

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF IOWA CITY

One day in the autumn of 1839, a horseman rode into Iowa City, the capital-to-be of the Territory of Iowa. News of his coming was soon passed around and a small congregation was assembled in the two-story log cabin of Matthew Teneyck, on the southwest corner of the intersection of Iowa Avenue and Dubuque Street. There Reverend Joseph L. Kirkpatrick, circuit rider of the Methodist Episcopal Church, preached what is said to have been the first sermon delivered in Iowa City. What he said was not recorded, but his visit marks the beginning of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Iowa City.

THE CHURCH BEHIND THE CIRCUIT RIDERS

Before telling the story of this Iowa City church it may be well to pause for a brief survey of the institution which sent him out.¹ The Methodist Episcopal Church was well adapted to pioneer conditions; it was born of the American Revolution and cradled on the frontier. But to understand its spirit and organization, one must go back to England for, strangely enough, the founder of this distinctly American church was a clergyman of the Church of England, a Tory, an opponent of the Republican movement, and a critic of the Revolution.

For half a century John Wesley had ridden over England preaching to the neglected lower classes. His remedy for the ills of society was an emphasis on godly living, not

¹ The summary of the history and organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church is taken largely from Lucecock and Hutchinson's *The Story of Methodism*. Mrs. E. H. Weber contributed valuable data on the Iowa City Church.

revolution. Those who accepted his teaching he organized into "classes" and "societies" for encouragement, instruction, and admonition, with class leaders, lay preachers, and superintendents, all under his direction; but these "Methodists" as Wesley and his associates were called, at first in derision, were expected to apply to an ordained clergyman of the church to which each one belonged for the formal rites such as baptism and marriage. This division of religious activities worked fairly well in England, where most of the Methodists were nominally members of the established church and an ordained clergyman of this denomination was to be found in each community.

But soon Methodists began to emigrate to America. New societies were formed. To shepherd these American Methodists Wesley sent over a number of trained subordinates, but before their organization work was well started, the Revolution began. Because of the close ties between the Wesleyan societies and the Church of England, many of the Methodist leaders were under suspicion and most of them returned to England.

At the close of the Revolution it became evident even to John Wesley, then an old man, that the Methodist societies in the new States must be reorganized into a separate American church or the movement would die out. Reluctantly Wesley gave his consent and approved two men to head the new church — Thomas Coke, a wealthy and educated clergyman of the Church of England, and Francis Asbury, son of a gardener, who had come up from the ranks of Wesley's lay preachers. And so at Christmas time, 1784, in Lovely Lane Chapel, Baltimore, Maryland, a new church was born and named "Methodist Episcopal". The name was significant of its origin and its form of government. The order of worship and the twenty-four articles of religion prepared by John Wesley were adopted. To these

the conference added one pledging allegiance to the United States. But though the government of the church was episcopal, at first even autocratic, its spirit was democratic. Any person, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, good or bad, young or old, might hope to be "converted" and to receive assurance of forgiveness and future salvation.

Wherever a few Methodists could be gathered together, there a class was organized with a class leader, for prayer, admonition, singing, and testimony. Whenever a few Methodists took root, there a society was formed and a church was built. To foster and organize these units, the church sent out the traveling preachers, each one with a horse to ride and a Bible and hymnbook in his saddle-bags. These circuit riders often lacked formal education but they knew their Bibles and the church hymns, and knew how to appeal to their frontier congregations. They kept pace with the march of settlement as it swept westward across the Appalachian Mountains, down the Ohio River, and across the Mississippi. Many of these men were noted for their loud speaking. (It was said of Richard Swearingen, one of the early members of the Upper Iowa Conference who at one time resided a few miles from Iowa City, that he "converted" one man who listened to him preaching at a camp meeting three miles away.)

Behind these minute men of the gospel was an organization capable of rapid and almost unlimited expansion. The "general superintendents" Wesley had appointed to head the new church became bishops (in 1788) and the number gradually increased. Decisions as to creed, discipline, and organization were referred to a General or Quadrennial Conference, made up originally of ministerial delegates.² This Quadrennial Conference also determined the number of bishops and elected new ones as needed.

² Lay delegates were not admitted into the General Conference until 1872 and into the Annual Conference until 1932.

The territory covered by the Methodist work was divided by the General Conference into "annual conferences". The ministers of each annual conference held meetings once each year at which one of the bishops presided. At these conferences, cases of discipline were handled, problems of finance were discussed, new ministers (deacons and elders) were ordained, and, finally, the bishop read the names of the preachers and their assignments. An annual conference was usually subdivided into districts, each with a presiding elder (now a district superintendent), also appointed by the bishop.

Local Methodist work might be organized into "missions", "circuits", or "stations". A mission was often a large area in which Methodist settlers might be found or converts made, but in which the work had to be largely supported by the conference or by the mission board. Usually a preacher had to seek out his own congregation.

As settlements increased, circuits were formed, the preacher visiting the various appointments on his circuit at more or less regular intervals. On the frontier many of these circuits might be a hundred miles or more in extent and the "circuit rider", always paid only a pittance and often not paid at all, fought heat, cold, storms, blizzards, floods, mud, and snow in order to meet his appointments.³ He held services out-of-doors, at camp meetings, or in cabins, schoolhouses, taverns, or churches. Whenever a congregation came to be large enough to maintain a preacher of its own, it became a station, but the period for which a minister could remain in charge of a single congregation was limited — it was fixed at two years in 1804, at three years in 1864, and at five in 1888. The time limit was removed in 1900.

³ The death rate among these early itinerant Methodist circuit riders was high. Out of the 737 members of Conferences who died up to 1847, 203 were under thirty-five years of age.

A quarterly meeting or conference was held in each mission, circuit, or station, with the presiding elder of the district in charge. In attendance at these quarterly conferences were the preacher in charge, local preachers, local deacons, stewards, exhorters, class leaders, and the superintendent of the Sunday School. Reports as to the work of the church and the Sunday School were made. Financial statements were presented to the presiding elder. The characters of the local church leaders were examined, licenses were issued to the local preachers, deacons, and exhorters, and stewards were appointed. Not infrequently members of the church were dropped from the rolls for conduct unbecoming a Methodist.

Quarterly conferences were also the occasion for revival sermons and communion services. In the summer, the quarterly conference might take the form of a camp meeting at which rousing sermons and spectacular conversions over-shadowed the more sedate routine.

As the local church business came to be more varied, meetings of the church leaders came to be held more often than the quarterly conference met. Out of this grew the "official board", organized by the quarterly conference and functioning under the direction of the pastor. It includes, besides the pastor and assistant pastor, the trustees, the stewards, and certain other members of the quarterly conference, such as standing committees and heads of various church organizations. This local board received official recognition by the General Conference of 1884.

The church members were organized into classes, small groups which met for prayer and testimony, under the supervision of a class leader whose duty it was to keep a fatherly eye on his flock. These classes were also expected to collect funds for church work. The formal organization of Methodist members was the "society", following the

plan inaugurated by Wesley in England. The business side of the church was carried on by the stewards, but church property was in the hands of a board of trustees, appointed by the presiding elder or by the board itself. Since the local society was often not incorporated, it appears that the trustees in such cases represented the parent church, but held the property in trust for the local church unit.

METHODISM REACHES IOWA CITY

The Iowa area was first opened to white settlers in June, 1833. In September the Illinois Conference (organized in 1828) of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Peter Cartwright presiding, sent two circuit riders — Barton H. Randle and John T. Mitchell — to the “Galena and Dubuque Mission”; and on November 6th Reverend Randle preached the first Methodist sermon in the Iowa area. The following year he encouraged the little group of Methodists at Dubuque to undertake the erection of a church — the first church building in Iowa. The cost was \$255.⁴

But Methodist circuit riders did not tarry at the river towns. Up the Iowa rivers and across the prairies they followed the advancing settlers. In 1836 the Illinois Conference created the Iowa River Mission, a field extending over most of what is now Iowa, wherever a settlement could be found and Methodist circuit riders could find a cabin in the most out-of-the-way place. By the time Iowa was made a Territory in 1838 the Illinois Conference report listed 740 members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Iowa — out of a population of 23,242. By 1839 the number of members had increased to 1061.⁵

When the Illinois Conference met in 1839, Bishop Thomas

⁴ Gallaher's *The First Church in Iowa in The Palimpsest*, Vol. VII, pp. 1-10.

