

Congregational Church First One in Anthony

The town of Anthony was laid out April 6, 1878, and the first public religious meeting was held in May. Six or eight men, but no women, were present, representing three or four different denominations. Judge Evans of Wellington, who was here to assist in securing the town-site title, was present at this meeting. He was asked to lead the meeting but declined, explaining later, "I wanted to see what kind of stuff you were made of."

In the early summer Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Lee offered the use of their unfinished home for Sunday services. 'Pews' consisted of borrowed boards brought in and layed on boxes and nail kegs and window sills. Soon, those who could afford it brought a nickel a Sunday to be used in making benches. When a sufficient amount was received to pay for a bench, one was made—plain and without a back rest. A desire for more comfort soon resulted in a decision that all benches thereafter should have back rests.

Rev. Hammond, a United Presbyterian minister, who had retired and was living about five miles northwest of town preached a few times and then for a short time Rev. Fulton of Harper, a Presbyterian minister, did the preaching.

The first Sunday in August, 1878, a Sunday school was organized with three classes. O. Jennings, president of the town company, was made superintendent, with St. Clair Gray as secretary. The teachers were R. Sherwood, Mrs. Dawson, and B. H. Steadman. It was a union Sunday school.

In the fall, the services moved to the new frame store building of O. S. Northrop, on Main street, for one or two Sundays, and then to the upper part of Jake Herzer's one-and-a-half story business house on Main street. At this place the benches of the church were shared with Anthony's first school, conducted by Ralph Lockwood.

When the floor began to give way, school benches, and church services were moved to a room 14 by 16 feet on So. Bluff which had been built

for a cobbler shop. (This was near the present site of the Anthony Republican office. Miss Clara Sherwood had secured this location.)

Most of the winter services were conducted here by Rev. Strickland, a Methodist minister, who had come here from Nebraska to find a milder climate.

In the spring of 1879, the county commissioners rented, for their use, the frame building of C. R. Miller, on Main street, and they granted the church permission to hold services there.

Through the assistance of Dr. S. D. Storr, of Topeka, the state superintendent of Congregational work, a student from Oberlin, W. A. Hobby was secured as minister for the summer.

August 3, 1879, a meeting was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Olmstead, and it was decided to organize a Congregational Church — which they proceeded to do, with Mr. Olmstead as secretary of the meeting.

The church was formed with eighteen members. Mr. and Mrs. B. H. Steadman, William S. Steadman, Mrs. Alice Bennett, Mrs. Mary J. DuBois, Mr. and Mrs. O. Jennings, Mr. and Mrs. L. J. Rinehart, Miss C. L. Anderson, Mrs. Jennie Rinehart, Mrs. M. L. Hayes, Mrs. E. M. Benedict, Miss Mary Isabella Jennings, and Mrs. Julius Ruggles.

Other members added by the time the new house of worship was dedicated, less than a year afterward, were: Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Smith, Mrs. Mary Jane Hinsey and Miss Ida Hinsey, Edward P. Boye, Mrs. Celie E. Sherwood, Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Halsey, Mr. and Mrs. John L. Hiltz, and Dr. George M. Keller.

At the first meeting of the church members, the following committees were outlined: Rev. W. A. Hobbs, B. H. Steadman and L. J. Rinehart, committee on constitution and by-laws; W. H. Hayes, W. P. Olmstead, and L. J. Rinehart, trustees; O. Jennings and B. H. Steadman, deacons; W. S. Steadman, secretary and treasurer. An ecclesiastical committee was appointed consisting of O. Jennings, L. J. Rinehart, and W. S.

Stedman. Mr. Steadman soon moved away and P. Anderson was elected to the office.

For the winter of 1879 and 1880, the services of the church and Sunday school were held in the new school building of the town.

In the spring of 1880, the church began the erection of its own building, on the corner of Bluff and Steadman streets. Materials for this structure were brought from Wellington, the nearest railroad station at that time. The building was completed at a cost of over \$1,000, including a grant of \$350 from the Congregational church building society.

