



# Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 Schoolhouse Museum

Deerpark Historian 25 Grange Rd., Huguenot, NY 12746

845 856-2702 [www.1863schoolhouse.org](http://www.1863schoolhouse.org)

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## A Community Milestone 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sparrowbush Methodist Church

2018 has ushered in the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization, construction and dedication of the Sparrowbush Methodist Episcopal Church located on 39 Main St., Sparrowbush, NY. The church, a simple wood-frame structure, has changed very little since it was first built. Its commitment to serve as a focal point for this community's spiritual, patriotic and social well-being remains strong and little changed, as well. This house of worship was built by a congregation of friends and neighbors, who helped to finance, construct, furnish, upkeep and support a variety of spiritual and social programs. This community spirit is still alive and well, today, 150 years later.

Celebrations are, indeed, planned. Pastor Amy Garret wants to extend a welcome to one and all, to attend these events, which are free and open to the general public.

### "Make Your Own Ice Cream Sundae"

Saturday, Aug. 18 from 1-3pm,  
at the Sparrowbush Fire House  
Pavilion  
Featuring the "Broome St. Band"

### Church Worship Celebration

Sunday, Aug. 19 at 11am

### Sunday, Nov. 4 at 11am

Church Worship to celebrate the  
1868 Dedication  
Followed by a luncheon which is  
free and open to all



## A Growing Community

In 1868, Sparrowbush, New York was experiencing a growth spurt. With a schoolhouse, post office, and numerous businesses including a busy tannery, the time had come to find a suitable place for community worship. This article from *The Evening Gazette*, May 29, 1869 gives a nice overview of the village at the time of the church's building.

"Sparrowbush is the name given to a thriving little village, situated on the Delaware River, about two miles west of Port Jervis. Honesville, named after Philip Hones, one of the earliest projectors and promoters of the building of the Delaware and Hudson Canal, is a small hamlet contiguous to and properly part of Sparrowbush, although the former has the right of name by priority, Sparrowbush having received its appellation on its establishing of a post office, a few years ago. The village derived its name from the Sparrowbush Creek which runs

through it and finds its way into the Delaware at that point.

"The village contains about 1,000 inhabitants. The scenery in the vicinity is grand and picturesque, furnishing abundant material for the artist's pencil. The Delaware & Hudson Canal and Erie Railroad pass through the village, although the latter has no station, owing to the proximity of Port Jervis rendering a depot unnecessary. The Port Jervis and Mongaup Valley Plankroad also passes through the place and a stage route has lately been established to Port Jervis making trips three or four times a day. Last year a new and handsome school house, two stories high, was erected at a cost of \$4,500. The school consists of two departments under the management respectfully of Mr. John W. Slawson and Miss Hooker, and is well attended, showing that in educational interests, Sparrowbush is not behind any village in the state.

"A neat and substantial church of the Methodist Episcopal denomination was also erected the past year, at a cost of \$3,000, and at the late session of the Newark Conference, Rev. E. P. Crane was appointed to the pastoral charge of the congregation. The church is in a prosperous state and had large accessions to the membership by a powerful revival last winter.

"Sparrowbush and Honesville contain three stores, kept by Messrs. Kimball, Banks & Co., and West: two saloons, one which is kept by Peter Conine, one hotel by Charles E. Crum: two blacksmith shops and a tannery by Messrs. Cooper, Swasey and Co.

"Sparrowbush owes its growth and prosperity largely to the tannery, which not only furnishes employment to a large portion of the male population, but also contributes largely to the business of the stores, saloons, etc. of the village."

## **SBME: A Look at the Early Years**

The era of the Civil War saw an increased fervor for religious revivals. The citizens of this growing community felt the call after a particularly well-attended assembly some months earlier. A meeting of the male members of the Sparrowbush society was called for on September 24, 1867 at the home of Anthony Friend. They came to discuss the need for a local place of worship. The Sparrowbush congregation was part of the Port Jervis charge, as was Matamoras. They immediately set out to find a suitable location. T.A. Raymond offered a site adjacent to the old school house, but this was rejected for not being centrally located enough. Mrs. Decker had vacant lots on Main St. and the decision to build there was accepted. However, the old school house was purchased for \$95 and the materials from the structure were used in the building of the new church. A resolution was passed. A plain brown cornerstone was laid on August 22, 1868 bearing the inscription "M. E. Church Erected 1868." Construction was soon completed and the dedication was held at Thanksgiving time that same year.

