

observation of the Sabbath Day, daily family worship, and abstention from all intoxicating drinks. When a member broke these rules, a special meeting was held and the erring member was promptly dismissed from the Society. With a formal request to reunite and a promise to abide by the rules, the member might later be readmitted.

Original members included E. Seaward, P.R. Staples, R.A. Peck, G. Wilbur, Lana Keith, Sarah Staples, T. Seward, Martha Peck, A. Keith, and J. Wilbur.

By 1867, the Society had gained many new members and had joined with Briggsville in order to hire a minister who could serve both areas. Reverend Bridgeman left the Society and was replaced by Reverend J.M. Hayes of West Salem, whose salary was \$232.50 per year. In 1871 the name was changed to Big Spring Congregational Society. In 1874 the Society voted to build a church together with the F.W. Baptist Society. John Stowell donated land for the church, and local farmers brought stones for the basement. Men traveled to Kilbourn and brought back the needed lumber using horse and oxen. Area Indians took a great interest in the building and were reportedly of great help. Kerosene lamps hung from the ceiling and the seats were all handmade. Use of the church was divided equally between the Congregationalists and the Baptists, with both agreeing to give up their time should the other have a wedding or a funeral.

In 1880, members voted to erect a parsonage across the highway from the church on two acres of land purchased from S.S. Landt. Fifteen-cent chicken dinners and ice cream socials helped raise money for this endeavor. After 1891, the church was united with the Davis Corners and Jackson churches, and all three would contribute to the salary of a minister to serve this entire circuit.

In 1905, the church hired its first and only female minister, a Mrs. Christie, who was from England. She served the parish until 1909.

Eventually, the Baptist and Congregational churches began to disagree. By 1912, the original church building and grounds were sold to S.B. Strader for \$60 and the money turned over to the Baptist Society. Now the church belonged solely to Big Spring.

In 1934 the parsonage was sold to Clarence Armson with the stipulation that alcohol never be sold on its grounds. The money was used for maintenance of the church and church grounds. In 1951, the original oak heaters in the church were replaced by a coal burner.

The Big Spring Cemetery is located about a quarter mile east of the church, where more than 50 area soldiers have been laid to rest since the Civil War.

Other ministers who have served the Big Spring Congregational Church include Reverend Campbell, Reverend Hicks, Reverend Moulton, Reverend Pope, Reverend Brown, Reverend Heberlein, Reverend Hadden, Reverend Rawson, Reverend Chase, Reverend Helms, Reverend Christie, Reverend Haywood, Reverend O'Neil, Reverend Luke, Reverend Dewitte, Reverend Wilcox, Reverend Forester, Reverend Austin, Reverend Veith, Reverend Shannon, Reverend Flora, Reverend Wicks, Reverend Davies, Reverend King, Reverend Adams, and Reverend Barton.

### **Big Spring Congregational Church**

In June of 1866, residents in the small village of Big Spring began to hold community meetings in the log homes of settlers. Business meetings were opened and closed with prayers. On Sundays, Reverend Bridgeman conducted regular services and Sunday school was held.

Soon the congregation that developed voted to name themselves the Ecclesiastical Society. They adopted a strict constitution which outlined member requirements such as strict



*Big Spring Congregational*