

Committees

General Committee

Hon. Stanley Powell, Chairman

Miss Kate Benedict
John Beattie
Mrs. E. W. Krainbrink

Miss Della Waterbury
Miss Ethel Crispin
Ormison Hilborn

E. E. Wakefield
Miss Lillian Wheeler

Invitation

Miss Della Waterbury
Mrs. E. W. Krainbrink

Program

Rev. F. J. Fitch
O. O. Hilborn
E. E. Wakefield

Music

Miss Ethel Crispin
Miss Lucy Cull

Finance

Claude Brockway
E. W. Krainbrink
John Beattie

Decorations

Mrs. William Pearce
Mrs. Hiram Darling
Mrs. Fred Boardman

Entertainment

Mrs. John Scheurer
Mrs. Ed. N. Lowrey
Mrs. E. W. Mason

Miss Kate Benedict in charge of relics.

June 24, 1834

in

June 24, 1934



REV. F. J. FITCH

BAPTISTS END FOUR DAYS OF CELEBRATION

Observance of Centennial Anniversary Concluded Sunday with Memorial and Historical Significance

June 24 - 1934
Sunday morning services at the Baptist church were largely attended. Rev. E. E. Branch, of Grand Rapids, gave a splendid address, recalling the many years he had served as the pastor of the church in Ionia. The church was decorated with an abundance of flowers sent by families and friends of deceased members of the church. They were from Mrs. J. R. Crispin and Miss Ethel Crispin, Mr. and Mrs. Hiram Darling, Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Krainbrink, Mrs. Henry Powell, Miss Florence Peterson, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Seely, Mr. and Mrs. William Pearce, Mrs. Bert Underwood and Mrs. Purl Johnson, Mrs. Berdie Burlingame, Mr. and Mrs. Byron Smith, C. C. W. class in memory of Mrs. Ford Halstead; Mrs. Leo Edwards, Mr. and Mrs.

Fred Boardman, Mr. and Mrs. Guy Eddington, Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Spurrer, Arthur Cornell, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Beckhorn, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Witzel, and a basket from the primary department of the Sunday school in memory of Robert Burlingame.

At 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon a memorial basket was taken to the grave of Candace Dexter, in Oak Hill cemetery. She was the oldest settler to arrive in Ionia and the oldest member of the church.

The Evening Service

The evening service, a community gathering was honored with the presence of Rev. Duey L. Martin, of Tecumseh, Neb., pastor of the Ionia church from 1900 to 1904. Rev. Martin spoke on "Cobwebs or Pillars," and gave to his audience a splendid picture of the primitive type of religion. Rev. Martin attended the golden jubilee of the class of 1884 of the Colgate university last week, of which he was a member. Sunday evening's service brought to a close the celebration of the one hundredth birthday of the founding of the First Baptist church in Ionia, which was so successfully carried out by the present members of the church, and enjoyed not only by its members but by the congregation and friends. The committees worked hard in preparing so thorough a program for the enjoyment of those who could return to its services. Throughout the week, a birthday cake with 100 candles, was in evidence, decorated in the yellow and white color scheme which was carried out at all services.

Relics on Display

In the rear of the church auditorium was a group of pictures, Bible and Baptist histories which had been loaned to the church under the supervision of Miss Kate Benedict, to be on display during the centennial service by members and friends of the church, in memory of deceased members or of members who have moved away from the city. This display consisted of pictures of the following persons: Judge and Mrs. Erastus Yeomans, who were charter members of the church; Mr. and Mrs. Worden, parents of Mrs. Flora Freeman; Rev.

and Mrs. W. T. Woodhouse, former pastor of the church in 1922 to 1924; Mr. and Mrs. Hart, grandparents of Miss Della Waterbury; Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Waterbury, member of the board of trustees, and builder of the church; Orry Waterbury, one of the builders of the church, and a member of the board of trustees, who served as a deacon; Mr. and Mrs. Chester Waterbury and daughter Edna, now Mrs. O. J. Carpenter, of Lee, Mass.; Miss Della Waterbury, church clerk for a number of years; Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Steere; Mrs. Steere was a member of the board of trustees, and superintendent of the Sunday school, and active along many lines for several years; Deacon Thomas E. Smith, father of Mrs. Clara Scheurer; Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Powell, teachers in China some years ago; Rev. Henry W. Powell, pastor, educator and friend of the church; Rev. Herman E.

