

HISTORY OF AU SABLE CHURCH

[MISS MAE HOWELL.]

In reading the early history of this country one is impressed by a certain trait which seemed to be characteristic of the pioneer, namely, their religious convictions. As soon as a settlement was established the little company selected one of the homes in which to hold divine services on the Sabbath. We find the western and southern tiers of townships in Kendall county settled first and that in 1833 or '34 the first Sunday school was organized in Pavilion. These little groups began to spring up wherever a settlement was made and later developed into our strong church organizations of the county.

So, into this township of Na-au-say in 1846 came Dr. Townsend Seely with his family to make a home on the site now occupied by Mr. Carl Schobert. The same religious spirit actuated Dr. Seely in calling his neighbors to the Seely home—a log house 16 x 20 in size—where Rev. Mr. Chapman of Plainfield conducted a Sunday service.

These meetings were continued through the fall but discontinued during the winter.

In the spring of 1847 the present Union school house was built and when completed church services were held in it, Mr. Chapman still preaching.

The next item we quote from the first record ever kept of the church.

"February 26, 1848.—Previous notice having been given Rev. Chapman was appointed moderator. Mr. and Mrs. A. K. Wheeler, Mr. and Mrs. N. W. Graves, Mr. and Mrs. R. M. Wheeler, Mr. and Mrs. Townsend Seely and Edmund Seely, resolved to organize themselves into a Congregational church to be known by the name of the church of Au Sable Grove and resolved to have the sacrament administered on the ensuing Sabbath. The meeting opened and closed with prayer. Mr. Chapman delivered an appropriate lecture preparatory to communion.

T. SEELY, Clerk."

We are fortunate in having some personal reminiscences of this very period in the church's history given by Mrs. Cecilia Satterly now of Chicago, the oldest living member of this church.

Mrs. Satterly whose parents were Mr. and Mrs. Jeremiah Shepherd writes that as a little girl of six years she remembers very distinctly standing between her mother and Mrs. Rollin Wheeler the day the church was organized and that she was baptized at a service held at Dr. Seely's home before she was five years of age. She also adds that for a long time after the church was organized it had no resident pastor but ministers from different denominations came from Plainfield and Oswego to conduct the services. In a little book begun by Mrs. Satterly in 1850 are noted the names and the texts of the ministers who supplied each Sabbath, the majority being Methodists. Elder Beggs, a pioneer circuit rider, was one of them. Mrs. Satterly closes with this tribute that those who founded the church have left good records and a foundation that has upheld the structure which this generation have so worthily and faithfully erected.

The little band kept adding others to its roll and on June 11, 1854 resolved unanimously to change their relation from the Fox River Union to some Presbytery and also to substitute Presbytery for Congregational government. This change was effected the next September and James R. McLain, Townsend Seely and O. C. Johnson were elected elders. The church was to be known as the First Presbyterian church of Au Sable Grove. The first trustees were

New manse, the land being given by Dr. Seely. The exact cost cannot be accurately stated but was probably between seven and eight hundred dollars. Some of the families contributing were, O. C. Johnson, S. M. Satterly, John N. French, James R. McLain, A. K. Wheeler, A. T. Howell, Wm. A. Jessup, J. C. Carpenter, H. S. Jessup, E. S. Satterly, Edmund Seely, Jeremiah Shepherd, T. Seely, Robert Gates, and Archibald Hopkins. It is also noted that the Goudie family donated walnut logs.

We note as early as 1859 certain amounts of money were given for benevolent purposes but in 1862 Presbytery recommends as regular objects of benevolence the following, Home and Foreign Missions, Educational Cause and the American Bible Society.

The first mention of building a church was in 1863, the services since the organization sixteen years previous were still conducted in the school house—Sunday school being part of the regular service.

The contract of the new church was not let until the summer of 1866 to Fisher and Merrill of Aurora for the sum of \$3,300. The land on which the church stands and its grounds were given by Dr. Seely. When the building was completed or nearly so it was found not to be built strong enough in the roof to support it, hence the rods you see were put in to hold it together and from that time on it has been a united church.

The dedication services were held October 4, 1866 and at the same time Rev. E. J. Stewart was installed as pastor. For several years Mr. Stewart conducted services in the Carpenter, now Ridge, school house six miles distant. A number from that neighborhood united with the church and two elders, Jonathan Carpenter and Luke N. Steel, were elected from the group.

Rev. Theodore Jessup in 1873 began his notable pastorate of fourteen years. His next pastorate was at Booneville, N. Y., where he labored for twenty-nine years. A bronze tablet has been erected there to his memory. We find the report in 1881 of the Sunday school: number of officers 6, number of teachers 11, adult scholars 70, intermediate 42, primary 23. Total membership 140 and average attendance 53. The church contributed that year \$90 to the different benevolent boards.

