

## *Historical Sketches of Iowa Baptists*

Authors: Mitchell, S. H.,

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(Counties covered: Polk, Jasper, Marion, Boone, Tama, Madison, Story, and Warren)

### Chapter XX

The fourth to appear on the list of Associations was the Central Iowa, organized on 1852. A meeting of delegates from the Baptist Churches of Des Moines, **West Union (Vandalia)**, **Harmony (Monroe)**, and Coal Ridge was held with the **West Union Church (Vandalia)**, July 3, 1852, “for the purpose of organizing an Association.” “Rev. I. C. Curtis was called to the chair and Rev. J. A. Nash appointed clerk.” A constitution was adopted and the Central Iowa Baptist Association began its career. Churches 6, members 114.

The first meeting of the Association was held with the **Harmony (Monroe) Church**, October 15, 1852. Rev. J. Bond preached the introductory sermon, W. D. Everett, Moderator, J. A. Nash, clerk. The next year, 1853, there appeared the following Churches in the list: **Monroe (formerly Harmony)**, **E. Evans, pastor, 30 members**; Fort Des Moines, J. A. Nash, 24; Corey Grove, 10; Union, I. C. Curtis, 12; Coal ridge, W. D. Everett, 23; Pleasant Grove, 33; **West Union, E. Evans, 23; Newton, E. Evans, 12**; Hartford, B. B. Arnold, 16; total, 9 Churches; 5 pastors; 12 baptisms reported and 183 members. Of the 9 Churches, the first was organized in 1850, the following three in 1851, the next four in the order named in 1852 and the last in 1853. These Churches were located in Polk, Jasper, Marion and Warren counties, and comprised all the Baptist Churches then known in the west two thirds of the State. The anniversary in 1853 was with the West Union Church. Rev. J. A. Nash preached the sermon. B. B. Arnold, Moderator, J. A. Nash, clerk.

1854. Met at Hartford. Rev. J. A. Nash preached the sermon, E. Evans, Moderator. The following additional Churches are found on the list: Boone Forks, W. J. Sparks, pastor, 22 members; Knoxville, 52; North River, 18; South River, S. G. Hunt, 13; North Union, W. J. Sparks, 17. Knoxville came from the Oskaloosa Association and had been organized in 1851. There are now 14 Churches, 6 pastors; 98 baptisms are reported, 118 received by letter and experience, and a total membership of 384. It has been a year of remarkable revivals. Eleven of the 14 Churches reported baptisms. Rev. W. D. Everett, pastor at Coal Ridge, reports 17; Rev. B. B. Arnold, at Hartford, 27, and Rev. W. J. Sparks, at North Union, 29. The annual meeting in 1855 was at Fort Des Moines. Rev. J. A. Nash still Corresponding Secretary. Iowa Centre and Newbern Churches are added, and Ira H. Rees, A. W. Russell and H. Haley to the list of ministers. Sixteen Churches, 8 pastors, 47 baptisms and 489 members.

1856. The place of meeting is Knoxville. Otter Creek, Handsome View, Winterset, and Mount Pleasant Churches are added. H. Haley is pastor at Otter Creek and J. Ellege at Winterset. New names in the list of ministers are A. Dana, Coal Ridge; D. Taylor, Hartford; **J. Ellis Guild, Newton**; and H. C. Warson, Pleasant Grove and South River. There are now 20 Churches, 10 pastors, 40 baptisms reported, and 671 members.

**In 1857 the meeting was at Monroe.** Rev. B. B. Arnold preached the sermon, and J. Currier was Moderator. Rev. A. W. Russell removed from Monroe in June of 1857, and began work at Winterset, under appointment of the State Convention. The annual report says: “The Church was rent by divisions and difficulties, and was in other respects feeble and inefficient. In

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removing these difficulties; however, encouraging progress has been made, and the prospect for the future seems much more encouraging.

