

Many Kinds of Baptists

A cross-section of the population of Iowa in 1860 would show a representation by every major American denomination. Most of Iowa's Baptists have come from three principal lines: Regular (more Calvinistic), Separate ("New-Light" or more revivalistically minded), and Free (more Arminian). Also numbered among early Iowa's Baptists were a scattering of Negroes, a few of the "anti-mission," "Hard-Shell" or "Primitive" variety, a handful of "Six-Principle" followers who stressed Hebrews 6:2 with the laying on of hands after baptism, and a trace of the "Seventh-Day" believers who worshipped on Saturday instead of Sunday. Still surviving today are some "Bible" Baptists and extreme independents. Three-fourths of Iowa's 50,000 Baptists in 1955 are associated with the Iowa Baptist Convention.

To Iowa's early Baptist leaders the problem of assimilating such a theological variety was not a serious one. True, they sought Baptists wherever in spacious Iowaland they might be found, but strove, as a rule, to reach the unconverted sinner, the half-hearted or "back-sliding" Christian, to whom the life-renewing Gospel of spiritual regeneration might be heralded. The waters of Iowa's

beautiful streams have been troubled by many an angel during the past twelve decades of her history; countless Baptist decisions to follow Christ have been sealed in their ceaseless flow.

Slavery had no standing with Iowa Baptists. The fateful rupture among Baptists in the nation because of slavery in the 1840's found little reinforcement in the Hawkeye State; the resulting Southern Baptist Convention, formed in 1845, is today the most rapidly growing denominational group in the United States. By 1953, however, it had not directly planted any churches in Iowa as in the neighboring states of Illinois and Missouri. One congregation in Centerville finds fellowship with a Baptist association in Missouri, which, in turn, is associated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Northern Baptist Convention did not achieve its organization until 1907 at Washington, D. C. When it was incorporated in 1910, the Honorable Charles Evans Hughes of New York, later Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was elected Convention president. In 1950 the name of this organization was changed to the American Baptist Convention and with it the Iowa Baptist Convention is affiliated.

Iowa's Negro Baptists

In territorial days only a handful of Negroes lived in Iowa; after statehood there were many

more, especially as the Civil War came on. Some Iowa Negroes attended Baptist churches, others Methodist, Congregational, or Presbyterian. As Negroes became more numerous, separate organization was thought necessary and this is still generally the case. There is a color problem remaining from early days.

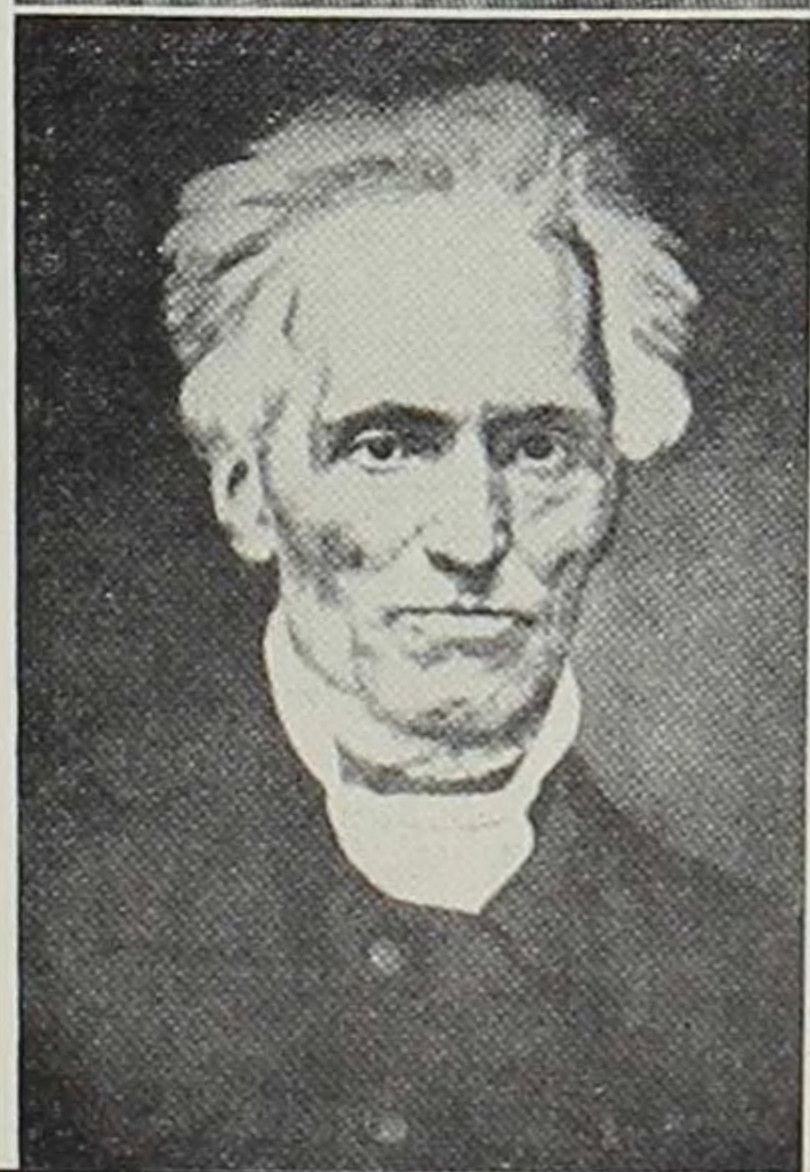
Unfortunately, records are lacking for much of the Iowa Negro Baptist work. In 1891 a statistical column appeared in the *Minutes of the Iowa Baptist Convention* which carried ten Negro churches, with a total of 1,014 members. These churches were at Keokuk, the oldest in the state, Bloomfield, Burlington, Centerville, Marshalltown, Mount Pleasant, Ottumwa, Muchachinock (Givin), and Des Moines, which had two. The Negro churches were formed into the Iowa Association, the largest being that in Keokuk with 162 members.