Well-meaning but confusing financial dealings necessitated the church officials to call for the church's incorporation. This was accomplished on Feb. 12, 1883. The incorporation seal was described as follows, "The Seal is a copper cent, American coin, on the back of which are the words "United States of America." On the face of the seal in a semi-circle at the top is engraved the word "Sparrowbush," directly under which, and across the face are the letters "M.E.C." At the bottom is an open book." However, the coin was never found.

Between the years 1872-73, property improvements were undertaken. The brook wall was repaired, the church yard was graded and a picket fence was built around the brook and church. A spire was erected, also.

Rev. Maschman was pastor when the water rights of the brook were sold to the Port Jervis Water Supply Company for \$125. This sum was applied to the mortgage. On July 19, 1896, the old mortgage was burned in front of a large congregation. The church was now debt free.

Over the next few years, the Ladies Aide Society raised funds and had a new carpet installed. The basement was finally finished through donations of cash and labor. On July 25, 1900, the church was struck by lightning, which caused \$350's worth of damage. Insurance paid the bill but the work still had to be completed.

By the church's fiftieth year, World War I raged. The Sunday school included 140 members. Many changes had taken place that called for the reorganization of local Methodist ministries. The old circuit of Sparrowbush, Mongaup and Cahoonzie broke up permanently. The circuit of Rio and Sparrowbush was created. The minister had to move to Sparrowbush. A parsonage was needed. So in 1919, through generous financial co-operation and assurances from Eddy Farm summer guests, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Roese and Mrs. Mary Patterson, owner of the hotel and twenty-seven year President of the Ladies Aide Society, monies were made available. In 1921, the house was ready, electrified and furnished. Rev. Thomas was the first occupant.

Disaster struck the town and the surrounding areas in 1922. During the night of June 17, a terrible rain storm inundated the valley. Torrents of water from the reservoir raged down Upper Brook Road, reeking destruction along its path. Roads and yards were carried away. Boulders were left in their place. Canned fruit as well as foundations were washed from under houses along the brook. The bridge to the pastor's house was carried away. In the church a new floor was needed, as well as pews and decorations, at a cost of \$2,100. Members of the church donated items and services in an attempt to bring their church back to full use.

To support their beloved church, the members over the many years have held suppers, ice cream socials, revivals, prayer groups, Children's Day pageants and patriotic parades and ceremonies far too numerous to count. In this day of struggling congregations and closing ministries, of all denominations, the proud people of the Sparrowbush M.E. are still carrying on a vibrant tradition of community service and harmony.

## **Tri-State Union February 28, 1868**

### **Revivals**

"The religious interest in all the churches in Port Jervis is still continued. Protracted meetings are nightly held in the Methodist and Baptist Churches, and tri-weekly in the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. Over 140 conversions have occurred so far in the M. E. Church. Several were baptized in the Baptist Church last Sabbath evening."

## **Tri-State Union December 11, 1868**

### **Dedication**

"The Sparrowbush M. E. Church was dedicated to Divine Worship on Sunday, the 26<sup>th</sup>. Rev. DeLoss Lull, David Walters, H. Dutcher and Geo. F. Dickinson taking part in the exercises with the congregation in attendance both morning and evening were very good. The edifice in which they worshipped will hold 400 persons and is well calculated for a Sunday School Room as well as for other religious services. The sum of \$1,200 was needed to pay the balance of debt on building which was raised without difficulty during the day. Great credit is due the people of Sparrowbush and Honesville for the manner in which they have conducted this enterprise."

## **Tri-States Union June 7, 1900**

"The new basement of the M.E. Church was formally opened last Friday evening, when the Ladies Aid Society held an ice cream social. The affair netted \$17.50. The new basement is a decided improvement, and the indefatigable Mr. Rhodes and his equally indefatigable assistants are to be congratulated over the success of their labors.

"Rev. J.G. Haas, former pastor of the Sparrowbush Evangelical Church, now located in Lake Ariel, PA., visited friends here on Monday, returning home today."

# THE PORT JERVIS UNION.

REPORTED IN FULL  
VIEW OF OUR PUBLIC

ASSOCIATED PRESS NEWS—MOST ACCURATE AND RELIABLE

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PORT JERVIS, N. Y., MONDAY, JUNE 19, 1922

THIRD CLASS A COPY  
FIFTY CENTS A YEAR

## Port Jervis Visited by Disastrous Flood Saturday Night from Terrific Storm—City Reservoirs and All Brooks Overflow

### CULVERT ON KINGSTON AVENUE

#### BREAKS—NOW 300 FOOT CHASM

Road Acts as a Big Dam for New Lake For  
Several Hours Before Breaking—Trans-  
formers Carried Away.