1858. The Association is now composed of 24 Churches, 5 of which were added the present year. These were Buffalo Grove, Bethel, Boonsboro, Green Bush, and Good Hope. There are 15 ordained ministers within the bounds of the Association; but as but few of them are devoting their whole time to the ministry there is much destitution. Considerable success has, however, attended the labors of the year, and this region, so lately the abode of the red man and the Buffalo, is rapidly being pre-empted for the Lord and for Christian civilization. The number baptized during the year is 120, and the Association now numbers 911 members. Rev. Ira. H. Rees is occupying Boone and Story counties, under commission of the Convention, at a salary of \$300.00, one-half of which is to be raised on the field. For a number of years Brother Rees continued a heroic and self-sacrificing struggle on this frontier, and then removed farther west, doubtless to repeat the struggle. A correspondent of the Standard, in 1886, visited this same dear brother in southern Kansas, and found him desirous of disposing of sundry lands he possessed, in order to devote himself again to the active work of the ministry.

**1859. The Association met at Vandalia** and received reports of several revivals of special interest, while other fields, not blessed with abundant showers, have been refreshed with heavenly dews. Rev Joshua Currier, formerly of the Dubuque Association, has been sustained by the Association and the Home Missionary Society to supply destitute Churches a part of this and the last year, the beginning of a number of years of faithful labor by Brother Currier in the Central Association. Rev. T. J. Arnold and Rev. T. C. Townsend also began work here in 1859. Rev. J. A. Todd, E. Whitaker, and L. L. Frisk are noted in the list. Churches 24, pastors 11, baptisms 111, added from other sources 188, total membership 921. E. O. Whitaker preached the annual sermon and is clerk of the body. Rev. J. Currier, Moderator.

1860. Met at Sandyville, Warren county. Rev. T. C. Townsend preached the sermon. J. Currier, Moderator, J. A. Todd, clerk. Five Churches have been dismissed to form the Upper Des Moines Association and it has been a year of spiritual dearth. There are now 18 churches, 7 pastors, 33 baptisms reported and 739 members. There is not yet a Church in the Association having 100 members. Des Moines is the nearest with 92. Rev. R. D. Hartshorn has become pastor at Knoxville and is clerk of the Association. Rev. J. Currier is Moderator.\* One small Church with 11 members, called Prairie Church, near Des Moines is the only addition to the list. Baptisms 44, members 755. Rev. Wm. Parker is preaching at Iowa Center, being ordained there this year.

1862. This year the Anniversary is at Knoxville. Rev. J. A. Nash preached the introductory sermon. Rev. J. Currier was elected Moderator and R. D. Hartshorn clerk. At this meeting the present writer was present as a visitor. It is hard to realize that at that time our Baptist cause in all this great Central District of Iowa was only ten years old, yet there are only two Churches in the Central Association that were organized prior to 1852. Des Moines and Knoxville each dates back to 1851. The meeting at Knoxville this year is remembered as a pleasant and harmonious occasion. The Church at Des Moines have had a revival of great power

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and have baptized 60, giving them a membership of 165. Baptisms in the Association 118, total membership 864.

1863. The Association met at Des Moines. Moderator and clerk the same as last year. The Churches of this Association, as elsewhere, are suffering depletion as a consequence of the Civil War, but “exhibit an almost united devotion to the Government in its struggle to subdue the Rebellion.” But little evidence of revival in the Churches this year, though the **Vandalia Church, Rev. J. Parker pastor, has baptized 37, showing a good work.** Total baptisms 45, membership 833. In 1864 the Association met at Vandalia. There were **only 4 pastors reported, Rev. Demas Robinson at Iowa Centre and Vandalia, Wm. Hildreth at Knoxville, J. Currier at Monroe,** and J. A. Nash at Des Moines. The Church at Avon reports 33 baptized, Carlisle 34, and Hartford 12, and these Churches are all now without pastors. Rev. J. Parker, an active worker, and pastor of several Churches, has died during the year. Whole number of baptisms 82, members 817 in 18 churches.

