

TCFA HISTORY

1824

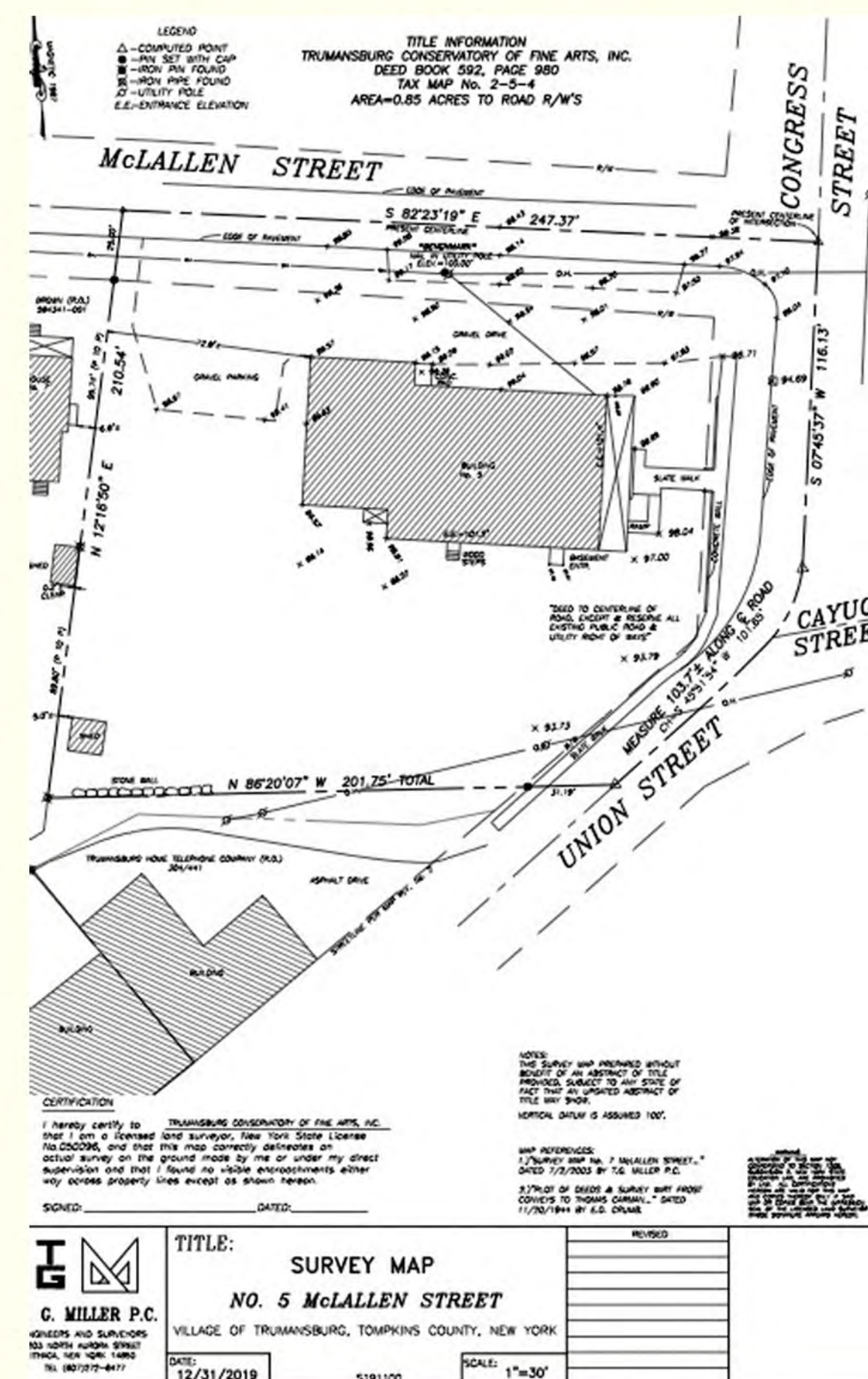
The first of three Baptist churches — built on the site where the Trumansburg Conservatory of Fine Arts now stands — was constructed on a plot of land donated by John McLallen (1773-1844), one of Trumansburg’s earliest settlers. The deed of 1983 refers to the property as Parcel 1 “Being the same premises as conveyed by John McClallen* and Marie McClallen* to First Baptist Church and Society in the Town of Ulysses by Deed dated July 15, 1824 and recorded on March 19, 1825 in Book H of Deeds at page 294.”

According to The History of the First Baptist Church Trumansburg, New York, 1819-1994: “...the fellowship was called the Second Baptist Church of Ulysses, the Covert Church, then in Ulysses, having been formed in 1803. In later years, the church was incorporated as the Baptist Church and Society of Trumansburg and came to be commonly called the First Baptist Church of Trumansburg.” Variations of these names appear throughout recorded references to the church.

*This misspelling of the McLallen last name continues throughout the document.



The corner street signs outside of the Conservatory today



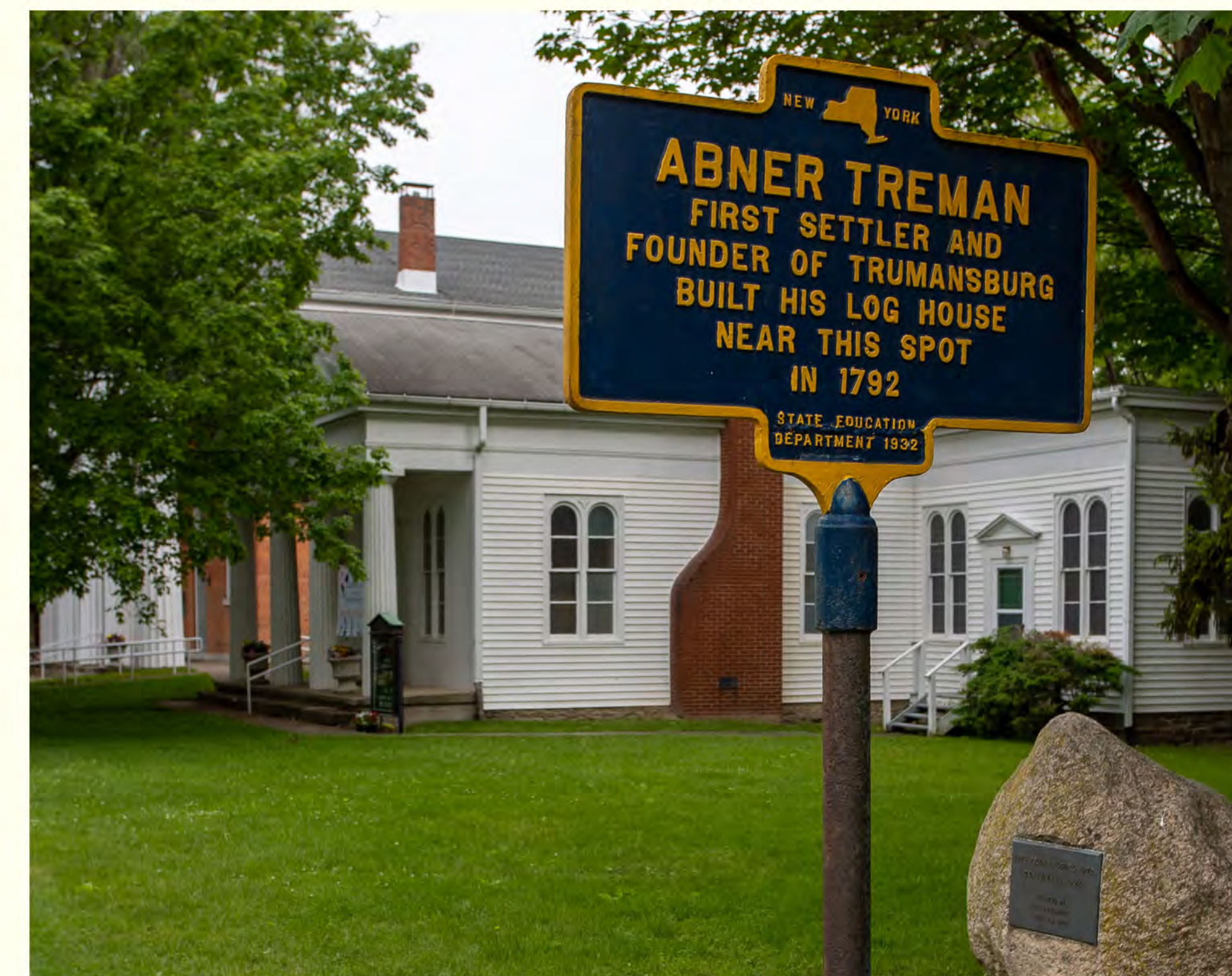
Survey map of the .85-acre parcel where today’s Conservatory stands at 5 McLallen Street