Today, in cooperation with four agencies — the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the Iowa Baptist Convention, the Negro Baptist Convention, and the Negro National Convention — the Negro Baptist Educational Center is maintained in Des Moines. Rev. John Q. Evans is in charge of this religious educational work. In 1953, for example, he organized and supervised 14 leadership classes in different areas. Besides, he developed institutes for mission workers, teacher training for the young people and preached 25 times.

Statue of
Roger Williams
(1603 ? - 1683)
at Providence,
Rhode Island



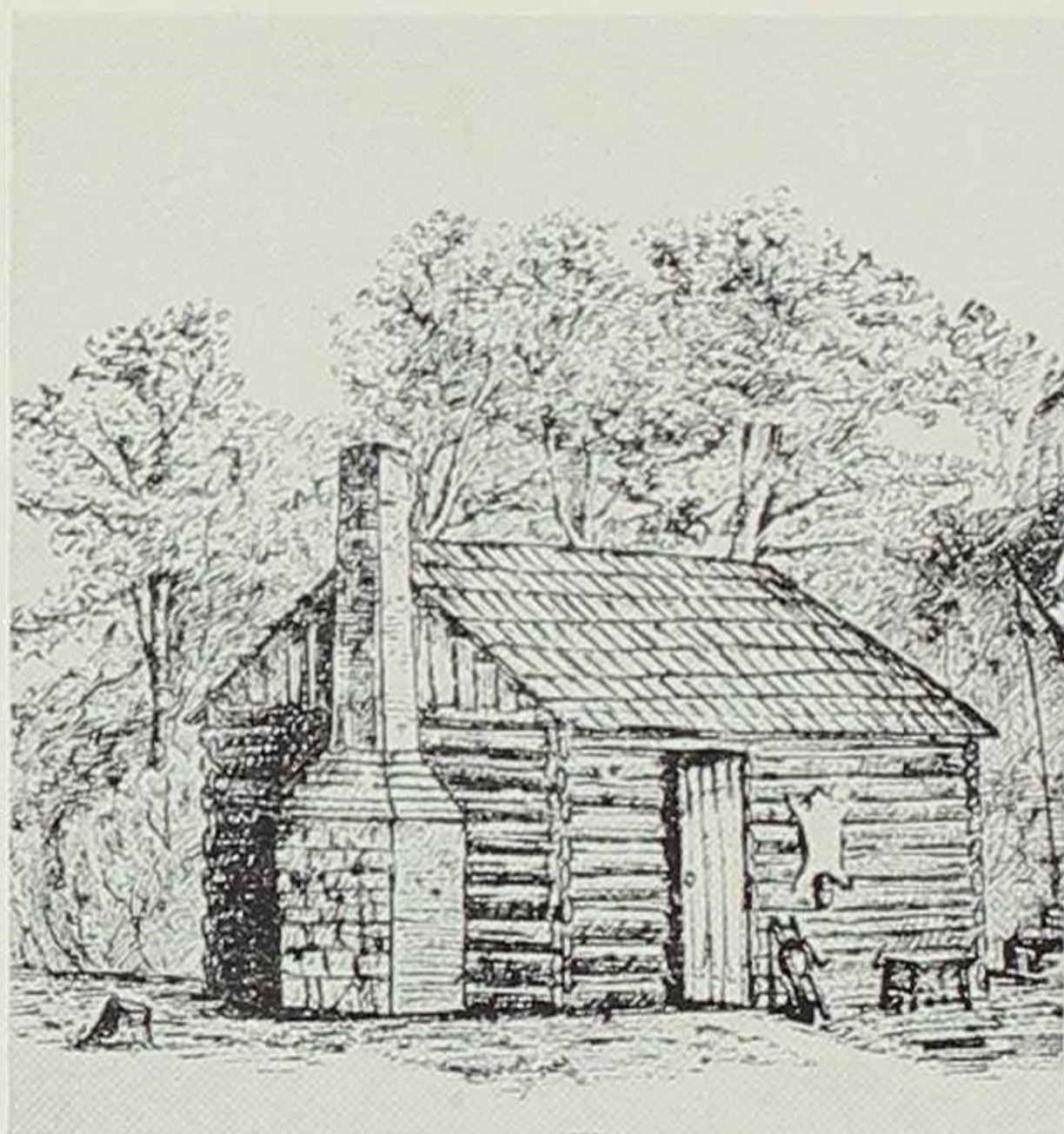
Left:
John M. Peck
(1789-1858),
home missionary



