

The Hennepin United Methodists Church

Methodists Society or Wesley Society as it was known in the old days . Early 1830's the Reverend Jesse Hale and William Boyd were directed by the headquarters in Indianapolis, to continue their preaching to the Indian Missions located along the northern part of the Illinois River. Leaving the Peoria region they land in Hennepin eventually leading to a Methodists Society in 1833.

Later in the year numbers had increased enough to start a church society. A small meeting at Dr. David Ritchie in the village. The first members were; Hiram P. White, and wife, Dr. David Ritchie and wife, Miss Betsey Carpenter, afterwards Mrs Hays and Mrs. Sarah Bloomfield. More memberships were added later in the year Linas. B. Skeel, Mrs. Olive Skeel, and Mrs. Emeline Durley.

1833 Ledger accounts and notations at Methodists Headquarters in Indianapolis, record that lay members of the Hennepin Territory ended up establishing the Chicago temple.

In 1834 Rev. Zadok Hall, the first minister on February 16th at Dr. Ritchie's, preached a sermon, taking his text from Matthew 9: 12. As they year went on the number of members increased. In 1835 Rev. A.E. Phelps officiated, and Rev. Asa McMarty in 1836. Mr. Phelps helped toward building the first meeting house. In 1837 Rev. Wm. Condiff was the preacher and died near the end of the year near Caledonia.

Rev. Hays a local preacher of Hennepin vicinity for many years, and among the first who came to this locality. He put up the first frame house on Hennepin Prairie, and one of the first frame houses in the village.

March 2nd, 1838, the trustees begin plans for a modest house of worship. The frame house would be twenty-six by thirty six feet. Fall of 1839 the house was built and occupied for many years.

1858 having outgrown the old church built a new one next door. A brick structure with the sanctuary on the second floor. The lower floor was finished the following year, and by 1866 the second floor was completed. The total cost was between nine and ten thousand dollars.

Rev. Thomas Parkinson from England first position in the United States was in Hennepin. The old winding stairs on both sides were removed for a single modern stairway, changing the seating arrangement. Choir was seated on the south side with the entrance doors to the sanctuary on both sides. Members back then when late preferred not to face the congregation. A new red ingrain carpet was purchased by Miss Cornelia Turner.

Congregational Church contributed a walnut set of four pulpit pieces which had been used in their church. Adam Deck presented a large pulpit bible in memory of his sister Miss Sarah Deck.

Service was held at the old Congregational church while remodeling and decorating was being done. Lightening struck the spire of the church and it was removed from the steeple and rebuilt.

A hand fired furnace was replaced by an automatic gas furnace in later years.

In 1965 Rev. Wesley I Kersh was the minister had Richard L. Doyle; a Peoria architect made changes to the sanctuary. The altar rail was opened at the center front to enhance the communion table, velvet drapes were hung behind the table.

August 25th, 1968 the name of the church was changed from the Methodist Church of Hennepin, Illinois to the United Methodist Church, Hennepin, Illinois.

After the current church was erected the meeting house was sold for private dwelling. In 1967 it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs Walter Durley Boyle and restored to the original state. Used primarily today for Sunday School, pastor's study, and meetings for the United Methodist Church.

War of 1812 veteran Ralph Ware from Vermont gave a plot of land to the village of Hennepin in 1836 provided that it be used for public worship or education. It was a common village meeting ground that became known as the "the commons."

In 1966 the village decided to install a municipal water and sewage system. In drawing the plans the engineers used "the commons" as the site for the water tower. Unaware of Ware's provision.

The Putnam County Circuit Court ruled that the village could lease the land to the Hennepin Public Water District and it ordered the district to pay \$4,700.00 rent to the village in a lump sum for the 40 year lease. The money was divided equally between the Catholic and Methodist churches. Attorney Walter Durley Boyle lay person for the UMC won this decision.

The Hennepin United Methodist Church stands nearly the same as it did in 1859, except for the Sunday school area that was included later thanks in part to the Boyle Family.

Information comes from the Record of Ye Olden Times, from the Hundred years of worship and from the 1830 to 1870 minutes as record by the members of the Wesley Society and Hennepin United Methodist Church.