ALL CULVERT AND TRACKS ARE

### MAYOR THANKS

#### FIREMEN, POLICE AND VOLUNTEERS

Appreciates What Hundreds of  
Men Did to Save Property and  
Avert Loss

MINI 71  
Last SECTION OF RAIN  
DURING 24 HOUR PERIOD  
The rainfall during the 24  
hours ending Sunday night to-  
talled 6.17 inches, and during  
the 24-hour period including  
Saturday morning and early  
Sunday morning there fell a  
total of 5.41 inches of rain.

#### FOUR RESCUED

### HEATER'S HILL

#### ROAD IS RUINED LONG DISTANCE

Flood Makes Rocky Gully of High-  
way—End School's Home  
Nearly Wrecked

### PIKE STREET IS

#### SCENE OF HEAVY FLOOD DAMAGE

Union Celler Flooded—25 Tons of  
Paper Ruined by Water—  
Streets Are Everywhere

### GREAT DAMAGE

#### DONE BY FLOOD AT SPARROWBUSH

Post Office Nearly Carried Away  
—Kinney's Garage and New  
Auto Tumble Into Creek.

## The Evening Gazette June 19, 1922

### Sparrowbush Suffers

"While disaster hit Port Jervis, Sparrowbush was suffering from a flood that came over the spillway of No. 3 reservoir, and gave the brook that runs to the Delaware River more water than it could hold. All along the way, farmers' yards were flooded but it was not until the village of Sparrowbush was reached that the big damage was done.

"The brook demolished the garage of James Kinney and overturned a recently purchased \$2,300 Paige automobile. It then swung against the residence of Mr. Charles Van Keuren in which the Sparrowbush post office is situated, and by ten o'clock Sunday morning, the rear and front walls of this house had been undermined leaving the house resting on the side walls. All the while, this torrent was wearing away the road in front of Mr. Van Keuren's house, and returning to the main channel. The brook then flooded properties on Brook Street and the tannery property was also inundated.

"Other streams overflowing the gullies from uplands above Sparrowbush did damage. One of these floods overturned the waiting station of the trolley and undermined the northeast corner of the Red Men's Hall.



*This is the aftermath of the 1922 washout at the intersection of  
Kingston Ave. and Culvert St. in Port Jervis, NY.*