Right:
Adoniram Judson
(1788-1850),
foreign missionary



IOWA BAPTISTS ON THE FRONTIER

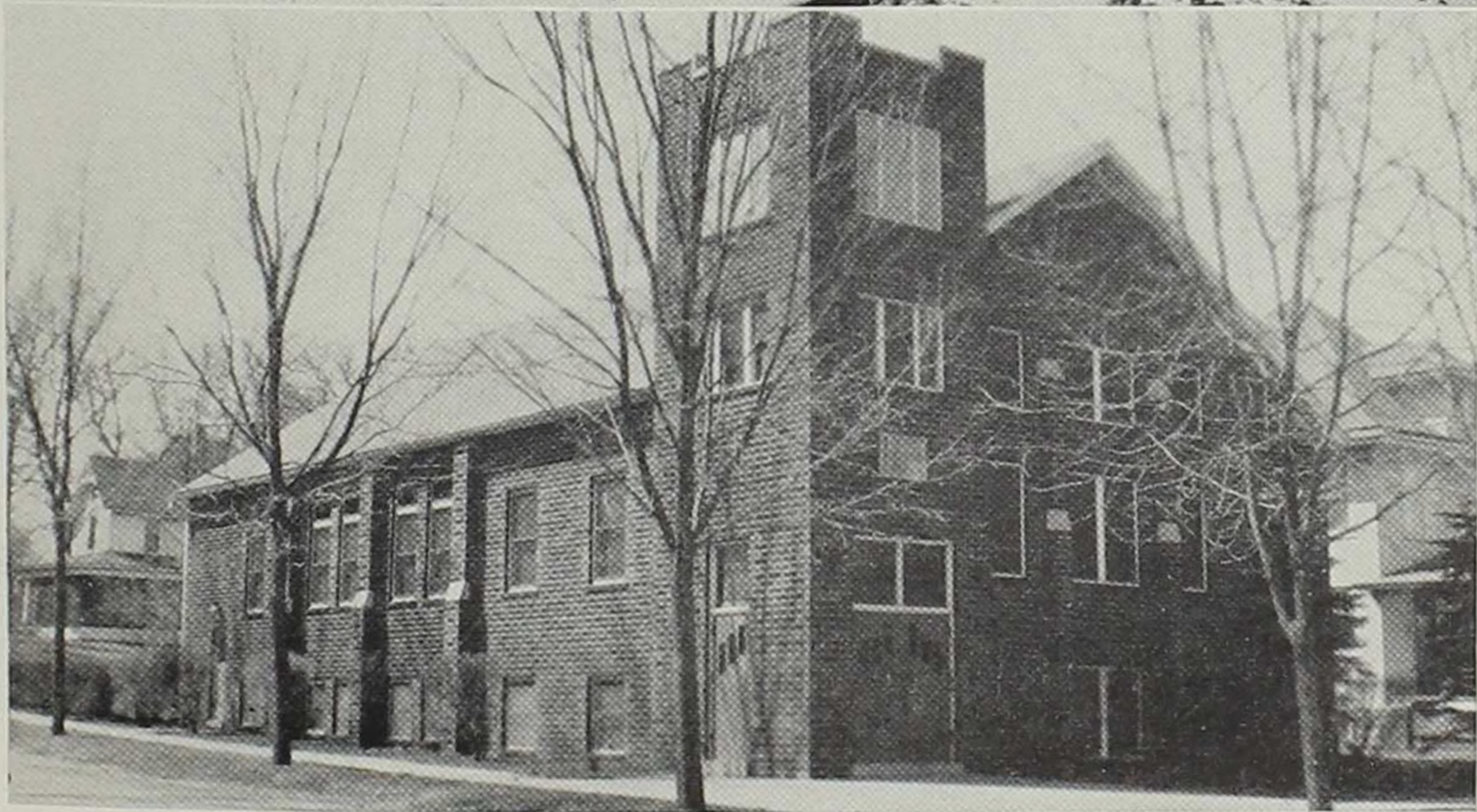


Left: Hously Cabin on Long Creek where the first Iowa Baptist church (Danville) was organized in 1834. *Right:* First Baptist Church of Danville today.



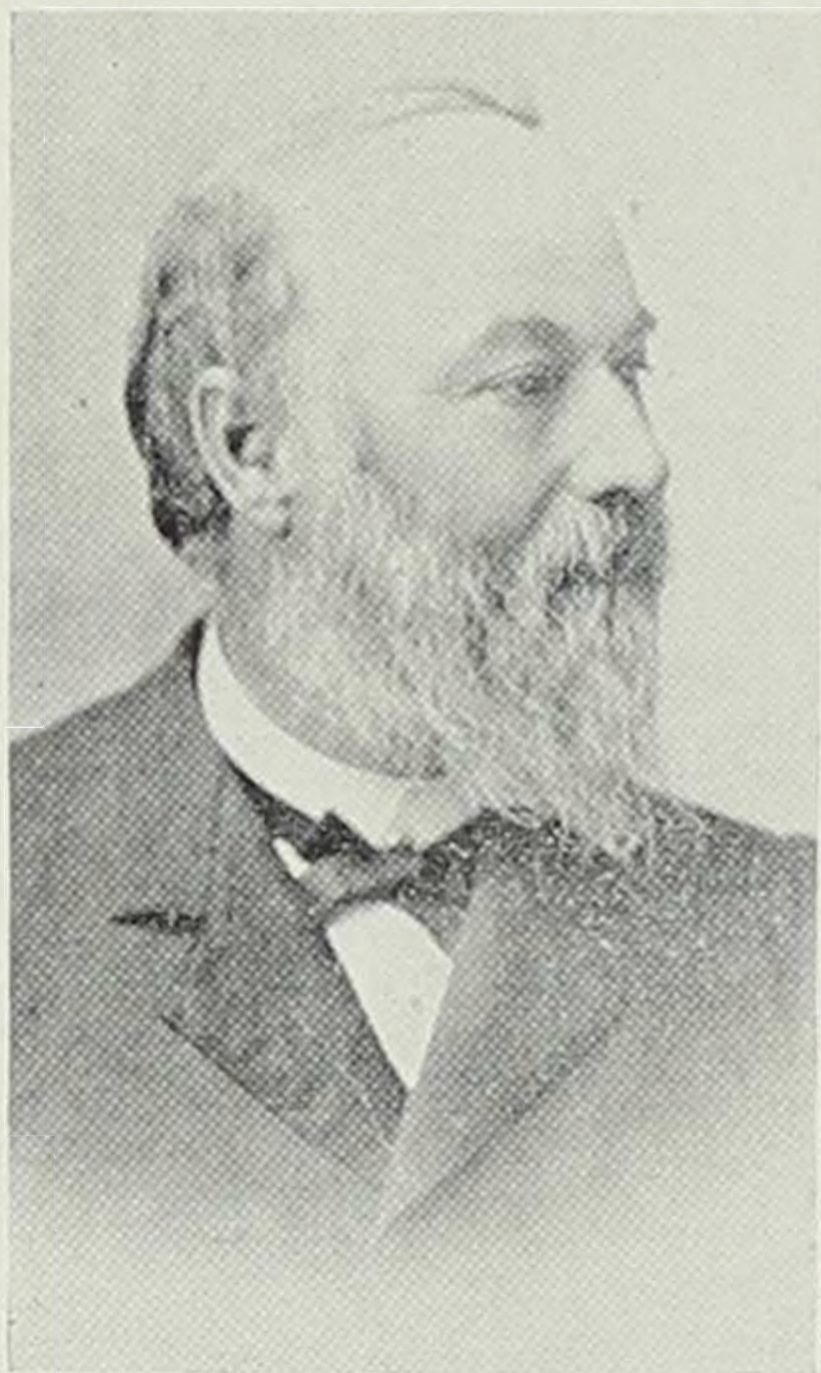
From S. H. Mitchell's *Historical Sketches of Iowa Baptists*
First Iowa Baptist Association, formed in 1839.

