

# NORTH HILLSDALE'S BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY CENTER

## First Baptist Church Now Grange Hall—Property is Unconditional Gift of Mrs. Frances R. Masters.



Left to Right—J. J. Paulsen, Master Hillsdale Grange; Napoleon T. Benedict, C. H. Becker, Mrs. C. H. Becker, members of grange, who remember when services were held in the old church and many of the former congregation.

(By George Niles Hoffman)

At last the Hillsdale Grange has a home suited to its needs and befitting the great amount of good it is doing in the community. This thriving and healthy branch of the Patrons of Husbandry has a membership of two hundred and fifty-four and is constantly growing. Unfortunately, however, their meeting place was destroyed when a very disastrous fire consumed the Masonic building at Hillsdale last year. Since then the grange has been holding its meetings any and everywhere from pillar to post literally until recently when it was presented by Mrs. Francis R. Masters of Copake and Park avenue, New York, with the beautiful building which was built over one hundred years ago for the First Baptist Community of North Hillsdale and formerly used by them as a church.

### Athletic Activities

Following out the idea that the new grange meeting place is to be used for the good and enjoyment of the entire community an athletic organization has been organized within the grange but distinct in its management as individual officers have been chosen. They are: Fred Paulsen, Chairman; John Dood, Secretary; Robert Schneichel, Treasurer.

The boys have a fine basket ball team and will engage later in other games and sports. They pay dues and function as a separate society but are under certain restrictions as regards the care of the building.

### Early Baptist Church of Hillsdale

The church known more generally

at the present time as the "East Baptist Church," was organized May 28, 1787, by Revs. John and Stephen Gano. There were fourteen persons who entered into covenant and constituted the society. They were Jas. and Phoebe Martin, Caleb, Jr. and Anna Woodward, William, Jr. and Rosannah West; Ambrose and Joanna Latting; Griffin and Anna Wilde; Ruth Jordan, Esther Terry, Lucy Loop, Sarah Martin.

The first church meeting was held June 23, 1787, and James Martin was elected deacon and Ambrose Latting church clerk. The first church was built on the three corners, near the present residence of G. F. Stickle, by Ambrose Latting, who agreed to finish it on the outside and wait on the church till they were able to pay for it. This was done, and the church was finally finished off in 1798. Its entire cost was supposed to have been about \$800. The work of finishing was done by Albert Foster for about \$300.

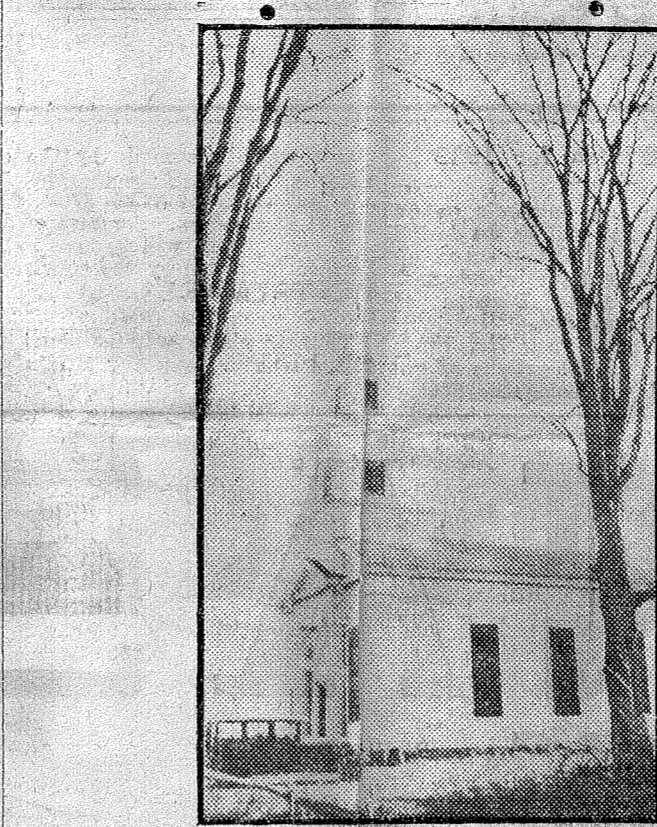
### Baptist Church History

The first church property, Mrs. Masters' gift to the grange was largely built in the summer and fall of 1839. It is said to have cost in the neighborhood of \$5,000, and that part of it was moved nearly a mile down the road from the site of a former church built before the 18th century, on the Bingham Collin farm. The dedication occurred on the 27th of November 1839.

The church had been incorporated in 1838. The first trustees were elected previously in 1835 and were Thomas Palmer, John Tyler, Amos Knox, William Knox. From a small beginning of fourteen members in 1787 the church grew in numbers until in 1817 there were one hundred and ninety-two members. In the autumn of 1837 forty-three were added to the membership.

