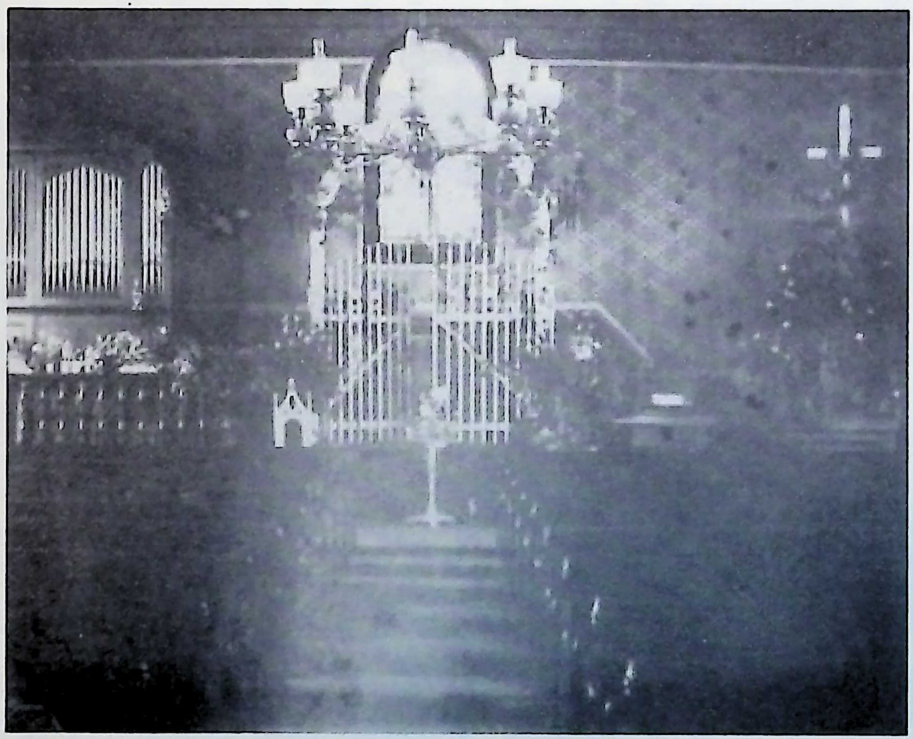
First Presbyterian Church
Hancock, New York



Congregation Established October 13, 1830
Building Dedicated December 26, 1850



1893 Easter Sunday

Note center isle, organ pipes on left,
Cornwall dedication window behind pulpit



1910 (approx.)

Church was painted a pale red with white trim.
Notice open entrance before vestibule was enclosed.

The Congregation

"On the thirteenth day of October, 1830 there gathered in the schoolhouse of the village then known as Chehocton, a little company of godly people whose hearts had been stirred by the Spirit of God during a time of revival. Their object was to form themselves into a church organization, to confirm and sustain their own faith, and to spread the Gospel they believed. Then and there under the leadership of Rev. Samual Orton and Rev. E.D. Wells they brought into being the church known by the name of the Presbyterian Church in the Town of Hancock, and the church so formed was attached to the Presbytery of Chenango.

The history of the church may well begin with the roll of its first members. They were received by letter from the Presbyterian Church at Deposit, Ezra May and Dorcas, his wife; Chloe, wife of Richard Sands; Hasmit Wheeler, John Allen, Maria Leonard, Cassandra Lakin and Susan M. May; and upon profession of their faith, Charles Leonard, Ransom F. Wheeler and David Leonard. They were the pioneers, and through the years that followed they sustained and carried forward the church of their founding and made possible the continuing existence which bring us, their inheritors in the faith, to this day of anniversary.

The first offering from the new organization is recorded as a contribution of $5.04 to the cause of Home Missions, an example worthy of remembrance and emulation. Throughout the year of organization and until the close of 1833 there seems to have been regular preaching services at least once a month and the church bade fair to be prosperous."

The above was written by an unknown writer about 1900; information was taken from Session notes. That writer, and others, continue the story.

