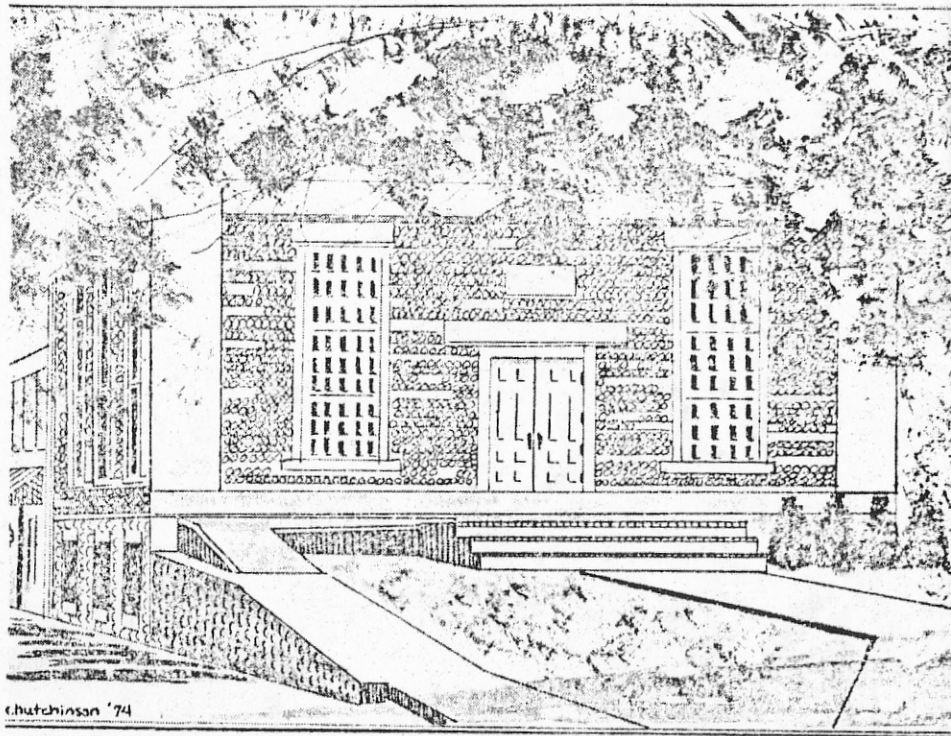


THE  
*First Baptist Church*  
WILLIAMSON  
NEW YORK



*Serving Christ and Community*  
SINCE 1821

*Rev. Clinton L. Barlow, pastor*

*"Having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart  
But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show  
that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us."*

*II Corinthians 4:1,7*

*An "American Baptist" Church*  
REBUILT 1974

REDEDICATION SUNDAY

November 24, 1974

The First Baptist Church of Williamson, New York, began in 1808 as a mission church of the Baptist Church of Sodus. On February 24, 1821, this mission church became independent from the Sodus Church, and thirty-nine charter members formed the Second Baptist Church of Williamson. It was called the Second Baptist Church because there was already a First Baptist Church in the area now known as Marion which, at this time, was still a part of the Township of Williamson. The year 1826 saw Marion formed into a Township of its own, and the Second Baptist Church incorporated itself as the First Baptist Church of Williamson, filing the incorporation papers in 1827.

It was also in the year 1827 that the original church structure was built on the site of the present cobblestone building on East Main Street. This structure was a frame building, with a gallery built around three sides of the sanctuary. The building was paid for through subscriptions of grain, ox teams, and manual labor. Part of the expenses for the upkeep of this building was paid through rental of the pews to members of the congregation.

The church records from these early years find the congregation constantly getting after its backsliding members. Backsliders were defined as those who did not attend worship regularly, who did not keep their pledge up to date, who spent the Sabbath in a trifling manner, or who harbored hard feelings towards some other brother or sister. The church records also show that forgiveness was always quick and genuine. One issue constantly discussed at church meetings during these same years was that of slavery.

On the cold winter night of February 7, 1843, the church building was destroyed by fire. The church records from this time say only that, "Our meeting house burned down." Eight days after this devastating fire the congregation, now 237 members strong, met and voted to rebuild. This time the church would be a cobblestone structure, measuring 40 feet by 56 feet. During the years 1844-1845 the congregation held worship services in several of the school houses in the Township. Money was raised and the building efforts went forward as stones were hauled from the shore of Lake Ontario in Pultneyville and laid in place by the members themselves. It is not surprising that a cobblestone construction was decided upon, since the period 1825-1860 was that of the cobblestone in this area. The newly erected cobblestone church was dedicated in May 1846.

