

**A History of the Church
of the Brethren in
Southern Iowa**

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Compiled by

Willis P. Rodabaugh

and

A. H. Brower

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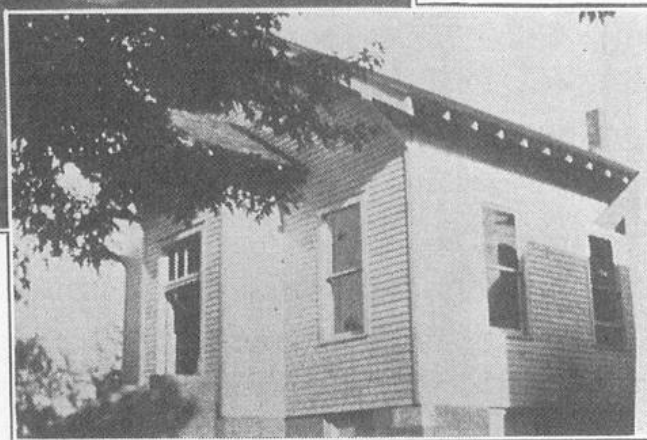
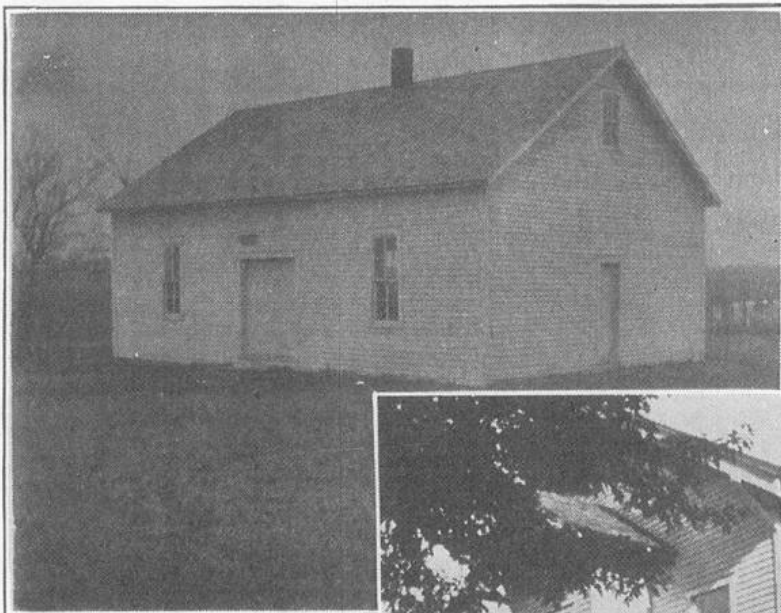
Elgin, Illinois

1924

CHAPTER VI

The Franklin Church

This church is located in section 14 of Center Township, Decatur County, Iowa. It was organized in the fall of 1858 at the home of Bro. Christian Heaston. Eld. Abraham Replogle was present and installed three breth-



Old and New, Franklin Congregation

ren into the ministry; namely, Brethren Wm. Stout, Samuel Garber, and Harvey Spurlock. Bro. Spurlock soon moved away. Among the charter members may be found

the names of Garber, Huff, Hendricks, Heaston, Harshbarger, Ownsby, Payton, Stout, Spurlock, Chandler, Pace, Guyer and Sears (of whom Eld. A. L. Sears is a descendant).

The exact number of members at organization is not known—perhaps about twenty-five. In about the year 1859 or 1860 there were eighteen added to the church, including Bro. L. M. Kob and wife. He was chosen to the ministry in three or four years.

The first communion meeting was held at the home of Bro. James Ownsby, in Decatur City.

After the organization was completed, there being no house of worship built until 1874 the preaching services were held in schoolhouses once a month or oftener, and social or prayer meetings were held at private houses. By the untiring efforts of the above-named three ministers the Gospel of simplicity was being preached in all parts of the county and surrounding community. The work being ably seconded by the lay membership, it grew and prospered to such an extent that at one time the membership reached about 170. They were, however, much scattered, some residing in Lucas and Wayne Counties.

In the early eighties the church began to decline, and Bro. Samuel Garber expressed himself as deploring the lack of unity and consecration in the members of the congregation. Just how the sentiment of division originated and what progress it made we are unable to say, but we find that the promoters of division were given opportunity to get in their work.

In 1892 S. H. Bashor came to this place and held a series of meetings at the request of some of the more progressive members of the church. He began the meetings at the Franklin churchhouse; then they were trans-

ferred to the Union schoolhouse, where the Progressive Brethren organization was effected. They then built a house one mile west of the Franklin house and about a dozen members went with them at that time, including one deacon and wife. No minister withdrew at that time. The attendance greatly decreased at the old church, and the work has been greatly hindered ever since on account of the division. The Progressives have three churchhouses in this county, all in Center Township. They claim to be "just like the Church of the Brethren," and those who know no better in regard to the matter go to the Progressive churches, because they are nearer home.

