



Madison County Genealogical Society



Madison County Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 1031, Norfolk, NE 68702-1031
mcgs@telebeep.com

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nemcgs/ www.nesgs.org/~mcgs

Early Churches of Kalamazoo Township in Madison County

Compiled by Charlton Ryan and Nancy Zaruba

The **Iowa Valley Church** grew from modest beginnings, meeting at first in the Iowa Valley schoolhouse or in private homes. It was a good distance to any other church at that time; and since the Methodists had no church nearby, they met with a United Brethren congregation. In the beginning, denominational lines between the two groups were dim. In the little schoolhouse, one Sunday's service format would follow that of the United Brethren, and the next Sunday's would be that of the Methodists.

On the 28th of May 1882, formalization of the congregation began in the home of Rev. John Hotskin, where the first trustees for the Iowa Valley United Brethren Church were chosen. These were A. A. Webster, President; John Hotskin, Vice President; and Julian Hatch, Secretary. Charles Olson and Cyrus Barnes were also present. Later that year, when a church building was constructed, it was actually in the adjoining township of Schoolcraft, but its cemetery was in the township of Kalamazoo, just as was the Iowa Valley schoolhouse. Although the new church was officially listed as belonging to the United Brethren denomination, the early congregation was still composed of many Methodists and some from other denominations as well.

One early resident recalls that Mr. Chapman and Mr. Jonas Throckmorton did much of the painting on the new church. The first minister was Rev. Hotskin; the second was Rev. Hatch. Charter members of the new church were: Rev. Hotskin and his wife, Cynthia Ann (James); Rev. and Mrs. Hatch, Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Barns; Mr. and Mrs. Edward Barns; Mrs. Louisa Kaufman, Mrs. Maggie Kaufman, Mrs. Mary Olson (who was the daughter of Rev. Hotskin and who married Charles Olson), and Mrs. Lily Hatch. Other names of early members were: Jimmie and Julia Willie; Bertie Hatch; Mrs. Lewis James (sister to Rev. Hotskin); and the McNeelys.

In the years 1884 and 1885, five more families and two single men arrived, increasing the congregation's size. These new members were the families of W. D. Sterner, J. H. Fichter, Arthur Rumery, S. F. Woods, and S. M. Dowling. The single men were B. F. Brannian, who married Ida Sterner; and Charles Sprout, who married Mary Fichter. Later a Mr. Baldwin and his sister arrived.

Sometimes services were conducted by the Presbyterian minister, Rev. Kimball, from Madison. When an organ was purchased, Rose Sterner led the choir and Ida Sterner was the first organist. The Sunday school was lead by Arthur Rumery and subsequently by Mr. Baldwin. During those years the little church was frequently filled to capacity--which was estimated to be 75 people. Eventually, sheds were built to shelter the horses ridden or driven to church.

Other early ministers were Revs. Diltz, Cotton, and Cole. There was also a Rev. H. C. Copsey, who came from England with his wife and baby.

This church is gone now. It was dissolved in 1920. The structure was moved to

the homestead of Frank and Frances Pospisil and their eleven children where it served as a summer kitchen and wash house. ---Ryan

The origin of the **German Evangelical Lutheran Zion-Wedekind Church** dates back to the 21st of November 1885 when Fredrick and Dorthea Schoepflin sold land for five dollars to people wishing to build a church, parsonage, and cemetery. At an 1888 meeting chaired by Rev. C. Burchers, with Theodor Beltz, serving as secretary, the following officers were elected: Rev. C. Burchers, August Eucker, Frederick Schoepflin, Christian Wollin, and Theodor Beltz. Their newly adopted name for the church was The German Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church, Ohio Synod.

The first pastor to serve the church was Rev. George Bohn, from 1890 to 1891. A longer pastorate occurred from 1896 to 1914 when Rev. John Weber served. Prior to 1932, services were held in both German and English, but after that year, two English Sundays were followed by a third German Sunday. According to one account, the congregation was hit hard by the Great Depression. One minister, Rev. C. M. Hollensen, who served from 1929 to 1933, was fully compensated in 1960. It was also in 1960 that the lumber from the church was donated to the Mid-Nebraska Lutheran Home. Its baptismal font was given to the Immanuel Lutheran Church of Omaha---Ryan

There was a **Methodist Church** located on the Edward and Margaret (Boysen) Kohl family farm in Kalamazoo Precinct. The church is no longer there. Some who attended the church believe that it was moved to the site of the Old Home Café north of Madison and east of Enola where it is now used as a home. This has not been verified.

There was a cemetery associated with the church, and it is still in use today and known as the Kohl cemetery. In 1876, the Rev. Jabez Charles was appointed to the Madison Circuit. This included Madison, Union Creek, Fairview, Kalamazoo, Newmans Grove, and Tracy Creek. There was no church on this circuit at that time.

