

Chilton Times-Journal

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FROM THE CHILTON TIMES OF JULY 7, 1900

Nearly seventy years have elapsed since the first missionary worker visited Calumet county. Imagine the county, clad with primitive forests, the sporting place of wolves, deer bear foxes and other wild game, no roads, only a few log houses, hundreds of miles from a railroad, and you will have an idea of the frontier life of a man exploring the county and preaching the gospel to a few scattered families.

Such was the life of Rev. John Clark, who introduced Methodism into the valley of the Fox river in 1832. Arriving at Green Bay July 21, he immediately went down along the east shore of Lake Winnebago, making a number of converts and gathering them into a small band. They met in a little log house which occupied the site near the graveyard, about a half mile northwest of Brothertown. The first public service was conducted in 1835, about 50 being present. Prior to this time, they met in private homes and among them were a sprinkling of close communion Baptists. It was a great day for the people when the missionary came. They would cease work and give him a reception which would usually end up in song, exposition of the Word and prayer. They had trying experiences very often in reaching the place.

Rev. Clark, when appointed to the aforesaid field of work, was a member of the New York conference, but in 1836 joined the Illinois conference and was made presiding elder of the Chicago district, which embraced the country 100 miles south of Chicago and 250 miles north, with a breadth of from 40 to 80 miles. In 1837 he made the journey from Chicago to Green Bay, via Milwaukee, and returned, stopping at Stockbridge and

Brothertown. A few nights he slept in the snow, wrapped in his buffalo robe, and though this was cold comfort, yet the people in contrast gave him a warm welcome.

Church services had been conducted for some time, though no organization was fully perfected until 1838. Rev. H. W. Frink was now in charge of the circuit, and he preached his first sermon Jan. 25, 1838, on this text in John: "Verily, verily I say unto you; the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God and they that hear shall live."

That year a new circuit was planned, called the Deansburg (the new name of Brothertown) and Fonddu Lac circuit was in charge of the presiding elder of the Milwaukee district. It is remarkable to note with what aggressiveness the conferences of those days launched out into this frontier work. The men that were sent had little preparation; they were not in the work because it was a profession but because the love of God for humanity constrained them, and when the Rev. Jesse Halsted came, in 1839, a great revival took place, resulting in large accessions to the church. Mr. Halsted had a strong personality, making him very popular among people, and exemplified the truth that a man, to be a leader of men, must be a servant to all with whom he comes in contact. He was returned in 1840 and again in 1841. The field of work was then known as the Brothertown Indian Mission and the reports show that there was a membership of 82--12 whites and 70 Indians.

There are always milestones in the experience of a church and the year '42 was one of them. That year the first board of trustees was elected of the Brothertown M. E. Society. They had a quarterly meeting on Jan. 29, Rev. Jas. R. Goodrich presiding. The following board of trustees were elected: R. Abner, Sen., David Wiggins, John C. Hammer, Heziah Fowler and Wm. Fowler. These trustees were empowered to buy land for the erection of a church and parsonage. A lot consisting of

three acres was purchased of Thomas Cummock, on April 2, and a committee of three appointed, consisting of Mr. Cummock, Mr. Hammer and Mr. Wiggins, to erect the church. The site chosen is the one on which the present edifice stands. We sometimes hear of children changing their names, and it seems that Brothertown had another name about this time. It was known as Deahsburg for some time and then in 1842 the field of work was spoken of as the Lake Winnebago Mission at Manchester. Before the "log chapel" and the "log parsonage" were completed a quarterly meeting took place in which the following stewards were elected: Chester Ford, W. W. Wright, David Allen, Thomas McClaughey and Morris Farmer. This perfected the organization and placed the Brothertown church at the head of Methodist churches organized in this section of the state. Of the first members, none remain, save Mrs. Rebekah Hohnson, who lives south of Brothertown, and Mrs. Hannah Cummock.