The woman's missionary society was organized March 10, 1879 in response to an appeal from the pulpit by Rev. Theodore Jessup. The first meeting was

held at the manse and the officers elected were: President, Mrs. T. F. Jessup; vice president, Mrs. O. C. Johnson; secretary, Miss Mary Goudie; treasurer, Miss Sarah Jessup.

The organization of the Christian Endeavor occurred in 1887. A committee composed of O. C. Johnson, C. E. Sexton and Miss Clara L. Seely (Mrs. Harry Jones) was appointed to present the constitution and by-laws to the session.

From the annual report of the church to Presbytery in 1889 the church membership was 98. The six elders were W. A. Jessup, Edmund Seely, C. A. Hopkins, Jesse Carpenter, R. M. Wheeler and S. W. Johnson. Our boastfulness of up-to-date customs in these modern times receives a set back as we note the church in the late 80's had officially appointed ushers, Clinton S. Carpenter and S. C. Goodale.

The fiftieth anniversary of the church was a memorable event on September 27, 1898 and was celebrated by an inspiring program of music and splendid addresses. The history of the church was read by Edmund Seely, a charter member, he with three others being the only living charter members at that time.

During the pastorate of Rev. M. E. Todd which began in 1900 the church underwent extensive repairs. The entrance was changed from the south to the west, the pulpit and choir were transferred from the north end of the church to the new addition built on the east

The M. B. club was pleasantly entertained at the home of Mrs. Otto Christian. After a bountiful dinner the program was given by Miss Evelyn Hooper and Mrs. Michaels of Aurora way. Miss Hooper gave a very interesting account of her trip to Europe last year. Having spent several months in Finland, she told much of the life and customs of that country. She also spent a short time in London and Paris. Miss Hooper and Miss Michaels gave several duets on Hawaiian harps and Miss Hooper sang

Miss Evelyn Schlapp and Mrs. Frank Fidyment entertained in the latter's home Saturday afternoon from 3 to 4 complimentary to Mrs. Dorothy Thompson Wheeler. Pine and white decorations were used throughout the house also the menu. Entertainment consisted of contests, for which prizes were won by Mrs. George Hopkins and Mrs. J. A. Goudie. Presents were numerous and beautiful. They were presented in a decorated basket by Mae Louise Kellogg

and Lois Mae Hopkins. At the close of the entertainment refreshments, consisting of ice cream, cake, and candy, were served by the hostess assisted by Margaret Schlapp. After March 1, Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler will reside on the groom's father's farm.

Foreman-Larson Wedding Performed at Newark

Miss Ruby Larson and Howard Foreman Married by the Rev. L. L. Masted at the Home of the Bride Friday Evening.

Miss Ruby Larson, youngest daughter of Mrs. Malinda Larson, became the bride of Howard Foreman of Downers Grove at a pretty home wedding which took place at the home of the bride's mother Friday night. The ceremony was performed at 8 o'clock in the presence of the immediate relatives of the contracting parties. The Rev. L. L. Masted of the Newark Lutheran church officiated.

Attending the bride was her sister, Miss Leo Nora Larson, while Harold Foreman of Downers Grove, a brother of the bridegroom, acted as bestman. The bride was attractive in a white Canton crepe dress with hat and accessories to correspond, and wore a bouquet of or orchid sweet peas and roses. Miss Leo Nora wore green Canton crepe with white accessories and a corsage bouquet of orchid sweet peas and roses. Miss Evelyn Peterson played a wedding march as the group took their place and later Miss Peterson sang "I Love You Truly." Following the ceremony a two-course dinner was served. The home was decorated with white peonies, white hydrangias and palms. Mr. and Mrs. Foreman departed the same evening on a wedding trip.

Mrs. Foreman has been a teacher in the intermediate room of the Newark school the past five years. She attended the school and took her senior year in the Sandwich Township high school, one year at North Central college in Naperville. The bridegroom is an organizer of diamond ball leagues in Illinois and adjoining states.

The guests present at this happy event were the bridegroom's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Foreman of Downers Grove, Mrs. Stella Anderson and daughter Virginia, Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson, Mrs. Rosier, Clarence Olmstead, all of Downers Grove, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Loveless of Monroe, Wisconsin, Harold Foreman of Downers Grove, Harland Johnson of Helmar, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Morrison of Lisbon, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Peterson, Mrs. M. E. Peterson, the Misses Darlene Miller, Elvina Osmonson and Evelyn Peterson, Howard Miller, of Downers Grove.

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Howard Miller, of Downers Grove.
The Rev. Masted acted as toastmaster and many of the guests responded with toasts to the happy couple.

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With grandpa it was a gig and a gal.
With dad it was a flivver and a flapper.
With son it's a plane and a jane.

Wagner

Sable Grove. The first trustees were chosen in 1857.

