

(0:00)

Sharon: This is an interview with Miss Helen Post and Mrs. Katherine Ward for the Clinton County Historical Society, St .Johns Michigan oral history project by Sharon Randall. The tape is being made October 17, 1978, at 9:30 a.m., at the Greenbush Methodist church, Greenbush Township. Miss Post and Mrs. Ward are sisters and members of this lovely old church. The church's history and their own family history coincide. These two women were responsible for a historical display that was used in Sept. 1978 when the Greenbush Methodist church was shown as part of the third Clinton County historical home tour. Today I am asking Miss Post and Mrs. Ward to give us an oral report on the history of this old country church. They are going to start with some background material and then concentrate on the history of the families that are represented in the church's magnificent stained glass memorial windows. Miss Post is going to give us the history of the church and then she is going to start by talking about the windows that are located in the entryway to the church. Miss Post.

(1:15)

Helen Post: I'm Helen Post and I was born in 1908 and I have always lived in Greenbush Township and I live on the old home farm which is on Hyde Road in a house that is probably 109 years old. And I have always attended the Greenbush Methodist Church. And I would like to give you some pictures of the Greenbush United Methodist Church.

The Greenbush United Methodist Church was built in 1898, but Methodism really began in this community in 1849. In the fall of 1849 Reverend William Benson organized the class in a log school ½ mile south of Eureka. Members of this class were Nelson Daggett and wife, Nathan Spooner and wife, William Besley and wife, and James Carter. This was the beginning of the Greenbush church. Among the earliest ministers were Reverend Wilkinson, Reverend Crittenden, and Alden Smith, a circuit rider.

In 1855 another early religious organization was founded at what was then known as the Wildcat School. They're better known today as the Union Home School. They consisted of 15 members. Elden Rose was one of the early ministers there. In 1865 the present Sherwood School was built to replace an old wood structure. These two organizations united and had services in the Sherwood School which is one mile north of the Greenbush Methodist Church. The first minister was Reverend Charles Chick who lived in Maple Rapids and preached there also. Among the families who were regular attendants were Davies, Adams, Ellis, Conner, Fleagle, Scott, Carter, Osmond, Almond, Sherwood, Ingersol, Hudson, Grant, Jolly, Besley, Newman, Silvernail, Mathews, Blanchard, Marshall, and Newman.

In 1877 the Keystone Grange of Greenbush built a two story hall one mile south of the schoolhouse on a half-acre of ground given by Mr. R. E. Davies [should be Richard Conner Davies] for a building site. It was built by

a company of stockholders composed of grange members. The grange used the upper floor and allowed the church to use the lower floor for services without paying rent. This the church members were glad to do as it provided more room for their growing attendance. The township elections were held there also.

Services were held there for several years and in 1896 there was much talk about the need for a real church building and several plans were considered. One was to remodel the grange hall as at this time the grange had ceased to function and the stockholders had given to the church their interest in the hall and site. No plans for remodeling being satisfactory the building was moved across the road at a site donated by the late Peter Fleagel. It was purchased two years by the township of Greenbush for \$200. In 1897 the church purchased for \$50 the title to the land where the hall stood and the following year an additional strip along the north side for a horseshed for \$50.

At a special meeting a building committee was appointed which consisted of W. T. Bear, chairman, Marcus Jolly, Frank Marshall, treasurer, Peter Fleagel, John Bishop, and A. B. Dexter, Meanwhile plans for a beautiful country church was made with the help of Henry Hewitt a Maple Rapids carpenter. He was employed to oversee the building of the church a task for which he received a dollar and a half a day. Later he turned this work over to Henry Mallory and the building was completed under his supervision. The building committee assumed the entire responsibility of financing the building and pledged a thousand dollars as a start. Much of the work was donated. \$500 were paid by the merchants of St. Johns. Many families pledged \$25. In addition several of the families bought a beautiful window bearing the name of the donor.

At the dedication enough money was pledged to clear the indebtedness on all of the church property including the church debt. The total cost of the building was about \$4000. Dedication services were conducted by Reverend William Puffer and Bishop Ninde of Lansing on August 28, 1898. At this time it was considered the most beautiful country church in the Michigan Methodist conference.

(5:47)

The window over the front entrance to the church was given by William Henry Goddard. William Henry Goddard was born July 1, 1831, in Rye, England, Kent County [Rye is located in East Sussex. English records indicate he was born in Dover, Kent County and grew up in Rye, Sussex.] which is located in the southeastern part of the British Islands on the English Channel. Rye was noted because of its many artists. William Henry went through the three guilds in an artist school in England and was 27 when he had mastered his trade of decorating and painting a mural of Biblical scenes and characters on the walls of churches. He did gold leaf work on the ceiling of churches which is a lost art today. William Henry married Mary Ann Davies of Winchelsea, England, a town four miles west of Rye on the English Channel. They were married in 1860. Three children were born

William Davies, Mary Elizabeth, and Edward Robert. They were all born in Rye, England.

