



1865 – 1894:
OUR STORY BEGINS

*“... and on this rock I will
build my church”*

Matthew 16:18

“He who knows only his own generation forever remains a child.” -- Benjamin Franklin

A New Congregation in a Gilded and Gritty Frontier Town

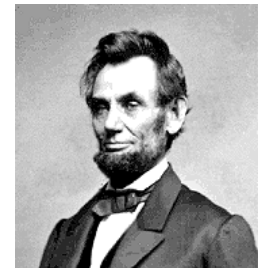
At Promontory Summit, Utah in 1869, railroad owners and common laborers gathered to drive a “golden spike” signaling the completion of a transcontinental rail system. An Iowa village of 100 persons, Ames, was a dot on that route. It had been platted in 1864. The following year the first congregation in the village was organized. The details of the church’s early years have been ably told by Farwell Brown in the book *Ames: The Early Years in Word and Pictures, From Marsh to Modern City* (Ames: Heuss Printing, 1993). An historical account of the first church in Ames by Lynette Spicer is available at the Ames UCC website (www.amesucc.org/history). Some of that account is worth retelling, but it needs to be placed in its wider cultural context.

THE WIDER WORLD

Social, Economic, and Technology Events

1846 - Iowa becomes the second state in the nation to allow married women to own property.

Abraham Lincoln



1858 - The Meskwaki tribe receives permission from the Iowa General Assembly to purchase land and live along the Iowa River.

1865 - The American Civil War ends. President Lincoln is assassinated.

1866 - Alfred Nobel invents dynamite.

1867 - David Livingston begins exploration of Congo.

1867 - Russia sells Alaska to the United States for \$7.2 million.

1868 - The first professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, is organized.

1869 - Princeton and Rutgers play first intercollegiate football game.

1870 - John D. Rockefeller founds Standard Oil Company.

1872 - Thomas Edison perfects the telegraph.

1873 - The Remington Company produces typewriters.

1875 - Emma Haddock of Iowa City is the first female in the United States to practice law before a federal court.

1876 - Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone; the Battle of Little Bighorn occurs in eastern Montana Territory.

1877 - Thomas Edison invents the phonograph.



1880 - The first large steel furnace is developed by Andrew Carnegie.

1881 - A mass immigration of East European Jews to the United States begins.

1883 - The first skyscraper (10 stories) is built in Chicago.

1892 - A poor economy leads to the Panic of 1893.

1893 - Henry Ford builds his first automobile.

Ford's first
automobile



Literary, Musical, and Educational Events

1865 - Fyodor Dostoevsky writes *Crime and Punishment*.

1866 - Mark Twain's story "The Jumping Frog" is widely distributed.

1868 - Iowa is the second state to outlaw segregated schools; Louisa M. Alcott writes *Little Women*.

1869 - Iowa is the first state to allow women to be admitted to the bar.

1870 - *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* is published.

1870 - 1900 - Land grant colleges begin and universities develop graduate programs.

1871 - Iowa appoints the first woman in the United States to a statewide office; she becomes the Iowa state librarian.

1874 - John Vincent and Lewis Miller hold the first meeting of Sunday School teachers at Lake Chautauqua, New York; it becomes a popular form of adult education.

1875 - Mark Twain writes *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

1876 - Johns Hopkins University, a pioneer in graduate education, begins.

1881 - Tuskegee Institute opens.

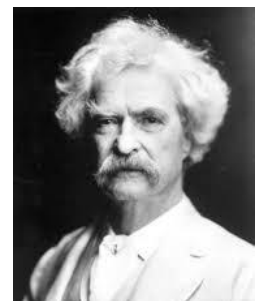
1883 - Mark Twain writes *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

1887 - *A Study in Scarlet* is published; it is the first Sherlock Holmes story.

1890 - First moving picture (film) is shown in New York City.

1893 - Chicago World's Fair (or Columbian Exhibition) is held.

Mark Twain



Cultural Changes

Division continues. European powers watched with interest as the United States became so divided over the issue of slavery that it split into two and fought a bloody war that kept families, churches, and geographical areas feuding long after the war ended in 1865. Economic trading resumed and international competition became a reality by the turn of the century. In America, the majority of people lived in rural areas, but as waves of immigrants arrived and became workers in the urban area offices and manufacturing plants, the balance of the nation's political power swung to the cities. Skyscrapers and department stores were new realities, although more Americans lived in rural areas than urban areas until the early decades of the twentieth century.



Technology Aids Frontier Expansion. Railroads and a new energy source, oil, brought wealth to a few. The move westward was furthered by the telegraph. The violence of the frontier was exaggerated in dime novels, but the injustices and violence to Native Americans were underreported. The reality of economic highs and lows were all too familiar to farmers as well as merchants and the emerging trade unions. There was a “gilded age” to be sure, but also periodic recessions. Writers such as Mark Twain (1835-1910) gradually weaned readers from non-fiction to fiction. Thomas Edison (1847-1931) created numerous inventions including the phonograph, which changed life in cities and towns and brought entertainment to untold thousands.

Public Education. A number of factors increased the support for public education. The need to rebuild a unified nation was one. The diversity of immigrants and the belief that they needed to accept commonly-held values and practices was another. Although some Protestant churches had parochial schools, most private schools were Roman Catholic. The prejudice against that faith tradition was another factor that moved state legislatures to expand funds for public schooling.

