

Otterville Methodist Episcopal Church South Otterville United Methodist Church

Township:	T-46-N	Organized:	1869
Range:	R-19-W	Disbanded:	No
Section:	34	Active:	Yes
Map:	Click Here	Updated:	July 19, 2005
Cemetery:	There is no cemetery associated with this church.		
Area:	Otterville, Missouri		
Records:	The location of the church records is unknown at present.		

History:

Otterville United Methodist Church Organized in 1869 From "Memorabilia of Cooper County", 1990

At a meeting of the citizens of Otterville on July 4, 1876, Thomas J. Starke of Otterville read a history that he had written about the Otterville and Lebanon townships. This history is recorded in full in the "History of Cooper County" by Henry C. Levins and Nathaniel M. Drake. This Starke account is printed also in later volumes treating the history of Cooper County. It is in this writing that is found the first mention of a Methodist Church in Otterville.

To quote: "The Methodist church and the Christian Church were built about the same time in the year 1872. The former was built by M.C. White and the latter by T.C. Cranmer and T.M. Travillian. They are both neat brick buildings and are ornaments to our city."

We have church records that prove the Methodist church at Otterville was organized in 1869 and until 1872 worship services were held in the old Cumberland Presbyterian Church which at that time was a (Union) Church. In 1872, the brick church mentioned previously was erected on a plot of ground donated for that purpose by S.H. Saunders and dedicated at Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In the spring of 1881 the front of the building was blown away in a wind storm. The front was rebuilt and a vestibule was added. Fifteen years later the old building was condemned and razed. In its place the present building was erected in 1896 during the pastorates of the Rev. J.H. Denney and the Rev. William D. Matthews.

The foundation of this present building remains the same (white steel siding was added in 1975), there have been many worthwhile additions to the interior. The wiring for electricity and the original light fixtures were presented by the late Mr. and Mrs. G.W. Harlan in memory of their son, George Clark Harlan, who was the first from this community to die while in the service of his country during World War I.

The pulpit was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. A.H. Hansberger who on their death left their estate as a trust fund for the church. The altar rail was purchased by and presented to the church by the young people's class, at the time the new altar was placed. The two large pulpit chairs were the gift from the Dependable Sunday School Class, the women's bible class.

The pews were bought early in the 1900's by the Women's Missionary Society. The women served two meals daily during the Otterville Street Fairs to purchase the pews. The roast beef dinners were served in the breezeway of the Otterville Lumber Yard for 25 cents each. Meat and other perishables were kept overnight in the basement at the home of the late J.L. Spillers immediately south of the church and three blocks from the Lumber Yard. The pews were purchased from a mule train that originally had planned to deliver the pews to a church in

LaMonte. In traveling through Otterville, the wagon train broke down. Finding pews wanted here, the wagon train was immediately stopped in Otterville.

Aisle and pulpit carpets were laid in 1878, 1951, and most recently in 1977. The carpet of 1951 was a gift bequeathed by the late Mrs. Ophelia Cline.

Stained glass window panes were installed in 1949.

A large framed copy of Sallman's "Head of Christ" was presented on Christmas Eve 1950, by the H.A. Wood Bible Class. The picture with a light below hangs on the front wall of the church.

During the summer, 1952, George H. Wood, Jacksonville, Florida, presented the communion table and Paul K. Wood, Washington, D.C. and Miss Geneva L. Wood, Springfield, Missouri, a purple cover for the table honoring their father the Rev. H.A. Wood, who was completing 50 years in the ministry. The last eleven years he served as pastor of the Otterville Church. This gift was dedicated at a special service by the then Bishop Ivan Lee Holt, St. Louis.

Church paramounts were bought from money won with a float in the Sedalia Fall Festival.

A sizeable fund left by the late Mrs. W.G. Streit and gift from the late Mrs. Ophelia Cline were placed in a building fund for remodeling and redecoration which was done in 1960. A gift of a brass cross and brass candlesticks in memory of the later Mr. and Mrs. H. Roger Starke were given by their daughter, Mrs. Jennie Lee Castle and Miss Marie Brennecke of Frankfort, Indiana, in 1952. Matching brass altar vases were given later by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Miller, New Port Richey, Florida, in memory of her mother, Mrs. Zedda McMillan Potter in 1955.

The piano was the award presented by the Potter General Store in their closing out sale in 1913. There was much spirit shown in this event in which votes were earned by each cash purchase during the sale. Two congregations in Otterville vied for the piano. Those who steadfastly refused to leave the Cumberland Presbyterian name for a Union group joined with the Methodists to defeat the Union group. The final Saturday of the sale event was a contest between two men. Joe Minter and J.D. Starke who bought the most of the last remaining stock. The final bog was to be a surprise boa that was bought by Mr. Minter and contained cloth overshoes. In the final talley, the piano was the property of the Methodist- So jubilant were the members, that men carried the piano the three blocks to the place in the church ready for services the following morning with Mrs. W.G. Streit at the piano then and there in the same Saturday evening, the group sang, "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow", the first hymn sung in the church with a piano. The piano now is in the home of Sammy S. Potter. Interested members and friends bought the Hammond Electric Organ in 1960 and is the first electric organ in a church in Otterville.

A memorial baptismal font is the gift of women of the church and was dedicated in 1940. The late Miss Ella Brisley, Kansas City, and her sister Mrs. Norma B. Phillips, New Franklin, presented in 1962, in memory of their mother, Mrs. Fannie Brisley, a set of Schulmerick Carillon that can be operated manually from the organ and that play regularly on a preplanned schedule three times daily and are heard throughout our community. This is a distinctive feature not found in too many churches. The two sisters even set up a trust fund for repair and maintenance of the carillon and to buy tapes.

Harold V. Romig built and presented the front door entrance consisting of a concrete floor with wrought iron roof and hand rails.

In 1890, Herbert R. Kuhn and daughter, Mrs. Kathryn Edwards, presented in memory of his wife, Mrs. Herbert R. Kuhn, a Christian Flag and an American Flag in stands that are at the front of the church. On the death of Mr. Kuhn, a bequest of several thousand dollars became the property of

the Church. Near the same time, Mrs. Noma B. Phillips bequeathed the church a similar amount. In October, 1986, air conditioning was added.

Through the years the church has worked on circuits with churches at Walnut Grove, Clifton City, Glensted, Pleasant Green, Bell Air, Pleasant Hill and Florence. Presently worship services are held each Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m., except on the fifth Sundays of any month. The church has always had assigned a pastor. Since June, 1988, the first woman pastor, Mrs. Zelena Stultz of Sedalia, was assigned.

In March, 1981, the Taylor Chapel Methodist Church in Otterville closed because of lack of membership. It was the only church in Otterville that was built and supported by black membership. Those remaining members have become faithful and active members of the Otterville United Methodist Church.

The membership of this church and its attendance has never been noteworthy, yet this brief history proves love, devotion, and pride in the building itself have been embedded in the hearts of its faithful and devoted members.

Written September, 1988 for Cooper County History.

Typed by Evalene Porter.

by Jennie Lee Starke Castle
