

Churches of Edwards

The early settlers of Edwards were from Protestant areas of United States and from Protestant European countries so these churches naturally were the first formal organizations in the various sections of the town.

In 1819, only seven years from the time the first pioneers came to Edwards they began having meetings of the faith they were accustomed to before settling in the wilderness that was to become Edwards. Traveling clergymen served the people wishing to worship God with others who shared their beliefs and services were held in many different places. The Methodist Church has a good history, which will help any of you wanting to go in depth on the early meetings. Everts History of St. Lawrence County also has an excellent section on the religious societies of Edwards.

Union/Universalist Church in Village

In the village there were not enough members of one faith to have a church of their own so the people of five different faiths, Presbyterians, Baptists, Universalists, Episcopalians, and Methodists, got together and built a small church on Main Street at the corner of Church Street. This cost \$1000 and was built in 1850. Thomas Noble gave the land for the church.

The combined congregations grew and needed a bigger church so in 1886 they built again. William Grant designed and built it for \$2800. A description of it at the time it was dedicated in Feb 1887 can be read in a newspaper account of it in the folder on the Union church in the [Edwards History Center](#).

Later this church became the home of just the Universalists, although officially still a Union Church for all faiths, and remained Universalist until that group became too small to have their own parish. At that time it closed and remained empty until April 1969 when it was torn down. The last picture of it was taken 17 Aug 1967, and is shown here.

The newspaper account says the bell weighs a thousand pounds. It is mounted on a base in the front corner of this lot, having been placed there in 1976 at the request of the Bicentennial Committee. The base was repaired and faced with brick last year, courtesy of the village. The clapper had to be taken out back in 1976 because the adults kept ringing it! It is in the History Center.



Methodist Church in Village

Around 1900 the Methodists decided to purchase the old school that was beside them and not used since the opening of the bigger school in 1898. They acquired one half of the building, turned it a quarter, and added it to the rear of their church for more room. The other half was purchased by the owner of the house on the other side (Davison's house), turned a quarter and used as a store. It can be seen at the edge of later pictures, still standing, although used only for storage by the Davisons.



In the early 1880s the Methodist congregation had grown to a point where they felt they could support their own church building and in 1885 they left the Union church (still the little, original one) and erected their own church a short way along Main St. from the Union Church. It was finished in Feb 1886 at a cost of \$2400. This picture (above left) shows the Methodist Church and Parsonage before 1900, in its location before the building was moved back to allow the state road to go through the village. Henry

Noble (1898-1999) told me one day that he watched them move the building back.

The 1962 picture (at right) is the original church that burned on 15 Sep 1972. Immediately the Catholic priest, Father Charles Richard, offered the use of the Catholic Church to their congregation. I know that he immediately called their pastor, because just as soon as I got back home from watching the fire, I called Father Richard and said I felt we should offer our church to them. His reply was "I already have". The offer was accepted, and Sacred Heart Church was shared for 19 months until the new Methodist Church was finished. The consecration of this church was 28 April 1974.



Rev. Paul Darnell, the pastor at the time the original church burned, had just joined the local fire department. This was at a time when the clergy did not usually join volunteer fire departments. Then, as it turned out, his church was the first fire he turned out to help fight!

The final picture of the Methodist Church shows how it looked on December 31, 1999.

Methodist Church in South Edwards

It appears that the South Edwards Methodist congregation was the third group to have their own church. It was given to them by The Independent Order of the Good Templars, a temperance organization, when they no longer could support a building. Since the organization did not form until 16 March 1894, it stands to



reason that it was probably after 1900 before they disbanded and donated their building to the Methodist group. In the St. Lawrence County History published by Everts in 1878, the Methodists were holding their services in the school in South Edwards. This picture, from a 1928 newspaper article describing an Old Home Day of South Edwards, shows an early view of the South Edwards Methodist Church. The date of the picture is not known. Part of the bell cupola can be seen at the top of the picture.



There are not many changes from the spring 1976 picture of S. Edwards to the 31 December 1999 picture shown here, except for the fairly new handicapped entrance. It has been mentioned that the prisoners from the Gouverneur Correctional Facility painted the black trim around the church, as shown in the 1999 picture.

St. Edward Catholic Church in Talville

Then came changes in the religious affiliations of Edwards' townspeople. The opening of the mines in Talville in the late 1800s attracted workers from the areas of the world who practiced Catholicism and they wanted a church of their

own in which to follow their religion. At first they were dependent on priests from neighboring communities coming to Talville for Mass, but not on a regular basis. In 1891 they were able to have Daniel Dart build a small church just as you turn onto Ames Road in that community. Since they had very little extra money with which to buy accoutrements for their church, they made many of the items at home with their tools and/or sewing materials.

The first picture shows what it looked like in 1932, white with dark green trim. The second picture shows the church in 1957. Notice the cross on the roof. That



cross was added to the shrine built in the side yard of the present rectory on Trout Lake Street, by Manie Hurley as a memorial to her son, Terry.

After the church was razed in 1962 because of the mobility of the parishioners and their usual attendance being at Sacred Heart in the village, a number of items from it were stored in the garage of what was then the rectory in Edwards village, on Back Street. In 1997 during the 75th anniversary celebration of Sacred Heart parish, the church members were reminded that the artifacts were still stored upstairs in that garage and were available to Sacred

Heart. Some were accepted by former St. Edward parishioners and some were distributed in other ways. The small confessional was specifically donated to the Edwards History Center and was added to the collection.



Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Edwards Village

The opening of the mines in the village brought many Catholic families to the new work site, and therefore, a desire for a Catholic Church here.

In 1928, under the guidance of Father Maguire, their church was built. The first picture shows some workmen sitting on the steps just after it was finished. Notice the double-hung plain glass windows on the front, before any stained glass decorative windows had been donated.



Over the years, it has been redecorated, and sometimes changed, as needed; the latest refurbishing being done in 1997 for the 10 Aug 1997 celebration of the 75th year of its incorporation. This picture shows how it looked after it was repainted to closely match the original color scheme. The original main color was white. All of the renovation work was done by parishioners. The handicapped accessible ramp was added in the summer of 2001.



The colored picture was taken on 10 August 1997 after the refurbishing, and on the date of the 75th anniversary celebration.

Assembly of God Church in Village

These churches remained the only ones in the town until 1953 when the Assembly of God denomination was established in the village. This parish first held services in the IOOF Hall. They bought the site of the former school on East Main Street where Stanley Todd had started a house, but not finished it, completed the house, and built a church. The first picture shows how it looked in the Bicentennial year. In 1996 they celebrated the 40th anniversary of the completion of the church, which was constructed at a cost of \$7,000, and totally debt-free. Leah Noble's records state that their pastor at that time was Rev. Gerald Smeltzer. I recall he was a talented, well-liked man, and missed very much when he was transferred.



The second photo shows how it looked on December 31, 1999.

Cornerstone Christian Fellowship Church, So. Edwards

The newest church building in Edwards is located in South

Edwards, and the church itself, as stated in their history, was established in 1991 by Pastor Kevin Thompson and his wife, Rose, and a handful of people, as a home meeting group. Pastor Thompson moved to Harrisville in 1989, but grew up in the Watertown area.

The building, erected in 1995, is utilitarian in design, as is the more modern practice, and has a growing group so they have already erected an addition (in 1999) attached to the right side of the original building, to meet their needs.



This picture was taken on December 31, 1999.

LaVerne H. Freeman, Jan 2000 ... Revised Feb 2000 for posting on the Internet

Sources

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