

CHERRY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER December, 2009

We hope you had enjoyable holidays with your family and friends. December 9<sup>th</sup> we received 10.6 inches of snow. Since the weather has stayed severely cold, we will be keeping it for a while. It was very pretty until one has to clean off their car, shovel, plow, etc.

Our calendars are in and still \$8. The dues of \$10 for this newsletter and \$5 for the Blossom News are due in January. Please let us know when you have a new address. Several newsletters have been returned due to lack of a correct address.

On October 4<sup>th</sup> twelve of us enjoyed a potluck at my home - Spring Ridge Senior Living. They toured the building and visited my apartment. They enjoyed seeing how pleasant and modern a high rise can be now days.

Our member, Winton Page, has been such an ideal resident that the nursing home said he could move back home. This happened on Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>. He is remarkable at 89. He has care around the clock. He also has a loving family that cares very much about him.

The following have died since the last newsletter:

Isabel B. Myers	age 95	Oct. 4
Leonard B. Keller	age 62	Oct. 18.

After eight years I will be retiring from being your treasurer as of January 1, 2010. So far, we don't have anyone who has offered to take my place.

The following was written by Charles A. Fox. He had never got through the eighth grade in school. He lived in the Flora area with his father and family from 1842 until 1922 when he moved to Delafield, WI. Some of this information was handed down by his father and his family, and some he has seen and heard for eighty years. He had never fingered a typewriter until he was seventy-eight. He was always a farmer.

“As a youngster, I and my pal Frank Banks, who was about my age, played in the church (which was never locked). Also we played in the cemetery. We had an unwritten law never to destroy or harm anything in either place, and we lived it to the letter.

For many years the cemetery was cut with a scythe once a year. The hay was burned or hauled away. Later on the folks of Flora raised money to pay a man to mow the cemetery \$1.50 for a ten hour day. The Griggs lot had an evergreen hedge around it, and it was always kept well-trimmed.

Prior to 1859 the settlers held religious services in their homes and school houses, and as the settlers increased, the interest increased. I have heard of them tell about putting two wooden wash tubs bottom side up (that is the kind of wash tub they use to have), and put a plank across to sit on in the homes and pack them in like sardines.

At that time, as it should be now, the church was the social center of the community. No telephones, television, radios, a newspaper once a week, and poor mail service. When I was a youngster, father and I would go to Cherry Valley, Belvidere or Fielding (which is now Fairdale) to do our trading. Some of the neighbors would see us coming and we would stop and exchange news, or maybe meet a neighbor on the road coming back from town.

The church was a great medium for news exchange. There was a great desire to know about the sick and the dead. There were no hospitals or undertaking parlors in those days. Neighbors would sit up with the sick at night to give the relatives rest. Also neighbors would sit up with the dead at night until burial. Those were the days when you had real neighbors, when needed. They were influenced more or less by the church affiliation. At the funeral of Inez Aves, held June 23, 1906, there were 130 horse drawn rigs--43 in the funeral procession. At funerals there were always men to tie the horses of the mourners.

Quite an amount of work was donated to the construction of the church building by the neighbors of the community. The cost of the material was about \$1,800.00. The seats were the flat board type, made right in the church by the carpenters, seating about four adults. There was a number on each on the isle side, and families bought these seats and sat in them at first. Later they gave up the system.

My grandmother Fox owned seat #1. Some had a seat cushion for their seats, and I have been told that some had spittoons in their seats, but I never saw them. At funerals it took two strong men to get the coffin in and out of the church.

About 1898 there was a ladies organization called the Willing Workers. They raised money to remodel the seating arrangement of the church. Night services were lighted with kerosene lamps, four at the windows, a chandelier, and one at the pulpit. One man was told they had bought a chandelier, and he said 'What did they do that for? Who would they get to play it?'

In 1880's there were no gravel roads. They were kept up by poll tax, either the men paid \$1 a year or worked one day on the road. There were few bridges. You had to ford the creeks, wash holes, and the river in places where a bridge is now.

The church goers had to contend with mud in the spring and fall, an dust in the summer. If a lady or ladies came to church unattended by a man, there was always a man who would help the lady out of the carriage, tie the horses, and then get it for her when the service was over.

This church was first organized as the North Franklin and South Flora Union Church. Later it was called the South Flora Union Church. This Union was composed of five denominations: Viz Wesleyan Methodist, Methodist Episcopal, Free Will Baptist, Decipels of Christ, and Universalist.

About 1894 Rev. L. H. Brown, a minister of the Baptist Church of Cherry Valley alternated with Methodist Episcopal, instead of the Wesleyan Methodist. This continued until about 1910 when Rev. Brown quit his services and the Methodist Episcopal took over every service.

When I was young there was a well-attended Sunday school. Those classes were all good sized ones. Every year there was a Sunday school picnic, mostly by the Kishwaukee River on the Jimmie Field or Thomas Farley property. Some would go in wading in the river, but some went in swimming. No one seemed to have a swimming suit in those days. If the male species wished to swim, he went around the bend of the river and used the bathing suit he was born with.

About the month of June every year, the Sunday school had a children's day exercise at the church. A large amount of flowers were brought from the homes and the decorations were great. The children sang songs, gave recitations, had dialogues, and really entertained their parents and friends.

At Christmastime there was always a Christmas tree reaching nearly to the ceiling of the church. It was very well decorated, lighted with many candles, and loaded with presents. At that time there was standing room only for some.

About 1900 the Methodist had a Epworth League, which got good attention. It held meetings at the homes of the ones that belonged to it. At the turn of the century, there was a concentrated effort to move the church in Irene, but it didn't get enough support and created quite a bit of discord.

For many years, there was a mixed quartet. The winter was the time for the yearly revival meetings. They lasted about three weeks and sometimes were held in very cold weather. But that didn't lessen the attendance much. The horses were well blanketed, the men wore fur coats, and there were buffalo robes for the laps of the ladies. They also used heated soap stones. All ladies were dressed in long skirts with high buttoned shoes. They wore their done up in a pug at the back of their heads. There were very few clean shaven men. Most of them had beards or mustaches, or both."

I found this story in the Cherry Valley Library. There is much more to Mr. Fox's very interesting life story. I enjoy details of the past so much. I hope you enjoyed this article.

Your newsletter reporter, Beverly M. (Oberg) Scholz,

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