

JUBILEE SERVICE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY.

A DAY OF JOYFUL THANK-GIVING

Dr. J. M. McElroy, First Pastor, Delivers Address—Paper by Dr. W. L. Orr an Organizing Member—Sermon by Dr. F. W. Hinitt, Former Pastor.

From Monday's Daily.

"The results of fifty years of service in the life of a church can not be estimated by calculus" said President Dr. F. W. Hinitt, president of Parsons college at Fairfield, former pastor of the First Presbyterian church of Ottumwa, yesterday morning in the opening service of the fiftieth jubilee anniversary of the organization of that church body.

All the Pastors Are Living.

In its fifty years of existence the church has had but five pastors and all are living. Three of the five were present yesterday at each of the services and all took an active part in the anniversary celebration.

The morning and evening services were conducted by Dr. F. F. Stoltz the fifth and present pastor of the church and the morning sermon was delivered by Dr. F. W. Hinitt the former pastor of the congregation. Dr. J. M. McElroy of Ottumwa, the first pastor, delivered the chief address of the evening service.

At the evening service letters were read from the two former pastors who were unable to be present: Rev. Hervey B. Knight of Tacoma, Wash., and Rev. B. E. S. Ely of Des Moines.

The Five Pastors.

Rev. J. M. McElroy, the first pastor, began his service in 1855 and continued until 1869. Rev. Knight began in 1869 and continued until 1881 and Rev. Ely continued from 1881 to 1894. Rev. Hinitt accepted the call to Ottumwa in 1895 and continued until his resignation to accept the presidency of Parsons college at Fairfield in 1900.

Jubilee Service. The evening service was devoted especially to the jubilee anniversary. Rev. McElroy, the patriarch of the church, and of living pastors, held the most absolute attention while he told them of the little congregation to preserve their church organization. Considering his seventy-four years' age, with the best and strongest part of his manhood spent in the hardships necessitated by the life of the pioneer missionary, Rev. McElroy is well preserved, and he spoke with surprising power and vigor.

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At the end of five years our membership was about sixty, including several encouraging instances of conversions; our small house of worship was well filled with regular and interested hearers; the Wednesday evening prayer meeting was sustained; and a small but interesting Sabbath school was in regular operation with an enrollment of about fifty.

At the end of ten years the civil war was just closing, in which from the families connected with our church some eighteen enlisted soldiers served in Iowa regiments, six of them falling soldier graves. They were: David Bosworth, W. W. Farley, Henry H. Hukill, Albert Dougherty, Robert Lyons, James Lyons. The others from the church who left to serve their country were Dr. W. L. Orr, Philip Kieffer, James S. Perry, T. L. Porter, John G. Holloway, Ralph Holloway, Moeris Holloway, Isaac Newton Holloway, Benjamin R. Chambers, John S. Moen, Nathan F. Manroe, Richard H. Varden.

At the end of twenty years we had increased the membership of the church from about twenty to about sixty. At that time we had a larger and better house of worship. The full enrollment of members from the first organization had reached 159; but death and dismissals and absences reduced the actual membership to about eighty, with an enrollment of about seventy-five in the Sunday school.

At the close of my pastorate of almost fourteen years we had a commodious and neat house of worship, which had cost about \$800 and which represented an amount of effort and self-denial on the part of a small congregation of small means, which, I judge, has never been equalled in the history of any church in Ottumwa. The attendance upon all the services was good, and we were favored with encouraging accessions. But the pastor's health had been unfavorable and seriously affected. Teaching, and doing the work of a pastor, and acting as chairman of the building committee, including the soliciting, collecting of funds, and settling with the workmen—all this meant something of over exertion and led to his resignation. The total enrollment in April, 1869, had reached 225, but the net membership was much less and the effective membership was about 120 with about 50 enrolled in the Sunday school. For about one year after resigning my pastorate here I did mission work in the region of Wall's school house, six miles northwest of Ottumwa. Our labors there had something to do with originating the Salem Methodist church and also the Wilton Presbyterian church.

In the spring of 1870 I accepted a call to the Batavia Presbyterian church, where I fulfilled a pastorate of thirteen years. During the early years of this pastorate I met with much encouragement, until the migration fever broke out, an epidemic which prevailed all over the west, especially affecting the rural communities. Our people there never said a word, so far as I know, indicating that they were tired of me. They just good humoredly picked up their belongings and moved away. Our

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light. We love its sanctity of antiquity. It is the most ancient of organizations. Civilizations have come and gone. But the sanctity of antiquity is not the only thing in which we should glory. Simply because of taking it old it does not deserve our reverence.

Wonderful Adaptability.

"The church of God has in it the sanctity of holy achievement as one of its glories. Through all the ages it has been the one great beneficent power among men. You will find that through all the ages, as the church was growing and building and taking upon itself universally it has been the supremest benefactor and beneficent power to all humanity."

Self Sacrificing Power.

