

## THE DUNKERS IN IOWA.

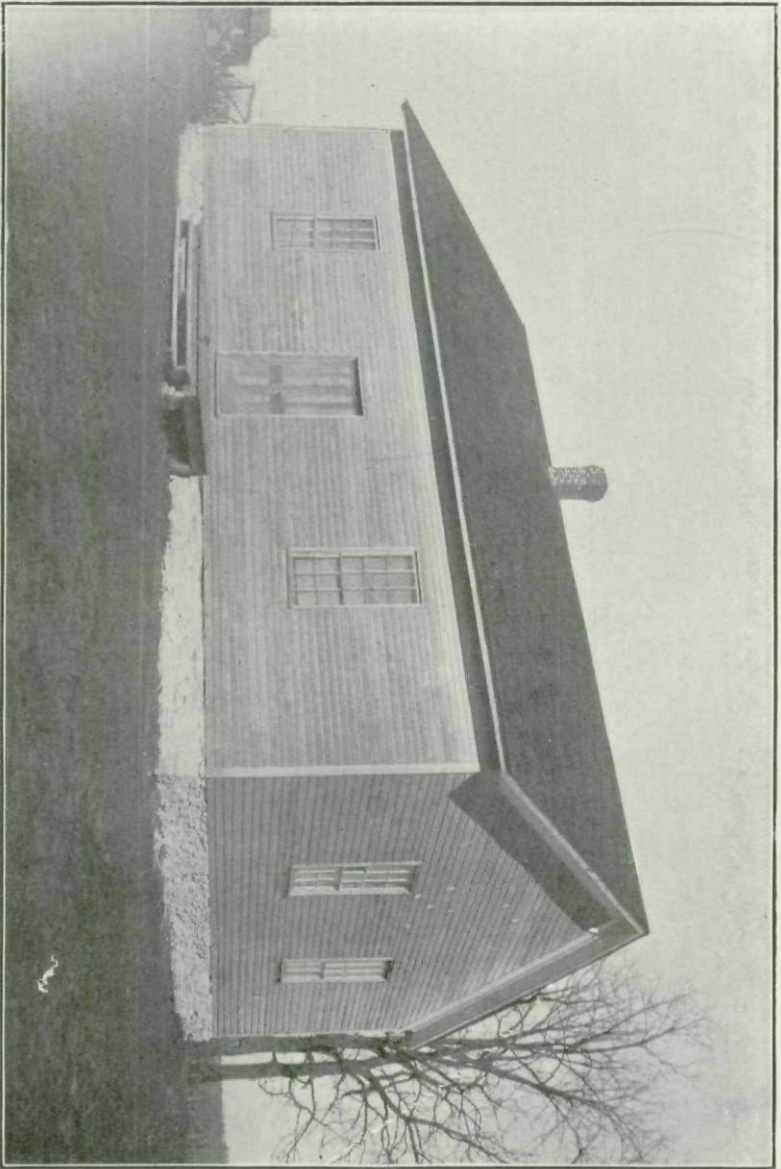
BY ELDER JOHN E. MOHLER.

The organization of the Dunkers church (incorporated, German Baptist Brethren church) grew out of the great religious awakening which occurred in Germany during the closing years of the seventeenth century, when large numbers, becoming dissatisfied with the condition of spirituality in the State church, withdrew from it and met together for the worship of God.

In the village of Schwartzenua a small company, among whom Alexander Mack was a natural leader, met from time to time to study and read God's word. This company mutually agreed to lay aside all existing creeds and search for the truth in the Word, and having found it, to follow where it might lead. They were led to adopt the New Testament as their creed, and to decide in favor of a literal, combined with a spiritual, obedience to all the commandments of the Son of God.

In 1708 this group of eight souls were buried with Christ in baptism, in the river Eder, and Alexander Mack was chosen as their first minister, though he has never been regarded as the founder of the church. The infant church grew in numbers rapidly, but soon met with severe persecutions. William Penn invited them to settle in Pennsylvania, and in 1719 they commenced emigrating to America, and within ten years about the entire church found itself settled comfortably in the vicinity of Germantown and Philadelphia. From this nucleus the church spread out southward and westward, and now flourishing congregations are found in most of the states.

