Ripley Memorial United Methodist Church
[1868-1998]

Descriptive Summary:

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Biographical Note:
Over the past me hundred and twenty-eight years, congregations have changed; the world has transformed. From 1870 to 1960, the Ripley Church grew to 250 families. As the City of Buffalo grew, so did the appeal of Ripley Memorial. Peoples resettling from areas outside of the city, found a cultural, economic, and religious sanctuary within the neighborhood limits of Ripley. In the 1960's, most United Methodist Churches in Buffalo city neighborhoods were readily affected by the rapid growth of suburban communities. Consequently, United Methodist fellowships like Ripley Memorial were challenged by the Methodist migration.

In spite of that fact, members of Ripley Memorial experimented with diverse methods and ministries to conquer the disturbing pressures of the empty pews- sometimes successful, most times not! The ones who are still here today are the truly dedicated. Many have commuted many miles over the past thirty years in hopes of saving Ripley. They have remained courageous until the end. Through self-examination and study, Ripley developed a powerful hand in the missionary duties. This type of outreach has enabled the congregation to keep faith in their missionary spirit, and to accept what is happening today.

Unwilling to be paralyzed by the anticipated end, members of Ripley found encouraging paradigms in Scripture that described journeys in faith as time lines, (i.e. the lives of Moses, King David, Queen Vashti, and St. Paul). Applying this faith to the spirit of Ripley, members understood this to mean that the Ripley spiritual legacy was to be passed on.

One never rejoices when a people of faith elects to disband and to become disciples for Christ in other cost-effective ministries. However, it is noteworthy and commendable that the wisdom of Ripley transcended the temptation to be territorial and to be self-absorbed in their decision. Instead, they transcended territorialism and came to the realization that their time at Ripley had been commendable and that their stewardship had been a reward to the community. A more detailed history can be found below in the inventory.
Scope and Contents:
Church directory; financial records; histories; membership lists; programs; and record books

Inventory: See below.
Introduction and Inventory to

The Microfilmed

Ripley Memorial United Methodist
Church Papers, Buffalo, NY

(2 rolls)

Part of

The Buffalo State College Regional History Collection

Copies of the microfilmed titles are housed in
The Monroe Fordham Regional History Center,
Archives & Special Collections, E. H. Butler Library,
SUNY Buffalo State

*The project to preserve the papers in this collection was initiated by Dr. E.O. Smith, Jr. and Dr. Andrew Nicholls (members of the Buffalo State College Department of History).*

The 16MM film was filmed with a 34X lens
RILEY MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1870-1998: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
Prepared By
ANDREW C. MAINES
BUFFALO STATE COLLEGE

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past one hundred and twenty-eight years, congregations have changed; the world has transformed. From 1870 to 1960, the Ripley Church grew to 250 families. As the City of Buffalo grew, so did the appeal of Ripley Memorial. Peoples resettling from areas outside of the city, found a cultural, economic, and religious sanctuary within the neighborhood limits of Ripley. In the 1960’s, most United Methodist Churches in Buffalo city neighborhoods were readily affected by the rapid growth of suburban communities. Consequently, United Methodist fellowships like Ripley Memorial were challenged by the Methodist migration.

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II. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

During the last century, Buffalo was a growing metropolis. People of faith were offered opportunities to build new facilities and to expand their congregations. Church growth exploded and congregations fulfilled their visions across denominational lines. During the 1880's the areas of upper and lower Black Rock were expanding at extraordinary rates. In 1817, the beginnings of Methodism in Buffalo took form in Black Rock also.
III. HISTORY OF RIPLEY MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
ESTABLISHED IN 1817.

The Ripley Memorial United Methodist Church is a result of the merger of two Methodist Episcopal Churches. One was a German Methodist Episcopal Church on East Street. The other was a Methodist Episcopal Church at Farmer and Thompson Streets. The East Street Methodist Episcopal began with the founding of a Sunday School in 1852. The German Methodist Episcopal Church was a Mission Church of the Mortimer Street Methodist Episcopal Church.

Starting out as a mission Sunday School program. Ripley Memorial United Methodist Church was first located at 322 Dearborn Street on a lot and building given by Dr. A.P. Ripley on November 16th, 1887. In 1891, the chapel of Ripley Church was moved to the corner of Farmer and Thompson Streets. On January 1, 1939, the Church merged with East Street Methodist Church at 221 East.

The present parsonage was built in 1913 at 225 East Street. On June 25, 1950, work began on a remodeling project for a new church school unit, improvement of Church and parsonage. On October 19, 1952, these improvements were dedicated at the morning worship service.

In the 1870's, the theology of the slave question split the entire Methodist Episcopal Church-(ME Church North, and ME Church South.) In the North the result was that Free Methodism developed out of the Genesee Regional Conference, at Perkins, New York, in 1870. At the same time, there was a growing feeling in Buffalo for the East Street German Methodist Church to develop into an independent church in order to satisfy the spiritual needs of the neighborhood and as a way to overcome the political ramifications of the Methodist split. Merging congregations became a reality.