On October 30, 1849 the church voted to change it's form of government from the Presbyterian to the Congregational form, but still kept its relation to Presbytery and received a part of its support from the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions. Some time after 1861 the church seems to have severed all relations with Presbytery and to have become fully Congregational.

During the 1800's, there was a Plan of Union agreement between the Congregational and Presbyterian churches in the North. Individual churches were apparently free to affiliate with one or the other denomination. A church could choose to use elements of one denomination's practice while remaining officially part of the other, and could retain close ties with both. Hence the confusion in the record as to First Presbyterian's status throughout the period; many northern churches share this mottled history. The Plan of Union eventually failed, although similar plans involving these and other Protestant denominations continue to be developed. In any case, First Presbyterian, Hancock, voted full Presbyterian membership in 1898, and has remained so for over a century.

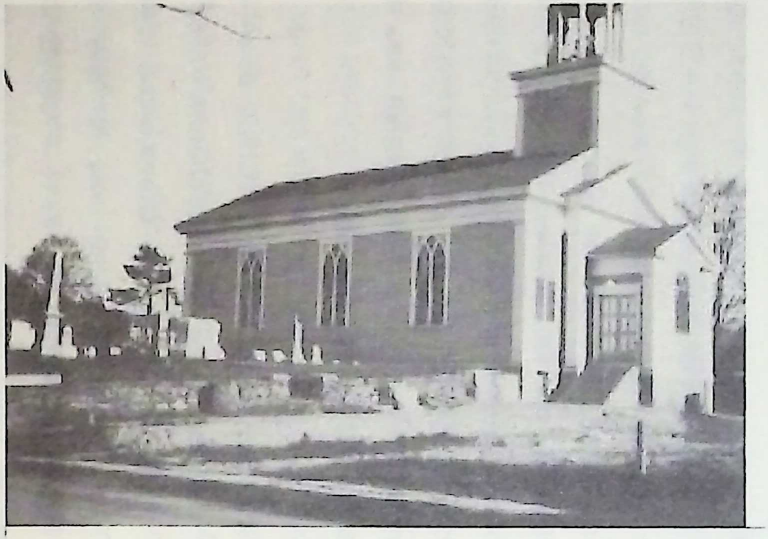
During most of the 1900's, church membership and attendance were at an all-time high at First Presbyterian and throughout the nation. Those were the days of Women's Fellowship, Men's Clubs, a couple's club (forerunner of our present active Lamplighters group), a busy Sunday School, and a church packed with worshippers at least on Easter Sunday and Christmas Eve. There were visits from missionaries

family night suppers with programs, and a Youth Fellowship. The Protestant churches in the village cooperated with union Holy Week services, Released Time Education, and Vacation Bible School. The church was indeed a center for social life as well as worship life for many decades.

But times changed, expenses increased, membership decreased, and the pool of available pastors declined. In 1969, the Hancock church entered into a yoked parish agreement with the Deposit church. A joint Session was established and many joint services and programs were held at both churches. In 1997, the Windsor church joined the parish, which was renamed the Three Rivers Covenant Parish. But the financial burden proved too difficult for even three churches to support a full-time ordained pastor, offer programs and services, and meet each church's maintenance obligations. The parish was dissolved in 1999, and each church went its separate way.

Since that time, the Hancock church has been served by Commissioned Lay Pastors trained by Susquehanna Valley Presbytery and by ordained pastors for regular Communion Services. On September 17, 2000, Pamela J. Allen was formally installed as Commission Lay Pastor assigned to First Presbyterian Church, Hancock, on a part-time basis. Sacraments (Baptism, Marriage, and Communion) are conducted by ordained pastors on a regular schedule.

First Presbyterian enters the 2000 Millennium with a grateful appreciation of our past, and prayerful rededication to our future.



1920

Vestibule installed; there is no downstairs entrance.



1925

Probably the last picture taken before the new windows were installed.

The Building

The church's property holdings began with a quit-claim deed dated October 23, 1823, which conveyed from Ezra May and Dorcas, his wife, to Charles Leonard, John Hawk, Ezra May and others, as trustees of school district No. 4, Town of Hancock, and their successors in office, a parcel of ground to be used for a school house, meeting house, and burial ground. Consideration for this deed transfer was $1.00. This deed formalized the use of the land in question. A school house already was in use on the property, and the burying ground, which now surrounds the church building, had been in use since at least 1821.

