

74 years of
"SOUTH SIDE"
Apostolic Christian
CHURCH HISTORY

Ben Nussbaum

SEVENTY-FOUR YEARS
OF
"SOUTH SIDE"
APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH HISTORY

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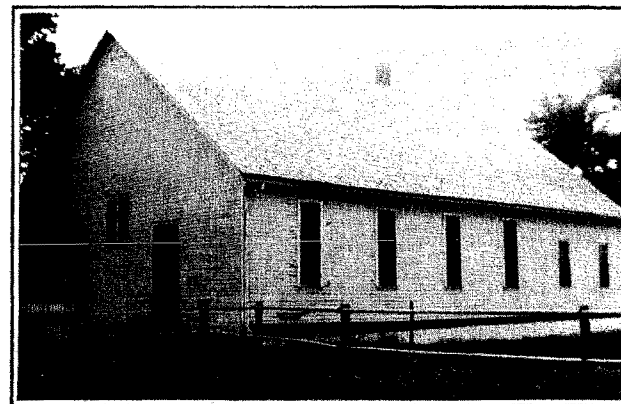
FOREWORD

History, unfortunately, does not become recorded history until it is too late. However at this time and with the help of my contemporaries, it is still possible to piece together much of the remote past relevant to the "South Side" Apostolic Christian Church located in Section Thirty-six of Indian Grove Township, Livingston County, Illinois.

Even though our own early lives may have had their share of trials and tribulations, lack of money and other material deficiencies, it can in no way compare with the extreme hardships that our ancestors endured to protect and nurture the Church. To be able to carry on the religious life demanded of them by their conscience as well as the by-laws of the Church must have placed a severe strain upon their already difficult lives. We must, therefore, be eternally grateful to

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these our elders who, through their perseverance and sagacity, have made it possible for us to enjoy the fellowship and "freedom to worship" of today's Church. So, to our forefathers; to those old friends and companions of horse-and-buggy days--whose lighted faces shine nor smile no more upon this earth--these pages are dedicated.



Looking southwest at the Church
as viewed from the road.



View looking northeast. From L. to R: Outside
facilities, Sunday School, rear of Church.

BEGINNING OF THE APOSTOLIC
CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THIS AREA

History of the "North Side" Church recalls that the Joseph Virkler family came from Croghan, New York to Livingston County in 1864 and settled on a farm north of Forrest. Niklaus Nussbaum, my Grandfather, and his family came to the Fairbury area from Metamora in the fall of 1868. They moved to the southeast quarter of Section Thirteen in Indian Grove Township which was three and one-half miles southeast of Fairbury. The only church services of their faith, in this vicinity, were being held at "North Side" homes in the region of Section Twenty-one in Pleasant Ridge Township.

The "North Side" began their services in 1864 with visiting ministers presiding. They were held in homes for four or five years until a two-room Church was built. It had an assembly room and kitchen and was erected on

the southwest corner of Section Twenty-one. This was their first Church building and was comparable in size to a one-room country schoolhouse.

When Grandfather commenced farming here in 1868 he had little equipment or money with which he could purchase any and my Father often told us of the times they had borrowed a neighbor's wagon in order to attend the "North Side" services. It was a drive of eight miles and many "South Siders" had the same problem, traveling even greater distances to attend these services.

BEGINNING OF THE "SOUTH SIDE" CHURCH

In the late 1860's and early 1870's an increasing number of families moved into this now-called "South Side" community. With some regularity, one began to hear such names as: Bittner, Farney, Gerber, Hari, Hartman, Host-erwitz, Nussbaum, Roth, Slagle, Sohn, Sommer, Steffen, Wenger, Yoder, Ziegenhorn, Zimmerman, and others. Services were held in various members' homes and nearby Indian Creek served as their baptismal fount until the Church building was erected in 1875. The burgeoning membership of these early years required increased space and a meeting to discuss it resulted in Andrew Roth, Ulrich Steffen, and Rudolph Leuthold being elected trustees. Records dated June 10, 1875 in the Court House at Pontiac verify incorporation of the Church with these men as trustees.

There were so many offers that choosing

a building site was difficult. After considerable deliberation a final decision was made to accept the acreage on the west side of the road at the exact center of the mile on the east side of Section Thirty-six in Indian Grove Township. Joseph Hosterwitz donated the north half and Peter Sommer the south half with the stipulation that if the ground was no longer of use to the Church, it would revert to them. Sommer also donated the ground for the cemetery, a subject that will be mentioned again later in these pages.

Confident that all things were in order, that the right course had been plotted and with the assurance that all would help; construction began shortly after incorporation. The building was completed and put to use before the end of the year.

My father hauled the first load of sand that was used in building the foundation of this new Apostolic Christian Church. When he

arrived with the sand nothing had been started nor staked out and he was at a loss as to where to unload so that the pile would be most advantageous to the masons and yet not interfere with construction. After a short deliberation, he chose a spot that proved to be quite satisfactory. The stone, undoubtedly, was hauled from the quarry near Fairbury. The mortar was a mixture of slaked lime and sand as this was prior to the time when Portland cement was common.

Original ministers of the "South Side" Church were: Rudolph Leuthold, Peter Sommer, Nick Wanner, Henry Ziegenhorn, and Christian Gerber. Leuthold lived in the "North Side" area and was Elder of both Churches.