IV. RIPLEY MEMORIAL SINCE EISENHOWER

Between 1929 and 1960, Ripley grew to become the spiritual home of over 250 families, becoming the spiritual icon for ministerial opportunities for Methodist Black Rock. The Methodist movement grew with tremendous energy under the guidance of the pastors of Ripley. What had originally begun with 25 members under the leadership of Rev. F.W. Hoppman, remained steady, becoming a congregation of over 250 families under the strength of Rev. Edwin Holly. The dedication of the families to help and serve others in a time of need, never stopped. Under the backdrop of World War II, a crippling tuberculosis epidemic was spreading the country. Ripley came to distinguish itself as an active force of the Social Gospel Movement ideology. When the Black Rock area was affected by the epidemic, it was Ripley and its’ Dedicated members who came to support families. They unselfishly came to the call of those affected, and began the steps towards renewal. At the same time, Rev. Arthur Rheme of Ripley began to understand the importance of veterans and their families. Rev. Rheme made sure that VFWs received their monthly church newsletters and all received a copy of the church-wide survey that was conducted in 1944. All efforts were made to ensure that the Ripley Memorial would serve the lives of military veterans.
Ripley Memorial United Methodist Church

The latter half of the 20th century was not as positive as the first half of the century was for urban Methodism. Social, economic, and demographic setbacks challenged the Ripley community. The rising expenses and fluctuating membership created an inhospitable environment for the survival of Methodism. The continual move to suburban centers in the 1970s created a condition that left the Buffalo district in a management crisis. Warm bodies were missing from churches, and the issue of financial survival became a crippling reality. While Ripley was suffering under the strain, Methodism throughout the country suffered simultaneously. Ripley members realized that they had to look forward and not backwards. For the next 30 years, beginning with Rev. Frank Mucci, attendance began a steady decline.

For approximately 24 years, Rev. Franklin V. Young, and Rev. Merle Showers, (each serving for roughly 12 years each) fought an aggressive battle to attract members. Despite these efforts, both pastors realized the traditional church did not hold the place of influence that it once had. Dramatic action had to be taken for Ripley Memorial to survive in the neighborhood. In 1978, members like Mrs Helen Sherk, Bro. James Stoberl, Mrs. Alice McGuire, and others, participated in church revitalization study groups. It was realized that a consolidation of Westside churches was necessary. Ripley Memorial, Richmond Avenue, North-Delaware, Asbury-Delahay, Ontario Street, and First United Methodist were to become mutually supportive of each other by creating a spirit that connected all six and financially aided each other through full participation in a general fund. This consolidation of funds made it possible for all to share in a variety of ministry programs and demonstration projects. It was also during the leadership of Rev. Showers that Ripley and Ontario Street Methodist were joined in order to become a cooperative parish in hope of surviving.

In spite of the many changes that were occurring in the community, the challenges did not have a negative affect on the devotion of the congregation at Ripley. While membership declined, many groups like the Ladies Aid Society, Ripley United Methodist Men’s Group, and the United Methodist Women, developed to meet the missionary desires of the church. By bringing to the forefront the idea that the Church was more than just a building, Ripley’s organizations were able to rally the support. The spiritual and financial support of these groups developed into an invaluable asset for the church. They were able to create internal support systems (i.e. prayer) that were able to hold Ripley together through the roughest times. Always a pro-family congregation, Ripley made decisions to improve the lives of area families. The Housing Mission, was well as the Health Missions created a focus that supported the foundation of the family. Ripley began to purchase and to develop homes for the neighborhood as a further method of promoting the family ideal in Black Rock.

Now, as the end of Ripley comes into view, Rev. Maggie Y. Boyd is faced with a challenge no other pastor has had to face. While being a woman of African descent was problematic for some, her dedication and spirit have allowed the members of Ripley to come to terms with what is at hand. She is leading the way and preparing everyone for the change that is taking place as of June 30, 1998. The rich legacy of the Ripley Church is recorded in the memories of the people who lived and worshipped there, and now as the end nears, all will come away with a piece of history with them.
## CHRONOLOGICAL LISTS OF PASTORS

### East Street
- F.W. Hoppman, 1865-1867
- J. Kindler, 1868-1869
- Phillip Heendiges, 1870-1873
- G. Jacpb Woerz, 1873-1876
- John Fladd, 1876-1878
- Phil Stahl, 1879-1880
- F.W. Hoppman, 1881-1886
- J.G. Lutz, Jr., 1886-1887
- A. Grobe, 1888-1891
- G. Bobilien, 1891-1898
- H. Mueller, 1898-1901
- Phillip Heandiges, 1902-1909
- Herman A. Maseer, 1910-1917
- Fred C. Hauser, 1917-1920
- Paul Loesher, 1920-1928
- Ernest Steinkrause, 1929-1932
- Alfred Lenzer, 1932-1935
- John B. Harry, 1935-1938

