

**Francis Asbury**

Francis Asbury was the first superintendent or bishop of American Methodism. He was born near Birmingham in England and came under Methodist influence at an early age. Asbury was accepted as a local pastor at age eighteen and joined the itinerancy four years later. At the 1771 Conference, he was one of five volunteers to go America.

As he embarked for America in 1771, the twenty-six year old wrote in his journal, "Whither am I going? To the new world. What to do? To gain honour?... To get money? No. I am going to live to God, and to bring others to do so."



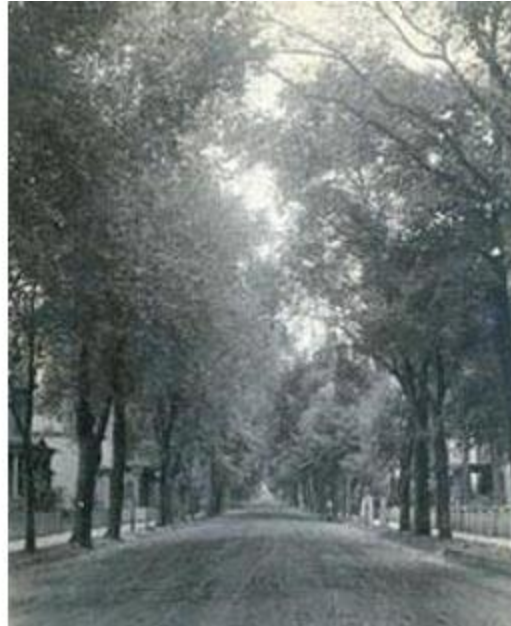
**Francis Asbury**

Within twelve months of his arrival in America, Asbury was appointed by John Wesley to be his temporary assistant in charge of all American work.

During the War for Independence, Asbury was the only British Methodist preacher to remain in America. On December 24, 1784, sixty circuit riders met together at the Lovely Lane Meeting House in Baltimore, Maryland to consider John Wesley's plan for ordaining preachers in the new world. This "Christmas Conference" became the formal organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in

America. On this day, Francis Asbury was consecrated as the first bishop of the Methodist Church. For 30 years Asbury made annual tours of the eastern United States, preaching sermons and administering to the Methodist congregations. During his lifetime, and partly due to his influence and leadership, the American Methodist Church became one of the most important Protestant denominations in the United States. Asbury never returned to England.

In 1883, Rev. Eli Gifford wrote a history of the Farmingdale church from evidence available to him. Although he could not find a specific date when the first Methodist's preached in Squankum, he stated that in the life of Benjamin Abbott, one of the Circuit Rider preachers, there was an account of him preaching to a large congregation in 1793 in Squankum on his way to Long Branch.



The town of Farmingdale, first known as Marsh's Bog and later as Upper Squankum, grew up along an established Indian path used by the Lenni-Lenape to travel from inland to the seashore. That path became known as Main Street. Religious meeting places were among the first priorities when towns were formed years ago. Houses, barns, and schools served as meeting places until 1827 when a crudely finished and plainly furnished church was erected on land donated by William Little, a hotel keeper whose wife was a member of the church.

In 1844, the first Methodist parsonage was built for the use of the traveling preachers.

In 1846, a barn and carriage house were built on the property.

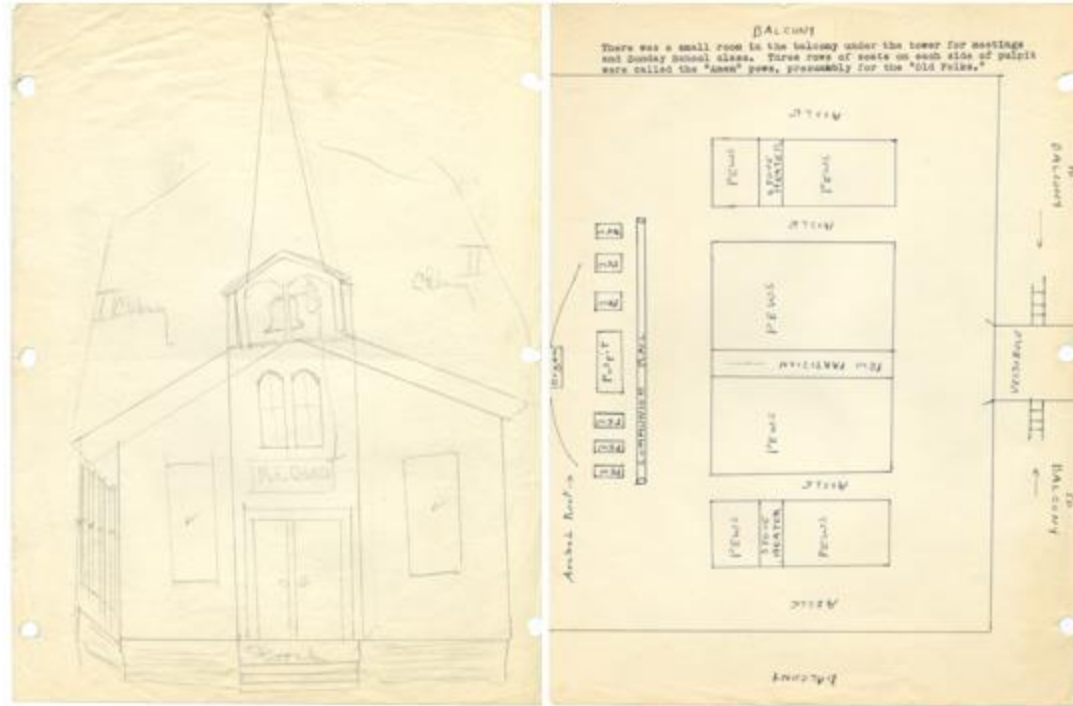
In 1848, a lot was purchased from Catherine Wainwright and a year later, in 1849, the cornerstone of the church was laid. The church was completed on its current site and dedicated May 21, 1851. The subscription for this church was started by William Goodenough.







Sketch of improved church, no photo has been found



In 1868, the preacher felt the parsonage was inadequate compared to the appearance of the church.

The parsonage was sold and moved to property owned by Dr. Disbrow.

A new parsonage was started and completed in 1872.

Pastor Osborn helped cut trees on the Williams property, now Evergreen Cemetery, for timbers for the parsonage. He also carted logs and quarried stone.

In 1893, a fire started during church from a defective flue. Rev. Post fainted, the fire was put out quickly, and the sexton was asked to have the flue repaired.

The next Sunday, the sexton made the fire and went home for breakfast. By 9:30 the defective pipe heated up and caught a curtain in the sanctuary on fire.

Since there was no fire department, fire companies from Lakewood, Long Branch, and Freehold were telegraphed from the station. The horse and men-drawn rigs were loaded on railroad flatcars.

By the time they arrived, saving the church was hopeless, but they were able to save the parsonage by hanging rugs on the side of the house and keeping them soaked with water.