IN RELIGION

- 1840 - A small group of churches in the St. Louis, Missouri area form Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenverein des Westens, the German Evangelical Church Society of the West.
- 1845 - The Iowa Association of Congregational Churches, organized at Denmark, Iowa in 1840, changed its name to the General Congregational Association of Iowa.
- 1846 - Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints started leaving Nauvoo, Illinois traveling across Iowa on the Mormon Trail to establish a new home in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1856 - German Pietists who were persecuted in their homeland by the German government and the Lutheran Church moved from New York state to Iowa to establish the Amana Colonies.
- 1861 - The Good Samaritan Hospital opens in St. Louis. It was a forerunner of deaconess “sisters” proving health care to all patients, regardless of creed, race, nationality, or color.
- 1863 - The first General Synod (of the Reformed denomination) was convened at Pittsburgh.
- 1866 - The Ku Klux Klan is formed in the South.
- 1867 - The German Evangelical church, or Kirchenverein, publishes a children’s paper, directed more for Sunday School use than use in the parochial schools organized by some congregations.
- 1869 - The First Vatican Council proposes doctrine of “papal infallibility;” it is adopted the following year.
- 1870 - In the South the Christian (Colored) Methodist Episcopal Church is formed.
- 1870 - Ursinus College, affiliated with the Reformed Church, opens.
- 1871 - The Iowa Home Missionary Society is begun by the General Congregational Association of Iowa
- 1871 - The Jehovah’s Witness movement begins.



- 1871 - Charles Darwin writes *The Descent of Man*, sparking debate about evolution.
- 1871 - A seminary of the German Reformed Church at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania moves to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and eventually becomes Lancaster Seminary.
- 1872 - Three regional synods of the Evangelical Synod merge at the General Conference meeting in Quincy, Illinois.
- 1873 - The Union of American Hebrew Congregations is started.
- 1873-1875 - Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey hold urban revivals in America and England.
- 1874 - The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) is founded.
- 1875 - First publication of Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Religion, with Key to the Scriptures*.
- 1876 - The first Protestant church in Alaska is founded.
- 1880 - Blacks organize the National Baptist Convention.
- 1882 - The Knights of Columbus organization is formed.
- 1884 - The Settlement House movement begins in England and the USA; students and seminarians are encouraged to live in poor neighborhoods and work to alleviate poverty problems.
- 1884 - *The Christian Century* magazine is begun.
- 1885 - At the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, American Roman Catholic bishops develop *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*. Commonly called the Baltimore Catechism, it is widely used for decades.
- 1885 - The Mormons split into polygamous and monogamous groups.
- 1887 - The Moody Bible Institute opens in Chicago.
- 1889 - Catholic University of America is opened.
- 1892 - A Congregational minister, Lyman Abbott, writes *The Evolution of Christianity*.

Religious Issues

Missionary Work on Other Continents. By mid-century, both the established Church of England as well as the young denominational Protestant churches in the United States began missionary projects in Africa and Asia. Such efforts continued after the Civil War. Historically active in Latin America, the Roman Catholic Church expanded its efforts in Central and South America. At its height, Anglican missionary work was occurring in more than 150 countries. [Hoag, and Sachs, "A Chart of Church History"].

Sunday School Enrollment. Interrupted by the Civil War, the Sunday School movement resumed in the 1870s as the western frontier expanded. In an early 1900's report, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that three Sunday Schools were begun each day. The Sunday Schools often contained the largest libraries in rural communities and business leaders often led those in urban areas. The most famous Sunday School superintendents included oil magnate John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937) and department store founder John Wanamaker (1838-1922). Sunday Schools



sponsored bands and used hymns to supplement the printed curriculum. A number of hymns were written for use in the Sunday schools. [Robert W. Lynn, *The Big Little School*, 1980.]

Adult Education. The Chautauqua movement was linked to the Sunday school movement. John Vincent, a Methodist minister, and Lewis Miller, an Ohio entrepreneur and Sunday School superintendent, had a vision to better prepare church school teachers for the coming age of science and technology. They found a meeting place on Lake Chautauqua, New York and 5,000 people attended the first Chautauqua conference in 1874. It was adult education at its best with inspiring platform speakers, stimulating classes, and moving worship services. Vincent established the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, the first successful book club in America, in 1878. Imitators of the Chautauqua movement appeared throughout America in summer tent shows offering what one observer called “culture under canvas.” Ames had tent Chautauqua’s from 1904 to 1926. One reason for the success of the Chautauqua movement was its ecumenical basis. Mainline denominations were welcome, as were Roman Catholic and Jewish representatives.

Ecumenical Efforts: Successes and Failures. The churches of America and Europe did not live up to Jesus’ mandate (John 17:20) that his followers become one in spirit. Beginning in this period and extending into the 1900s, most traditional denominations had splinter movements due to issues with doctrine and worship. Even Roman Catholics on the continent and in America were critical about certain papal pronouncements and in practice disregarded some of the church’s doctrines. Pentecostal groups left the Methodist Church in search of deeper spirituality. [Wilson-Dickson, *Church Music*, p. 142; Hoag and Sachs, “A Chart of Church History”]. The clear emphasis on an intellectual faith that was, in time, open to emerging biblical higher criticism, was not open to what it viewed as the over emotional approach used by revivalists such as Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899). Another matter that confronted the denominational churches in America was segregation. Several major denominations were split with essentially northern and southern branches (Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist, for example).

