

# Church Celebrates Silver Anniversary

## First Preachers Travelled Along 200-Mile Circuit

"Truxville" Charge Mentioned First In Records Of 1814

### PIONEER CHURCH

Although the influence of Methodism has been strong in Truxville almost from the time the first settlers toted their humble belongings to their rough log cabins along Toby's Creek, Truxville M. E. Church had its official beginning in 1814, when as "Truxville", it is first mentioned as a preaching place.

In those days the hardy man of God who carried the spiritual message to pioneering men and women had to ride 200 miles to cover the circuit in which Truxville was included.

For many years services were held in the school house or in private dwellings but in 1853 the growing congregation decided it had reached a point in its development where it needed a regular meeting place. So, on July 22 of that year, Jacob Rice, one of the most prominent of the early settlers deeded three-quarters of an acre to Jacob Rice, John P. Rice, William Booth, Asa Rice, Daniel Harris, John Wall and W. C. Hageman, trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Truxville. The land cost \$100.

### Built On Present Site

The church was built where the present church stands, one of the Kingston Mountain. It was about thirty feet wide by forty feet long, with an addition for a porch, and modelled after a church which had been built shortly before on the plains above Wilkes-Barre.

Some changes were made in 1880—certain pillars which obstructed the view being removed—and a short time later the old-fashioned wooden blinds were removed and larger window panes built in. A few years later, a bell was placed on the church. In 1907, during the pastorate of the late Rev. W. H. Stang, whose widow still lives in Truxville, extensive renovations, costing \$3,026 dollars, were made to the church, and it was valued at about \$5,000.

### Church Burns

Early in the morning of January 3, 1910, the church burned to the ground. While plans for rebuilding were being started, Mrs. W. L. Conyngham offered to build a church, as a gift from her and her two sons.

Mrs. Conyngham's contribution of more than \$11,000 to rebuild and to provide furnishings for the church was unusually fine, because she was not a member of the Truxville church, attending services at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Wilkes-Barre.

Spurred by Mrs. Conyngham's offer, the congregation swiftly completed plans for the new building. Others helped with inspiring spirit. Mrs. John Conyngham gave a bell, in memory of her brother, Mr. Robinson. A splendid organ was the gift of Mrs. Louisa Norris. Toby Creek Lodge of the I. O. O. F. contributed a striking memorial window. Members of the congregation had only the pews to purchase, although many contributed to a fund.

The new church was dedicated on January 26, 1911. A program still exists, and from it older members of the congregation may draw stirring memories.

### Audience Changed

Many of the people who took part in that ceremony twenty-five years ago are dead. The district superintendent, Dr. H. C. McDermott; two of the donors, Mrs. W. L. Conyngham and John N. Conyngham, the Rev. H. L. Jones, D. D., rector of St. Stephen's Church, who preached the dedicatory sermon; Rev. W. T. Blair, then pastor of Plymouth M. E. Church, who preached the evening sermon; three members of the Board of Trustees, William C. Johnson, Everett Besteder and Asa Warden, have answered the inevitable summons.

But many more live to celebrate the Silver Anniversary of that dedication, among them Rev. J. L. Thomas, who was pastor of the church then; Rev. J. S. Crompton, who preached the first sermon in the church at the morning service on the day of dedication; Dr. J. Fowler Richardson, who directed the musical program at the afternoon service; W. H. Conyngham, one of the donors, and four members of the board of trustees, Archie Woolbert, John Benning, James Perrege and William natus.

## DEBT TO PAST GREAT; VISION OF FUTURE NEEDED—CROMPTON

By J. ROLLAND CROMPTON  
Pastor, Truxville M. E. Church

The occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dedication of the Truxville Methodist Episcopal Church brings an opportunity for the Pastor to bring greetings to his many friends in this and surrounding communities. He counts it a privilege that he has been permitted to serve this church and community over a period of nearly five years. To rejoice with people when they rejoice and weep with them when they weep; to enter into the varied experiences of community life over a period of years is a privilege not to be considered lightly.

The church occupies an indispensable position in community life. It stands for the best. It comforts the sorrowing, sustains the discouraged, lightens the burdens of the oppressed, and points men and women from that which is sordid to the noblest and best that human life can know. It stands with the home and school as one of the great character building agencies which guarantee the progress of civilization and safeguard the interests of society.