OLD WORLD BAPTIST ROOTS IN NEW IOWA HOMELAND



Top: Organization of Danish Baptist General Conference in America at Harlan in 1910. *Center:* Village Creek Swedish Baptist Church near Lansing, founded in 1853. (Courtesy Baptist General Conference of America.) *Bottom:* German First Baptist Church of Aplington, founded in 1869.

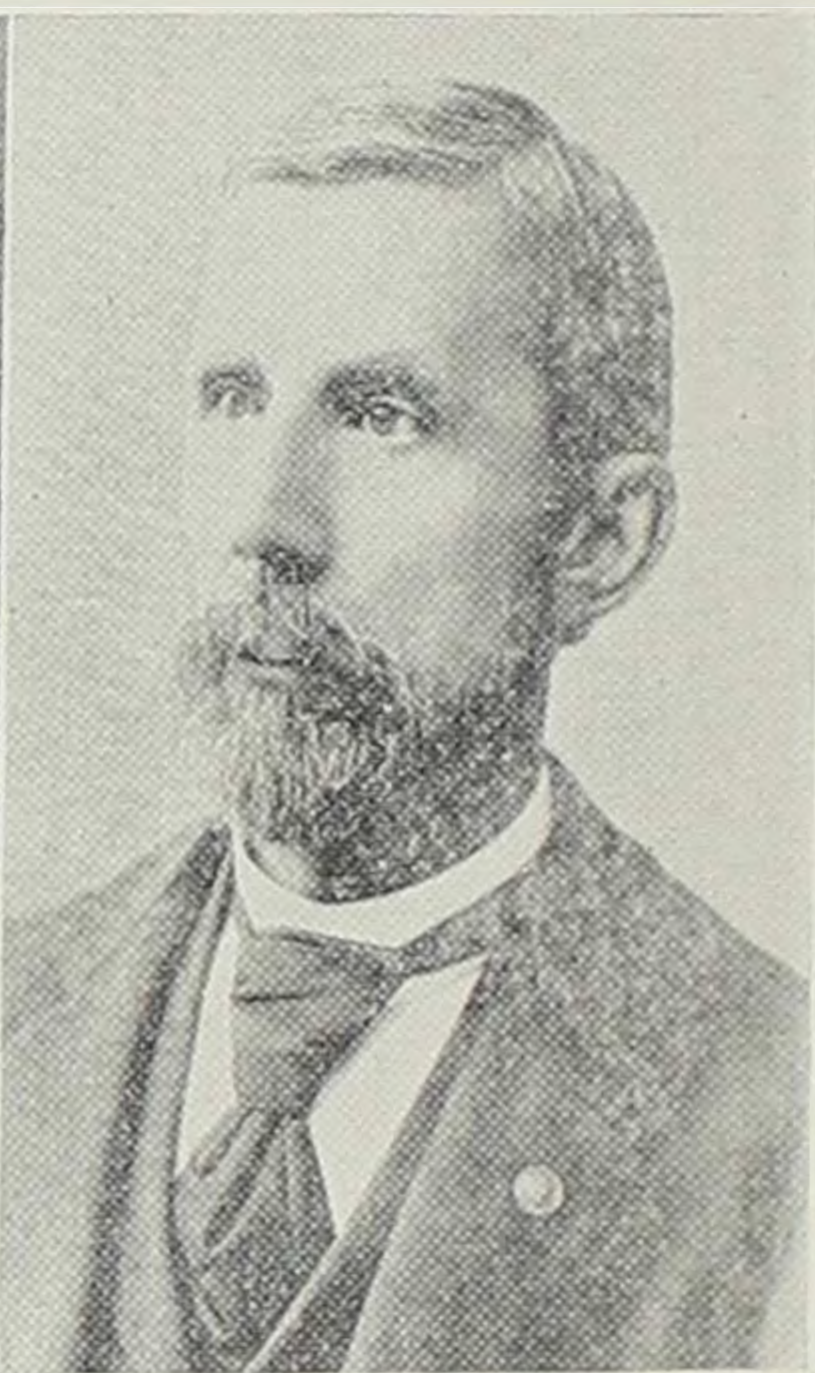
BAPTIST LEADERS OF YESTERYEAR



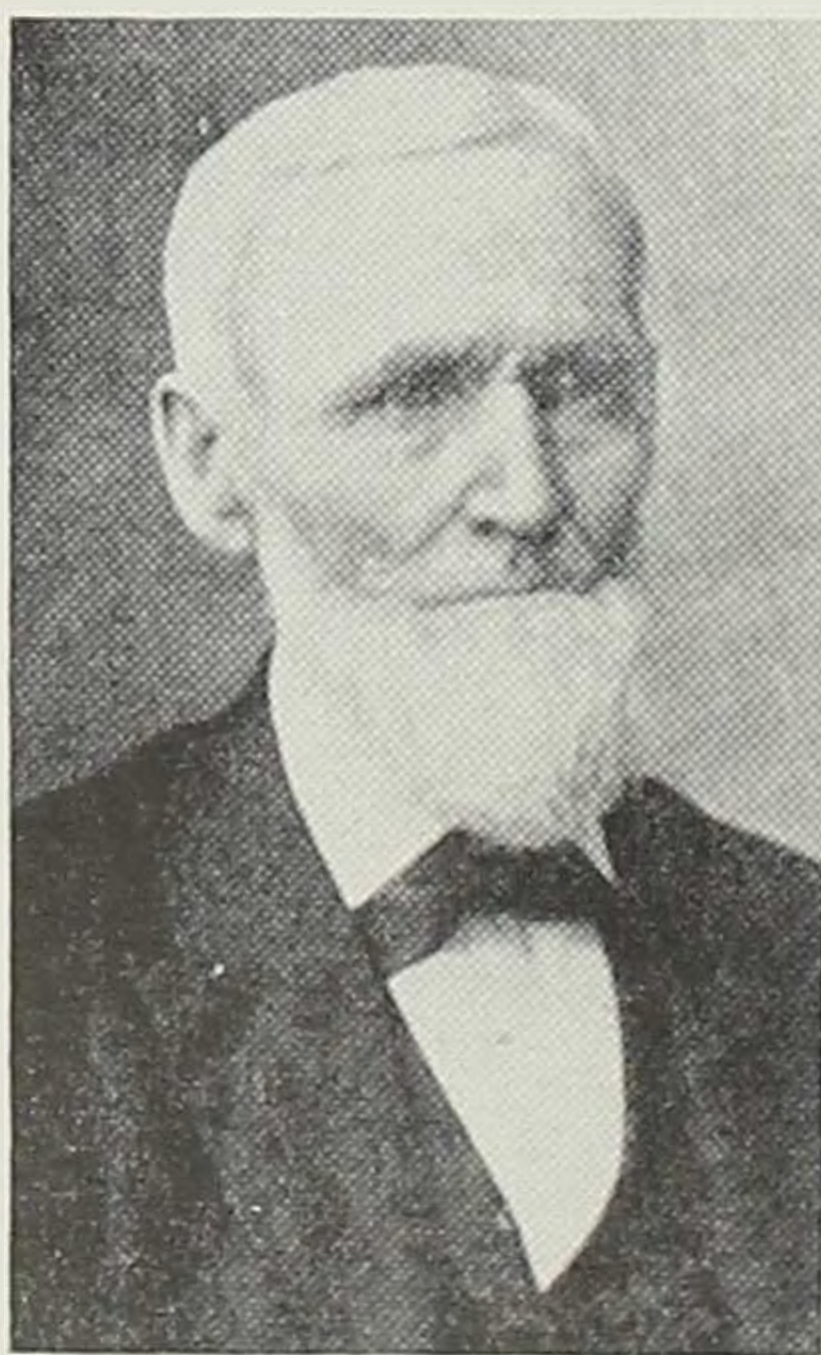
REV. L. N. CALL
Webster City



REV. ALBERT LOUGHRIDGE
Iowa City



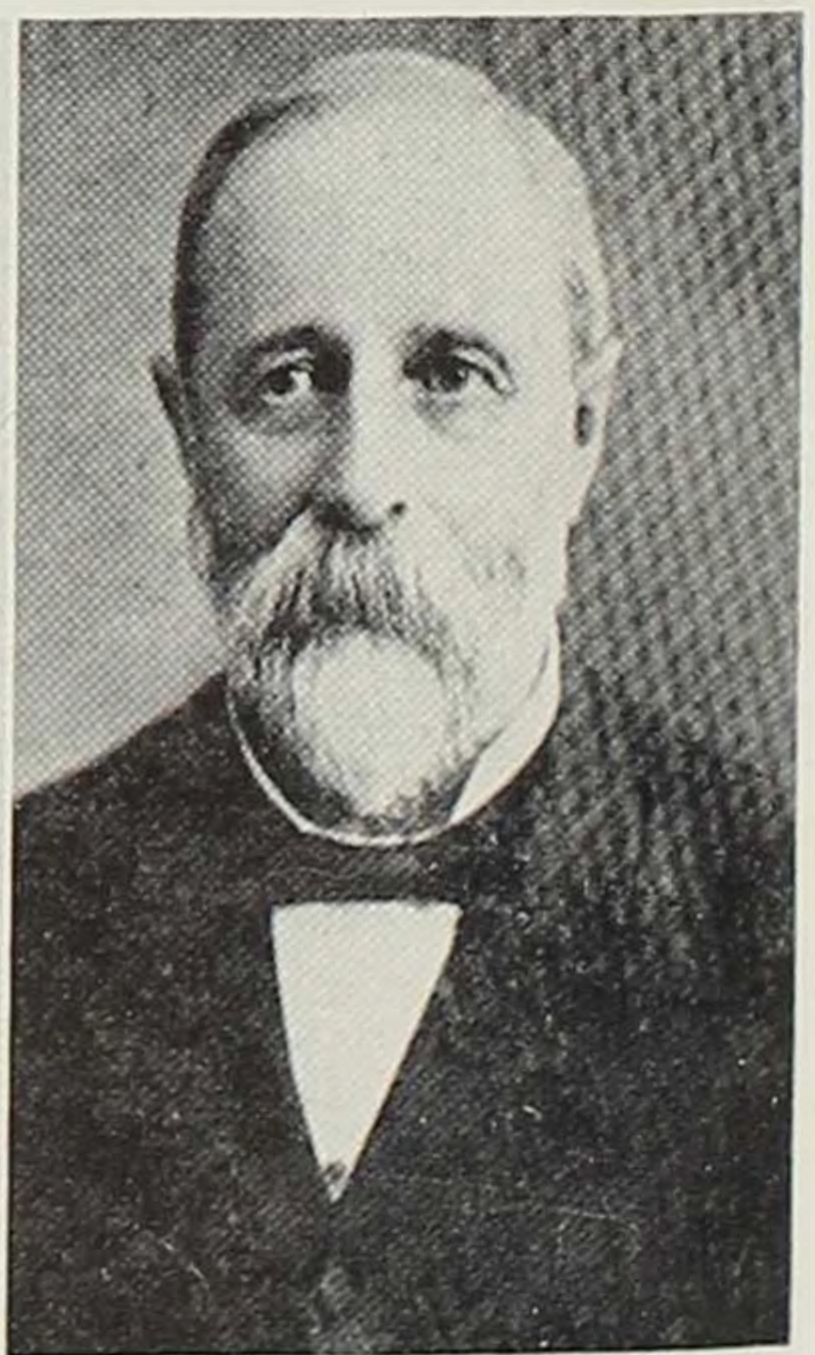
COL. ALONZO ABERNETHY
Des Moines



REV. CHARLES E. BROWN
Maquoketa



MRS. CHARLES E. BROWN
Maquoketa



HON. HOWARD M. REMLEY
Anamosa

BAPTIST LEADERS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW



HENRY K. PETERSON
Council Bluffs



REV. ELMER DIERKS
Iowa City



REV. ROBERT BENEDICT
Charles City



REV. JOHN Q. EVANS
Des Moines



MRS. HOWARD ROACH
Plainfield



REV. PAUL SMITH
Des Moines



Camp at
Clear Lake,
General
Association
of Regular
Baptists
(Courtesy
Rev. Bob
Gardner)



Junior Camp,
Iowa Falls
Assembly



Forest Lake
Camp, near
Ottumwa

The service programs of the Eastern, Western, and Central associations actually overflow the state boundaries, with six Negro Baptist churches in Omaha, Nebraska, one in St. Paul, Minnesota, one in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and two in Quincy, Illinois. These ten plus the 49 churches in Iowa proper make up the Iowa Negro Baptist Convention today. The Executive Secretary is Rev. George Parish, minister of the Maple Street Baptist Church in Des Moines. Iowa's largest Negro Baptist congregation is the Corinthian Baptist Church, also in the capital city.

Free Baptists