1832

A disagreement arose within the congregation regarding the place of “instrumental music” in the house of worship. The instruments in question were bass viols. Church members reached an agreement allowing the bass viols to continue for two more months. The history of musical forms and their acceptance or non- acceptance by certain segments of society is a common thread that will repeat itself for many years to come in the United States.

1843 - 45

The original church building was sold to Abner Treman Jr. (1803-1887). He was the son of Abner Treman (1761-1823), the “First Settler” (1792-93) on the land that eventually became the Village of Trumansburg. Treman Jr. moved the structure across the creek and turned it into a store which was later destroyed by fire. Meanwhile, a second and larger Baptist church was built on the McLallen plot which was dedicated on February 13, 1845.



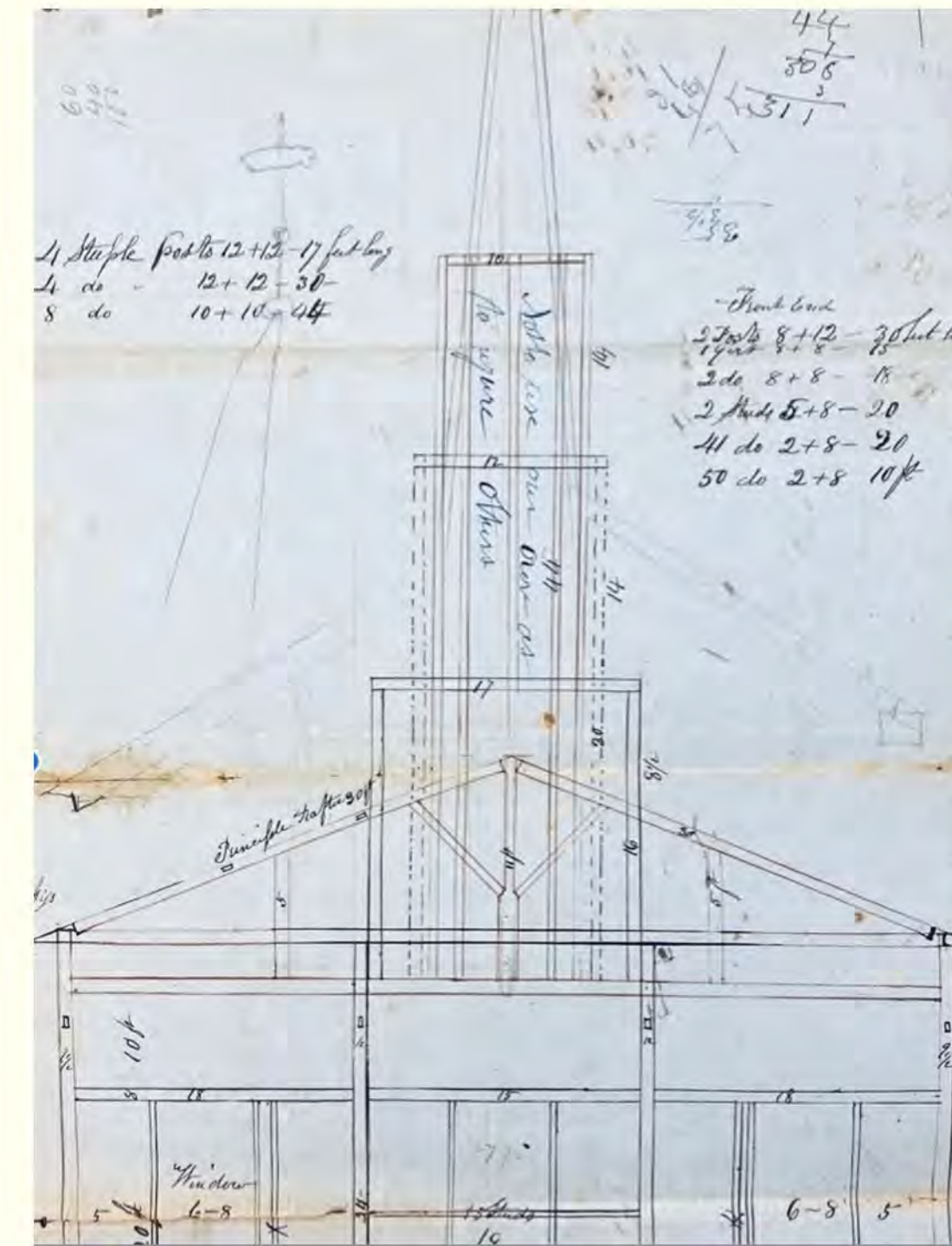
Historic marker on Main Street, Trumansburg recognizing Abner Treman as the “First Settler”.