⁵ Aurner's *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History*, Vol. I, p. 298; Fellows' *History of the Upper Iowa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, pp. 19, 20.

A. Morris, presiding, decided that the Iowa field did not fit into either the Chicago District or the Quincy District. "Brethren", he declared, "we must have a district in Iowa". The presiding elders greeted this suggestion of a bishop from the East with amusement. But in this case distance had given a better perspective than familiarity. "I have passed people enough between this and Cincinnati, bound for Iowa, to form a district", declared Bishop Morris, "So begin. Give me the names of creeks, groves, prairies, settlements, or anything suitable to designate the localities of new comers."⁶

And so the Iowa District of the Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1839 and the name of Henry Summers (trained under Peter Cartwright) was read as the presiding elder. Included in the Iowa District was the "Iowa Mission", a field extending up the Iowa River as far as the newly laid out capital, Iowa City, including parts of Muscatine, Cedar, and Johnson counties. The minister assigned to this Iowa Mission was Joseph L. Kirkpatrick, thirty-six years of age, who in the fall of 1839 preached in the Teneyck cabin in Iowa City.

There were only about one hundred persons in Iowa City at the time and men predominated, but there were probably at least two women in that first Methodist congregation — Mrs. Teneyck and her mother, Mrs. Hannah Cole.⁷ How many times Kirkpatrick was able to reach Iowa City is not known, but the official records of Johnson County reveal that on June 26, 1840, he officiated at the marriage of two Johnson County residents — Andrew T. McElwain⁸ and Nancy Ann Wheatley.

⁶ Waring's *History of the Iowa Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, p. 92.

⁷ Aurner's *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History*, Vol. I, p. 299.

⁸ McElwain is said to have sung the first hymn at public worship in Iowa

In June, 1840, Reverend James L. Thompson, a veteran itinerant, visited Iowa City and probably preached. He had served in Illinois, Missouri, and Indiana and had been retired, but his idea of retirement was to settle in a new and fast growing community and take a lively interest in the nurture of the early Methodist Episcopal Church in a new town. Reverend Thompson soon became a resident of Iowa City.

Sometime late in the summer of 1840 Barton H. Cartwright (a pioneer preacher and a cousin of Peter Cartwright, a man who earned his living by breaking prairie with a breaking plow and several yoke of oxen) preached in Iowa City. He says of this visit: "I went but once to Iowa City; there were only a few there, mostly families engaged in the work on the new state house, which was then up about four feet from the foundation, and the work suspended. . . . I preached in a kitchen, the first sermon in the place. That night, a man died, and I stayed and preached at his funeral."⁹

In the General Conference of 1840, the Illinois Conference was divided into three conferences, one of which was the Rock River Conference to which the Iowa District was assigned. At the first meeting of this new conference the Iowa District was divided into two districts — Dubuque and Burlington. The Iowa Mission (including Iowa City) was placed in the Dubuque District. Bartholomew Weed was

City.—Irish's *History of Johnson County, Iowa*, in the *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. VI, p. 31.

⁹ Waring's *History of the Iowa Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, p. 94. Cartwright was mistaken as to his preaching the first sermon. Captain F. M. Irish, writing in 1868, reported that "Mr. Fenee [Ferree], of the M. E. Church, preached the first sermon" in Iowa City.—*Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. VI, p. 31. This also was a mistake. Uriah Ferree was prominent in a group east of Iowa City, but he does not appear to have preached the first sermon in the new capital. That honor appears to belong to J. L. Kirkpatrick.

named presiding elder of this district and G. G. Worthington was assigned to the Iowa Mission.¹⁰

Partly because of illness and partly because of the extent of his parish, it appears that Reverend Worthington was not able to give much attention to the Iowa City Methodist group and Reverend Thompson assisted in the work. Bartholomew Weed, the presiding elder, came to Iowa City sometime in 1840 and is said to have held a quarterly conference for the Iowa Mission¹¹ and to have formally organized a Methodist class or society. The meeting was held in a schoolhouse belonging to Jesse Berry, on the north side of College Street between Capitol and Clinton streets. The members of this class are recorded as: Mrs. Hannah Cole, Mr. and Mrs. B. C. Pinney, Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Ward, Mr. and Mrs. John Horner, Mr. and Mrs. John Parrott, Mrs. Margaret Gardner, Mrs. John Hawkins, Andrew T. McElwain, Isaac Bowen, and Benjamin M. Horner. Chauncey R. Ward was appointed the class leader.¹² Since Andrew T. McElwain was married on June 26, 1840, and there is no mention of his wife on this list, it seems possible that this record refers to a class which had collected informally early in 1840. Class meetings were later held in Mrs. Anson Hart's schoolroom on Iowa Avenue and in the temporary Capitol (Butler's Capitol) on the north side of Washington Street, just east of Clinton Street.

The first official record of a quarterly conference for the Iowa Mission is for the one held "near Iowa City" on July 9, 1841. Those listed as present were: Reverend B. Weed, presiding elder; Reverend G. G. Worthington, preacher in

¹⁰ Fellows' *History of the Upper Iowa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, pp. 24, 25.

¹¹ Aurner's *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History*, Vol. I, p. 299. There is no record of this quarterly conference among the church papers now available.

¹² Aurner's *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History*, Vol. I, p. 299.

charge; P. H. Patterson and Uriah Ferre [Ferree], local preachers; Thomas Odell and I. P. Van Hagan, local deacons, John Horner, exhorter; and G. S. Hampton, D. Sweet, A. Shaw, V. Bozart (or Bogart), and John Parrott, class leaders. At this meeting, Uriah Ferree, Jesse Bowen, John Demoss, John Parrott, and G. S. Hampton were appointed "Stewarts" of the mission. A number of these men lived outside Iowa City, for the most part east of Iowa City near the present site of West Branch or in a neighborhood later served by the Brick Chapel.¹³

In the meantime, the new capital was humming with activity. Carpenters and stone masons were at work (with occasional lay-offs for lack of funds) on the Capitol building (now the Old Stone Capitol). Men were at work in the quarry at the north end of Clinton Street. William Felkner's sawmill on Rapid Creek, to the north, gave work for men in felling trees and transporting lumber. Cabins of logs and houses of lumber sprang up almost over night. One settler boasted as he moved into a new frame house, "Five days ago my house was in the woods, growing."¹⁴

BUILDING THE FIRST METHODIST CHURCHES

The founders of Iowa City were anxious to promote the building of churches and when the city was first platted Chauncey Swan, Acting Commissioner, reserved four half-blocks for church purposes. This offer was ratified by the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa on the last day of July, 1840. This act provided that one half of one of these half-blocks be given to any Christian denomination that would give bond to erect upon its lot within three years

¹³ *Records of the Proceedings of the Quarterly Meeting Conferences of the Iowa Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (manuscript record book).

¹⁴ Pelzer's *Iowa City: A Miniature Frontier of the Forties* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XXIX, p. 11.

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from the date of the act a church edifice costing at least one thousand dollars.¹⁵

The adherents of the Methodist Episcopal Church were not idle. On December 15, 1840, application was made to Chauncey Swan, Acting Commissioner of Public Buildings, for a church lot. "We the undersigned Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church do hereby make application for the west half of a certain church reserve in Iowa City for the purpose of erecting a Church thereon according to the requirements of the Law which reserve is in Block Sixty Seven north of the Park." This paper was signed by Jesse Bowen, Isaac Bowen, John Parrott, John Horner, and A. T. McElwain. No record of the appointment of these first trustees has been found. Perhaps they were named by the presiding elder on one of his visits; perhaps they were self appointed. Nor is there a record of the filing of any bond at this time.¹⁶

At the same time another Methodist Church was making plans for the erection of its church building. This was the Methodist Protestant Church, which had been organized about 1830 in protest against the arbitrary authority of the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the refusal to admit lay delegates to the conferences.¹⁷ Adherents of the Methodist Protestant Church perfected a local church organization at Iowa City on May 4, 1841. They chose for their lot the east half of the half-block on the south side of Iowa Avenue between Dubuque and Linn streets and, on

¹⁵ Shambaugh's *The Old Stone Capitol Remembers*, p. 333; *Laws of the Territory of Iowa*, Extra Session, 1840, p. 62.

¹⁶ Photostatic copy of the application on file among the official records at Des Moines.