"Free-willers" and "New-Lights" were among the names first applied to the Free Baptists, one of many bodies produced by the "Great Awakening" in New England. Followers of Benjamin Randall of New Hampshire, they spread eventually to the Mid-west, organizing a General Conference in 1892. The name used in their charter, granted by the State of Maine, was Free Baptist. Inspired by Rev. George Whitefield on his final visit to America and whom he heard just two days before that famous English revivalist died in 1770, Randall became the exponent of "the universal love of God to men, the universal atonement in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, the universal appearance of grace to all men, and the universal call of the Gospel."

Shortly before the Civil War, Free Baptists began coming to Iowa. Their growth in the state was never large and in 1910, following successful negotiations, the 27 Free Baptist churches, 18 ministers, and 1,685 members came over in a body to the Iowa Baptist Convention. At that time the churches of the Iowa Free Baptist Association were grouped in five quarterly meetings, as follows:

Buchanan
Quarterly Meeting

Aurora
Bryantsburg
Central City
Dunkerton
Edgewood
Fairbank
Lamont
Oelwein
Waubeeek

Cedar Valley
Quarterly Meeting

Burr Oak
David
Horton
Lincoln
Little Cedar
Six Mile Grove
Tripoli

Little Sioux Valley
Quarterly Meeting

Curlew
Estherville
Spencer

Van Buren
Quarterly Meeting

Hillsboro
Lockridge
Utica

Wapsipinicon
Quarterly Meeting

Bethel
Buena Vista
Farmington
Mount Zion
Pleasant Hill

German Baptists

Credit for the pioneer work among German Baptists in the United States belongs to Konrad

Anton Fleischmann, a German who came to America from Switzerland in 1839. In Philadelphia he organized a church known as "The German Church of the Lord that meets on Poplar Street." Other German Baptists formed churches in Brooklyn, Buffalo, and Rochester, New York, and in 1847 a strong German Baptist colony