In the latter part of 1865 William and Mary Ann came to America with their three small children. They came in the late summer in a sailboat and were four weeks in crossing the ocean. Serena Smith came with them.

Serena and Richard C. J. Davies who was already in America were engaged before he came. They were married shortly after she arrived. They came to Greenbush Township, Clinton County, Michigan, where William T., Robert E., Richard C., and Elizabeth Davies Adams had settled taking up land, clearing it, and building log homes. William T. and Robert E. had already built a fanning mill factory one-half mile north of the Greenbush church in 1855.

William Henry Goddard and Mary Ann built a log house across the road and a little south of the Greenbush church and he was employed as the painter of the fanning mills and milk safes. His great talent as an artist was lost as they papered the churches in America. Three more children were born Katherine Serena, James, and Charles. James and Charles died in infancy.

In those early days singing schools were popular and Mary Ann Goddard would go with a big sleigh load to the sing. On the way to and back from the singing school the people would ask Mary Ann to sing. People said her beautiful voice would ring out like a silver bell on those frosty nights. William Henry would stay with the children so that she could go to the sing. But Mary Ann did not live only eight years after coming to America. She died March 6, 1873, at the age of 39 leaving four little children. The children were taken in the home of the Davies family. William Henry continued to be employed by the Davies brothers and did painting elsewhere like the Steel Hotel in St. Johns and newly built homes in the area. William Henry papered the inside of the Greenbush church when it was built, did all the varnishing, and painted the church on the outside. He passed away April 24, 1899. His funeral was the second one held in the Greenbush church.

(9:12)

The south window in the entrance hall was given by James S. Adams and his wife Elizabeth Davies Adams. James S. Adams was born in Ohio in 1842 and came to this community when a child. He entered the employment of the Davies brothers fanning mill factory and worked his way to foreman in the woodworking department. He bought 120 acres of land across the road south of the Greenbush Methodist Church which he reclaimed from its wild condition. His wife Elizabeth Davies to whom he was married in 1865 was born in England. They were official members of the Greenbush church for many years. After retirement they moved into St. Johns and opened a harness shop.

(10:00)

Sharon: Now Mrs. Ward is going to tell us a little bit about herself and her background and she is going to go into the windows in the Sunday school room and several of them in the sanctuary. Mrs. Ward.

(10:15)

Mrs. Ward: I was born 1902 and grew up in this beautiful country church where I had wonderful religious training and then I became the wife of Reverend J. Lawrence Ward. And his first charge was the Greenbush church. And we served around Grand Rapids, Michigan, and he was the treasurer of the Michigan Methodist Conference and had that work for 36 years. He was treasurer the longest of any treasurer in the history of Methodism in this country. And we retired in 1965. We served for 42 years in the ministry. And now I live in Florida. Sanford, Florida, but spend my summers with my sister Helen Post in the Greenbush community and attend this beautiful Greenbush church which I call my little church in the wildwoods.

(11:08)

Now the large window on the east side of the Greenbush church was given by Robert and Alice Davies. Robert E. Davies was born in Suffix County, England, October the 5<sup>th</sup> 1830, and was reared in his native land until the age of nineteen when he crossed the Atlantic in 1849, an ocean voyage of 30 days, landing in New York City. Then he went to Lyons, New York, where he served an apprenticeship of three years in a fanning mill factory. After he had learned his trade he came then in the fall of 1854 to Grand Rapids, Michigan, and spent a year working as a journeyman. Then located in Clinton County and with his brother William embarked in business.

His brother William T. came to America in 1851 and learned the trade in Lyons, New York, and the two undertook the manufacturing of fanning mills and milk safes. Their fanning mills acquired a wide reputation extending over the state of Michigan. This factory turned out hundreds of fanning mills and milk safes each year from 1855 until 1891. The Davies fanning mill factory ranked among the leading industries of the kind in central Michigan and was the first factory in this area. It was located ½ mile north of the Greenbush church.

Robert E. Davies married Alice Thomas of Lyons, New York. To this union four children were born: Robert T., Nellie, Edith, and James R.

Robert E. was highly respected and very active in the community. He was the treasurer of the township for thirty years. He did much for the building of the Greenbush church. Robert E. died June 22, 1897, at his home in Greenbush. His wife Alice Thomas Davies was born August the 8<sup>th</sup> 1833 and died March 17th 1889.