There are few records of construction of the church building itself, but construction must have taken place in 1850, under the first full-time pastor, the Rev. William B. Christopher. The original building was probably windowless, and was lit by kerosene lamps and candles. The Rev. Mr. Torey of Delhi preached the dedication service on December 26, 1850. His text was Gen. 28:17 – "This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven."

In 1851, for the consideration of $100.00, a portion of the 1823 deed was transferred to ownership of the Chehocton Congregational Church.

In 1889-90, extensive repairs were made to the building at a cost of $1,000.00. The original, tall slender cathedral-style windows, were added; these can now be seen at Read Memorial Library in the Village. A window dedicated to former pastor Rev. Isaac D. Cornwall and his

wife was installed in the front of the sanctuary, and a pipe organ as well.

Electricity was added to the building in 1902, making the church one of the first structures in the village to be electrified. The Manse was built in 1906.

In 1915, further renovations brought an alcove on the west side to house the organ pipes in the center front of the sanctuary, and the Cornwall window was moved to a new vestibule on the east side of the building; the original vestibule became the rear portion of the sanctuary.

The 1920's and 1930's brought major changes in the church's physical home, thanks to the generosity of Roscoe Crary. His mother, Mrs. Thomas Crary, had been a tirelessly active member of the church for many years before her death. In her memory, and the memory of other family members, Mr. Crary installed the magnificent stained glass windows that are still the focal point of the church building. He also purchased and had installed the electric Estey organ that is still in use. The now-unused pipes from the original organ remain in place behind the pulpit.

The original church building had no basement, as was common construction practice at the time. For many years, fund-raising suppers were occasionally held in the social rooms of both the Baptist and Methodist churches. At some point, a hole had been dug under the church building for a furnace. But in 1939, Mr. Crary's bequest of $5,000 "to be used for repairs, improvements, alterations or additions to the present building" was used to complete a basement project. The

entire area was excavated to equal the size of the building. A Sunday School/Social room was built, with kitchen, furnace room, storage room and washrooms. Contractor for the project was Harry Kraft; Sunday School Superintendent was Julia B. Dix. The space was dedicated on October 15, 1939, under the direction of then pastor Rev. Carl H. Elliott. In the evening, the community was invited to hear a talk by the Rev. W.H. Gleysteen, a missionary to China on furlough.

In 1995-96 the stained glass windows underwent extensive restoration. Broken and missing glass was replaced, new frames built, and a protective covering was placed over the outside. And in 1999, an elevator was installed for easier access to all sections of the building. In the near future, additional work will be done on the downstairs entrance to complete the handicapped-access project.



1929 Notice two new windows, one old one

Special Events

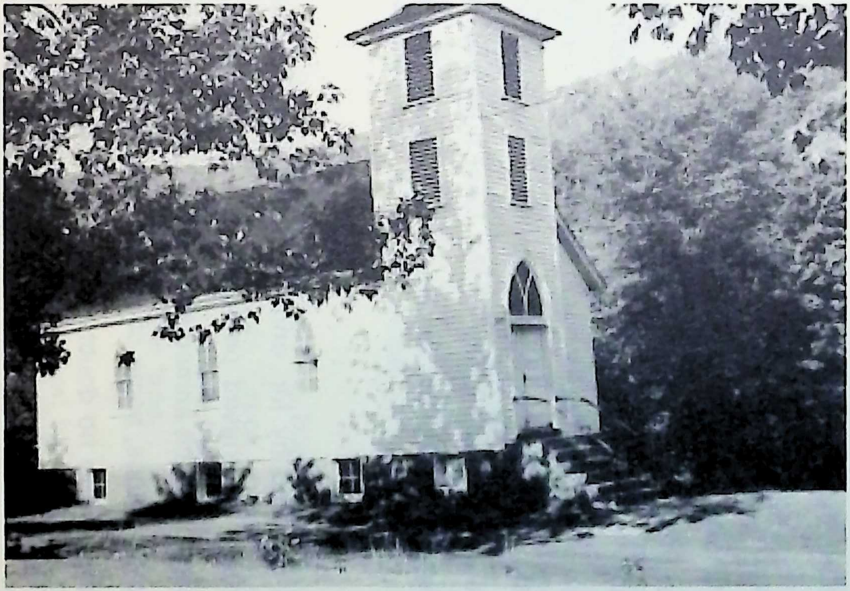
In the late 1850's, the nation was tense and fearful of division and possible civil war. In December of 1859, the Presbyterian (or Congregational) Church held a day of fasting and prayer for national unity and the cessation of hostilities between the North and South. Throughout the war that followed, 1861-65, the church sent (and lost) several of its members to the conflict.