An excellent resource on the history of Congregational churches in the Midwest is Richard H. Taylor’s, *Congregational Churches on the Plains* (Providence, RI, author self-published, 2012).

Taylor states (p. 41), “The ecumenism rebounding in local communities also was shared by the national church in many ways, including international conferences on missions, polity, and faith, the founding of the International Congregational Council (1891), and the formation of the ecumenical Federal Council of Churches in the United States. Denominational unions were also a growing phenomenon in the nation. Most of those happening were unifications of groups in the same denominational family. English-speaking Congregationalist, for instance, welcomed Welsh-speaking *gymanfas* into their state associations, such as in Iowa in 1884.

Music Trends (Secular and Sacred)

The revivals that occurred in the pre- and post-Civil War years are often identified as gospel songs. Some say gospel songs had their roots in the Negro spirituals, while others, like Sydnor [*Hymns: A Congregational Study*, p. 68] give credit to the camp meetings that had begun early in the nineteenth century. These camp meetings were on the frontier, with persons setting up tents at the side of a river. A typical service began with hymn singing. Following the reading of scripture,



the preachers would expound on the text just read. The purpose of the sermon was to convince the listeners that they were sinners and the only way to be saved was to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. The preacher would end the sermon with what was known as an altar call. Those who were ready to confess their sins publicly and be born again came forward as more hymns were sung. The fiery preacher then baptized the new believers in the river. The purpose of music and hymn-singing was changing, from an emphasis on biblical texts that were linked by theme to the sermon to simpler tunes and texts that emphasized the message that Christ shed his blood to redeem the individual believer and he, the Christ, was now a personal savior.

Who attended and founded churches during this period? The upper class belonged to the established denominations – Church of England or in America the Episcopal Church, Presbyterian, and Congregational. Mark Twain called this period “The Gilded Age.” It certainly was an era of strong personalities such as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie who were great philanthropists, but in the eyes of some, robber barons. Shiny in appearance and proper in manners, the era had wide-spread practices that violated its values. The middle class, comprised of well-to-do farmers, business owners and aspiring clerks, teachers and others in service industries were attracted to the Methodist and Baptist congregations. Those who worked in stockyards or labored as typists in corporate offices often belonged to sects, cults, or non-mainline congregations. The “average” American might well be the telegraph operator depicted in movies about the Wild West. Roman Catholic leaders could claim that their congregations crossed all social classes. Whether on the frontier or in urban ghettos, revivals appealed to those who were not regular church goers. It was also an era of gritty frontiers that involved child labor abuses, discrimination against immigrant and Native American nations.

Hymns that became popular during this period included: “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” by Charles Wesley (1855), “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus” (1858), “He Leadeth Me” (1862), “Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory” (1862), and “Shall We Gather at the River” (1864). Hymns written in the years 1865-1894 include: “The Church’s One Foundation” (1866), “I Love to Tell the Story” (1866), “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise” (1867), “I Need Thee Every Hour” (1872), “Blessed Assurance” (1873), “Break Thou the Bread of Life” (1877), “God Be With You” (1882), “How Great Thou Art” (1885), and “Make Me A Captive, Lord” (1890). While these and many others came from hymn writers and composers of “mainline” churches, a number of them also came from the revivals of new denominations.

LOCAL LIFE

Ames and Iowa Agricultural College*

	1866	1870	1875	1880	1885	1890	1895
Ames population	100	636	820	1,153	1,317	1,276	1,893
IAC enrollment	--	192		281		297	
First Congregational Church of Ames membership**	9	70	135	NA	NA	132	177

*Iowa State University’s original name was Iowa Agricultural College

**The Ames United Church of Christ began as The First Congregational Church of Ames.



1865 - Plat of Ames is recorded.

1865 - The first passenger train comes through Ames on the day President Lincoln is shot.

1866 - The Methodists organize their first church. Its building is at the corner of Kellogg and Onondaga (now Main Street).

1867 - Ames first school teacher, Henry May, is hired.

1867 - Hoggatt School is first used as school for Ames children.

1868 - The first Baptist congregation in Ames is begun.

1868 - Ames women demonstrate and close down Ames's first saloon.

1870 - Ames' first mayor, William West, is elected.

1872 - The Baptists build their first church at the corner of Fifth and Kellogg.

1874 - The first telephone service comes to Ames.

1877 - The first baseball club in Ames is organized.

1881 - The first brick school house is built; it later is known as Central School (now City Hall).

1886-87 - A fire burns much of Main Street. It leads to a law requiring all business buildings to be made of brick.

1887 - The Methodists relocate their church to the southeast corner of Sixth and Kellogg.

1887 - The United Brethren Church is located at Kellogg and South Second St. (The denomination later becomes the Evangelical United Brethren.) In 1963 the Nazarene Church acquires the building of the United Brethren.

Iowa Agricultural College

1859 - The Iowa Legislature selects a Story County site for the Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm.

1864 - Iowa Agricultural College is designated Iowa's land grant college.

1869 - The Iowa Agricultural College begins classes, with an enrollment of 192 students.

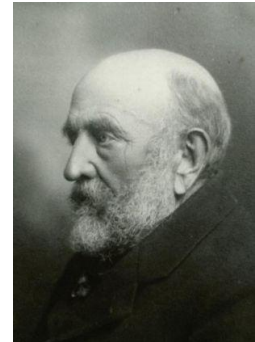
1872 - There are 24 men and 2 women in the first IAC graduation class.

