

Salem Friends Church

First Established Monthly Meeting in Iowa

*Scripture based ~ Servant minded ~ Spirit led ~
Saved by grace*

In 1835, Isaac Pidgeon, Aaron Street Jr. and their families settled and made homes in then, the Black Hawk Purchase, Territory of Wisconsin. The same year, along with Peter Boyer, the two laid out the streets of Salem, Iowa, using a grapevine as a measuring rod.

By 1837 nine other families joined them and a meeting for worship was organized and held in the home of Henry Joy. Thomas Frazier was the first Minister.

On August of 1838 the first recorded assistance was given by the Quakers at Salem to help slaves. By October 8th, 1838 a monthly meeting was established and held in a house rented for meetings. Salem meeting still has the original minutes (*see minutes on following page*).

In 1839 land was bought for meeting house, school and cemetery for \$25. A hewn log house with two rooms, each 22 ft. square, was built at the cost of \$340 and was used for both church and school. In August, a graveyard was laid out on that acreage and the cemetery is still used today. In 1839 an education committee was formed, 2 teachers were hired and a school was formed. By 1843 there were 300 students in three schools. Eight other meetings were started. In the 1840s there were 300 people attending church in the log meeting house on the south side of Salem.

During the years 1844 to 1848 they built a brick, two story meeting house. It was 40x70 feet at the cost of \$3,000. In 1843 the Anti-Slavery Friends Meeting was established. It was a group of abolitionists disowned by the Salem Meeting. They held separate meetings for ten years and they had



Built as Salem Meeting house (1848) and became used as Whittier College (1867).

separate burial grounds—separated by a line on the grounds. When the Civil War settled the slavery issue, the two groups came back together and were united under the original meeting.

In 1845 Reuben Dorland came to Salem and gave his time and talents to education; establishing a High School in 1851 which enrolled 335 students. In 1850 the First Day Scripture School was organized and only held on warm days. By 1868, it was held all year long.

Whittier College was organized in the upper story of the Salem Meeting House in 1867. By 1875 the College had grown and required the lower story, so they built a new frame meeting house for the Salem Meeting at a cost of \$2,500.

In 1879 the new ways of younger Quakers caused older, conservative ones to withdraw and they built a meeting house in the East part of Salem. When the main two leaders died, the group ended. In 1881 two Salem Quakers went to Jamaica and started a work there. In 1893 men and women started meeting together for worship on February 27th of 1912 when the wood frame building burned to the ground.

On January 5th of 1913, a new building was dedicated on the present site, 210 South Main Street at a cost of \$3,300. In



the fall of 1927, that building was raised and a basement was placed under it at a cost of \$1,200. The fellowship hall was added to the sanctuary in 1978-79. In 1996, four of the original five acres was divided and given half to the city of Salem and half to the Salem South Cemetery Association to be used as burial grounds.



Cemetery at Salem South

In 1999, Salem helped organize the Grace Community Friends Church in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. It became its own meeting in August of 2006. Salem Friends has employed 36 different pastors, with an average stay of 3.6 years, since becoming a meeting in 1838. The shortest stay was under a year, the longest at 15 years. We have employed three youth pastors and one

associate pastor. Salem has held many functions over the years. Some of the most memorable include "In Bethlehem Inn" dinner theatre - 13 performance years since 1990. We held fifty consecutive years of Missions Conventions from 1962 through 2011. Our people were instrumental in the building of four Habitat for Humanity homes in the Salem community. We have held two Lay Witness Mission retreats. We have multiple annual functions that include a hayride, a canoe trip, our youth food booth at Salem Old Settlers, week-long Vacation Bible School, a weekly Wednesday after school program called Kid's Club and, most recently, a Summer lunch program for school aged children and free community movies in the Salem city park.

We are celebrating our 175 years as a Quaker meeting by sponsoring different activities for the community over the course of the year 2013.



Salem Friends Church celebrating 175 years 1838-1913, the first Monthly Meeting in Iowa.

Salem Monthly meeting of Friends first opened and held in Salem Henry County Iowa Territory on the 8th day of 10th Month 1838 in accordance with an Extract of a Minute of Western Quarterly meeting of Friends held at Bloomfield meetinghouse Park County Ind on the 11th day of 8th month 1838— Stephen Hockett jr was appointed Clerk for the day.