**1865. The Association meets at Monroe, September 6,** E. W. Hartman clerk. There are now 13 Churches, 9 pastors, 61 baptisms reported and 762 members. A Church has been organized at Indianola with 32 members and J. A. Pool pastor. T. J. Arnold is pastor at Knoxville where 25 are baptized; Brother Nash reports 10 at Des Moines and 13 are reported at Pleasant Hill, but no pastor. In 1866 Carlisle is the entertaining Church, T. J. Arnold preacher, J. A. Nash Moderator, E. W. Hartman clerk. **Two notable accessions to the ministry are mentioned, viz. Rev. J. Y. Aitchison at Newton** and Rev. L. W. Hayhurst at Des Moines. The Churches report the addition of 182 by baptism, and 161 by letter, and a clear gain of 200 members. The Churches most favored with revivals and additions are Des Moines, 62 baptisms and 100 additions from all sources, Indianola, 58 baptisms and 99 additions, Hartford 33 and 51 respectively, and **Newton 13 baptisms and 32 additions.** Des Moines and Indianola and **perhaps Newton have done, it is said, “and are doing a noble work in the erection of meeting houses.** Indianola, only two years old, is the second Church to number over 100, having already 130; Des Moines 260, and Knoxville has reached 100.

1867. The Association meets at Indianola. Hartman continued as clerk. Twelve Churches, 7 pastors, 85 baptisms, 148 added in all ways, and 1,060 members. Rev. T. J. Arnold has changed from Knoxville to Carlisle, where 25 have been baptized. **Monroe, Rev. J. Currier still pastor, has baptized 28.** Eight of the 12 Churches have meeting houses; that at Indianola being dedicated on the occasion of this Associational gathering. In 1868 the Association met at Hartford. A Church has been organized at Polk City; **also the Sherman Church, Jasper county.** Another year of revival; 134 persons have been baptized, and the present membership is 1,293. The Winterset Church transfers her connection from the Western Association to this body, reporting 50 baptisms and 200 members, Rev. O. T. Conger, pastor. Rev. T. R. Cressey, the senior preacher and father of the Cressey family of preachers, has settled at Indianola, succeeding Pastor J. A. Pool. Rev. J. D. Cassady, from the Upper Des Moines Association, is preaching at Iowa Center. Rev. A. Pratt is at Knoxville.

1869. The annual meeting is at Knoxville. Rev. T. R. Cressey is Moderator. E. W. Hartman, clerk. This is one of the high water marks of the Central Association, in its thirty-four

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years of history. There are 13 Churches, with 11 pastors reporting 232 baptisms and 1,487 members. Winterset, where O. T. Conger is still pastor, reports 140 baptisms and 397 members. Churches were organized this year at Altoona, Peoria City and Woodland. **Rev. J. G. Craven is preaching at Elm Grove, and T. M. Bailey at Newton.** The amount contributed for missions is another evidence of prosperity. The Treasurer's report of the Convention for 1869 credits this Association with \$505.05. The Association met in 1870 at Winterset. E. W. Hartman, still clerk. Rev. J. V. Schofield is pastor at Des Moines; Rev. D. N. Mason, at Indianola; Rev. J. Frey, Jr., at Knoxville, and **Rev. G. W. Hertzog, at Monroe.** Churches 17, pastors 11, baptisms 89, members 1,536; given to the Convention, \$394.43. Earlham, New Virginia, and North River Churches were organized this year.

1871. Meeting at Des Moines; Rev. J. Frey, Moderator; Rev. D. N. Mason, clerk. A year of spiritual fruit gathering Churches 11, pastors 13, baptisms 155, added in all ways, 249. Total membership 1,773. Rev. R. Garton has succeeded Rev. O. T. Conger at Winterset. **There are now six Churches having over 100 members each, viz:** Carlisle, Des Moines, Indianola, Knoxville, **Monroe** and Winterset. Rev. Amos Robinson becomes pastor at Newton late this year.

