

Comment

MORE COLOR OF THE RAINBOW

The old church at Chester, in Washington township, north of Westfield, two miles and more, is closed for religious services and this is a matter of sincere regret for many folks who hold the old times in a reverent regard. Chester was largely a Quaker community and was included in the fine tribute paid Washington township by Prof. John P. Haines, who wrote a fine history of the county, and has always given old Hamilton county folks kindly words. And, he knew the history of the people and their antecedents. Mr. Haines is not very well and it is fine to call attention, once more, to his tributes to the people of his beloved county. In speaking of the Quakers, he said Washington township was settled largely by the Quakers. "As these people stand for uprightness of character and the thoughtful education of their children and are hard-working, thrifty and persevering, the township soon became notable for its churches, schools and the scholarly attainments of its citizens. The homes and the farms are among the best in the county."

The old church at Chester goes back to 1837, when Robert Tomlinson settled two miles north of Westfield. Enoch Jessup followed Mr. Tomlinson and soon the neighborhood was a happy community. The nearest church was at Westfield and by foot and horseback Westfield was quite a distance away. But, it was not until 1859 that the Chester church was established, after a number of the people of the community requested the Westfield Monthly Meeting to permit them to hold a meeting at Chester. Said meeting to be held on the first and fourth day of each week, except first day of quarterly and fourth day of monthly meeting weeks. The Westfield meeting agreed to the request and the next body to pass on it was the Quarterly meeting at Westfield, in May, 1859. A committee was appointed to visit the Friends in the Chester neighborhood and reported that the request be granted. The Quarterly meeting granted the request and sent a committee composed of Dougan Clark, Jacob Carson, Noah Stafford, Clarkson F. Cook, Benjamin Harold, Jesse Horney, Jemima Stanley, Sarah Hiatt, Elizabeth Bray, Edith J. Cammack, Phoebe Cook and Eunice Doan, with Levi Pennington and Ellen R. Hunt, as clerks.

The original petition for the establishment of the Chester church was signed by Robert Tomlinson, Peter Rich, David Stalker, John Stalker, Joseph Moore, William Baldwin, Lydia Tomlinson, Prudence Jessup, Amy Rich, Annie Stalker, Deborah Moore, Mary Baldwin, Noah Tomlinson, Allen Tomlinson, Eli Carey, Isom Hiatt, Jonathan Carey, David Podrea, Abigail Tomlinson, Martha A. Tomlinson, Mary Carey, Asenath Hiatt, Eliza A. Carey, and Tamer Podrea. So, Chester was organized on October 26, 1859, with Robert Tomlinson and Lydia Tomlinson as heads of the meeting and Joseph Moore and Amy Rich as clerks. The first minister to proclaim the Gospel was Joseph Pickett and the first recorded minister was Zimri Kivett. Other members became ministers and Florence Stanbrough Roberts was a missionary to Africa. Allen Tomlinson donated

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the land for the church property and the labor for building the church was donated. For a time part of the church was used for a school room.

Those names given as connected with the establishment and the building of the church are among the best-known and most-highly-regarded names in the older days of this county. In that early day the Lindley family, north of the church, were Friends and, before that time a few years, Joseph G. Cannon, as a boy, lived in the community, where his father practiced medicine, coming from Carolina to Indiana and then on to Illinois. The community is always spoken of in the highest respect for those Friend Quakers, opposed to war, yet favored the rights of liberty, for all men. So the community was known as one of the foremost stations on the Underground Railway from the South

on the way to Canada, and whatever force was necessary to accomplish the safety of the hunted Negroes was used by those peaceful Quakers. No community has a higher reputation for good citizenship that has the old Chester community. The names stand for all that is best in American history and the younger generations take great pride in the record of the folks who made it possible to inherit great and good names.

One incident in recent history occurred near the Chester church which the people recall. Senator James E. Watson was seriously injured in an automobile accident and was taken to a hospital at Indianapolis where he was treated for some time before he recovered. The health of Senator Watson was of interest to the people all over the state and the country and he had many visitors at the hospital. At one time an old Civil War veteran came to see the Senator, sitting down by his bed, and saying, "Jim, you're not going to die, are you?" And, the jovial senator, even in pain and severe suffering, said, "Oh, no, I'm not going to die, I'll be around again soon." And the veteran replied: "Well, Jim, I'm glad, I don't want you to die, I used to go with my father to hear you make speeches, when I was a little boy. Don't die, Jim." And, of course, he didn't.

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