

# Topeka Ministerial Spans 70 Years

Topeka churches have had a long history of corporation. Cooperative efforts have included Easter and Thanksgiving services as well as pulpit exchanges and Vacation Bible School. Exactly when the Topeka Ministerial Association officially started is not clear, but financial records date back to 1938.

Circuit riding preachers were a welcome sight to many of the first white settlers of the *Hawpatch* in the early 1830’s. Frequently the

preacher was the only visitor families saw for days. Through the efforts of these faithful “men of the cloth” churches began to form.

By 1835 a group lead by Robert Latta had formed a Methodist congregation called Eden Chapel west of town at the location of the Eden Cemetery. The pulpit is reported to have been in the area of the present flag pole. In 1843 a Baptist group formed a congregation in the log home of William Collett west of Topeka. Later with the help of Bishop Isaac Smucker, the Maple Grove Mennonite congregation was formed in May of 1854 with 18 charter members.

Dating the ministerial association’s formation is difficult. A bank deposit book from the Topeka Branch of Farmers State Bank bearing the name of E.E. Hartzler has a hand written note saying “Began in 1938”. Hartzler’s name has a line drawn through it and in its place “union meetings”. The first entry was August 3<sup>rd</sup> in the amount of \$28.48. Given the economic conditions of the day, that would have been a sizeable amount of money. What those union services were we can only speculate.

For many years union services were a staple of Holy Week. Ministerial Association archives have copies of Lenten Week services. Every evening a “union service” was held in a different church. The pastors took turns preaching. On Thursday night each congregation held their own communion service, many times including footwashing. On Good Friday afternoon there was another union service with almost all local businesses closing from 1 pm to 3 pm. Easter Sunday began with a joint Sunrise Service followed by individual services.

In the late 1993 the Topeka churches jointed together for what was called “*Topeka Together*” in the elementary school. Dr. Dan Yutzy, a professor at Taylor University in

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## 1993 “Fill Our Churches” Proclamation

L to R: Harold Gingerich -Eden Worship Center, Red Haggard - Topeka Town Board, Gene Troyer - Maple Grove, Clarence Remple -Topeka Mennonite, John Murray -Emma Mennonite

Topeka Union - 1965  
Holy Week  
Services Planned  
The Topeka Union Holy Week Services will be held at 7:30 each evening April 12-14. The Theme is: Responding to Christ. A study of Mark 14-16. Following is the schedule:  
Monday: Church of God, Reverend Harvey Graber, “The Response of Depression” Mark 14:10-42.  
Tuesday: Baptist Church, Reverend Willard Schrag, “The Response of Betrayal” Mark 14:43-65.  
Wednesday: Methodist Church, Reverend Kenneth Leininger, “The Response of Denial” Mark 14:66-15:15  
Maundy Thursday, The Lord’s Supper will be observed in each church.  
Good Friday, 1:30 p.m., Topeka Mennonite Church, Topeka High School Choir, Reverend James Gentry, “The Response of Rejection”, Mark 15:16-41.  
Easter Sunday, Sunrise Service, 6:00 a.m., Methodist Church, Reverend Roy Emery, “Response of Wonder” Mark 15:42-16:8  
Evening, Maple Grove Mennonite Church, “Response of the Church” as seen in the film, “The Unfinished Task” Mark 16:9-19.



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# Mile 146

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## “Hawpatch: Homebrew, Dillinger, and Outlaws”

In the 1800’s and early 1900’s the *Hawpatch* could be a pretty wild place. Numerous horse thieves and outlaws operated around the *Hawpatch* in the 1800’s. The “knobs” south of town as well as the lake area to the east were favorite hideouts. The late Bessie Oesch told Genevieve Lehman stories about the island in the middle of Olin Lake (joins to the southeast corner of Oliver Lake). Since the lake is relatively shallow, the rustlers would swim their loot to the island “where there was plenty of grass and more water than they could drink. When they could dispose of the horses legally (?), they would be in good shape.”