*Improvements on this same culvert system were just recently done.*

## The Evening Gazette, June 19, 1922

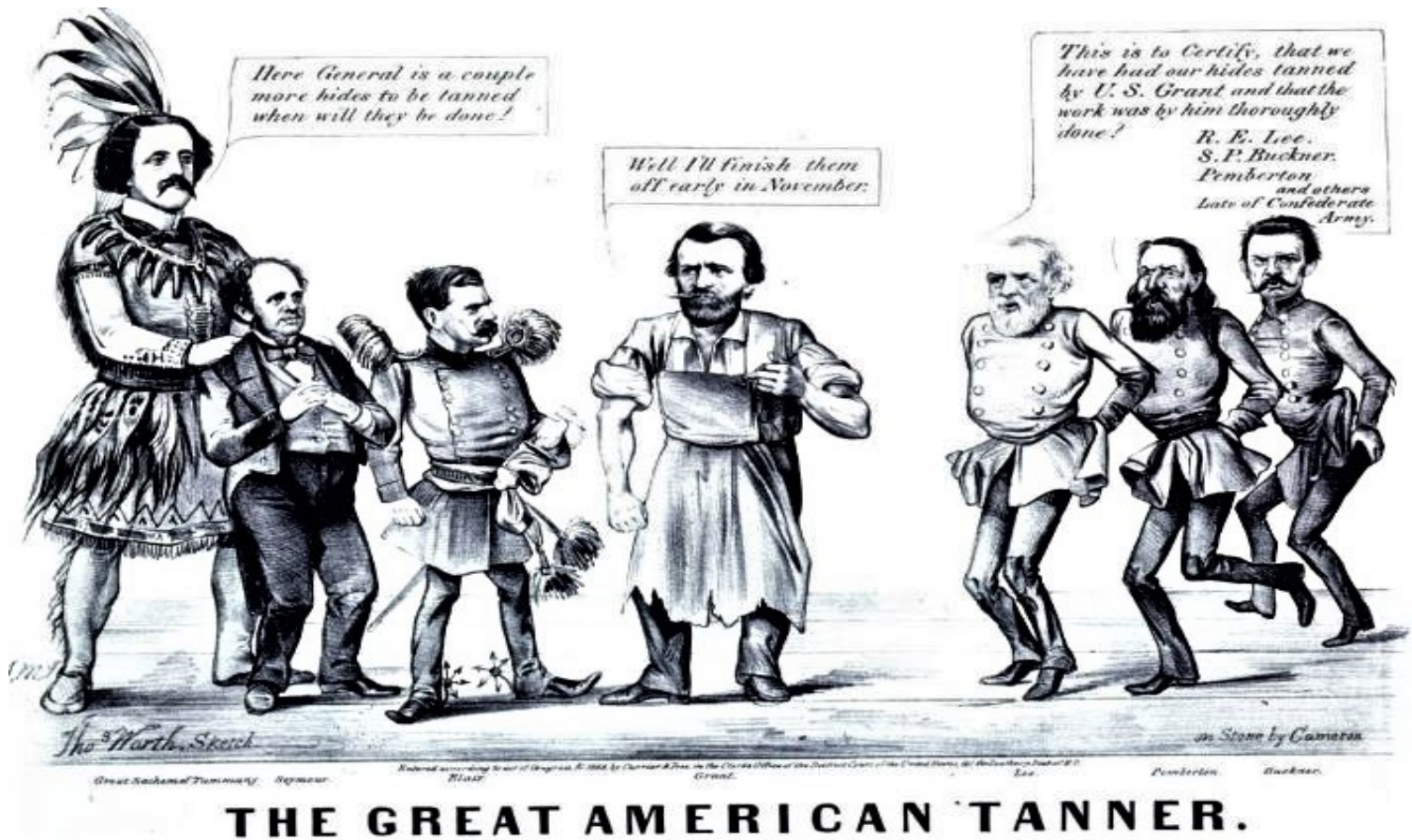
### Rainfall Totals

"Rain falling at approximately one and one half inches an hour for four hours was responsible for the serious flood of Sunday morning. From 8 p.m. Saturday to 2 a.m. Sunday, six hours, there was a total rainfall of 6.7 inches, but nearly all of that came after 10 o'clock Saturday night.

"The rainfall for the 24 hours ending Sunday morning was 7.67 inches. This record has not been equaled in the thirty-six years that records have been kept in Port Jervis.

"In the great flood of October 1903, when the Barrett Bridge was carried away, 10.09 inches of water fell in three days and the greatest total fall for 24 hours was 7.37 inches. Weather observer W. H. Nearpass, took a measurement of rainfall at eight o'clock Saturday night, after the heavy rain of earlier that evening was over and recorded a total of one and a half inches had fallen since noon. There was very little rainfall after that until 10 o'clock, when it started in and rained almost constantly until after 2 a.m. Another measurement after 2 o'clock showed a total of 7.67 as stated above. It was an unprecedented deluge."





## The Presidential Election 1868

The national election of 1868 came within days of the dedication of the Sparrowbush M.E. Church. That year the Republican candidate was none other than Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and his running mate Schuyler Colfax. The Democrats ran former New York State Governor, Horatio Seymour, whose running mate was Francis Blair Jr. The election was a forgone conclusion, given Grant's huge popularity since the winning of the Civil War. Nevertheless, large rallies were held at Brown Hall in Port Jervis. Newspaper accounts tell of Republicans from Cuddebackville and Huguenot called the Port Clinton Guard, marching into the hall in bright new uniforms to the sound of the Port Jervis Brass Band. The Sparrowbush Tanners Club arrived in their leather work aprons, the aprons being symbolic of Grant's tanning the hides of the Confederates! It must have been a grand march as fifty men carried lit torches into the hall.



This warning was published in the Tri-State Union October 30, 1868  
We guess things never change!

## U. S. Marshals IN SEARCH OF Naturalization Swindlers, IN ORANGE CO.!!!

UNITED STATES MARSHALS ARE IN ORANGE COUNTY AFTER NATURALIZATION SWINDLERS. THEY WILL BE AT PORT JERVIS SOON. A GRAND JURY COMPOSED OF HIGHTONED REPUBLICANS AND WAR DEMOCRATS FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF N. Y. ARE IN SESSION TO INDICT ALL WHO MAY BE ARRESTED FOR ATTEMPTING TO VOTE ON FRAUDULENT NATURALIZATION PAPERS. IT WOULD BE WISE FOR ALL, WHO HAVE OBTAINED PAPERS, WHICH ARE ILLNGAL, NOT TO VOTE

STRINGENT MEASURES ARE ADOPTED TO PREVENT THIS ALL OVER THE STATE. BEWARE.