Original Cherry Street Baptist Church, Now Remodeled and Still Being Used

By ALGIA M. JACKSON

The month of October marks the 114th anniversary of Second Baptist Church. Various activities include visits of pastors and choirs from La Grange, Mo. and Bloomington, Illinois. A presentation of a Tom Thumb wedding by the youth department was also a part of the celebration.

First organized in 1864, the original church was called the First Colored Baptist Church of Galesburg.

By 1865 an increase in population and greater opportunities for full time employment created a need for recognition. Rev. J. W. Jackson of Jacksonville, and the Missionary of the Woodriver Baptist Association was called upon to assist the twelve original charter members in the organizing of Second Baptist Church.

Originally services were held in an old Dunn Hall which was located on the Southeast corner of Main and Prairie streets, where the First Galesburg National Bank now stands.

The present site was acquired in the fall of 1867 when the church made its first major effort in the community by buying a house of worship. Old records of the First Baptist Church state that with the merging of the congregations of the First Baptist and the Cherry Street Baptist Churches, there was no need for the Cherry Street building.

It was agreed to sell it to the Colored Baptists. With the able assistance of Henry Bailey, an influential Negro citizen, the contract for the purchase of the building known as the Cherry Street Baptist Church was signed.

Recognition of the historical contributions of L.C. Carter, Sr. must be noted. For the most part, the families of the church were of limited education and therefore lacking in the ability to keep accurate records of important proceedings necessary for an authentic history. Carter, the first black historian in Knox County, was essential in the preserving of written data of the church.

Other important events in the history of the church include the ending of the parsonage in August 1944, the incorporanting of the church as a non-profit organization under State of Illinois laws on July 30, 1946, and the burning of the mortgate in October, 1955.

Second Baptist has had 24 pastors since it was chartered. Rev. C.L. Coleman had the honor of holding the longest pastorate. Dr. Coleman served 21 years. Upon the death of Dr. Coleman, Rev. Wardell Cato, Sr. was installed. He is the present pastor and will celebrate his fifth year of pastorate December 31.