

From "The Daily Banner"  
Greencastle, Ind. Sept. 4, 1939

### Fincastle History Is Presented

Charles McGaughey Read Narrative At Old Church Home-coming.

Church has had an important place in the life of the Putnam County community.

At the recent home-coming of former members of the Fincastle Churches, a fine historical narrative was presented by Charles McGaughey of Greencastle, a decendant himself of Fincastle family, the material for the paper having been assembled by Miss Bee Cunningham, of Fincastle. The narrative in full was as follows:

#### Looking Back

"God gave his children memories," wrote Studdert Kennedy, "that in Life's Garden there might be June roses in December." Most of us have priceless memories of some of our grayheaded church pioneers: but only one of us now living, Mr. Harmon Brothers, can carry back to the early days when the first church was founded in Fincastle. An old Church Record begins: "Names of the members of the Church of Christ at Fincastle, Putnam County, Indiana, organized on Saturday before the second Lord's Day in July A. D. 1854" a list of forty nine names follows that probably includes the charter members since no comment follows their names as whether they came in by letter or immersion. By the close of 1856 the list carried more than one hundred names and the question of church house seems to have come up for the following notice appeared in three issues of the Putnam Republican Banner:

"Notice is hereby given that there will be a meeting of the members of the Church of Christ at the Meeting House in Fincastle, Putnam County, Indiana on Saturday April eleventh, Eighteen hundred fifty seven at two o'clock P.M. for the purpose of electing trustees for said church. Dated March 25th. Signed: W. W. Mills, Elder."

What was this meeting house mentioned in the notice? No one seems to know, but it is supposed that the church met in homes of its members as did most of our early churches. In Truth: "The Gloves were God's first Temples" here and many of us have been told of the early Locust grave gatherings which Uncle Harmon vividly recalls as once interrupted by the excitement of the shooting of an eagle. The election of trustees was held as advertized and Robert M. Brothers clerk declared W. Mills, Jordon Grider, and Shelton Allen Elected Trustees of the Church of Christ at Fincastle.

On April 20, Wm. H. Shields, Recorder of Putnam County, recorded this election in Miscellaneous record No. 1 on page 34, fee 30 cents.

The church was now organized ready to transact business, and on July 4, 1857, Jacob Hartman transferred to the trustees for the nominal sum of ten dollars a certain bit of real estate carefully stated as to meets and bounds, in section township and range and duly acknowledge before John Eaton, Justice of the Peace. The deed of conveyance was duly recorded Dec. 8, 1857 at 12 o'clock M. and a fee of \$1.00 paid. One clause in this

deed entitled to more than a passing notice: For the purpose of a House of Christian Worship thereon to belong to and under the management of said trustees, but said House to be open to any person to preach in when not occupied by its owners in worship. "There is no narrowness of vision here. A monument in Hartman Cemetery bears this inscription "Jacob Hartman died June 5, 1863, age 64 years, three months, 27 days, " But a far more lasting memorial is the grant of this land.

The plot of land was large including the lot on which the telephone exchange is built as well as the land still owned by the church but room was needed in 1857, not only for the building grounds but also for a hitching lot. There were "wagon days" and "hack days". True there were buggies and cutters, but these were used more for quick business trips by the head of the house, for pleasure jaunts by the young people and their sweethearts, or drives when the whole family was not expected to go along. Look back to your father's or grandfather's day and picture the entire family coming to church in a buggy! In most cases it would have been once more the story of the old woman who lived in the shoe, six, eight, ten, or even twelve children in a family was not uncommon then. The roomier hack which some of you will remember with the canopy top and two seats, often sufficed if some of the older boys and girls rode horseback and so eased the load. The church building was probably built in 1858 as the deed was recorded in Dec. 1857.

Who planned the structure and what hands helped we have no way of knowing but it was probably partly at least a labor of love. It stood surrounded by locust and a fence over which stiles were built on the front and on the south side. To these stiles drove Alexander Smith with chain harness clanking; Lot Hinkle walked by aid of two canes all the way from his home where Earl Shannon now lives, and George D. Hartman perched on the edge of the driver's seat and pushing on the lines, as one expressed it came with his wife, Jane Hinkle Hartman; many walked carrying their Sunday boots or shoes until they were in sight of Fincastle, thus saving shoe leather; others drove, others came on horseback; they came in many ways but they came to this first church not occasionally but regularly each meeting day. Ramp Creek just west of the old bridge site served as the baptismal pool, and it served at all times in the year. Probably there are some here today who were bapltised when a hole had to be cut in the ice so that they could be immersed in the cold water. We are told, however, of the bapltism of a sick man where every care was taken. A large watering trough hewn and hollowed from a tree trunk was brought into the house and partly filled with cold water but warmed with hot water from the iron kettle. In this the sick man was immersed without any ill effects. These are examples of primitive conditions but also examples of loyalty and fervor of the church.