In 1872 the Association met at Otley; D. N. Mason, clerk. A year of somewhat limited results. There are 22 Churches, 13 pastors, 57 baptisms reported, and 1,599 members; a decrease from last year of 172. The Church at Otley, midway between Pella and Monroe, organized in 1871, is called Mount Moriah Church, and has 69 members. Elm Grove Church, seven miles south of Des Moines, also organized in 1871, Rev. Uriah McKay, pastor, has 40 members, 11 of whom were baptized during the year. The Enon Church, Rev. J. L. Wyly, pastor, is a new organization with but 9 members. **Rev. Amos Robinson, of Newton, is preaching to the Sherman Church.** Rev. A. Wells seems to have been pastor at New Virginia this year and last. Of the 22 Churches in this Association, 11 are less than five years old, and six of them without pastors. Rev. J. R. Murphy, D.D., recently from Salem, New Jersey, has become pastor at Des Moines, succeeding Rev. J. V. Schofield after a two years' pastorate.

1873. The meeting this year is at Norwalk. Rev. A. Robinson of Newton, is clerk. Brother Robinson, of Newton is clerk. Brother Robinson is still pastor, and patiently laboring on at Newton. Refreshing showers of Divine Grace are again evident this year. The 21 Churches with 13 pastors report 227 baptisms, and 1740 members. This is within five of the high tides in the history of the Association. The Churches sharing most largely are Des Moines, Rev. J. R. Murphy, pastor, 56; **Monroe, Rev. G. W. Hertzog, 31**; and Winterset, Rev. R. Garton, 83. A Church has been organized at East Des Moines, Rev. Granger W. Smith, pastor; 9 baptisms and 63 members. The contributions for the Convention this year are \$380.90. Keeping pace pretty well with the spiritual prosperity. Rev. T. R. Stitt is preaching at Hartford. Rev. Wm. Tilly has become pastor at Indianola; S. Funk at Norwalk and Sand Hill; Rev. Thomas Miller at Woodland. Knoxville is without a pastor, Brother Frey having returned to the English River Association, after a three years' service there.

**1874. Monroe entertains the Association this year.** Amos Robinson is still clerk. The names of several new Churches not represented are dropped out of the table this year. Some of

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them will certainly reappear. Churches 17, pastors 12, baptisms 63, members 1487. Rev. John Bodenham appears as pastor at Carlisle, A. Robbins at Knoxville, D. Simons at Hartford and Vandalia, H. S. Fish at Otley, H. C. Warson at Spring Hill, Samuel W. Lee at New Virginia, and J. Messenger at Clanton Church. This church was 10 miles south of Winterset was dismissed from the Western Iowa Association in 1858, and first appears in these minutes in 1870 but seems to have very little prosperity. Reports 26 members.

In 1875 the meeting was Vandalia. The same clerk continued. Churches 21, pastors 12, baptisms 30, total membership 1463. Rev. A. J. Delano has succeeded pastor Garton at Winterset, after an interval of one year. Brother Garton, after a pastorate of three years here, removes to Waterloo, Iowa, to begin one of the notably long and successful terms of pastoral work in Iowa. **Rev. J. A. Abbott appears as pastor at Monroe.** Brother Messenger at Clayton reports 8 baptized and an increase of membership to 33. The Patterson Church, S. W. Lee pastor, is enrolled with 61 members and 6 baptisms.

1876. Patterson is the place of convocation, H. S. Townsend of Norwalk clerk. Churches 21, pastors 10, baptized 54, total membership 1614. Brother Wm. Tilly is pastor at Carlisle and reports 23 baptized. Rev. Granger W. Smith has closed his pastorate at East Des Moines and Rev. Wm. Hildreth is preaching there. Brother Smith is the youngest son of the excellent Iowa pioneer, Dr. Dexter P. Smith, and after his pastorate of three years at East Des Moines returns to the east to the regret of his Iowa brethren. Rev. John Fulton has become pastor at Winterset after an absence from Iowa of 8 or 9 years. Indianola and Knoxville, with 6 others of the smaller Churches are without pastors.