Peter and Katie Schaffer furnished the following information of interest pertaining to problems that arose in the early Church. Katie is the daughter of Christian Gerber and she relates that the Gerbers had moved to

this area from Morton shortly before 1875. Her mother, Barbara, was the daughter of Andrew Roth and the Roths also came from Morton about a year earlier. The unrest and discontent that developed among members after the Church had been built was apparently the result of friction between two of the ministers, Nick Wanner and Henry Ziegenhorn. No one remembers the nature of the dispute but Katie recalls a parental discussion in which her father lamented that, "If things didn't clear up, he intended to return to Morton". Fortunately the problem resolved itself shortly thereafter when Henry Ziegenhorn moved to the Cissna Park area.

During this time, the Fairbury Church was under the Eldership and Ministry of John Georg Steidinger who came to this area from Germany in 1875. Both Churches being smaller than the "North Side", it was decided to confer the "South Side" Eldership on Steidinger.

In concluding their recollections, the Schafers noted that soon after this action Christian Gerber was heard to comment, "Things went better at the Church".

The "South Side" Church was built and in service in 1875. It was abandoned on December 11, 1949 and dismantled in the Spring of 1950 after serving the congregation for a period of seventy-four years.

The automobile, with it's ability to shorten distances and compress time, was probably the most important factor contributing to the demise of both rural Churches, as a similar fate befell the "North Side". After removal of the "South Side" buildings and barns, this tract of land was returned to the heirs of the donors as per the original arrangement.

"SOUTH SIDE" MINISTERS

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

BY THE

SEQUENCE IN WHICH THEY SERVED

PETER SOMMER

Peter Sommer was one of the Church's very first ministers. He was especially active when meetings were still held in members' homes. Information concerning the duration of his ministry is quite vague and no records even show when he left this area. Dates of his birth, death, and place of burial are likewise unknown.

It was Sommer who donated one-half of the Churchyard plus the ground for the cemetery. He no doubt preached in the new building as it was erected and in use soon after this gracious act.

NICK WANNER

Nick was another of the original "South Side" ministers. Except for the reference to his ministry by the Schaffers, little information is available. Some recall that after

the conclusion of his ministry, he moved to Morton. Dates of his birth, death, etc., are not available.

HENRY SCHWING

Henry Schwing was born in Switzerland in 1813. He came to the United States and as a young man lived first in Ohio and later moved to Illinois.

Like the other early ministers, little is known about him. He lived in the area south of Chatsworth and obviously travelled a considerable distance to attend Church and serve as a Minister. He died in 1880 and is buried in the "South Side" Cemetery.

HENRY ZIEGENHORN

Henry was born on October 19, 1823 in Burg, Prussia, a part of Germany. He came to this country in 1865, locating in Peoria for about two and one-half years. He moved from

there to a farm in Livingston County, settling on the southeast quarter of Section Twenty-four in Indian Grove Township. This farm is about five miles southeast of Fairbury.

He lived there six or more years before moving to a farm in the Claytonville-Cissna Park area. Here he ministered in the local churches until his death on December 11, 1906.

CHRISTIAN GERBER

Christian Gerber was born in Wayne County, Ohio on December 12, 1847. He moved to this area from Morton, Illinois in 1874 or 1875. He had ministered at the Morton Church and continued that ministry here.

At this time John Georg Steidinger was the presiding Elder of the Fairbury Church and had the Eldership of the "South Side" Church also. Soon after, however, Gerber was made the Elder here and remained so until after his death thirty-five years later. He

passed away on July 14, 1910 and his funeral was one of the largest ever held on the "South Side". The Illinois Central ran a special train for this most sorrowful occasion.

It is a tribute to the Gerber family that in a selfless act, they took one, Joseph Bella, into their home and cared for him in his latter years. Bella was quite feeble due to a stroke and could not walk without aid. In previous years he had been an Elder in the Bluffton, Indiana Church and a notation of this is made several times in John H. Baumgartner's book, The First Hundred Years. No one recalls that Bella served as a Minister here, however he was buried in the "South Side" Cemetery and his gravestone reads: "Elder Joseph Bella, 1812-1902".

HERBERT BINGHAM

Herbert Bingham was also one of the "South Side's" earliest Ministers. During

his early ministry, he worked as a laborer for several of the local farmers. Later, after marrying, he moved to Fairbury and continued his ministry in that Church. Records of his birth, death, etc., are unavailable, though we do know that he ministered here in the early 1880's.

FRIEDERICH HARI

Friederich Hari was born in Switzerland in 1830. He lived on a farm two miles northeast of the "South Side" Church where he served as a minister for a number of years. He died in 1909 and is buried in the Church Cemetery.

SAM SLAGLE

Sam Slagle was born on November 30, 1849. He lived on a farm one and one-half miles north of the Church. Sam ministered on the "South Side" until moving to

Fairbury in 1904 where he continued ministering until February 7, 1932. He died November 29, 1937.

JOHN GERBER

John Gerber was born in Wayne County, Ohio in 1849. In the Spring of 1889 he moved to this area from West Bend, Iowa. He had been a minister there and continued that avocation at the "South Side" Church.

While living on a farm near Bremen, Indiana, John donated the land and helped to build the first Apostolic Christian Church in that area. This congregation flourished and increased at such a pace that this country Church was soon abandoned and a much larger one was built in town. John Gerber died in 1912.

The Gerber Family performed an act of great compassion by affording shelter and sustenance to an elderly, homeless man named

George Hamm. When the Gerbers moved to Bremen in the Spring of 1911, Hamm spent his final years with a family some distance away.

JOHN KAISNER SR.

In 1893 Mr. Kaisner came to Fairbury from Austria-Hungary. He was born there in 1857 and as a youth was baptized in the Danube River. His ministry commenced there and continued in Fairbury where he resided for two years. When he started farming south of town he also transferred his ministry to the "South Side".