In those early days the Brethren wielded considerable influence in the religious affairs of the people. Christopher Sower, a printer at Germantown, printed the first German Bible published in America. About the year 1740 he printed a set of Sunday school tickets, which are still preserved, and which were used in the Brethren Sunday school. This was



One of the first Brethren (Dunkers) churches built in Iowa—the oldest now standing It is the "Dry Creek" church, near Robins.

over forty years before the establishment of the first Sunday school by Robert Raikes. Unfortunately the Sunday schools were discontinued later and only in recent years has the church again taken up Sunday school work.

The Brethren are, in every respect, evangelical in their faith. The New Testament is their only recognized creed. The teachings of Christ are still held in literal, as well as spiritual observance. Baptism is administered by trine-immersion, to believers, according to Matt. 28:19. The Agape, or Feast of Love, is still observed in a manner similar to the practice of the church during, and immediately following, the day of the Apostles. It is a full meal, eaten in the evening, in connection with the service of feet washing, recorded in the thirteenth chapter of St. John, and the Communion, described in the other Gospels.

The Salutation of the Holy Kiss, commanded five times in the Epistles (I Thess. 5:26) is observed in the church, although not between the sexes. The sick are anointed with oil, in the name of the Lord, at their request, as taught in Jas. 5:14, 15. Divorce and remarriage are practically unknown among the membership. Intemperance is prohibited, and a firm stand is taken against war. The members are required to pay all honest debts, and the church looks after her own poor. Going to law is discouraged and membership in oath-bound secret societies is forbidden. Caste in the church is labored against and a simple uniform dress has been adopted as an aid to maintain plain dressing among the membership. The distinguishing feature of this uniform among the sisters is the head dress, which is a neat bonnet. The rule among the brethren is a clerical coat collar.

A great majority of the Brethren are agriculturists and the strongest churches are usually found in the country. They own a large publishing house at Elgin, Ill., of which the main profits go to the support of home and foreign mission work. Flourishing churches have been established by the General Missionary and Tract Society in Denmark, Sweden,

France, and India, where a number of mission workers are being supported to further the work at those places. A number of excellent schools are maintained by this church, and several colleges, which rank high as educational centers. The oldest colleges are at Huntington, Pa., and Mt. Morris, Ill.

The government of the church is not complex. Each local congregation conducts its own affairs, chooses its own ministers, deacons, and bishops, the first two usually from the laity of the church, and the last from the advanced ministers. In this church all the members of both sexes have equal voting rights. Where possible each congregation settles its own difficulties, and directs its own work.

The local congregations are grouped into districts, for convenience, and each congregation in the group sends one or more delegates, from among its officers or the laity, to an annual district conference, which convenes within the radius of the group, to consider matters of a wider interest than pertains to the local congregation.

These districts, then, in turn, each send a delegate from among the bishops, or elders, within their respective bounds, to the Annual International Conference, which body of delegates forms a standing committee to deliberate upon matters of general interest, such as methods and ways and means of church work, or church discipline, or doctrines of the church. No creed but the New Testament has ever been adopted, the intent of the church being to keep herself open to the reception of new light in regard to the will of Christ, as may be received by the fraternity, as new conditions are met, and greater knowledge of the Lord is received, and brought to the front by individual worshippers. The decisions of the International Conferences are supposed to be binding upon the fraternity until their repeal, or they become obsolete, by reason of no more necessity of their observance. The voting power of this conference is vested in the delegates from the districts, as above named, together with a delegate from each local congregation in the brotherhood.

The church is not large in numbers, the total probably being about 100,000, nearly all of whom reside in the United States. It may be said that the proportion of active members compared with the actual membership, is quite large. The Annual Conferences have an attendance of from 15,000 to 40,000 and *The Gospel Messenger*, the official organ of the church, is read by about 70 per cent. of their entire membership.