¹⁷ The Methodist Protestant Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church South, which separated from the main church in 1844 over the question of slavery, were reunited in 1939 as "The Methodist Church".

the day following the organization, work was begun on the church building. The cornerstone was laid on May 12th. Funds for the erection of this church, the first to be completed in Iowa City, were raised largely by subscription at home and in the East and by the sale of pews at fifty dollars each. The deed to the lot was signed by Governor John Chambers on January 19, 1843.¹⁸

In the meantime the Rock River Conference of 1841 created the Iowa City Mission and Presiding Elder Weed looked around for a man to fill this strategic position and to build a church. Of his dilemma Reverend Weed wrote later: "I found it difficult to find a suitable man for Iowa City. As we contemplated building a church there during the year, we wanted one suited to that kind of work. Bishop Morris [the bishop who had insisted on creating an Iowa District] said to me at our conference, 'Come down to the Missouri Conference, which is to meet at Palmyra, and I think we can find you a man.' I went. A young man named G. B. Bowman, was selected . . . It was not without a struggle, and the exercise of episcopal authority, that young Bowman's services were secured."¹⁹ This filching

¹⁸ The Methodist Protestant Church of Iowa City had a checkered career. It was used frequently for schools, lyceums, and concerts. H. W. Lathrop opened a private school in the basement in 1841 and in 1847 A. G. Gower taught the first free public school in Iowa City in this building. In 1845 permission was obtained from the legislature for the sale of this property to the Iowa City College, but the college failed and the property later reverted to the church. In later years the building was known as the "Old Blue Church". The lot was sold piecemeal and in 1886 the church building was removed to make room for the Christian Chapel, the present Christian Church.—Shambaugh's *Early Church History in Iowa City* in the *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. XV, pp. 566, 567; Aurner's *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History*, Vol. I, pp. 295-298. There were two other Methodist churches in Iowa City—the German Methodist Church, founded in 1849, which disbanded many years ago, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

¹⁹ Waring's *History of the Iowa Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, pp. 104, 105; Graham's *Elder Bowman* in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XVII, pp. 37-48.

of a promising young minister from another Conference was not exactly good form, but it was felt that the end justified the transfer.

So it was that Reverend George B. Bowman, a minister drafted for service, arrived in Iowa City in the fall of 1841. He was then a young man of twenty-eight and unmarried. A student at Cornell College²⁰ (which Bowman established in the early fifties) described Bowman at that time as a tall, well shaped man with sharp features, piercing blue eyes, "a strong and at times very musical voice, an excellent singer . . . a wonderful flow of language." Dr. William King of Cornell College described Reverend Bowman as a man of commanding personality, strong convictions, imperious will, and great force of character, a man who inspired confidence and was shrewd in business.

All these qualifications he was to need in the work at Iowa City. The original Methodist class of farmers and laborers had to be enlarged to include teachers, doctors, and lawyers. Above all a church costing at least one thousand dollars had to be built by July 31, 1843, if the valuable free lot was to be secured; and there was little money in sight. Moreover Reverend Bowman's work included the outlying groups of the Iowa Mission as well as Iowa City. The first official record of his service seems to be in the minutes of the quarterly conference of the Iowa Mission, held in Iowa City on November 13, 1841.

Two days later, on November 15, 1841, the "officers of the Iowa City Mission" met at Jesse Bowen's office²¹ "to take into consideration the propriety of building a Methodist E. Church in Iowa City." With the presiding elder, Reverend Weed, in the chair, the meeting adopted the following resolutions:

²⁰ John O. Foster.

²¹ This location is now occupied by the building at 117 Iowa Avenue.

“Resolved, That the Trustees of the Methodist E. Church draw up a subscription and present the same for subscribers for the building said Church.

“Resolved, That we will build a Methodist E. Church.

“Resolved, That the chair appoint a Board of Trustees to act in and for said Church.”²²

On a motion adopted by the meeting, P. H. Patterson, Jesse Bowen, John Horner, John Parrott, John Demoss, Thomas Taylor, and Robert Smith were named as trustees by the presiding elder. Then the meeting voted that the chair appoint a soliciting committee of three and Reverend G. B. Bowman, P. H. Patterson, and John Horner were named on this committee. Money was scarce in these frontier towns and what little there was had to be used to pay for land so one more resolution was adopted — “That the chair appoint an Agent to visit the Cities on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers as far as Pittsburgh for the purpose of soliciting funds to build said Church.” Following this meeting the newly appointed board of trustees met and organized with P. H. Patterson, president, Jesse Bowen, secretary, and John Horner, treasurer.

In planning for their new church, the Iowa City Methodists were no doubt influenced by the dignified and beautiful stone Capitol slowly rising on the hill above the Iowa River. As the trustees came to the meeting in Dr. Bowen’s office, they could see the east portico already in place. Other Iowa towns had been content with log buildings for their first churches, but the Iowa City people were more ambitious.

When the trustees met on January 26, 1842, they decided to “proceed immediately to build a Methodist E. Church 34 feet wide & 44 feet long the doors & windows so ar-

²² *Record of the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the M. E. Church at Iowa City* (Manuscript record book).

ranged as to answer ultimately for a Parsonage or Seminary, And that Br. Smith be requested to draw up a draft of particulars". After considering the matter for two weeks, or perhaps after consultation with others, the trustees (on February 12th) rescinded their resolution providing for a frame church and resolved that "we will endeavor through the aid of our friends, and the assistance of Providence [to] build a Brick Church of such dimensions as we may be able to do, when our means may be ascertained".

The officers representing the Iowa City Mission had adopted a resolution authorizing the presiding elder to appoint an agent to solicit funds in the East. It was, apparently, soon after the decision of the trustees to build a brick church that Reverend Bowman was delegated to perform this duty, leaving his work at Iowa City in the hands of Reverend Thompson. Bowman was gone about six months, going as far east as Philadelphia and New York. The record book of the board of trustees does not include a report on the funds collected, but it is evident that the trip was eminently successful, for some \$4000 was secured, some apparently in goods, and the trustees gratefully voted that "Brother Bowman be allowed the sum of Two hundred Dollars (out of the funds collected by him) for his services in collecting said funds."²³

There was no bank in Iowa where the money collected could be deposited and paid out as needed, so the contributions were deposited in St. Louis. Some materials, such as glass, nails, paint, and shingles were purchased at Muscatine or St. Louis and paid for out of the funds on deposit there. Some of the donations were, it appears, either contributed in the form of goods such as sugar, coffee, tea,

²³ This was at a meeting of the trustees held on October 3, 1842. Details of the building of the church are found in the manuscript record book.

molasses, and other commodities or were invested in such commodities at St. Louis, and these were brought to Iowa City and used to pay the workmen. The trustees' records contain many allusions to these goods, and Anson Hart, who was employed to superintend the work on the church (part of the time at a salary of \$2.00 per day) found that the disposition of such goods added much to the difficulty of his job. Carpenters, bricklayers, and other craftsmen occasionally "worked out" their subscriptions. Rough lumber was secured from the Wm. Felkner sawmill and brick came from the kilns of Sylvanus Johnson on South Gilbert Street.

At the annual conference of 1842 it appears that the Iowa City area was made a "circuit" although it continued to receive mission funds. About the same time the board of trustees was reorganized at Iowa City. Some members lived far out in the country (John Demoss and John Parrott, for example, lived several miles east of Iowa City) and found it inconvenient to attend the meetings regularly. One was found to be ineligible (reason not given). The reorganized board, appointed by the presiding elder, consisted of John Horner, Peter H. Patterson, Jesse Bowen, Anderson Meacham, and Anson Hart. Resignations and new appointments were of frequent occurrence.

But in spite of all the difficulties the church slowly took form. The three years specified by the legislature for building a church would expire in July, 1843, but in January the building was far from completed; it was under cover and enclosed, but the walls were unplastered and there were no seats. There seems to have been some doubt as to whether this unfinished building would answer the requirements of the law providing for the grant of a lot and on January 7th, 1843, the quarterly conference provided for a committee to petition the legislature for a grant

of the lot "provided that a deed cannot be obtained from the proper authority."

A week later (on January 13th) the board of trustees directed Jesse Bowen to make the necessary application to the proper officer or officers to procure a deed. The trustees stated that they had "filed a bond in the Office of the Secretary of the Territory, conditioned for the erection of a church . . . worth One thousand Dollars, and . . . the said Trustees have proceeded to erect a Church, and have expended Three Thousand three hundred Dollars thereon, And . . . it is now in such a state of completion as to allow public worship therein".