## Local Methodism Born Of Vow Made During Indian Massacre

### ANNING OWEN KEPT PLEDGE AFTER ESCAPE

Methodism rode into this section with a Bible under one arm and a muzzle-loading rifle balanced across the saddle. It was a wild, unspoiled area, held by proud natives who could be horribly savage on occasion. The first white men who came brought a living, personal religion with them.

Had Etienne Brule, the first explorer, been less religious he would not have lived to relate his adventures along the Susquehanna early in the Seventeenth Century. When Indians were about to kill him they discovered an Agnus Dei about his neck. While Brule was explaining the meaning of the medal a fierce storm broke, and the Indians, convinced of the power of his God, fell to their knees and allowed him to go. The first known visit of a Christian minister to Wyoming Valley was in 1741, when Rev. John Sargeant, M. D. (Yale, 1729) founder of the Indian training school at Stockbridge, Mass., came to preach. He was not well received and returned home, disappointed.

During the Wyoming Massacre in 1778 Anning Owen, one of the early settlers, had a miraculous escape from death at the hands of the blood-hungry savages. While the Redmen were sweeping through the valley after the battle, scalping refugees and burning dwellings, Owen found his way to the river with another man and laid in the water under some bushes. From their hiding place they saw one of their neighbors brained by an Indian's tomahawk.

As he laid there, scarcely daring to breathe, Owen vowed he would consecrate his life to God. When the cloud of death and vengeance lifted from the valley, Owen kept his promise. A man of little learning, Anning

Owen had unbounded spiritual zeal. His dark, almost hypnotic glance, would hold an audience enrapt while he preached. He has been called "the unlettered crusader of Methodism on the Western frontier" for during the years after his conversion he travelled a territory extending from the Hudson to the Genesee River and from Lake Ontario to Chesapeake Bay.

His humble home was on Wyoming Avenue, Kingston, until 1810, when he moved to Cayuga County, N. J. where he died in 1814, at the age of 63, worn out by his stupendous labors.

The little Bible class which he organized in Kingston grew into the Kingston Methodist Episcopal Church and became finally the nucleus of the Wyoming Conference of today.

When families began to settle on this side of Kingston Mountain, services were held at the homes of Gilbert Carpenter and Charles Harris. As early as 1799 a class of forty members was organized on Harris Hill, where Charles Harris, known affectionally as "Father Harris", led meetings. From this root the Methodist churches of Dallas, Carverton, Lehman, Shavertown and Truxville sprang.

## Pageant Depicts Church's History

### Truxville Groups To Give Pastor's Production January 26

"Like A Mighty Army . . ." an historical pageant written by Rev. J. Rolland Crompton, pastor of Truxville M. E. Church, especially for the Silver Anniversary of that church, will be presented on Sunday night, January 26, as the climax of Anniversary Week.

Mrs. J. Rolland Crompton is serving as general chairman of the production. The costumes and properties will be in charge of Miss Doris Chapman, Miss Marion Over and William Hewitt. Sheldon Bennett will have charge of lighting. Mrs. B. Aubrey Ayre will direct the music.

Scene I is laid in 68 A. D. in Philippi, as word comes of the martyrdom of Paul in Rome. Julius is talking of Paul and his work to the little group which meets secretly. "Doubtless," he says, "martyrdom awaits others of us. But we shall go on until the banner of Christ shall proclaim His kingdom established in the world."

In the second scene John Wesley, founder of Methodism, appears, attending a quarterly meeting to receive reports from class leaders. Each in turn gives news of the spread of Methodism and in the end Wesley gives them his blessing and sends them forth to their task.

Scene III shows the influence of John Wesley and his followers in America and the need for a church organization in this country. The action depicts the consecration of Francis Asbury as Bishop and the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church as a denomination.

In scene IV Rev. Mr. Crompton shows the establishment of Methodism in Wyoming Valley, with consequent beginning of Methodism in Truxville, its development, the building of the first church at Truxville and as the scene closes, a tableau represents the burning of the church in the early morning of January 3, 1910.

Scene V, titled "The Dedication", is based upon the fact that God often uses seemingly disastrous circumstances for the working out of His purposes. The burning of the church is followed by the building of a new and finer structure, a gift of generous benefactors, and the action gives a glimpse of the scene of the dedication twenty-five years ago, with cast of characters made up largely of those who were present on that day.

