



The Society Scroll

Newsletter of
The Ocean County Historical Society
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“Telling The Stories Of Ocean County”

On-Line Extra June 2008

Lakewood, NJ Baptist Church

The Research Department has received a packet of Lakewood history from Miriam Foster Hayes, West Hartford, CT. Mrs. Hayes' grandfather was the pastor of the Lakewood Baptist Church from January 1893 until his death on June 25, 1923. The packet consisted of old newspaper clippings and articles relating to the church and to the election and assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Included were photographs of Lakewood with identification written on the back. There were also two publications about Lakewood. All these old papers will add to our research files. Mrs. Hayes also donated to the Research Department records of marriages performed by her grandfather while he was pastor of the Baptist Church in Lakewood. Thank you, Miriam.

I have gleaned some history about the Baptist Church in Lakewood from these papers and would like to share with all.

In the early spring of 1869, there were some twenty or more Baptists located in Bricksburg who came here from the New England States and New York. On April 11 of that year, they met at the home of Deacon Benjamin Dix. Several subsequent meetings were held, and it was finally decided to hold regular prayer meetings, the first to be held at the home of Deacon Dix on April 6, 1866. Shortly after, Deacon George P. Smith generously donated the use of his hall on Main Street where the first preaching service was held, the Rev. W. F. Brown of the Orient (Burrsville) Baptist Church preaching. The final organization was completed May 21, 1868.

Smith's hall served as the meeting place for some time, but as the membership grew, it was felt that a home of their own would be desirable and steps to that effect were started. The use of the church building at First Street and Clifton Avenue was secured from the Land Company in 1871. Several years later in 1881 the church members, by change of some property and cash, bought the property they now own. With some additions and repairs, the building did them good service for a number of years.

As Lakewood grew, it was seen that the building was too small, and as Rev. George Johnson had left \$4,000 toward a church building fund, it was decided to build. In 1897 the cornerstone on the new Baptist Church was successfully laid on June 7 at 5:30 o'clock in the presence of a large company of the church. Upon the speaker's platform were seated the Rev. W. G. Wedemeyer and other dignitaries. After the dedication speeches, the Rev. Wedemeyer thanked all who had made the church possible. The Hon. George G. Smith, chairman of the Building Committee, then read a list of the contents of a hermetically-sealed metal box, which was to be placed within the cornerstone. The stone was then hoisted to its position and laid by Mr. Smith, after which he said, "I declare this cornerstone of the First Baptist Church properly laid in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

A commodious stone structure was completed and dedicated March 27, 1898.

A Lakewood paper dated Saturday, January 31, 1903, has an article reading as follows:

“A short time ago, John D. Rockefeller offered to donate \$2,500 toward paying off the mortgage of \$5,000 on the Lakewood Baptist Church, providing the congregation raised the other half/ When all but \$500 had been subscribed, Miss Cornelia Nash, of New York, said she will share with Mr. Rockefeller in wiping out the mortgage. Now that the mortgage has been taken care of, the \$2,000 subscribed by the congregation can be used for repairs and improvements to the church when needed.”

In March 1927 a memorial to the late Reverend Dr. Wedemeyer was installed in the church.

Elizabeth Ann Grant

February 1990

The above article is taken from Memories of Old Ocean County, Selected Articles from *The Society Scroll*.

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Historic First Baptist church.

Photo used with permission. See the following site:

<http://www.bricktownlive.com/photo/Lakewood-NJ/1st-baptist-lakewood-nj>