This showing seems to have satisfied the Territorial authorities. Across the face of the application J. M. Colman, Territorial Agent, wrote his approval of the grant, dating it "January (16?)th 1842". (Apparently the Territorial Agent had not become accustomed to the new year.) The men who signed this application as members of the Board of Trustees were Jesse Bowen, George B. Bowman, Anson Hart, Anderson Meacham, Charles Cartwright, John A. Miller, and John Horner.²⁴

The application was granted and the deed was signed by Governor John Chambers on January 21, 1843. No record of this deed, however, appears on the Johnson County courthouse books until 1906, when a copy of the original patent was obtained from the Secretary of State at Des Moines.²⁵

The building was plastered in the summer of 1843, but pews were not provided until a year later when the trustees made a contract with two men to construct the seats "with ends panneled" for \$2.50 each. This contract included a

²⁴ Photostatic copy of the original application from the records in Des Moines.

²⁵ A copy of the deed is to be found in the *Record of the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the M. E. Church at Iowa City*.

pulpit. Payment for the pews and pulpit was to be in goods and "the debts due the Trustees". At the time this contract was made William Murray was directed to collect the necessary lumber to finish the church and "to pay for the same out of the goods & dues of the Church, reserving enough of Cash debts to procure oil & other necessary Cash articles".²⁶

The church building as it was finally completed was forty by sixty feet with the entrance facing Jefferson Street. The lower floor, a semi-basement, was cut up into four small rooms in the south half for the Sunday School and for class meetings. One large room occupied the north half of this floor. The entrance was from the south, under the steps to the main floor. A number of stoves supplied heat.

The main floor was the church proper. The elaborate pulpit, put in place in 1845 at a cost of forty dollars, stood in the north end of the room, facing the choir loft over the south entrance. Forty-one pews furnished seats for the congregation. Four large stoves provided heat and four lamps suspended from decorative plaster of Paris center-pieces, furnished the artificial light. The trustees had a hard time deciding as to banisters to separate the pulpit from the pew sections and as to the use of wainscoting along the walls, but these were finally provided.

With the church at Iowa City virtually completed, Reverend G. B. Bowman was transferred to another charge, since the limit for a preacher's tenure in one charge (two years) had expired. The trustees voted him fifty dollars in goods as a parting gift for his services in collecting funds to complete the church and "loaned" him ten dollars in cash to defray the expenses of his removal to Dubuque.

Reverend Laban Case was assigned to the Iowa City Cir-

²⁶ *Records of the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the M. E. Church at Iowa City, March 12, 1844.*

cuit, but arrangements were made by which he had charge of the congregations in the area around Iowa City while the elderly Reverend Thompson looked after Iowa City proper.

This first Methodist Episcopal Church was never formally dedicated, nor does it appear that there was any ceremony at the laying of the cornerstone, if there was a cornerstone. None has survived. The final record of the trustees who did the building was entered on August 16, 1847 — "W. Murray as agent reported that the Church & parsonage are completed and the means put into his hands all expended except a few articles of little value and that all the debts due the Trustees that are collectable have been collected . . . That the whole cost of the Church has been about \$5000.00 & the cost of the parsonage \$175.00". The trustees still owed \$70.36 to various persons, including \$4.50 to Bishop Loras for a fence.

THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS

This church building served the Iowa City congregation for the next twenty years. During this period the church steadily increased in membership and found a place for itself in the community life. There were many problems in the growing church. One of these was the question of funds.

At first the Iowa City Methodist Episcopal Church was assisted by the Missionary Board which contributed \$100 a year to the Iowa City Mission. On August 9, 1848, the quarterly conference meeting in Iowa City sent the following request for such outside assistance: "That the Quarterly Conference respectfully represent their peculiar situation, the smallness of their numbers, the most of whom are poor, and the importance of having constant preaching and the labours of a stationed preacher in order to compete

with other denominations in the great work of saving souls and building up their several churches at the State Capital which may exert an influence throughout the young and rising country. . . . Therefore, in view of this state of things, the Quarterly Conference would earnestly pray for a continuance of the favour of the Missionary Society for the ensuing year, believing that an appropriation could not in any part of our country be better made, and tend more to promote the glory of God & build up our beloved Zion."

As the church developed this missionary gift was cut to \$75 a year, then to \$60 and finally to \$50. By 1852, the Iowa City church was out of debt and this contribution was discontinued. Iowa City Station had grown up.²⁷

The remuneration of the preacher and presiding elder was always small and uncertain. To some extent it depended upon need and circumstances. Generally a small salary was paid quarterly — a "quarterage". Traveling expenses for the presiding elder, moving expenses of the preachers — for many years two years was the limit in a station — table expenses for pastor and presiding elder, keeping a horse, and similar details are found in the early financial reports. In September, 1852, the Iowa City Quarterly Meeting voted \$288 to Reverend Corkhill, with \$100 for table expenses in addition. In March, 1853, an additional \$50 was added to the living expense fund.

Minor expenses were met in various ways. Classes were expected to raise money for church work. In March, 1850, the quarterly conference of the Iowa City Station recorded donations of \$23.79 from Anson Hart's class, \$23.25 from "Governor" Lucas's class, and \$18.36 from D. Worthington's class. Often the amounts reported were very small.

Small expenses were often met by assigning some

²⁷ *Records of the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the M. E. Church, July 5, 1852.*

“brother” the duty of collecting the money and paying the bill. In January, 1850, for example, Anson Hart was appointed a committee of one to raise funds “to pay the bill of Bishop Loras of \$4.50 for fence between the Catholic Church & the M. E. Church”. Later he reported that the bill was paid.²⁸

In October, 1861, the church officials in Iowa City determined to adopt the financial plan given in the church discipline. This was one of John Wesley’s ideas and called for a weekly contribution from each member, to be collected by the class leaders. Records of the official board at this time indicate that the assessments varied from fifty cents per week, paid by three members, to one cent, also paid by three members. Four members contributed forty cents a week; two members, thirty cents; two members, twenty-five cents; twenty-two members, twenty cents; two members, fifteen cents; thirty-four members, ten cents; seventy-three members, five cents; and ten members, two cents.

On December 2nd, however, this plan was declared to be a failure and, in lieu of it, a committee was appointed to rent pews and fix a “Minimum valuation” upon the seats. The highest “rental” was \$30.00, the lowest \$2.00 for a single “sitting”. This custom of “renting” pews was continued for many years but was given up in 1893 because of its unsocial implications. Since that time subscriptions to the budget and collections have been the chief reliance for funds.

Just when the term “official board” came into use in the Iowa City Methodist Church can not be definitely determined. “Leaders’ Meetings” are reported as early as October 7, 1861, and on December 5th, it is recorded that the “Official Board” met after prayer meeting to appraise the

²⁸ *Records of the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the M. E. Church, January 14, 1850.*

seats. For a year or two the terms leaders' meetings and official board meetings were used indiscriminately.

Under date of February 23, 1885, the statement "First meeting of the official Board organized under the Discipline" appears on the church records. Apparently the official board was at first a representative group, a meeting of church leaders to decide problems which could not be referred to the quarterly conference, either because it did not meet often enough or because they did not come within the usual business of the quarterly conference. It was, in effect, transferring authority to the local preacher and congregation.²⁹

The quarterly conference took cognizance of the moral and spiritual conduct of the members of the church and licensed various local leaders. At the first meeting of the Iowa Mission held at Iowa City on July 9, 1841, "Br. P. H. Patterson's License as a Local Preacher was renewed" and he was recommended to the annual conference "to take Deacons Orders in the Church". "Br. Uriah Ferre's License was renewed as a Local Preacher" and John Horner was licensed as an "Exorter". Six months later a recommendation was presented by the Reverend G. B. Bowman from the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Iowa City that "Br. John Horner" be licensed as a Local Preacher and after examination before the Conference he was "licensed" to "Preach the *Gospel*".