TCFA HISTORY

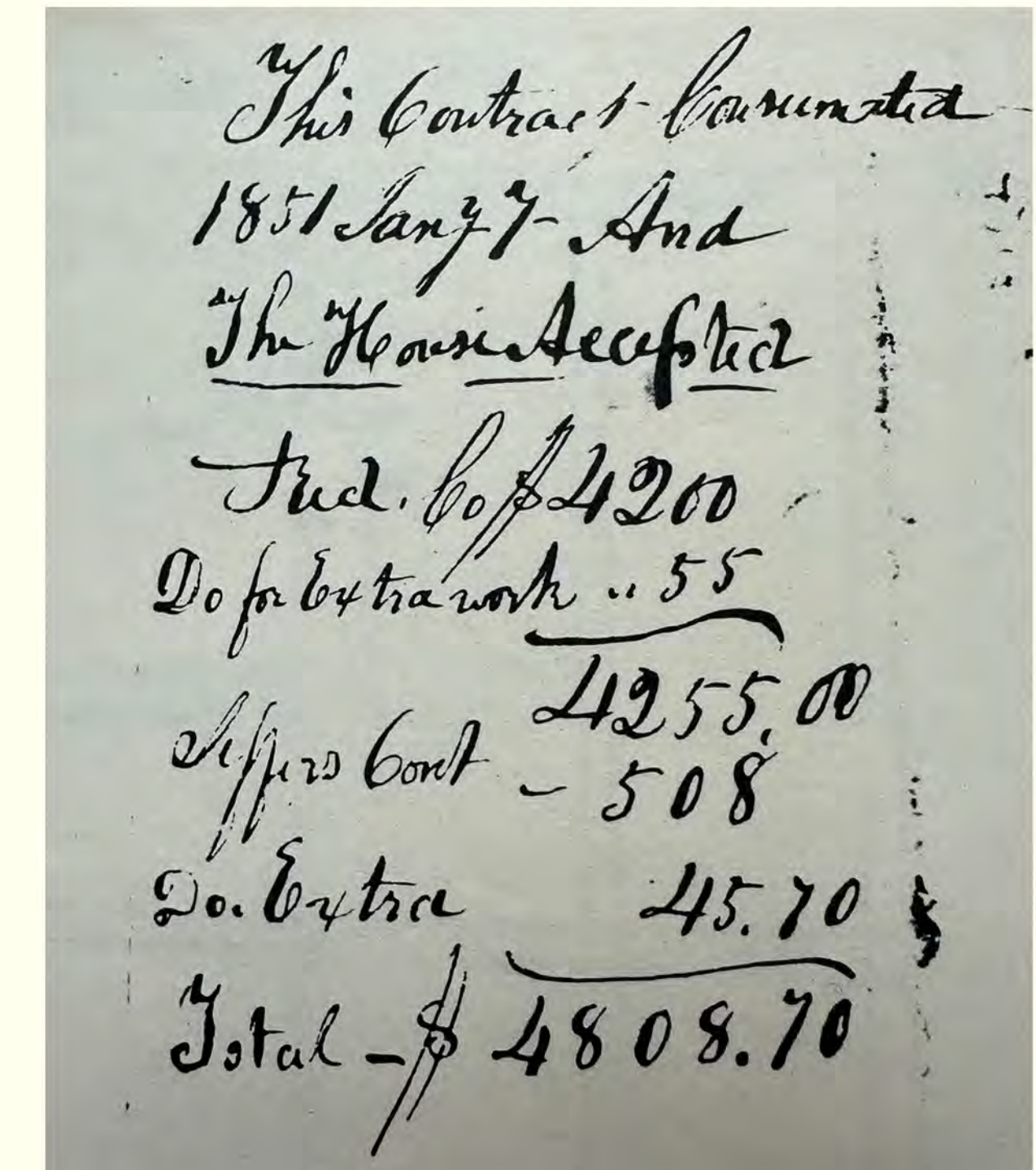
1849

The second of three Baptist churches built on the McLallen site burned to the ground in 1849. Church members engaged Daniel Elmore (1805-1888), a local carpenter and builder, to design and build what would become the current Greek Revival structure. Elmore built several other properties in the Village of Trumansburg — most notably the Hermon Camp House completed in 1847. In addition to his accomplishments as a builder, he also traveled up to twenty miles on Sundays to deliver sermons in the area.

A newspaper column entitled “Local Histories” printed on December 9, 1893 reports that a “foot of ashes and charred remains” from the fire was unearthed that year when a major renovation of the church required excavation work. Further the article states “Sexton Gifford has in his possession a part of the old church bell which melted in the fire...” This observation foreshadows the melting down of the large bell that hung in the steeple of the church built in 1850.



Architectural rendering by Daniel Elmore of church entrance. Photo of original document courtesy The History Center in Tompkins County



Tally of the total cost for the project from the original agreement between the church and Elmore. Photo of original document courtesy The History Center in Tompkins County



Portrait of Daniel Elmore from History of Tioga, Chemung, Tompkins and Schuyler counties, New York. 1879



Illustration of Daniel Elmore's house at 23 South Street from History of Tioga, Chemung, Tompkins and Schuyler counties, New York. 1879. The house is now home to Ness-Sibley Funeral Home.

1849 - 1851

The last Baptist church at this site was planned, designed, built and dedicated during this time period. Daniel Elmore kept detailed records of his work on the structure, including an original sketch of the design which shows a classical façade topped by a bell tower and 23-foot church spire. Elmore's vision was based on the architectural designs of Benjamin Asher (1773-1845) whose work transitioned between Federal architecture and the later Greek Revival style. Asher's first handbook on design, *The Country Builder's Assistant* (1797) revolutionized nineteenth century architecture. Some of the classical architectural elements of this style harken back to Renaissance architects Giacomo da Vignolo (1475-1555), Sebastiano Serlio (1475-c.1554), and Andrea Palladio (1508-1580). The specifications for the church and the agreement with Elmore for its construction are held at the History Center in Tompkins County on the Ithaca Commons.

Around this time and again in 1896 two additional plots of land at the McLallen Street site were transferred from the owners to the church — Parcel II in 1850 by Lyman Strobridge, James McLallen and John McLallen; Parcel III in 1896 by Charles L. and Hattie Chapman.

TCFA HISTORY

1851

The new Baptist church building was dedicated on February 6, 1851. An audience of about 1,000 heard a sermon delivered by Charles L. Bacon, who served as minister from 1850-1865. In his diaries Elmore has captured detailed records of the daily progress toward completion of the church at the end of 1850, often including the last names of the workers he employed. Some representative entries:

- May 30, 1850 Raised part of steeple section
- June 6, 1850 All hands worked as yesterday. Finished raising veranda & roof.
- July 3, 1850 The cornice above Architrave done.
- Sept. 5, 1850 Hung the Bell. Finished the top of Spire. Good
- Oct. 17, 1850 Hart hung the front doors

