

The First Congregational Church, Garnavillo, Iowa

Building of the brick building for the Congregational Church of Garnavillo began in 1866 and was completed in 1867 on Lot 3, block 7 Garnavillo, land sold to the Congregational Church by James & Caroline Crosby. The church, 32 x 50 feet, with 18 foot walls, was built to seat about 200 people and was the second church erected for this Congregation. The cost to build was \$3,597.27. The brick was contracted from Dehn Brick Factory with instructions *"to hand mould the outside brick and have them as good as the brick on Crosby's Office."* The brick structure was built with a wood bell platform over the front gable with the intention to later build a spire. James O Crosby was on the building committee for the church. Later the congregation purchased additional yard space - E ½ lot 4, block 7.

The congregation originally organized in 1844 held its early "meetings" in the Garnavillo court house. They completed their first church building in 1847, a frame structure which was 32 x 26 feet and cost \$400. It was located in the west part of Garnavillo, diagonally northeast across the street from the "Old Cemetery", on the corner of lot 5, block 14. In Dec 1854, the Clayton County Herald reported: "The ceiling had been white-washed, the walls papered, and the seats nicely painted."

In 1857, the First Congregational Church, on lot 5, block 14 was sold to the German-Protestant School Association. In 1860 the German-Protestant School Association sold the church back to the First Congregational Church. Then in 1866, this first church was sold to John Siebertz for \$167.

In 1881 services ceased in the brick church as the early English and Irish settlers moved on and were replaced by German Catholics and Lutherans. At this time there was still a flourishing Union Sunday School of 100 members under superintendent James O. Crosby.

In 1888 the congregation disbanded with a membership of 10 – 1 man and 9 women. James O. Crosby bought the church building from the national church organization for \$300 and it then served the Garnavillo community as a gathering place for some years.

From 1892 – 1897, the building served the St. Peter Lutheran Congregation as a temporary service site until the St. Peter Congregation completed the building of their first church.

In 1921, when James Crosby died, Miss Lucia Roggman was named as trustee of the deed to the building with instructions that the building be used for a library and community purposes.

In 1936 there is evidence in the Clayton County Centennial Newspaper that the building was being used as a public library. Other records state that the Tuesday Study Club initiated a public library in the building in 1940.

In 1945, the bell from the Congregational Church was sold to St. Peter Lutheran Church after losing their church to fire.

In the 1950's when the Garnavillo Community School became cramped for space, "The Library" was converted to an assembly room, study hall, library and typing classrooms. In 1959, the Public Library was moved to the Crosby Law Office building on Main Street. In 1962, when the Garnavillo Middle and High School was completed, the brick building was abandoned.

In 1965, the building was given by Miss Lucia Roggman to the Garnavillo Historical Society (organized in 1965 for the purpose of saving the building to create a museum). The Garnavillo Historical Museum opened in this former Congregation Church at 203 N Washington Street Garnavillo in 1966. And currently remains a community museum.