

Chapter 20

History of Bangor Township

Bangor Township, which is Township 85 North, Range 19 West, was surveyed by Guy Wells, May 31 to June 7, 1847. He noted "improvements" which consisted of prairie sod plowed and log cabins built, on the east side of the Iowa River, but when Bangor Township was organized, the river was made the eastern border of the township, and the improvements became part of Liscomb Township. It is believed that at this time there were no residents of Bangor Township. The bison and the elk were gone, but a few deer were left, and there was an abundance of prairie chickens, fish and other game. The early settlers could almost live off the land until they got their crops started.

The first settlers in what is now Bangor Township came in 1848. On June 23 of that year, Elkanah Bush entered a military land warrant for 160 acres in what is now the south eastern corner of Bangor Township. On July 11 of the same year, Jesse Amos entered 160 acres where the Royal Ranch now is. Not much happened for another year, then in the fall of 1851, the first Quakers came along. Abel Bond, Wm. Hobson, Nathan Bales, Elam Jessup and Fred Cavinis were in the group. They scouted the country, then returned to southern Iowa for the winter. The next spring, most of them came back to Bangor, many of them to stay. With astonishing rapidity the land was all taken. When the remaining government land was turned over to the State of Iowa in 1855, only a few marshy tracts that no one wanted remained.

Bangor village was platted by Abijah Hodjin in 1854, but it was never incorporated. It became the center of the community and a number of businesses were established. There was some kind of a general merchandise store from the beginning up to and including the 1930's. There was a wagon shop, a shoe and harness shop, and a blacksmith shop. At one time there was a drug store. A post office was established and continued up until 1920. At one time there was also a post office at Stanford. A sawmill was hauled by team from Keokuk and was operated for many years near the Honey Creek bridge southeast of Bangor. In the early days someone burned brick on what is now part of the Royal Ranch. There were several attempts at mining coal on the southern end of Mormon Ridge, but the vein of coal was very thin and did not prove profitable. With the coming of the railroads, the products of these local industries could be obtained more economically, and local efforts were discontinued.

Schools were started very early in the history of Bangor Township. There were earlier schools, but by

1870 the school districts were organized and numbered in the following order: Hazel Green, Hockett, Bangor, Bentley and Fairview. Stanford Academy was in operation for some years prior to 1900. These schools were faithfully supported for many years and served as centers of learning and social activity. In 1914 the demand for school improvement was felt, and an election was held to decide if the township wished to consolidate the schools. It carried and a township school board was elected. It was decided to build a new central school house for the township, and bonds for the building were advertised. But before they could be sold, a petition was circulated to dissolve the new school district. Enough signatures were obtained to call another election and it carried by just a few votes. The new district was dissolved and jurisdiction returned to the original five country schools. There the children attended for many years, but by the late 1960's all Bangor territory had been divided among the neighboring schools, and there are now no schools in Bangor Township.

There was an active community spirit in Bangor from the early days. A literary society was supported for many years beginning in the eighties. About the same time and later, a baseball team composed mostly of Whinerys, Hollingsworths, Kirks and Wilsons was famous far and wide. Over the years there were many good ball teams. The Bangor Band with Ben Beeson as directors and Robert Whinery as manager was in great demand for many years. They played at both the Hardin and Marshall County fairs, and were booked a year in advance for Fourth of July celebrations. On special occasions they made many trips to places as far away as Clear Lake, Ames and Des Moines. A telephone company was organized in 1900, which successfully served the surrounding community for fifty years.

Today Bangor is much different than it was in the past. Farms are larger and the population is considerably less. Old timers miss the neighborly events such as threshing rings and local school events. Community centers have changed and take in much more territory than in grandfather's day. But transportation is much easier, and the large schools have the potential for a much better education than was possible in the smaller schools. Times have changed and we must meet the changes. If we meet our problems with the fortitude of the pioneers, and with a spirit of cooperation and neighborliness, the future for such rural communities as Bangor is still bright.

BANGOR POST MASTERS

Paul C. Carter - March 3, 1881
 Samuel Whinery - February 26, 1892
 Robert E. Whinery - July 10, 1905
 Charles Whinery - October 18, 1906
 Grellet Dillon (acting) - April 1, 1923
 Raymond Brush - June 14, 1926

LIBERTY MONTHLY MEETING OF FRIENDS

On October 10, 1901, seven Christian families, wishing to serve their Lord more effectively, met in a small frame building known as Liberty School No.1 to establish a monthly meeting, to be known as Liberty Monthly Meeting of Friends. Thirty-five names appear on the records as charter members. Abner B. White was the first pastor.