The church had declined to such an extent that in 1914 there were only eighteen members in the Franklin church. In the fall of 1915 Bro. J. F. Burton, of Northern Iowa, was called to hold a series of meetings and the visible result was that sixteen were baptized, besides some renewing their covenant. The work took on new life, and there is hope that in spite of all discouragements they may yet be a force in the community.

Bro. Samuel Garber had the oversight of the church from his ordination to the time of his death, in 1888. Then Bro. Wm. Stout was bishop until his death in 1898, being assisted by Bro. L. M. Kob, who was then presiding elder until his death, in 1911, with the exception of 1902-1906, when he resigned and Eld. A. Wolf was chosen as overseer. Since 1911 Bro. A. L. Sears has looked after the spiritual interests of the flock.

The Sunday-school was organized long before the churchhouse was built, and was first held in a schoolhouse, afterwards in a Methodist churchhouse, and later transferred to the new church building. Large numbers attended and a good, interesting Sunday-school was the

result. Bro. Jacob Castor was a loyal superintendent for years. After the Progressives built their churchhouse so near, the attendance greatly diminished, and it has not fully revived, but a faithful few have been enjoying the privilege of keeping the Sunday-school alive. One of the sisters said, "It has not been evergreen, although we have attempted to make it such this year, but on account of bad roads and sickness this winter, we were unable to accomplish our purpose."

Prayer and social meetings were held for a number of years, but on account of the scattered homes of the members only occasional meetings of this kind were held the last few years. In the last year or so there has been a Christian Workers' meeting organized, and a lively interest is reported in that as well as in other church activities.

Besides the ministers already named the following may be mentioned: Samuel Riddle, prior to 1878, moved west and has since died; Jonathan Swihart, a year or so before 1878, was a fluent and entertaining speaker; Edward Johnson, elected in 1900, died 1903; J. D. Brower, by letter for one year, 1912; A. L. Sears, elected ———, ordained ———.

Some of the deacons are as follows: James Ownsby, died in 1884; Howell Chandler, before 1878, died in 1898; Jacob Castor, prior to 1878, died 1889; S. V. Sears, prior to 1878, moved away, 1886; J. J. Sears, chosen 1894, died 1911; L. D. Garber and Hiram Porter, installed 1879; the latter died in 1888; John T. Caster and John Moore, chosen in 1889; Glen Petticord, chosen 1907; Nelson Prowant, installed about 1905; served for a year or so; Abe McVey was chosen in 1894; F. A. Garber, who is one of the ministers, was installed in 1915 and advanced to the full ministry Sept. 16, 1921.

A new churchhouse was built. It was begun in 1919, and was dedicated June 6, 1920. Bro. M. W. Emmert, of Mount Morris, Ill., preached the dedicatory sermon. He was accompanied by Eld. D. L. Miller (of sacred memory), who gave three of his Bible land talks. The present ministers (Nov. 19, 1923) are A. L. Sears, F. A. Garber, and Bro. Olaf Caskey, who has lately moved to Leon, but as yet has not presented his letter. This was formerly a part of the Fairview church and when first organized was called the Decatur County church.

Eld. Samuel A. Garber

Samuel A. Garber was born in Cambria County, Pa., Jan. 1, 1832. His parents, John and Sarah Garber, were of German descent and members of the Church of the Brethren. In 1838 they emigrated to Iowa, coming by steamboat down the Ohio River and up the Mississippi. They settled in Jefferson County, near Libertyville, his father, John Garber, being the first elder in the Libertyville congregation and the first Brethren preacher ever ordained in Iowa. Samuel grew to manhood and was married in the spring of 1853 to Nancy A. Peebler, whose ancestors were members of the Brethren church in Switzerland shortly after the church was organized. They soon fled to Holland and later to America, to escape military duty.

Samuel and his wife united with the Church of the Brethren shortly after they were married, and in the spring of 1855 emigrated to Decatur County, Iowa, settling a few miles north of Leon in Center Township. He afterwards traded this farm for another, also in Center Township, where he lived until his death. He was elected to the ministry when the Decatur County church was or-

ganized, and ordained a number of years later, being the first elder ordained in the Decatur County church. After being elected to the ministry he entered actively into the work, and during the rest of his life preached almost every Sunday. In addition to his regular appointments he was called to all parts of the Southern District of Iowa and North Missouri. Twenty-five years ago it would have been rare to meet a person in Decatur County who had never heard Sam Garber or Lewis Kob preach. The seed sown still remains, and there are many fruitful fields in this part of the country where they labored, waiting for the harvesters.