He ceased farming in the Spring of 1926, retiring to Fairbury where he relinquished all ministerial duties. John Kaisner Sr. passed on in 1930.

ROBERT BAHLER

Robert Bahler was born in Germany in 1863. He lived on a farm one-half mile

north and one-half mile west of the "South Side" Church where he ministered for a few years. He then moved to Indiana, continuing in the ministry until February 7, 1932. He died in 1936.

One Winter he taught German to a group of "South Side" youths. The Sunday school building served as a classroom.

CONRAD STEFFEN

Conrad Steffen was born on November 24, 1869 near Cropsey, Illinois. He was very successful as a farmer in the area southwest of the "South Side" Church. His ministry was a continuing avocation from his ordination in 1908 until his death on January 17, 1922.

JACOB BAER

Jacob Baer began his ministry in Germany where he was born on October 26, 1857. He ministered in several churches there in his

early thirties before 1912 when he came to America and settled in the Morton area.

He served the Morton Church until 1915 when he moved to a farm southwest of the "South Side" where he continued ministering. Upon retiring from the farm and moving to Fairbury, he transferred his Ministry there also until February 7, 1932. Jacob Baer died on May 19, 1933.

PETER SCHAFFER

Peter Schaffer was born on October 4, 1883 in Alsace-Lorraine. He lived on a farm very near the "South Side" Church and was one of it's ministers for a number of years. He was ordained in 1923 and served the Church here until February 7, 1932. The date of his death was April 28, 1968.

GEORGE IFFT SR.

Mr. Ifft was born in Wallroth-Hessen,

Germany on July 4, 1863 and came to the United States when he was eighteen years old. In 1888 he moved from the Roanoke area to a farm three miles southeast of the "South Side" Church.

He was ordained a minister here in 1924 and served the Church in that capacity until the Spring of 1930 when he retired from the farm and moved to Fairbury where he continued ministering until February 7, 1932. George Ifft Sr. died on January 12, 1945.

ANDREW KOEHL

Andrew Koehl was born near Fairbury on August 11, 1888. He lived on a farm about four miles southeast of the Church and was ordained a minister in March of 1932, following in the footsteps of his father and brothers. Here he served until the abandonment in 1949. Later, after moving to Fairbury, he transferred his ministry to the Forrest

Church. There he continued to preside at the pulpit in a most persuasive way being especially influential with the younger folk. He was summoned by his Creator on June 26th, 1969.

WALTER STEFFEN

Walter Steffen was born on a farm near Cropsey on February 1, 1896. He lived one-half mile south and one-half mile east of the Church. He was faithfully concerned with the needs, welfare, maintenance, and repair of this edifice.

Walter was ordained in March, 1932, thereby becoming a third generation minister, following in the footsteps of his Father and Grandfather. After issuing thoughtful and effective sermons from the pulpit for fifteen years, he resigned in 1947. He had also been the Church Treasurer for some time. Walter presently resides at

202 South Sixth Street, Fairbury.

EMIL BAHLER

Emil Bahler was born near Fairbury on December 24, 1891. He lived on a farm a few miles southwest of the Church. Ordained a minister in 1939, he served the Church here until it's cessation in 1949. After this, he transferred to the Fairbury Church and continued to minister, serving the congregation with his forceful, meaningful, and devoted sermons as only Emil could.

Finally, he built a comfortable home in Fairbury, intending to retire, his Maker deemed otherwise and called him to his reward on November 28, 1959.

ELDERS WHO SERVED THE "SOUTH SIDE"

The "North Side" was the earlier of the two rural Churches by several years and their Elder was Rudolph Leuthold. When the "South Side" Church was organized he was likewise selected for that Eldership. In addition, he was also a Trustee and remained so until construction was completed in 1875. Shortly after this, a younger minister, John Georg Steidinger was awarded the Eldership. Leuthold was thus no longer required to serve the "South Side".

The next, Christian Gerber, who had served the ministry here for several years and being Steidinger's junior by almost twenty-five years, was given the Church Eldership. Steidinger, thus relieved of his duties, was no longer required to make those arduous horse-and-buggy trips from town. This selection made Gerber the only resident

Elder with "full-charge" ever to serve the "South Side".

After Gerber's death in 1910, Elders Jacob Honegger from the "North Side" and Martin Steidinger of the Fairbury Church were entrusted with the "South Side" Eldership. Honegger died in 1920 and Martin Steidinger singly carried on this Eldership plus his charge at Fairbury until February 7, 1932.

THE FIRST CHURCH

I well recall the original Church, but alterations and additions over the years have obscured it's dimensions. The seating in the assembly room faced the pulpit at the south wall and two stoves furnished the heat. Another large room served as both kitchen and dining room where the cooking range in the northeast corner and another heating stove combined to provide warmth.

About 1900, if memory serves me correctly, the Church was remodeled and enlarged. In the assembly room, the pulpit was placed on the east with the seating properly facing it. The women sat on the left or north half with the men on the opposite side.