(13:20)

In connection with Robert E. Davies was his brother William T. Davies who was a generous giver to the Greenbush Methodist Church for years. William T. Davies a prominent and prosperous citizen of Clinton County as has been said was a member of the well-known W. T. and R. E. Davies manufacturers of celebrated Greenbush fanning mills. He was born in Heights, Kent County, England, August the 30<sup>th</sup> 1829. He was the son of Robert and Mary Ann Davies and a brother of Robert E. Davies. He was

reared to manhood in his native country and there received a fair education. And he was largely self-educated. He immigrated to America in 1851 taking passage at London on a sail ship and making what was then considered a short voyage of 26 and ½ days. Making port at New York City he then went to Lyons, New York and there served an apprenticeship of three years at the fanning mill trade. He worked as a journeyman at his trade in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1855 he and his brother Robert E. Davies established themselves in Greenbush Township, Clinton County. They first commenced manufacturing fanning mills on a small scale and the celebrated Greenbush fanning mill was their special project and they also put out a large supply of milk safes.

William T. married Miss Jeannette Sevy a sister of Ozi Sevy of Greenbush Township. One of the first families to settle in this area was the Sevy family. To them six children were born Hattie, Mary Louise, Jennie, William T., Nettie, and Richard C. who passed away at the age of six.

He was preeminently a self-made man and a very successful one. He owned a large body of land with his brother R. E. north of the Greenbush church. Mr. William T. Davies possessed many of the sterling qualities and riches of a sturdy English race. He took a great interest in the affairs of the community. He had an excellent reputation for sound business judgement and financial ability and his family was highly esteemed. No manufacturing firm of Clinton County wore a better reputation of businessmen than that of W. T. and R. E. Davies. William passed away in St. Johns November the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1904, and his wife Jeannette passed away February 6<sup>th</sup> 1932.

(15:50)

In that these five families the Davies came to this community and lived for many years I think that something should be given about their heritage. Now Robert Davies the first he was a soldier of the Crown who fought under the great General Wellington and he fought in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. I'm going to tell you something about his life. Robert Davies the first was born May 1<sup>st</sup> 1794. He was a native of Wales from young manhood he was a soldier in the English army. He took part in the war of the allied forces against Napoleon under the leadership of the renowned General Wellington and fought in Spain, Portugal, and France. And likewise served in Canada. At the age of twenty-one he took part in the world famous battle of Waterloo in 1815 at the town of Waterloo. He was decorated for bravery by Queen Victoria and given a plaque which is highly prized by his family. He was stationed in France three years after that famous engagement at Waterloo. Robert Davies the first retired as a pensioner after years of service in the military. He was then made guard in the military command.

He married Mary Ann Thomas on November 18, 1828, and she was born on September 28, 1797, in Kent County, England. They lived in Winchelsea, England, near the English Channel. John Wesley preached in their home at one time. Five children were born to this union: William T.,

born 1829; Robert E., born 1830; Elizabeth Sarah, born in 1832; Mary Ann, born in 1834; Richard Conner born in 1841.

Robert the first passed away September 1, 1859, and was buried by the Winchelsea church, Kent County, England. His wife Mary Ann came to America to live with her children in 1860 as four of her family had come and settled in Greenbush Township, Clinton County. Cleared the land by the now Greenbush church. Mary Ann Thomas passed away March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1876.

(18:21)

Now the north window in the east side of the Sunday school room in the Greenbush church was given by the Beebe family. Sylvester Beebe was the donor of this north window. He was born in Herkimer County, New York, April 14, 1820. His paternal ancestors were English. Farming was his occupation. In 1846 he was married to Abby Ann Vincent. Two children born to this union: Emma L. who was the wife of the late William Bird and William F. Two children were born in this union. Mrs. Beebe died soon after that.

In 1861 he married Clara Osborn. Two children were born to this union. A daughter Antha who passed away in 1936, a son Charles E. who died while still a young man. Mr. Beebe and his family came to Michigan in 1865 settling in Essex Township. In 1870 they came to Greenbush settling on section 23. The farm now occupied by Eldridge Snyder family. Mrs. Beebe died in 1896. Sylvester died January 30, 1899. His funeral was the first one in the new Greenbush Methodist Church. To William F. and Clara were born Nora, Bertha, Estella, and Lawrence.

(19:50)

The north east window in the sanctuary was given by the Peter Fleagle family. Peter Fleagle was a valiant soldier in the Civil War. He was born March 24, 1833. He was the eldest of Daniel and Nellie Fleagle both natives of Pennsylvania. At the age of 20 he left home and came to Sandusky, Ohio and began work there. Mary Cole a native of Ohio became his wife. Two children of this marriage were well-known in Greenbush community. Nellie who married Frank Marshall and Anna the wife of Eugene Jolly. The mother of this marriage departed from life in 1874. A second marriage with Alice Riddle took place. Four children were born namely Ella, Edward, Fred, and Lewis.