In 1861, the Presbytery of Delaware met here.

In 1935 the International Hymn Festival was held here. This program featured the choirs of the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches, and the Orchestra of the Baptist Church. Pastors from each church delivered short talks about hymns and church music.

Anniversary celebrations were held, always in October, in 1900, 1930, and 1980.

First Presbyterian may have led the way locally in approval of women occupying the pulpit. For three months in 1889, the wife of Rev. F.V. Garretson, a supply pastor, occupied the pulpit. In 1925, Miss Dorothy VanWie, daughter of Rev. Frank VanWie, preached at services in Hancock and Cadosia. Miss VanWie was a student at Hartford Theological Seminary, and later became a missionary in Africa. This was also the first church in the village to call an ordained woman, Rev. Virginia Murray, to the pastorate, in 1989.



Cadosia Presbyterian Church

Cadosia Presbyterian Church

Religious services were probably first held in Cadosia during the 1890's. These were conducted by a Mr. and Mrs. Kazenstine, Methodists, who held services and programs for adults and children for many years.

In the early years of the 19th century, pastors from First Presbyterian Church in Hancock came to Cadosia to conduct formal services and a Sunday School in the old school house. Rev. Yeomans and Rev. Carson left a fine legacy for the Rev. John Laing, who became pastor of the Hancock church early in 1914. He continued the work in Cadosia, and soon Presbyterians there reached the decision to establish their own church. Many of the local business people – the Schaefer, Forester, and Wright families – were active Presbyterians in Hancock.

Land was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Christian (Barbara) Forester beside the creek, an unused portion of his extensive woodshop lot. Fundraising began almost immediately, with suppers, sales, and plays supplementing donations, some solicited by children of the community. These fundraisers were no doubt the start of the church's Ladies Aid, which functioned successfully for the entire life of the congregation.

Christmas was celebrated in the unfinished building in 1914, and the structure was dedicated in June of 1915.

The Cadosia Church operated as a branch of the Hancock Church, under the same pastor, for many years. Congregation members were

officially members of the Hancock church, sending some of their own to the Session and Trustee boards of the mother church.

The Cadosia church throughout its history was a center for Christian Education for children from the entire Cadosia Valley. Enrollments of well over 50 children were common, even into the later years when enrollments of most Sunday Schools had begun to decline. An elaborate Christmas program was the highlight of the Sunday School year.

In 1922, the Cadosia church hosted revival meetings, which attracted people from throughout the area. On one evening, the entire Masonic Lodge of Hancock attended; another evening, Emory Methodist Church in Hancock reserved nearly all the seats. Even Sidney Center sent a delegation to hear the evangelist. Music for the twice-daily services was led by S. S. Fish.

In 1955, serious deterioration of the building's foundation, due partly to flooding of nearby Cadosia Creek, necessitated a major raising of the church and rebuilding of the foundation. A new kitchen and storage rooms were installed at this time.

In 1956, Cadosia Presbyterian received full standing as a separate church, with its own certificate of incorporation. The two churches, Hancock and Cadosia, became a yoked parish, sharing the pastor, Rev. James H. Underwood. Sixty members of the Hancock church, who had been attending services in Cadosia, were officially transferred to charter membership in Cadosia. The first Elders for the newly-separated church were Albert Gross, Robert Curtis, and Elwyn Raymond. Signing the legal notice of incorporation in January of 1957

were Milton Phillips, Lillian Phillips, Mrs. Raymond Wahl, Aleatha Gross, Albert M. Gross, and Ruth Hunter.

