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History of the  
Lima, Wisconsin  
Presbyterian Church

By

Martha M. Boyd

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[1928]



The Lima Presbyterian church was organized December 10, 1850. This was brought about through the influence of Rev. George Lamb, who came from the East in the summer of 1840 to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Johnstown, and was installed as their first Pastor in the fall of 1850. Steps leading up to this began in 1847 by the Presbyterian Synod of Illinois which sent Rev. John Morrison of the Reformed Presbyterian Church to Rock Prairie to do missionary work among the Scotch people settled there who were from the Established Church of Scotland. (At that time there was a Congregational Society at Mt. Zion which later located at Emerald Grove.) Rev. Morrison spent three months that summer (1847) with the Rock Prairie people. He then brought William McCormic, an elder, with him and these two constituted a session and organized the "Presbyterian Congregation" of Rock Prairie.

Then between 1847 and 1850 the ministers who came among them were Rev. John Morrison followed by Rev. McMasters, Rev. Samuel Wylie, and Rev. A. M. Stewart. And while we have no record that any of these ministers visited the pioneer Presbyterian families settled in our Lima church vicinity yet Mrs. Deborah Godfrey McComb, who was then a child of nine or ten years, distinctly remembers that Rev. Stewart held a meeting in the Stoddard School-house and baptized a number of children. She and her brothers, Harvey and Peter, were among those baptized. So we are safe to assume that other visits were made and other services were rendered by the early missionaries. Mrs. McComb says that soon

after this, Rev. Stewart entered the Army as a chaplain. This may be of interest to recall: the present building which we know as the Stoddard School house was not built until January, 1850, and previously there had been a building made of logs. It was in the log building that those earliest meetings were held. Also, most of the houses were then made of logs. There were no sun parlors nor sleeping porches at that early period nor church buildings; and services were held sometimes in a home, sometimes in a school house, and once in a new barn at Otter Creek built by John Austin, Grandfather of our Alf Austin. Those early settlers seemed to choose the things which were for the lasting good of the community, and judging from some of the names recorded, the church community extended from the William Galloway's and Robert McMillan's on the northeast to John Addie's on the west in the town of Milton, a distance of ten or twelve miles and there were no "autos" then, and few horses, and almost no conveyance except lumber wagons often drawn by oxen. Yet these people met together in spite of all their difficulties and laid the foundation of a church home, making it more easy for those who came afterwards to "carry on." Many of them walked several miles to these meetings.

Coming back to our starting point, December 10, 1850, a meeting was appointed to be held at Stoddard's School house. Rev. Lamb, who was then Pastor of the Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church, brought two of his Ruling Elders with him—they were Mr. John Menzies and Mr. David McClay. These three constituted a ses-

sion. As you all know, a session in the Presbyterian Church is the medium through which the church does its work—now as then. Accordingly, a church was organized and the following names were recorded as members. The names are recorded in this order: Francis Vance, John Steel, Robert McMillan, John McMillan, Thomas Godfrey, William Galloway, John Vance, James Boyd, John Kyle, John Godfrey, Hannah McMillan, William McCord, James Kyle,, William McKinley, Andrew Lee, Elizabeth Godfrey, James Galloway, Anna Godfrey, Henry McQuillan, and Samuel Godfrey. Among these, Francis Vance, John McMillan, and Thomas Godfrey were chosen to be Ruling Elders, and a meeting was appointed for December 22, at Stoddard School house.

At this meeting conducted by Rev. Lamb, the elders previously chosen, Francis Vance, John McMillan, and Thomas Godfrey were installed; and James and Eliza Graham, Nancy Boyd, Mary Kyle, Mary J. Steele, Jane McMillan, William Steele, and Samuel Vance were received as members (the total numbering twenty-nine). Rev. George Lamb was a young man, unmarried and consumptive. He died in 1854 and was laid at rest in Johnston Cemetery, having preached up to the very last, saying, "I would rather die in the harness. Rather wear out than rust out."

In 1854 Rev. Andrew Walker came to Rock Prairie Church, and in 1855, he became Pastor in both Rock Prairie and Lima Churches, preaching every other Sunday in each place. In 1867, twelve years later, the Rock

Prairie Church decided to have their services every Sunday and to give Rev. Walker to the Lima Church seeing that his home was in Lima on a farm (though he did no farm work) and in that year (1867) the Rock Prairie Church became United Presbyterian and secured Rev. Wallace from that branch.