1885 - College Hospital built

1891 - George Washington Carver becomes the first black student at Iowa State Agricultural College.

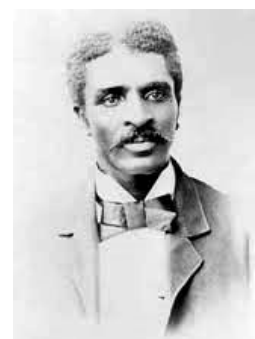
1891 - The Ames College and Railroad Company, or "Dinkey" begins making trips between the campus and Ames.

Henry May



Hoggatt School

George
Washington
Carver



1894 - ISC and Iowa begin playing football against each other.

OUR STORY BEGINS

The story of the founding of the first congregation in Ames has been told often and well in previous histories of Ames and church anniversary publications. Farwell Brown has an excellent summary in his first of three volumes about the City of Ames. [“First Church Founded in Ames,” Farwell T. Brown, *Ames: The Early Years in Word and Picture: From March to Marsh to Modern City* (Ames, Heuss Printing, 1993), pp. 31-36.] Much of the information which follows here is found in an unpublished address by Farwell Brown entitled “The Past is Prologue to the Future.” The speech and other primary source materials are in two file boxes at the Ames Historical Society. [copy of speech from Ames Historical Society, Ames UCC, box 1]

The First Congregational Church was formed in Ames in 1865. Eight people are listed as original members – three Congregational, three Presbyterian, and two Baptists. Among them was Cynthia O. Duff who was a moving force in organizing the first church in Ames. She brought the communion ware from Syracuse, New York, in a market basket. It is one of the congregation’s most prized heirlooms. It is not in use, but is on display in a case in the sanctuary.

The infant congregation met in the railroad depot, with planks for seats and a buffalo robe thrown over two boxes serving as a pulpit. An organizational meeting was held at the home of the Kingsbury’s, he was the station depot manager, where the decision was made to affiliate with the Congregational Church. Worship services continued to be held in the depot. Some records indicate that fifty people would attend such services.

The congregation erected its first church building in 1866. The dedication of the first church building was a major event. The first minister of the congregation, the Rev. John White, and other speakers gave expressions of thanks for the many local as well as distant contributors. Some “contributions” were financial, others tangible gifts. A Syracuse, New York, congregation supplied some items used in worship services. Cynthia Duff had been influential in gaining deeds of the two lots from John Blair, the representative of the Cedar Rapids and Missouri Railroad Company. The railroad also contributed several hundred dollars to the infant congregation. The American Missionary Society of the Congregational Church had also sent \$500 of financial support. Students and faculty at the college made the wooden pulpit. Mr. Loud, an IAC staff member, was credited with most of the work on the pulpit. It was used for 28 years and then was given to a newly formed congregation in Runnels. The Honorable J.B. Grinnell, the founder of Grinnell College, was invited to preach the dedication service. Following the service, he and others at the service contributed enough money to pay off the construction cost of the building.

For six years after the founding, only the men over 21 were allowed to vote on church business because they alone could be members of the Congregational Society. In 1871 the Society voted to give women the right to vote, however, it was an additional two years before women actually were able to vote on church matters.

Another important vote came in the formative years of the congregation. In many New England churches, individual pews or “pews in a box” were purchased by individual members or families.



The Ames congregation voted to have “free” pews.

During its first thirty years, membership in the “new” church grew, as the population of the city and the enrollment of the college increased. By 1891, the membership had reached 132. The total given from all societies of the church was \$348.93 that year, or an average of \$2.64 per member.

OUR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

“Any person may become a member of this Church, who gives credible evidence of piety, and who assents to the Confession of Faith and Covenant.”

- - 1890 Manual of the First Congregational Church

Who were these hardy souls who founded this congregation? Where did they come from? What were their ages? What occupations were represented in this initial generation of hungry saints of the church? What did they believe? A general answer to the first question is that many came from either New England or eastern states. Some moved to Ames from previous locations in Midwestern and Mississippi Valley states to the east. A few were battle-tested veterans of the Civil War. An early member observed, “Most newcomers are eastern people.”

If you had to guess the average age of a member of the First Congregational Church of Ames in 1865, would you think it to be 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, or older? It was most likely in the 30 to 35 year old range. Remember, Ames was a new community. As the iron rails were opening up the West, they brought many young men and women seeking opportunities. The first minister was 31 years of age. It is likely that most of the women of the congregation who protested the advent of a saloon in 1868 were in their late 20s and early 30s. That would be true, too, of the husbands who watched the protest from across the street.

Joining the First Congregational Church was not simply a matter of requesting to become a member and then having one’s name added to the list. Officially, new members were subject to examinations and discussions. Church records indicate that from time to time the notation appeared, “Removed from membership by discipline.” [Gladys H. Meads, *At the Squaw and the Skunk* (Ames: Greenwood Printing, 1955), p. 6] In the 1876 Manual, a list of approximately 80 names is given under a heading that these persons formerly had ties with the congregation.

The church records clearly indicate that there were many more female members than male members. For the final years of this first thirty-year period, the annual report numbers reveal that there were at least twice as many women members as men who were members.