We find the question of a suitable salary was an item in those early days and in 1856 the church agreed to pay the Rev. John Walker about \$300 a year and a donation. The first donation was held at the home of Seth M. Satterly and amounted to \$63.

In 1857 the first "parsonage house" as quoted from the records was built on the present site now occupied by the

to the new addition built on the east providing a session room also. The manse later received its share of enlarging and repairing.

The peak of highest membership was reached in 1902 when the number enrolled was 180, 55 being received in one year—Rev. Todd, the pastor.

Rev. D. T. Robertson began his ministry in 1903 and by his vigorous efforts a furnace was installed for heating the church and the commodious sheds for the comfort of the horses

were built, the perfection of the motor vehicle not being reached at that date.

The first every member canvass of the community took place in 1914 during the pastorate of Rev. W. H. Liggett, putting the church on a new and better financial basis. The first financial secretary was Mrs. Grace Gabel Johnson, now of Fresno, California.

The manse at this time had bravely stood the stress and storm of 58 years and not being able to bear more was slowly disintegrating, hence a building committee was appointed and the historic old land mark which has seen the pioneer come and go was razed to the ground. The new manse was completed in 1915 at the cost of \$3,592. The building committee was A. E. Kellogg, Frank Austin, Henry Wheeler, Bert Vickery, Charles Gates, Henry Schobert and William Campbell and the first to live in the house were Rev. and Mrs. E. S. Martin, newly married and beginning their first pastorate.

Rev. S. R. Bingham, our present pastor, came to us in the summer of 1920. Since that date several improvements on the church property have been made, electric lights installed in both church and manse, a new furnace in the church besides interior and exterior decorating.

As to the growth of the church we find that it began with 12 charter members and for a time additions were about equally between those uniting by letter and on confession of faith. In 1867 we note the membership was 55. Five years later there were 83 members and in 1889, 98 members. The numbers kept increasing and in 1898 the membership was 138. Ten years ago the report was 149 and today the membership is 155.

Tracing the increase in benevolences the reports show \$96 given to the different boards in 1881, \$194 in 1891, \$354 in 1902, \$445 in 1916 and for the year ending 1923 the total for benevolences was \$1560. After ten years of organization the missionary society in 1889 raised \$38 as its yearly offering to the boards. In the 34 years since that date the amount has increased to \$440 in 1923.

The young people of the church have maintained a Christian Endeavor society and yearly send delegates to its conferences. The teacher training classes, the school of missions and graded work in the Sunday school have proven educational factors in the community.

The benefits of organizations now long discontinued are still bearing fruit—Mrs. Henry Arlen with her Junior Christian Endeavor and Mrs. Belle Kellogg of the Loyal Temperance Legion are worthy examples. Special mention should also be given the Rev. George Harris for his youthful military company and C. S. Carpenter with his large Sunday school class of boys.

For over a period of seventy years the Seely family cared for the Communion elements, three generations having prepared the sacred service and only as the last moved away was it put into other hands. Faithfulness has ever characterized the Seely devotion to the church.

Inside the school house the people are decorously assembling. There is a pleasant hum, presently a hush. The minister arises and announces a hymn. The choir of John N. French, Edmund Seely, Mrs. Sexton, Mrs. Henry Jessup and Miss Julia Satterly sit in the center of the room. Mr. French pitches the tune with his tuning fork and followed by the support of the choir and congregation the hymn is brought to a triumphant finish. Smoothly the service flows on, little figures on the high benches softly swinging their feet back and forth, a fair faced matron framed in by a poke bonnet gently nods, the man seated by her side with severely combed hair and high swathed collar shifts his feet with little creaking of his fine boots. The sermon ends, a song, a prayer and after general exchange of greetings the teams are untied and soon the prairies drifts in. Softly the picture fades away and we are back in 1923 to modern homes and automobiles—"What has God wrought?"

[By Miss Mae Howell, read at the seventy-fifth anniversary of the church October 18, 1923.]

The day set for the celebration of the ninetieth anniversary of the Au Sable Grove Presbyterian church, Sunday, August 21, 1938, could not have been more perfect. The sky was clear and the air cool and fresh after the rain of Saturday. More than 350 were present at each of the three services during the day. Many were present from nearby towns and cities and some from neighboring states.

The program opened with a prelude by Mrs. Helen Wheeler Christian, church pianist. The Doxology was sung and the invocation given by the pastor, the Rev. Wesley L. Kosin. The Scripture and prayer was given by the Rev. S. R. Bingham, pastor of the First Presbyterian church, Janesville, Wisconsin. Mrs. Margaret Stewart Goudie sang a beautiful solo. The history of the church was read by Mrs. Mary Leitch Hall. Letters from two former pastors, the Rev. James C. Nansen, of Lost Springs, Kansas, and the Rev. James A. Smith, of Salem, Oregon, were read by James Hopkins, clerk of session.

