



Madison County Genealogical Society



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Early Churches of Shell Creek Township in Madison County

Compiled by Nancy Zaruba and Richard Strenge from the Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888-1988 Centennial Book

Church of the Nazarene

The Rev. August N. Nelson, an evangelist from Portland, Oregon, conducted revival services and performed a number of conversions in 1916. In June 1917 the Church of the Nazarene was officially organized. The charter members were: Mr. and Mrs. Henry Stude, Mr. and Mrs. E. O. Guffey, Mrs. Julius Hansen, Mrs. Ann Froding, Ben Schukey, Mrs. Ethel Torgersen, Emma Hansen, and Edna McDonald. The Farmers Union building was rented and services held there until 1918. Church membership was 48 in 1918.

Under the leadership of Rev. C. R. Mathison a lot and parsonage were purchased for \$4,000. The parsonage was moved to its present location and the church built. It was dedicated in April of 1920 by District Superintendent Theodore Ludwig. On March 31, 1930, a service was held and the mortgage burned by Mrs. John Anderson, acting treasurer. The first pastors were Henry Bell and A. M. Brown. C. R. Mathison, 1917-1918; H. C. Tittimore, 1918-1921; R. L. Major, 1921-1922; D. A. Savage 1922-1923; Elizabeth Wheeler, 1923-1924; and Mabel Vaage, 1924-1928.

Congregational Church

The Rev. A. T. Reed, an evangelist from Oberlin, Ohio, conducted meetings which resulted in the formation of the Congregational Church of Newman Grove. The church was organized by Rev. H. Bross, District Superintendent on Oct. 4, 1900. On Oct. 8, 1900, the Rev. C. D. Gearhart from Pierce, Nebraska, was called. Officers elected were: C. A. Miller and E. H. Gerhart, deacons; C. L. Juell, J. J. Husensetter, and R. Pryor, trustees; J. A. Bloomquist, Clerk; G. C. Dimcock, Treasurer; and C. C. Miller Sunday School Superintendent. The erection of the new church began in the spring of 1901 at a cost of \$3,500. Membership was 52 people.

The Ladies Society organized in October 1900. Officers were: Mrs. Jean Bloomquist, President; Mrs. Kathryn Gerhart, Vice-President; Mrs. Maude Wenrick, Secretary; and Mrs. Junkins, Treasurer.

Shell Creek Lutheran

Shell Creek Lutheran Church was officially organized on February 2, 1874, during a meeting held at the home of Anders Strand. John Simonson was chairman, Nels Wick secretary, and Johannes M. Johnson, Knud Anderson and Simon Christianson as trustees. The first pastor was the Rev. Ole E. Torgerson who had come here from Wisconsin in 1871, after having served a congregation in Wisner. An eighty-acre tract of land was purchased on which the present church and parsonage were built. The first parsonage was a log house built by Gunder Hamre which consisted of two rooms and a shanty. The name "Shell Creek Evangelical Lutheran Church" was

chosen in 1883.

Some charter members were: Simon Christian Simonson, Christian Simonson, John Simonson, Nels Wick, Johannes M. Johnson, Lars M. Johanneson, Johannes Williamson, Knud Anderson, Anders Anderson, Knut J. Kvam, Narve Nerison, Nels Nerison, Ole Nerison, Ole Knudson, Hans Nelson Christianson, Hans Christianson, Carl Frederick Steiner, Johannes Anderson, Charley Stone, Enok A. Togerson, Anna Karina Simonson, Hans Olson Sto, Anders P. Larson, and Mons Nelson.

First church services were held in a schoolhouse north of the "Old Town Bridge" on the east side of the street, until a blacksmith shop, purchased from George Evans in 1882, was converted into a chapel southwest of the "Old Town" bridge. The present church was built in 1888 during the pastorate of J. B. A. Dales. Shell Creek congregation was affiliated with the Hauge Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod in America until 1917. They later affiliated with the Lutheran Free Church which in 1962 merged with American Lutheran Church. Members of the congregation who have gone into the ministry include Mabel Vaage, Joseph Vaage, Gus, Benjamin and Gerhard Ostrem, Amanda Ostrem Nesvig, S. C. Simonson, John Morsund, and Terry Larson.

Trinity Lutheran

The earliest history of Newman Grove includes Trinity Lutheran Church. The Rev. G. Erdahl a Norwegian pastor visited from Omaha. He visited again in August of 1873 and baptized some children. On August 30, 1874, he helped to organize "The Skandinaviska Lutherska Trefoldighed Menighed" in the schoolhouse in Old Town, north of the Shell Creek bridge. Thirty-two adults and fifty children were enrolled as members.

Early settlers lived in Boone, Platte and Madison counties so services were held in the Newman Grove schoolhouse, District 8 in South Branch and District 23 in North Branch. In 1883 a division was made forming Trinity, North Branch, and South Branch all served by one pastor. With the growth of Newman Grove, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church became an independent congregation in 1903. The predominant language was Norwegian.

Early family names on record include: Strand, Texley, Gutru, Backerud, Buan, G. Thompson, Syverson, Simonson, Hovland, Helleckson, Field, Nelson, Boe, Waum, Skillstad, Berg, Fodness, Sohus, Bruland, Horn, Belgum, Score, Kaarstad, Funrue, Froistad, Anderson, Olson, Julson, Sater, Sanderson, Tisthammer, Ole Julson, Thorsten Olson, Syver Field, Sophia Field, Holverson and Larson. Further information is available in the Newman Grove centennial book.

United Methodist Church

The first Methodist church, was founded in February 1874, by Rev. S. P. Van Doozer. The Sunday school was organized two years earlier in June 1872 at the Warren family home. Services were conducted by Rev. S. P. Ballman who lived on his homestead in Albion. In 1876 Rev. Jabez Charles served the Madison circuit comprised of Madison, Union Creek, Fairview, Kalamazoo, Tracy Creek, and Newman Grove for two years. The first church building was constructed in 1882. The charter members were: Mr. and Mrs. E. Squire, Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Finder, Mrs. Mary Searles, George Heany, Jefferson Heany, and Mrs. M. Searles. In 1912 many members of the Congregational church united with the Methodist. The first resident pastor in Newman Grove was the Rev. W. R. Phelps in 1887.

Source: Newman Grove, Nebraska 1888 – 1988 Centennial book