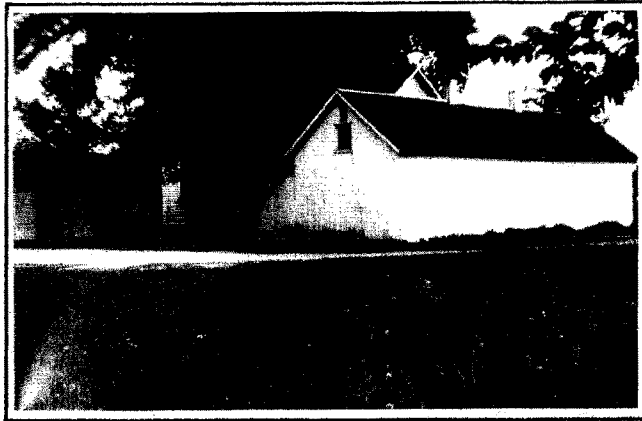
After twenty or more years of use, the heating stoves were replaced with a steam furnace which provided a more uniform warmth and general comfort over the entire assembly

room. I have a vague recollection that the Sunday school was built about the time of the Church remodeling or shortly thereafter. It, too, was heated by steam from the furnace in the Church basement. Though I'm unable to recall the actual construction of the Sunday school I still retain a mental picture of how it looked when it was very new. Prior to this, Sunday school had been held in the dining room.

BUILDING AND REMODELING

In building the original Church and also in remodeling and enlarging it about 1900, no architects nor draftsmen were utilized. All of the construction work was done by local carpenters and neighboring farmers. Some thought it would be much more convenient if the large assembly room ceiling could be supported in some manner that would eliminate the existing posts. Ed Hartman was of the opinion that this could be accomplished and was given the task of supervising the alteration. One probable method would have been to install heavier rafters. Attaching the ceiling joists to these would achieve this objective. I recall that the ceiling remained firm and level throughout all the years that the Church was in use: mute but obvious testimony to the ability of the carpenters.

The building was well-lighted through



View of Church looking southeast: showing pantry and hall attached, rest rooms in foreground.



View also looking southeast showing Sunday School on the right.

adequate windows on both the north and south sides. Numerous rods, with hooks on the lower ends, were permanently attached to the ceiling. Suspended from these long rods were kerosene lamps which furnished sufficient light for the evening services.

The outside of the Church and Sunday school were covered with wide weatherboard painted white. The inside walls of the church were covered with four-foot high wainscoting. Above this, both ceiling and walls were plastered and painted white.

The bench seats were not the most comfortable but were probably on a par with any of that era. The seat part was a wide board with a sturdy backrest, all of which was very solidly built. The carpenters that built the Church were probably responsible for these seats, at any rate they were not factory-built pews. The varnish used on the pews at that time lacked the quality of today's.

I recall that in very hot weather it would become quite tacky and stick to clothing. It was once rumored that a man, after sitting for a considerable time, tore the seat from his trousers upon rising to his feet.

HORSE-AND-BUGGY DAYS

The 'open buggy', so common in the early days, spurred the Church into building six (three each on the north and south sides) rather novel but practical items called 'steps'. These 'steps' were roughly six feet square and two and one-half feet high. Made from two inch lumber, they served as loading and unloading platforms for 'open buggy' passengers. The elderly and infirm were especially grateful for these added facilities as each had stair steps on the side adjacent to the walks leading into the Church.

Near each of the six 'steps' was a lamp post. They were made of round cedar, pointed at the top to hold special lanterns. Painted gray, they stood a lonely, ghostly, vigil; emphasizing their importance only at the night meetings by illuminating the nearest 'step'. I speculate that one lamp post also

stood at the east door.

All of the sidewalks at the Church were made of hard-burned brick; two by four by eight inches in size. These walks were made with the bricks lying flat except at both edges where they were set diagonally on end. The porches (passage-ways) around the Church were also made of this same brick.

A wooden porch, about eight feet wide, extended across the entire east front of the building and had a single step at each end. Another step was centered at the front of the porch in line with both the walk-in gate and the east door entrance.

Carriages eventually replaced the 'open buggies'. They were equipped with low, large, sturdy, steps; not to mention mud and splash guards over the wheels. In time, the carriages were superseded by an all-weather buggy known as a klondike. Father had 'open buggies' and later a carriage, but he never owned a klondike.

SERVING THE DINNERS

My parents discontinued farming and moved to Fairbury in 1911. Prior to this we had always attended the 'South Side' whose Sunday services consumed the entire day and necessitated the serving of a dinner. Unexpected visitors (before telephones) sometimes put a strain on the provisions but several mothers usually alleviated any shortage by sending their children home for an extra loaf or two of bread.

In past conversations with my mother, she recalled that in the Church's early years all of the bread was homemade. However when I was a youngster, the congregation had increased to the point where it was no longer feasible for those 'serving' to bake their own bread. It was subsequently purchased from the bakery. We would place an order with them at least a week in advance and then

on the Saturday prior to our 'serving day' make the trip to town in the spring wagon; picking up the bread and stopping at the grocery for an ample supply of coffee and sugar. This was very fine bread, well-wrapped and placed in large, lightweight bread boxes furnished by the bakery and to be returned to them for re-use. The women, using bread knives and boards, did all the slicing as no bakery of that era performed such a service. This slicing was a time-consuming task and was done by several adept ladies early in the morning so as to be ready at 'coffee time'.

My memory retains a clear picture of the first bread slicer purchased by the Church. One person could then slice all the bread in neat, uniform slabs in a minimum of time. Each loaf was hand fed to the cutting blade and several accidents, resulting in severely cut fingers, occurred before the operators learned to use another loaf to pressure the

heel into the blade. This blade was fastened in a sliding holder at an angle to it's motion and was always kept extremely sharp.

