

# Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church History

(adapted from "History of Mills County 1985" page 24)

The fall of 1856 brought the first meeting at what would become Wesley Chapel. Organized by the families of William B. Wilson, Thomas Kayton, and David Kayton, early settlers in rural Mills County, it was held in the Wilson home near Mud Creek, one mile west of the present Wesley Chapel Church. Soon the attendance outgrew the homes, and services were held in the nearby Big Mud or Benton schoolhouses.

In 1870, John Plumb Sr. donated a piece of land for a cemetery and a house of worship. Three years later the first Wesley Chapel Church was built, across the road south and a little east of the present building. It was a neat, plain frame building with a foundation of native rock from a quarry south of Henderson. By 1898, the trustees began to talk about building a larger church. The first building was torn down and the lumber used in the new.

On May 24, 1898, a deed was signed by Ezra and Grace Plumb giving one-half acre on the corner opposite the cemetery. Soon the cornerstone was laid, and the following year the church was dedicated. Since the church sits on a hill and the steeple was quite tall, it was struck by lightning several times.

In 1917 the steeple was removed and the interior of the church redecorated. In 1919, on land just west of the church donated by Edd and Martha Wilson, a parsonage was built which saw continuous service for 50 years un the Nishna Valley Parish was organized in 1969 and Emerson became the location for the official parsonage.

Through the years, Wesley Chapel has served as a community center for Farm Bureau meetings, 4-H meetings, and other activities. The annual fall harvest sale has continued to unite members of the church and community in a day of fellowship.

At different times in its history, Wesley Chapel has been affiliated with churches in Emerson, Silver City, Hastings, Henderson, Strahan, and Malvern. Wesley Chapel carries on with the work begun by the earliest settlers, that of bringing the Good News to this part of Anderson Township in Mills County, Iowa. As time continues, the challenge is to look at ways of making this building and its ministry more meaningful and accessible to all persons in the community.