"We should glory in its militant self-sacrificing service. The principal of selfishness is the strongest in humanity to overcome. The self-centered aspect is the natural one of man and is the instinct which nearly allies us to the best. Men have to learn to give and take before they can live together in society. The natural instinct is to give as little as we can and take all we can get. That is the way we are constructed. The church strikes at this strongest trait of the beast in man and through all the ages self-sacrifice has been the distinguishing mark of the servants of the church."

Glory in Its Destiny.

"We should glory in the destiny of the church. Its future and its end is fixed. It is absolutely certain. It came from God in eternity and it is destined to be with God in infinity."

Rev. McElroy's address was as follows:

Dr. McElroy's Address.

The passing of fifty years is marked by many changes to communities, families and individuals. The old people of the early period have all passed away. Of those who, fifty years ago were young, or even but children, a large majority have already reached the other shore. A new generation has grown up, to whom the new things are getting old, and the old things new. Of the early ministers of various denominations who proclaimed the gospel in the little town of Ottumwa fifty years or more ago, not one, so far as we know, is now living. Of the presbytery which ordained the first pastor in the old Congregational church buildings at the corner of Second and Court streets, only one, Dr. Thomas H. Dinwiddie, then pastor at Washington, is now surviving. Of the original members of the church, only two remain among us, while two residing at a distance are supposed to be still living.

Ottumwa Fifty Years Ago.

My labors in Ottumwa date from July 15, 1855, my ordination and installation by the Des Moines presbytery occurring on the sixth day of December. My pastorate continued not quite fourteen years, terminating in April, 1869. The population of Ottumwa fifty years ago was some seven or eight hundred, including a considerable number who had drifted hither to this frontier town, without any definite aim, not home-seekers, but adventurers, waiting for whatever might turn up. The state of morals was low, and the reputation of the place as to healthfulness was not favorable.

The Early Church.

There was considerable churchly competition, there being some six organized churches—all of them with very small membership. We had on our church roll twenty-five names, but only four of these resided in the town; six lived eight miles north near what is now Highland Center, six lived eight miles south near Ormanville, and nine others lived from four to four miles away on the other side of the unbridged river. We had no house of worship, and no Sunday school; and a congregation of hearers and worshippers was yet to gather. It took a good while for these people to find out who the new minister was. Some guessed that the young man was a physician and called him 'doctor,' by some he was suspected of being connected with the Des Moines Navigation Co. Others supposed him to be connected in some way with the projected railroad, and interviewed him with a view to employment.

"Leighton's hall, where we at first held our services was not a popular or even comfortable place of assembly, and when a year later we entered our own small church building, on fourth street near Green, those who did not attend could easily make the excuse that the place was too far out of town."

"At the close of my pastorate of almost fourteen years we had a commodious and neat house of worship, which had cost about \$800 and which represented an amount of effort and self-denial on the part of a small congregation of small means, which, I judge, has never been equalled in the history of any church in Ottumwa. The attendance upon all the services was good, and we were favored with encouraging accessions. But the pastor's health had been unfavorable and seriously affected. Teaching, and doing the work of a pastor, and acting as chairman of the building committee, including the soliciting, collecting of funds, and settling with the workmen—all this meant something of over exertion and led to his resignation. The total enrollment in April, 1869, had reached 225, but the net membership was much less and the effective membership was about 120 with about 50 enrolled in the Sunday school. For about one year after resigning my pastorate here I did mission work in the region of Wall's school house, six miles northwest of Ottumwa. Our labors there had something to do with originating the Salem Methodist church and also the Wilton Presbyterian church."

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and game and fresh fish could be had for the hunting.

Deficiency in Salary.

"The salary promised me was \$500. Of this the board of home missions gave for the first year \$150, and of the remainder Kirkville paid one-third and Ottumwa two-thirds. This was paid in full the first year, and almost in full the second year, but for several succeeding years there was a considerable deficiency. After the disastrous financial failures of 1857 when the bank bills in circulation became almost worthless, immigration had almost ceased, and when two seasons of crop failure had occurred, it was impossible for our handful of people to do much towards the pastor's support. In 1857 their entire contributions including minister's salary was \$225, and next year \$300. But they did what they could and their welcome and co-operation were so cordial as to dispel all feelings of discouragement."

Dependent on Missionary Field.

"I was wholly dependent on the missionary field for support. My father a well-to-do Ohio farmer, died when I was a boy of 15. My share in his estate, together with over \$1,000 which I had earned as a teacher, had been expended in my collegiate and theological course; so that when licensed at the age of 25 years I was not \$5 from square with the world. When starting from Greenfield, Ohio, for Ottumwa, I borrowed from an old neighbor of my father, \$300. This was repaid several years later in full by my mother and my brothers. Out of this loan I paid traveling expenses and for things needful for our first householding, and the \$120 for a good saddle horse for my itinerating work."

Struggles for Existence.

"The demands of hospitality were from the founders of our home very considerable—demands which my efficient helpmet always met cheerfully and satisfactorily. In the summer of 1857 I was prostrated by sun stroke which disabled me for three months and which kept me under the weather for two years and which may have had something to do with my subsequent loss of hearing."