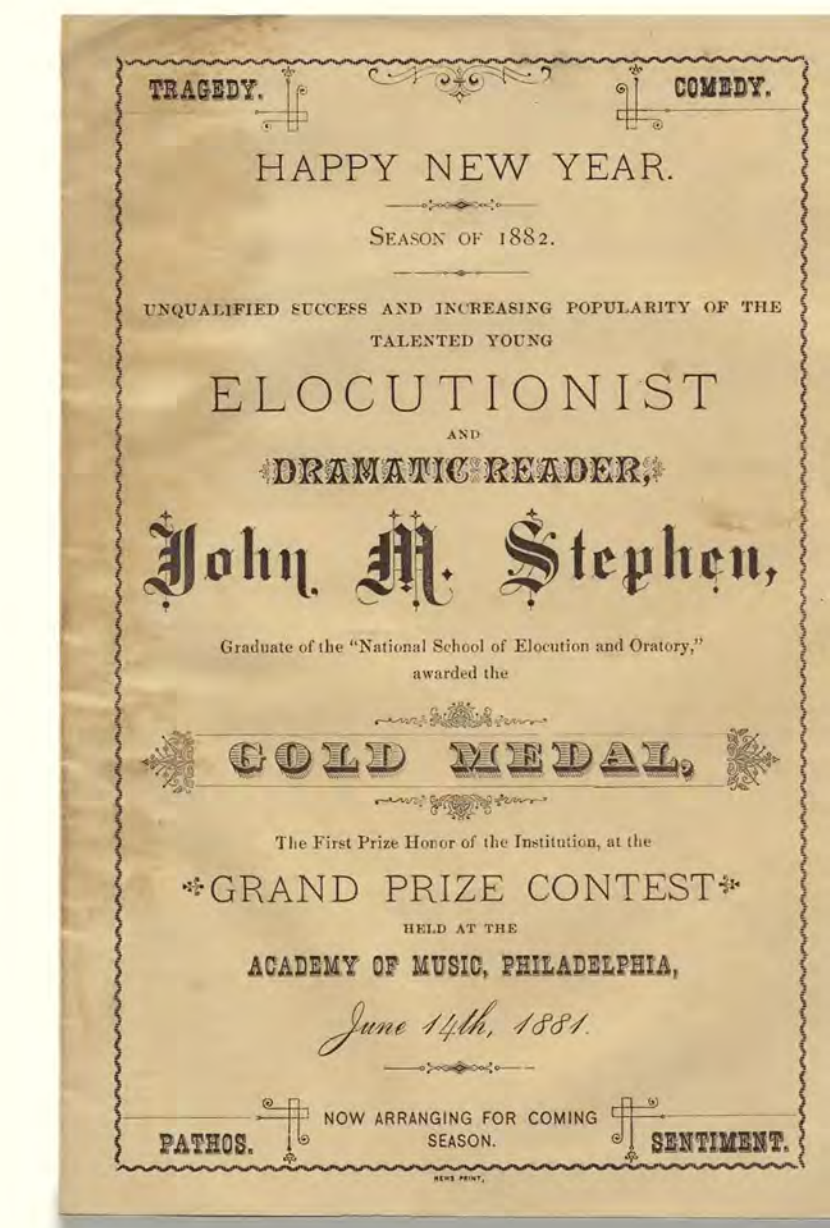
Interspersed with these details relating to the construction of the church are entries demonstrating the central role agriculture played in the daily lives of many people at the time:

- May 30, 1850 E Treman plowed lot 103 for oats
- July 2, 1850 Took cows from E.E. McLallen's pasture

The elevated site enhances the building's commanding presence in the village and probably helped protect it from the great flood of 1935.
Photo courtesy of the Ulysses Historical Society



Photograph of the nine members of the Hutchinson Family Singers taken in 1845



The program for one of John M. Stephen's elocution performances in the late 19th century. Likely this is the correct name and not the one provided in *The Free Press* article.

1859 - 1891

The First Baptist Church, like the current Conservatory of Fine Arts, demonstrated a commitment to providing entertainment to the community. The building was used as a concert venue as early as 1859 according to an entry of September 16, 1859 in James McLallen's diary: "The Hutchinsons gave a concert in the evening." The reference is most likely to be the Hutchinson Family Singers, a highly popular and successful musical group of that time. The Hutchinsons popularized four-part harmony and their songs addressed controversial topics such as abolitionism and women's rights.

The Free Press for August 31, 1889 reports on yet another evening of entertainment at the church during the nineteenth century when an elocutionist by the name of Mr. John M. Stephen performed to a small audience. The writer praises Mr. Stephen's "genius for storytelling and pathos", calling the evening "good entertainment at reasonable prices."

In March 1891 M.C. Baldwin gave an organ concert at the church according to the *Trumansburg Sentinel*. He gave another concert later that year in July where he was "assisted by Mr. John G. Stevens in character impersonations."

A. H. PRINSON, Supervisor.

The young people of the S. of C. E. of the Baptist Church have engaged

Minor G. Baldwin,
the Concert Organist of New York City to give a concert in the Baptist Church.

Thursday Evening, March 26th.

Mr Baldwin comes to us highly recommended as an organist, and we hope all lovers of music will avail themselves of this rare musical treat. The following is an extract from the Lewiston (Maine) Evening Journal of March 10, '91.

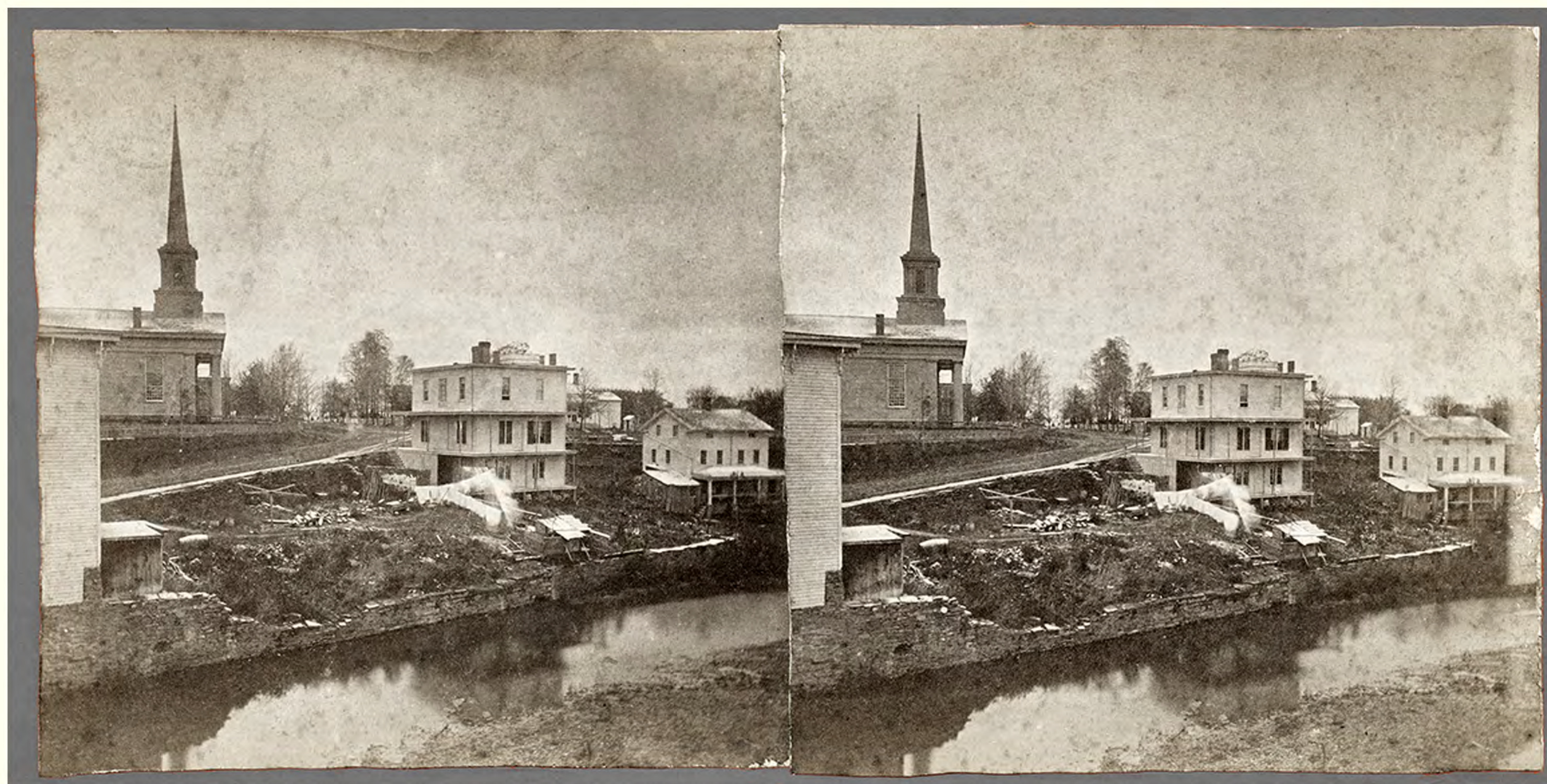
Newspaper article advertising an organ concert by M.C. Baldwin, complete with description of the impression made on the audience.