Church membership in these early days was not a perfunctory relationship. Members were subject to scrutiny and not infrequently were dropped from the rolls. In 1847 one of the prominent men of Iowa City, who was also a local preacher, was tried before the quarterly conference and expelled from the church on the charge that he had made

²⁹ For the organization of the official board of the local church see page 383 above. The various church organizations will no doubt be materially changed as a result of unification.

three business trips to Muscatine on the Sabbath (he insisted he went to preach), charged illegal interest (about twenty per cent) on a loan of \$24.85, and reported to the annual conference that the membership in the church at Iowa City was 128, when a "diligent search" revealed only half that many. The decision was "guilty" and the erring member was expelled from the church. This decision was appealed to the annual conference. Its verdict is not given, but apparently the "brother" was reinstated in some way for in 1861 he was renting one of the most expensive pews in the Iowa City church.

Class meetings were important activities among church members during the early period. In 1843 the minutes of the quarterly conference for the Iowa City Circuit reported eleven classes, including several outside Iowa City. One was in Cedar County on the Wapsinonock Creek, where John Demoss presided over a group meeting in the Demoss schoolhouse. There were two classes in Big Grove Township (one at what is now Solon), one at North Bend (now North Liberty), one at Lone Tree, and one at the site of Brick Chapel under the direction of John Parrott. Five classes met in Iowa City.

The Methodist class leaders in Iowa City included some outstanding men. Among them were Anson Hart, James Harlan, S. N. Fellows, and Robert Lucas. Class meetings gradually diminished in importance as the years passed. The last class leader in the Iowa City Methodist Church was W. T. Jackson who served until 1919.

In August, 1844, the Iowa City Methodist Episcopal Church was the meeting place of the organizing conference of the newly established "Iowa Conference", which included all the Territory of Iowa. It was a pleasant coincidence that Bishop Thomas A. Morris, who had formed the Iowa District in 1839, was presiding at the meeting, and

Bartholomew Weed, one of the doubting Thomases who had questioned his action at that time, was a delegate — no longer doubting. The Iowa Conference was divided into three districts — Dubuque, Burlington, and Des Moines — and the Iowa City Station was placed in the Dubuque District, with David Worthington in charge. There was also an “Iowa Circuit” with L. McVey as “Preacher in charge”. In 1856 two annual conferences were established in Iowa and Iowa City was included in the newly created Upper Iowa Conference.³⁰

Camp meetings had lost most of their hysterical appeal by the time Iowa City was established, but they were still almost annual events. In 1841 and 1842 camp meetings were held three miles east of Iowa City where there was an active center of Methodists. In April, 1843, a committee was appointed by the Iowa City Circuit to confer with “Bloomington & Cedar Circuits” on a union camp meeting.

Although John Wesley took many of his lay preachers from the ranks of the uneducated and pioneer preachers in America were often of the same class, there has always been a close affiliation between Methodist churches and education. Church services in Iowa City, as elsewhere, were often held in schoolhouses until a church could be built.

After the Iowa City church was ready for use there were frequent requests for permission to use certain rooms for school purposes. Indeed, the men who planned the first Iowa City church had in mind the possibility of using it later as a seminary.

Nor were the college promoters willing to wait for an institution of higher education. On January 7, 1843, ten years before the Iowa City church became self supporting, the quarterly conference adopted the following: “Resolved,

³⁰ Fellows' *History of the Upper Iowa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, p. 29.

That it is expedient for the M. E. Church to establish a Seminary of learning at Iowa City, and that a committee of seven persons be appointed to carry the foregoing into effect, under the patronage of the Conference having jurisdiction here."

A charter was obtained from the legislature of the Territory. The college was to be "under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church, with power to confer all degrees in the arts and learned professions."³¹ The Rock River Conference sponsored the plan for a few months and then the Iowa Conference took it over. Reverend James L. Thompson, elderly retired minister located at Iowa City, was delegated to go east to select a president for "The Iowa City College". He was apparently an adept at picking men and, like the Canadian mounted police, determined to "get his man", for he brought with him a young man just graduated from Asbury (De Pauw) University, of which Matthew Simpson was president. This was James Harlan who later served as State Superintendent of Schools, President of Iowa Wesleyan College, United States Senator, and Secretary of the Interior.

Harlan and his wife drove to Iowa City and were entertained by Dr. and Mrs. Jesse Bowen. Later they established their home in a little house on the southwest corner of Linn Street and Iowa Avenue and there was born their daughter Mary who became the wife of Robert T. Lincoln.

The twenty-five trustees of the college (including Reverend Bowman, Reverend B. Weed, John Demoss, J. M. Colman, Dr. Jesse Bowen, and Governor Lucas) began soliciting subscriptions for a building and in the meantime classes were held in the Methodist Episcopal Church and later in the rooms of the Methodist Protestant Church. Mrs. Anson Hart served as "lady principal". But the

³¹ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa, 1842-1843*, pp. 75, 76.

dream of a Methodist college at Iowa City lasted only two years.

But if there was not to be a Methodist college in Iowa City, there were other schools in the new capital and rooms for school purposes were much needed. Occasionally teachers were permitted to hold classes in church rooms, but the pupils, apparently, did not always observe proper decorum in the church premises, for the trustees resolved not to permit the use of the building for other than church purposes. Exceptions to this rule were, however, sometimes made.

In the minutes of March 10, 1845, for example, the trustees "Resolved — That the application of Doct Reynolds for the use of the Church for an exhibition of his School be granted upon the following conditions viz — That he be held personally responsible for any damage that may accrue to the house from said exhibition — That good order be preserved — That no applauding, or anything else be allowed that would be improper in a House dedicated to the worship of God — That the Church be clean and in order on the Sabbath following the exhibition and that Bro. Worthington [the pastor] be appointed to assist in carrying the foregoing into effect". Even with these restrictions the resolution was carried only by the deciding vote of the president of the board.

A year and a half later, however, the trustees adopted a resolution "that the Church shall not be used for any purpose except the ordinary Church purposes, nor shall any benches or other Furniture be taken from the Church without a written order from a majority of the trustees."

Again, on March 7, 1853, the trustees set aside their rule that the church should be used only for church purposes by renting the large room in the basement to Miss Violett for a schoolroom for three months, at \$2.00 per month.

The local Methodist Episcopal Church also ventured into

the publication field when *The Colporteur*, "a neat little sheet", was started under church patronage in the fall of 1844. It was issued monthly, but did not long survive.³²

A Sunday School was an early responsibility of the Iowa City Mission. At the quarterly meeting held on September 28, 1844, the presiding elder asked the routine question — "Is there proper exertion in regard to Sabbath Schools in the city?" The answer was "There is not". Apparently the Iowa City Methodists did not intend to let this condition prevail, for two months later (November 30th) the answer was "There has been a sabbath school organized auxiliary to the Sunday School Union of the M. E. Church."

The first officers of the Iowa City Methodist Sunday School were: J. P. Carleton, superintendent; William Reynolds and "Sister" O. L. Worthington, assistant superintendents; C. C. Catlett, secretary and treasurer; and L. P. Frost, librarian. There has been a Sunday School organization in the Iowa City Methodist Episcopal Church since that time. A report on June 29, 1845 (the date of the quarterly conference), gave an average attendance of 87 scholars, 17 teachers, and 3 officers. The library boasted eighty volumes.

The Sunday School library was, in the early days before public libraries had been established, a source of much enjoyment. Twenty copies of the *Sabbath School Advocate* were taken in 1845 at a cost of between fourteen and fifteen dollars. The pastor had doubts about spending so much for papers; he thought books were a better investment. But it was not easy to keep track of books. Then as now, books had a way of disappearing. One pastor could locate only a few volumes of the hundred said to belong in the library.

Money for the library always came from special subscrip-

³² Shambaugh's *The Old Stone Capitol Remembers*, p. 274.

tions and no project received heartier support. The whole family shared in its benefits. Down to comparatively late years (when books became so common they were no longer considered a luxury) the receipt of new books was the occasion of a line-up before the Sunday School library and many adults now living probably got their first taste of reading for pleasure from these books. The largest number reported at any quarterly conference was six hundred.

THE CHURCH REMODELED

For a score of years the Methodist Episcopal group worshipped in the brick church, its classic lines putting no restraint upon the "Amens" and "Hallelujahs" of the devout worshippers. The Holy Sacrament, annual and quarterly conferences, weddings, funerals, baptisms, and reception of members combined to hallow the modest structure.

