

Highland Baptist Church

by

Mrs. Mamie Speer Garton

Condensed from her complete history of the church as read at the fiftieth anniversary June 23, 1907, and until the closing of the church.



This church stood two miles north of the village and was built sometime 1875. The Highland Baptist Church was in use almost fifty years. It was torn down about 1943.

In the year of 1856 or 1857, Rev. L.L. Greenlee, then living on his farm in Clay township, having learned that there were a few Baptists in this vicinity came across on foot (perhaps 15 miles) and held services from time to time at the home of Mrs. Edgman. Sometime in the summer of 1857 the church was organized at Mrs. Edgman's. There were nine Charter members; Bro. Henry Merrick and wife, Bro. H.D. Dye and wife, Bro. Wm. Dye and wife, Dr. Brower and wife and Mrs. Edgman. The Rev. A.W. Everett, father of Dr. B.S. Everett, preached the sermon that day.

Rev. L.L. Greenlee continued to serve the church as pastor for ten years. His pastorate extended over the period when our country was divided over political questions and the dark clouds of strife at times even threatened the unity of the church. Membership grew from nine to twenty-three. Those were days in the history of our church and state which called forth heroic action in the work of the ministry. The record makes mention of one occasion when the monthly support of the pastor was one dollar and a pair of socks. During this period Bro. A.G. Owen was elected church clerk which office he held for twenty years.

The church was very punctual in her observance of the Lord's Supper, strict in regard to moral conduct of members and liberal in support of the church. During 1874 Bro. J.M. Neslon, pastor said, "if the brethren would try to build a home of worship, he would preach one year for nothing. Challenge accepted.

During 1867 the meeting place was the Brower Schoolhouse and in 1868 they worshipped at Brush Schoolhouse.

In February 1875 the committee to locate a site for building consisted of brethren, D.G. Casey, W.G. Bomer and A.F. Owen. Location at the cross roads near widow Renshaw's house. (cor. S.W., S.E., Sec. 24-68-23, Jefferson township) about two miles north of Clio, Ia.

The committee appointed to raise funds and build the house reported their work was done. The church was dedicated on August 8, 1875, during the pastorate of Rev. Ira Blakely. Rev. Brown of Ottumwa, Iowa preached the Dedication sermon. They now had a church home, clear of debt.

The first revival was held in January, by the first pastor the Rev. L.L. Greenlee. On April 1, 1876, the first Sunday School was organized at Highland and Bro. D.G. Casey was elected superintendent.

In May 1895, Rev. C.W. Heady a young consecrated worker and efficient pastor was called, and new interest was evident. In September 1895 Rev. R. Shipley was received into the church and baptized by the young pastor in the presence of a vast concourse of people. The scene they presented as they stood in the water on that beautiful day is one never to be forgotten, the candidate, a man of 80 years, with his form bowed with the weight of years, and the administrator, a man scarcely more than a boy, in the health and vigor of young manhood.

The year of 1902 was a dark period in the history of the church. No services were held for over a year, the longest in the history. Many steadfast members held together and in spite of deaths and removals, still held high the banner of King Emmanuel.

Pastors during the first fifty years;

1st pastor, Rev. L.L. Greenlee, 1856-1866	
Rev. Wm. Barnett 1867-68	Rev. L.L. Greenlee 1869
Rev. Huckalby 1870	Rev. A. Johnson 1871
Rev. G.W. Herron 1872-73	Rev. J.M. Nelson 1874
Rev. Ira Blakely 1875	Rev. L.L. Greenlee 1876-79
Rev. Wm. Barnett 1879-82	Rev. G.W. Smith 1883-94
Rev. J.M. Waklee May 1895	Rev. C.W. Heady May 1895-96
Rev. John B. Smith 1896-97	Rev. C.B. Hole 1897-97
Rev. Julius Nelson 1898-99	Rev. J.F. Barron 1900
Rev. C.B. Carey 1901	none 1902

Rev. J.H. Perry, 1903-04 he was helped by Rev. M.S. Clark. Rev. G.W. Smith, 1905 who had the greatest gathering in of souls.

In 1897 and again in 1905 the church entertained the Eden Baptist Association.

In Sept. 1888 a delegation consisting of D.G. Casey, A.F. Owen and H.D. Dye and their wives were sent to attend the organization of the Unity Baptist Church at Maple Grove.

An organ was purchased in June 1898. The Childrens Day exercises in 1898 was the largest congregation ever at Highland.

The Baptist Young Peoples Union was organized Jan. 1, 1906.

Two have become ministers from the church. In the first 50 years on the day of the church's 50th anniversary June 23, 1907. Rollo C. Speer, a young man of nineteen years of age was licensed to preach the gospel

and he became a famous minister. In the second 50 years in 1908, Oral Hesseltine was baptized and later became a minister.

Two men were working at some dangerous task. Said one, "They're having meetin' over to Highland, so they'll be prayin' fer us," The thot' stuck in the other man's mind, "If they are praying for me, I better pray for myself," He came to church, gave his life to the master and lived an honorable life.

A boy, you might think never had a serious thought, left to live in Kansas. There he joined a Baptist church, served as a faithful deacon, all through his associations at Highland.

Pastors after the first 50 years.

Rev. G.W. Smith 1907	Bro. Arthur A. Woods 1908
Bro. Hal Norton 1909-10	Rev. J.P. Thomas 1911-13
Rev. G.W. Smith 1914-16	no record for 1916

In 1943 the church was sold and torn down. The material was used in a tenant house.

For 86 years Highland held up to the world the banner of the cross, She passed through lights and shadows, over heights and through valleys, encouraged by gracious revivals and depressed by careless indifference.

Yes, Highland Baptist Church is gone. Cattle now wander over the spot where, long before the church was founded, the buffalo roamed, but her influence for good lives on.

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Isaiah, 55:11