July 3, 1889, a council from several churches in the state met for a recognition service, and, on Sunday, July 4, 1889, the new building was dedicated.

The church outgrew the old building, and built the new one which stands on the same site as the old one. This structure is of brick, and was dedicated November 27, 1910.

It is well to note that the Congregational church was one of the first organized here in Anthony and they are only a year behind the city in their anniversary celebration. On May, 1939 they celebrated their 60th program.

During the last ten years the Congregational church has had many celebrations and programs of interest. On January 21, 1940 the "Passion Play" was given at the high school auditorium sponsored by the Women's Council of the Congregational church. April 6, 1941 the Congo club, a group of young married people in the church presented "The

Questioner," a pageant of the Great Hope.

On March 4, 1944 a birthday party was given for Rev. Evans to celebrate his 70th birthday. There was a dinner served in the church dining room.

In Sept. 1944 the Pilgrim Fellowship was organized with Mrs. Worthington as leader. This was a group of young men and ladies of high school age who met every Sunday evening at the church or in homes.

Very interesting programs were enjoyed. There was also a Jr. Pilgrimage Fellowship organized for the younger children.

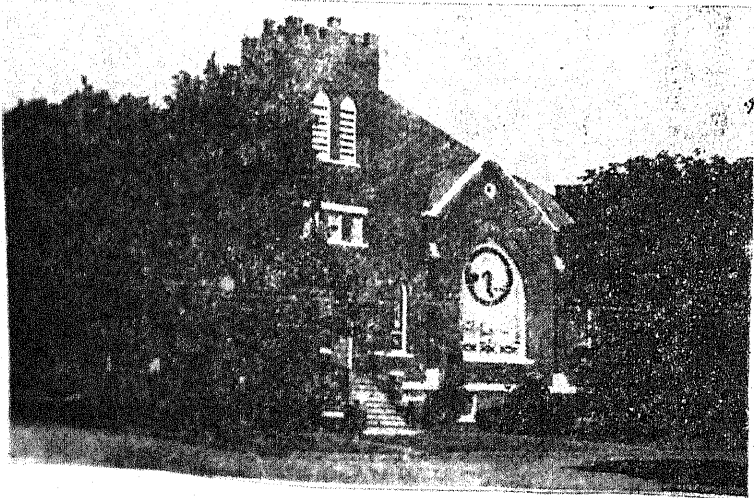
December 1944 at an annual meeting a gift from the church was presented to D. J. Hilts who had been treasurer for 25 years.

October 6 and 7, 1944 the First Congregational Church of Anthony entertained the Southern Association on 54th annual meeting.

On May 5, 1946 our well loved pastor, Rev. Evans, tendered his resignation to take effect September 1 as he was retiring from active ministry. The resignation was accepted with the very best wishes for Rev. Evans and Mrs. Evans.

On August 4, 1946 a call was given Rev. O. M. Hepler and he accepted. He and Mrs. Hepler and little daughter arrived. The parsonage was re-decorated and repaired. On November 20, 1946 a Service of Recognition and Ordination of Orville Melvin Hepler to the Christian Ministry was held.

The church honored the Rev. Ev.



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ans by making him Pastor, Emeritus on May 18, 1947.

On August 3, 1947 Rev. O. E. Bonny of Cleveland, Ohio was called to be the minister. He was accepted. He and Mrs. Bonny and children arrived Nov. 29, 1947. A reception was given them January 7 to welcome them to Anthony.

The following is a list of the pastors that have served the church since 1880:

On Oct. 1, 1880, the church began to have a resident pastor, Rev. T. D. Childs. Succeeding him are: M. M. Tracy, J. C. Holliday, C. A. Wright, Charles Burgess, D. F. Sommers, H. C. Dunsmore, F. A. Bissell, J. H. Henderson, J. E. McLain, Jeffrey Martin, Alex R. Bolton, William Elwood, B. F. Buck, C. H. Husband, W. F. Harding, O. L. Corbin, C. A. Eschelmann, F. R. Bush, S. Duane Ogden, J. Merle Evans, O. M. Hepler and O. E. Bonny the present pastor.