Platted in 1893, Topeka was not officially organized as a town until September 1, 1913. It was in that organizational meeting that E. P. (Pixley) Wemple was appointed as town marshal, fire chief and street commissioner. Town records show that he was paid \$44.00 a month for his services. Over the years many of the town marshals also have multiple areas of responsibility from street commissioner to being in charge of the sewer.

Mark Mickem has heard many stories about his great, great grandfather Pixley Wemple. Most of the stories came from Burdette “Cap” Roy, Elmer Speicher, and Harley Wingard who were known to have spent countless hours sitting on the park bench in front of the hardware re-counting tales of early Topeka. Apparently one of Pixley’s hobbies was making his own brand of homebrew. One day his son “Pink” and his friends decided to sample the marshal’s handy work. Needless to say, they all got drunk. While Pink had the good sense to stay at home, the others went up town and created quite a stir. An angry Pixley confronted the young troublemakers demanding to know where they had gotten “the hooch”. When they said, “From your house,” the poor marshal had no choice but to let them go. According to Mickem, that was the last time his great, great grandfather made homebrew.

On another occasion the word was that notorious gangster John Dillinger would be driving through Topeka. Merrill Mishler, whose wife Helen taught 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in Topeka for many years, actually saw Dillinger drive through town. Needless to say, Topeka residents were quite nervous. How they knew when Dillinger would be passing through town isn’t clear. But Topeka people seem to have a way of knowing these things. At any rate, local law enforcement was nowhere to be found. Marshal Pixley eventually was located east of town sitting in a culvert smoking a cigar - safely hidden away.

Prior to Wemple’s hiring concerned citizen’s were allowed to deal with certain criminal matters and lock up undesirables until the U.S. Marshal could come down from Michigan. While hanging wasn’t within the scope of their authority, Noble county residents lynched a 24 year old accused murderer and known horse thief. It did serve to put the criminal element on notice that such things would not be tolerated.

Over the years Topeka has been served by a succession of men who loved and cared about this community. Most of them held down both the marshal’s office and managed the sewer or street department. Two men, Auburn “Red” Haggard and current Marshal Carl Stoltz served the public more than 18 years each. Topeka is a safer and better place because of them.



John Dillinger

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## Topeka and the Doublemint Gum Connection

In the early 1900's mint was a major cash crop for farmers in the Topeka area. While a few mint stills remain in the area, corn and beans have become the major cash crop today. And yet, because of a near disastrous mistake Topeka will be forever linked to one of the most famous and largest selling chewing gums in the world.

At the age of 29, William Wrigley Jr. came to Chicago from Philadelphia in the spring of 1891. He had \$32 in his pocket and a wealth of enthusiasm and energy. He also possessed a great talent as a salesman. Since his father had manufactured soap it was only natural that young William would open his own Chicago based company promoting Wrigley Scouring Soap. As an incentive to merchants, Mr. Wrigley offered premiums. He knew his customers would be more likely to carry Wrigley's soap if they received a little "something for nothing." One of these premiums was baking powder. When baking powder proved to be more popular than soap, he switched to the baking powder business.

One day in 1892, Wrigley hit upon the idea of giving away two packages of chewing gum with every can of baking powder. The promotion was a huge success. And once again the premium (chewing gum) became more popular than the product it was promoting. In 1893, Wrigley introduced the world to Wrigley's Juicy Fruit Gum which was followed a few months later by Wrigley's Spearmint. Mr. Wrigley was a pioneer in using advertizing to market name brand merchandise. Wrigley's gum quickly became a household word. People couldn't get enough of it. That is where Topeka comes into the picture.

