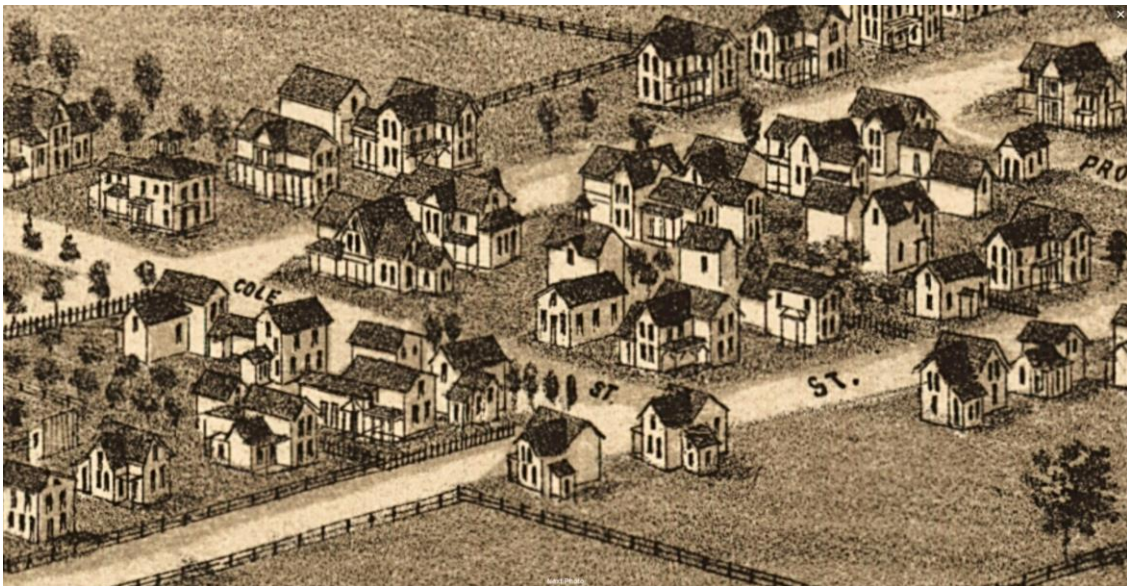


The Little Church on Cole Street

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

You might be familiar with Cole Street in the village of Fairport. It is less than a tenth of a mile long, with only five houses. So it may surprise you to learn that Cole Street was once home to a church, and an early community recreation center.

Amos Cole sold his farm in Egypt in 1864 and moved to Fairport. He laid out his little street between West Avenue, called Cherry Street at the time, and Roselawn Avenue, known as North Street in those days. An 1872 map indicates that the east side of Cole Street was populated with houses at that time, while the lots on the west side were undeveloped.



The Free Methodist church on Cole Street is in the center of this section of the 1885 Birds Eye View of Fairport. The church opened five years prior to the creation of this lithograph.

The Fairport Herald of July 2, 1880 announced the plans of the Free Methodist Society: “A lot has been secured on Cole Street, and an effort is to be made to build a small church this fall.” By the end of 1880 the little congregation held its meetings there. The church was lit by lanterns, and a woodstove provided heat for the building, probably no more than 20 x 30 feet.



The old Free Methodist church on Cole Street

According to former historian Helen Butler, most of the congregation of Fairport's Free Methodist church joined "regular Methodist churches" in about 1910. The building sat vacant until the community began to show an interest in providing recreational opportunities for children. A citizen's committee made up of representatives from area churches, the Board of Education, and the Chamber of Commerce set out to determine the needs and to secure a building. By 1915, the former church was filled with kids, specifically, boys. As reported in the Fairport Herald, "The boys are more than enthusiastic over it as the place is just what they have desired for a long time. Any boy in the village is welcome to the privileges, and parents may well encourage their boys to go there. It will be open every evening in charge of a competent committee of adults. The place is being arranged for basketball and other games." Apparently the girls of Fairport were on their own when it came to recreation.

The repurposed church didn't last for long as a recreation center. By 1919 efforts were underway to secure a new facility, and when the high school on West Avenue opened in 1924, the gymnasium helped to address the community's desire for recreational facilities. The old church at 14 Cole Street found new life as a private garage, and later was used to store fire-fighting equipment. It was torn down in 1940 and a small house was built in its place by Alfred and Minnie Pelton.

Published in the Fairport-ER Post: April 13, 2017