The Sunday School

Superintendent, Mr. Paul Coglizer. Beginners and Primaries, Mrs. M. Carr, Mrs. L. Hayter, Mrs. V. Elliott; Junior Department, Mrs. F. Hayter; Senior Department, Mr. O. F. Schaaf; Congo Class, Mrs. O. E. Bonny; Adult Bible Class, Mrs. W. L. Hutchinson.

Education and Fellowship

Missionary Auxiliary, Pres., Mrs. H. Wilcox; Plymouth Daughters, Mrs. E. Mueller; Mayflower Daughters, Mrs. M. Carr; Pilgrim Guild, Mrs. W. Hutchinson; Congo Club, Mrs. O. E. Bonny.

Officers of the Church

Deacons and Deaconesses

Bob Hilts, Harry Rice, Homer Thompson, W. L. Wilcox, Mrs. M. Carr, Mrs. N. Couch.

Trustees

Ed Fox, Leroy Gillespie, Ray Hayter, P. O. Herold, Earl Underwood. Clerk, Mrs. Earl Underwood. Treasurer, Mrs. W. Waldschmidt. Music Supt., Mrs. F. Hayter.

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The First Methodist Church of Anthony

Soon after the City of Anthony was organized on the 4th day of August, 1878, a number of the citizens met at the home of the civil engineer, who had surveyed and laid out the city, to organize a Sunday school.

Growing out of this Sunday school came a desire to organize a church, with the result that in the fall of 1878, the original First Methodist Episcopal church in Anthony was created.

On the 15th day of March, 1879, a young Methodist preacher delivered his first sermon in Anthony completing the organization of the church with sixteen charter members. The services were held in a stone building on Main Street where the Grabham Motor building now stands.

The first communion service was held April 24, 1879.

Soon after this memorable service, the school building where the Washington school now stands, was completed, and in which they held their meetings.

In the fall of 1882 work was be-

gun on a church edifice on the present site, which was donated to the trustees by the Anthony Town Company. This building was completed at a cost of \$2500, and was dedicated in 1883. The next year the Annual Conference convened.

In April, 1903, the ladies of the church voluntarily met and were organized as "The Lady Helpers" — there being a need of assistance in finances and the social life of the church. This organization later developed into the "Ladies' Aid Society."

The membership of the church increased rapidly, and it was found necessary to have a larger building. In 1904 an active campaign was started to rebuild and enlarge the building, which was accomplished at a cost of \$3000.

In 1904, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized, with fifteen charter members. This Society sponsored the Standard Bearers, the youth, and the King's Heralds and Little Light Bearers, the children.

The Epworth League for the youth of the church, was organized and as willing workers this group of young people was an impor' t

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The Blessings of God have continued to be upon the church and under Rev. Homer's ministry the most modern and newest auditorium in Anthony has been completed and the average attendance has been approximately 150 for the past two months which is the best attendance under the present ministry.

Since the beginning of Central Baptist church there have been 472 addition, many of which have deceased, moved to other towns and have transferred membership to other churches. The present active membership is about 165.

Congregational Church Was First In Anthony

In 1878 when Anthony was being founded by people from many parts of the nation, there came educated and cultured people from New England and the Middle States who were accustomed to good homes and worshipping in beautiful churches.

They were mostly young people, who came in all the strength and vigor of youth. They came to better their fortunes and build homes, and surround these homes with the advantages of their former homes.

They soon felt the need for a place of worship on the bleak Kansas prairies. Wealth and social standing played no part in those early days. For from home and kindred each needed and each helped the other.

The church life played an important part in the early history of Anthony.

In the summer of 1878 services were held in the home of B. F. Lee with a United Presbyterian and a Presbyterian minister each preaching a few Sundays.

In August, 1878, a union Sunday School was organized with O. Jennings as Superintendent. There were three classes taught by R.