Powell, now living in California; a picture of the farm home of Rev. H. W. Powell of a group of Baptists including Rev. D. L. Martin, of Tecumseh, Neb.; Miss Mary Powell, Mrs. Joseph Powell, Mrs. Ella Powell Barnes, Edna Parmely, the daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Levi Marmely, pastor from 1868 to 1872; Mrs. Levantia McDonald, the oldest member of the church for some time; the ladies' quartette, composed of Misses Hearsey, McMullen, Allured, and Benedict, who sang for a number of years in the '90's; a group of Baptists taken in Mrs. Morrison's yard, including Mrs. W. D. Arnold, Mrs. T. S. McCall and Mrs. E. O. Taylor, the pastor's wife, who served here from 1874 to 1876; Rev. and Mrs. T. S. McCall, whose pastorate was from 1886 to 1888; Mr. and Mrs. Philip Markle; Mr. Markle was a deacon in the church; Dr. O. R. Long, a former member of the board of trustees; Mrs. O. R. Long, Mrs. Mary Keyes, Miss Ella Hutchins, for many years a member and teacher in the church; Mr. and Mrs. John B. Hutchins, Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe Hearsey, parents of Miss Winifred Hearsey; Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Higbee, Mr. and Mrs. Perry Hart; Mr. Hart was chorister for some time; Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Gates; Mr. Gates was a former deacon of the church; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Freeman; Mr. Freeman was Sunday school superintendent; a group picture of Baptists, with Rev. F. O. Dickey, pastor from 1893 to 1896; Rev. John Donnelly, pastor from 1877 to 1882; Charles Crispin, J. R. Crispin, deacon for many years, and father of Miss Ethel Crispin; Rev. and Mrs. Alfred Cornell, pastor of the church two different times, in all a total of 26

years; the Canfield family, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Broad; he was deacon for many years; Mrs. Addie Butcher Burnett, mother of Mrs. L. T. Smith; Mrs. Anna Butcher, grandmother of Mrs. L. T. Smith; Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Baldie; Mr. Baldie served on the board of trustees; Archibald G. Benedict, father of Miss Kate Benedict; Joel Benedict, father of Mrs. Canfield, Mrs. Morrison and Miss Jessie Benedict; Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Allured, president of the board of trustees, and parents of Mrs. J. C. Beattie; William Allured, brother of Mrs. J. C. Beattie; Dr. and Mrs. D. Van Alstine, pastor from 1882 to 1886; Miss Emma Arnold, the church clerk for many years; a deed with the signatures of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Dexter, giving the property on which the church stands to the church, was on display.

Musical Numbers

One of the most interesting musical features of the centennial program was the numbers sung by what was called the "old quartette," composed of members who sang together several years ago, and were brought back together for this occasion. Friday evening this quartette, composed of Miss Lucy Cull, Miss Kate Benedict, Chandler Haight and Herbert Cooper, sang "We Would See Jesus," and together with the present quartette,

composed of Miss Winifred Arntz, Mrs. Mina Underwood, E. E. Wakefield, and Norman Wakefield, several selections were rendered. Many of the older members of the church well remember when these people and many others sang in the choir, and all expressed their pleasure in hearing their voices again.

The following history of the Baptist church was prepared by Rev. F. J. Fitch, and read, with stereopticon views, at the Friday night service:

History of the First Baptist Church of Ionia, Michigan, June 22, 1934

By REV. F. J. FITCH

"Washington Center, Ionia county, June 24, 1834. On this, the twenty-fourth day of June, Elder E. Loomis, agent of the American Baptist Home missionary society, and Elder L. Slater, missionary at the Thomas Mission station, visited this place. After sermon and other religious exercises six brethren and sisters, Samuel Dexter and Ann, his wife; Alfred Cornell and Nancy, his wife; Erastus Yeomans and Phoebe, his wife, united in conference."

The First Minutes

With this report in the first book of minutes of the church, we have the story of its birth, a pioneer religious endeavor in the midst of a pioneer town. Michigan was a territory then, and Governor Porter was chief executive. Ionia county did not come into being for a year or more, and although there were smoldering embers, the fires of the "war" between Michigan and Ohio had not yet fanned into flame. Our beloved state was emerging slowly from the wilderness. Writing a few years before, Rev. Isaac McCoy, pioneer Baptist missionary to Michigan, tells of a proposed trip from Kekellemazoo, now Kalamazoo, to Grand Rapids, says: "The distance is about 120 miles, a northeasterly direction. The whole route will be in the wilderness." Looking back from the vantage point of a hundred years it is difficult to see our charming little city in its swaddling clothes. The first industry in the city was a large coffee mill, on the front of Samuel Dexter's cabin, which was used through the countryside for the grinding of corn. In November of 1833 Mr. Dexter arranged his sawmill on Bellamy creek, and the next year added a grist mill to his equipment. In 1837, the year before Rev. Sangster became the first pastor of the Baptist church, Mr. Dexter opened his mill on the site now occupied by the armory, and the waters of the two little creeks which flow beneath the pavements of the city were united into one at about the point where Dexter and Washington streets now intersect, and then carried on a flume over Main street to operate the machinery of the mill.

