

## Egypt's Only Church a Long Lost Memory

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

Heads hung heavy in the hamlet of Egypt when the old Methodist Episcopal Church burned to the ground. The date was January 17, 1922, when the building, owned by Pearl Rainbow, was ignited in flames from a defective stove pipe. The Fairport Herald reported that a bucket brigade was quickly formed, but as the fire started in the attic, their efforts were in vain.

Built in 1826, the large wood frame building stood just a stone's throw from Oliver Loud's Tavern, near the entrance to where the Town Centre Plaza is located today. A description of the building was provided by Bertha Bortle Aldridge in 1953: "The church was a large building, entirely covered with narrow boards. It had eight windows on each side, each window having 24 panes of glass. The church seemed much larger than some of the early churches in Massachusetts. There were two front entrances and inside each were stairs leading to the upper part of the church where services were held."



*Egypt's Methodist Episcopal Church, built in 1826*

Cullen Loud, Oliver's son, had run his deceased father's inn for several years when in 1882 he purchased the old church next door. Loud brought life to the 56 year old building, which

needed a new purpose after the Methodist congregation disbanded. Known as Loud's Hall, the building became the social center of Egypt, where the district school held concert performances and ceremonies. Many of the clergyman from Fairport's churches periodically came to Egypt to hold services, and the American Sunday School Union frequently sponsored events at Loud's Hall. Dances were regularly held at the old church as well. When one visiting pastor protested the use of the building for a dance, he was reminded that it was the revenue from such events that paid his salary.

Traveling orators speaking on political and social topics of the day could be heard at Loud's Hall. Prize fighter Joseph Hess, an advocate for the temperance movement, commanded a large crowd in February of 1886, after having an audience at the Fairport First Baptist Church and Shaw's Hall just a few days earlier.

Rainbow Hall became the name of the old building when Pearl Rainbow gained ownership in about 1911. Much of the first floor was used as a residence, and it also became the voting place for the people of Egypt. Sunday school, musical performances, and dances kept Rainbow Hall bustling with activity. Damon's Orchestra of Rochester performed for what may have been the largest crowd the building ever held, a 1917 dance for the benefit of the employees of the Egypt Canning Company. Eighty couples were in attendance.

When it burned in 1922, the old church was said to be the second oldest structure in Egypt, next to the nearby Ramsdell-Ranney homestead.

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