In March 1969, the members voted to withdraw from the Presbytery and became known as Cadosia Community Church in January of 1970. Declining membership and difficult financial circumstances made it necessary to officially close the church in the winter of 1989-90.

The building was sold in 1995; it still stands, although it is no longer in use as a church.

On October 25, 1995, the remaining members, many daughters and granddaughters of charter members, returned to the mother church in Hancock. Mrs. Milton (Lillian) Phillips and James Ramburg, both active in the Cadosia Church for many years, became ordained Elders in the Hancock Church; both have recently passed away.

† Pastors †

1850 – 1851	William B. Christopher
1852 – 1858	Isaac D. Cornwall
1859 – 1961	Harvey Newcomb
1865 – 1878	Isaac D. Cornwall
1878 – 1881	C.G. Hazard
1884 – 1888	G.H. Burgess
1890 – 1893	W.H. Kiershaw
1895 – 1897	D.T. Williams
1898 – 1900	Daniel Russell
1900 – 1905	Seldon L. Haynes
1905 – 1911	William L. Yeomans
1911 – 1913	Edgar P. Carson
1914 – 1916	John S. Laing
1916 – 1921	Aaron C. Stuart
1921 – 1926	Frank E. VanWie
1926 – 1933	DeVello S. Haynes
1933 – 1941	Carl H. Elliott
1942 – 1946	Stuart V. Curnock
1946 – 1958	James H. Underwood
1958 – 1962	William F. Sutherland
1963 – 1965	Jack A. Kyle
1968 – 1988	Harold K. Justesen
1989 – 1991	Virginia Murray
1992 – 1994	Laura B. Aull
1997 – 1999	Willem Bodisco Massink
2000 –	Pamela J. Allen, CLP

First Presbyterian Church

Hancock, NY

Invites you

to

Join with us

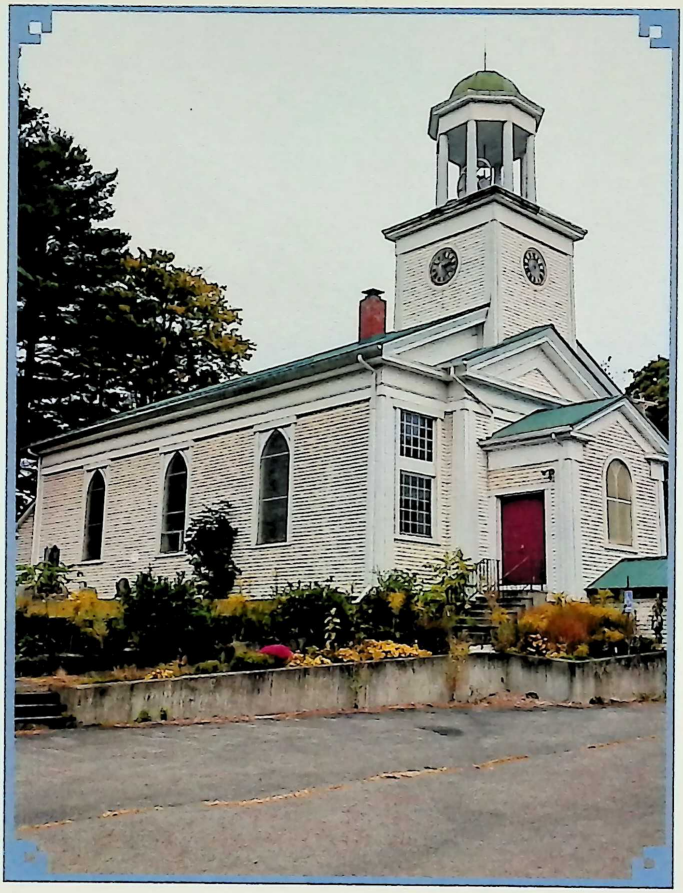
Celebrating this Church in a

Closing of Witness Service

October 26, 2025

3:00 PM

Reception to Follow



217 West Main Street

Hancock, NY

Congregation Established, October 13, 1830

Building Dedicated, December 26, 1850

2026 Update to History of the First Presbyterian Church of Hancock, New York

This is an update to the 18 page (including Photos) History published after Pam Allen became Commissioned Lay Pastor in the year 2000. That History also includes a brief history of the Cadosia Presbyterian Church which early on a mission of the Hancock Church and then existed from 1956-1969 as a separate congregation of the Presbytery before dismissal from the denomination and finally closure in 1990.

