

BETHEL CHURCH

By Margaret Smallwood

The Bethel Congregation was a branch of the Old Sugar Creek Congregation, who had their house of worship situated just east of the Morgan Bridge in Eminence, five miles distant. It was a long distance for the brave pioneers to go to worship, so they resolved to build a house out on the then unbroken prairie. They went to the forest and hauled their logs and with such tools as broadax, chisels, foot adz, etc., they fashioned them into shape and pinned them together with wooden pins.

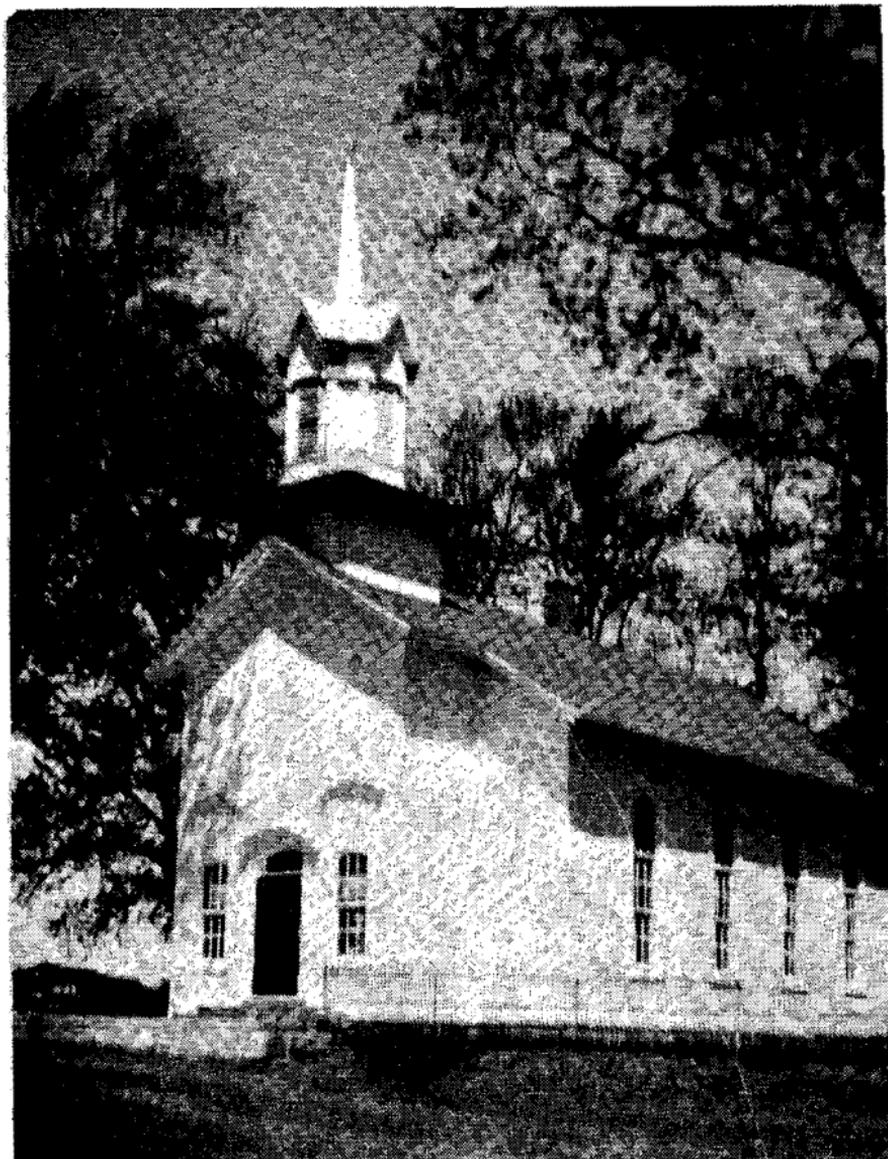
The first meeting was on the twenty-sixth day of November, 1854. They gave to their house of worship the name of Bethel and they agreed to be known by the title name of the Bethel Congregation. Elder William Ryan was elected Evangelist; David Bowles and William Shively were elected Elders; and George G. Ryan and Jeremiah Miller were elected Deacons. Trustees were David Bowles, Samuel Waters and William Shively. They worshipped in this old building for eighteen years until the congregation grew to such a size that the old

house was not large enough to accomodate them.

M.A. Miles, a fine carpenter from Vermont, was the master carpenter of the second building. The second building was dedicated February 2, 1873. It was good sleighing and people came for miles to enjoy the dedication services. The record book shows a large number of people became members of this church.

The Bethel Church was repaired and remodeled, and a concrete platform was placed at the front in the fall of 1910.

There began a decline in attendance during the 1930's, however there were Sunday School and Communion Services until the year 1951. The church is kept repaired and maintained. Memorial Day Services and funerals continue to be held in the quaint old church.



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