The younger children were not too adept at spreading butter and sugar on the bread and so at one time homemade, sweet coffee cake (kuchen) was furnished for them. This was of little concern until those adults with a sweet tooth also began to consume coffee cake instead of bread. When the practice got out-of-hand several women discussed the problem, concluding that the additional baking burdened them excessively and that the only remedy was to cease supplying coffee cake entirely. No one wanted to be the first to halt this custom and thus be a target of the grumbling that would surely follow. Impulsively my mother volunteered and the group backed her, declaring that they would likewise refuse to serve kuchen when their turn arrived. There was some moaning at

first but the incident was soon forgotten.

The early Church lacked window screens and in the summer the flies took advantage of this especially while we were eating at the dining tables. Some of the women, using three-foot long, leafy, tree branches as chasers, would stand behind the diners and flick away the flies quite effectively.

THE CHURCH COFFEE

The Church coffee was invariably a very tasty drink. It was made in large quantities by a few certain women known for their prowess as cooks and one of them assumed the responsibility of preparing it each Sunday. This coffee was made on the coal-burning cookstove in a copper wash boiler of approximately fifteen gallon capacity. It had handles at each end and was covered with a lid of tin. The ground coffee and raw, well-beaten eggs were put in a twenty-five pound, muslin, sugar sack. All, in proper proportion to the number of gallons of water required, ended up in the boiler. This formula no doubt contributed to the distinctive, savory taste.

The coffee, sugar, butter, and bread were always served together and a batch of stirring spoons were stuck directly in the

bowl with the sugar. This eliminated the endless hunt for a dry sugar spoon.

Fuel for the aforementioned stove was kept in the coal-and-cob room. This was the center section of the building which housed the two outdoor rest rooms. It was immediately west of the Sunday school.

SUPPLIES FOR THE SUNDAY DINNER

We made many churns of butter at home in those days and furnishing an adequate amount for the Sunday 'serving' was no problem. To meet the large milk requirements though, it was necessary for several families--possibly ten--to augment our supply by each furnishing a gallon. All, in turn, would reciprocate when each other's 'serving' Sunday arrived.

This raw milk (pasteurizing and homogenizing process were not yet in widespread use) was brought to Church in jugs of crockery. Several, commensurate with the expected attendance, were opened, poured in large containers, and boiled in preparation for serving at dinner time. The remainder were kept in reserve and only used as their need became apparent. The donors would reclaim both empty and unopened jugs at the conclusion of

the services.

My mother always took another precaution when she supervised the 'serving'. By pouring the milk into an open pan, prior to boiling, she could make a cursory examination for impurities. Glass jugs, of course, had they been in existence, would have eliminated this procedure.

MID-WEEK CHURCH SERVICES

In early years, the mid-week services were held on Wednesday afternoons or evenings depending on the season. Afternoon services commenced at Thanksgiving and continued through the Winter until field work started in the Spring. They would then revert to the evening routine until the following Thanksgiving when the cycle would be repeated.

Once, at a mid-week, evening service, all of the ministers failed to attend. In their absense, the congregation held a "Singstund" or hour of song. We opened with a prayer, sang several hymns, had a closing prayer, and returned home.

One minister, our neighbor John Gerber had worked extremely hard that day and, assuming that the other ministers would attend, decided to stay home. The remaining

ministers, by their absense for one reason or another, had left the pulpit unattended that particular night, and if I recall correctly, no mid-week services were held for some time after that.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

The following were in charge of the Sunday School and taught the boys' classes.

Louis Koehl Sr.
Jacob Schlipf
Albert Steffen
Ed Hartman
Phillip Sohn Sr.
George Ifft Sr.
Ben Leman
Paul Hoffman
Emil Hoerr
John Koehl
Andrew Rieger
Louis Koehl Jr.
Emil Bahler
Paul Honegger
Walter Moser

The following taught the girls' classes.

Helen Schaffer

Anna Roth

Anna Steffen

Anna Gerber

Katie Hari

Therisa Schneider

Maggie Ifft

Rosa Hari

SONG LEADERS

The following are listed in the approximate order in which they served.

Louis Koehl Sr.

Albert Steffen

John Zimmerman Sr.

Will Wagler

Ben Leman

Sam Steffen

Ben Steffen

Louis Koehl Jr.

Raymond Wenger

THE CHURCH YARD, DRIVES, ETC.

The Church yard could be entered through either of two gates on opposite sides of the Church--one on the north and one on the south. Each entrance gate actually consisted of two half-gates which were hinged from posts at their outer ends. Fronting the Church and spanning the distance between the two drive-in entrances was a white picket fence. It was about three and one-half feet high and made of one and one-quarter inch square pickets. Centered in this fence and in line with the Church entrance was a walk-in gate. A pipe fence extended outwardly from the two drive-in entrances. It was constructed of a pair of one and one-half inch diameter pipes supported by round, cedar posts. The pipes passed through two holes in these posts which had been drilled at the proper spacing to make both an attractive and utilitarian

fence.

Just inside the south entrance and extending southward to the east end of the new barns was a hitching rack. This rack was constructed of posts similar to those used in the fence except only a single hole was drilled near the top. A heavy chain was drawn through the line of holes and fastened only to the end posts. This rack provided easy access for those who, in warmer weather, frequently attended half-day services. They could tie the horses and in many cases not even bother to unhitch. Across the road from the Church and parallel to the fence was a long hitching rack of similar construction. It was built to accomodate funerals and seldom used otherwise.

The entrance gates, which were normally closed throughout the week, along with the stout fences would occasionally have the task of containing some neighboring livestock that

had been herded in and left to 'mow' the yard. At other times the mowing was performed by those, "Who saw the need and felt the urge".

Several large, silver maple trees flourished to the east and south of the Church. For many years they provided a most welcome shade during hot summer months.