First Baptism

The next item in relation to the church comes two months later, on August 23, 1834, when Rev. E. Loomis and Caleb Eldred visited the church, and after a sermon and discussions it was voted that the conference should ask recognition as a church. W. B. Lincoln gave a review of his religious experience, and the next day was baptized in Grand river. It was at this time that the permanent organization was affected. History records that this was the first Baptist church west of Jackson, the first church of any denomination in Ionia county, and the first Protestant church in western Michigan. Baptist history started in the Thomas mission, on the west bank of Grand river, in what is now Grand Rapids, in 1822, among the Indians, but when they moved to Gull Prairie in 1936, the

church went with them. In a sense our church was the child of the Thomas mission. Although from June 24, 1834, until February 18, 1837, there was no pastor, and meetings of the church were irregular, the church has had a continuous history without interruption from the day of its birth. In addition to the six original members, the church now counted Benjamin G. Barber, who was received by letter, and Dr. W. B. Lincoln, who was the first physician in Washington Center, later to be called Ionia, as members. Dr. Lincoln was voted in as clerk, a position he held for over 10 years.

Historical Incidents

There are many interesting sidelights in the early history of the church. In February, 1837, the minutes tell us that Candace Dexter was received as a member. This is especially interesting when we learn that Mrs. Dexter was the mother of Samuel, George and Stephen Dexter, and had emigrated from Little Falls, New York, at the advanced age of 75 years. She lived in Ionia for 13 years, and is buried in the Dexter plot in Oak Hill cemetery. Mrs. Dexter was the daughter of Rev. Esek Windsor, who was the son of Mercy Williams, daughter of Roger Williams. Hence it follows that one of the six founders of the church was a direct descendant of Roger Williams, who founded the original Baptist church in America at Providence, Rhode Island. Mrs. Dexter was likewise the grandmother of Mrs. William Jennings Bryan, and the great-grandmother of Mrs. Ruth Bryan, who has visited the grave in Oak Hill cemetery. It therefore follows that our church had a noble beginning, and can claim a kindred relation to the first Baptist church in the United States.

The First Pastor

In May, 1838, Rev. A. C. Sangster became the first pastor of the church. He appears to have been an unstable fellow, and there was some discussion a year later as to whether he should be retained for a second year. The vote was in his favor, however, and he was on the field until Saturday, May 2, 1840, when the church declared the pulpit vacant. On August 9 of that year H. D. Buttolph preached in the schoolhouse that was used to house the church, and it was voted to ask the church at Troy, Oakland county, to ordain him, that he might enter upon his ministerial duties in Ionia. He finally arrived on the field in October of 1840, and remained a faithful pastor here until 1844. Rev. Alfred Cornell became pastor next. Rev. Buttolph had been a student at Colgate university in the class of 1843, and Rev. Cornell was a graduate of the same class. Mr. and Mrs. Cornell came on the field in 1845, and remained here for 17 years. Rev. Cornell was the brother of Dr. Alanson Cornell, who came to Ionia in the autumn of 1833, and the uncle of Lucian Cornell, for many years a member and official of our church. Mrs. Lucian Cornell was an honored member of our church for many years, and passed to her heavenly reward in January of this year at the advanced age of 85 years.

How He Was Paid

What the salary of the preacher was at this time we do not know, but we find a note in the minutes telling of the appointment of a com-

mittee to circulate a subscription paper for the support of the pastor. At the same meeting, August 2, 1845, it was voted to tax every male member one shilling, and female members six cents for the support of the gospel, these amounts to be paid monthly. At the same rate the church at the present time would receive around \$14 per month. It was during the pastorate of Mr. Cornell that the first church house was constructed. Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Dexter had given to the church a plot of land eight rods square on the corner of Main and Norvell streets to be used for a church and parsonage. The first building was a frame structure, and stood on this lot approximately on the land now occupied by the Defendorf house. There is some conflict over the first house of worship in Ionia, but one historian states: "This first structure erected and dedicated as a church was the first and only church edifice in this section of the then wilderness, and for several years continued to be used for all large gatherings and wedding celebrations. The deed to this property is still extant, and contains the well preserved signatures of Mr. and Mrs. Dexter.