Male/Female Membership of the First Congregational Church 1889-1894

	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894
Male Members	67	38	43	45	54	64
Female Members	98	86	89	97	107	110
Total Members	165	124*	132	142	163*	177*

[Note: Various church reports disagree on the annual numbers. The numbers indicated are from the Annual Reports of the First Congregational Church Society Meetings. The asterisk indicates



that a different figure is found elsewhere.]

Why the large differences in membership between men and women? One observer remarked that the men formed secular clubs while the women could find groups within the church to join.

Although baptisms in Congregational churches during this time were usually by “sprinkling,” adult baptisms did sometimes occur in one of the local streams. A note for the baptism of a “John Swan” to be done outdoors says “deferred until warm weather.”

This first congregation in Ames was made up of pious individuals, male and female, who were strong advocates of temperance and in just a decade or two, women’s right to vote. Their faith was biblically based and applicable to societal needs as well as personal devotion. Another characteristic of the membership was its openness to persons of other faith traditions. And it was reciprocal. At the 1900 dedication of the new brick church building, all the other congregations cancelled their morning services so their members could attend the Congregational Church’s event.

The founders of the church were reported as being in agreement that it should be a “union” church. The term “union” had no reference to the Civil War. It most likely referred to the cooperative arrangement between the Presbyterian denomination and the Congregational denomination. They had formed a “Plan of Union” as a strategy to conquer the West, spiritually speaking. The leaders of the two denominations, and many of their church members, were convinced that the West (the Mississippi River was a convenient dividing line) was a godless frontier that could either be saved or lost. “Bands” of young men came to Iowa to begin churches and colleges. By the 1840s, the agreement was cancelled, but in practice, the break was a gradual rather than a sudden parting of ways.

Why the break? Williston Walker, a noted church historian, calculated that some 2,000 Congregational churches of this era eventually became Presbyterian, in part because there was no national office or structure of the Congregational denomination. At a national meeting, a frustrated Congregational leader commented, “The Congregational cow is being milked, but all that comes out are Presbyterian milk and cheese.” (SOURCE: Williston Walker, “The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism” a paper. (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1960 reprint).

Despite the rhetoric, Congregational churches in Iowa flourished. In the first decades after the Civil War, the state of Iowa by far had more Congregational churches and a greater number of church members, including African-American members, than did its neighboring states.

The choice in Ames to be a Congregational church may have been made easier because there were already a Presbyterian church in Nevada and plans for one in Boone. Another factor, however, may have been that there were lots of Congregational churches already in Iowa and many more educated Congregational ministers coming from the East to pastor churches in the growing Midwest states. Consider these impressive statistics showing church membership in the Plains states (Source: Richard Taylor, p. 30):



The Number of Plains States Churches by Denomination and their membership for 1869

	State	Congregational	Presbyterian (New School)	Presbyterian (Old School)	Presbyterian Independent: Missouri Synod
Churches Members	Iowa	197** 11,158*	80 3,512	192 10,306	
Churches Members	Kansas	60 2,647	40 916	47 1,831	
Churches Members	Minnesota	70 3,488	45 1,936	55 1,778	
Churches Members	Missouri	61 2,626	61 2,480	117 5,318	139 7,818
Churches Members	Nebraska	23 571	8 256	16 561	
Churches Members	South Dakota	4 56	0 0	0 0	
Churches Members	Total	415 20,546	234 9,100	427 19,794	139 7,818

* Includes 736 members for thirteen blank churches figures at avg. size of other state body churches.

** Omitted are some American Board for Commissions of Foreign Missions churches for Native Americans, later many became Congregational.

OUR MINISTERS AND STAFF

During the first thirty years of the congregation's existence, it called eight ministers. The earliest ministers were from New England. Vermont was the home state of a number of them. By the time of the Civil War, the Congregational Church was widely known for its missionary endeavors in foreign lands. It also had a history of "home" missionary efforts.

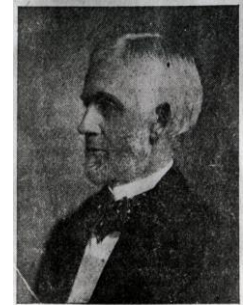
Much of the information on the first eight ministers of the congregation is from the *First Congregational Church Manual 1903*; hereafter cited as *FCC Manual, 1903*). The dates in the parentheses indicate the years of ministry at the First Congregational Church of Ames.

- 1) **Rev. John White** (1865-1868), in his early thirties, comes to the "far west" from New England. He had been serving as a pastor in Connecticut. Prior to that ministry, he and his wife, Jane, had served as missionaries in Africa. His return to the United States and then Iowa was for health reasons; he likely had tuberculosis. In Iowa, he had a warm and eager reception. He was energetic and dynamic. Like him, many of those who attended the first worship services were young – in their twenties and thirties. The young congregation prospered under his leadership. He became an advocate for temperance, successfully lobbying the state legislature making saloons illegal within two miles of a state college. After leaving Ames in March 1868, he returned to Africa for a short period of time, perhaps a



year. Once again, health reasons forced him to return to the United States. He was then called by another Iowa congregation, the Wittenberg Congregational Church near Newton. His ministry there lasted only a few years. He succumbed to tuberculosis (then called consumption) on March 23, 1879 at the age of 37 years and six months. He was buried in the Wittenberg cemetery, alongside two of his children.