Scene VI, "The Church Today and Tomorrow", reviews the progress of the church in twenty-five years, emphasizing the congregation's responsibility, and calling for a new consecration. As representatives of all organizations and groups within the church go to the platform pledging their loyalty the congregation arises and all join in singing a hymn which was used in the dedicatory services, and now becomes the theme hymn of the pageant, "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord."

The cast of characters includes the following:

## Peck Heads Roll Of 34 Preachers

### Truxville Church Pastors For 118 Years Are Listed

Thirty-four pastors have served the Truxville Methodist Episcopal Congregation during the last 118 years, during which time the church has grown from a minor charge on a 200-mile circuit to an independent congregation of one pastor.

In the list of clergymen who have served the charge there is a gap between 1822 and 1843 for which no records exist.

- The official list of pastors for Truxville M. E. Church follows:
- George Peck . . . . . 1818-1822
  - Elisha Bibbins . . . . . 1822
  - G. H. Blakestee . . . . . 1843-1844
  - James O. Boswell . . . . . 1844-1850
  - C. E. Taylor . . . . . 1850-1853
  - C. Perkins . . . . . 1853-1858
  - J. LaBar . . . . . 1858-1860
  - C. L. Rice . . . . . 1860-1861
  - J. W. Mungler . . . . . 1861-1863
  - N. C. Smith . . . . . 1863-1865
  - A. J. Van Cleft . . . . . 1865-1866
  - J. LaBar . . . . . 1866-1870
  - J. Madison . . . . . 1870-1872
  - Isaac Austin . . . . . 1872-1875
  - S. Elwell . . . . . 1875-1878
  - F. A. King . . . . . 1878-1882
  - G. C. Lyman . . . . . 1882-1885
  - S. J. Austin . . . . . 1885-1888
  - F. Kendall . . . . . 1888-1891
  - W. Rawlings . . . . . 1891-1892
  - Clark Callender . . . . . 1892-1895
  - N. J. Hawley . . . . . 1895-1897
  - J. W. Price . . . . . 1897-1899
  - Philip Houck . . . . . 1899-1901
  - L. T. Van Campen . . . . . 1901-1903
  - W. H. Stang . . . . . 1903-1908
  - J. R. Warner . . . . . 1908-1909
  - \*J. L. Thomas . . . . . 1909-1913
  - \*A. O. Williams . . . . . 1913-1917
  - \*J. R. Austin . . . . . 1917-1923
  - \*J. Arthur Jones . . . . . 1923-1926
  - \*Harry M. Kelley . . . . . 1926-1928
  - Albert J. Chapman . . . . . 1928-1930

\*—Living  
Rev. J. Rolland Crompton has been pastor of the Truxville M. E. Church since 1931.

Scene I: Willard Woolbert, James Baker, Harry Keller, Warren Woolbert, Cleopas Platt, Stewart Yorkes, Betty Palmer, Susan Palmer, Grace Morris, Marion Finney and Rebecca Platt.

Scene II: Fred Finney, Richard Cease, Sherman Harter, Robert Bachman, Wilbur Gemmel.

Scene III: Fred Finney, Robert Bachman, Clarence Jones, Wilbur Gemmel, Willard Woolbert.

Scene IV: Group watching church fire.

Scene V: Rev. John L. Thomas, Rev. J. S. Crompton and group of worshippers.

Scene VI: Senior and Junior choirs, ministers, active and retired, representatives of official board, Ladies' Aid Society, Epworth League, church school classes, (organized), and the Church of Tomorrow, represented by a church school teacher with a class of children.

## OFFICIAL FAMILY OF THE TRUXVILLE M. E. CHURCH

MINISTER  
J. ROLLAND CROMPTON  
33 Harris Hill Road  
CHURCH OFFICERS:

### RETIRED MINISTERS

JOHN L. THOMAS  
JOSHUA BRUNDLE

Organist and Director of Music  
MRS. B. AUBREY AYRE

Official Board Secretary . . . . . Thomas Carle, Jr.  
Financial Secretary . . . . . Dana L. Edwards  
Current Expense Treasurer . . . . . George J. Reynolds  
Benevolence Treasurer . . . . . Fred Turner  
Building Fund Secretary . . . . . Thomas H. Ayre  
Recording Steward . . . . . George Kulp  
District Steward . . . . . Dana L. Edwards  
Reserve District Steward . . . . . J. P. Benning  
Communion Steward . . . . . Mrs. Archie Woolbert