Most of the ministers of the church give their labors without remuneration by their respective charges, esteeming it a privilege to thus labor for their Master, while they follow some secular pursuit for a living. As there are usually several ministers to a congregation, and farming is the occupation of a majority of them, the ministry is not necessarily a great burden, and by the sacrifices of the minister the surplus funds of the congregation often go to foreign and home mission boards. A pastor who gives much, or all of his time to his church is of course given the support he needs, financially.

The Brethren church congregations in Iowa have generally been established by immigration from the older states, and then added to from the inhabitants in the community, as the congregation gained a footing. Owing to incomplete records in many of the churches it is difficult to give any but a bird's-eye view of the denomination, in the State. In the following list of congregations it must be considered that one name of a church often really represents a number of places where preaching services are regularly carried on. For instance, not often are there more churches than one, in a county in Iowa, but in some instances, the county may be almost covered with preaching where the several ministers in the church hold forth the Word. About all the congregations have thriving Sunday schools, and at other places Sunday schools are kept up where no preaching services are had.

At this time there are between forty-five and fifty organized congregations in Iowa, with a total membership of about

three thousand. Many of the congregations have lost numerically within the last few years, from emigration to newer agricultural regions, and the influx of the members has been comparatively small, and the additions by baptism have not been more than usual. There are three active home mission boards in the State, and they are all promoting missions in the much needed places in the cities, besides looking after weak churches in the country, and responding to calls for preaching at isolated places. The chairman of each board, in the northern, central and southern parts of the State, respectively, are, O. S. Gilbert, Eldora, Iowa, W. E. West, Ankeny, Iowa, and S. F. Brower, Ollie, Iowa.

The first congregation in Iowa Territory was effected in 1844, in Jefferson county. Elder George Wolf, of Illinois, a noted minister of his day, assisted in the organization, and he probably retained charge of the congregation for some time. At the start there were eight members. Among the first ministers of this church were John Garber and Peter Lutz. In 1858 their first church building was erected three and one-half miles northwest of Libertyville, after which the congregation took its name. In 1876 this building was torn down and a new one built upon the old site. In addition to this building, another was erected at Batavia, in 1903, where Daniel Holden is pastor. W. N. Glotfelty, Batavia, is pastor of the old church. Elder C. M. Brower, South English, Iowa, has general oversight of the congregation. One of the deacons, Philip Albaugh, was baptized here in 1845, and he was perhaps the first convert in the State. He is 85 years of age. This church numbers seventy-five. The first members were from Pennsylvania. Some pioneer preaching was done by ministers from Illinois. The first ministers chosen here were John Garber and Peter Lutz. Others, deceased now, were Daniel Leedy, James Glotfelty, Enoch Prather, J. H. Filmore, and J. E. Eshelman. The early deacons were Michael Peebler, Philip Albaugh, Jesse West, and Wm. Roberts, all now deceased except the second named.

The Pleasant Hill church was organized out of the Libertyville church in 1896, and now has a membership of thirty-five. They worship in a house four miles southeast of Libertyville, which was built in 1888. E. G. Rodabaugh is elder, assisted by V. Anderson.

In 1851 the Mt. Etna church, Adams county, was organized, with fifty members and their first church building was put up in 1868. The present membership is forty-five, with J. M. Follis, Lenox, Iowa, and A. P. Simon, Mt. Etna, Iowa, as ministers.

The Fairview church, Appanoose county, was organized in 1853, with fourteen members. A building was erected in 1866. The present membership is fifty-seven, with A. Wolf, Udell, Iowa, pastor.

The next year the Monroe county church took form, with twenty members. At present this congregation has about ninety-four members. Peter Brower, South English, Iowa, is the elder, and Willis Rodabaugh, Frederick, Iowa, the pastor.

