

THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH – PEORIA, ILLINOIS

In the fall of 1880, William A. Huston and his wife Mary, members of the Free Methodist church of Paxton, Illinois, removed to Peoria, at which time there was no organization of that church here, and they were the only members. They commenced holding neighborhood prayer meetings in the home of the people and seeing good results, and securing a number of conversions, they were encouraged to send for Rev. William Manley, chairman of the Galva district of the Illinois conference of their church, who came in the month of December, 1881, and held a ten days' revival meeting, which resulted in the organization of the Peoria society in the building known as the Olivet Mission, on Walnut street, between Washington and Adams street, which had formerly been Calvary Presbyterian mission, and at which place the late William Reynolds had for many years conducted a Sunday school. The society was organized December 29, 1881, with the following six charter members: Wm. A. Huston, Mary E. Huston, Jonathan Haley, Belle Orr, Eliza Ward and Cynthia Morris.

In 1882, Revs. W. G. Hanmer, William Kelsey and P. C. Hanna, held a series of revival meetings in the Mission building on Walnut street, which resulted in an addition of fifty members. William A. Huston was the first class leader, and has served continuously in that capacity to the present date,—a period of more than thirty years.

Rev. Manley, who organized the church, has passed away. William Kelsey is now pastor of the Englewood Episcopal Methodist church, Chicago, and P. C. Hanna is the United States minister plenipotentiary to the Republic of Mexico.

The organization of the Free Methodist church is very similar to the organization of the Methodist Episcopal church, including the itineracy; consequently, pastoral changes are frequent.

The following pastors have served this church: Rev. J. D. Marsh, 1882-84; G. W. Whittington, 1884-85; F. A. Arnold, 1885-86; James Sprague, 1886-87; J. T. Taylor and John Harvey, 1887-89; J. D. Marsh, 1889-92; D. M. Smahey, 1892-93; J. T. Taylor, 1893-95; B. D. Fay, 1895-98; W. H. Winter and Lizzie Haist, 1898-1901; Henry Lenz, 1901-03; W. C. Willing, 1903-06; John Harvey, 1906-07; W. J. Bone, 1907-08; R. G. Wilkin, 1908-10; H. J. McKinnell, present pastor since 1910.

The society worshiped in the building on Walnut street ten years. The church building on the corner of South Underhill and Windom streets, West Bluff, was built during the second pastorate of Rev. J. D. Marsh and was dedicated by General Superintendent (Bishop) B. T. Robberts, December 6, 1891. The parsonage on Windom street was built during the pastorate of Rev. B. D. Fay in 1897. The society has a mission church at the corner of Broadway and Nebraska streets, built by members of the parent society. A district parsonage has recently been built on Underhill street, under the charge of District Elder E. G. Cryer. The number of members at the present time, February, 1912, is forty-six. The Sabbath school at Underhill and Windom streets numbers thirty, while the school at Broadway and Nebraska streets numbers eighty. This society is also conducting a Sabbath school at 2021 South Washington street, which has a membership of forty.

They have an active Women's Foreign Missionary society, which raised and paid for foreign missions last year \$156.