At different times the church licensed some of its members to preach the gospel. Among them were Charles Truesdell, Lyman Palmer, Rodney Gilbert and Albert Knox. One of these, Lyman Palmer, was later ordained to the work of ministry.

Former ministers of the church are Revs. Stephen Gano, Abel Brown, Samuel S. Malloy, John D. Hart, Enoch Marshall, Samuel Wood, Philip Roberts, Horace Spencer, Peter Prik, John E. LaGrange, Stephen Jones, O. H. Capron, Eli W. Brownell, Samuel Pomeroy, Samuel Pomeroy, Ethan



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Palmer, Henry F. Cochrane, Edwin Beardsley, C. F. Duganne, also Revs. Bates, Ferris and Lyman Palmer.

According to Napoleon Benedict who with Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Becker remember when good sized congregations attended the old church, there is probably no survivor of the ministry, church officers or congregation at this writing. Years of disrepair have left their scar on the building which was purchased not long ago by a real estate operator and many antiques sold from the interior including the pews which are said to have been very old.

The bell is believed to be now in use in the Baptist church of Catskill. The artistically planned gallery of the church is being preserved to all appearances as it was, by the grange in their plans for modeling the structure. A few of the former church members recalled by Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Becker, who have known Hillsdale for over fifty years are Tunis Moore, Major George Bullock, John and Jas.

Tyler, George Knox, Mrs. Amos Knox, William T. Palmer, Warren Wiley, Stephen B. Batan, Mrs. Alf. Curtis, Clinton Palmer, Elmer Hunt, Henry Gildersleeve, Edwin Hunt. Mr. Becker states that he believes all members to have died long ago.

### Visited Niverville

### Church Beautifully Situated

The old church property is majestically grand in its setting and ideal in its convenient location on the new Hillsdale-Great Barrington state road. In a beautiful valley surrounded by entrancing hillsides, woodlands and meadows here is a spot which shows nature at its best and delights even him who is not so keen on scenery. The artistic old building itself, rare in its distinctive class seems something taken from the classics and placed there in this peaceful valley to be preserved forever. And so Mrs. Masters must have thought when she bought it with only its preservation for good to the community in mind, as a motive. What a shame to see it in ruin as it was fast going and she purchased it. Then after several attempts to put it at its best use to the community she gave it outright to the grange, an organization well suited to keep the property up in a condition suitable and befitting its great beauty.

### Grange to Improve Property

It is not the intention of the members of the Hillsdale grange to accept their recent gift and not improve the property. They have set about the making and completion before May 1st, of the former church into one of the most idealistic community centers anywhere as well as a very practical and serviceable meeting place for their members. The floor is being cleared of an accumulation of benches and other unfit materials, making ready for its use for dances, basketball and meetings of every description suitable to the need of the entire community. A beautiful new hard wood ceiling has replaced the one destroyed by weather and the roof repaired in a satisfactory manner.

The contract is let to excavate for a cellar under the building and here a modern heating plant for the building will be installed. The estimated cost of repairs is about twenty-five hundred dollars, fifteen hundred of which is to be raised by grange activities.

The list of officers of the Hillsdale Grange includes exceptionally active and interested grangers. To Mr. J. J. Paulsen, the Master, much of the credit of organizing the effort to carry out the plans for fixing over the building and also the incorporation on March 24th of the grange, which was a necessary part of the undertaking. Mr. Paulsen and family, who came to Hillsdale in 1923 have worked unceasingly in the interest of the church building project and seem just as anxious as ever to continue. The grange is indeed fortunate to have Mr. Paulsen head the list of grange officers as Master.

Officers of Hillsdale Grange at present are: J. J. Paulsen, Master; George Steuerwald, Overseer; Chas. Porteous, Lecturer; Hiram Johnson, Steward; Burton Harrington, Ass't. Steward; Rev. William H. Blackie, Chaplain; Barnard Klitsch, Treasurer; Mrs. Edith Van Deusen, Secretary; Frederick W. Paulsen, Gate Keeper; Irene V. Gilbert, Lady Asst. Steward; Edna Hoffman, Pomona; Verana Mettler, Ceres; Evelyn Vossburgh, Flora.

### Ladies to Hold Tea

The ladies of the grange are to hold a reception and tea at the Green Vine Tea Room at Hillsdale on April 20th. This is one of a series of dances, receptions and teas to be held by the ladies of the grange. Miss Grace Hutchinson who conducts the Green Vine Tea Room has very graciously donated the use of her attractive place to the grange ladies for this occasion.

The following will constitute the Building Committee: J. J. Paulsen, Frank Gilbert, Bernard H. Klitsch, Robert Peterson, Charles Porteous.