

**Historical Marker - S668 - Methodist Episcopal Church / The Old Rugged Cross  
(Marker ID#:S668)**



**Front - Title/Description**

**Methodist Episcopal Church**

Circuit-riding Methodist ministers held religious services in Pokagon Township during the 1830s and 1840s. A class was organized in Sumnerville in 1840. In 1876 the Methodists purchased this building, which had been built in 1862 as a hops barn, and renovated it as a church. They constructed a belfry and installed pews and stained glass windows in pointed frames. In this church, in 1913, "The Old Rugged Cross" was sung in its entirety for the first time. The following year the Methodists purchased the nearby Baptist Church, selling this building to John Phillips, who used it as a storage barn. In 1998 the Pokagon United Methodist Church reacquired the church for restoration.

**Significant Date:**

Civil War and After (1860-1875)

**Registry Year:** 2000    **Erected Date:** 2000

**Marker Location**

**Address:** 31394 East Street

**City:** Niles

**State:** MI    **ZipCode:**

**County:** Cass

**Township:** Pokagon

**Lat:** 41.91168400 / **Long:** -86.17330000

**Web URL:**

**Back - Title/Description**

**The Old Rugged Cross**

In January 1913 the Reverend Leroy O. Bostwick, assisted by the Reverend George Bennard of Albion, held a series of religious revivals at the Pokagon Methodist Episcopal Church. Before the event, the Dowagiac Daily News predicted a large attendance, announcing "Mr. Bennard is a sweet singer and a splendid gospel preacher." Bennard had begun composing the hymn "The Old Rugged Cross" while in Albion the previous year. He completed the hymn here in preparation for the revival services. During the revival it was sung publicly for the first time by the Pokagon Methodist Episcopal Church choir. Impressed by Bennard's hymn, the Reverend and Mrs. Bostwick financed its first printing. "The Old Rugged Cross" quickly became one of the most popular hymns in the United States.