

Holley Baptist Church

9-13-00

Recently I came into the possession of this wonderful century old photo of the Baptist Church in Holley through the generosity of William Nestle of Albion. I would also like to thank Marsha DeFilipps, Murray-Holley historian for information contained herein.

The Baptist Church in Holley was dedicated on Jan. 22, 1891. The *Holley Standard* of Jan. 29, 1891 reported the following:

"The Baptist society is almost as old as the village itself. It was formed in 1825, the year of the completion of the Erie Canal, the building of which gave birth to Holley as a hamlet and the nucleus of the prosperous village of today. The old church which the society has just vacated, was dedicated in 1834 and then cost about \$3,000. In 1866 it was enlarged and improved at a cost of about \$4,500.

The decision to build a new church was formally made in the fall of 1889 though the matter had been under consideration for several years. The lot on Geddes Street was selected as the most central and desirable of any that were available. Work was commenced on the new building early in the spring of 1890, and carried steadily to completion. The plans were furnished by Addison Forbes, of Rochester. The contract for the mason work was let to Ward S. Buell of Albion and for the carpenter work to Edwin Bliss of this village. The carpenter work was done under the charge of, and supervised by, Mr. Maynard of Brockport.

The edifice is built of rock face Medina Sandstone of a rich brown color from our local quarries, with gables and roof of dark

slate. Handsome windows of cathedral glass, and an open belfry surmounted by a graceful spire, complete a beautiful and appropriate exterior. There are two entrances from the street through ample vestibules from which doors lead both into the main audience room and into the Sunday School room. The main audience room is about 40 x 50 feet, the roof being supported by open timber work. The floor slopes from all directions towards the pulpit, and the room is seated with 275 folding assembly chairs arranged in circular form. The platform and baptistry are ample in size and at the rear are convenient toilet rooms. To the right of the pulpit is space for the choir and a recess to receive the pipe organ which the society hopes to purchase in the near future. The Sunday School room is at the front of the building and connects with the main audience room by folding doors. The arches over the pulpit and between the audience room and Sunday School room are handsomely hung with drapery. The church is well lighted with electricity. In the basement is a commodious dining room and a convenient, fully equipped kitchen. Water for culinary, toilet and drinking purposes, and for the baptistry is supplied from the Holley Water Works. A new carpet has been purchased for the main audience room, and the carpet from the old church used in the Sunday School room, vestibules and dining room."

This 1891 article certainly gives us a great deal of information about the interior of the church at that time. I believe our photo is from the late 1890s and shows that the pipe



organ has been put into place. We can see that the choir was using spindle back chairs arranged around the organ. Congregational seating was in cast iron folding seats like those found in a theater. The *Holley Standard* article notes the use of electric lighting which we can see in our photo. However, note the two kerosene wall bracket lamps for when the power went off as auxiliary lighting. On the platform to the far right are three traditional pulpit chairs and a center pulpit. A flower stand is showing at the corner of the platform and another small stand is seen between pulpit chairs for hymn books, water carafe, etc.

Notice the plush drapery in the baptistry arch. A small hymn number board hangs just to the left of these. Note the absence of religious symbols in this rather plain interior which was typical of most Protestant churches of this time frame and before. However, the organ pipes are made pretty with decorative stencils.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Hillside Cemetery Chapel, both located at Holley, were also designed by Addison Forbes. During the years since this picture was taken, alterations have included the removal of the sloping floor and the addition of more traditional pews.