### TRUSTEES:

W. E. Bennett  
Archie Woolbert  
George W. Reynolds

Thomas Carle, Jr.  
Dr. G. L. Howell  
J. P. Benning  
Bruce Long

## CHURCH TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD

Twenty-five Years Ago, After Flames Had Levelled The Old Building, This Church Was Built For The Congregation Of Truxville By The Conyngham Family. Although It Has Been Enlarged Since To Provide For A Growing Congregation The Church Retains The Southern Appearance Which The Donors Suggested, Inside And Out.



## Township's Birth Postdates Revolution By Twelve Years

### REGION HAS DEVELOPED FROM WILD FRONTIER

Originally, Kingston Township included not only most other townships in the vicinity, but inclosed within its boundaries a great portion of Wyoming Valley.

Hundreds of square miles of rolling woodlands and fertile meadows fell within the original boundaries when they were established by authority of Connecticut and the Susquehanna Land Co. It was one of the eleven of the Susquehanna Townships into which Luzerne County was divided in 1790. Within its sprawling borders centered some of the most tremendous events of the Colonial era.

## Pastor Has Served Charge Five Years

### Biographical Sketch Of Present Pastor At Truxville Church

The Rev. J. Rolland Crompton, present pastor at Truxville, was appointed to the local charge at the annual session of Wyoming Conference held at Wilkes-Barre five years ago next April.

Rev. Mr. Crompton was born in Unadilla, N. Y., in 1899, the son of a Methodist preacher. In 1916 he was graduated from the College Entrance Course of Binghamton Central High School and in the fall of that year entered Dickinson College at Carlisle. He transferred to Syracuse University in 1919 and was graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Arts in January, 1921.

He joined Wyoming Conference in 1920 and after some time in active work requested a leave of absence to take further Theological training. He entered Drew Theological Seminary, graduating in 1927 with the degree of Bachelor of Divinity. He also won the John Heston Wiley prize of the Seminary for pulpit oratory and manner.

Rev. Mr. Crompton and his father began their ministry in Wyoming Conference in the same church, Kirkwood, N. Y., as his father and lived in the same parsonage. Rev. Mr. Crompton's pastoral record follows: 1920—Kirkwood, 1921-22, Apalachin; 1923-at school; 1924-27, Brady Memorial, Scranton; 1928-30, Meshoppen; 1931-35, Truxville.

In 1921 Rev. Mr. Crompton was united in marriage with Miss Ruth Andrus of Binghamton, N. Y., who has been extremely helpful to him in his ministerial work. They have three children, Richard Edgar, Wesley Rolland and Patricia Ruth.

When he came to the Truxville charge in 1931 he found the work limited by lack of space and facilities in the church building. During the pastorate of his immediate predecessor, Rev. A. J. Chapman, a new pipe organ had been promised as a gift from the Conyngham family. After consideration of the problems an architect was secured, a contract was let and work was started to increase ministerial work. A program which was completed in November, 1932.

Rev. Mr. Crompton is president of the Syracuse University Alumni Association of Wyoming Conference, secretary of Mt. Greenwood Kiwanis Club, secretary-treasurer of the Methodist Social Union of Wilkes-Barre District, past-president of the Drew Alumni Association of Wyoming Conference and a member of Franklin Lodge, No. 263, F. & A. M.

## Helped Dedicate Church; Observe Anniversary Now

### Pastor Of Church Twenty-Five Years Ago Has Home Here

### CROMPTON RETURNS

The man who was pastor of Truxville M. E. Church when the present building was dedicated twenty-five years ago and the man who preached the first sermon in that church will have parts in the Silver Anniversary program next week.

Rev. J. L. Thomas, who was pastor when the old church burned and when the present structure was built and dedicated, retired in 1925 and lives in Truxville.

Rev. John S. Crompton, who preached the first sermon in the church on the morning of its dedication, is the father of the present pastor, Rev. J. Rolland Crompton, and lives now at Mehoopany.

