

HISTORY
OF
HANCOCK COUNTY
INDIANA

ITS PEOPLE, INDUSTRIES AND INSTITUTIONS

BY
GEORGE J. RICHMAN, B. L.

With Biographical Sketches of Representative Citizens and
Genealogical Records of Many of the Old Families

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CHAPTER XIII—BLUE RIVER TOWNSHIP..... 490
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WESTLAND FRIENDS CHURCH.

When Blue River township was first settled it was a dense woodland. The struggle for a living and for future prosperity then began, and it may well be said that the first settlers sought a firm foundation of Christian principles on which to build character and association. There were many obstacles to be met in those early days. The people were few and the facilities were not as they are today for conducting church work, yet the true light of Christ was shining forth and the faithfulness of a few of their earnest endeavors was rewarded with the flourishing churches of today. The work of Christ began with the daily toil of this newly settled land and soon the work of the churches was rapidly progressing until the attendance became a routine and a duty.

In the year 1832 Joseph Andrews located in the vicinity of Westland. He was followed by John Brown, in 1833, and Elias Marsh, Elisha Butler, Nathan Perisho, William Brown, Frederick Brown and others, until the year 1839. All of these being members of the Walnut Ridge Friends church, and having settled quite a distance from their regular place of worship, they held a meeting in the same year for the purpose of binding themselves together in church fellowship. In 1840 church services were begun by the above

organization. The newly-born society was in charge of a committee that was appointed by the Walnut Ridge monthly business meeting and it remained under its charge for several years.

The society at that time consisted of about fifteen families. In the year 1841, at the Walnut Ridge monthly business meeting, they appointed the following named Friends as trustees: Samuel Bundy, Joseph Andrews and John Brown, who were to purchase a lot on which to build a church. They purchased two acres off of the farm owned by Nathan Perisho and wife, in the southeast corner of section 18, township 15, range 8, paying the sum of five dollars therefor. The lots have remained the property of the church to this day. Here the present church building is located and here lie many of the charter members and their children.

Soon a log house was erected on this lot and used as a place of worship. A teacher was employed for the education of their children and the school was held in the church building for many years. Among the early ministers which held meetings in the log house were Mary Hodson and Melissa Hill. A Sabbath school was organized, which was in charge of Abigail Hubbard. After a number of years of worship in the log house the society deemed it best to erect another house in which to hold their services. Willing hands set to work and a small frame house was built. This building served as a house of worship and for a Sabbath school until the year 1866. In the meantime the membership had increased, a preparative meeting had been granted, and in that year the present building was erected.

A committee composed of Elihu Coffin, Joseph O. Andrews, Jesse Brown and Benjamin H. Binford was appointed by the preparative meeting to consider the propriety of repairing the old house or building a new one. After investigation they reported to the meeting that the probable cost of repairing and enlarging the old house would be fourteen hundred dollars; also that the cost of building a new frame house, thirty by fifty feet, would be about one thousand dollars, furnished inside with new benches, outside with slat window shutters, painted inside and out. The meeting chose the proposition of a new building and directed the same committee to proceed with the work. A subscription had previously been taken to aid the carpenter in procuring material. Elihu Coffin was the contractor. The house was finished and furnished at a cost of one thousand seven hundred and eighty-two dollars and thirty-two cents. The old house was sold for a barn for seventy-five dollars and is used at the present time as such.

As the church prospered in membership and interest it began to assume new duties. In 1883 a home mission committee was appointed by West-

land and Western Grove preparative meetings jointly, of men and women Friends, who met monthly for consultation and to receive reports of work done. A number of cottage prayer meetings were held; visits were made to the sick and aged, to the county infirmary and county jail, giving good literature to the inmates and trying to encourage them to live upright Christian lives. Often very interesting and encouraging reports are given by different sections of the committee. This work is still carried on.

About 1890 the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized, whose main object was to raise money to help send and keep missionaries in the field. Raymond Holding, a member of Westland church, went to Cuba as a missionary a few years ago and still remains in the mission field.

In 1872 Walnut Ridge monthly meeting, endorsed by Walnut Ridge quarterly meeting, established a monthly meeting to be known as Westland monthly meeting of Friends, to be held on the fourth seventh day of each month at eleven o'clock a. m. (later on the time was changed to ten o'clock a. m.), to be held alternately at Westland in the even months and at Western Grove in the odd months. The first monthly meeting was held at Westland, October 26, 1872. The committee appointed by the quarterly meeting to attend the opening of the meeting was composed of David Marshall, William Binford, Sr., George Swain, Micajah C. Binford, Sarah J. Hill, Eliza A. Chappell and Elizabeth Hunt. Josiah Binford and Lydia A. Binford were appointed clerks. The first minister with a minute to attend the new monthly meeting was Charles Hubbard of Raysville monthly meeting of Friends.

On August 25, 1877, Joseph O. Andrews, Lemuel Harold and Benjamin H. Binford were appointed trustees of the meeting property. R. Barclay Binford and Jesse W. Beeson are trustees at the present time.

In the year 1890 a band of young Christians organized themselves into a Christian Endeavor Society. There were nineteen who signed the pledge as active members and started to battle through life with the great object in view of making themselves more useful in the service of God. The organization was small, but the true Christian spirit was prevalent, and the society grew steadily until the organization numbered about sixty members in 1896. Later, the members began moving away, going to school and teaching, until in 1906, it was deemed best to discontinue the society.

O. Winbern Kearns, who had been recorded a minister of the Gospel by Walnut Ridge monthly meeting about the year 1870, served as pastor of this church until his death, May 8, 1894. Other ministers occasionally visited the church, but the meeting felt the need of a regular pastor and secured the services of Micajah Morris for two years. Following him were

James P. Price, 1897; Benjamin J. Mills, 1902; Frank N. Edwards, 1903; Levi Pennington, 1905; William J. Cleaver, 1906; James D. and Marguerite Carter, 1907; Frank N. Edwards, 1909; Isaac N. Stanley, 1911; Thomas R. Woodard, 1914; Frank N. Edwards, 1915.

At the present time there are one hundred and twenty-one members, eighty-five resident and thirty-six non-resident. Average attendance for the past few years, about fifty-five.

With the exception of a few years at the beginning of the meeting, the Sabbath school has been maintained regularly, with an attendance of from fifty to sixty-five. There are seven classes. Adult members attend regularly. The oldest member attending is seventy-five years of age, and one member enrolled in the home department is seventy-nine years of age. This department has an enrollment of seventy-three and the cradle roll has thirty-three, with Martha J. Elliott as superintendent. Elma Binford is superintendent of the primary department.

The clock purchased by the Sabbath school in 1879 is still doing faithful service. The school has purchased and placed in the library three hundred volumes of good books. E. Clarkson Elliott is superintendent of the Sabbath school. The following is a list of past superintendents, according to records available: Isaac Harold, Mary L. Binford, Oliver Brown, David Newlin, William P. Binford, Lydia A. Binford, Lemuel Harold, Micajah Young, Mark A. Catt, M. C. Butler, Abe L. Coffin, Olive Binford, Charles Kearns, Naomi Binford, Charles Cook, John Curry, Abigail Butler and Eldora Binford.

The present house was remodeled and reseated in modern style in 1902, at a cost of eight hundred and ninety-six dollars and fifteen cents. The building committee was composed of R. B. Binford, M. C. Butler, James Lindamood, Eldora Binford and Charity Toms. John Anderson was the contractor.