TCFA HISTORY

1871

On May 23rd, the church building was spared from a fire sweeping through Trumansburg village when residents recalled that there was a fire engine stored in a nearby barn. They used it to prevent the fire from spreading further up Union Street, thus saving the church. Eleven buildings in total were destroyed, including the Washington House, the hotel that stood on the corner of Main and Washington Streets. As a result of this fire, the Trumansburg Fire Department was incorporated the following year and brick (rather than wood) was used to rebuild structures on Main Street. Many of these brick buildings still stand and serve as area businesses.

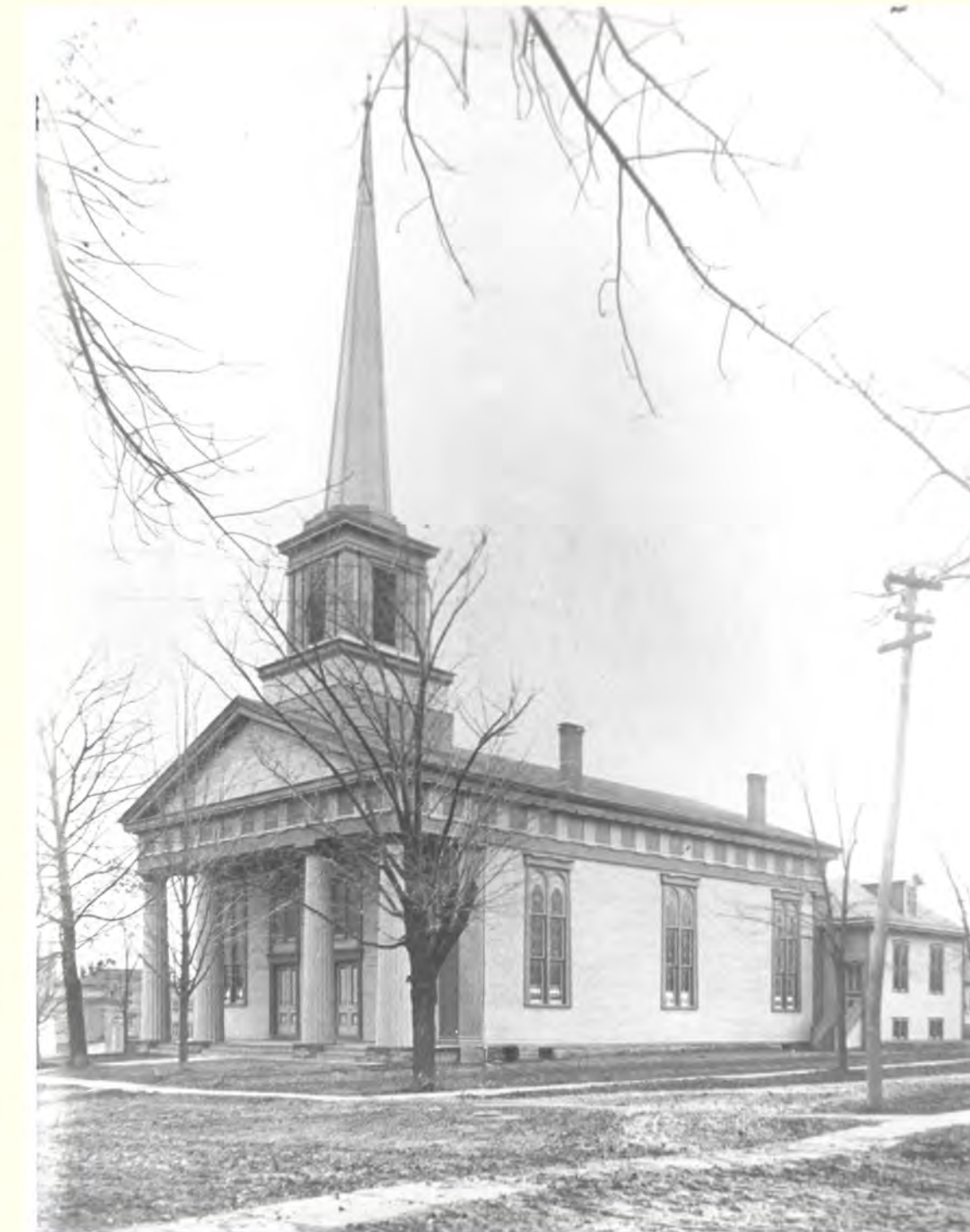
Stereoscopic photographic views, such as the one shown here of Congress Street, were immensely popular in the United States and Europe from about the mid-1850's through the early years of the 20th century. Viewed through a stereoscope, the image looked three-dimensional.



The First Baptist Church as it appeared from across the creek

1902

A frame addition with a hipped roof was added to the rear of the building for Sunday school and other activities. The original triple-hung windows were replaced by round-headed casings with stained glass in the openings. The stained glass windows were later moved to the new church on Seneca Road after the old building was sold to the Conservatory of Fine Arts in 1982. Eugene Holton, a contractor from Interlaken, supervised the work. The final building as it stands today, measures 54.5 feet wide by 85 feet deep, with an additional 10 feet for the porch.



