

# First Baptist Church Records

Potsdam Public Museum

2 Park Street., Potsdam N.Y.

## Location in Repository

NB R. 9/ S. 2, 3

## Call No.

2020.042

## Abstract

This collection consists of 8 boxes of material ranging from 1838-2012, reflecting the history of the First Baptist Church in Potsdam, NY, and the organizations that were affiliated with the First Baptist Church in Potsdam, NY.

## Date Range

1824-2012[bulk dates: 1900-1999]

## Size

8 file boxes, 3.73 linear feet

## Creator

First Baptist Church, Potsdam N.Y.

## Language

English

## Historical Note

On January 9, 1824, thirteen men and women banded together to form the First Baptist Church of Potsdam, N.Y., and were received into the St. Lawrence Baptist Association by fellow delegates from churches around the county. Following the formation of the church organization, attempts were made to secure a permanent location of worship for use by the First Baptist Church. Despite the efforts, the First Baptist Church of Potsdam sat without a permanent home for thirty years following its founding. Sermons, meetings, and other church related events often took place in private residences, various other local churches, and general locations that are obscure in description such as “the yellow schoolhouse”. Finally, during the years of 1857-1858, a plot of land was purchased and a church building for the congregation was constructed. A parsonage was added to the church shortly afterwards.

In the following decades, membership climbed as high as 168 people in 1875. About the year 1925, remodeling and redecorating of the interior and exterior of both the church and the parsonage occurred after decades of use. These improvements lasted for about 20 years before remodeling/redecorating occurred once again during the late 1940s. The original church building would last for another thirty years or so before being burned down in a fire in 1971. In response

to the fire, 24 Leroy Street was purchased as the congregation's new home. It served that purpose until 2012, when the property was sold after the church in Potsdam, in the same year, decided to dissolve due to hard economic times and dwindling membership.

### **Scope and Content**

The First Baptist Church Records consist of material and manuscripts of various histories of the church in Potsdam, annual reports, news clippings, programs, directories, membership information, financial books, booklets, and legal documents that also pertain to the affiliates of the First Baptist Church. Strengths of the collection can be found in its recorded meeting minutes of the First Baptist Church in Potsdam and affiliated organizations, associations, guilds, councils, and societies of the First Baptist Church of Potsdam. Of special interest is a Sanford family bible included in the collection. The Sanford family was associated with the First Baptist Church of Potsdam.

### **Physical Access Restrictions**

Required assistance from staff for Sanford Bible in Box #8, in addition to the books and booklets in Series 3. The rest of the collection is unrestricted to the public.

### **Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use**

For copies of materials, users must pay \$0.25 per page.

For use of material for publishing purposes, users must credit Potsdam Public Museum.

### **Organization and Arrangement**

Certain boxes may contain multiple series.

Series 1 -- Humble Beginnings of the First Baptist Church of Potsdam

*Box #'s: 1, 3*

Series 1.1 — Membership/Administrative Manuscripts

*Box #'s: 2, 3, 7*

Series 1.2 — Historical Events and Legal Documents

*Box #: 3*

Series 2 -- By Affiliate's

All material for groups that were affiliated with the First Baptist Church in Potsdam NY.

*Box #'s: 2, 4, 5, 6*

Series 3 -- Books/Booklets

*Box #'s: 2, 8*

### **Processing Information:**

Collection was processed to the folder level by Mary Gilbert and Hans Kuno, August-September 2020.

## **Provenance**

Given in 2020 by Cherie Baker, a former member of the First Baptist Congregation in Potsdam. The First Baptist Church of Potsdam dissolved in 2012.

## **Related Material**

References to Record Groups are abbreviated as “RG”

(RG) II.D Box 1 Folder #10 “First Baptist Church” --- NB R. 9 / S. 1

## **Additional Reading**

Peterson, Mark R. “Early Church Establishments in St. Lawrence County: 1804-1821.” *The Quarterly Official Publication of the St. Lawrence Historical Association* XXXVII, no. 4 (1992). <https://www.slcha.org/quarterly/issues/v037no4.pdf>.

## **Organizations, Associations, Guilds, Councils, and Societies**

All listed below were affiliates of the First Baptist Church of Potsdam N.Y. and are represented within the collection. Abbreviation “aka” refers to the phrase “also known as.”

Am. Baptist Women’s Potsdam Council - *From https://abwomensministries.org*  
aka: “A.B.W. Potsdam Council”

Founded in 1951, the national group “AB Women’s Ministries is a Christ-centered ministry with a commitment to encourage and empower women and girls to serve God... American Baptist Women’s Ministries has a long heritage of being on the forefront of mission and ministry with women and girls worldwide. From our very roots to today, AB Women’s Ministries has addressed critical issues such as sex trafficking, poverty, equal voice, safety and security, access to water and other natural resources, leadership development, and, of course, spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.” As of 1961, an A.B.W Potsdam Council was operating in and around Potsdam.