- 2) **Rev. Simeon Gilbert** (1868-1869), a Vermonter by birth, was a graduate of Chicago Theological Seminary and classmate of Rev. T.O. Douglass, who became the leader (superintendent) of a state association of Iowa congregational churches. He gave faithful service to the Ames church for one year. Records indicate he was a person of high literary interests and perhaps was not a good fit with the congregation at that time in its history. He moved to Chicago where, as associate editor of the *Advance* and sometime western correspondent of *The Congregationist*, he had substantial influence. A later source refers to him as Dr. Gilbert.



REV. SIMEON GILBERT, D. D.

- 3) **Rev. A.A. Baker** of Bakersfield, Vermont (1870-1874) was called to the Ames pastorate in October 1869. He was serving as the minister of a church in Manchester, Iowa. He began his ministry in January 1870 and served five years. "Under his ministry the church grew in strength and prosperity. He often preached in school houses both north and south and was especially influential in starting the churches of Garden Prairie and Kelley." (*FCC Manual*, 1903)

- 4) **Rev. George G. Perkins** (1875-1879) "In March 1875, Rev. George G. Perkins from Hamilton, Missouri, began his work as pastor.... moving his family here in June. A pastor with 'seven children and none too many' needed a parsonage. One was erected on the lots east of the church and was ready for use about July 1. Its cost was about \$2,000. On Nov. 5, 1875, the tenth anniversary of the church was observed by a 'Praise and Fellowship meeting' ...During Rev. Perkins' pastorate a Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized at the parsonage with Mrs. Perkins as president. Rev. Perkins continued his service for five years, receiving many into fellowship, strengthening the faithful, rejoicing with the joyful and entering into deep sympathy with the sorrowful, for two of his sons sleep in our Ames cemetery."



Mr. Perkins resigned his pastorate in January, 1880. (*FCC Manual*, 1903)

What is not said in the *Manual*, but is recorded in the church's annual meeting minutes are the three reasons why he resigned. First, he complained of the "continual delinquency" of his income payments, second of the "manifest lack of cooperation and evident unfriendliness of others," and third, the "manifest disposition of some to join hands with those who have sought and are now seeking to tender my work ... useless."

The transition to the next minister had a glitch. According to a story by church member Mrs. Lydia Tilden, the Perkins had a sick child who could not be moved from the parsonage. So the family of the new pastor, which included five children, was invited to become temporary



members of the George Tilden family, which also had five children! The Bennett family moved into the parsonage after the Perkins' child recovered sufficiently to be able to move.

- 5) **Rev. William P. Bennett** (1880-1884) "In June 1880 a call was extend to Rev. William P. Bennett of Vermont. He was a graduate of Williams College and Andover Seminary. He was greatly interested in youth and education, serving for some time as a member of the school board of Ames. He believed in . . . the Congregational way and if some were hesitant regarding its desirability in this 'peculiar community' his wish prevailed and the installation services were held in May, 1882." In 1883, the seating capacity of the church was increased by the addition of an alcove at the rear of the pulpit for the use of the choir; an entrance hall was added while the tower was carried up and finished with a graceful spire.

As the result of preaching by Rev. Baker during his term (1870-1874), a church was organized in 1883 by Rev. Bennett about six miles north of Ames at Gilbert Station. Under his guidance a commodious church building was erected. From that time for more than sixteen years, the Gilbert church was yoked with the Ames church. The First Congregational Church pastors preached regularly at Gilbert in the afternoon of each Sabbath.

The next year, in 1884, a call came to Mr. Bennett from Crete, Nebraska, where he would have, beside serving the church, the spiritual guidance of the youth who attended the Doane Congregational College. A council was called and though strong efforts were made to retain him in Ames," ... [the council, after a tie vote, the moderator broke the tie, arguing that it was more difficult to find someone for Doane than a minister for Ames]. "So Mr. Bennett went to Crete where he lived and built up the people in the most holy faith until his sudden death from pneumonia in March 1896 . . . "In the resolutions of sympathy sent the family from Ames he is characterized as 'a sturdy defender of Congregationalism, a brave champion of temperance, an ardent promoter of education, an active leader in reforms.'" (*FCC Manual*, 1903)

- 6) **Rev. E. C. Moulton** (1885-1886). "Rev. E. C. Moulton, a friend of Mr. Bennett, began his work here in Feb. 1885. Mr. Moulton was educated as a lawyer, graduating from the New York State University of Law at Ballston Spa and soon afterward he was admitted to the bar in Janesville, Wisconsin. After teaching a short time he decided to enter the work of the ministry. He was a gifted speaker and a much loved pastor. He won the popular regard and esteem not only of the church but of the people of Ames and on occasions of special importance no one was more frequently solicited for an address." (*ACC Manual*, 1903)

[Editorial comment: In January, 1886, the following resolution was passed: "Resolved, That it is the wish of this society that the present relations between Rev. E. C. Moulton and this society be continuous and should he or the society in the future wish to sever those relations the party so desired to have liberty to do so by giving the other party three months notice." Several months after the adoption of this resolution, the pastor "severed the relations," the congregation waived the three months' notice, and Mr. Moulton immediately began a new pastorate at Shenandoah, Iowa.]

