## A Memorial To The Past

## Cornwall United Methodist Church

## When our current stone church was completed in 1878 a small brick building in the cemetery was built to house the compressor for the gas system which provided light for the original church and the parsonage. It was lighted by H.L. McAvoy’s patented Automatic Gas Machine. Then in 1917, electricity was installed, thus making the gas machine obsolete. For years the building was used for storage. Heritage Sunday is our once a year celebration to commemorate the history of the church. On Heritage Sunday 10/25/15 we arrived at church to find a drunk driver had crashed into and completely destroyed our gas house.

## As an alternative to rebuilding the pump house, a memorial garden was built. On April 29th, 2018 Cornwall United Methodist Church dedicated their new memorial garden. The garden consists of a gazebo, garden and area for loved ones’ ashes. Ryan Fretz was asked to be the designer of this garden as he is both a landscaper and an artist. Being a member of the church, he paid special attention to tie the memorial garden into the history of the church. He re-incorporated materials from the demolished gas house and original pieces from previous church renovations. While excavating the area under the current gazebo, Ryan found remains of what may have been another building. We can surmise that this was part of the foundation of the first church built to house the early congregation after ironmaster Thomas Coleman donated an acre of land to them in 1834 because we know the site of that building was close to the current garage. That plain brick building measured 35 x 40 feet. This  congregation was part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which later came to be known as the United Methodist Church.  The four garden beds are bordered with bricks from the gas house and their 16 cornerstones are cut from its sandstone window sills. The stone bench was once a doorway threshold. He felt it was no small coincidence that the arched stone he used to build the step to the gazebo has exactly the same 52 inch width as it’s opening. A beautiful cast iron grate from a basement window is now the cover for the final resting place; the well-like excavation made to contain ashes.  The beds are planted with the springy moss from the cemetery that dominates some sections of the turf, a natural lawn largely untouched for 200 years. Ajuga, found around the church, was also used and the beds are ringed in sempervivum, also known as hens and chicks. The hens and chicks represent our families and the flow of generations. The common name given to the plant refers to its growth habit of mature plants that produce rings of offspring around themselves that will spread as they grow repeating this cycle of life again and again. The multitude of varieties planted speaks to our own diversity - many different types of people growing together as the body of Christ, as this one church family.