Retired Amish Bishop Dan A. Miller remembers hearing the story of how T.V. (Tobe) Yoder's near disastrous mistake lead to the creation of Wrigley's Doublemint Gum. Just before Mr. Wrigley arrived to pick up a fresh supply of mint oil it was discovered that the peppermint and the spearmint oils had inadvertently been mixed together. Needless to say, Yoder was panic stricken. Mint was a major cash crop and the family's survival depended on it. Upon hearing of the mistake Wrigley's response is reported to have been, "Well I guess we are going to have to make a new kind of gum". In 1914 Wrigley's Doublemint Gum was introduced to the world. And that is "*the rest of the story*" - almost. Years later Yoder would start Yoder Popcorn which continues as a thriving business..

Mint oil was an extremely valuable commodity during the Great Depression. Some mint farmers actually brought their mint oil to town and stored it in the bank vault. Dan A. remembers the time when his father Atlee had 300 pounds of mint oil which they stored in a barrel in the basement of the house. Some mint farmers where holding on to their oil in hopes of selling it for \$30.00 a pound. One day a Mr. Schrock came by and offered him \$15.00 a pound. Dan said, "Dad talked with Mom and she wanted to hold out for more money, but Dad said if we sell it now we can make 5 years worth of farm payments". So, Atlee took the deal and sold the mint. Within two or three weeks the price had gone up to \$25.00 a pound and he could have paid off the farm! Dan said his dad never felt bad about making the deal because when the prices fell a few months later other people lost their farms.

The next time you open a package of Wrigley's Doublemint, remember it all started here in Topeka.



## Track Notes:

### Schedule of Events:

- June 13th Topeka H. S. Alumni Banquet
- June 16th: TAHS Board Meeting
- June 20th: *The Wabash 4th District*  
Presentation on the history of trains in Topeka  
Topeka Branch Public Library (1:30 PM)
- July 4th: Tour the Depot Museum
- July 21st: *TAHS Show & Tell*  
Picnic & Carry-in at the Depot
- August 18th: TAHS Board Meeting
- September 15th: *TAHS monthly meeting*  
*Stories From The Great Depression*



### 35th Annual Topeka Quilt Show

The 35th Annual Topeka Quilt Show & Sale will be June 24th-27th at Eden Worship Center. Information is available online at [www.topekain.net](http://www.topekain.net) or [edenworshipcenter.com](http://edenworshipcenter.com)



### TAHS Quiz

1. How much was E.P.Wemple paid to be town marshal?
2. Who saw John Dillinger drive through Topeka?
3. What was the first flavor of Wrigley's gum?
4. In Dan A. Miller's story, how many years of farm payments was his father able to make from the sale of the mint oil?
- 5.. Who represented the Topeka Town Board in the "Fill Our Churches Sunday" presentation?

### TMA continued

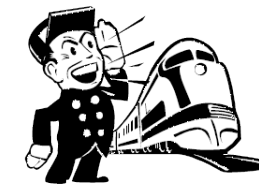
Upland, Indiana, was the guest speaker. The Topeka Town Board proclaimed November 7, 1993 as "*Fill Our Churches Sunday*" to coincide with the special meetings. And, most churches were well attended on that day.

The Ministerial Association continues to be active in the community. In addition to joint services and a Vacation Bible School, they have operated a summer lunch program to provide children in the community a good meal. In 2008, they jointly opened a food pantry "Christ's Community Cupboard". Topeka's Ministerial Association continues to work together to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the community. They hope and plan to continue to do this for many years to come.

### Topeka's 3rd Grade Classes Visit The Depot



The 3rd grade classes from the Topeka Elementary School visited The Depot on May 4th and 11th. Topeka again has three 3rd grade classes. Each class spent 30 minutes on successive Mondays touring the Depot seeing Topeka history first hand. TAHS Board members Doris Haggard, Bob Coon, Cleo Hartzler and Harold Gingerich were on hand to guide the tours and answer questions.



**"All Aboard!"**  
**T.A.H.S. membership is**  
**only \$10.00 a year.**  
*Membership Matters*

Answers: 1) \$44.00 a month; 2) Merrill Mishler; 3) Juicy Fruit; 4) 5 years; 5) Auburn "Red" Haggard;

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