A memorial was drafted in 1843, thanking the "friends of religion" for assisting in the erection of the church and parsonage. The church had four windows, rough hewn planks for seats, a roughly hewn pulpit; people did not sing by note and the collections were taken only once in two months. Men were happy and content. They worshipped with a zeal. Rev. Hiram W. Frink, who was appointed missionary in 1842, did excellent work for three years and was assisted by "local preachers" who received license to preach from the general conference. The missionaries had very large circuits to cover and in their absence the local workers carried on the work. On account of family affliction, Mr. Frink was compelled to leave the work and Rev. W. Miller was appointed to fill the vacancy. Mr. Miller was an enthusiastic man and began his work Apr. 4, 1845. In his book, entitled "Thirty Years in the Itinerancy", he relates some thrilling experiences how that old log chapel, which was hewn inside and outside, and could seat about 150 people, was often "packed to its utmost capacity," about 100 finding standing room. A great revival broke out and 75 persons professed to be converted in four weeks.

It was about this time that Mr. Miller went to Stockbridge village as a Macedonian cry had come from that direction. The first meeting was held at David Wiggins's, one-half mile south of the mission house, which still stands and is now occupied by Mr. Westenberg in striking the iron while it is hot. Mr. R. S. Hayward was appointed local preacher and served at Stockbridge as well as Brothertown. Those were remarkable days and the colored population were unusually interested and active in service for God, which the following from Mr. Miller's books shows:

"Father Jacob Chicks, head chief of the Stockbridge nation, had been but recently converted and his heart was overflowing. Tall and erect in form, with a brow to rule an empire, he arose in the midst of the great assembly (held in a barn) and came forward to the stand and said in English: 'Me been a great sinner, as all my people know.' His noble form shook with emotion and his manly face was flooded with tears. The whole audience wept with him, for his tears were sublimely eloquent. Recovering himself, he simply added, 'All me want now is to love Christ.' He then addressed the audience in their own language."

It appears from this that the colored population had a language of their own, but gradually became acquainted with the English, the Sunday school, which was organized in 1839 at Brothertown, becoming a great help in that direction.

The present church edifice with its quaint little steeple and weather worn appearance, was planned in 1845. The old log chapel was too small. A man in Stockbridge gave the timber, the people made a bee and cut the same, a fund was started and a ladies' aid society from the east sent a box of drygoods valued at \$300, which was sold. Rev. Miller took active part in the construction, and the edifice was completed in 1846. It occupies a restful position and stands in the foreground of the village as you approach it from the north. Since its construction

it has been remodeled some, within and without, by willing hands, and has never been in the predicament that another church was, which sadly stood in need of repairs. Of that church they say, that the minister reckoned the cost of repairs to be \$500 and when he had announced it one night at prayer a very wealthy and equally stingy member of the congregation arose and said he would give one dollar. Just as he sat down, however, a lump of plastering fell from the ceiling and hit him upon the head, whereupon he arose hastily and called out that he made a mistake--he would give \$50. This was too much for a poor man in the back part of the room and forgetting himself he said, "O, Lord, hit him again."

A parsonage was constructed in 1847 and has been the scene of many donations. People often did not have money to give, so they supplied the parson with vegetables, eggs, butter, meat, etc. But we are constantly changing and it might be added too, that the circuit riders are not having such a hard time of it as they used to. It may be of interest to members of the church and readers of The Times to have a list of all the men who served as pastors on the circuit which consisted of Brothertown, Stockbridge, Brant and Gravesville. Records also show that the whole stretch of country to Lake Michigan belonged to the circuit rider years ago, but men seldom undertake the task of covering so large a parish, in this state, nowadays. The following is the list of pastors that have served on the circuit and the year denoting the time of appointment:

John Clark, 1832; George White, 1836; H. W. Frink, 1837; Jessie Halsted, 1839; H. W. Frink, 1842; H. R. Coleman, 1845; Henry Requa, 1847; David Lewis, 1848; William M. Osborne, 1849; Jessie Halsted, 1850; M. Woodley, 1852; William Sturgis, 1854; William Spell, 1855; T. Orbison, 1856; Jessie Halsted, 1857; William Robotham, 1859; A. Griswold, 1859; T. Peep, 1860; J. P. Suffron, 1861; A. A. Horton,

