

Little White Church on the Hill Continues to Thrive

Reproduced verbatim from an article that appeared in the Pioneer in 1968

Editor's Note: Mrs. Stanley Ball of Chippewa Lake has prepared the following history of the Chippewa Lake Methodist Church, a landmark in the vicinity that has served the community for many years. The church has been a heart-warming part of the community for many years.

The church was built by Chippewa Lake Lumber Company about 1885. They donated the land on which it stands. Chippewa Lake was quite a village at the time. There was a big sawmill and a shingle mill and a railroad. The railroad went out in 1906.

There was a big passenger boat on the lake called "The Reveille". Clara Nott of Chippewa Lake was the first passenger to ride on it. After the mills left many families moved away. A few of the houses were moved, but many of the buildings were destroyed by fire.

The church for many years was Congregational and years ago the Methodists met in the town hall. Later on that was discontinued. The church looked quite different in those days from what it does now. The steeple has been torn down and many changes have been made on the inside.

The sanctuary had a high beamed ceiling at the time and it was lighted with oil lamps. There were four on each side and two up in front. These were bracket lamps with reflectors back of them. There was a big wood stove in the southwest corner and the stovepipe ran clear through the church.

On the north side of the church was a long shed where they tied the horses. This shed had a roof and separate stalls for the horses.

The church continued to be the center of activities until about 1916 or 1917. Grace Manahan was organist for many years. The hymn book racks in the church now were bought in the memory of Grace. Ed Davis was choir leader for many years.

About 1915 there was a bad fire in the village. Three stores and a dwelling house all burned at one time. There was a large store that back in the lumber days was owned by Sam Parker. He later sold it to H.C. Ward and Ernest Sweet.

At the time of the fire it was owned by Elmer Forbes. This store had groceries, dry goods, a meat market, the post office, and the telephone exchange, and an apartment upstairs where the Forbes family lived. There was a hardware across the street owned by R.G. Abbey & Son, a grocery store next to it owned by H.A. Tiffany & Son, and a dwelling house owned by Mrs. Schofield. That was a tragic day for Chippewa Lake, but a few amusing incidents happened. People do odd things when they get excited.

In trying to save the furnishings from the Forbes apartment they carried the feather beds downstairs and threw the canned fruit out the window. The Abbeys saved quite a bit of the stock from their hardware, and they later opened a store in another building and continued to do business for a year or so.

About 1916 and 1917 several families moved away from Chippewa and the village started to go down. The church went down. The Delmar Hahn family came to Chippewa Lake in 1918 and at that time the church had no regular minister, and they had services only on special occasions.

In 1921 the church was organized as a Methodist Church. Rev. DeVinney was district superintendent at that time. The church had quite a struggle to keep going the first few years. Rev. Byron Hahn was the minister in 1923, and he preached at Rodney, Third Ave. in Big Rapids, and Chippewa Lake. Rev. & Mrs. Zuse were at Chippewa from 1940 to 1945.

Rev. Jones was district superintendent from 1938 to 1943 and Rev. Byron Hahn from 1943 to 1949. Rev. Zuse preached at Rodney, the Sparks Church, and Chippewa Lake. Later the Sparks Church was discontinued and the pews that are now in the Chippewa Church were donated by the Sparks Church.

The women's society of the church up until this time had been known as the Ladies Aid Society. Mrs. Zuse organized the present WSCS October 1, 1940.

When Rev. McDonald was at Chippewa the ladies of the church put on a campaign to raise funds and they put in a coal furnace. Delmar Hahn, Bernie Williams, and Mr. Baker excavated the basement, and the furnace was a big improvement. They were all very happy to part with the old stove.

Rev. Frank Cozadd came to Chippewa in 1941 and he did a lot for the church. Frank Brumel and Joe Zetti were firing the furnace at this time and they decided it would be a good idea to convert to oil. Somehow the money was raised, and this was accomplished.

The walls of the church were papered in oatmeal paper, and it had been for years. Rev. Cozadd, Frank Brumel, Joe Zetti, and Clarence Franck did over the walls of the church; and Agnes Brumel, Esther Franck, and Elizabeth Zetti painted the woodwork.

It was a big thrill to everyone when that job was finished. A large picture of the head of Christ was given by Virginia Ball and the arrangement of the platform was changed at that time so that there would be nothing to obstruct the view of the picture.

A short time after this the chimes were installed. This was Rev. Cozadd's idea and the chimes have given pleasure to a great many people and have been a wonderful help to the church.

About this time the summer resort around Chippewa started building up, and the church began to grow again. The Sunday school grew by leaps and bounds and it became apparent that more room was needed.

The church had no money, but B.J. Ford was here then, and he had a lot of good ideas for raising money. The one he finally decided on was raising wheat. He rented ten acres of ground of Myra Simcox, and called it "God's Acres".

Mr. Ford solicited money to buy seed, and several of the farmers donated their labor, and they got the wheat planted. It was a particularly good season that year, and there were some anxious moments over the wheat crop, but when it was harvested, it brought about \$400.

Everyone was very happy over it, and that was the start of the building fund.

As a Thanksgiving for the success of the project, the church put on a harvest festival. All the oldtimers whose addresses were available, were contacted and invited to come. Harry Rogers loaned us a tent and chairs, and we put on a dinner on the church lawn.

There was an interesting program in the church afterwards. The church was filled to capacity, and it really was quite a success. Rev. Richard Adkins was pastor of the church at the time, but Rev. Cozadd and his family came back for the festival.

The money made from the crop raised on God's Acres was a good start towards the building fund, but we needed more. Mr. Ford went out again and canvassed the community. He gave everyone a chance to give, and the money started coming in. We finally got the new addition.

We are indebted to Frank Brumel and Joe Zetti for some many things that we have in the church. The last day that Joe lived he and Frank worked all the forenoon on the basement steps. We were getting ready for a wedding.

Some of the ladies were washing windows, and Joe and Frank were trying to get the basement stairs finished. We all went home to lunch and intended to go back and work in the afternoon. After Joe got home, he had a heart attack. Frank took him to the hospital, and he passed away about 11 o'clock that night. I don't think any of us will ever forget the part Joe had in our project.

The carpet and many of the furnishings of the church were given by Edward F. Taber. He passed away February 28, 1960.

The little white church on the hill has done a lot of good in years past, and we hope and pray that it may continue to do good and help young people to a better way of life for many, many years to come.