HEATING AND INSIDE MAINTENANCE

For years Rudolph Vonbergen took care of the furnace during the day, lighted the lamps in the evening, and performed those tasks that contribute to everyone's comfort and well-being. A thermometer hung from the ceiling over the spot where Rudolph usually sat near the center of the assembly room. He could thus easily observe the temperature and properly regulate the furnace. When attendance was large, especially during extremely hot or cold weather, it was also necessary for him to adjust the window openings to insure adequate ventilation. In later years this particular task somehow fell to Albert Steffen and to the same, he was very attentive.

Rudolph was also assisted by John Maurer, Will Wagler, Ed, and Walter Steffen who would come early on Sunday mornings and get a fire started to make the Church comfortable.

These four did the same for the mid-week services in cold weather.

At one time two ladies by the name of Wrensch lived across the road from the Church and they were hired to do the weekly cleaning. Eventually, when they had moved away, it became the obligation of the family that served the Sunday dinner to also do the cleaning earlier in the week. In cold weather it was done after the mid-week afternoon services while the Church was still warm.

Housecleaning the Church was an annual affair, usually in the Spring, and one in which many of the congregation participated. Several butchering kettles were set up in the yard and stoked with firewood to provide ample hot water.

A clock, large enough to be visible over the entire assembly room, hung on the north wall. Winding it was the responsibility of those who did the 'serving' each week. It

had been presented to the Church about 1900 by Louise Walbel prior to her marriage with Andrew Steffen. Still an excellent time-piece, it now adorns a wall in the home of her son Alpha.

NEAR CATASTROPHE

Walter Steffen, for a period of time, performed the Church's janitorial duties and the episode I'm about to relate probably happened during the winter of 1930. He lived nearby and one Wednesday forenoon fired the furnace and prepared the Church for services that were to be held later in the day.

He completed the task and started to leave. A glance at the steam gauge was reassuring but as he walked toward the door, fastening his coat and donning mittens, the penetrating odor of wood smoke filled his nostrils and alarmed him of impending danger. A quick investigation disclosed the source-- the wainscoting that surrounded the chimney in the dining room was AFIRE! Without hesitation, Walter rushed to the basement and returned with a shovel and two pails of water. Using the shovel as a lever, he pried

the smoldering boards away from the chimney and doused the exposed areas with water. The fire was momentarily extinguished and the crisis over. If his departure had occurred a few minutes earlier, in all probability, everything would have been consumed.

ELECTRICITY COMES TO THE CHURCH

Rural electrification with it's attendant 'high lines' became a reality in the late 1930's and during this same time the Church was 'wired'--possibly 1938. Even those of us with vivid imaginations could not foresee such an improvement in illumination.

The obsolete lamps and lanterns were immediately discarded. However, after several power failures, (and they occurred repeatedly), the Church purchased an Aladdin lamp. It was fueled with gasoline which, under pressure, was atomized inside two burning mantles thus providing an alternate source of light for the evening services. This lamp was trimmed, filled, pumped up, (a simple hand pump accompanied each one) and ready for lighting. It could be placed on the pulpit in a matter of minutes after an interruption.

Not long after the introduction of

electricity to the Church a stoker was installed in the furnace. This eliminated hand-firing and resulted in a more uniformly controlled temperature.

BARNs AND HORSES

The original barns were built on the north and the west edges of the Church yard and later, as the membership increased, more were erected along the south edge. At that time my father sold his in the northwest corner and purchased two (numbers 19 and 20) in this new, south section. Capacity of all the barns was in excess of one-hundred teams.

After considerable use, the oldest barns --those on the north--were rebuilt. Sometime later, when the automobile became dominant, all but a few were converted into garages. Eventually, when side curtains were obsolete and sedans or winter tops became fashionable, a majority of the members merely drove through the entrance and parked; ignoring the garages altogether. A decision was then made to dismantle them all, starting with those on the south and west. Before long,

the recently rebuilt shelters on the north met the same fate and the hitching racks--another victim of the times--were also removed.



View looking northwest showing the last barns standing after being converted to garages.

Compiling this book has been quite stimulating. Dealing primarily with the horse-and-buggy era; a time that coincided with the impressionable years of my youth, it has served to make these memories doubly vivid.

Like a fine wine, they are exceptionally clear and especially enjoyable when shared with old friends.

I enjoy recalling those Sunday panoramas of converging vehicles--always a dozen or more in view--as they navigated the straight roads which bounded our flat, square-mile sections. They reminded one of small sailboats tacking and running to take advantage of the ninety degree roads. Dust clouds, during the dry season, revealed the positions of those intermittently hidden by hedge or crop. Remember how the horses would snort and whinny as they rhythmically clopped along the crusted roads? Or the muffled crunch of hoof and wheel on bitterly-cold snow? Even the thought of greasy mud squishing and splattering against the buckboard or clinging to the spokes brings forth a nostalgic sigh.

Some of these teams were beautiful to behold: matched drivers that pranced ever so

briskly; well-curried coats and oiled harnesses that glistened in the sunlight; taut leather traces hooked to doubletrees that scarcely wavered as the stylish black carriages wheeled majestically alongside the Church 'steps'. Warm harness oil and the steam from the horses, both a result of their exertion, combined to permeate the surrounding air with an unique aroma that can only be recalled by those whose nostrils have sensed it firsthand. Occasionally a frisky colt, too young to leave at home, trailed closely behind. After the team was tied, the barn doors would be re-opened, permitting it to nurse or frolic amid the vehicles in the yard.