First Baptist Society -

The male members of the congregation became incorporated in 1853 forming the First Baptist Society.

1<sup>st</sup> Bap. Women’s Guild -  
aka: “World-Wide Guild”,  
aka: “American Baptist Women’s Ministries”

Formed in 1915, American Baptist Women's Ministries is a diverse community of American Baptist women and girls engaged in ministry in Christ's name. With local area, region/state, and national levels of ministry, AB Women's

Ministries creates a community of passionately faithful, mission-minded women and girls engaged in worship, service, and friendship.

Christian Endeavor Society -

The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor is a nondenominational evangelical society founded in Portland, Maine, in 1881 by Francis Edward Clark. Christian Endeavor Societies existed in Potsdam N.Y. as of 1894. During that same year, a local union called the Christian Endeavor Local Union of Potsdam was officially formed in the town.

Church Women United -

Founded in 1941, Church Women United is a national Ecumenical Christian women's movement representing Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and other Christian women.

Baptist Ladies Aid Society -  
aka: "Baptist Missionary Society",  
"BMS World Mission"

The Baptist Missionary Society(BMS), today called BMS World Mission is a Christian missionary society founded by Baptists from England in 1792. It was originally called the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen, but for most of its life was known as the Baptist Missionary Society. The headquarters is in Didcot, England. As of 1883, a Women's Baptist Missionary Society existed in Potsdam.

NY State Council -  
aka: "North Country Association",  
"Black River Association"

*From St. Lawrence Quarterly Fall 1992 "Early Church Establishments In St Lawrence County: 1804-1821" by Mark R. Petersen.*

"The Congregationalists organized simultaneously as the Presbyterians and, as Everts and Holcomb put it, "comingled" with the latter during the early years.<sup>7</sup> This arrangement arose out of the Plan of Union of 1801, whereby the Presbyterians and Congregationalists agreed to combine their missionary efforts in a "presbygational" arrangement that encouraged each group to recognize the other's ministry and polity.<sup>8</sup> With an eye toward preserving their own traditions, the Congregationalists nevertheless proceeded to create two sectarian organizations in 1810, the St Lawrence Consociation for the laity and the Black River Association for the clergy."

Other accounts designate 1805 as the founding year for the Black River Association.

St. Lawrence Baptist Association - "aka: St. Lawrence Association" Formed in Stockholm NY in 1813. The First Baptist Church of Potsdam joined the association in 1824.

### **Series 1: Humble Beginnings of the First Baptist Church of Potsdam**

<i>Box/Folder</i>	<i>Content</i>
1 1	- Clippings, photos, and histories pertaining to the founding and existence of the First Baptist Church in Potsdam N.Y. In addition, are notices, lists, and reports related to a few meetings from 1943-1945.
2	- Old and amended Constitutions of the First Baptist Church in Potsdam, in addition to documents pertaining to committees associated with the congregation.

#### **Series 1.1: Membership/Administrative Manuscripts**

Documents listed below pertains specifically to membership of First Baptist Church of Potsdam. Membership crossover may be seen between church membership and groups affiliated with the church.

<i>Box/Folder</i>	<i>Content</i>
1 3	- Reports of the Advisory Board(minutes) from 1918-1995.
4	- First Baptist Church Annual Reports for the years 1930-1959 to the St. Lawrence Baptist Association.
5	- First Baptist Church Annual Reports for the years 1959-1965. Also includes minutes from a few meetings from 1959-1965.
6	- First Baptist Church Annual Reports for the years 1966-1972.
2 1	- First Baptist Church Annual Reports for the years 1973-1980.
2	- First Baptist Church Annual Reports for the years 1981-1989.
3	- First Baptist Church Annual Reports for the years 1990-2012.
3 1	- Lists and directory of church membership ranging from 1919-1960's. (range of years not all inclusive)

<u>Box/Folder</u>	<u>Content</u>
3 2	- Photos, programs, correspondences, news clippings, and bios pertaining to the election of a new pastor appointed to the First Baptist Church in Potsdam. In addition is an obituary and information related to past pastors of the congregation in Potsdam along with a clipping about the U.S. Church Council.
3 3	- News clippings, correspondences, and an invitation related to the Fountain Family of Homer N.Y. Members of the Fountain Family are associated with The First Baptist Church of Potsdam.
7	- Local membership card file of the First Baptist Church of Potsdam. Organized alphabetically by last name.