In 1866, the Lima Presbyterians built the present edifice, and it was dedicated "A Reformed Presbyterian Church" as the people so far, belonged to that body of Presbyterians; but in the spring of 1869, the Church called a meeting which was held at the home of John H. Godfrey to consider withdrawing from the Reformed Presbyterian body and uniting with the Presbyterian Church of the U. S. A. Those present were Elders: John McMillan, Francis Vance, Thomas Godfrey; other members: James Boyd, James Kyle, James Anslie, William Alexander, William McCord, John D. Godfrey, John Godfrey, Sr., John Addie, David McIllree, John H. Godfrey, Mrs. J. H. Godfrey, William G. Alexander, Mrs. Thomas Godfrey, Mrs. Francis Vance, and Mrs. John McMillan. The change was not made without vigorous protest. To many of them, the rigid principles contained in the doctrine of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, for which so many had burned at the stake, were not to be lightly given up, and though just enough voted for the change to make a majority of one, yet, many of those who voted for the measure, never at heart or in practice allowed any real change in the church. The Psalms were still sung, and the doctrinal sermons prevailed for some years. The Sabbath was strictly observed, and the min-

isters who came to preach arrived on Saturday night and remained until Monday. Ministers in those days did not travel by train on the Sabbath.

The Church became a part of the Milwaukee Presbytery in 1870, and later was transferred to the Madison Presbytery. This connection still exists.

What took place between the years 1850 and 1855 when Rev. Walker began his pastorate is not recorded. From 1855 to 1876, a weekly prayer meeting was held in the homes with Rev. Walker in charge.

From 1874 to 1910, a Woman's Foreign Missionary Society held monthly meetings and were represented each year at the State Presbyterial Society which met at the time that Presbytery met. Rev. Daniel Smith was Pastor when the Missionary Society was organized. After a period of thirty-six years the society was discontinued during the pastorate of Rev. Whitfield. In 1893, a Christian Endeavor Society was organized and flourished for a time. It was very helpful in developing the young people of that period in Christian work.

Some of the ministers secured after the change in 1867, were Rev. Swinton, who was then Pastor of the Milton Congregational Church; Rev. Martin, who came over from Delafield, and others who were students followed for a period, at first from McCormick Seminary and later from Carroll College. Rev. Daniel Smith, who lived near, preached for some time, and there were others. In 1878, Rev. Caton came, and he and his mother were

the first to occupy the manse which was built in 1879. Rev. Caton went East in 1881. Rev. Angus, Rev. Jamieson, Rev. Doole, and Rev. Whitfield, and others, also lived in the manse. (The manse was sold in 1928, forty-three years after it was built). Rev. George Smith of the Congregational Church of Koshkonong, served our church in 1880 and for some years when needed.

From time to time Elders who have been added to the original force, were David McElree, John Godfrey, Sr.; in 1885, W. G. Alexander and W. J. Kyle; in 1915, the Church was reorganized and adopted the time service for Elders and elected William E. Boyd who served with W. J. Kyle for three years. Then W. J. Kyle moved to Whitewater, and Howard Kyle and John McCord were made Elders. Those who were clerk of the session were: Francis Vance until 1889, W. G. Alexander until 1915, and William E. Boyd until his death in 1924. The office is now vacant. (1928) All through the period of seventy-eight years or more since the church was organized there have been those prominent in the work of the church — leaders in Sunday School work, in the Woman's Missionary Society in the Christian Endeavor, in the Children's Guild which Rev. Caton instituted, and there were those who led the singing and helped in other ways. Perhaps the names of all of these should be recorded, but we think that in that day when the Master has the final review, it may be that the highest rewards will be given to those who regularly and reverently filled the pews.

—Written by Martha M. Boyd.



(Original of typed copy in letter file)

History of Lima Presbyterian Church continued.

(From information gathered from Elizabeth Boyd, Ansel Godfrey, and Dr. Zac Davies we find that since 1926, the following ministers have occupied the pulpit: T.G. Breaw, Zac Davies, William O'Neill, Wallace Robertson, Robert Hubbard, Emerson Abendroth, Dan McCarthy, William Schuster, Phillip Baxter, and Paul Doedens (present student pastor). Dr. Z. Davies is now Moderator. The church was transferred from the Madison Presbytery to the Milwaukee Presbytery in October 1949.

Home comings have been held annually since 1921. The Church Record Book shows that the first one was held in August, 1921, with the Rev. Henry Jordan of Milton, as pastor. A newspaper account gives the date as September 4. After the sermon, about fifty of those attending went to the John Boyd home where dinner was served by several of the ladies of the church. Later it was decided to make the home coming an annual affair to be held on the Sunday following the Kyle Cousin Picnic which is always the last Saturday in August.

The building was remodeled probably in 1932, although the date is not recorded. The rededication service was held in December, 1932. Dr. Ganfield, president of Carroll College preached the sermon.

So, though changed in many ways, the Church still lives and serves the community.

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