

Historical Sketch of The First Presbyterian Church Seneca Falls, New York

Welcome to the First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls. We like to refer to our church as First Church. It is one of the nearly 11,000 similar congregations spread across the United States which make up the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The oldest church in the village of Seneca Falls, the First Presbyterian Church of Junius was organized in 1807, worship taking place in a barn owned by Col. Daniel Sayre located in Bridgeport. In 1816, to ensure membership growth, First Church relocated in a schoolhouse immediately south of the current site of this church. Receiving the present lot from Col. Wilhelmus Mynderse as a gift, First Church in 1817 erected a frame structure seating about 200. The church's location name was changed as a result of an 1829 act of the state legislature dissolving the township of Junius into four new townships, one of which was Seneca Falls. As the community grew, a new building with a columned front, a central tower, and a much greater seating capacity was constructed in 1842, the old structure having been removed to nearby State Street. Continued growth of both community and church led First Church in 1871 to commence the construction of the present building, completing it at a cost of \$60,000 and dedicating same on January 14, 1873.

In 1923 during the 75th anniversary celebration of the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, the National Women's Party drew up the first Equal Rights Amendment, the proclamation of which by Alice Paul, the party's vice president, occurred in this church. For many years a reenactment of the original 1848 Women's Rights Convention has been presented here.

In 1953 Priestley Doane became the first woman elder in this church.

In 1965 this church played a major role in the foundation of Eisenhower College which is now the campus of the New York Chiropractic College.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION (see next page for accompanying glossary)

Although modernization and remodeling have occurred, the essence of the church has been preserved. The structure was designed in the (then) modern English or Victorian period of Gothic architecture, the exterior being executed with pressed bricks laid in plumb bond and abundantly decorated with sand stone. At the first corner rises the main tower, originally 166 feet high, now considerably reduced

This tower starts from the ground with massive buttresses which terminate near the belfry and are capped at intervals with strong offsets, molded belts, and pointed windows between the various sections, the whole culminating in a (once) majestic spire. On the opposite corner is a similar smaller tower, also now reduced in height. In the belfry is hung one of Meneely and Kimberly's Troy bells weighing 3,500 pounds. Between the two towers are three large windows resting on a heavy stone belt course and enclosed in a triple pointed arch with elegant stone capitals and arches. Above these windows is a solid ornamental belting course and in the tympanum of the gable, a beautiful rose window 12 feet in diameter encircled with stone moldings. The gable is crowned by a simple cornice and beam tracery in the apex.

The sides are of the same style as the front and are divided into six panels each with massive buttresses richly dressed with capitals and arches. The windows are filled with cusped tracery and crowned with stone arches.

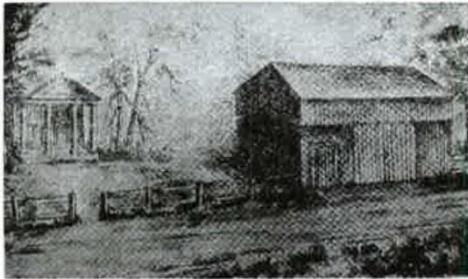
The interior consists of two divisions, a basement and a superstructure. The entrances are of solid white oak and are placed in the two towers which are approached by ample (formerly) stone steps and open upon a landing midway in height between the two floors. From these landings in either tower, the basement stairs descend and the main stairs ascend to the sanctuary. The principal vestibule in front is reached by broad flights of easy stairs from the entrances in the towers, and from this vestibule the sanctuary is entered through wide arched doors. The ceiling is divided into aisles (each 26 feet high) and nave (40 feet high) and is finished entirely of black ash worked in massive moldings, bosses, corbels, and beam tracery. The structure was subsequently reinforced with steel rods. From the ceiling are suspended three splendid reflecting (now electrified) chandeliers. At the rear of (the sanctuary is a balcony which projects beyond the vestibule four feet with cusped panels all of black ash. The whole sanctuary is wainscoted in the same style of work and of the same materials.

The pews are all of solid black walnut. The windows are filled with stained glass which renders a very pleasing subdued light, and in the tracery heads of seven sanctuary windows are emblems representing (clockwise) Holy Scripture, lamb, wine (grapes), lily, decalogue, bread (wheat), dove, and anchor.

The present lectern is made of solid black walnut, on the front of which is represented the monogram of our Lord, the Alpha and Omega. All furnishings with the exception of the pulpit are original. The present organ, installed in 1958 at a cost of \$32,000, is a Schantz organ comprised of 1200 pipes of which 305 are not under expression.



Time Line of Important Events of The First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls



Col. Daniel Sayre Barn
located on Lake Rd 1807



"First" Church
at current location 1817



"Second" Church
at current location 1842



"Third" Church
at current location 1871