In October, 1846, it was decided to rent the pews in the new house of worship, the income from the rentals being applied to finishing the interior. Rentals ranged from \$1 to \$5, the total amount being \$78.38. It was also voted that each person who had taken a seat should give his note payable in grain or its equivalent.

Extend Its Field

John VanVleck having reported that some people in North Plains were desirous of having religious services there, asked for a license to preach, which was granted September 1, 1843. On June 1, 1845, a regularly called council ordained Mr. VanVleck to the gospel ministry, and he became the organizer and first pastor of the Palo Baptist church.

In 1843 the church was represented at the Shiawassee association, at its meeting at Perry, and the usual letter and statistical report was read. The Grand River association came into existence the next year.

Rev. E. H. Morrison, of the class of 1844, of Colgate university, came to the church in 1863 for two years, being followed by a return pastorate of Rev. Cornell for another two years. This made 19 years that Mr. Cornell served the church. In 1868 Rev. Levi Parmely came to the church from Elkhorn, Wisconsin, as pastor. Dr. Alanson Cornell presided as chairman at the meeting which voted to extend the call.

New Church Rises

By this time the first house of worship was deemed insufficient for the work of the church, and plans were made for alternations and repair. A committee was appointed to secure funds, and Orry Waterbury asked to submit estimates for the work. It is inferred that since the estimates totaled some \$3,500, and the committee was unable to raise any funds, that the idea of repair was not acceptable to the church. Therefore, on Monday, June 22, just 66 years ago tonight, the former motion to repair the old building was rescinded, and a new motion was passed to build a new building

at a cost of not less than \$10,000. In August of that year Rev. Parmely came to the church as pastor at a salary of \$1,000 and parsonage. Benevolence collections for the year amounted to \$100.64 for foreign missions, \$53.75 for home missions, \$100 for Sunday school, and \$4.50 for the Cedar Springs church. For other objects of a missionary nature \$35 was raised and paid out.

On Thursday evening, February 24, 1870, Miss Ella Hutchins, Miss Carrie Hutchins and Lee Hutchins presented themselves for membership after baptism, and were received and baptized three days later.

It Is Dedicated

After considerable discussion in various gatherings of the church, it was finally decided to let the contract for the church to Brother Orry Waterbury, and that he should complete the work. The second church building thus came into being. It was like the present building, except a small tower on the southeast corner, and the entrance which was added some time later. It was a happy day in the church life when in 1872 the pastor, Rev. Parmely preached the dedication sermon on January 7.

Rev. E. O. Taylor succeeded Mr. Parmely in 1874.

Rev. John Donnelly came as pastor in 1877. Dr. Donnelly was graduated at Colgate university in 1862, and was given the honorar degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1888. He remained for five years and was followed by Rev. D. VanAlstine in 1882, who remained for four years.

In 1886 Rev. T. Simpson McCall became the pastor. We have a directory of the church published January 1, 1887. The pastor lived at 104 Union street. Thomas E. Smith, Lucien Cornell, James P. Hart, Walter D. Arnold, Orry Waterbury and E. E. Gates were the deacons. John W. Baldie was treasurer, Mrs. Baldie teacher. Miss Emma Arnold was president of the children's mission band. George H. Allured was one of the trustees, and Mrs. Allured was president of the ladies' aid society. Alfred Broad was also a member of the board of trustees. Mrs. Broad was active in church work. Miss Winnie Harsey was organist, with J. P. Hart as chorister. Miss Hattie McMullen and Miss Kate Benedict comprised the music committee.

Rev. J. J. Phelps followed Mr. McCall, and was pastor from 1889 to 1893, in which year Rev. F. O. Dicky became pastor.

In 1875 J. R. Crispin joined the church at Saranac, later transferring to Ionia. Mr. Crispin was the father of Miss Ethel Crispin, our talented organist, and teacher of the C. C. W. class.

In 1896 Rev. E. M. Jeffers came to Ionia as pastor, and remained here until 1899. In response to an inquiry as to the whereabouts of Mr. Jeffers, a reply was received from Duluth, Minnesota, saying that he had passed on to his reward at Denver, Colorado, several years ago.

So we come down to dates of the present century. Rev. Duey L. Martin came in 1900 to usher in the new century. To say things about Mr. Martin would be superfluous, for he is here tonight to speak for himself. We are happy to have our friends of the past with us for these few days.

