

1

United Methodist Church, Pekin (now Sanborn)

2914 Upper Mountain Road
Sanborn, NY 14132

"We have a good parsonage, a good new church, and strong membership. It is composed mostly of substantial farmers. Our people receive us cordially, and I trust we shall have a prosperous year." — B.T. Roberts, October 1, 1857, in a letter to his father.

This was the last Methodist Episcopal Church that Roberts pastored.



Brockport and the Bergen Campgrounds

The Bergen Campground has faded into the fields, but its legacy continues. Eight miles south of Brockport, the camp meeting was started by B.T. Roberts and others in 1854 as a semi-independent Methodist camp meeting to promote holiness and reform. Typically thousands attended, especially on weekends.

Of the 1854 Bergen Meeting Roberts writes:

"It was the largest and one of the very best I ever attended. There were some forty tents on the ground, all of cloth. The appearance was very imposing. There are some of the best Methodists in this region I ever met. They keep the fire burning the year round whether the preacher enjoys religion or not. There were a goodly number of conversions, but the greatest work was in the church. Formalists were aroused, backsliders reclaimed and believers sanctified. August 17, 1854, in a letter to his father."

Brockport was another city where Roberts and Kendall both pastored the Methodist Episcopal Church.

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Albion Free Methodist Church

"The house was crowded to its utmost; some 1,300 being present, and many left unable to get in. The house thus dedicated is a substantial structure, 101 feet by 55. ... A basement the whole size of the building, entirely above ground, affords pleasant and convenient rooms for class and prayer-meetings, and Sabbath-school. ...

25 South Platt Street
Albion, NY 14411

The cost of the whole has been in round numbers about \$10,000. The whole has been paid or provided for." — Buffalo Morning Express, May 26, 1860

The first pastor here was Loren Stiles, who left the Methodist Episcopal Church across the street when expelled and oversaw the construction of the new building. Roberts and William Kendall also served at the Albion Methodist Church. In a letter to Roberts, February 3, 1855, Kendall writes:

"Our house was crammed Sunday night from top to bottom; but salvation came. Last night, also two lost their strength — a thing never before known in Albion until this winter. The people are filled with wonder and dismay. Officials, thus far for the Devil, begin to cower. There is great danger that Jesus will become popular. Dr. R [John Wesley Redfield] says it will take the Devil six months to repair the damages done this kingdom already. 'My voice is still for war,' is his watchword. We look for a mighty shaking."



The Free Methodist Church was begun in 1860 "to maintain the Bible standard of Christianity and to preach the Gospel to the poor."

2

The Chesbrough Orchard

On Chesbrough farm nearby a group of men met and organized the Free Methodist Church in 1860. Roberts announced the meeting in The Earnest Christian, which he had begun to publish in the same year:

"A Camp Meeting will be held at Pekin, Niagara county, N.Y., twenty miles north of Buffalo, about forty rods from the depot, to commence on Thursday, 16th of August.

A convention will be held at Pekin, for the purpose of adopting a Discipline for the Free Methodist Church, to commence at the close of the Camp Meeting, Aug. 23d."

An historical marker stands in front of the lot that served as Free Methodist Centenary Park from 1960 to 2010.