settled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Also in 1847, a German-speaking group of Hollanders reached St. Louis, Missouri, led by their pastor, Rev. Christopher Schoemaker. In March, 1849, he and his followers were baptized in the Mississippi River by the famous missionary-educator, Rev. John Mason Peck, then the pastor of the Second Baptist Church. In due course, many other German Baptist churches were organized in Chicago, Springfield, Peoria, Illinois, and in the Province of Ontario, Canada. From these and other centers came both settlers and other influences which led eventually to Iowa's German Baptist church developments.

One of the great names in Baptist history in America is that of Rev. Augustus Rauschenbusch, by birth a Westphalian and the sixth in a line of German clergymen. In 1850 he united with the German Baptist church in St. Louis. Rauschenbusch aided in the formation of the General Conference at Wilmot, Ontario, Canada, in 1865, and gave distinguished service in the German department of Rochester Theological Seminary (New

York) until 1890. This famous father had a wonderful son, Walter, Professor of Church History at Rochester until his death in 1918. Walter Rauschenbusch helped in training nearly every German Baptist minister of the passing generation. Thus, the Iowa men and their churches with them have worn the liberal or "Social Gospel" stamp. It was Walter's sister, Emma, who married the widowed missionary, John E. Clough from Burlington, after serving in India in 1882.

The famous old Oak Street German Baptist Church of Burlington had the honor of holding the Twenty-sixth General Conference in 1940, which was characterized as "the greatest conference of our first century." For the first time in history the program was conducted entirely in English though three extra German meetings were scheduled.