Mr. Martin left us late in 1904 and Rev. E. E. Branch came to enter upon a 17-year pastorate. When he resigned in 1922 Rev. Wm. T. Woodhouse succeeded, but illness severed a happy fellowship in two years, and in 1924 Rev. Alfred Trenerry came from Niles, Mich., as pastor. Mr. Trenerry remained four years, leaving late in 1928. In March, 1929, the present pastorate commenced, the nineteenth in the hundred years history of the church.

Many Musicians

We have said nothing about musicians in which quality of genius our church has abounded. We listened Wednesday night to the ladies' quartette from the C. C. W. class, and we marveled that four female voices could blend so well. It is not the first quartette of women that has delighted the church. Back in the 1890's there was another quartette which sang for years together, two members of which we have with us still, Mrs. Grace Allured Cressy, Miss Winnie Harsey, Miss Hattie McMullen, and Miss Kate Benedict.

It is impossible to estimate the influence that the church has had on the religious life of the community, the state and the world at large. It has given men to the Gospel ministry, Rev. Alfred Cornell going from Ionia to Colgate university, to return for 19 years as pastor. Rev. John VanVleck was ordained here, and established the Palo church. Rev. Henry Powell and Rev. Herman Powell went out to long, useful ministries as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Miss Mary McLean carried the influence of the first church to the Indians under the leadership of Isabel Crawford. Ralph Powell and Mrs. Powell went to teach in Yale in China. But who can measure the work that the church has carried on? Hundreds have passed through its doors to hear the good Gospel of the Christ, and have carried away with them inspiration and enthusiasm that has been translated into useful and fruitful lives.

"Curtain Is Down"

So we come to the end of a hundred years. To use the picture given to us by our speaker Wednesday night, the curtain is rung down. Henceforth the past century is but a memory. The golden rays of the afternoon sun reach their hands up toward the sky, casting a mellow afterglow upon us as we turn our eyes backward to behold the earthly pathway over which our church has come. As we turn again with the glow of yesterday still on our faces, we see that pathway reaching out in the dim unknown of the future. It is the birth of another century. It is the challenge of work not done, of new avenues and new opportunities. It is the outstretched hand of the Christ as He says: "Come with me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Lumber is on the ground for the Baptist church remodeling. A gallery is to be put in. 8/24/06

Pastors

Rev. A. C. Sangster.....	1837—1840
Rev. H. D. Buttolph.....	1840—1845
Rev. Alfred Cornell.....	1845—1863
Rev. E. H. Morrison.....	1863—1865
Rev. Alfred Cornell.....	1865—1867
Rev. Levi Parmely.....	1868—1872
Rev. Jonathan Rowley.....	1873—1874
Rev. E. O. Taylor.....	1874—1876
Rev. John Donnelly.....	1877—1882
Rev. D. VanAlstine.....	1882—1886
Rev. T. S. McCall.....	1886—1888
Rev. J. J. Phelps.....	1889—1893
Rev. F. O. Dicky.....	1893—1896
Rev. E. M. Jeffers.....	1896—1899
Rev. D. L. Martin.....	1900—1904
Rev. E. E. Branch.....	1905—1922
Rev. Wm. T. Woodhouse.....	1922—1924
Rev. Alfred Trenerry.....	1924—1928
Rev. F. J. Fitch.....	1929—1936

Nineteen Pastors, Average Pastorate 63 Months.

From June, 1834, to 1837 the Church was under the pastoral care of Home Missionaries

Rev. Geo. Woodcock	1936 - 1945
Rev. W. L. Crabbers - - - -	1945 - 1947
Rev. J. Lee Lewis - - - . .	1947 - 1950
Rev. W. W. Fixley - - - -	1950 - 1956 ^{Aug 15}
Rev. ALFRED P. MILLER - Dec 1	1956 - 1960 ^{Sept}
Rev. John W. Tennyson - Jan 1	1961 - Dec 1/65
Rev. Lowell Young - June 1	1966 -
Rev. Gilbert Keller -	- Oct - 73
Rev. Roy Pitts - Oct 1973	_____

A CENTURY AND THE CHURCH By Edgar A. Guest

A century of service to mankind,
And still the steeple stands beneath the sky,
Thrones rise and fall and fashions drop behind,
The church is all we have that doesn't die!

One hundred years and still the church is young!
Still men keep faith and seek the finer things!
Still hymns of faith and praise to God are sung
While time rusts fame, ends power and humbles kings.

Men come and go upon the stream of change.
Through new and old God keeps his place on earth.
Abiding faith! Oh, is that phrase so strange,
Since centuries add lustre to its worth?

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