The First Baptist Church after the tall spire was removed. Photo courtesy of the Ulysses Historical Society

Turn-of-the-century photograph showing the 1902 addition. Photo courtesy of the Ulysses Historical Society

1924

The tall spire, which could be seen from all over the village, was taken down due to safety considerations. The bell tower portion of the steeple remained although eventually it was dismantled due to irreversible structural issues. The 'Trumansburg Reminiscences' section of the *Trumansburg Sentinel* of January 4, 1977, recounted an interesting anecdote involving Daniel Elmore, "one of our most respected citizens", using a ladder to paint a portion of the spire he had missed previously. Upon descending, he saw that the ladder had begun to slip on the wet paint. Fortunately, "he finally reached the bottom in safety, just as the foot of the ladder was about to slide over the edge to the ground, 75 feet below." Thus the church's designer and builder escaped calamity. *Transcription of this article courtesy of The History Center in Tompkins County*

TCFA HISTORY

1936 - 1946

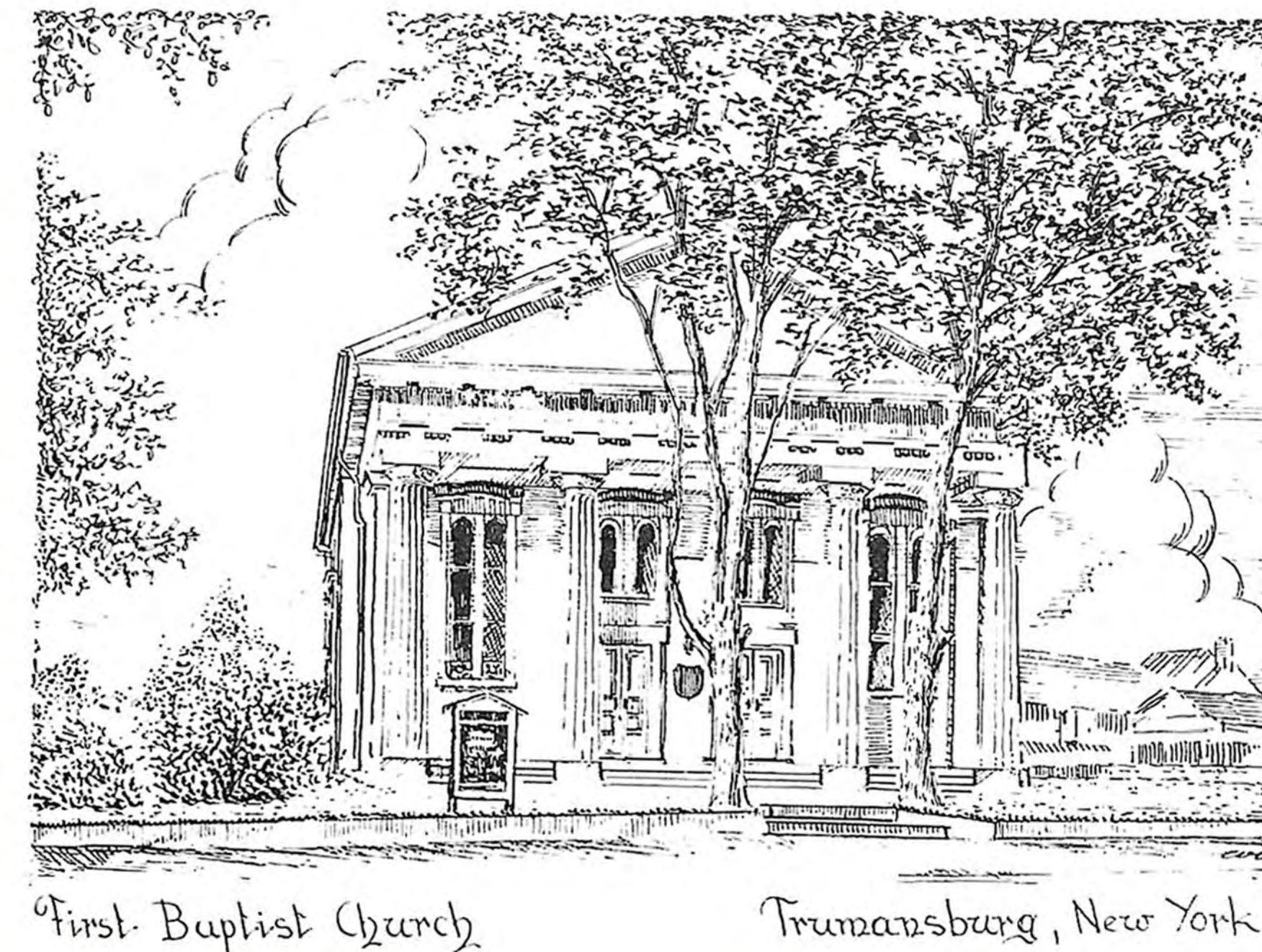
The World Wide Guild, a group of young women from the church congregation, organized spring concerts during these years, continuing a tradition of providing musical entertainment to the public. One surviving concert program lists performances by solo singers, a trio and the full chorus. A selection of pieces performed at the Spring Music Festival on May 10th, 1940 include:

Country Gardens (Morris Dance).....*Old English arr. Riegger*
In the Gloaming.....*Harrison*
There are Fairies at the Bottom of Our Garden....*Lehmann*
When Love is Kind.....*Saar*
Tales from the Vienna Woods.....*Strauss-Riegger*
Ciribiribin.....*Pestalozza-Gore*

Recognize anyone in the photo below?



The World Wide Guild Music Festival participants , First Baptist Church of Trumansburg, taken in the late 1930's or early 1940's. Photo courtesy of The Ulysses Historical Society



Sketch of the building without steeple and spire used on a donation card for a church fundraiser. Document courtesy of The Ulysses Historical Society

1950

This year was the 100th anniversary of the current structure's completion in 1850. To help mark the occasion, the congregation undertook improvements to the building which included removing old chimneys, as well as installing new wallboards and ceiling panels along with the light sconces still here today. The remaining portions of the church steeple, including the bell, were removed due to the rotted condition of the wooden supports. The enormous bell had been cast in Sheffield, England in 1859 and hung on March 23, 1860. Sheffield is known for several metallurgical innovations including the crucible process of steelmaking, plating copper with silver by fusion, and the production of stainless steel. The church bell was melted and recast as paperweights to be sold as commemorative souvenirs. One of these bells is on exhibit. Although the elimination of the church steeple elements over the years was unfortunate, without these architectural features the building came to possess a more secular look.

TCFA HISTORY

1982

Calista A. Smith (1937-2022) founded the Conservatory of Fine Arts, Inc (TCFA) as a non-profit organization. She began teaching music as the single faculty member with ten students. Many area residents took music lessons from her over the years. Calista also served as TCFA's Executive Director, a position she held for nearly three decades. The certificate of incorporation for TCFA lists the following Trumansburg residents as its first board of directors:

<i>Martin A. Luster</i>	<i>Perry City Road</i>
<i>David Ingersoll</i>	<i>Perry City Road</i>
<i>Emma Lou Sheikh</i>	<i>Strowbridge Street</i>
<i>Geri Speich</i>	<i>Iraddell Road</i>
<i>Dixie Reed</i>	<i>Cayuga Street</i>
<i>Roger Rector</i>	<i>Congress Street</i>



The Conservatory building circa 1983. Photo courtesy of The Ulysses Historical Society

1983

The sale of the building to the Trumansburg Conservatory of Fine Arts, Inc. for \$36,000 was settled. Pending completion of a new First Baptist Church, the Conservatory and Church shared the Congress Street space. Later, the Trumansburg Montessori School began to use the basement of the building for its classes and the downstairs space served as a Montessori School until 2013.