Pam Allen served until July of 2005, and was the last person installed as Pastor of the church. Two other people served as pastoral leaders for the church – Mike Jansen (Free Methodist) in 2015-2016; and retired UCC Pastor Phyllis Norman who served communion many times from 2015 to closing and who was appointed as Moderator of Session in the year of closing, 2025.

The officially reported church membership in 2013 had dropped to 8 active members – and with periodic small additions, transfers and deaths remained at 7 from then until closing. At closing in 2025 there were 2 elders and 2 affiliate members actively participating.

Session Minutes and Church Records following August 2011 until closing are less than regular due to the death of prior Clerk of Session Meg Wahl in 2016 and subsequent destruction of some records left in her care. Alice Prince became Clerk of Session in 2015 and preserved and added to a looseleaf binder passed on to her by Meg. This binder has minutes and notes from 2014 until September 2025 and the Closing of Witness Service on October 26, 2025 at 3:00 pm.

As mentioned in the history from 2000 the church at its beginning followed the 1801 "Plan of Union" adopted by New England Congregationalists and Presbyterians in the North, which sought cooperation in establishing new churches in the region, and allowing very flexible arrangements of local church government and connection to Presbyteries and Congregational Associations.

Hancock used most of those varieties of arrangement from its founding as Presbyterian in 1830 until being locally Congregational in 1849 and constructing the building with congregational Trustees in 1850, selling cemetery plots and recording deeds which gave ownership to individuals and attending Congregational Association meetings, yet reporting to Presbytery in 1861.

Then they dropped active participation with Presbytery for some time, and incorporated in Delaware County as the First Congregational Church in 1891, but then voted to

become fully Presbyterian in 1898, but not incorporating as First Presbyterian until 1916. The Deeds to three parcels became the church property of this 1916 incorporation – covering roughly the parking lot, the manse and the church property minus the various deeds to cemetery plots.

The property was originally part of 'an acre' reserved by Ezra May for public purposes, as a schoolhouse, meeting house and burying ground in an 1820 deed to Daniel Broadstreet.

The reservation of the acre was re-iterated in an 1822 deed for 70 acres to Charles Leonard which was adjoining property (and would include a sizable central portion of the current Village) This was followed in 1823 by a deed for that same acre from Ezra May and Dorcas his wife to the Trustees of the school district (May himself was one of the Trustees of the School in that conveyance).

Ezra and Dorcas May were charter members of the Hancock Presbyterian Church organized as part of Chenango Presbytery in 1830, meeting at first in the schoolhouse, but also at the Leonards home in early years. By 1835 May had moved to Belvidere, Illinois and conveyed the deed to the Trustees of the Congregational Church, reserving the school lot – which at the construction of the church in 1850 he allowed to be moved to the parcel either adjacent to the manse or where the manse now stands. The school collapsed when the attempt was made to move it, and was rebuilt on the smaller parcel.

Chenango Presbytery was later divided and merged such that Hancock became part of Binghamton Presbytery, and subsequently Susquehanna Valley Presbytery when Binghamton Presbytery merged in 1965 with Susquehanna Presbytery (formed in 1959).

Delaware County Histories contain inconsistent facts about Ezra's birthdate, marriage, and place of death. The record found at Find A Grave contains better information than most of these. https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/159362943/ezra-may

Four of the May children are buried in the cemetery in Hancock – Elijah, Elisha, Samuel and Sally. Ezra, Dorcas and children Harvey, Susan and Lovisa along with his second wife Elinor are buried in Illinois.

The church records show the intention of building a manse and recording a mortgage for it as early as 1891, but the location at that time is uncertain. The current manse was built in 1906 after the church had become Presbyterian again.