

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

By Photographer Fred Powers
And Historian Arch Merrill

West Walworth's Zion Church

THE present Zion Evangelical United Brethren Church in West Walworth was built in 1842 as a schoolhouse, fashioned of cobblestones which were hauled from Lake Ontario.

The church society was organized in 1856 and the members met in homes



until the stone schoolhouse was purchased in 1865 for \$130. The building was dedicated as a church in 1866 with 22 charter members,

under the Rev. Charles Gilger. Rev. David Fisher, a circuit pastor, doing most of the work of transforming it into a house of worship.

A frame entrance with a bell tower was added. After the tower was struck by lightning in 1924, it was rebuilt at a lower height.

The bell, purchased in 1894 for \$295, was inscribed: "To tell of Thy loving kindness in the early morning and of Thy truth in the right season."

The years brought many changes. Gas lights were donated by Jacob Welker, who also gave one of the stained glass windows. In 1924 electricity was installed in the church and parsonage. In 1880 the horse sheds were built and enlarged in 1914. Members had individual stalls in the sheds and few dared to use space allotted to another. The old sheds came down in 1928.

The first Sunday School addition was constructed in 1904 during the pastorate of the Rev. Charles Stube. The Christian Education Building was added in 1959 at a cost of \$23,000. In 1910 the English language was substituted for German in the services.

Highlights in the church's history include the 1918 conference of the New York United Brethren to which it played host, and the visit in 1959 of Bishop J. Gordon Howard of Pittsburgh, head of the Eastern Area of the church, and the Christian Endeavor.

The Women's Mission Society, organized in 1924, and the Christian Endeavor Leagues, formed in 1928,

are active groups. The church has a membership of 167 and the Sunday School attendance averages 110.

For years the West Walworth church has been served by students of the Colgate Rochester Divinity School. The present minister, the Rev. Charles Gilger, who will be graduated from the divinity school in May, 1964, took the pastorate in October, 1962.

He is a graduate of Wheaton College in Illinois and of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and was pastor of the Walton Baptist Church for five years and of the Seneca Falls First Baptist Church for three years.

Zion Church, which began life as a cobblestone schoolhouse, is a landmark in the Wayne County community just over the Monroe County border.