- 7) **Rev. J. D. Wells** (1888-1890) "Rev. J. D. Wells ... came to us from Webster City in March 1888. He was a graduate of Michigan University and was a successful teacher in Dubuque for



two years. He then went to Union Theological Seminary in New York City to prepare for the ministry. After several pastorates he came to Webster City where he remained five years. During his work in Ames, the Sunday School greatly increased in numbers and interest, and an addition was made to the church building on the east of a room 20 x 30 for the accommodation of classes. This room was very useful for other departments of church work, as prayer meetings, Christian Endeavor, missionary, ladies and temperance societies, and being connected with the church by folding doors was often opened into the audience room.

Mr. Wells was a fine musician and did much to arouse interest in church music. [Ed. Note: The first paid staff member, Miss Pearson, was appointed as chorister during Wells' ministry.] He was also an earnest and aggressive worker in temperance. He organized the young people into a society of Christian endeavor, the Y.P.S.C.E. which he regarded as one of the strongholds of the church. He left us in August, 1890, at the urgent request of the people at Wilton, Iowa, seconded by our Home Missionary Superintendent to take charge of Wilton Congregational Academy." (*FCC Manual*, 1903)

- 8) **Rev. F. J. Douglass** (1890-1896) Rev. F. J. Douglass came from Humboldt, Iowa, beginning his work in Ames on Nov. 1, 1890. He was a graduate of Chicago Theological Seminary, a classmate of Rev. J. D. David, long a missionary of the American Board in Japan. Mr. Douglass went to Jamaica as a missionary, the climate proved fatal to the life of his young wife and child, and for him he was compelled to leave the island and seek work elsewhere. His pastorate in Ames continued for six years, being longer than that of any pastor preceding him.



Much advancement was made. The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor (Y.P.S.C.E.) increased in strength and helpfulness, sometimes relieving him by taking charge of the evening service. A Mission Band was organized by the pastor's daughter, Miss Winona Douglass. To clarify, the "band" was not a musical group; its stated purpose was "to cultivate an interest in the degraded and needy." In its first year, it reported it had 23 members. A Junior Y.P.S.C.E. was organized March 26, 1893, with Mrs. Gammon as its leader. (*Note: The church took this youth program seriously; Mrs. Gammon was sent to Boston for the national Christian Endeavor convention.*)

Mrs. Douglass was an efficient leader in Woman's Missions and temperance work, and as librarian of the Sunday School, she introduced a new and systematic method for the care and distribution of books." (*ACC Manual* 1903)

Church Staff

Typical of churches of this period, the First Congregational Church of Ames had "two for one," that is, the minister's wife was the unpaid second staff member. Most ministers' wives were active in the church, attending meetings, serving as the coordinator or chair of committees, teaching Sunday School classes, accompanying the minister as he called upon members and prospective members.

There is an account that a young woman, Miss Pearson, was hired as the first chorister. What her



responsibilities were is not clear. What was clear, however, was that she was to be paid by special contributions. Her salary would not come from the budget.

Although the appointment of an Associate Pastor who would focus on the college community (students primarily) would not come until 1906, the First Congregational Church benefited from the faculty and student body of Iowa State. There were many who served as Sunday School teachers and advisers to the organizations the church began.

OUR BUILDINGS AND BUDGETS

The one person who was most responsible for the quick location and rapid construction of the initial sanctuary of the First Congregational Church was Cynthia O. Duff. She had been a nurse in the Civil War and also developed skills as a telegrapher. After the war, she became acquainted with John I. Blair, who was the agent for the Cedar Rapids and Omaha Railroad Company. She acted on his behalf because many in the area were against the railroad's expansion, especially if it was too near their property. She purchased 320 acres from several Ames area residents in 1864, telling the former owners she was purchasing the land for a "rich uncle" back east. The "rich uncle" was the railroad and its representative, John Blair. As the town was developing, Mrs. Duff opened a restaurant on Main Street. Not coincidentally, railroad crews often ate there. Due to her influence and that of John Blair, the Cedar Rapids & Missouri River Railroad deeded two lots worth \$300 to the Congregational Church Society. The lots were located at Sixth and Kellogg. Incidentally, the street name, Kellogg was Cynthia Duff's maiden name. (*Faces of Our Founders: The Early Leaders of Ames, IA* (Ames, IA: Ames Historical Association, 1991, pp. 10-11).

Cynthia Duff



That account adds that Cynthia Duff was also accomplished as a carpenter. She assisted with the construction of the sashes and helped in fitting the windows into the frames. She and other women helped putty the windows. R. B. Shearer was paid \$300 to build a 30 foot by 40 foot frame building at a total cost of \$1,800. The work completed by Cynthia Duff and the other women saved \$12 from the construction cost.

The church building was dedicated on October 7, 1866. According to accounts of the dedication service, donors including Josiah Grinnell, a Congregational minister and journalist, and the founder of the City of Grinnell, raised the money to complete what had already been raised to pay off the building costs. At the end of the service, Grinnell promised to write his friend, Oakes Ames, a congressman and a major financial banker of the transcontinental railroad system, to ask that he donate a bell for the church. The bell was cast in 1866 by the Henry Hopper & Company of Boston. Its wheel is 43 inches in diameter; its height 27 inches. It is 29 inches at its base and 15 inches at its curve.



In 1875 the first parsonage was constructed next to the church. The congregation believed it necessary because it was calling as its fourth pastor, Rev. George G. Perkins, who had seven children. Although the parsonage was for the family, church records indicate it was also used for Sunday School classes on the Sabbath. The cost of the building was \$2,000.