Iowa became a State; the railroad came to Iowa City; the seat of government was moved to Des Moines and the State University of Iowa was installed in the stone Capitol; gold seekers and Mormons outfitted here for the long trek westward. As Iowa City grew, the Methodist Episcopal Church prospered. In January, 1863, during the pastorate of Reverend A. B. Kendig, a revival meeting which "continues with great and unparalleled interest" resulted in the addition of more than 120 members to the already growing congregation.³³

This revival seems to have provided the necessary enthusiasm for the enlargement of the church. In spite of the Civil War, the congregation decided to build an addition forty by forty feet on the west. This was of the same architectural design as the original edifice, but the arrangement for the interior was entirely changed. The entrance was now on the west — facing Dubuque Street. A tower

³³ *Iowa City Republican*, January 21, 1863.

and graceful spire reaching skyward some 92 feet adorned the new wing. Colored glass windows were a new feature. The cost of this remodeling was about \$5000, the same as that of the original church building.³⁴

The fairs so much used to raise money for relief work among the soldiers seem to have been frequently used by the church at this time. During the year 1863 entertainments of this kind were recorded in the local newspapers. On June 9th and 16th the ladies of the Methodist Episcopal Church gave a fair and strawberry festival at Metropolitan Hall which netted over \$250 above expenditures.³⁵

The room used for the church services was now eighty feet from the entrance on the west to the east end where stood the pulpit, sixty feet wide at the front (east) and forty feet wide at the rear. Colored glass windows were a new feature. The seating capacity (according to the *Iowa City Republican*) was between six and seven hundred people. Announcement of the services was made in the *Iowa City State Press* in the following words:

NOTICE — The re-opening of the Meth. Epis. Church at Iowa City will take place — Providence permitting — on next Sabbath, the 8th of November. The order of exercises will be as follows: Prayer meeting at 9½ A. M. in the Lecture room. Preaching in the main audience room at 10½ A. M.; after which the collection will be lifted, and the dedicatory prayer will be offered. The Holy Eucharist will be celebrated at 3 P. M.; followed by a sermon at 6½ in the evening.

The public are affectionately invited to be present.

A. B. Kendig
J. Effinger Pastors.³⁶

Dedication services were held as announced on November 8, 1863, with the presiding elder, the Reverend P. E.

³⁴ *State Press* (Iowa City), May 2, 1863.

³⁵ *State Press* (Iowa City), June 13, 1863.

³⁶ *State Press* (Iowa City), November 4, 1863.

Dimmitt, as the speaker. A number of visiting clergymen assisted in the services which were attended by a capacity congregation.

In this remodeled church the first Iowa Methodist State Convention met on July 11, 12, and 13, 1871, to consider the work and problems of Methodism in Iowa. The address of welcome was appropriately given by Reverend Anson Hart and the meeting was called to order by Dr. Jesse Bowen.³⁷

THE THIRD CHURCH BUILDING

The next twenty years passed uneventfully. In spite of the War and the depression, the cost of remodeling the church was paid off. Then early in the afternoon of Sunday, January 6, 1884, fire broke out in the building. It was a very cold day and the furnace had become overheated in an effort to warm the building, woodwork nearby became ignited and soon the blaze ate into the main auditorium. The fire was finally extinguished, but the carpet was ruined, the pews and organ blistered, and the walls blackened.³⁸

The next morning the board of trustees met and laid plans for rebuilding and redecorating the edifice. The insurance amounted to \$1024. The roof had needed repair even before the fire, so it was decided to put on a new roof and steeple of a different design. Abandoning the classic lines of the old church, the trustees decided on a steep roof with a blunt steeple. The cost of the repairs and alterations was around \$7000. Regular services were held in the basement on September 21, 1884, but the dedication services were not held until October 26, 1884. Reverend Emory Miller of Des Moines, a former Iowa City pastor, delivered the dedication sermon.³⁹

³⁷ *Proceedings of the First Iowa Methodist State Convention, 1871.* This publication contains much general Iowa Methodist history.

³⁸ *Iowa City Republican (Daily)*, January 7, 1884.

³⁹ *Iowa City Republican (Daily)*, September 20, October 25, 27, 1884.

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It was to help pay for this reconstruction that the Methodist Episcopal Church disposed of a part of its original lot. The original grant had a frontage on Dubuque Street of 150 feet. On the north forty feet of this lot stood the house that had originally served as the parsonage and later had been used as a home for the janitor. For some time it had been rented. The building committee, hard pressed for funds, decided to sell the north forty feet on which this house stood, and on April 5, 1884, it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. R. B. Mahanna for \$1000. Since the grant of the lot to the church was for religious purposes only, a special enabling act was secured from the General Assembly of Iowa.⁴⁰

THE STONE CHURCH

Another score of years passed, and again there was agitation for a larger and finer place of worship. Indeed as early as 1895, the Reverend F. E. Brush in his farewell sermon had called attention to the cracked walls and the inadequate seating capacity of the building. It was not until more than ten years had passed, however, that action was taken. The official board on March 5, 1906, during the pastorate of the Reverend Lucius C. Clark, adopted a resolution calling for the erection of a new church building. A committee was appointed to study the cost of a suitable building and the financial problem of constructing it. The committee reported that \$50,000 would be required and suggested a five-year plan for raising this amount. Letters were sent to the members and the response was found to be favorable. The official board, therefore, proceeded with the preliminary steps. The first of these was a legal measure. The Methodist Episcopal Church of Iowa City had never been incorporated. The extensive financial activities made

⁴⁰ *Laws of Iowa*, 1884, Ch. 14.

this advisable, since otherwise the trustees might be personally liable for any debts incurred by the church board. And so on April 2, 1906, formal articles of incorporation were issued to the Methodist Episcopal Church of Iowa City to continue fifty years from that date.⁴¹

On April 13th the official board appointed a committee to solicit subscriptions for a building to cost \$50,000. When \$30,000 had been subscribed, construction was to begin. Ten days later (April 22nd), on a warm spring Sunday morning, the church building was discovered to be on fire. Those who came to attend the Sunday School and the morning services stood by and watched as the conflagration, despite efforts of the firemen, consumed the wooden framework, the roof, the altar with its sacred associations, the little choir loft, and the corner library, where a few old and unread books remained in the glass-doored cupboards. A group of women who had toiled for years to secure money for a pipe organ turned their eyes away as the cherished instrument crashed to the ground floor after only two years of service.⁴²

This "auspicious, propitious, and suspicious" calamity made the construction of a new church an urgent and immediate necessity. The work of taking subscriptions went on apace as a special committee went east to study church designs.

The plan finally adopted called for a building 80 by 119 feet. This required a larger lot than the old church and the building committee — A. E. Swisher, W. D. Cannon, Jr., Lovell Swisher, Geo. W. Ball, A. E. Meardon, Dr. T. L. Hazard, Dr. L. L. Branson, C. S. Magowan, S. W. Mercer, and L. C. Clark — at once secured an option on the lot

⁴¹ Recorded in the office of the Recorder of Johnson County, April 4, 1906.

⁴² *Iowa City Republican* (Daily), April 23, 1906. The official board sent a vote of thanks and a gift of \$50.00 to the Iowa City Fire Department.

which had been sold twenty years before. The sale now appeared as a costly investment. The house had been enlarged and property values had increased since 1884. The lot was finally bought on June 16, 1906, for \$2800, and Mrs. Carrie C. Mahanna was permitted to remove the house.⁴³

Arrangements were made for holding services in the Coldren Opera House (on the southeast corner of Dubuque and College streets). The debris from the old building was cleared away and the new church began to take form. The cornerstone was laid on November 26, 1906. The new church was built of white sandstone, trimmed with Bedford limestone. Its style is Gothic or Pointed, with towers on the southeast and southwest corners, that on the southwest being taller than the other with a place for a church bell (not yet installed).

The main entrance is on Jefferson Street, but a doorway on Dubuque gives access to the basement and small rooms in the rear of the church auditorium. The pulpit and the pipe organ are on the south, facing the church proper. Balconies on the east and west swing down by railed stairways at each side of the pulpit platform.

The seating capacity of the church auditorium is about 600, that of the balconies 250, and perhaps 50 more persons can be seated in the choir loft. The basement floor has a space for large meetings and smaller rooms for various group meetings. The interior woodwork and the pews are of dark oak. A large stained glass window on the east portrays Plockhorst's "The Resurrection"; a corresponding window on the west copies Hofmann's "Woman at the Well".

The cost of the edifice complete amounted to \$75,000. The work took nearly two years, but on February 9-13,

⁴³ Dedicatory Program of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1906; *Record of Deeds*, Book 99, p. 59, in the office of the Recorder of Johnson County.