While the Church of Christ was getting firmly established another religious group was growing up at Blakesburg - or Blakes-borough - as the Putnam County History of 1887 names it. Here lived John Fosher, whose parents we are told were the first settlers on Ramp Creek and gave it its name, because of the many wild onions or ramps that grew along its banks. Here the father built a frame church which many of us remember as it stood in the midst of Blakesburg cemetery - a church free to all though Mr. Fosher was a Universalist.

Blakesburg grew up to be a thriving village with flour mill, saw mill,

tannery, general store, saw factory and this church where a group of Universalists and their friends worshiped during the sixties. In 1871 under the leadership of Rev. William Wallace Curry, the group removed to Fincastle and built a church house that was the pride of the community. "Elegant" is the term the 1879 historian uses in describing it. And beautiful it was and still is as it stands among the sheltering trees. Dr. Logan Stanley and Charles B. Bridges are names that carry us back to the erection of the church. The land was bought from Jacob Cord and who of us have not heard stories of Uncle Jake and Aunt Betsy Cord, those entertaining characters of pioneer days. Only the best was good enough for this house of the Lord and zealous hands worked with the building. Reese Trail carried the bricks for its construction and counted them one by one so that in later days he could say: "There are so many bricks in the Universalist Church." Again we wish that we could remember the number as he gave it over and over again.

Many gifts came to help with the furnishings. The clock here on the wall was the gift of A. R. Brattain of Greencastle who was known throughout the state for the excellence of his wares. The clock is proof of their enduring quality. Charles B. Bridge gave the organ that formerly stood in the alcove here where the old time things are on display. The organ was of unusual construction simulating a pipe organ with its gilded pipes, and was long used here in the church. Most highly prized of all gifts is the pulpit on which the old Bible rests. It was the work of the hands of W. W. Curry who was a cabinet maker as well as a preacher. It was a personal gift to the church he organized and as long as the pulpit stands it will symbolize his loving interest and shepherding care.

The Christian Church was led for a time by member preachers such men as Joel Ridge, Ezekiel Wright and Joe Davis but Oliver P. Badger soon came to it as a man in his prime and led it and molded it as did none other all the days of his life. The fathers of our two churches were W. W. Curry and Oliver P. Badger, both men of ability of each of whom it has been truly said: "There was none better in the brotherhood." Both like Paul, loved their flocks and came back again and again when Fincastle needed their helpful messages. Both claimed Kentucky as his native state, but both worked long in Indiana. Both were men of affairs as well as able preachers and served their countrys in different fields of endeavor.

Here the likeness ends, Brother Badger was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1851, and was defeated the next year for the state Senate, but Brother Curry figured long in the political world as a member of the staff of Governor Oliver P. Morton, as Secretary of State of Indiana, and as an important worker in the United States Pension Bureau for many years.

Brother Badger was the kindly, fatherly, much loved leader who was at home with any of his people - one who would humorously answer an anxious housewife's question as to what he wished to drink with: "just a glass of milk, but spill a little cream in it laughter, spill a little cream in it." Brother Curry felt the dignity and responsibility of his calling as a minister of the gospel and lacked the human touch of a later dearly beloved pastor, Rev. T. S. Guthrie. Mrs. Betty Cooper relates that her brother Charlie once drove Bro. Curry to Greencastle and driving to Greencastle then with horse and buggy was not the few minutes drive that it is today. Brother Curry sat stiffly silent, uttering not a single word until they passed a drove of hogs near the end of the journey, when he remarked: " A

nice drove of hogs," Charlie agreed and that finished the conversation for the entire trip. Freed from his ministerial dignity, however, he was a man of fire and humor in his political speeches. W. W. Curry and Oliver P. Sadger are household names in Fincastle, names that are tied up with memories of church memberships, marriages, and deaths. We are proud of our heritage as well we may be for few churches can equal, much less surpass what we have had here.

