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Sketch of the First Congregational Church in Fremont, Nebraska

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FOREST CITY

was organized as a town April 18, 1858, with Barney Scott, Peter Forbes, Matthew J. Shields, Wm. Sayles, and Geo. B. Ackley as trustees. It is a town of modest pretensions and has never boasted of a large population. It is settled by an industrious, thriving people, and as its natural resources become developed the town will improve, and should the projected bridge across the Platte, connecting Saunders with Sarpy county, be built at or near this point, its future prosperity is doubly assured.

GILMORE,

on the U. P. railroad, ten miles from Omaha, was laid out by the U. P. R. R. company, which built a substantial depot on the line at that point. David Leach afterwards laid out an addition to the town. These parties have since succeeded in having it vacated.

Papillion City, laid out in 1857, at a point about two and one-half miles north-east of the present town of Papillion; Plattford, Hazelton, towns in this county, organized in an early day, have long since returned to their primitive state.

We have thus taken a retrospective view of some of the events that have transpired in the early history of Sarpy county, preferring in this centennial year to omit its later history, as this will eventually be embodied in the general history of the county.

SKETCH OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN FREMONT, NEBRASKA.

BY REV. I. E. HEATON.

October 28, 1856, I arrived in Fremont. Sabbath, November 2, I preached the first sermon in this vicinity. This was at the house of Seth Marvin, a mile and a half west of Fremont. No house in Fremont was sufficiently finished to contain an assembly of twenty-five. The next Sabbath we commenced a service in Fremont in the house of Robert Kittle (in a little shanty just south of the knoll on Military Avenue on which E. Abbott's house now stands). From that time Sabbath services were continued with special exceptions.

August 2, 1857, the First Congregational church was organized with seven members. Four of these are still numbered with us; these are E. H. Barnard, H. A. Pierce, my wife, and myself. I was the pastor for about twelve years. About 1860 we collected timber and boards for a church. The timber was nearly framed; some Indians were passing this way, and arrived here late in the evening. They made a fire near our timber. Early in the morning we found the timber was on fire. It was chiefly burned. We then purchased an unfinished house, and fitted it for a church. It became afterward the residence of Thomas Wilson. In the spring of 1867 we commenced the erection of a church 28x40 feet. It contained a tower and a bell. Our numbers were then small. The population of Fremont was small. The church was erected with perhaps as much energy, effort, and self-denial as have been exhibited in the erection of our present commodious church. We disposed of our first church building, expecting to soon occupy the new church. But delays occurred; the church was not completed for use till its dedication, Aug. 5, 1868. During the winter we occupied the school house; it stood west of the present Baptist church. The use of the school house was by necessity divided among three denominations. One Sabbath in January it was my lot to preach in the evening. Saturday afternoon my wife and I went away, expecting that I should preach in the morning. A young lady had been left in my care by the will of her mother by adoption. We left her with another young lady in charge of the house. By her slight want of caution our house took fire and was burned in the evening. When I returned Rev. Mr. Van Anda, the Methodist brother, suggested to me that perhaps I would not feel like preaching after returning and finding my house burned. I replied that I could just the same as on other occasions. I did so. This was, of course, a severe loss; all my books and papers were gone. But I took this view of the case; the loss had already occurred, I could not recall it. I would endeavor to make the best practicable improvement of present circumstances. So far as my loss might be considered providential I would neither murmur or repine. I remembered these lines:

Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.

Providence smiled upon me. Friends were kindly liberal. I was enabled to erect our present house. In the spring of 1869 I was af-

flicted with severe rheumatism and resigned my office as pastor of this church. I suggested that some younger man might be more useful. October 1, Rev. James B. Chase became our pastor. He continued so for two years. In January, 1872, Roswell Foster became our pastor. He continued so for three years and some months. During his pastorate we enlarged our church building, by adding twenty-two feet to the north end. In January, 1876, Rev. George Porter became our pastor, and continued so for a year and a half. Our present pastor, Rev. A. T. Swing, commenced labor with us February 1, 1878.

EARLY FREMONT.*

BY HON. E. H. BARNARD.

When in the early autumn of 1856, from the bluffs near Elkhorn City, my eye first beheld this portion of the great Platte valley, I thought I had never seen so goodly a landscape. For many miles the windings of the Elkhorn and Platte rivers were outlined by a fringe of timber, bounding the valley on either side, while the meanderings of the now classic Rawhide were as distinctly traceable by an occasional tree and clump of bushes. The sight filled me with rapture and made the blood fairly bound in my veins. In all my life I had never seen its like and I never expect to again. Here was this grand, and beautiful, and fertile country, spread out like a map at my feet. And what made it more fascinating was the fact that it was *unoccupied* except by Indians and wild beasts. What wonder that those who saw this valley then should be seized with a strong desire, as was Moses of old, to go in and possess the land.

Well, we went in, a few of us, and just here the *poetry* of this narrative ends. Instead of the flesh pots of Egypt, made ready and awaiting us, we found hardships and privations on every hand. Nobody had been in advance to build us houses and dig us wells, to lay out roads and build bridges, school houses, and churches; nor men to plant groves for us. We had all these things to do for ourselves. The man who has a good house to live in while he builds a better one, does a good thing, but he who builds a shelter while he is himself

*Read at the farewell service held in the Old Church, June 21, 1884, first printed in the *Fremont Tribune*; reprinted by permission.