1908, the new church was dedicated, with elaborate ceremonies, at which Bishop William Fraser McDowell was the principal speaker.⁴⁴

PARSONAGES

The circuit rider of the frontier was not encouraged to marry; his work required the utmost mobility. But the establishment of organized churches with "stationed" preachers brought up the problem of a home for the minister and his family. The local church group was expected to furnish "board and room" even for the itinerant preacher. On November 13, 1841, the quarterly conference of the Iowa Mission adopted the following resolution:

"That the Stewards provide suitable boarding and other necessaries for Br. Bowman P. in charge during this Conference year; and also that they make such arrangements for the Table expences of Br. Weed as may be thought necessary."

But Methodist preachers were not immune to romance. The Johnson County marriage records contain this brief announcement: "This is to certify that George B. Bowman, aged 30 years, and Margaret Jane Hill, aged 19 years, were legally joined in marriage by me at the residence of John Hawkins in Iowa City on the 2nd day of April, A. D. 1843." The certificate was signed by "James L. Thompson, Minister of the M. E. Church".⁴⁵ The newly wedded couple apparently roomed and boarded during the few months remaining in the conference year.

As the "Iowa City Mission" grew into a "Station" in 1842 and became a full-fledged church, the need of a home for the pastor became evident. During the year 1845, the

⁴⁴ The description of the church built in 1906 is taken from the booklet issued at the time of its dedication.

⁴⁵ From the records in the office of the Recorder of Johnson County.

board of trustees appointed a committee to "examine a building which Bro. Hawkins proposes to sell for a parsonage for \$70 and to purchase the same provided the price & terms of payment are such as in their opinion to justify it." Such committees seldom reported on what was done and there is nothing in the record to explain where this building was located, but when W. Murray, the agent, made his final report on August 16, 1847, he stated that the parsonage was finished and the cost had been \$175. Whether the first house, offered for \$70, was actually purchased and moved to the northwest corner of the church lot, and rebuilt, or whether it was purchased, remained on some other lot, and was later sold is not revealed in the church records. In September, 1851, provision was made for digging a well on the parsonage lot.

Reverend Alcinous Young (1847-1849) seems to have been the first minister to occupy this parsonage. It was, however, always unsatisfactory as a home for the pastor.

Dr. David Henry Worthington, a son of the Reverend David Worthington (1849-1850), once told an Iowa City friend that he was born in the basement of the church while his father was the minister. The church records make no mention of the occupation of the church basement by the pastor's family, but in March, 1850, a committee was appointed to raise \$6.33 to defray the balance of indebtedness on house rent, which suggests that the church was renting a house for the pastor.

At any rate it appears that the parsonage was rented to some one not the pastor at this time for the record of the board of trustees for January 14, 1850, shows a resolution providing that the rent from the parsonage be transferred to the "Board of Stewards" for the purpose of paying an indebtedness to Mr. Edw. Lanning. In September, 1851, however, the trustees assigned one large room in the base-

ment of the church and two smaller ones to "Bro. Taylor" in consideration "of his keeping the House in order & lighting & keeping fires when necessary & furnishing & preparing wood — Lard & oil to be furnished by the Church."

The ladies of the church finally decided that a new home for the minister was needed and by 1858 the local newspapers began to carry items concerning the activities of the "Ladies Sewing Society" of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Under the leadership of Mrs. Anson Hart — worthy helpmeet of Anson Hart, one of the trustees — the women set out to raise funds for a new parsonage. There were suppers, fairs, festivals, the customary church entertainments. The *Iowa City Republican* wrote them up in the florid, half-gallant, half-facetious style then used by men in describing activities of women. The following is an example of the publicity after the event:

The Festival of the M. E. Society, last Friday evening was a decided success. We learn the Ladies, always first to be pleased, are well satisfied with it. The Parson and his *gude Frau*, are content — the Lords of creation do not regret the loss of a single dime — the bright eyed Misses and Lads declare it, the "good time" come; and last, though not least in importance, the unshingled and weather exposed parsonage itself will take on form and comeliness to the tune of over \$200 . . . gladly would we . . . speak of the abundant and most tasty preparation — of the bountiful table, supplied with the sweetest and rarest — of bivalves — jellies and creams — of those *counters* on which were matron and maiden wrought goods of Parisian style and elegance, and behind which were gentle CLERKS, whose every glance of eye spoke askingly — and whose every utterance *chinked* with music . . . of that not to be named "*Bag*", which so violated our maternal boyhood instructions, "you must not *grab*". Of the music by the Blind, who, as if in compensation for the loss of outer sight, are mercifully vouchsafed an acute inner vision, lighting up their souls with the sunshine of song and attuning their hapless lives to those grand choral melodies that fill the Universe of being.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ *Iowa City Republican* (Weekly), December 15, 1858.

The entertainments took different forms. On one occasion a supper by the Ladies Sewing Society was combined with a donation party for the minister. Late in December, 1859, another "Fair and Festival" was held at Market Hall. Admission was twenty-five cents and supper was the same price. The newspaper reported that the proceeds amounted to \$213.70 and that this amount would cover the final expense of the new parsonage, which had been built on the part of the church lot east of the church. The ladies apparently left the fence to the men, but it was not until October 9, 1861, that the official board appropriated funds for a fence around the parsonage lot.

The new parsonage, which seems to have been financed by the women, served the minister's family from 1860 until 1895, when the building was sold for \$250 and moved to North Linn Street.

It will be remembered that the Reverend Frank E. Brush (1893-1895) had endeavored to arouse enthusiasm for a larger church and a committee was appointed to consider the possibility of constructing a new church, with a pipe organ added, and a new parsonage. The committee decided that it was inexpedient to start a movement for a new church, but it advised that a new parsonage should be built. The plans were soon made. The cost, including a new barn and other improvements on the lot, was estimated at \$5000. Subscriptions amounted to \$3079. The Ladies Aid contributed \$500 and the remainder was borrowed from local banks and from the Queen Esther Society, an organization of Methodist young women, which had accumulated \$425 which they planned to use later for a pipe organ.

An indebtedness of some \$2000 hung over the church for more than five years. The Ladies Aid paid the interest

⁴⁷ *Iowa State Reporter* (Iowa City, weekly), December 28, 1859, January 4, 1860.

(which by that time had amounted to some \$350) and the women were irked by the failure of the men to liquidate the debt. Finally, on the first of May, 1901, the President of the Aid Society wrote the following frank letter to the "Stewards and Trustees":

The Aid Society of this church desire to see the debt standing on the parsonage cancelled and believe this is the opportune time to make an extra effort to do so. And while we pledged five Hundred [dollars] and felt that was a good deal we have already paid nearly one thousand. And still the Aid Society stands ready to give this burden another lift. We are tired of having this debt held up to us when ever we make an effort to increase our funds. It has to be paid and I am sure this is not business like to let this run from year to year all the time growing. So let us buckle to and get the incubus out of the way. The Aid Society will pledge another five Hundred provided you will see to it that the rest is paid within a year from this date May 1. Otherwise we will hold our funds for other purposes.⁴⁸

The men, thus "put on the spot", met the challenge and by conference time, 1901, the debt was paid, the five hundred dollars contributed by the Ladies Aid being paid to the Queen Esthers for the \$425 loan and interest. Incidentally the Queen Esthers used their money for the pipe organ burned in the fire of 1906.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Iowa City Methodist Church in early days came largely from the transfer of members who moved here and from revival services. During later years revivals have been little used and a much larger proportion of the membership has been added through the Sunday School and the young people's societies. A comparison of the population of Iowa City and the membership rolls of the Methodist Church shows the following figures:

⁴⁸ Manuscript letter signed by Mrs. Lytle, dated May 1, 1901.

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<i>Population of Iowa City</i>		<i>Membership Roll</i>	
1856	2,570	1856	200
1865	4,417	1866	260
1875	6,371	1876	290
1885	6,748	1886	300
1895	7,526	1896	562
1905	8,497	1906	740
1915	12,033	1916	890
1925	15,289	1926	1,123
1930	15,340	1936	1,070

YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH

It was during the twenty years following the Civil War that young people began to have separate societies. The early church made no special provision for its younger members; they were expected to attend Sunday School classes, church services, and class meetings, just as older people did. Early in the 1870's the churches began to consider special meetings for young people. The Christian Endeavor, an interdenominational society, had chapters in Methodist churches. Other groups were organized under such names as Lyceums, Oxford Leagues, Alliances, and Christian Leagues. In 1889 five Methodist young people's groups consolidated to form the Epworth League which was officially recognized by the Upper Iowa Conference in 1890 and by the General Conference in 1892.