After the hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy," Dr. D. T. Robertson, the pastor from 1903-1905 and now retired from pastoral duties but a recent missionary pastor at Lake Side, Oregon, spoke of the enduring qualities of the church because Jesus Christ promised to sustain it. As evidence that Christ has been and is building, he gave statistics showing the growth of the church in numbers, acquired property, missionary activity, educational interest and attainment, and in spiritual vitality. After the hymn, "Rock of Ages," the Rev. Oliver C. Johnson, pastor of the Presbyterian churches at Prairie du Sac and Waunakee, Wisconsin, gave the benediction.

A delicious and bounteous dinner was

numbers, but of steadfast Christians and that the influence of the church gradually changes lives. The Rev. Elmer S. Martin, pastor of the Northminster Presbyterian church of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, gave the closing prayer.

Many were entertained at homes for lunch between the afternoon and evening meetings.

The evening meeting opened at 7 o'clock. Mrs. Harold Christian played the prelude and the hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light," was sung, and the Nineteenth Psalm used as the responsive reading. The Rev. D. T. Robertson offered prayer and Mrs. Elnathan Wheeler sang a solo. The Rev. Elmer S. Martin delivered the first sermon of the evening, making plain the dependence of Christians upon God and also God's dependence on Christians to complete His plans. After the hymn, "The Old Rugged Cross," Dr. Paul Johnson gave a sermon and as the closing message summarized the activities and messages of the day. He presented the reason why people go to church and stated that the past of the church was a beautiful and sacred memory, a memory to be cherished; but that the future of the church is a challenge to us all. The congregation sang, "Our God, Our Help," and the Rev. Wesley L. Kosin dismissed the group with the benediction.

A few items of interest noted during the day was the presence of John Jessup, a life member of the church. Mr. Jessup will be 82 in September and is the oldest member of the church. Little Kenneth Murley Klett, 3½ months old, son of Roy and Margaret Murley Klett of Downers Grove, was the youngest present.

The flowers throughout the church were beautiful and the basket sent by

the Hasemeyer funeral home was presented to John Jessup.

Alvin Kellogg of Na-au-say and Mrs. Alice Litsey, of Aurora, twins, who were 73 years old their last birthday anniversary, were also present.

Sunday was the seventieth birthday anniversary of Dr. D. T. Robertson and Mrs. William Campbell was also celebrating her birthday anniversary.

The two oldest pieces of furniture date back to Civil war days, and are the marble top table at the altar and the haircloth chair.

For eighteen years church services were held in the Union schoolhouse, one-half mile west of the church. The present church building was constructed in 1866 and remodeled in 1902.

Leonard Milton of the Milton studios in Aurora took pictures throughout the day and many ordered them for keepsakes. Orders may still be placed with Otto Christian.

ized the Seely devotion to the church.
Only one minister during the church

history thus far has gone forth, Rev. Oliver Johnson.

In looking back we find pastors and families not mentioned in this imperfect sketch, what shall we say of them? Without their efforts and labors this church's history would be incomplete. "Other men labored and ye are entered into their labors."

We look to the church in the community in supplying the social life as well as the spiritual. The trend of the various social organizations of the community is toward the church. The hearty support and respect are freely given by the people of the community whether aligned with the church or not.

Silently and swiftly we leave present surroundings and are back to the old school house up the road; it is Sunday and the service is being held. To every hitching post and rail are tied the rigs of the congregation. By far the greater percent are lumber wagons with only one or two double seated buggies, the average speed of each team about six miles per hour. The aristocrat in this motley assemblage of vehicles is the single rockaway carriage of Elder J. R. McLain. Near it are tied the saddle horses ridden by his son, Carey, and daughter, Jane.

A delicious and bounteous dinner was served to all in cafeteria style on the lawn at the manse by the ladies of the Missionary society. All enjoyed very much the social hour during the dinner. The older ones renewed acquaintances and the younger ones made acquaintances.

The afternoon program opened with a pretude by Mrs. Harold Christian and a duet by Mrs. Marshall Updike and Miss Verda Tarr. The Rev. Oliver Johnson brought the first message of the afternoon. He related his memories of the church during the time he was a member and before, which included his earliest recollection of a divine service on the Wheeler road when his father and mother had a house-warming at the completion of their new house where the Otto Christians now reside. Elder Beggs, a Methodist circuit rider, preached the sermon. He also gave his recollections through the period of history beginning at his earliest memory to the time when he left this community to go out as a minister of the Gospel over forty years ago. The hymn, "I Love to Tell the Story," was sung and the Rev. S. R. Bingaman delivered a sermon speaking of the dependence of men on the church, stating also that the membership of the church is not made up of