Rev. Mr. Thomas was appointed to the Shavertown charge, of which Truxville was then a part, in 1909, and served there until 1912. To him, the anniversary celebration recalls one of the most dramatic incidents in his ministry, the tragic burning of his church and the joyful rebuilding with the aid of kind benefactors.

### Eighty-One Next Month

Mr. Thomas will be eighty-one years old next month. He was born in the village of Illogan Highway, Cornwall, England. He came to this country in 1855 and joined the Methodist Episcopal church in Succasunna, New Jersey. Soon after he received an exhorter's license, and later a local preacher's license. In 1885 he joined the Wyoming Conference.

He has served at Forest City, West Nicholson, Union Center, Fly Creek, Sanitaria Springs, Afton, Sidney Center, Parsons, Bennett Memorial-Wilkes-Barre, Shavertown, Askam, West Nanticoke, Lehman and Glen Lyon.

Rev. Mr. Thomas, as a retired minister of Truxville M. E. Church, has been extremely helpful in the work of the local church, and the congregation rejoices that he has lived to participate in the week of anniversary.

### Will Preach Sunday

Rev. Mr. Crompton has always been a close friend of Rev. Mr. Thomas. When the present building was ready to be dedicated, the pastor invited Rev. Mr. Crompton to deliver the dedicatory sermon. Many still living in Truxville remember his splendid sermon that morning.

Rev. Mr. Crompton was born at Mehoopany in 1867 and was a minister for over forty-two years. He professed conversion in the Mehoopany M. E. Church in 1885. He received an exhorter's license, and a local preacher's license in 1887, and in the same year he was appointed to supply work at Avoca. Later he entered Wyoming Seminary and in 1891 he joined Wyoming Conference.

He has served as pastor at Kirkwood Hawleyton, Gett Bend, Unadilla, Bainbridge, Jermy n, Providence, Scranton, High Street, Binghamton; Dunmore, Honesdale, Waverly, Pittston.

One of Rev. Mr. Crompton's finest pieces of work was his successful campaign to establish an Endowment Fund out of the income of which the retirement allowance of retired Ministers of Wyoming Conference is paid.

By request of the committee in charge of arrangements for the Anniversary Celebration he will preach the sermon at the morning service on January 19.

## Church Enlarged Three Years Ago

Shortly after Rev. J. Rolland Crompton became pastor of Truxville M. E. Church it was enlarged to accommodate its growing congregation.

Without altering the traditional lines of the building, the length was increased, permitting an extension to the auditorium and two new rooms; the I. O. O. F. Memorial art glass window was illuminated, the chancel was completely rearranged and a new pulpit and lectern were installed. Larger and better church school facilities were provided and an excellent kitchen, with ample light and ventilation, and large serving counters was provided. In all, these and the other renovations, equipped the building to minister to the needs of the community, religious, social, educational and recreational.

The rededication took place on Sunday, November 13, 1932.

## RIISING FROM ASHES, CHURCH FULFILLED PROPHETIC SERMON

On Sunday evening, January 2, 1910, the congregation of Truxville M. E. Church tramped through the snow to hear its pastor, Rev. John L. Thomas, preach from the text, "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for Good."

After the service, the audience filed slowly out, stopping briefly to congratulate Rev. Mr. Thomas upon his powerful sermon. Then they went home and went to bed.

Early in the morning most of them were awakened by the panic-stricken cries of "Fire" which were carried on the crisp, cold air. Outside, the low clouds shone red with the reflection of flames, leaping from their church. They dressed hurriedly, and tried to help, but there was nothing to do but to stand by and watch the devastation of their Sanctuary.

Only three years before the church had been rebuilt at a cost of more than \$3,000. There was still \$800 debt. The insurance was only for \$2,000. For the first time since 1854, Truxville was without a Methodist church.

"And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good."

It was a sorrowful group that gathered next day to discuss what could be done about rebuilding. Then, from Mrs. W. L. Conyngham came a summons. She wanted to build a new church for the congregation, a gift from her and her sons, John N. and William H. Because she had spent her youth in the South she wanted the new church to be of Southern architecture. In addition, she wanted the congregation to establish a fund of \$2,500 for maintenance and insurance. Aside from those provisions, there were no restrictions to the offer. Overjoyed, the congregation accepted Mrs. Conyngham's offer and work of rebuilding began.

One year later, on January 26, 1911, a new church rose from the ashes of the old and was dedicated.