Many parishioners did not have such fine teams and, as my family, relied on work horses to pull the buggies. Regardless of what one owned, he went through a similar routine in preparing for these Sunday morning

sojourns; hitching up, mixing a feed bag of corn and oats, and stuffing a large sack with hay. Hay and grain were put aboard the vehicle and fed to the horses at noon. Blankets and foot warmers helped ward off the bitter cold when Winter was severe. Those warmers made of soapstone seemed to retain heat longer--no one remembers why. At Mother's urging, one of the girls would fill a jug with milk; a last minute ritual on those weeks that we were to assist with the 'serving'. This was the signal that starting time was fast approaching; awaiting only that final word from Father,....."Giddap".

THE CEMETERY

The cemetery is also located in Section Thirty-six. It is one-half mile south and one-half mile west of the Church site and directly on the half-mile line. This small tract, donated by the Sommer family, was located in the southwest corner of their farm. The actual date it came into existence is problematical. An old plat book printed in 1876 shows the Church location and states that it was built in the previous year. The cemetery however, is neither referred to nor shown; the obvious conclusion being that it's inception was later than 1876.

An area in the Church yard was originally designated for that purpose. It was north of the Church proper, just inside the east fence and adjacent to the barns. The first burials, because of their proximity to the neighbors across the road, incurred their

objections and probably motivated Peter Sommer to donate the aforementioned tract.

No record exists to identify the occupants of these few graves and even their location has now been obliterated by constant tilling of the soil. This desecration by the plow and the reaper encourages one to question the wisdom of those responsible. The "Abandonment" of the buildings and grounds is understandable--but not of these early founders and members.

HEARSEES, FUNERALS, ETC.

All three Churches ("North Side, Fairbury, and the "South Side") possessed horse-drawn hearses and I remember quite well those three consecutively owned by the latter. The first was a completely open buggy and might as well have been called a spring wagon. A building for the express purpose of sheltering it was erected on the cemetery grounds near the entrance.

Number two was similar except the coffin was shrouded in a box-like structure directly behind the driver. This austere, black enclosure, though windowless, had double doors at the rear to facilitate loading and unloading. These doors, barely high enough to clear the casket, hinged outwardly from the center. It was a simple and practical hearse; truly symbolizing the religious order it served.

The third was purchased in 1914 from Sam Stoller of the Fairbury Carriage Company. It was sturdily built with large, side windows and lanterns which helped to dispel the gloominess so characteristic of these vehicles. Though quite modern, it still afforded no protection for the driver and, since Death is no respecter of inclement weather, he occasionally suffered in the performance of his duties. Sam Steffen recalls that he was the driver of this conveyance on it's final procession; a funeral on February 7th, 1925 which, incidentally, I attended. A magnificent pair of black drivers belonging to Sam's father was the pulling team.

Transportation throughout the Church's existence had it's funereal counterpart. Whether it was flatbed wagon, buggy, carriage, or car; this has held true. I remarked earlier about one example; the resemblance of the spring wagon to the open hearse. The

auto hearse, a modified automobile is another and it's acceptance was accelerated by enterprising morticians who provided these motorized vehicles as an integral part of their services. The Church subsequently approved this procedure and confirmed the decision by disposing of it's own hearse and the no-longer-needed, cemetery shelter.

During the first funeral services, the body reposed in the Sunday school room and remained there for viewing. Sometime later this practice was revised and it then lay in the Church hall, always under the constant vigil of several attendants. This hall was quite spacious as it extended across the full width of the building. The casket was always re-opened at the cemetery and remained so throughout the song and prayer which invariably concluded that ceremony.

At first, all interments were in a single row and side by side, irrespective of any

family relationship. This pragmatic system was not too popular and about 1910 it was revised so that the husband, wife, or other family members might reserve common space. At present the cemetery is almost completely parcelled into family plots. It's attractiveness attests to the diligence and efforts of the men who lived nearby. They attended to the mowing, trimming, digging, and general maintenance down through the years without material reward. As far back as memory permits, the following have accepted that responsibility:

John Hoerr

Alfred Rapp

Ed Steffen

Alpha Steffen (present sexton)

Sam Zehr Jr.

Carl Sohn

Andy Lehman

Sidney Leman

Emil Sohn

BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

The setting for baptisms in the early years of the Church was Indian Creek. All services were held in members' homes and no doubt those near the Creek were selected as meeting places on the Sundays this event was to occur. Baptism was a year-round happening and it proved to be a rigorous experience for those who made their decision in the Winter season. On extremely cold and frigid days a large hole was chopped through the ice. After immersion in the near-freezing water, the shivering new-member was wrapped in blankets brought for the purpose and then hauled back to the nearby home where the services would be concluded. The last members to be baptized in Indian Creek were Albert Steffen and Katie Roth.

After the Church building was erected all baptizing transpired there. A baptismal

fount or trough was constructed of wood and lined with sheet metal. It had handles at each of the four corners and they were used to carry it from storage in one of the buildings west of the Sunday School to the pump which stood at the south side of the Church. Again, weather was never a deterrent and those who chose to be baptized in the Winter had to endure well water at ambient temperature. No doubt it was very reminiscent of the sub-zero creek ordeals.

GERMAN SCHOOL

A large class studying the German language was held in the Church before the days of compulsory education. These classes met for several winters and were comprised of both boys and girls including two members of our family.

Mr. Robert Bahler was the instructor in the final year which was thought to be about 1900. At that time the class was held in the Sunday school building and three of my brothers attended. It was rumored that the students were quite unruly which probably contributed greatly to the school's discontinuance.