Jabez Charles was born in England, September 6, 1836, converted at the age of fifteen, and licensed to preach in the Primitive Methodist Church in 1864. In March, 1857, he was married to Miss Elizabeth Powles, and in June 1868, they came to America, and he became a local preacher on the Charters Circuit, Pittsburg Conference, of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1872, he came to Omaha, not intending to preach but rather to secure a homestead and to make a home for himself and family. However, he was persuaded to take charge of the work in Madison County. He began his career on September 18, 1872, and continued without a break until the conference of 1902 when at the age of sixty-six, worn out by thirty years of incessant toil on large circuits with small salaries, he requested, and was granted retirement---Zaruba

The **Z. C. B. J. Jan Hus 50 lodge (Bohemian Hall)** was organized January 2, 1898. It was located five miles north and five and one half miles east of Newman Grove. (Jan Hus means leader of the protestant religions of Czech country.) By belonging to this organization, it was each member's duty to be helpful and take care of its members, especially in times of trouble.

Joseph Storek was chosen president with Karel Vancura as secretary, and Thomas Panek as treasurer. There were fourteen founding members. Members met monthly on Sunday afternoons. On December 24, 1898, it was decided to build a hall

for Bohemian families to come together for weddings, funerals or other occasions. Reverend Phillipi of Clarkson, NE, officiated at many of these events. Karel Vancura financed the hall until funds could be raised to reimburse him. One acre of land was leased from Joseph Choutka. Eventually, the building began to deteriorate and extensive flooding caused damage to the interior of the hall. In 1964, it was decided to tear the hall down. Members once again began meeting in homes.

The highest membership of this lodge totaled 156 members. At present, there are 103 members with Della Strand currently serving as president, Donald Novotny as secretary, and Ed Choutka as treasurer.---Zaruba

Sources: Centennial Book Committee. Bryan Smith, Representative. Newman Grove Centennial: Our First Hundred Years. Marceline, MO: Walsworth, 1988. 89-90, 93-94, 104, 189.

Miscellaneous unpublished notes from members of the Madison County Genealogical Society.

Marquette, Rev. David D. D., A History of Nebraska Methodism: First Half-Century 1854-1904. Cincinnati: Western Methodist Book Concern Press, 1904. 261-267.

Reverend and Mrs. John Hotskin

In the spring of 1873, John Hotskin with his wife and several children left Harrison County, Iowa for a homestead on the NE ¼ of section 4, Township 21, North, Range 3 West of the 6th prime meridian in Kalamazoo Township of Madison County, Nebraska. It was a hard trip over muddy and bridgeless roads in bad weather. A short distance south of Madison they encountered the terrific blizzard of Easter Day, April 14, 1873 but were lucky to find shelter at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Horsham. This storm lasted three days and nights. After the storm they continued on to the wild, unimproved prairie homestead. They found temporary shelter with a neighbor while preparing a dug out on their own land. Mrs. Cynthia Hotskin's brother, a Mr. James and his family came out at the same time and located on a nearby homestead.

In September of 1873, a son, Marion Hotskin, died after a protracted ailment. His father set apart a tract in the North East corner of his farm for a cemetery, now the Iowa Valley Cemetery, and Marion was the first one buried there.

John Hotskin was an ordained United Brethren church minister and a leader, not only in the religious activities, but also in promoting the social and material welfare of the Iowa Valley community. He was an eloquent speaker and a fine singer. His wife was Cynthia Ann James an accomplished woman with a soprano voice. They held revival services, preached in homes, school houses and churches in (Burnett), St. Clair, Walnut Grove, Fairview, Looking Glass and other frontier localities. He had the ability to inspire hope and cheer where he appeared – a great benefit to depressed settlers during the grasshopper years in the middle seventies. He promoted the building of the Iowa Valley church. His social service among the young people on the frontier effectively established a higher standard of morality in business and civic behavior.

The most lasting monument to Rev. Hotskin's memory was the founding of the Iowa Valley Cemetery Association on August 17, 1912. The incorporators were F. K. Panek, James Adamek, Tom Panek, F. A. Franek, F. G. Dvorak, C. Olson and F. K. Pospisil. It is one of the prettiest country cemeteries.

Rev. John Hotskin was born in Sweden, became a sailor in his teens and located in Harrison County, Iowa, after the Civil War. In early manhood he became devoted to Christian work and was ordained minister of the gospel in the United Brethren church.

In 1884, he moved with his family to Rock County, Nebraska, where he continued his Evangelistic work on a new frontier as long as his health held out. At the age of 89 he died in Rock County. Funeral services were held at the home in charge of the Methodist minister of Bassett. He was buried in the Iowa Valley cemetery, where services at the grave were conducted by Rev. C. W. Clifton of Meadow Grove, Nebraska. Mrs. Cynthia Ann Hotskin moved to Long Pine, Nebraska and lived there with her son, until her death in 1917. She too was buried in the Iowa Valley Cemetery. Their daughter Mary Hotskin married Charles Olson on December 8, 1878.

Source: H. Halderson, Tri-County Pioneers: A Frontier Days History of Boone, Madison & Platte Counties. Rpt 1940. 146-151.