S. Sherwood, Mrs. Dawson and B. H. Steadman. Of this first Sunday School Mrs. Lou A. Olmstead said: "I well remember my first attendance at this school. It was the second Sunday in January 1879. The school was held on South Bluff Avenue somewhere

near the present site of the Republican office in a building 14x16 ft., which was used during the week for school purposes. The seats were boards put upon nail kegs or boxes all around the room, with an occasional board across the room, if the extra board could be secured and the attendance demanded. There was a good attendance, but only three that I had ever seen before. I can assure you it was a sad hearted, homesick scholar that received instruction that day. Was it strange that an intense longing for the dear old New England church with its beautiful appointments and dear familiar faces filled my heart. Few can realize what it cost the pioneers of Anthony in heart aches, self sacrifice, courage, endurance and devotion to make possible this little city. During the winter of 1879 the union Sunday School was held in this little building and preaching services when ever a minister could be secured."

Through the help of Rev. S. D.

Storrs, Superintendent of Home Missions in Kansas for the Congregational Churches, Rev. W. A. Hobbs, a theological student from Oberlin college, was secured to come and labor with the people.

On August 3, 1879, he organized the First Congregational church of Anthony with Mr. and Mrs. B. H. Steadman, Mr. and Mrs. O. Jennings, Mrs. Alice Bennett, Mrs. Lou A. Olmstead, Mrs. Mary J. Du Bois and Mr. and Mrs. L. J. Rinehart as charter member. Others came in soon.

In the fall of 1879 lots were secured in the second block on North Bluff Avenue for the purpose of building a church. In the spring of 1880 a frame building was erected on the site at a cost of \$1,500.00. Aid to the amount of \$350.00 was secured from the Congregational Church Building Society. The material for this building was hauled on wagons from Wellington, Kansas, the nearest railroad point, a distance of 42 miles. This was the first church building in Anthony. When the church was finished a council was called to recognize the new church, which met on July 3 and on the next day Sunday, July 4, the church was dedicated to the worship of God.

Rev. S. D. Storrs, Superintendent of Home Missions in Kan-

sas, had charge and assisted in the service. Rev. Richard Cordley, D. D. pastor of the church at Emporia, Kansas, preached the dedicatory sermon. It was a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing for the little church of Anthony, that was to mean so much to them and the life of Anthony for many years to come. Of those who attended that service none remain with us, but are dear in the memory of many. The church came to self support in 1885.

Having outgrown the old church the present beautiful church on the original site was built under the leadership of the pastor, Rev. B. F. Buck. Dedicatory services were held on November 27, 1910. Two of the beautiful windows of the church are in memory of three members of the first church choir: Mr. and Mrs. O. Jennings and Mrs. Alice Bennett. The communion table and chairs and first pulpit in memory of another singer and worker, Mrs. John Clendemire. There are a few in the present choir that should be commended for long and meritorious service: Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Hayter, Mr. Ray Hayter, Mr. Durland Hilts and Maurita Connell.

The women's organizations have always played an important role in the life and work of the church

—first the Ladies Social Circle and later the Plymouth Daughters. The project carried on the longest by these groups is serving the Lions club dinners since their organization in 1921.

They have helped materially in keeping up the church property and the parsonage and in acquiring the pipe organ and grand piano.

At the 70th anniversary of the church a beautiful new pulpit and lectern were dedicated to the memory of the early pioneer women that organized the Ladies Social Circle.

The ministers who have served the church are: Rev. T. D. Childs, Rev. M. M. Tracy, Rev. J. C. Holliday, C. A. Wight, Charles Burgess, D. T. Sommers, H. Charles Dunsmore, Rev. Bissell, Rev. Henderson, J. E. McClain, Rev. Martin, Alan Bolton, Wm. Ellwood, B. F. Buck, Charles H. Husband, Dr. Wm. F. Harding, O. L. Corbin, C. A. Eshelman, Fred R. Bush, S. Duane Ogden,

J. Merle Evans, Orville M. Heppler, O. E. Bonny and E. Vernon Benson, our present pastor.

J. Merle Evans served the church ten years as pastor from November 1, 1936, to September 1, 1946, and upon his retirement was made Pastor Emeritus.