The first Sunday School in the church was organized in 1853. The years of the 1870's were hard ones indeed for the church. There was no minister. Membership was dwindling. And a letter was sent

out by the church, asking its sister Baptist Churches in the area to pray for its renewed life. In the year 1879 things went from bad to worse, as the congregation became embroiled in a fierce internal struggle over the actions of the recently called minister. He left in the same year, and the congregation was breathing its last before the death of the whole enterprise.

Then it was that in the year 1880 Hiram S. Cogswell, a member of the Marion Baptist Church, felt a strong call from God to come to Williamson and put the First Baptist Church back on its feet. Hiram Cogswell personally underwrote the expenses of the church, including that of the minister; and personally went to each member of the church, inviting each one to begin anew with him. He collected around him a handful of dedicated people who believed, with an unshakable faith, that the church could be brought back to life. During the years 1880-1883 these same people, along with Mr. Cogswell, made repairs and improvements to the church building at the cost of \$1,000.00. It was during these years that galleries in the sanctuary were torn down, that a baptistry and the front platform were put in, and that a vestibule was added to the front of the building.

At the time of the 75th Anniversary of the church in 1897, the church clerk reported a membership of 78. The church was now debt free and self-supporting. There was no dissension among the members. A Youth Group and Ladies Aid Society had been added to the church program. The church was now contributing regularly to home and foreign mission work.

The congregation of the Williamson First Baptist Church began the 20th Century by building a parsonage, directly adjacent to the church building on the west side, in the year 1900. By the year 1913 the church sanctuary received a new hardwood floor, laid at an incline; new pews; new carpet; and a reed organ. The church basement, where the janitor had been living, was completely remodeled to provide a new kitchen, dining room, and prayer room. The building was also electrified.

At the time of the 125th Anniversary of the church in 1946 a room had been built in the sanctuary ceiling to house a new Memorial Organ, which was finally dedicated in 1949. The year 1948 found a new heating system being put into the building, along with a new floor in the basement. In 1952 the sanctuary was redecorated in blue, and a divided chancel was made. In 1956 the church kitchen was remodeled, and flood lights were installed in the front of the church. In 1957 the church basement was remodeled. In 1960 the church received a new roof.

The year 1964 found the congregation breaking ground for a new educational building, located directly south of the cobblestone building. By November of this same year, the building was

finished and dedicated. Community use of this building began in 1966 and, in 1967, the church sanctuary was once again redecorated.

At the time of the 150th Anniversary of the church in 1971, the spirit and hopes of the congregation were running high, as thanksgiving was given to God for the past, present, and future. The test of this spirit and these hopes came on June 1, 1973 when, in thirty minutes time, the interior of the cobblestone building was destroyed by a fire of undetermined origin. The time was 10:15 on a Friday morning. By 7:00 p.m. that same day several dozen church members met in the parsonage and resolved together to rebuild the church. During the summer of 1973 plans were drawn, finalized, and voted upon by the congregation. At the same time an extensive cleanup operation in the cobblestone building, and in the educational building, was undertaken and completed by the friends and members of the church. Rebuilding began in the Fall of 1973. It was decided to capitalize upon the Greek Revival style of the cobblestone building, and to restore the interior in a colonial decor reminiscent of Williamsburg, Virginia.

And now — eighteen months, \$100,000.00, many prayers, much hard work and sacrifice — later, we come to this glorious Thanksgiving Sunday — Rededication Sunday, November 24, 1974. What of our future? Let us look to the past. When the people here were strong, dedicated, and committed to God, the church grew and prospered. When the people here were weak, lukewarm in dedication and commitment to God, and quarreled among themselves the church almost died. As it has been in the past — so it is in the present — so it will be in the future. The choice ever remains ours.

— Clinton L. Barlow



The Members Of  
***THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH***  
of Williamson, N. Y.

cordially invite you to join them for one or more of the  
events of celebration on

***REDEDICATION SUNDAY***  
***November 24, 1974***

MORNING WORSHIP	10:00 A. M.
OPEN HOUSE	3:00 - 5:00 P. M.
EVENING WORSHIP and ORGAN RECITAL	8:00 P. M.