Peter Fleagle enlisted in 1861. He was in the regiment which was attached to General Sherman's army. He took part in the Atlanta campaign and was honorable discharged in July 1865. As a reward for his services the government gave him a large piece of land which is located directly across from the Greenbush church. After he was discharged he settled on this farm across the road from the church and he served as commissioner for several years in the area and was class leader for the Greenbush church for many years. Mr. Fleagle was an honored and esteemed citizen of Greenbush Township and enjoyed the confidence of all who knew him. He was a member of the building committee of the church.

(21:35)

The Marshall window is the large one on the north side of the church. Hannah Watros was born November 7, 1829. The daughter of William and Nancy Strong Watros natives of New York. Hannah married Henry Marshall October 7, 1852. Henry was born in Westchester County in New York in 1827. The son of Seth and Phebe Marshall. He came to Ohio when a young man and was married there. By this union of Mr. and Mrs. Marshall there were born six children: George, Frank, Lewis, Almira, Denton, one having died. The parents of this household emigrated to Clinton County and settled on a farm in Greenbush Township in 1860. Henry Marshall was in the Civil War and was discharged because of wounds in 1864. He died in 1880. He was a man among men and known for his honesty and integrity. Mrs. Marshall continued living on the farm carried on with the help of her son. She died in 1906.

(22:50)

The Bear family donated a window on the west side of the church on the northwest corner of the church. Mr. Bear was born January 3, 1848, in Ohio in Tuscarawas County. His parents Jacob and Mary there was natives of Pennsylvania. He was united in marriage February 21, 1875 with Mary E. Baumgartner a native of Ohio. Three children blessed this union: Clark born February 1, 1877; Clarence September 27, 1878; and Mary April 27, 1888.

Mr. Bear came to Greenbush in 1878 and here he made his home ever after on his splendid farm which he put in the possible finest conditions. He served as school director. He was master of the Keystone grange in Greenbush Township for years. He was a prominent and prosperous citizen of Greenbush. One well informed on the general topics of the day Mr. Bear was a leader in the Greenbush Methodist Church.

He was chairman of the building committee when the church was built in 1898. Others on the committee were Marcus Jolly, F. S. Marshall, Peter Fleagle, John Bishop, and A. B. Dexter. F. S. Marshall was treasurer of the building fund. These men assumed the entire responsibility of financing the building of the church and pledged a thousand dollars as a start.

Meanwhile the plans for a beautiful country church were made. At the dedication enough money was raised to clear the indebtedness on the church. Including the horse shed the total cost of the building was nearly \$4000. The dedication took place August 28, 1898. About four months after laying of the corner stones. Mr. Bear and his wife were active members of the Greenbush Methodist Church in which he acted as steward. They were highly respected members. One incident showing the self-sacrificing interest of the members of the committee is found in the devotion of W. T. Bear who was chairman of the building committee of the church. 120 acres of land to work he gave most of his time from April to November and in addition boarded the carpenter in his own home.

(25:15)

Sharon: Now Helen is going to give the histories of the other windows in the sanctuary.

(25:25)

Helen Post: The north window on the platform of the sanctuary was given by Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Jolly. Marcus Jolly was a farmer and he and his wife lived west and south of the Greenbush church where the [Twin Oaks] Golf Course is now located. Two sons were born of this union, Eugene and Henry and a daughter Minnie. The Jollys were very active members of the Greenbush church and highly esteemed. Marcus Jolly was a member of the building committee when the church was built in 1898. The family bought one of the beautiful stained glass windows. The son Eugene and wife Anna Fleagle Jolly came to live in the community and were active members of the church.

(26:08)

The west window above the platform in the front of the sanctuary was given by the Epworth League with the inscription Herald of the Cross. The Epworth League was organized in May 1890.

The large south window in the auditorium was given by Mr. and Mrs. James Jay Warren. James Jay Warren was born Orleans County, New York, in 1839. He married Sarah Elizabeth Warren who was born in Surrey County, England, in 1838. They came to Greenbush Township in 1863 and cleared heavily timbered land on DeWitt Road west of French's Corners. At that time there were two miles of solid woods between his farm and St. Johns. The later being then a small village. They owned 140 acres of land. Later the log house was replaced by a handsome commodious residence. Presently the [?] Acres reside there. Both Mr. and Mrs. Warren were highly honored and efficient members of the Greenbush Methodist Church. He had served as steward. They had an adopted daughter Lottie A. who married Walter Eames.

The same back windows have been repaired three times. The project of covering the windows with protective Plexiglas storm windows was completed by our youth this past year. The auditorium has been plastered and papered. A new porch was built at the south entrance and extensive painting has been done. New carpeting has been laid at the south entrance and stairway. Surely the early pioneers did not labor in vain. And great loyalty and appreciation has been displayed by members of the church as they have worked together and carried on the work of the church in this community.

A correction on this tape at point 52 should say R. C. Richard Conner Davies instead of R. E. Davies. Speaking of the Davies who gave the original land to the Grange Hall.