The English River congregation was organized in 1855, with about fifteen members. The families represented were Wolf, Wine, Brower, Flory, Harvey, and Stover. This little band took form in the log cabin of David Brower, which was one of the few dwellings in Keokuk county. David Brower was selected as the elder. Before a church building was put up large meetings, such as love-feasts, were held in sheds covered with native prairie grass. In 1877 a Sunday school was organized. Another church building was erected at North English in 1890, seven miles from the old church, which is three miles east of South English. The present membership is about 200, with an official corps of seven ministers and eleven deacons. Elder C. M. Brower, of South English, has charge of the church.

This congregation was formed by Elders Samuel Garber and Christian Long, of Illinois. The only charter members now there are Samuel Flory and sister Wolf. The deacons

chosen at the organization were Samuel Flory and Daniel Wine. The early membership came principally from Virginia and Ohio. The elders who succeeded David Brower were Jacob Brower, Samuel Flory, C. M. Brower, H. C. N. Coffman, and Peter Brower. The assistant ministers at present are Joseph Coffman, Daniel P. Miller, and John Brower. B. Frank Flory has the honor of being their first Sunday school superintendent.

Although, as noted, the first love-feast was held in a straw-covered shed built for the purpose, in or about 1860, Elder Jacob Brower built a large barn, and until the church was built this was used to hold the Communion services in. Ordinary services were held in the Liberty school house. The present church building is 40x60 feet and cost about \$2,000.

In 1856 the Decatur county congregation was organized, with twenty-six members. The name has since been changed to the Franklin church. A house of worship was built in 1874, about five miles northeast of Leon, Decatur county. The present membership is about thirty-six, although upwards of 300 persons have been identified with this congregation since its organization. A. Wolf, of Udell, Iowa, is the elder in charge, and L. M. Kob, of Garden Grove, Iowa, is the pastor. This flock was formed by Elders Frank Myers and John Garber. S. A. Garber and Wm. J. Stout were the first ministers.

The Indian Creek congregation, Story county, was also organized in 1856. There were twelve members at first, with Henry Flory, Sr., chosen as minister. In 1881 a house for worship was built near Maxwell, and the present membership is about eighty, with Elder H. H. Troup in charge, assisted by Samuel Bowser and A. W. Flory, all of Maxwell, Iowa. This congregation has, since its organization, given rise to five other congregations, which have been formed separately from time to time, several of which are at this time stronger than the mother church. They are the



Harlan, Coon River, Panther Creek, Dallas Centre, and Des Moines Valley churches.

The first deacon chosen was Joel Brubaker. The members were organized by Elders Henry Neff, of New Paris, Ind., and Isaac Neff of Virginia. Henry Flory, their pastor, sought out members who had moved from the east to adjoining counties, including Polk, Warren, Dallas, Guthrie and Shelby, and doubtless to his labors were due the later organization of so many congregations from this one. The total number of ministers who have been chosen by the church, and who have moved into her fold, has been thirteen, and of deacons, fifteen. The greatest number of members in this congregation at any one time was 125. At present there are three ministers and two deacons.

In the same year the Waterloo church, Black Hawk county, was organized with twelve members. Elder J. Hauger was in charge, and in 1868 their first church house was built where it still remains, about five miles south of Waterloo. It was a large building for those days, seating 800 persons, with a dining room in the basement capable of feeding 400 persons at one time. The cost of the building was about \$7,000. In 1873 another building was put up northwest of Hudson, and in 1880 a church was built in Waterloo, upon the site of the present building which was erected in 1902. The present membership of Waterloo is about 340, with Elder A. P. Blough as pastor. The city Sunday school averages in attendance 130, while the average in the Sunday school in the country is 250.