**The Association in 1877 met at Newton.** Clerk, Rev. Charles Payne, Knoxville. Churches 23, pastors 14, baptisms 94, members 1588. Of baptisms Dr. Murphy of 1<sup>st</sup> Des Moines reports 29, Brother Fulton of Winterset 23, Indianola, E. E. Bayliss pastor, 10. Rev. W. A. Cain is pastor at East Des Moines; S. West is preaching at Otley, H. W. Wilson at Polk City, Rev. Charles Payne has become pastor at Knoxville.

In 1878 the Annual meeting was a Spring Hill, E. F. Sperry of Knoxville clerk. There is evidence of a good degree of activity in that the contributions to State Missions this year have been \$396.60. Rev. W. C. Pratt becomes pastor at Monroe.

[1879] Indianola again entertains the Anniversary. Brother Sperry is still clerk. Churches 24, pastors 7, baptisms 48, total membership 1648. Both the Des Moines Churches are without pastors. Dr. Murphy retires from the active work of the ministry for a time for the restoration of health, and goes onto a farm near Winterset. Few pastors have entrenched themselves in the confidence and high esteem of Iowa Baptists in the same length of time as has Dr. Murphy, both as a faithful and successful pastor and as an efficient and laborious worker in every denominational interest. There are but two pastors in the Association that date their settlement with their present church earlier than the present year. These are Rev. John Fulton of Winterset, 1876, and W. C. Pratt, Monroe, 1878. The others this year are D. C. Ellis, Carlisle and Norwalk; J. F. Childs, Elm Grove; N. H. Dailey, Knoxville; D. Heagle, Indianola; T. R. Stitt, Spring Hill; and L. W. Atkins, Polk City.

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1880. Meet at Winterset. Churches 22, pastors 12, baptized 161, present membership 1698. Rev. L. M. Woodruff is pastor at 1<sup>st</sup> Des Moines, L. H. Thompson at Carlisle, E. T. Cressey of the Douglass Church, F. M. Archer at Fairmount and Otley. Others as last year. **Rev. G. W. Hertzog resides near Monroe, and has served many years as pastor of the Church with intervals in which others have served them. He is again at the helm, Brother Pratt having resigned.** The number of baptisms indicates a good interest in many of the fields. Knoxville reported the largest number, 64. **Newton 24, but is now without a pastor. Rev. Amos Robinson resigned a year or two ago after serving this Church faithfully for 6 or 7 years. Rev. Gilman Parker was pastor for an interval and presumably baptized the converts reported this year.**

The Anniversary in 1881 was at Knoxville. Churches 23, pastors 14, baptized 48, total membership 1595. Rev. T. J. Keith has become pastor at East Des Moines after an interval of a year or so during which Rev. D. D. Proper, had served the Church a part of one year. Rev. W. A. Welsher, D. D., is pastor at Winterset, Rev. John Fulton having resigned a three years' pastorate there to take charge of the 2d Church at Cedar Rapids. **Rev. N. H. Daily has removed from Knoxville to Newton and is pastor there and at Rushville and Sherman Churches.**

1882. The Association meets with the East Des Moines Church. Churches 25, pastors 10, baptized 19, present membership 1412. A year of great barrenness of spiritual results. Of most of the larger Church there is a large decline in membership compared with 10 years ago. Des Moines 1<sup>st</sup> is without a pastor. High Street Church, recently organized, has 46 members, S. A. Beaman pastor. Rev. W. A. Cain is pastor at Indianola, C. J. Pendleton at Knoxville and Rev. J. H. Miller is preaching at Geer Creek, Hartford and Patterson. **No pastor's settlement earlier than last year except G. W. Hertzog whose present settlement at Monroe dates from 1880.**