Bro. Garber always made a great effort to attend all the District Meetings, and held various offices in the District. It was thought by some that he was favorable to the Progressives when the church was divided. The following circumstance will show how he stood:

While the division was going on among the various congregations a sister from the Decatur County church wrote a letter to the *Progressive Christian*, complaining about conditions in the church, and a Progressive wrote to Bro. Garber, suggesting that it was about time for a division in Decatur County. His answer was: "The Scripture says, 'Beware of them that cause divisions.'" In a letter still preserved, which he wrote to his son only a few minutes before he was killed, he spoke of the church and deplored the fact that the local congregation was not prospering as it ought to do. On the 14th day of June, 1888, he, with his daughter Fannie, drove to Leon and on account of the threatening weather started for home early. They were overtaken by the storm two miles from town and he was killed by a stroke of lightning. He was 56 years, 6 months and 14 days of age. His wife died in 1910.

Bro. Garber was a man of genial disposition. His education was limited to what was afforded by the country school in pioneer days of Iowa. He was a lover of music, and taught singing schools at different places. His work was accomplished by tireless energy rather than natural ability, and the joy of having done his duty was a greater reward than "filthy lucre."

F. A. Garber.

Eld. Wm. J. Stout

Wm. J. Stout was born Sept. 22, 1816. He united with the Church of the Brethren in 1844, came to Decatur County, Iowa, in 1854, was chosen to the ministry in 1856, and ordained to the eldership about 1877. With Eld. L. M. Kob he had the oversight of the Decatur County church from the time of the death of Eld. Samuel Garber, in 1888, to the time of his own death, Jan. 23, 1898.

When a young man Bro. Stout married Letitia Sears, and together they traveled life's journey. To them were born seven children—four girls and three boys. One son died in childhood. Eld. Stout engaged in the milling business at an early day at Leon, Iowa. He was no loud speaker, having a weak voice, but his loudest sermons were his daily life. His earnest desire was always for the enlargement of the borders of Zion. While he never made a great mark as a public speaker, he deserves mention as a pillar in the local congregation of Decatur County.

. Eld. L. M. Kob

L. M. Kob, son of Philip and Christena Kob, was born in Dauphin County, Pa., on Christmas day, 1834. His mother, whose maiden name was Christena Rothrock, died when he was about two years old. When he was about six

years old, he, with his father, stepmother (whose maiden name was Barbary Horst), one brother and one sister, moved to Henry County, Ind., where he grew to manhood, and in 1857 was joined in marriage to Miss Anna Wimmer, daughter of Abraham and Hannah (Heckman) Wimmer of that locality.

Eld. L. M. Kob and wife were the parents of five children, three daughters and two sons. The sons preceded their father in death, one in youth and the other just two weeks after he was married. Two of the girls are married, and with their families are living in the county of their birth. The other one, with the mother, resides on the farm on which the parents located in 1858. Thirteen grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren came to them before the death of Bro. Kob.

As soon as they were married, Brother and Sister Kob started west with ox team to find themselves a home, settling in Decatur County, Iowa, where he resided at the time of his death, June 26, 1911.

There was a Church of the Brethren already established at this place, although they had no churchhouse until 1874, when one was built adjoining the Franklin cemetery. Prior to this time meetings were held at members' houses; also in schoolhouses here and there. After about one and one-half years Eld. Kob and wife, with sixteen others, united with the church. Three or four years later he was called to the ministry and was advanced in a very short time and ever tried to serve the church faithfully. True, Eld. Kob, with joys intermingled, met* with many trials and discouragements, and sometimes seemingly lost faith in his fellow-man, but his faith in Christ his Savior never faltered.

In the early days of his ministry he traveled much on

foot and horseback; later by wagon, and then with a single open rig, through heat, rain, mud, snow and cold, seldom failing to fill his appointments. The writer well remembers a trip with him in an open buggy to Nodaway County, Mo., when the thermometer registered 20 degrees below zero. On our return trip a heavy snowstorm set in, through which we traveled nearly all day; then stopped with a dear sister in Christ, and family, where we had to remain several days, on account of the deep drifts, still some forty miles from home. So anxious were we to get there that we had the pleasure of breaking the roads much of the way when we did resume our trip.

Another time Bro. Kob went to Mercer County, Mo. A fearful snowstorm overtook him. He left his conveyance and started for home on his faithful beast, riding through tunnels dug in the snow, over fences, through fields—any way to reach his little family. During this experience his helpmate was struggling to get along with the chores, etc., through the deep snow. What part will she have over there? Let these two instances suffice to show some little of what he underwent for the great cause he loved so well. All his work was done with but little recompense so far as this world goes, but the record was kept up yonder. He often said in late years, when advised by friends to stop and give the work over to younger ones, "Better wear out than rust out." His motto was, "Spend and be spent."

He was called to perform the marriage ceremonies for about one hundred couples and to conduct the funerals of nearly two hundred people. The last service he held away from home was the funeral of a friend, April 10, 1911. He kept the family altar burning bright as long as he was able to exercise in that capacity. His form is gone

from us, but surely his works do follow him. His power in the pulpit lay in his aptness at illustrating, backed by his personal zeal and consecration, which was devoid of anything that was ludicrous. The expositions and illustrations that he advanced impressed one with the character, devotion and sincerity behind them.

Most of this article is the words of his daughter, Jemima Kob.