With an increasing membership, the congregation added an educational unit (also called the Lecture Room), a choir loft, entrance hall, and a church spire in 1883. Another addition occurred in 1888, when Sunday School rooms were added. These rooms were used during the week as sites of other meetings. In 1884 the women of the church organized to help address the debt that was incurred by the construction.

Budget issues were a seemingly never-ending problem. The timely payment of the salaries of ministers was perennial. Despite the local budget problems, the members made it clear that missionary contributions were to be continued. In 1891 “A Systematic Plan for Benevolences” was established. Gifts were made to both Foreign and Home Missions, the Congregational Union, the American Missionary Association, and The New West Education Commission. [SOURCE: *Tradition and Visions*, 1990]

OUR ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Every human group enterprise establishes some form of governance. On December 25, 1865 the First Congregational Society is formed. This model came from the way that New England congregations were organized. Although worship services were open to all and were free, the policies, including financial as well as spiritual decisions, were to be made by the members of this group. It was only open to males over 21 years of age. At a Society meeting in 1871, the word “male” was stricken from its Constitution. It is not clear why, however, that women did not become voting members of the Society until 1873.

Social Action

Clearly, women were active in the congregation from its inception. But they became pointedly active on March 10, 1868. A group of thirteen women (most of them in their 20s and 30s) from the church marched to Sherwood House, the first hotel in Ames, where they confronted the man who had opened Ames’ first saloon. They urged him to close his operation. Despite a momentary delay, when a barmaid threw pepper on the wood stove “causing some consternation” as a newspaper account put it, they persisted. Their efforts persuaded the hotel owner, Mr. Sherwood, to put pressure on the saloon owner. One report said the owner was on the 4:00 p.m. train out of town. Farwell Brown speculated that another factor influenced the hasty departure. The deed to the hotel’s parcel of land contained a clause that in case of forfeiture, the land reverted to John Blair. Mr. Sherwood may have envisioned that the women’s protest would result in a dangerous decline in business.



No saloon opened in Ames until 1932. That amazing occurrence was probably due more to another effort, this time by the First Congregational Church's pastor, Rev. John White and a church member, W. H. Wynn, a popular professor of Latin, Literature, and History at IAC. They went to Des Moines to lobby the state legislature in the late 1860s. They convinced the legislators to pass a law banning saloons within two miles of any state college. Later, the Iowa Legislature extends the limit to within three miles of any state college.

A graduate of Iowa Agricultural College who becomes a leader in the women's suffrage movement (the right of women to vote), Carrie Chapman Catt, speaks at the church in 1890.

Carrie
Chapman Catt



Worship and Church Music

Church records mention that the church has a melodeon. (Dictionary description: "a small keyboard organ in which the tones are produced by drawing air through metal reeds by means of a bellows operated by pedals.") A young woman, Miss Pearson, was hired to play. The historical record makes clear that her wages will not be part of the regular church budget, but must be covered by donations. There is a newspaper reference to the fact that the First Congregational Church's choir is the first one "vested," i.e., has robes. The church's choir was dubbed "the city's best" in an article in the March 3, 1883 *Ames Intelligencer*.

Religious Education

Church records say relatively little about education at First Congregational Church in these first 30 years. One can assume that Sunday School classes were an active part of the program. In an 1883 letter in the church files, Farwell Brown's maternal grandfather, George Tilton, reports to his out-of-state bride-to-be, that he had been recruited to teach a young ladies class at the church. After they were married and she joined her husband in Ames, Lydia Tilden became the Superintendent of the Sunday School. According to figures from 1888 to 1890, there were as many as 75 to 100 students and 15 teachers involved in the Sunday School. Several letters of remembrance when the congregation celebrates its history indicate that the writers became Sunday School teachers when they were in the 7th grade or 15 years of age.

Prior to 1890 the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, Y.P.S.C.E., was started by Rev. Wells. In March 1893, a Junior Y.P.S.C.E. was organized. Christian Endeavor, as it was also known, was begun in Portland, Maine in 1881 by a Congregational minister, Dr. Francis E. Clark. Rev. Clark had begun the organization, he said, because while a large number of boys and girls were "hopefully converted, the question How shall this band be trained, how shall they be set to work, how shall they be fitted for church membership?"

Another letter in the files indicated that the writer had attended a Sunday School concert and observed that "there was not a grey head present." Multiple references mention a Sunday School orchestra.

Organizations

In the same year in which they began to vote in the Congregational Society, 1873, the women



formed their first organization, "The Home and Missionary Society." It remains active for a number of years, and is referred to in a local newspaper in 1892 as still meeting. A Ladies Sewing Society is begun in 1885.

OUR TRADITIONS AND HEIRLOOMS

1865 - Cynthia O. Duff was a member of a Congregational Church in Syracuse, New York. A member of the church, Mrs. Thurber, gives her a communion set for the new congregation. Tradition says she brought the pitcher and cup in a basket. It was used for communion until 1902. The set is in a case at the back of the sanctuary today.

1865 - The Syracuse church also provides other gifts for the congregation including singing books, an altar cloth, and a pulpit Bible.

1866 - Oakes Ames, the Massachusetts congressman and financial backer of the railroad, donates a bell. It is still in the church's bell tower and rings out the call to worship.

1866 - Iowa Agricultural College staff and students make the pulpit and donate it to church. It was later given to a church in Runnells, Iowa.