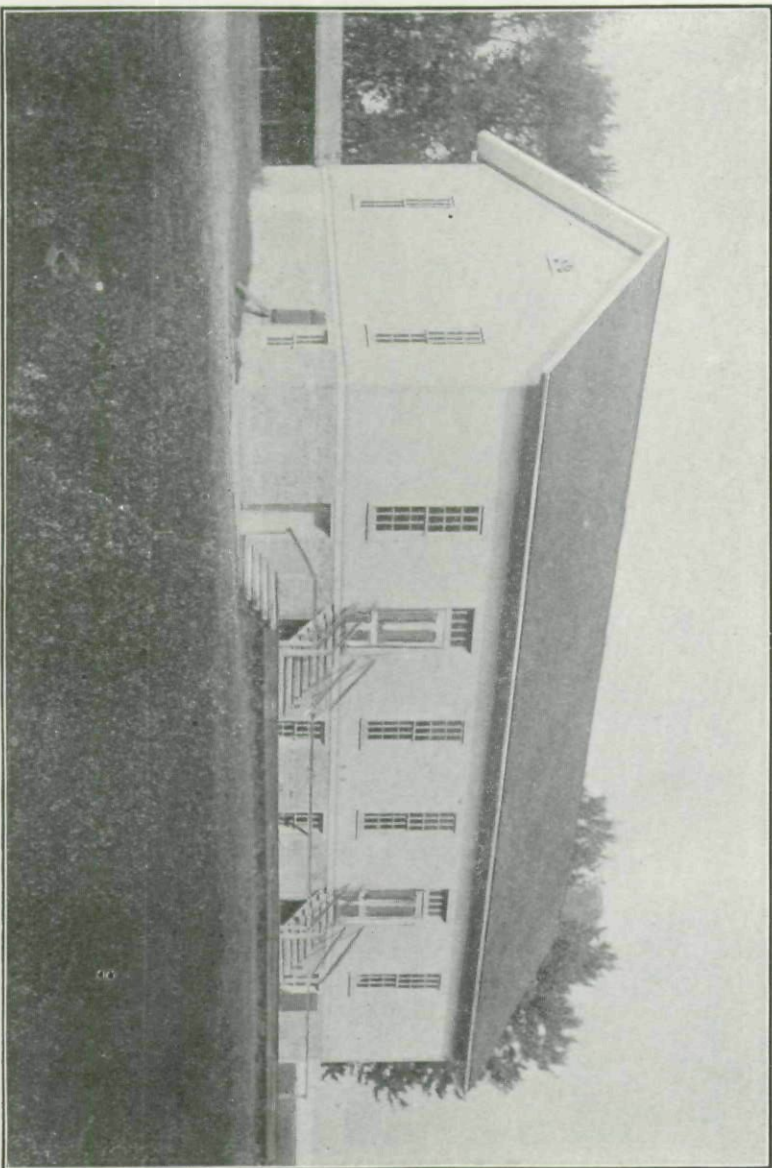
Probably the first member of the church to set foot in Black Hawk county was Elder Elias Buechley, in 1854. He stopped at Waterloo, at the Sherman House, then a one-story log building, near where the Central House now stands, on Commercial street. He returned to Somerset county, Pa., and spread the good news of Iowa's fine country, and the first settler of the Brethren, in the county was Martin Buechley, a cousin of the Elder, who removed to

Waterloo in 1855. Others, all from Somerset county, Pa., soon followed. Meetings were first held in private houses, and later in either Capwell's or Weaver's Hall, in Waterloo. The ministers in those early days were John Speicher, Joseph Ogg, and Jesse Myers. Among the early families were the Buechleys, Lichtys, Millers, Fikes, Berkleys, Klingamans, Shrocks, Wellers, Saylor and Mausts.

The Dry Creek church, Linn county, was also organized in 1856. Two years previous T. G. Snyder and family, of Blair county, Pa., had settled there, being the first members of the church in the county, and the only ones, until the year of the church organization. That year the church was formed with ten or more members. In the fall of the year their first love-feast was held in T. G. Snyder's barn, at which time the owner of the barn was set apart for the ministry. Two years later they erected their first church house, which still stands in a good state of preservation. This was one of the first houses built in the State, the Libertyville house having been built the same year. Two other church houses have since been built by this congregation, one of which is in the city of Cedar Rapids. The congregation numbers about seventy-five, with D. W. Miller, pastor of the country congregation, and S. F. Miller, pastor in Cedar Rapids.