The new TCFA sign being installed above the front doors. Photo courtesy of The Ulysses Historical Society



The plaque bearing Calista Smith's name as Executive Director remains on the door of the Conservatory's main office to this day.

TCFA HISTORY

1982 - 2000

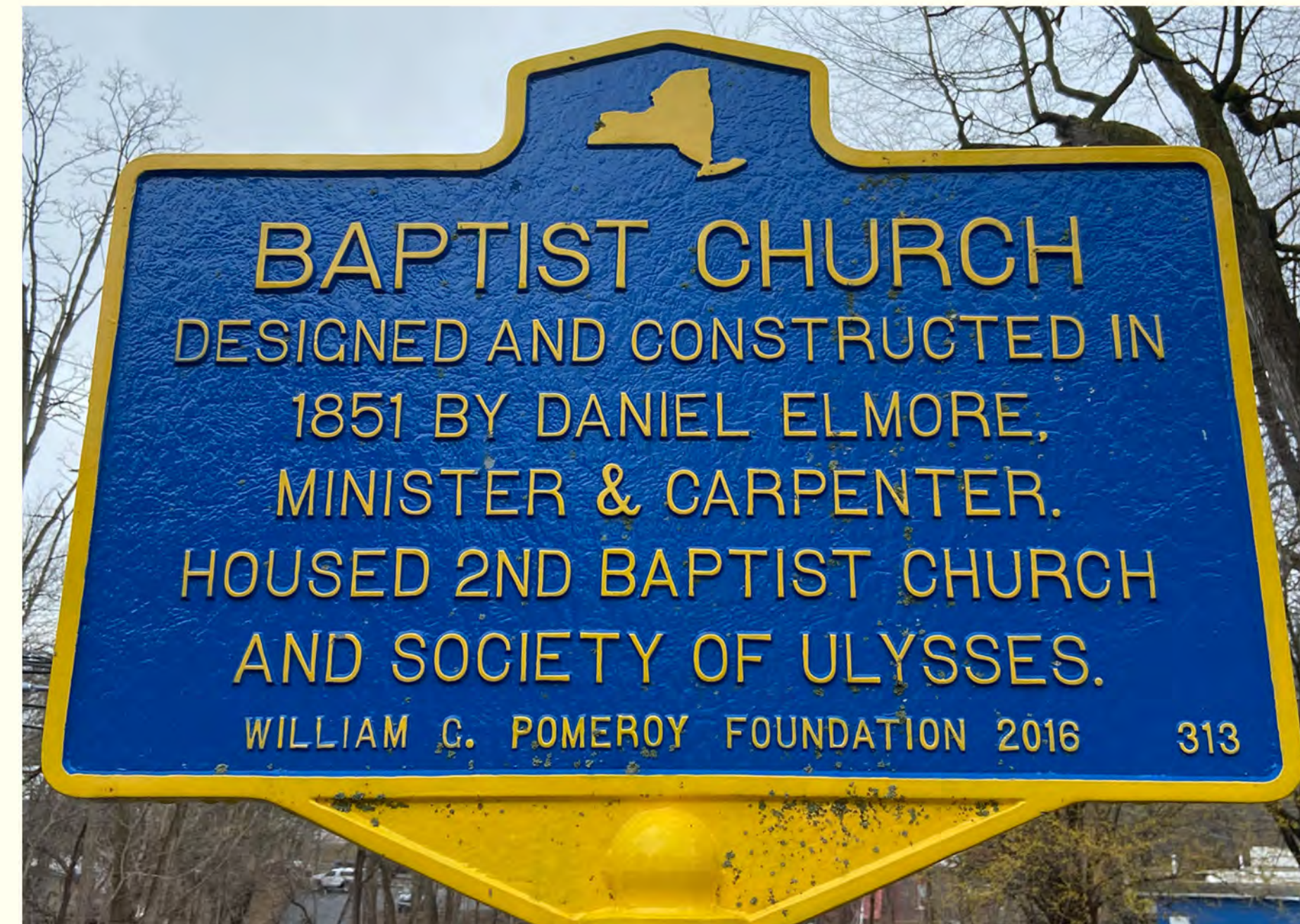
Under Calista Smith's leadership the Conservatory's offerings in music instruction expanded to include violin and fiddle; brass and wind instruments; violin and guitar to name some of the most popular. Wasting no time to showcase her students' talent, Calista organized a spring piano recital in 1982. A partial list of pieces performed at this early recital include:

Kate Kooperman - 'Birch Canoe' by Leila Fletcher

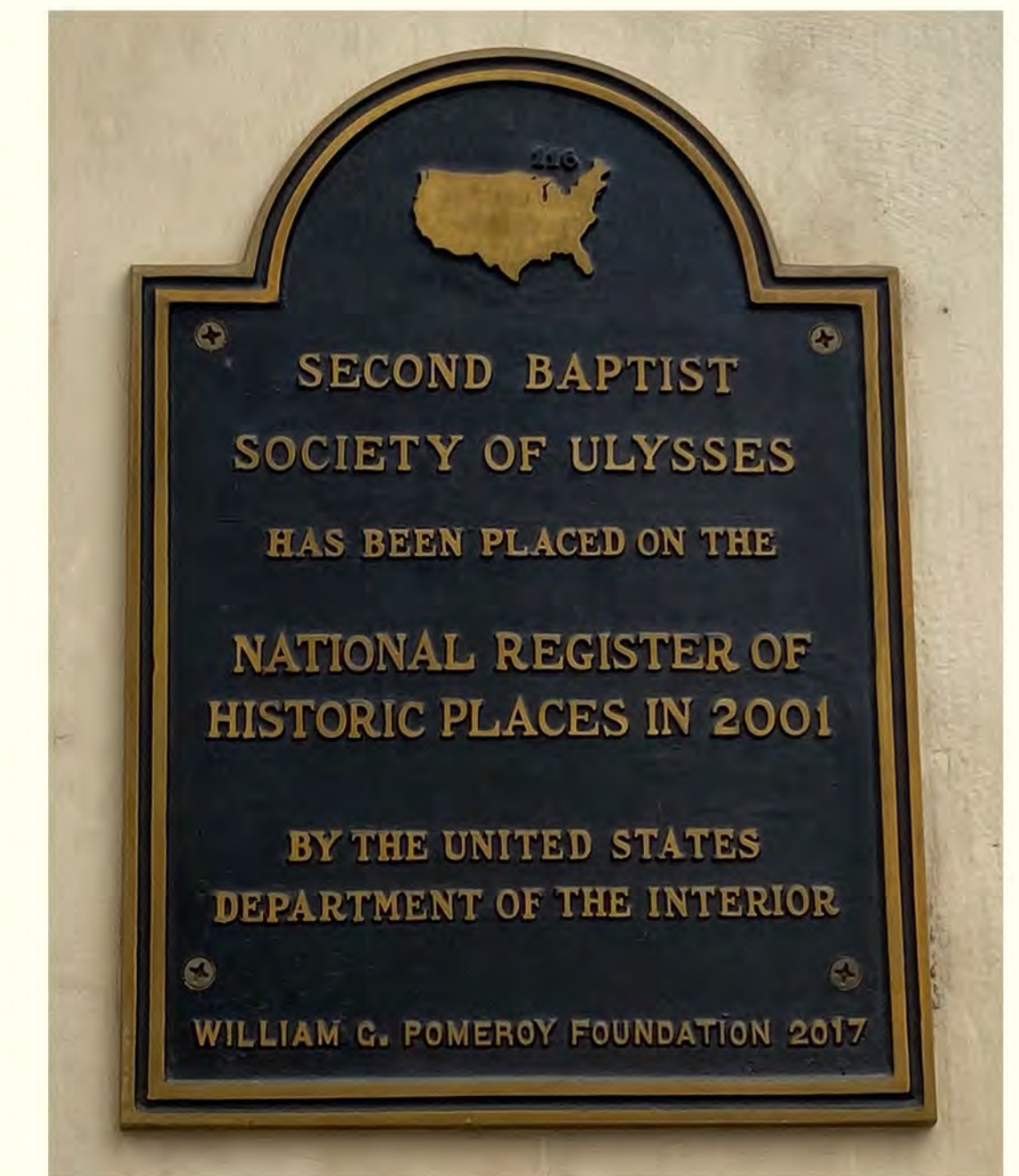
Rabia Sheikh - 'Swans on the Lake' by John Thompson