In a fine paper entitled "Sixty Years of Iowa German Baptist Association History," written in 1940, the late Rev. C. Fred Lehr of Aplington has given a clear picture of the organization of Iowa's German Baptist churches. The oldest, at Muscatine, was formed as the "Dutch and German" church, although its work really goes back to 1851 and 1852 when the first members of the church came to Iowa from St. Louis. Although it is the second oldest of this group in Iowa, the Burlington Oak Street Baptist Church, organized in 1869, heads the list with 694 members in 1952.

A German congregation was formed in Daven-

port in 1880, although some German-speaking Baptists there had previously united with their English-speaking brethren in the 1860's. The church in Aplington began with the coming to Iowa of a group, originally East Frieslanders, from Silver Creek, Illinois, in 1869. Other German Baptist churches were organized at Rock Falls in Cerro Gordo County in 1875, at Steamboat Rock in 1876, and at Elgin in 1879. A colony from Steamboat Rock formed the German church at the Buck Grove schoolhouse in 1889. Other churches formed in this period lasted for a time but have become extinct. At George the First German Baptist Church was organized in 1893, and Central Church in 1902. The church at Sheffield appeared in 1894, and in 1900 the German church at Buffalo Center. German Baptist work began at Victor in 1873 as a mission out of the strong Muscatine congregation; but in 1903 the Victor people organized a church of their own and they have had a full-time pastor since 1932.

The transition from the use of German to English was difficult, especially during and following World War I. Writes Pastor Lehr:

Not stubbornness, as is frequently thought, but heavy-heartedness was responsible in a good many instances for the reluctance with which the transition was made. . . . We must ever be mindful of the fact that all the sacred and cherished spiritual associations of our fathers were inseparably connected with the German language. . . . We

in Iowa are gradually coming toward the end of what we called the "Transition" period, during which churches are gradually becoming English-speaking churches. Wise and consecrated leadership has enabled our churches to emerge from this time of change not weaker, but stronger than they were before.

In 1952 there were 2,321 Iowa German Baptists on the rolls, with the following churches listed:

Aplington	George (First)	Steamboat Rock
Buffalo Center	George (Central)	Sumner
Burlington	Parkersburg	Victor
Elgin	Sheffield	

Along with one church in Illinois, nine in Minnesota, and 14 in Wisconsin, the Iowa German Baptist congregations form the Northwestern Conference as one of nine similar bodies composing the North American Baptist General Conference. The Seventy-second annual meeting of the Northwestern Conference was held in 1952 in the Oak Street German Baptist Church of Burlington, with Rev. Peter Pfeiffer, the local pastor, presiding.

Swedish Baptists

On August 14-16, 1953, the Village Creek Swedish Baptist Church in Center Township, Alameda County, Iowa, celebrated one hundred years of useful service. According to Mrs. Edgar F. Medary of Waukon, "This little church is the third oldest of its denomination in the world, the oldest in Iowa, and the second oldest in the United States." Eric Sandman, a layman from Galesburg,

Illinois, had found just the right place in Iowa for settlers coming over from the old country. Regular services have been held every Sunday since the church was organized on August 10, 1853. The first pastor was Rev. A. G. Swedberg.

In 1857 a log cabin was purchased for \$50 and used for a church until a frame building was built on bottomland ten years later. Because of flooding, however, it was removed to the present site on high ground, a 22-acre farm with a six-room parsonage. The present structure was built in 1911. Twenty pastors have served through the century, the present minister being Rev. L. D. Eaton.

Another Swedish Baptist church was organized at Burlington in 1854, but the people removed to Clear Water Lake in Carver County, Minnesota, the next year. The new Sweden Baptist Church in Lockridge Township, Jefferson County, Iowa, has a longer history. It was organized on May 23, 1854, in the home of William Högman — the "Log Chapel," built in 1846. This group has the distinction of having erected the first Swedish Baptist church building in the world. It was dedicated on February 10, 1855, with Rev. A. Norelius as the pastor. On May 17, 1931, the Iowa Swedish Baptist Conference erected a bronze tablet to honor the pioneers: Olaf Peterson, Gustav Schillerstrom, Gustaf Palmquist, Anders Wiberg, Fredrik O. Nilsson, A. Norelius, and L. L. Frisk. At these exercises a baptismal service was held in

Brush Creek, with two of Deacon Schillerstrom's grandchildren professing their faith that day.

The present First Baptist Church of Stratford (Hamilton County) was organized by Pastor Norelius on August 28, 1856, in the house of John F. Carlson at "Swede Bend" on the Des Moines River in Webster County. During sod house days, another Swedish Baptist church was formed on August 16, 1868, at Kiron in Crawford County. (Kidron was the name originally given the place, after the stream in the Holy Land.) Mrs. Bengta Sandberg, who was born in Sweden in 1832, came to Kiron in 1868 and lived until 1934, attaining the great age of 101 years, one month, and 13 days. For her hundredth birthday, her pastor, Rev. Gordon Carlson, wrote the following lines:

In the church and community loved and respected,
Enshrined in the heart of us all,
In the crucible, moment by moment perfected,
She waits for her Master's call.

The Forest City Swedish Baptist church came into existence in 1869 and owed much to the labors of Rev. Martin Dahlquist. Central Baptist Church in Sioux City (First Swedish) was formed on January 17, 1874. It was at first a union effort of Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians, but later on separation was deemed advisable. Other Swedish Baptist congregations organized were: Woodlawn Baptist in Burlington, June 13, 1881; Penn Avenue Baptist in Des Moines, October 18, 1881;

Grand Avenue Baptist in Davenport, March 10, 1889, and the church in Arthur, October 25, 1885. Those formed at Meriden, Creston, Denison, Lucas, Swea City, Gowrie, Clinton, and Council Bluffs have since disbanded.