The year 1856 witnessed another organization, named the Iowa River church near Marshalltown, Marshall county. It now numbers about seventy members, and is in charge of Elder F. M. Wheeler. An Old Folks' Home for the patronage of the churches in the State was established in 1904.

In 1857 the church at Greene, Butler county, Iowa, was formed, with twenty-one members, and Philip Moss as minister. Following him was Elder J. F. Eikenbury, who in turn was followed by Harvey Eikenbury, their present Elder. A house of worship was built in Greene in 1873, which remains the meeting place of the present congregation, of seventy-four.



South Waterloo church, south of Waterloo five miles. Probably the largest country church in the State.  
Size 40 x 80 feet. Seats 800 persons.

The Clarence church, near Clarence, Cedar county, was also organized in 1852, with twelve members. In 1876, a church was built, and the membership numbers about sixty-five, in charge of Elder John Zuck.

The Garrison church, Benton county, was organized in 1858, with fifteen members, and their first house of worship was built in 1874. The present membership of eighty-six is in charge of Elder Wm. Long.

The Middle Creek congregation, Mahaska county, was formed in 1860. A church was built in 1878, and C. M. Brower and S. P. Miller are the ministers at present.

In 1864 the Crooked Creek church, Washington county, was established, with forty members. At present there are about twenty-six members, in charge of C. M. Brower, South English and A. Sanger, Keota, Iowa.

The Coon River congregation, Guthrie county, was formed in 1865, from the Indian Creek church, as previously noted. John Fitz, of Illinois, was the first resident elder. A house of worship was built near Panora in 1873. The present membership of about 200 is in charge of Elder J. W. Diehl and J. D. Haughtelin, assisted by seven ministers, who conduct services at seven different places within the bounds of this congregation. M. Dierdorff preaches at Yale, D. D. Bosserman at Bagley, Iowa.

The church house at Bagley was purchased by the Coon River church about 1895. An interest is also held in the M. E. church building at Yale, where services are held. An addition to the church building near Panora was erected in 1895, and sheds were built to feed and shelter about fifty teams of horses.

The Elders who served this church previously to those who now have charge were John Fitz, S. Longanecker, G. R. Baker, C. Long, R. Badger and Jos. L. Myers. Other ministers were Jacob Hamilton, J. C. Miller, A. Brower, M. Dierdorff, John Fitz, Daniel Shirk, — Deeter, M. Herman, J. B. Diehl, Irving Haughtelin, Emery Fiscel, Ellis Caslow and L. D. Bosserman.

In Poweshiek county, the Deep River church, and in Shelby county, the Harlan church, were also organized in 1865, and each congregation built a house of worship about eleven years later. The first named congregation is in charge of Elder G. H. Hopwood, Deep River, and has about fifteen members. The other is in charge of Jas. O. Goughnour, Ankeny, Iowa, and numbers about thirty members.

The following year the Brooklyn church, Poweshiek county, was organized, with twelve members. The present membership of about sixty is in charge of Elders J. S. Snyder and S. C. Miller.

The Grundy church, Grundy county, took form in 1867, with nineteen members to start with. It now numbers 145, with Silas Gilbert and J. E. Jones in charge, Grundy Center, Iowa.

In 1868 the Des Moines Valley church was organized from the Indian Creek congregation, with thirty members. In 1876 a house for worship was built about four miles northeast of Ankeny, Polk county, and was enlarged and refitted in 1904. About ten years ago the congregation purchased the Free Methodist church building, 16th and Lyon streets, Des Moines. The present membership of over 100 is in charge of Elder S. M. Goughnour, Ankeny, Iowa, with assistants. Elder J. E. Mohler is pastor in Des Moines.

The Panther Creek congregation was organized in 1869 in Adel with Elder Christian Long in charge of sixteen members. It is now in Dallas county, and the first church was built in 1872. In 1875 another house was built one and one-half miles east of Dallas Centre, which was formed later into the Dallas Centre church. Sunday school was begun in 1873, in a school house near the church. There are now ninety-six members in charge of Elder Samuel Badger, Panther, Iowa. The first Sunday school was held in 1873.