In 1883 the Annual meeting was at Knoxville. Churches 24, pastors 13, baptized 109, total membership 1477. Rev. C. M. Brink has become pastor of the 1<sup>st</sup> Church Des Moines, Rev. F. D. Rickerson, D. D. of the High Street Church; Rev. Wm. Tilly at Knoxville, and Rev. Amos Weaver at Winterset. Most of the baptisms are in the three Des Moines Churches, 1<sup>st</sup> 17; East Des Moines 25, High Street 11. In Patterson, J. H. Miller pastor, 24, and in Winterset 16. Rev. W. A. Cain is doing a good work at Summerset. Indianola is pastorless.

**1884. Meet at Vandalia.** Churches 28, pastors 12, baptized 292, total membership 1802. Additions from all sources 490. East Des Moines reports 60 baptized and Indianola 129, **Monroe 34** and Ohio Church in Madison county, J. H. Miller pastor; 23. These are the principal larger numbers. The numbers of baptisms and additions exceed those of 1869 but considering all the Churches that remains the most prosperous year. **Several new Churches have been organized. Among them Kilduff, Rev. Z. A. Bryant pastor with 11 members, Milo, T. R. Stitt pastor with 20 members, and Ohio and Olivet, J. H. Miller pastor with 46 and 26 respectively.**

Indianola entertains again in 1885. Churches 28, pastors 12, baptisms 95, members 1834. Rev. T. S. Bovell has become pastor at Indianola, L. F. Compton at Newton, and Harry Woodson at Carlisle and Hartford.

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1886. The central Association held its thirty-fifth annual meeting at Carlisle. Brother E. F. Sperry has been clerk since 1878. The number of Churches is now 25, pastors 13, baptisms reported 79, total membership 1785. Rev. F. D. Rickerson, D. D. closed his work at High street Des Moines in the fall of 1885, and became pastor at Sioux City. He is succeeded at High street by E. F. Strickland, D. D. Rev. L. F. Compton is pastor at Newton and at Killduff, and Rev. G. C. Peck at Winterset. Other new names in the pastors' list are W. H. Sayre at Deer Creek, R. R. Albin at Knoxville, and **C. A. Price at Sherman. The post office address of the last named is at Colfax.**

The great revival at Indianola in 1884, wherein 129 were baptized was under the powerful ministrations of the spirit through Rev. W. A. Welsher, D. D. who remained with the Church through several months and was succeeded by the present pastor, Rev. T. S. Bovell. The Moderators of the Central Association have been: 1852, W. D. Everett; 1853-4, B. B. Arnold; 1856, D. Taylor; 1857 to 1865 inclusive, Joshua Currier; 1866-7, J. A. Nash; 1868-9, T. R. Cressey; 1870-72, J. Frey; 1873, J. R. Murphy; 1874, G. W. Herzog; 1875, F. Mott; 1876, J. A. Abbott; and for the successive years since, J. Fulton, Amos Robinson; W. A. Cain; D. D. Proper; W. A. Welsher, D. D.; J. A. Nash, D. D.; J. H. Miller, C. M. Brink; W. A. Cain and T. S. Bovell. The clerks from the organization in their order have been; J. A. Nash, three years; S. G. Hunt, three years; E. O. Whitaker, one year; J. A. Todd, one year; R. D. Hartshorn, three years; D. Robinson, one year; E. W. Hartman, six years; D. N. Mason, two years; Amos Robinson, three years; H. S. Townsend, one year; C. Payne, one year, and E. F. Sperry nine years. The first treasurer of this Association was Dea. B. Luce, two years; then Charles McKay one year and J. L. Smith, Esq. of Des Moines nine years, from 1856 to 1876 inclusive, except 1864, when J. M. Reicheneker was treasurer. J. Rickman served in 1856; Wm. Long six years to 1872; H. C. Deakin three years to 1875; W. F. Townsend in 1876; A. J. Duncan in 1877; U. McKay three years to 1889, and A. J. Duncan the six years since.