In 1907, plans were made to construct a meeting house. Mark Brindle and his wife, Sarah Clemons Brindle originally from Clemons, donated ½ acre of land cornering with the school ground on the southeast. This is Section 11 in Liberty Township. The new building was completed and dedicated on December 29, 1907. It was known as "The Friends Church at Liberty". The cost of the building was \$2,109.30.

The church was remodeled and redecorated on January 2, 1927.

On Sunday morning December 14, 1941, the church was destroyed by fire. The damage was estimated at \$3,000.00. The congregation held services in the Liberty gymnasium of the Liberty Consolidated School for

the next three months. In March 1942, the Bevins' Grove Christian Church building was purchased and remodeled for use. The building was dedicated as "The Community Friends Church of Liberty Monthly Meeting" on May 31, 1942. This was located in Liberty Township in Section 27.

The parsonage of "The Friends Church of Liberty", located in Section 11, was moved to the Bevins site in 1957 when needed for the pastor, Lester Figgins and his family.

In the 1950's and early 1960's, the Liberty choir presented two Sunday evening musical services outdoors each summer. They were known as the "Concert Under the Stars". Orville Norman was the choir director.

During the 75 years that "Liberty Monthly Meeting" was active, 382 names were entered on the membership book.

Two organizations in the history of the Liberty Friends are the Women's Missionary Society and the Quaker Men.

"The Community Church of Liberty Monthly Meeting" building was closed again in 1976. It was purchased by Mrs. Carolyn Leonard and torn down in 1980.

The congregation of Liberty united with the Bangor Monthly Meeting congregation in 1976. They are the "Bangor-Liberty Friends Meeting" and located in Bangor Township in Section 20.

Submitted by
 Mrs. Mark Norman

BANGOR LIBERTY FRIENDS

Bangor was one of the older church organizations in Marshall County, and is perhaps exceeded in age only by Bethel Grove. In the fall of 1850, a group of Friends from southern Iowa came to Marshall County looking for a place to settle. They liked the country that later became Bangor, and came back the next summer to build their homes. A traveling minister was with the group and he left a record. He mentions "David Davis, John Hockett, Elam Jessup, some of the Harris families and others". Abel Bond states that he and William Hobson "made a couple of benches and what Friends were there commenced holding meetings in a house that William Reece had rented". After meeting in the homes for a time, a site was selected for a meeting house east of the present cemetery, and a log house was erected. Here Western Plain preparative Meeting of Friends was set up by members of Pleasant Plain Monthly Meeting in 1853, and this was the regular meeting place for about two years after. Abijah Hodgins platted the village of Bangor in 1854, and on April 5, the following year, he deeded the site of the present Bangor Liberty church to the first trustees of the monthly meeting, who were William Hobson, John Hockett and Elam Jessup.

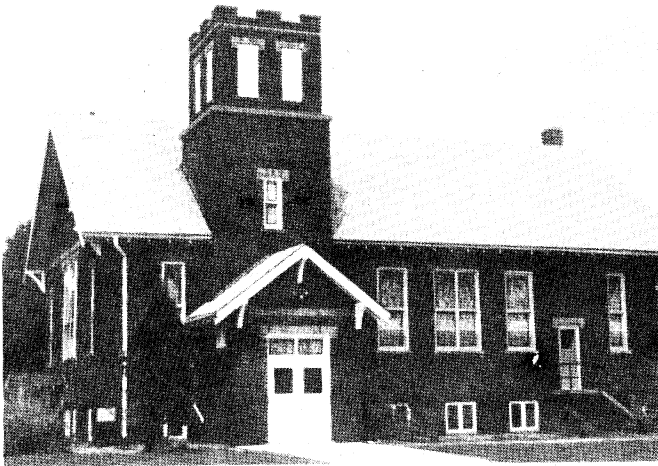


The Liberty Church Building
 1907-1941

Another log meeting house was built here, and the same year, 1855, Western Plain became a fullfledged monthly meeting. It was called "Western Plain at Bangor" for a few years, but about 1860 the "Western Plain" was dropped and the name was just "Bangor" for many years. The first Bangor Quarterly Meeting was held in June of 1858. A new form building was erected for the occasion, but it was damaged by the wind, and a rude shed was constructed to care for the crowd for the day. The seating capacity was about 300, and since it was a nice day, it was filled. In the early 1860's the frame building was built which served as a meeting place through the years until the present brick building was built.

Because of their opposition to slavery, it was very natural that the early Bangor Friends became interested and active in that organization which aided run-away slaves in their escape to Canada -- the underground railroad. In Iowa the usual route was from Iowa City up the Cedar River, but it is known that an alternative route was organized to go up the Iowa River and through Bangor in case the other route was cut off. Purposely, no record was kept, and it is not known how many, if any, came through Bangor, but the names James Owen, Nathaniel Lounsberry and Charles Kindley have by tradition, been connected with the venture.