Mark Mathews - 'The Pink Panther' by Henri Mancini

Marci Pollock - 'The Entertainer' by Scott Joplin



The marker in front of the building commemorating the completion of the structure and its designer/builder. The William C. Pomeroy Foundation funded both of the building's historic markers.



The marker on the front of the building commemorating its addition to the National Register of Historic Places

2001

The Conservatory building was entered into The National Register of Historic Places as the Second Baptist Society of Ulysses. A complete transcript of the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, describing the building's architectural and historic significance, is on display in this exhibit. In addition to the historical significance of the building, the text of the registration request emphasizes the building's prominent position vis-a-vis the surrounding historic homes and the layout of the village of Trumansburg:

"The building site is on the plateau overlooking the Taughannock Creek and the commercial core of the village, which lines New York State Route 96. This plateau area is mainly residential, with houses dating to the middle decades of the nineteenth century on generously sized lots. The buildings survive substantially intact."

As you walk about the village the elevated placement of the Conservatory continues to enhance its prominence.



Calista Smith leading a practice session for a choral group.

NATIONAL REGISTER TEXT

Second Baptist Society of Ulysses/Trumansburg Conservatory National Register of Historic Places Registration Form - A Transcript

The building now used as the Trumansburg Conservatory of the Arts, completed in 1851 for the Second Baptist Society of Ulysses, is a prominent landmark in one of the historic residential neighborhoods of the village of Trumansburg, town of Ulysses, in northern Tompkins County, New York. The building occupies an irregularly shaped parcel facing Congress with frontage also on McLallen and Cayuga streets. The imposing Greek Revival style building stands on the northeaster end of the lot. A level lawn held in by a retaining wall extends south from the church. A low limestone retaining wall fronts the church property on the Congress Street (east) side. Mature maple trees grace the front of the building while young Bradford pear trees line the gravel parking lot running along the north side of the building. The building site is one the plateau overlooking the Taughannock Creek and the commercial core of the village, which lines New York State Route 96. This plateau area is mainly residential, with houses dating to the middle decades of the nineteenth century on generously sized lots. The buildings survive substantially intact. A comprehensive historic resources survey of the village might identify a National Register eligible historic district, in which the conservatory would be a contributing property.

The meeting house itself is a large frame building with a massive Doric order porch spanning its front facade. It is composed of a rectangular plan, frontal gable main block (built 1849-1851) with a later rectangular plan frame addition (built 1902) with hipped roof on a raised basement. The main block measures 54 1/2 feet wide by 85 feet deep with an additional 10 feet added for the porch, or veranda. The porch is supported by four fluted Doric columns of massive proportions. The columns are not equally spaced across the front. There is a wider space between the inner two than the outer two. Although there is not enough space for a fifth column of the same dimensions, there is enough to allow easy passage through the two entrances each with tall paired doors at the center of the facade.

Each door has two vertical panels set within flattened fluted moldings characteristic of the Greek Revival taste. These doors are flanked by tall paired windows and surmounted by half-length windows. The tympanum and front facade are sided with boards laid up flush, while the sides and rear of the building have wooden clapboards. Plain pilasters trim the front and side corners of the building, while the back is plain save the partial returns at the roofline.

The front and sides of the conservatory retain a massive Doric frieze of triglyphs and metopes. All windows and doors, including the half-length ones over the main doors in the front facade have extended architraves. The sash, glazed with clear lights, are paired with round-headed arched tops. The interior of the main block retains its original configuration of a single span space open to the ceiling entered from a foyer surmounted by a balcony spanning the rear of the main hall. Entering the building from the main doors on the front facade one steps into the foyer, a narrow room with staircases at each end. These have turned, varnished wooden newel posts. The stairs rise to matching corner landings, where simple angle panel doors open onto the next run of stairs running alongside the long walls of the building. The stairs turn a second landing to emerge in the gallery. The gallery is supported by posts hidden by the wall separating the foyer from the main hall of the building. Like the foyer below, the open gallery spans the rear of the hall. It retains two rows of simple pews with straight sides and scrolled caps characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century. These are set on stepped risers. Two Ionic columns rest on the front parapet of the gallery. These rise to the ceiling of the church and once supported the back corners of the belfry. The being of the gallery arches gently to the back wall of the building in a simple cove.

Returning downstairs, two pairs of large swing doors admit one to the monumental main hall with its space unobstructed by any supports. The single span space regains its original fenestration with large windows capped by extended architraves. These have paired, round arched sash with clear lights. An imposing center medallion graces the ceiling. The walls are currently sheathed in acoustic tile, probably installed in the mid-twentieth century. The current hardwood floors of narrow boards replace or cover the original floors of pine boards. Beadboard wainscoting from the turn-of-the-century re-modeling wraps the rear and side of the room. Everything except the sliding door that once opens onto a large baptismal tank is now painted white. Missing are the stained-glass sash that were also part of that remodeling, the clear glass, however, is more appropriate to the Greek Revival interior.

The 1902 addition has a hipped roof with its ridge perpendicular to that of the main block and clapboard siding. It stands on a raised basement and is centered by a door at street level on the north side. This portion of the building has on-over-one set in plain square-headed windows. It is otherwise devoid of exterior architectural detail. The interior is finished with varnished headboard wainscoting and bull's eye cornerbacks and door and configuration but finishes are in some cases altered.

Certified under the National Historic Preservation Act, October, 15, 2001