

NEW VIRGINIA CHURCH HISTORY

In the seventies there was an emigration of Virginians from the famous Shenandoah Valley of those who had the fever to "go West and grow up with the country". They heard of the homesteads, timber claims, and cheap land in Nebraska and decided to locate in Catherton precinct. In 1880 they formed a school dist. No. 65 built a sod school house. Soon after the school house was built they decided that religious education was necessary also, so a meeting was called and a Sunday School was organized.

Lloyd Crabill was elected as Superintendent and his wife was elected as one of the teachers. I do not know who the other teachers were. This was the beginning of the church. Mr. Crabill was asked to suggest a name for the Sunday School, and after thinking a while, he suggested the name of New Virginia which was approved by all. This makes our organization date back seventy years, which will make it among the oldest in the country. The sod school house was used until 1884 when a frame school house was built.

Mrs. F. R. Brooks was the first school teacher in the new school house and she had the first Christmas tree and program of which I have been able to get any history.

I don't know what year the organ was purchased, but there was an organ in the schoolhouse as far back as i can remember. I do not know who was the first organist, but I do remember that Mrs. F. R. Brooks was among the first organists. Our congregation consisted of several German families and several families from other states who cooperated with the Virginians in making their church program a success.

Sunday School was continued and no doubt there was occasionally preaching by various preachers. Our church records have been misplaced so we cannot give definite information as to dates and names. The first preachers I remember were: Folden John Bean, E. A. Vandyke, McVey Hancock, and Blackwell Wilson, Priestly Bromwell, and R. E. B. Hill.

There may have been others that I do not remember. One of days that our Sunday School always made great preparations for was the gathering of four Sunday Schools for their annual Sunday School convention, as it was called at the time. This convention program consisted of songs and talks from each school and was enjoyed by all who attended. The Sunday Schools represented were; Catherton; Dist. 66, Pleasant Prairie, and New Virginia. Another gathering was the Sunday School picnics in the Summer, which is out of date at this time. Revival meetings were held as a rule during some time of the year, and this helped to build a stronger church organization.

In the first part of 1900, there was talk of building a church and as the country prospered, so did the church and in 1906, the long wished for church was built and ready to dedicate, but the night before the dedication the long wished dream went up in smoke and about all that was left was a pile of ashes, the cornerstone, and foundation. But being strong pioneers, they did not let the loss conquer their faith in God and instead of giving up they went back to the School house the next morning and held their services as scheduled, and this service resulted in raising enough money, with the insurance money to build another church, which was started that fall and was finished the next spring and was dedicated April 13 and 14, 1907. The program of dedication was as follows; April 13,

Laying of the cornerstone by Rev. A. V. Wilson & R. B. E. Hill.
April 14, 9:30, Sunday School, 10:30, Song Service by Rev. Fouch of Bladen, 11:00 Dedication by Rev. Embry, 3:00 Love Feast, 3:30 Sermon, Rev Priestly, 7:30 Song and Praise Service by Rev. Hill. 8:00 Sermon by Rev. A. V. Wilson. The dedication took place four years and one month ago from the day set for reopening the church May 13, 1951.

In 1907, A Ladies Aid Society was organized and has functioned ever since. December 1947 they celebrated their fortieth anniversary.

Since 1907 all the preachers that have been assigned to our church should be highly praised for the good work they have done. In 1942, preachers became scarce, and the Inavale charge eas not sent a pastor, but Inavale was fortunate enough to tie in with Red Cloud and New Virginia was left without a pastor.

In 1950 Dist. Supt. Smith gave Rev. Moore the go ahead signal to reopen New Virginia and with his assistance the church was repaired and redeccorated at a cost of about 800 dollars. The week day evening service had had pictures to look at, a good talk by Rev. Moore and hot coffee and lunch served after the service.

We want to thank Supt. Smith for the interest he has taken in our church and also Rev. Moore. Electric lights are being considered at the present time and after conference we no doubt will know if there is a chance of us having any use for them.

Going back to 1942, although we did not have a pastor assigned to our church, we did keep up the insurance and several years we paid our customary benevolences. There were several drives put on to raise money for the Methodist Hospital and other Christian activities so while our church was dormant in a way for eight years our pocket books and christian thoughts were active.

There could be a lot more history told of an organization close to seventy years old, but most of you know what has happened since 1907 and it would have to be a person several years older than myself to ell more of our early history. At the present time the only thoroughbred Virginians left in our community is the Henry Williams family and they did not locate here till the first part of 1900. One by one the early pioneers have passed on to their reward thus shifting the church work onto the younger generation. Although obstacles have been met they have been overcome and we feel well repaid.

Ray Wilson