With the start of the Civil War, traffic on the underground railway ceased abruptly, but the Bangor Friends were still active. James Owen, Isom Wooten and Josiah Dillon did Mission work among the negro refugees and freed men in the South. Josiah Dillon, Mar-



Bangor Church

garet Carter and Addison Kinzer taught school in Missouri and Kansas for at least one winter after the war. Several negro families came to Bangor at that time, but only one family stayed. They were the Warren family. They are buried in the Bangor Cemetery, and their tombstones record the ripe old ages of 109 and 116 years.

Bangor was the first Friends meeting in the locality, and as people moved into the country, their memberships were sent to Bangor. Later, new meetings were "set up", and names were forwarded from Bangor to the

new meetings. In the late 1850's, Bangor was said to have the largest membership of any Friends meeting in the world. Bangor Quarterly Meeting was visited by Elija Coffin in 1860, and he reported that about five hundred people were present. Bangor Quarterly Meeting was an important event for many years, even up into the early 1900's. But another element, quite undesirable crept in. While the devout Quaker fathers were holding their religious and business meetings at the church, events up on the town square took on a carnival atmosphere. There was always a ball game in the afternoon, and impromptu horse races and foot races. At times, to the dismay of the religious leaders, the presence of the county sheriff was required to keep peace and order.

Bangor received considerable stimulation in 1975 in the merger with Liberty Monthly Meeting. It was entered into first on a trial basis, then became permanent the following year. Old committees were disbanded and new committees were formed from the combined membership, and we became a new meeting -- Bangor Liberty. The future prospects for the merger appear bright.

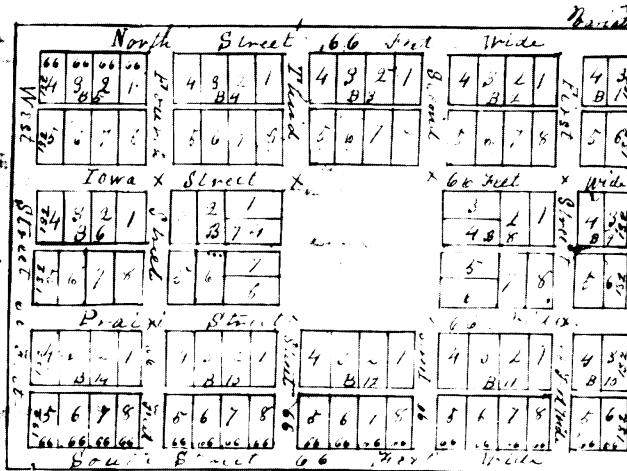
A tradition carried over from the Liberty Meeting is the Concert Under the Stars, and outdoor program of sacred songs given some Sunday evening during the month of July. Liberty had been doing this for some years, and the idea took well with Bangor Liberty. There is a natural amphitheater on the church grounds, a machinery transport is rented for a stage, and Bangor Liberty musicians have the help of singers from the surrounding communities. For the last few years, attendance has been checked near the five hundred mark. Attendance at the Christmas eve program usually approaches two hundred. Our meeting house is available for events of community service.

Bangor Liberty has two women's missionary groups and several prayer groups that meet in the homes. Christian education of the youth is cared for by an active Sunday School, and there is a Daily Vacation Bible School every June. We support the Quaker youth camp at Quaker Heights, near Eldora, with our youth, financially and with leadership. We support both the Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends and the Friends United Meeting financially and also supply leadership. Last year we sent a representative to Washington, D.C. to represent our opinions at the Friends Committee of National Legislation.

Bangor Liberty ministers to near ninety local families. The average age of the adult membership is near forty. The average attendance for the Sunday morning services has been 104 before the winter cancellations. In the last year, more than fifteen babies have been dedicated in our services. There is a need for spiritual leadership in the territory around us, and we pray that we may be prepared to meet that need.

"We do not wish to explain away our mistakes or failures, or magnify our successes. We only wish to be a part of, and in harmony with what Christians call "the body of Christ".

X Bangor Town Plat Marshall County Iowa Variation 11° 15' 30" 300



from which to make future surveys

Alleys 18.2 feet on 20.100th of one chain

The size of lots on the plat as the figures denote on the plat in feet. Variation 61° 15' 30"

I here certify that the above is correct plat of village lots surveyed & platted for John Hodgins situated on the North half of South West quarter on the south half of the North West quarter of section 8, township 8, range 12, West in Marshall County Iowa.

James Thompson Sec.

State of Iowa }
County of Marshall }
I, the undersigned, Clerk of said County, do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of the original plat of village lots surveyed & platted for John Hodgins situated on the North half of South West quarter on the south half of the North West quarter of section 8, township 8, range 12, West in Marshall County Iowa, as the same appears from the records of said County.

Wm. C. Smith County Clerk