### **Series 1.2: Historical Events and Legal Documents**

<u>Box/Folder</u>	<u>Content</u>
3 4	- Programs and histories from the 100 years centennial celebration of the First Baptist Church of Potsdam in 1924.
5	- Programs, pamphlets, correspondences, news clippings, and histories from the 125 years celebration of the First Baptist Church of Potsdam in 1949.
6	- Programs, pamphlets, news clippings, correspondences, and photographs from the 150 years celebration of the First Baptist Church of Potsdam in 1974.
7	- Programs, and correspondences from the 175 years celebration of the First Baptist Church of Potsdam in 1999.
8	- News clippings, a program, reports, lists, and photographs related to the First Baptist Church fire in 1971.
9	- News clippings, photograph, and certificates related to missions and missionary work by the First Baptist Church of Potsdam.
10	- News clippings, photographs, related to events and a mission attended by member of the congregation. In addition, is a blank postcard of the First Baptist Church in Potsdam.
11	- Bank receipts, invoices, correspondences, and tax information regarding the closing and sale of the congregation's property at 24 Leroy Street in Potsdam and the dissolution of the First Baptist Church Society in Potsdam in 2012.

Box/Folder      Content

3      12	- Mortgage information between the Pleasant Meadows Ministry in Evans Mills N.Y. and The First Baptist Church of Potsdam.
13	- Mortgages and other legal documents related to the First Baptist Church of Potsdam.

**Series 2: By Affiliates**

Groups may have additional/alternative names that are not specified here. See alternative names listed above in "Organizations, Associations, Guilds, Councils, and Societies" section. Affiliates are presented in the order in which they appear in the boxes. Some folders within this section may contain overlapping dates and information.

Box/Folder      Content

St. Lawrence Association

2      4	- Annual session minutes for the year 1922-1942.
5	- Annual session minutes for the years 1947-1956.

Christian Endeavor Society

6	- Book, minutes and membership information for the years 1931-1939.
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1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Women's Guild

4      1	- Book, minutes for the years 1925-1939.
2	- Binder, minutes for the years 1940-1954.

Ladies Aid Society

3	- Book, minutes for the years 1923-1929.
4	- Book, minutes for the years 1929-1935.
5	- Books, minutes for the years 1935-1940.

American Baptist Women's Potsdam Council

5      1	- Annual Reports for the years 1886-1892. Also included lists of places of group meeting and the amounts of money collected at each meeting.
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<u>Box/Folder</u>	<u>Content</u>
5 2	- Programs, notes, minutes and congregation finances from January. 25, 1957- Mar. 4, 1966.
3	- Constitution for "North Country Baptist Association", pamphlets, 150 <sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet, minutes and congregation finances from April 1, 1963- May 1, 1966.
4	- Pamphlets, minutes and congregation finances from April. 1, 1966-May 1969.
5 5	- Minutes and congregation finances from September. 12, 1969-December. 1, 1974.
6	- Minutes and congregation finances from February 1, 1975-November 14, 1979.
7	- Photographs, correspondences, minutes from meetings of the American Baptist Women held between 1980 and May 28, 1997.
<u>NY State Council</u>	
6 1	- Notes and minutes of the Black River Association from May 13, 1957- September 28, 1962.
2	- Notes, minutes, correspondences, and congregation finances of the Black River Association from 1957-1969.
3	- Administrative notes, minutes and correspondences of the North Country Baptist Association from May 3, 1970- May 6, 1984.
4	- American Baptist Women minutes from April 20, 1978-April 28, 1995.
5	- Minutes, notes, and association finances of the North Country Association of American Baptist Women from April 26, 1986-March 28, 1992. Includes a photograph of some of the members.
6	- NY State Council Programs from 1965-1995.
7	- NY State Council Directories from 1964-1993.
<u>Church Women United</u>	
8	- Book, Church Women United meetings minutes from April 1974-Jan 1991.

### **Series 3: Books and Booklets**

Some books and booklets may be located with related affiliated groups in Series 2. All book and booklets in box 8 apart from “The Baptist Catechism” in Folder #1 are not contained within a folder.

<u>Box/Folder</u>	<u>Content</u>
8      1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Booklet, “The Baptist Catechism” published in 1959.</li><li>- Book, <i>In Remembrance</i>; contains info about members and donors to the first Baptist Church of Potsdam.</li><li>- Sanford Family Bible.</li><li>- Bound, “First Baptist Church Minute Book &amp; Names of Members from January 9<sup>th</sup>. 1824 To June 29<sup>th</sup>. 1901.</li><li>- Bound, “First Baptist Church Minutes Book From March 21<sup>st</sup>. 1853 To October 26<sup>th</sup>. 1926.</li><li>- Bound, “First Baptist Church Minute Book &amp; Names of Members From October 1858 To December 20<sup>th</sup> 1893.”</li><li>- Bound, “Baptist Y. P. S. C. E. Sec'y. and Treas. Book” 1900-1925.</li></ul>