

The Beginnings - 1883 to 1885

"In presenting this history, the writer deems it necessary to furnish some account of the origin of the nucleus which eventually developed into a regular Baptist Church. I learn, from statements made by Rev. G. E. Leonard, D.D., of the Ohio Baptist Convention, and others, that two or three years previous to the organization of the church {1882 or 1883}, some devoted Christian women, with hearts full of love and zeal for the advancement of their Lord's cause, and an earnest desire for a Church home where they and others of the Baptist faith could meet together for worship, edification and Christian fellowship, had, with this worthy object in view, banded themselves together and organized a Ladies' Aid Society, in order that they might obtain help in accomplishing the object of their desires. To this end, a large 'upper room' in the Carpenter block, West Main Street {see note}, was secured and fitted up as a place of worship and named 'Baptist Hall.' In connection with this movement, Sister Carpenter, who was evidently full of love and zeal for the advancement of the Master's cause, had gladly donated the half use of the Hall and for one whole year had sustained afternoon services in it. Ministers from neighboring towns preaching there occasionally."

-- Rev. Alexander Moore, 1926

{Note} West Main Street was later renamed West Herrick Avenue. The actual address of this second-story meeting place was 123 W. Herrick Ave. The church continued to meet in this location until the first building was constructed late in 1894.

[123 W. Herrick Ave. today]



Over time, this group grew to the point that they determined that it was time to formally organize into a church. On March 6, 1885, the First Regular Baptist Church of Wellington, Ohio was formed. There were 22 charter members of the church, including two "Reverends" - the first pastor, Rev. J. H. Smith, and a Rev. D. P. Sheldon. From the list of these charter members, it is evident that the women greatly outnumbered the men.

CHARTER MEMBERS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Wm. E. Whitney, Mary C. Whitney, May Whitney, Bertha Whitney, Mrs. Margaret Winchell, Mrs. Annie M. Gannett, Mrs. Adelia Fisk, Cephas F. Fisk, Mrs. Hattie Wideman, Miss Callie Cannan, Mrs. R. Cannan, Mrs. Laurena G. Smith, Miss Etta Whitney, Mrs. Caroline Robinson, B. W. Garr, Rev. J. H. Smith, Mrs. M. J. Smith, Ora H. Smith, Otis W. Smith, Mrs. Nettie Clark, Rev. D. P. Sheldon, Mrs. Sarah J. Sheldon

The church adopted a Church Covenant, Articles of Faith, and Rules of Order as contained in a Baptist church manual prepared by J. Newton Brown, and published by the Baptist Publication Society. The Articles of Faith were those known as the New Hampshire Confession (the same confession that later formed the basis for the GARBC Articles of Faith).

Rev. J. H. Smith was chosen as the first Pastor, and a Recognition Council was called in order to be recognized as a regular Baptist Church. This Council, consisting of delegates from Elyria, Huntington, LaGrange, Litchfield, Norwalk, and New London, was held on March 31, 1885. A recognition service was held at 1:30PM the same afternoon.