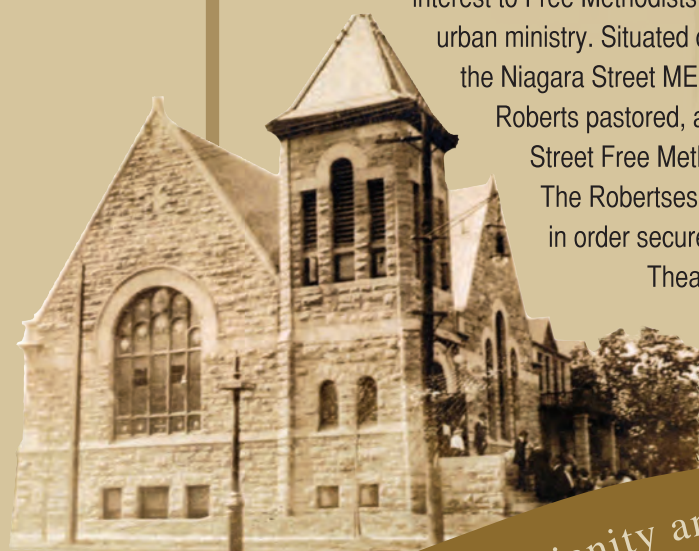


4

The Buffalo Work*

Shortly after Roberts was expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church, he and Ellen followed God's call to Buffalo. While there they lived in and ministered out of several buildings in the downtown area, but only one remains. They also ministered among the poor in Five Points, nearby.

Erected in 1866, First Free Methodist Church, located at 10th and Virginia (now a community center) is of historical interest to Free Methodists committed to urban ministry. Situated close by were the Niagara Street ME Church, where Roberts pastored, and the 13th Street Free Methodist Church. The Robertses sold their home in order to secure the Pearl Street Theatre, which became Second Free Methodist Church.



5



Stage Coach Inn (North Chili Tavern)

The Stagecoach Inn is located a block west of the current Roberts Wesleyan Campus. Levi Campbell bought the inn in 1819. Between then and when the Roberts

Corner of Buffalo Road and Union Street
North Chili, NY 14624

purchased the property in the 1860s, the building served as a hotel, country store, bank, post office, "a political focal point and an intermittent church meeting place." (History of Roberts Wesleyan College, Neil Pfouts) A restoration of the inn was completed in 2010.

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Roberts Wesleyan College

2301 Westside Drive
Rochester, NY 14624

"A number of person who are desirous of doing all the good in their power, have undertaken to

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establish a school, in which all shall be done that can be done, to train up youth to habits of piety, virtue, industry and economy, while they are acquiring, the elements of a sound education. With this object in view, a farm has been purchased, of 145 acres. ...

The design is to have all the scholars work from three to five hours every day. An accomplished farmer will teach the science and the practice of agriculture and horticulture." — B. T. Roberts, "A School Project," Earnest Christian, 11, May 1866



North Chili Rural (Evergreen) Cemetery

Both B. T. and Ellen Roberts and some of their children are buried here, as are many other notable early Free Methodists. The gravesite of Clarence H. Zahniser, who wrote a biography of B. T. Roberts, Earnest Christian, can also be found here. Roberts' parents and many of his family members are buried in the Gowanda Cemetery.

Buffalo Road
North Chili, NY 14624

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Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. — Jeremiah 6:15

B.T. Roberts chose this passage to conclude his controversial essay, "New School Methodism" in 1857. The Robertses took solace in nature's paths as well. Reading their journals, one imagines them as they traversed western New York, seeking God's meaning, answering His call, in love with each other and the world around them.

These words, written by Ellen in 1844, convey the peace she found in God's creation throughout her life: "I took a fine walk and heard the birds sing so sweetly their morning songs. ... I drink in the spirit of nature—my eyes feast on its beauties—it is food for body and soul." It was a passion she would share always with her husband.

Five years later Ellen Stowe married B.T. Roberts. He carried his bride to Caryville (now Oakfield), the first church he served as pastor. Roberts went on to pastor at Pike and Rushford, respectively, before arriving at Niagara Street Church in Buffalo. It was during this tenure that deep tensions surfaced between him and the Genesee Methodist Conference.

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Sanborn, NY 14132

2) Albion Free Methodist Church

25 South Platt Street
Albion, NY 14411

2) The Bergen Campgrounds

8 miles south of Brockport, NY 14420



4) The Chesbrough Orchard

5876 Hoover Road
Sandborn, NY 14132

7) Roberts Wesleyan College

2301 Westside Drive
Rochester, NY 14624

5) The Buffalo Work

Corner of 10th and Virginia Streets
Buffalo, NY 14201

8) North Chili Rural (Evergreen) Cemetery

Buffalo Road
North Chili, NY 14624

6) Stagecoach Inn

Corner of Buffalo Road & Union Street
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Places of Historical Interest in Western New York