"For several years after 1857 the struggle for existence upon the part of the congregation was a severe one. I had managed to buy a half acre of ground and had built a three roomed house of cottonwood lumber, and so had ceased paying house rent but instead, was paying 10 per cent on borrowed money."

"At the end of five years our membership was about sixty, including several encouraging instances of conversions; our small house of worship was well filled with regular and interested hearers; the Wednesday evening prayer meeting was sustained; and a small but interesting Sabbath school was in regular operation with an enrollment of about fifty."

Woe Decreases Congregation.

"At the end of ten years the civil war was just closing, in which from the families connected with our church some eighteen enlisted soldiers served in Iowa regiments, six of them falling soldier graves. They were: David Bosworth, W. W. Farley, Henry H. Hukill, Albert Dougherty, Robert Lyons, James Lyons. The others from the church who left to serve their country were Dr. W. L. Orr, Philip Kieffer, James S. Perry, T. L. Porter, John G. Holloway, Ralph Holloway, Moeris Holloway, Isaac Newton Holloway, Benjamin R. Chambers, John S. Moen, Nathan F. Manroe, Richard H. Varden."

Plans for New Church.

"In four instances take superintendent of our Sabbath schools had resigned to go out as soldiers—W. W. Farley, Dr. J. S. Perry, Dr. W. L. Orr, and P. Kieffer. The pastor had been principal of the Ottumwa seminary from the autumn of 1869, aided by two assistants, and himself engaged in the classroom about one-half of each day. He was also county superintendent of schools for two years, 1863 and 1864. The attendance and interest in the church and its services had increased considerably. A lot had been purchased and rock for a foundation placed upon it, toward the erection of a larger and better house of worship. The full enrollment of members from the first organization had reached 159; but death and dismissals and absences reduced the actual membership to about eighty, with an enrollment of about seventy-five in the Sunday school."

Dr. McElroy's Resignation.

"At the close of my pastorate of almost fourteen years we had a commodious and neat house of worship, which had cost about \$800 and which represented an amount of effort and self-denial on the part of a small congregation of small means, which, I judge, has never been equalled in the history of any church in Ottumwa. The attendance upon all the services was good, and we were favored with encouraging accessions. But the pastor's health had been unfavorable and seriously affected. Teaching, and doing the work of a pastor, and acting as chairman of the building committee, including the soliciting, collecting of funds, and settling with the workmen—all this meant something of over exertion and led to his resignation. The total enrollment in April, 1869, had reached 225, but the net membership was much less and the effective membership was about 120 with about 50 enrolled in the Sunday school. For about one year after resigning my pastorate here I did mission work in the region of Wall's school house, six miles northwest of Ottumwa. Our labors there had something to do with originating the Salem Methodist church and also the Wilton Presbyterian church."

Had Many Appointments.

"Our work for several years was preparatory, laying foundation, pile driving. It took some time for the people in general to learn that there was a Presbyterian church in the place and for them to find out that the minister was not a horse trader, nor a politician, nor an office seeker, nor a scapular, nor an ignoramus. For the first two years I preached every third Sabbath in Kirkville. For several years I held morning services in Ottumwa, an evening service either in Heckart neighborhood, eight miles south, or in the Gray and Brown neighborhood north. I also preached occasionally at Agency and Dahloaga, and in a number of country school-houses."

Privations of Pioneers.

"The first funeral I attended was that of a child from the family of E. Washburn. My first marriage service was that of a Mr. Butler near the garison. For the first year we occupied a four room house at \$8 a month, sub-letting two rooms to Philip Kieffer and little family. The house was warm enough in summer but in the winter with the mercury down to 32 below zero, the climate was Arctic. Of course our audiences were small at first, few people attending in town than at almost any other of my appointments. There were also privations which people from good homes in the east would not have had. We had no paved streets and no sidewalks or crossings, unless for two or three blocks on Front street. We had no gas lights, no electric lights nor even kerosene. We had no laundrymen or milkmen, nor accommodating grocery wagons. Food was not lacking in quantity but deficient in variety. Fruit, except of the wild kind, was only a memory, but nuts,

roll of communicants decreased from about eighty to less than fifteen, and then we moved back to our old home in Ottumwa.

Retires from Service.

In 1885, Elder T. D. Foster invited me, Pastor Ely and the members of this First church concurring, to hold regular preaching service at the chapel near the packing house. Six years of diligent labor I was permitted to fulfill there, adding one hundred names to the communicant roll of this First church, and resulting in the organization of the East End church with 116 members in 1889, and continuing until, by the ordering of Providence, I retired from active service in 1891.

Pioneers Not Wealthy.

"I have never for an hour regretted entering the ministry, nor regretted that my footsteps were directed to Ottumwa. Most of the pioneers in Iowa had but small pecuniary remunerations, a majority of them being under the necessity of exerting themselves in the way of self-support, by educational work, fruit growing, and some by trades and some by medical practice. The requirements in the way of style were not high, and the cultivated from the east could be politely cared for in a house of two or three rooms, and lodged, two or three in a bed, in a very small dormitory."

Had Many Calls.