The Ames church, near Ames, was established in 1869, and is in charge of Elder S. M. Goughnour, Ankeny, Iowa.

The South River congregation, Warren county, organized in 1870, with eighteen members, now numbers twenty-five members, and is in charge of W. W. Folger, Osceola.

The Nora Springs church, Floyd county, organized in 1872, with thirty-six members, has now a membership of twenty, with O. J. Beaver, as pastor.

In 1876 the Maple Valley organization, Cherokee county, was formed with ten members. Its forty members are now in care of Charles Delp, Aurelia.

The Dallas Centre church, Dallas county, was organized the same year, by separation from the Panther church, with fifty-seven members, in charge of Elder Michael Sissler. A church building had been erected near Dallas Centre the previous year, and is still in use. Another building was put up in Beaver, Boone county, a few years ago, where J. L. Hudson preaches. There are about 160 members in the Dallas Centre congregation, presided over by Elder S. M. Goughnour, Ankeny, Iowa. The resident ministers are Elders B. F. Miller, John Weber, C. B. Rowe, Harvey Royer and Maurice Eikenberry.

In 1877 Wayman Valley church, Clayton county, and Pleasant Valley church, Appanoose county, were formed with about twelve members each. The former is now in charge of C. T. Stone, Edgewood, Iowa.

The Pleasant Prairie church, Plymouth county, has twenty-seven members in charge of H. T. Maust, Ireton, Iowa.

In 1884, the Kingsley church, Woodbury county, was organized with thirteen members, by Elder J. W. Trostle. Their first house of worship was built in 1889, and two years later they had a membership of more than 100. In 1893 they built another house west of Kingsley. The present membership of the Kingsley church is about ninety, with Elder D. T. Dierdorff as pastor.

The Prairie City church, Jasper county, was organized in 1894, with twenty members, in charge of Elder J. L. Thomes. It is now under the care of Elder I. W. Brubak-

er, Monroe, with about forty-two members. The church building was erected the year of the organization.

In 1896 the Pleasant Hill church was organized from the Libertyville congregation, as before noted.

