

XVI. Historical

EARLY CIRCUITS IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS

A perusal of the old records reveals that the pioneers who remember the early circuit divisions of Central Illinois are left to us, to confirm the brief statements of facts, as found in the rare records of the earlier days.

Mrs. Mary Potter of Dwight, now living in her 108th year, was a woman grown when the Ottawa Mission was outlined, but that is a very unusual instance. We are fortunate now, if a representative of the third generation is left to bear the family name, and preserve the traditions of the past.

That there may be a revival of memories, and that some fragment of fact now fading out of time may be revived and preserved, is the justification for carrying with the record of our later transactions, the story of the heroic past.

Ottawa Mission "Vermilion Mission" and "Kankakee Mission" were familiar terms in those days when the sentiment of the state was taking form, while within the confines of those far flung lines, are now many subdivisions, with stately churches, and such well appointed evidences of prosperity and comfort, as to scarcely suggest the leanness of pioneer life.

Ottawa Mission commenced at the mouth of the Big Vermillion (opposite LaSalle, Ill., and extended up the Illinois river on the south side to Ottawa, thence up the Fox river to the Big Woods, thence east to the head waters of the Big Vermillion in Indiana, and from that part of the state, back to the mouth of the river.

The first Quarterly Meeting was held at a camp meeting on the 9th of August, 1834, at Sulphur Springs of the Fox river, Rev John Sinclair, Presiding Elder, Rev. William Royal, pastor in Charge; Frederick W. Worsby exhorter, James B. Campbell and C. R. Dewy, stewards; Moses Booth, B. Dewy, Anthony Pitzer, class-leaders.

The collection taken at the camp meeting amounted to \$128.85, W. Royal received \$127.85 and John Sinclair \$1.00 for traveling expenses.

Second Quarterly meeting held at Bro. Booth's, March 7, 1835, thirty-five people partook of the sacrament.

Third Quarterly Meeting at Martin Reynolds, May 30, 1835; John Benson, Ebenezer Tracy, class leaders; James B. Campbell, circuit steward.

On motion of J. B. Campbell a committee of five persons was appointed to select and procure by fee simple title, a suitable lot of ground in the town of Ottawa, for the purpose of erecting a Methodist Episcopal church, the committee to consist of Ebenezer Tracy, John Wallace, Benj. Holmes, John Benson and J. B. Campbell. Quarterage reported at this meeting—J. Benson's Class, \$6.06¼; E. S. Tracy's Class, \$3.56¼; B. Fleming's Class, \$2.68¼; John Sinclair's traveling expenses, \$.68¼; Wm. Royal 25 cents.

The last Quarterly Meeting for Ottawa mission was held at Sulphur Springs, on Fox river, August 28, 1835. The following were the appointments and the amounts contributed: Ottawa, \$9.25; Widow Pitzer, \$3.25;

Olmsteads, \$1.87; Ridgways, 25 cts.; Carns, \$3.25; Big Grover, \$6.00; Wisners, \$11.63; Vermillion River, \$7.25; Vermillionville, \$6.50; public collection at Ottawa, \$37.58.

Vermillion Mission was formed at the Ill. Conference in 1836, embracing all the settlements of the Vermillion, and south of the Illinois river. The recording steward remarks, "Here the Lord has largely strewed the bounties of nature." The First Quarterly Conference was held in Ottawa, Dec. 24, 1836. I. S. Walker, pastor; John Wallace, E. S. Tracy, stewards.

On motion, E. S. Tracy, John Palmer and John Wallace were appointed to estimate the cost of a building for a meeting house in the town of Ottawa. Quarterage paid—Ottawa Class, \$2.50; Vermillion, \$2.50; public collection, \$5.37½. John Sinclair received \$1.00 for traveling expenses, and L. S. Walker \$7.37½.

The first Quarterly meeting of 1837 was held at the Widow McDowell's east of the present Avoca church on the McDowell circuit, a class has been formed there under the pastorate of Wm. Royal, the first in Livingston Co.

In 1838, S. W. D. Chase was pastor, and Austin F. Rogers missionary. In 1839, the first Quarterly Meeting was held at Sister Pembroke's, Nov. 23, with the following named officers: John Sinclair, Presiding Elder; Harvey Hadley, pastor; A. R. Button, exhorter; James Argurbrith, Steward. In 1840 the Kankakee Mission was taken out of the Vermillion Circuit by an act of the Illinois Conference. The first Quarterly Meeting was held at South Ottawa, Dec. 5th, 1840, with officers as follows, S. W. D. Chase, pastor; James B. Houts, H. D. Goubert, local preacher; Josiah Shaw and Eneas Pembroke, stewards; S. W. Indigh and John Trout, class leaders.

In 1841, S. W. D. Chase and W. D. Gage were pastors. At the Third Quarterly meeting, in answer to the question, Are there any complaints? Brother J. Thorp answered, there was against Azra Button, for whipping his wife three separate times, "Whereupon the preacher in charge called a committee of local preachers consisting of H. D. Gorbett, Wm. Wheatland and Wm. Groom and found him guilty, and the preachers suspended him until the next Quarterly meeting conference. He was then tried by that body and found guilty and was allowed to remain on trial as a member of our church."

The First Quarterly Meeting of Wauponsie mission was held in South Ottawa, Dec. 11th, 1841. S. W. D. Chase being Presiding Elder, and R. E. Guthrie, pastor.

In 1842, W. D. R. Trotter was Presiding Elder, and John F. Devoe, pastor. In 1842, the appointments of the Wauponsie circuit with the membership were as follows—South Ottawa 32, Gorbett's 16, Holland's 24, Otter Creek 19, Eagle Creek 12, Wauponsie 8, McMillen's 8, Trumbo's 16. Total 135.

In 1844, A. E. Phelps was Presiding Elder, and T. A. Reed, pastor. In 1845, the same presiding Elder, and A. Kinyon, pastor. In 1846, John Morey, Presiding Elder, H. J. Humphreys, pastor. In 1847, Samuel Forkenbuty was pastor.

The first Quarterly Meeting was held at the house of G. W. Armstrong, Oct. 16th. In 1848, John Chandler was pastor, with John Brown.

Mazon Circuit was organized at the Conference of 1849, with the following officials: M. Bourne, Presiding Elder, I. Cotton, pastor; David Strawn, steward.

In 1850, O. A. Mather was Presiding Elder, and J. McLane, pastor; N. C. P. Heath, visitor; David Strawn and H. Cassingham stewards, C. Royal and G. C. Goodrich class leaders.

In 1881, S. Jennet was pastor, and Robert Walker, exhorter.

In 1852, S. A. W. Jewett was pastor. The First Quarterly Meeting was held in Brookfield, La Salle County. The Presiding Elder's claim was \$8 00. The pastor in charge \$57.80. The receipts were \$10.67. Paid O. A. Mather \$2.00. S. A. W. Jewett \$8.67.

These facts, as recorded by the stewards in that early day, reveals the care bestowed upon the records, and it is unfortunate that so few of the original minutes are preserved. Divisions of circuits, removals, and deaths, account for the losses. This sketch may be indifferently read, but it has cost years of search, and only one copy of the original valuable collection is in existence.

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