The list of charter members of the Universalist church begins with the names of Charles and Rachel Bridges, John and Elizabeth Grider and Christian and Emily Fosher head the list of the Christian Church, and the family names are repeated again and again in the later records:

Bridges Fosher, Shannon, Stanley, William, Brothers, Crodian, James, Pope, Stultz, Trail Todd, Walker and many others in the V. V. list. From the Christian Church - Grider, Fosher, McGaughey, Hinkle Guilliams, Goslin, Turner, Brothers Hartman, Thompson, Shuee and on and on through long lists for the early churches held no small memberships. Preaching services were held on different Sundays of the month so that the two groups could and did attend many meetings in both churches. Entrance to each church was made through one of two doors - the men entering in one door and seating themselves on the men's side and the women and small children taking the other entrance seating themselves on the other side of the partition. Many were the giggles from the young people when someone mistakenly entered the wrong door. The churches were well filled at all times, but during protracted meetings or the August meetings, the crowds overflowed the pews and the small children sat in a row on the edge of the platform about the pulpit. We who are sitting on these same hard benches today are apt to feel that the children had the best of it. The church fathers must have thought so too, for in the old church are 12 arm chairs so comfortable that they are the joy of the women who meet there to sew, and these were bought by the older men of the church. The chairs were not so numerous in the brick church, but who does not know the roomy chair first occupied by Uncle Bridges and later used by Uncle Robert as he superintended the Sunday School through long years of service.

Hard or not the seats were filled both for church and Sunday school. An old record lists the Sunday school classes as the 1st, 2nd, 3rd male classes and the 1st, 2nd, 3rd female classes with only the infant class showing a mixture of male and female names. We may be inclined to smile at this until we note the attendance of 80 or 100 or seven more at times. The classes needed elbow room but they learned their Bible lessons and sang lustily the old songs. We would give much to have today a sound record of the tuning fork and Uncle Zack Grider's tenor voice as it led in song in the old church, or be able to hear Judson Lindley and the organ in the brick church. That Fincastle sang well is not boast of local pride. The golden notes of Carrie Turner Grider's voice could have made her a career woman, if she had not been so faithful wife and mother: and the Stanley's Bridges, Griders, Turners and Goslins as well as other families in the churches have handed down their love of music to our present leaders in song.

IN this brief survey of the early history of these two churches we cannot take the time to tell of the Singing Schools of the early days, the strawberry festivals in June each year, of the rousing protracted meetings

at various times, of the anniversary meetings on the third Sunday in August, and many more community activities enjoyed in those earlier days.

Four names we must mention - four preachers who went out from these churches, Jasper Shuey and Jesse Fosher have finished their ministry years ago and gone to their eternal reward. O. W. McGaughey a much younger man is living and preaching the gospel at Veedersburgh. He began his ministry at the famous Sixth Christian church at Indianapolis, help pastorates at Central Christian Church at Columbus, Indiana, at Everett Washington and Covington, Indiana. G. S. McGaughey and an older brother, held pastorates at Indianapolis, Bicknell Linton, Robinson, Illinois and at St. Paul. Due to declining health his active work in the pulpit has almost ceased. At the present time he resides at Roachdale: is chairman of the board of the Christian Church at Roachdale Pastor of the community church at Carpentersville.

As the years have sped by the charter members have all been called home. Jordon Grider of the Church of Christ and Clay Fosher of the Universalist Church being the last to leave us. The succeeding generations about Fincastle have married and intermarried until many of us remember dear old loved ones in the Universalist church and in the Christian church until both churches hold dear associations: Babtists, Methodists, United Brethren, Presbyterians, and those of other communications have moved into the neighborhood to strengthen our family forces, so that today we are often led in song by a Universalist, a member of the Christian church at the piano, a Presbyterian as the most loyal worker among the men: and we all sit peacably together in the pew and listen to a Methodist preach to us and enjoy it. This co-operation has been further strengthened by joining the working forces of the two churches in what is known as the Community Circle, a plan adopted February 14, 1916.

However, each church keeps its own identity with its own name and its own officers - Lyda Bridges, Marion Borden and Hazel Darnell as the last named officers of the Universalist church and Margaret Grider, Laura Bridges and Eva Obenchain as the last elected trustees of the Christian church. The name as well as the Faith of Our Fathers are carrying on. We have inherited their trees, their buildings and their lands. We have inherited their lives of faith and fervent devotion: and if we but listen we may hear their voices speaking to us today in an appeal for greater things to be done in Fincastle community in the name of the Lord and Master of us all.

This history has been collected from old records, church lists, Sunday School reports, county records, remembered events and handed down stories, of the church and community life of the pioneers who sought God and right relationship with his fellowman in this particular community.