1862; J. Cole, 1863; T. Potter, 1864; William M. Anderson, 1865;
J. Boynton, 1867; A. J. Brill, 1868; William Trever, 1869; J. B.
Cole, 1871; J. W. Whitney, 1872; R. Blackburn, 1873; J. S. Bolton,
1874; C. Baldock, 1876; O. B. Clark, 1879; J. C. Robbins, 1882;
John A. Bevier, 1883; William D. Ames, 1884; Thomas Ross, 1885; C. W.
Turner, 1888; John Pooley, 1890; C. A. Stillman, 1891; F. C. Rochelle,
1891, (unexpired term of Stillman); Daniel Woodward, 1892; S. Olson,
1895; J. F. Decker, 1896; J. H. James, 1897 and H. D. Stone, 1899.

You will note that many of the names begin with "J", probably John, James or Joseph, all men of the Bible who have fought the good fight. "William" predominates probably because of William Tell who had such great faith in hitting the mark. None of the pastors stayed longer than three years at a time, though some were returned. This was due to the time limit which, however, the last general conference held at Chicago last May, has modified so that a pastor can now stay indefinitely, pending on the wish of the people.

Seeing the neighboring churches have been mentioned, it may not be out of place to briefly state that the present church edifice at Gravesville was erected in 1868 at a cost of \$2,100~~0~~ and dedicated on Sept. 23 by Rev. W. G. Miller. This church was dropped from the circuit last year and is now supplied by Rev. McKim, a student of Lawrence university at Appleton. The Brant church was erected in 1873, at a cost of \$1,534.65 and dedicated Dec. 14 by Rev. H. C. Tilton, of Appleton. The Stockbridge church was built in 1869, during Rev. Boynton's pastorate. Its cost was about \$2,000.

The membership in these churches has decreased some in the last few years, owing to many removals and a German population taking their places. Rev. D. H. Stone who is the present pastor on the circuit, gives each congregation a service every Sunday, Stockbridge being supplied in the morning; Brant in the afternoon, and Brothertown at night.

Interest in religious work has also been stimulated by an organization known as the Calumet County Sunday School Association which was organized about 35 years ago. The Association has held semi-annual meetings until last year when it was voted to have the meetings annually. The meeting, this year, occurs at the Brothertown M. E. Church on Tuesday and Wednesday, July 10 and 11. The invitation is for all to come. A program has been arranged which is given below:

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

1:30 devotional meeting, Ida Mann; 2 o'clock--Five prominent truths that every Sunday school teacher should keep in view, Mrs. Alma LaPrairie. 2:30--To what extent, if at all, should prizes, rewards, etc., be given to induce regular attendance? Edith Reader. 3:00--What is the home department of the Sunday school? Flora Sheldon. 3:30--Weak points in Sunday school work and how to strengthen them. M. Powell.

TUESDAY EVENING

7:30-- Song service, Brothertown choir. 8:00--Devotional exercises, Rev. H. D. Stone. 8:15--Address, Rev. J. E. Manning.

WEDNESDAY MORNING

9:30--Opening exercises. 10:00--Roll call and written reports from Sunday schools. 10:30--Methods, helps and suggestions in planning exercises for special days. Mrs. B. Knickerbocker. 11:00--Upon whom does the work of the Sunday school depend? Mrs. E. M. Dudley. 11:30--Paper, "Christ in Hebrews", Ivy Greeley.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

1:30-- Praise Service, S. G. Ruegg. 2:00--Paper, "Our First Parents' Estate and their Fall", Flora Hatch. 2:15-- Daily Life of the Sunday school teacher and its effect on his pupils. Mrs. E. Fowler. 2:45--What are the defects in the Sunday school that cause boys and young men to leave it? Cecil Buxton. 3:15--Parents' duty and privilege concerning the Sunday school. Dr. A. M. Evans. 3:35--Is Christian experience essential to a Sunday school teacher's highest usefulness? Mrs. R. A. McComb. 4:00--Business.