

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P O BOX 481
BRIGHTON MI 48116-0481

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #303
BRIGHTON, MI

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST 150 YEARS FOR FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION

Less than 20 years after the earliest pioneer settled in Brighton Township, Rev. and Mrs. Chauncey Osborne arrived in 1852. Newcomers to the village area were hard pressed to find organized Christian leadership. The German congregation of St. George Evangelical Lutherans had been chartered in Genoa Township and St. Patrick Roman Catholic Church was making a beginning in Green Oak Township. The Osbornes began the task of forming a congregation as part of the liberal 'New School' brand of the Presbyterian Church. On March 10, 1853, Jason and Mary Clark, Isaac and Catherine Smith, John T. and Harriet Watson, Samantha B. Lee (wife of James B.), Rev. Osborne's wife Susannah, Lydia Benjamin and Mariah Osborn formed the nucleus of the First Presbyterian Church of Brighton, meeting in the Osbornes' home. At the time the issue of slavery was a hot subject in America. A person sympathetic to slavery was not granted membership in the new congregation. Holy Communion, with wine furnished by the pastor, was served by common cup at the very first worship service. The Masonic Hall was leased for one year, February, 1855. Rev. Osborne served as pastor until 1958. To supplement their income (Osborne received no specific salary) Mrs. Osborne opened a 'Select School'.

In 1857, a parcel of land, then occupied by a foundry (previously a blacksmith shop), on the Plank Road was acquired. March 3, 1858, a white, Greek Revival style, frame building was dedicated providing the congregation with a home. It cost \$1500. to build. The ladies' organization, as ladies' organizations have always done, contributed carpeting and other furnishings, and in the 1880s commissioned a bronze bell, cast in Troy, N.Y. By 1882, adult membership totaled 65.

Each retaining their identities, the First Baptist Society of Brighton (organized c. 1875) and First Presbyterian Church, federated for economic reasons in 1915. They met together for worship employing one pastor.

The 70 year old frame structure was moved to W. North Street and a new brick sanctuary, in the Early English Country Gothic style, was built in 1927. The only historical item preserved from the original building was the bell. During the Great Depression in the 1930s the construction debt of \$35,000.00 almost forced the sale of the building. A jubilant celebration of thanks marked the burning of the mortgage in 1941. A disastrous fire, March 2, 1943, found the congregation in debt again. Wartime material shortages forced revised reconstruction but before the year was out worship services were taking place in the church. The federation of the Presbyterians and Baptists was dissolved in 1961, to become one congregation. The vacant Mellus Hospital next door became an office facility and classrooms. A four acre site south of the church was purchased in 1974, providing room to more efficiently house church offices. Groundbreaking for a new 12,000 sq/ft addition took place six years later. The facility has continued to grow to accommodate an increasing membership; as has the staff necessary to conduct the many outreach opportunities. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from 1880 History of Livingston County and "A History of Our Church, 1853-2003" by First Presbyterian congregation.)