The Iowa City Epworth League was organized in June, 1890, with Professor Charles S. Magowan as the first president. During the next forty years this organization, with its Spiritual Work, Mercy and Help, Literary, and Social departments, ministered to both students and young people of Iowa City. Since 1928 the Epworth League has ministered almost entirely to high school students, leaving the Wesley Foundation to take care of student groups.

In the fall of 1913 the Upper Iowa Conference made provision for a student pastor at Iowa City and Reverend Lewis F. Townsend was appointed assistant pastor to take charge of this work. He preached his first sermon at Iowa City on August 24, 1913. In 1917 Wesley Foundation of Iowa was incorporated to handle student work, with some support from all conferences in the State. In 1919 a student center was opened on North Clinton Street. In 1925 it was moved to a house just north of the church on Dubuque Street, the purchase of which was finally completed in 1938. In addition to Reverend Townsend who served until 1918, the following student pastors, assistant pastors, or student counselors have served at the Student Center: Reverend L. G. Rohrbaugh, 1918-1921, Reverend E. T. Gough, 1921-1926; Reverend C. G. Fort, 1926-1931; Reverend Glenn McMichael, 1931-1934; Mrs. Horton Talley, 1934-February, 1936; Mrs. Neil H. Baxter, February-August, 1936; Dr. and Mrs. Orlo Crissey, 1936-1937; and Reverend Robert H. Hamill, 1937 —.

WOMEN'S WORK

The work of the women's aid societies has been mentioned in connection with the building of the parsonages in 1860 and 1895. Following the Civil War with its Ladies Aid Societies for the soldiers, the Methodist women adopted the name. A group pictured in 1875 has come to be known as the first Ladies Aid, with Mrs. B. C. Mahanna as president. In 1906 when the efforts of the church were all bent on raising money for a church building worthy of a University city, the Ladies Aid was reorganized. Instead of a society which a woman joined and to which she paid dues, the Ladies Aid automatically took in all women members of the church. Under Mrs. W. D. Cannon the Ladies Aid of this period contributed more than \$5000 to the building fund. In 1916, the Ladies Aid was organized into seven divisions.

Women of the Methodist Episcopal Church were interested in work outside of their own congregation. While the Ladies Aid worked for the home church and did valiant service, groups of women turned to the larger parish. Tradition says that the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized in Iowa City in 1872, three years after the National Society, and the Conference Minutes for 1873 show a contribution of \$28 from the Iowa City auxiliary. The National Home Missionary Society was organized in 1880 and the local society in May, 1885, with Mrs. Jessie Bowen Sterling as president.

The Foreign Missionary Society sponsors the Standard Bearers and King's Heralds. The Home Society has Queen Esthers, Home Guards, and Mothers Jewels. The Wesleyan Service Guild, an organization of business and professional women formed in 1927 from the membership of an earlier Queen Esther group, supports both home and foreign missionary work.

ROLL OF PASTORS

During the hundred years since J. L. Kirkpatrick first preached in Iowa City, more than fifty men have served the Iowa City charge as ordained preachers, pastors, and ministers. About half of these served only one year or less. The list (not including the student pastors listed elsewhere), as nearly as it can be compiled, is as follows:

J. L. Kirkpatrick.....1839-40	J. T. Lewis.....1844
G. G. Worthington.....1840-41	D. Worthington.....1844-45
G. B. Bowman.....1841-43	J. D. Templin.....1845-46
J. L. Thompson ⁴⁹1843-44	John Harris.....1846-47
Laban Case ⁵⁰1844	Alcinous Young.....1847-49

⁴⁹ Resigned January 6, 1844.

⁵⁰ Reverend Laban Case seems to have been in charge of the circuit outside Iowa City, with Reverend Thompson in charge at Iowa City.—Brindell's *Early Methodism in Iowa* in the *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. III, p. 317.

D. Worthington	1849-50	P. P. Ingalls	1875-76
J. B. Hardy	1850-51	J. S. Anderson	1876-77
M. H. Hare	1851-52	J. T. Crippen	1877-78
T. E. Corkhill	1852-53	E. L. Miller	1878-80
E. W. Twining	1853-54	Emory Miller	1880-82
L. B. Dennis	1854-55	R. D. Parsons	1882-85
A. B. Morrison	1855-56	G. W. Brindell	1885-88
A. J. Kynett	1856-58	H. O. Pratt	1888-93
J. G. Dimmitt	1858-60	F. E. Brush	1893-95
E. C. Byam	1860-61	J. S. McCord	1895-1900
R. L. Collier ⁵¹	1861-62	D. W. Clinton	1900-03
A. B. Kendig	1862-64	M. S. Rice	1903-04
John Lavery (supply)		N. Pye	1904-05
March to Sept. 1864		L. C. Clark	1905-09
I. K. Fuller	1864-66	R. F. Hurlburt	1909-12
John Bowman	1866-67	S. E. Ellis	1912-23
E. K. Young	1867-70	W. F. Keeler	1923-30
J. W. Clinton	1870-71	H. D. Henry	1930-35
C. R. Pomeroy	1871-73	S. E. Ellis	1935-36
R. H. Sparks	1873-75	E. E. Voigt	1936-

On this list were G. B. Bowman, A. B. Kendig, R. D. Parsons, and L. C. Clark, who served as church builders or during periods of rebuilding the church. Bowman was also the founder of Cornell College. Another early pastor of executive ability was Alcinous Young, who served the conference either as preacher or presiding elder for many years. Reverend Bowman and Reverend Young were two of the seven Iowa City pastors who later served as presiding elders of the conference.

Of the ministers before the Civil War, Alpha J. Kynett probably came to be the most widely known. He was prominent in church circles, was one of the organizers of the relief work during the Civil War, sponsored the founding of the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home, and was active in the

⁵¹ Reverend Collier resigned in March, 1862, to take up work in Chicago. Reverend A. Young and President O. M. Spencer filled in for several Sundays, preaching alternately. Reverend A. B. Kendig arrived in June.

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promotion of Church Extension. A. B. Kendig and E. K. Young became well-known ministers in the East after leaving Iowa.

Reverend Merton S. Rice, now preaching at Detroit, Michigan, was listed in a recent poll as one of the twenty outstanding pulpit orators of the United States. Reverend Sylvester E. Ellis who spent twelve years as pastor of the Iowa City Church is preëminent in length of service. He was also one of the best loved for his pastoral work in the community as well as in the church.

THE CHURCH REMEMBERS

The history of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Iowa City spans a hundred years, almost the entire period of the existence of the Commonwealth of Iowa, both as a Territory and a State. The church saw three constitutions drafted in the Stone Capitol not far away. It has seen Iowa City grow from less than a hundred persons in a few cabins to a population of more than fifteen thousand and the State University develop from the beginning in the old Mechanics' Academy to an institution with more than ten thousand students in more than sixty spacious buildings.

This Iowa City church saw the Methodist Episcopal Church divide over the slavery issue and seventeen years later the secession of the slave States; it has lived to see the three divisions of the Methodist body united into one great Methodist Church. It has seen the local Methodist Protestant Church disappear and the German Methodist Church disband as the language barrier melted away. Since Joseph L. Kirkpatrick preached here one hundred years ago some twenty church buildings of other denominations have been built in Iowa City.

The Iowa City Methodist Episcopal Church has seen hospitals built, each one larger than the one before. It has

seen a public library established and watched schools multiply. It has seen three periods of intense interest in temperance and prohibition and has taken part in each movement. Its young men have gone out in the armies of three major wars. Since it was organized the Pacific Coast States, part of the Southwest, Alaska, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippine Islands have been added to the United States.

Business houses have come and gone, while the church has continued. It is possible that, with the exception of the Old Stone Capitol, the Methodist Church and St. Mary's Catholic Church are the only institutions in Iowa City whose buildings occupy the original sites allotted them almost one hundred years ago. With the close of the century which began in 1839, the Iowa City Methodist Episcopal Church gives place to the Iowa City Methodist Church and begins another hundred years.

RUTH A. GALLAHER

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