### Ripley
- Jos. Duxbury, June 1888-October 1888
- Peter Thompson, 1888-1889
- Henry Small, Oct. 1889-Nov. 1889
- H.A. Reed, 1889-1890
- Ray Allen, 1890-1893
- James Moss, 1893-1896
- L. Stevens, 1896-1899
- E.E. Fairchild, 1899-1905
- W.R. Pierce, 1905-1906
- D.N. Stafford, 1905-1908
- Joseph Dennis, 1908-1910
- Charles M. Hall, 1910-1912
- R.T. Doherty, 1912-1914
- James Moss, 1914-1917
- E.J. Cory, 1918-1919
- Charles H.M. Whelan, 1919-1922
- Ed. C. Toy, 1922-1927
- Norman Irving, 1927-1931
- Percy Asher, 1931-1934
- F.L. Harburn, 1934-1935
- G. Paul Keller, 1935-1938
- Dr. Ed. Scutz, 1939

### Merger
- Dr. Edward Schutz, 1939-1942
- Arthur Rehne, 1943-1948
- Roland Osgood, 1948-1952
- L. Van Sickle, 1952-1955
- Edwin Holley, 1955-1963
- Frank Mucci, 1963-1972
- Franklin Young, 1972
Records being written in German script made it very difficult to tell who were the Charter members, but the following names were recorded when the first Church was built:

Katherine Klepser
Johannes and Christina Haug (Changed to Houck)
Christina Baumstack
Christian Graf Katherine Graf
Magdaline Beyer
Phillipp & Katherine Duchscherer
Friedericke Haist
Katherine Wurster Marie Wurster
Ludwig and Katherine Jacob

Alvina Janner
Maria Baumstak
Nelly Stroh
Christine Baumstak
Friedericke Haug (Houck)
Sophia Bodie
Christine Jacob
Fredericke Klepser
J. J. Fink
Friedrich & Wilhelmina Bartz

In the late 1870s, more familiar names are recorded such as: Limburg - Boeck - Dahike - Horn - Pergande - Spohr - Alt - Seitz- and Haendiges.

**Charter Members of the Ripley Church included the following:**

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Conklin
Mrs. Carrie Kruger
Miss Ida Kruger - now Mrs. Hilton
John Duxbury
Mr. And Mrs. John Day
Fred W. C. Day
Mrs. Mary Denley
Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Grant
Miss Kitty Grant
Mrs. Jennie Glyn
Miss Margaret Glyn
Misses Anna and Emma Holbrook
Mr. Benjamin Woodall

Jane Lambert
Mr. and Mrs. J. Michener
Sarah Newman
H. W. Perry
Mr. and Mrs. A.P. Ripley
Mary Taylor
Isabell Taylor
William Taylor
Elizabeth Taylor
John White

**Contributed by Mrs. Ernest Williams, Church Historian**
History - numerous histories of the church written during the previous decades.

2. Record Book, 1884 - 1902. Written in German.

3. Record Book, 1847 - 1870. Written in German.

4. Quarterly Conference Record Book, 1868 - 1914. Written in German. + 2nd Book 1881 - 1909

5. Record Book, 1880 - 1902. Written in German.

6. Record Book, 1870 - 1897. Written in German.

7. Record Book (Mortimer Street Church), 1871 - 1898. Written in German.

8. Record Book (East Street Church), 1870 - 1901. Written in German.

9. Record Book (Mortimer Street Church), 1902. Written in German.

10. Record Book (East Street Church), 1870 - 1903. Written in German.

11. Finance Book (East Street Church), 1892 - 1906.

12. Finance and Membership Book (Mortimer Street Church), 1894 - 1907.

13. Record Book (Mortimer Street Church), 1907 - 1916. Written in German.


15. 2nd German M.E. Church Cemetery Payment Records, 1893 - 1924.

16. Record Book (East Street Church), 1901 - 1935.


18. Record Book (Ripley Official Board Record) 1923 - 1930.

19. Record Book (Ripley Quarterly Conference Record), 1927 - 1937.


21. Record Book (Ripley Church Trustees Funds), 1940s - 1954.

Ripley Memorial United Methodist Church

---------END OF REEL #1---------

23    Record Book (Budget Reports), 1967 - 1977.
25    Record Book (Official Membership and Church Record--baptisms, births, marriages, deaths, etc.), 1960s -.
26    Record Book (Ladies Aid Society Minutes), 1917 - 1933.
27    Record Book (Ladies Aid Society), 1930s.
34    Kitchen Report, 1956.
35    Sunday School, 1906 - 1939.
38    The Philather Class, 1917 - 1931.
42    Pictures
43    Printed Program, final dinner and closeout ceremony, May 1998.
45 Misc. Papers pertaining to the Ontario Street United Methodist Church, 11970, and 1990s.

NOTE: The materials in folders #44, & 45 were secured for filming by Dennis Pack.