GERMAN NO LONGER USED

Songs from the Zion's Harfe and the long book called Heft rendered in voices of melodious German provide us of that generation with irreplaceable memories. Unfortunately, songs like "Heim ach nur heim, Heim ach nur heim" lose some of their melody and much of their expression in translation.

Likewise, if you comprehended the language, those German sermons delivered with dignity and simplicity remain incomparable. Fringed with such prayers as, "Schepfer unseres lebens Der Du wohnst im Himmel, Allmächtiger, Allgegenwärtiger, Gnädiger und Barmherziger Gott Himmlische Vatter.....et cetera, they contained a message that was enlightening as well as beautiful and no English translation faithfully reproduces it.

Conceding that it was difficult to be fluent in two languages the older ones

nevertheless, for reasons mentioned above plus habit and nostalgia, adhered to the more familiar tongue and ritual. It was their expectations that by example and association the younger ones could be reconciled. It was not to be so, however, as many of them seldom spoke German during their daily routine or at home, even when living with their parents. It was probably this single factor--conversing in English--more than anything else that contributed to "The Parting of the Ways" on February 7, 1932.

NAME CHANGE

No serious rifts occurred in the early Church until 1907 at which time a group of dissidents formed a separate congregation. To differentiate themselves from the original Church which had been called "Christian Apostolic" even before incorporation; they reversed the word order and adopted the name "Apostolic Christian".

Separation did not have it's intended results in the original Church and the covert maneuvering and agitation continued for nearly ten years. Then, for reasons known only to a few, they likewise assumed the identical name chosen earlier by the sister Church. Two Churches entitled "Apostolic Christian" in the community are confusing and as time passes, all attempts at justification become quite humorous.

SEPARATION

The major separation that occurred in 1932 was not a spontaneous decision. It was the result of many irritations that had accumulated through the years. The language barrier as previously discussed, was one of the more serious problems. The younger ones were very reluctant to sit through sermons in a tongue they didn't understand. Another was the double standards of dress and deportment that were a consequence of favoritism. Shortly before separation many had begun to wear the latest in styles, hairdos, shoes, etc. Three-cornered veils, which had long been the accepted head covering, were no longer appropriate. Expensive and fancy lace veils had become the vogue. Pianos were purchased by many members and their children were given lessons--acts that would have absolutely prohibited only a few years earlier. Other

tactics, which many considered harassing, rankled those who, through choice or rebuke, were adhering to the traditional Church ways.

I recall an embarrassing situation that developed when the Elder refused to perform the marriage ceremony because, in his opinion, the intended bridegroom's dress was "unbecoming". Informed only hours before the event was to take place, he changed the offending apparel during the Sunday dinner hour, thereby gaining the approval necessary to solemnize the marriage. And so it went-- what was once forbidden to all was now permitted for some and though I have related only isolated instances, this preferential treatment encouraged resentment and was a major factor in the final division.

AFTER THE SEPARATION

After the "Parting of Ways" on February 7, 1932, all three area Churches were without an Elder. To rectify this Elder Emil Schubert came from Peoria to render his competent assistance. As a result he was given command of all three Churches. His untiring efforts and experienced help were sincerely appreciated and soon more than seventy in the area were repenting. Noah Schrock, visiting here at the time, noted the pressing need for a resident Elder. Peter Bach, a "North Side" Minister since 1923, was then ordained an Elder by Emil Schubert and Elias Winzler on November 20, 1932. He held authority over all three Churches until his death on May 5, 1946.

Again, temporarily, the Churches lacked a resident Elder and on December 24, 1946 they remedied this by ordaining Joshua

Broquard in the Fairbury Church and Henry Kilgus for the "North Side". Henry was also given 'charge' over the "South Side".

ABANDONMENT

The "South Side" Apostolic Christian Church held it's final service on December 11, 1949. After seventy-four years of continuous use it was now to be abandoned. The final sermon was delivered by Herman Hueni (now deceased) who was then a minister in the Bremen, Indiana Church though, in earlier years, he had lived and attended here. Sam Zehr II served the last luncheon to an overflowing assembly for this grievous affair. It was terminated with a parting hymn and a closing prayer followed by sorrowful and regrettable leave-taking.

The members, by this abandonment, were now unattached and it therefore behove them to join one of the active area Churches. An accurate count of the members by Walter Steffen, who was Church Treasurer, took the available funds and proportionally divided

them between the two Churches. The buildings were sold and then dismantled in the Spring of 1950.

HISTORICAL MARKER

A suggestion by Alpha Steffen that an historical marker be placed at the original Church site has met with the approval of everyone contacted. They further emphasized this concurrence with voluntary donations to defray the project's expense.

Alpha has obtained the consent of the present land owners to erect this monument alongside the highway fence and adjacent to the spot where the Church formerly stood. Made of granite, it is thus inscribed:

Original Site Of

THE SOUTH APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

1875-1949

The purchase has been completed and it's placement awaits only favorable weather as this book goes to the printers early in April of 1973.

The writer, denoted by the pronoun "I" throughout these pages, wishes to establish his relationship with those Nussbaums referred to by name or kinship as follows:

Niklaus Nussbaum is my Grandfather.

Samuel Nussbaum Sr. is my Father.

Christina Nussbaum is my Mother.

FINIS

It is my profound hope that reminiscing through these pages for a few, fleeting hours has been as gratifying and rewarding for you, the reader, as they have been for me in their compilation. To profit financially from this book would be inconcievable and I have therefore determined that the cost to you for this, my 'Labor of Love', shall be only for the printing and where the applicable, the postage.

In solemn faith,

Ben N.