

THE GILLAM CHURCH

Our information about this former small church came from Mrs. Ray (Victoria) Stevens and Mrs. Julius (Elma) Marion. It stood on a corner of the former James Stevens farm in Gillam township, what is now the intersection of Ind. 14 and county road 430E, on the northwest corner, in Sec. 23. It was probably meant to be non-denominational, but apparently became Methodist, with preachers coming from the Barkley church.

A small frame building, built about 1900, it went into a decline about 1930 and was closed, with members going to other churches in the area. Ray and Victoria Stevens lived in the building for a couple of years, after their home was destroyed by fire. It was then torn down and the materials donated to the building of a church in Tefft. In appreciation, former members were invited to the dedication. However it was struck by lightning after that and destroyed by fire. As Mrs. Marion said: "Perhaps the Lord did not want it moved away." She goes on to relate that the Gillam church had gas lights, unlike any today, and they were the responsibility of John Bishir. Some of the families attending this church were: Bishir, Stevens, Toomire, S. Robinson, Mason and many others. She remembers attending the old one-room Gillam school across the road. And mentions the Mason family Burying ground. This is a small plot south, at the next intersection with Division road, on the west side. This is not well tended today and but few stones are still to be found, but the old ornamental iron fence is still there. An earlier reading found eight graves there.

This small cemetery stands several feet above the road in front of the gate. It was here that Celia Rockwell fell in the summer of 1978 and broke bones which stopped the plans she and Cyril had to research the history of the Gillam church.

Further recollection of the Gillam church come to us from Cyril Rockwell: He tells of the former Logan store building which stood just north of the church. Across the road, on the west side was the one room Gillam school house where church was held before the church building was erected about 1900. The Larkin Logan family homestead was next west from the school house.. A descendant of Larkin Logan now lives on the site of the old school.

The church was a small white frame building. From a newspaper clipping we find that it was dedicated August 8, 1901, with an all-day program and dinner. Dr. S. Beck, the presiding Elder of the District was the main speaker.

There were tall, arched windows; two wood burning stoves heated the interior; there was a pump organ to accompany the choir. On the walls were brackets for lamps, first of oil, later they used acetylene gas. Some of the ministers he remembers were: Rev. Spiker, Etienne Kuonin, Charles Rinehart, Darwin Lavengood, a young evangelist. Two well remembered Sunday School superintendents were Schuyler Robinson and Bess Tillett. And Cyril also preached during the summer months while attending college.

Some of the families who were active in the church, as he remembers were: Leslie and Bess Smith Tillett, George and Molly Logan, Ed and Sarah Rockwell, the Culp family, Robinson families, the James Stevens family, Johnson, Hermansen, Julius Marion, Bishir, Toomire, Reed, Wagoner, and many others. One was Jennie Logan Faris, now living in Idaho and 102 years of age.

There were many revival services in this church. And the men would gather to cut wood for heating the church. Bobsleds were used to haul it in and store it in the old store building; also sleds were used in winter for bringing people to church in deep snow. A nice layer of clean straw, heated stones, blankets, sleigh bells on the horses, what a nice memory! And Christmas in the old church was an occasion! A large native evergreen tree was cut and put up inside, to be decorated with paper chains, popcorn and cranberry strings and lighted wax candles. The program was

held on Christmas Eve, after which Santa would arrive with gifts for all.

Darwin Lavengood was a young farm worker in the Gillam community who conducted evangelistic services in the Gillam church after regular services were discontinued. He thus brought twelve souls to God. He asked Cyril Rockwell to assist with a baptism and this was held in the Pinkamink river on the site of the old town of Saltillo. Many came to take part and there was singing and a prayer by Darwin, while Cyril immersed the twelve new christians in the Pinkamink.

The church stood empty for a number of years, then was sold to the Tefft Methodist church. They used it in constructing a new church. However that one was soon after struck by lightning and burned to the ground.