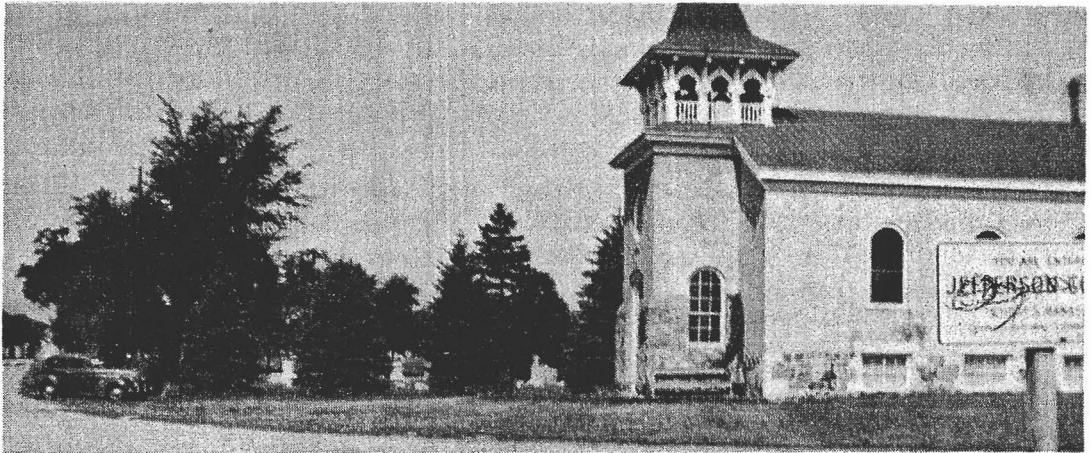


History of Siloam Chapel

By Alice Baker



Upright and staunch as the Cornishmen who founded it, this Siloam church stands at the northwest corner of the intersection of Hys. Z and 106. These men from Cornwall were descendants of men who were defeated but never conquered; men steeped in the legend of King Arthur and the lore of the Bible Christian church; these men builded a church.

Well acquainted with the stories of the Bible, it is little wonder that the pond now called Beaver Dam Lake became the Pool of Siloam, hence the name Siloam Chapel.

Some of the founders of this church came with the first onrush of settlers to Wisconsin in the historic year of 1836, but the land was not all taken up and neighbors were few and miles apart. As the country became more settled, true to their love of Christian service, these men held meetings in their log cabins.

Not until Mar. 7, 1850 was there a recorded move for church organization. The first meeting was held in the home of Henry Stacey. David Crerar, who had come to Wisconsin in 1836, was made secretary of the meeting. The choice was a fortunate one, for, even today, his minutes are as clear as the day they were written and his penmanship is a delight. Richard Sleep (1840) was made treasurer. Other members attending were: Henry Stacey, William Jolliffe, and Charles Box. Stacey was chairman of the meeting.

The site of this first church was diagonally across from the present building in a field now owned by Merton Uglow.

The minutes of this church history is a vivid picture of economic conditions in those early days, sharp contrast to today's lavishness and indifferent waste. On Mar. 15, 1850, 3,971 feet of lumber were bought at \$7 per thousand feet. Richard Sleep is credited with the first work on the church six days at fifty cents a day. David Crerar was carpenter; Charles Box, painter. Building expenses were watched with meticulous care. At one time a bill for \$1.50 for painting was held up until said "Mr. Box returned several partly used cans of paint, still in his possession."

What prayers were said for help in the building of the church there is no way of knowing, but helpers were already on the way, for in

the spring of 1850, Wm. Gilbert I and Hannah (Murley) Gilbert were on their journey to Eagle and with them was Rev. George Davy, who upon his arrival began work immediately on the prospective church building.

The first Meeting House was finished in Jan., 1851, but it was not paid for. The trustees had to give their personal, joint note for the remaining \$50. with interest at 12%. To pay this interest, several canvasses of the neighborhood were necessary.

Space forbids the naming of other men who helped in the building of the chapel, but in the community of the fourteen names then mentioned, seven still are represented by their descendants.

Soon after the church was built, the trustees voted the following resolution:

"Resolved on motion, that every member have a privilege of building his own seat in the chapel, with good pine lumber and no other, commencing at the door, on either side, to be as near alike as possible." Permission was granted to those whose families did not fill the pew to "let out at a price any available space," but this money was given to the church, "six pence per quarter."

Church membership was possible to "Only male members, twenty-one years and older, with two consecutive years of good standing in the community" and then on six months probation.

Although the church debt still remained unpaid, George Hooper offered the trustees one-half acre of land on which to build a parsonage. Definite specifications were given "one story, specified dimensions, framed and boarded-up cellar" and both the church and parsonage were painted yellow.

The payment of the church debt was a continuous problem, so much so that certain members were appointed to "wait" on members for solicitation toward the debt. At this time the pastor served eight charges: Siloam, Zion, Ottawa, Punck, Bakers, McKeys, Rome and Johnsons.

By Jan. 12, 1857 the old chapel was too small and a question of enlarging or building new came before a meeting held in the Rainous School house. This building was located in what is now the cemetery and a few stones of its underpinning can still be traced by people who have been told of its location. The site upon which the present church stands was part of the farm of William Gilbert I who gave land for both the church and church-yard. When? Probably at this time. William Jolliffe was chairman of this meeting and R. L. Pierce secretary. Joseph Hoige, Jolliffe, and Pierce were appointed to draw up plans to be submitted later to a "mechanic," and the cost was not to exceed \$1,000.

The oncoming of the Civil War called men away from the church, bringing added worries to those who already had carried the burdens making them doubly fearful of its bankruptcy.

Work actually began on the new church in 1867, and 1870 saw its completion. But services were held in the new church as early as 1869. William Gilbert had given the land for the church and cemetery, but little did he think that his own kin would be first buried there. Francis Henry Gilbert, infant son of John and Mary Jane Gilbert, a child four months old, was the first service in the new but possibly unfinished

church. The date of burial was Feb. 1869. (Shown on enclosed snap)

Formerly the Siloam church belonged to the Canadian branch of the Bible Christians, but on June 6, 1884, Siloam severed its connection with that body and joined the Methodist Episcopal church of the U.S.A.

Since 1904, Siloam has made several changes in its structure. Of interest to every antiquarian is the preservation of the original pine flooring by placing it in the basement.

For the 111 years which this church has existed, forty-three ministers or missionaries have ministered to its people. That these men have taught well the lesson of Christian living has been evidenced many times.