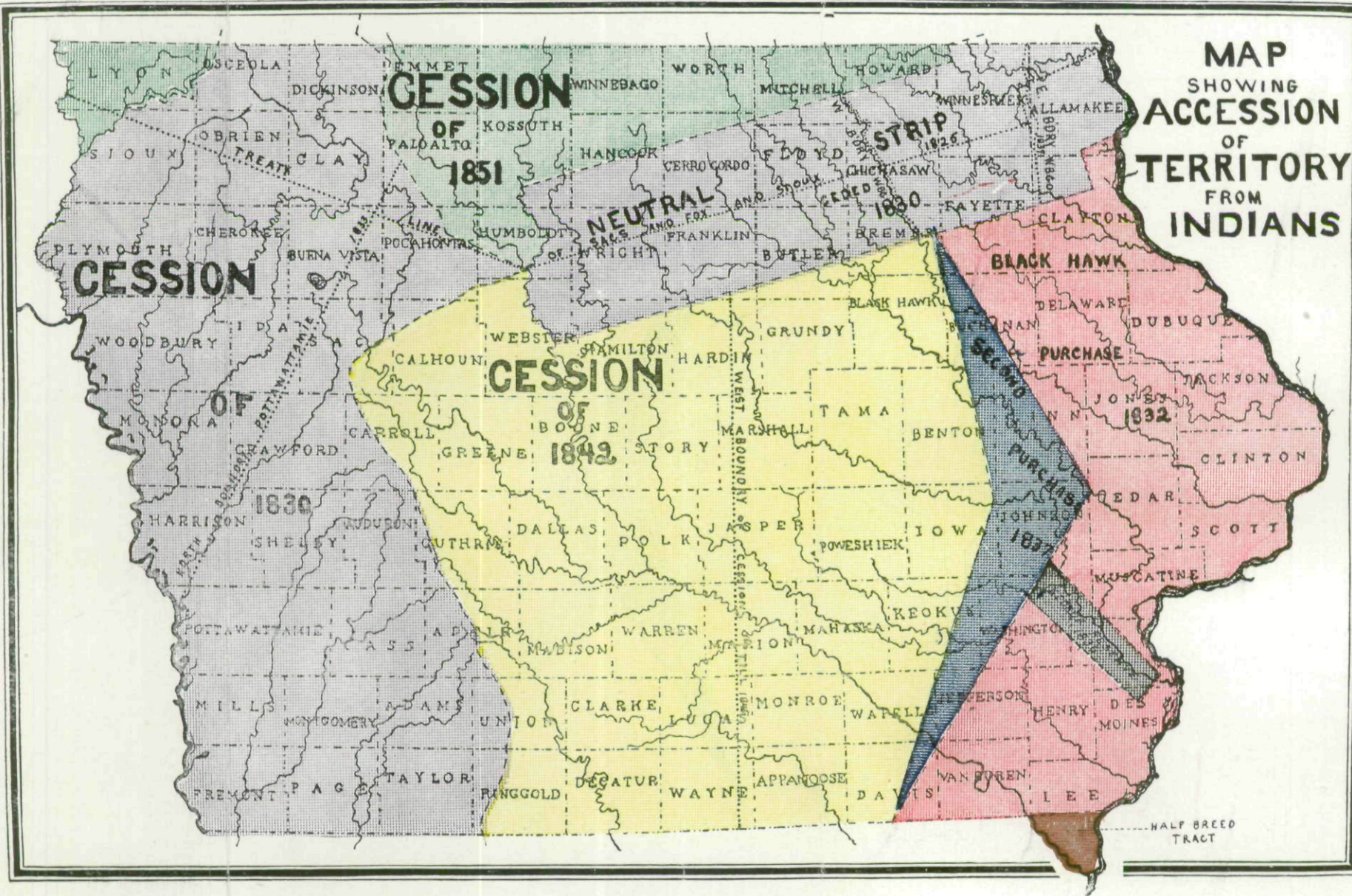
The South Ottumwa church was organized in 1900, and a building erected in 1901. Elder C. E. Wolf, Ottumwa, is the pastor. The first preaching services in the city were held in a private house at 316 South Moore St., in January, 1900. In August of the same year tent meetings were held by Elder Abram Wolf and Orlando Ogden. The first convert in the city was an aged Catholic. The first love-feast was held August 16, with twenty-eight members, in charge of Elder J. M. Follis. The committee to whose labors the present comfortable church building in the city is largely due, consisted of C. M. Brower, O. Ogden, Mankin Wray, and the pastor, Elder C. E. Wolf. The dedication sermon was preached by Elder L. H. Eby, of Mound City, Mo.

Besides these there exist a number of churches organized on dates unknown to the writer. Among these are the Ollie church, Keokuk county, with S. F. Brower, Ollie, Iowa, pastor. Aurelia church, Cherokee county, and Laurens church, Pocahontas county, in charge of Elder J. D. Haughtelin, Panora, Iowa.

South Keokuk church, Lee county, has fifty-three members, with E. G. Rodabaugh, Libertyville, Iowa, in charge. Franklin county church, in care of W. H. Pyle, Hampton, Iowa, has twenty-five members. Twenty members forming the Lake Park church, Dickinson county, are in the care of W. H. Eikenbury, Reading, Minn. The Sheldon church, Sioux county, has forty members in care of Elder J. E. Ralston, Sheldon. Gillett Grove church, Clay county, with twelve members, is in care of Geo. Brallier, Greenville, Iowa. Spring Creek church, Chickasaw county, with twenty-six members, is presided over by Harvey Gilliam of Fredericksburg, Iowa.

DES MOINES, IOWA, December 1, 1905.

**MAP**  
 SHOWING  
**ACCESSION**  
 OF  
**TERRITORY**  
 FROM  
**INDIANS**





Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.