

## CLAY COUNTY HISTORY IN REVIEW

by Ernest Elliott

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The beginnings of the Christian Church in Clay County, sometimes called the Church of Jesus Christ, and in derision they were called Campbellites.

Among the earlier settlers in Pixley twp. were a few families from Wabash County. They were Seth **Gard**, James **Pool**, and others who organized the Barneys Prairie Church in 1819. This church later became the first Christian Church in Illinois.

In the early days debates were common occurrences, and some of Alexander **Campbell's** preachers held debates in that building, many the old-fashioned fire and brimstone type sermons.

About 1839 when the families of John **Rogers**, William **Ingraham** and William **Read** moved from Wabash Co. to Pixley Twp., they felt inspired to carry the message to Clay County. **Rogers** was originally from New York, **Ingraham** from Pennsylvania and William **Read** was of the George **Read** family of Delaware who signed the Declaration of Independence.

Sometime in the spring of 1839, William **Read** and William **Ingraham** went to the home of John **Rogers** to talk about religious matters, and it was agreed that a church should be formed. A second meeting was held a short time later, and **Read** read the following quote, "That we do here and now constitute ourselves into a Church of Jesus Christ, to be known as the Church of Jesus Christ in the forks of the Muddy), and that we will meet together, worship God, and build the cause of Christ in this section. Our creed shall be the Bible, and nothing but the Bible, and now all who agree to this proposition will signify the same by giving me and to each other the hand as a token of said determination". (end of quote)

This solemn ritual took place in Ingraham Prairie under a large tree and the three men, **Read**, **Ingraham** and **Rogers** struck hands.

A short time later two of their brothers Eli **Read** and Philo **Read** joined with the three in an effort to establish congregations in Jasper, Effingham and Clay Counties. This was the very first beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ, or Christian Church.

In the beginning they were often called Campbellites in ridicule of Alexander **Campbell**, who, with others, organized the Christian faith based on the Bible only, beginning in about 1827.

This first congregation met in private homes for services until 1848 when a log house was erected. The log house was replaced by a brick building in 1853. The brick replaced by a frame building in 1872. Some of the early names