

About a mile north of the once notable old village of Eagle Springs stands a house that once was the home of the Baptist Divine John McClain. This is a typical well-to-do farm house of pioneer times. In its time it was a modern, well built house as compared with other pioneer houses of the same settlement. In the years prior to the Civil War this fine old man settled at this place, and started building a home and rearing a family. The little farm spread to the rear of the house, and was coursed by a stream of clear flowing water which nourished the fields as the old man's spirituality nourished the souls of the pioneer people living around Eagle Springs. On front of the house stands a number of fine old Arbor Vitae trees that were planted by the owner of the house. Since the evergreen is a symbol of eternity, so are these trees a fit symbol of the old man's devotion to the spreading of the Gospel among the people who lived within reach of this place. Rev. McClain was a noted preacher, and many are the older people who acknowledge the influence of this man upon their spiritual lives.

#### Eagle Springs Baptist Church

On November 6, 1858 Rev. McClain organized the first Baptist Church of Eagle Springs. He also became its first pastor. This church had as charter members the following names: J.H. Estep, Nancy Estep, E. A. Culpepper, Tabitha Culpepper, Wyatt Hall, Naoma Hall, F.M. Grimes, Elmira Grimes, Mary A. Grimes, Daniel Jones, Serepta Hall. Upon the founding of McGregor, this church was moved to that place. For the information contained in this paragraph, I am indebted to Miss Mary Jones of Moody, who is a granddaughter of the Daniel Jones and Mary A. Grimes, who are listed above as charter members of the first Baptist Church at Eagle Springs.

Next to the founding of the church, the thing that made this man and place most famous was love-lorn youth, seeking a minister to speak the words that would make then man and wife sought out this place. The runaways came horse-back, in buggies, rain or shine, in the daytime or night, as expediency demanded. These runaways however, were a very small minority of the great number for whom the marriage ceremony was performed. He was called to long distances, all over the country, to tie the hymenial knot. It is said that this devoted old minister officiated at more than 1500 weddings. At any rate we have heard many of the older settlers declare this number to his credit. The large family of sons and daughters reared here went into the world imbued with the spirit of the progenitor.

Jim Pennington of Oglesby relates that in the reconstruction days that followed the Civil War that Rev. McClain was so plain in his denunciation of evil practices that he incurred the wrath of the horse rustling, cow theiving, plundering element to the extent that his life was sought by those men. Rev. McClain was out many a day and night in order to avoid his would-be-slayers. This condition necessitated that someone supply him this victuals. Mrs. McClain heroically assumed this responsibility. At night she sould steal from the home and meet her husband on the prairie, supplying him with such comforts as were necessary for



his sustenance during the time he was hiding. Jim Pennington's mother was a neighbor to the McClains and left with her children this story of the devotion of Mrs. McClain to her husband.

Church going in those days, also had its dangers. Jim Pennington related another story of the times when church goers carried their pistols and rifles. The country was infested with thieves and lawless characters, but people were determined to have preaching, if they had to guard the church with guns while the preacher dispensed the gospel.

At a meeting on Station Creek, the people tethered their horses to trees and posted near the church, W. M. Oglesby and Capt. Davenport were seated near a window, their rifles close at hand, when a horseman rode out of the brush and circled the group of horses hitched to the posts and trees. Capt. Davenport recognized the man as one of the horse rustlers of the county. He quietly reached for his rifle, took aim and fired. The horseman reeled in the saddle. Capt. Bill Oglesby remarked hit him by God. The rider was only wounded and escaped to the brush. After the excitement had died down, preaching resumed.

The foregoing bits of history of the early days in the Eagle Springs community were furnished by the pioneers and children of pioneers who were intimately associated with the early settlers and their trials.

Source: History of Coryell County, Frank E. Simmons, Coryell County News, 1936 pp. 40-43.