As the Danes did later, the Swedish Baptists in America selected Iowa as the place where their national organization was completed. The historic Village Creek church in Allamakee County provided the setting for the organization of the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America, June 12-14, 1879. Before that, however, the Iowa Swedish Baptists had formed two conferences with their nearest state neighbors and kinsmen, the Iowa-Illinois Conference in 1864, and the Western Iowa-Nebraska Conference in 1872. Both included Scandinavian groups freely mixed though all were Baptists. In fact, they were called Scandinavian conferences, not simply Swedish, Norwegian, or Danish. Eventually, however, Iowa Swedish Baptists were to organize separately at Des Moines in 1883, and annual meetings of the Swedish Baptist Conference have been held since that time. In 1955 there are 16 Swedish Baptist churches in the Iowa Conference:

Arthur	Des Moines	Lansing
Burlington	Estherville	Sioux City
Cedar Falls	Forest City	Stratford
Cedar Rapids	Fort Dodge	Thompson
Davenport	Iowa City	Williamson
	Kiron	

Officers of the Iowa Conference are: Rev. Stanley Peterson of Stratford, president; C. Perry Hedberg of Davenport, secretary; Mrs. Merle Roth of Iowa City, president, and Mrs. Jules Carstensen of Odebolt, secretary of the Women's Union. The 16 Iowa Swedish Baptist congregations have 2,805 members, and 3,062 pupils in the Sunday Schools. Total property valuation for 1954 was listed as \$846,500.

Danish and Norwegian Baptists

The period of establishment and growth of Danish and Norwegian Baptist work in the United States was from 1856 to 1906. Rev. P. H. Dam, a missionary at Racine, Wisconsin, left for Iowa in 1867 to preach at Cuppy's Grove, near Harlan. The following year the First Baptist Church of Harlan was organized and soon received a nucleus of ten settlers directly from Denmark. In 1870 the Cuppy's Grove church, called Altamont, was organized as the first Danish Baptist church in Iowa, with 32 charter members, 18 of whom brought their letters from the Harlan Baptist congregation. The Altamont church, in Monroe Township in Shelby County, experienced a rapid and steady growth, reaching 250 members in the late 1880's, but other churches colonizing from it reduced its total membership. Today it numbers 154.

At one time there were Danish Baptist churches

in Atlantic, Cedar Falls, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Sioux City, Missouri Valley, Marshalltown, and Crystal Lake, but these are no more. Still serving in 1954 are 1,666 church members in the Danish Baptist Conference Association of the Iowa Baptist Convention with churches in Althamont, Alta, Elk Horn, Gilmore City, Harlan, Humboldt, Merrill's Grove, and Newell. There is a Danish Baptist home for the retired at Harlan, in charge of Rev. A. H. Nelson, who also edits *The Watchman*, the national Danish Baptist Conference paper now published in English at Elk Horn.

It is to the great credit of Iowa's Danish Baptists that the General Conference of Danish Baptists in America was organized on Iowa soil at Harlan in September, 1910, with 68 delegates present. Among the early organizers of Danish work in Iowa was Rev. Henry A. Reichenbach, born in Denmark in 1839. He gave many arduous years in the pastorate at Council Bluffs — from 1884 to 1893, and again from 1901 to 1915 — dying there in 1925.

From about 1878 the Norwegians began their organization of Baptist churches in Iowa, some of these people having come out of a Lutheran background. In 1892 the Iowa Baptist Convention welcomed into its ranks the first Norwegian missionary, Rev. C. J. Johnson. For a while Norwegian missions were carried on jointly with the

Danish. There was some shifting from Danish to Swedish affiliation and some migration between all the Scandinavian Baptists in Iowa. In due time, the increased use of English affected their work as it did the German. Virtually all Scandinavian work is in English today.

Conservative Baptists

In June, 1953, the Conservative Baptist Association of America, meeting at Portland, Oregon, elected Rev. Russell A. Pavy of Cedar Rapids as Recording Secretary of the national organization. He is also president of the Iowa Association of Conservative Baptists, whose watchword is: "Every Baptist a Missionary — Every Church a Bible Institute." The Conservatives, for the most part, are those who have withdrawn or withhold from the American Baptist Convention. According to the *Iowa Voice of Conservative Baptists*, the state paper, there were Conservative churches in 1953 in the following Iowa cities and towns:

Algona	Estherville	Muscatine
Bancroft	Harlan	Ottumwa
Britt	Jesup	Sibley
Cedar Rapids	Manchester	Spencer
Colfax	Mason City	Walker
Council Bluffs		

General Association of Regular Baptists

In May, 1952, the twenty-first annual conference of the General Association of Regular Baptists was held in KRNT Radio Theater in Des

Moines, with representatives from 609 churches. The total nation-wide membership is now 118,568. "With a membership of 'old-fashioned' fundamentalist Baptists, twenty-two churches organized the association in 1932." Growth has been remarkably rapid. There are three congregations of this fellowship in Des Moines, those of Grand View Park, Bethany, and Saylorville. Other Iowa churches enjoying fellowship with the General Association are at:

Adel	Floris	New Hartford
Algona	Forest City	Oskaloosa
Ames	Greene	Ottumwa
Belmond	Grinnell	Perry
Bloomfield	Grundy Center	Russell
Brighton	Guthrie Center	Shell Rock
Corning	Le Claire	Sioux Center
Corwith	Marshalltown	Washington
Creston	Massena	Waterloo
Cumberland	Melcher	Waverly
Douds	Monroe	Webster City
Eldora	Muscatine	Winterset

Iowa Baptists of every kind — American, Negro, German, Swedish, Danish, Regular, and Conservative — cling tenaciously to the dynamic principle of the Gospel as the expression of their religious faith: the divine initiative of love in behalf of the world.

FREDERICK I. KUHNS