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Who's Ever Heard of a Place Called Eddy?

You have to ask one of the real old-timers if you want to know about a little place called Eddy. Most maps still show its location six miles east of Topeka. But for those of us who are approaching social security age, we only remember it as a couple of old buildings east of town along the railroad tracks. Few of us “Baby Boomers” know anything of the history of Eddy or where it got its name. Frankly, during our high school days we were more interested in the cheerleaders from Shipshewana and LaGrange. But time has a way of expanding our interests.

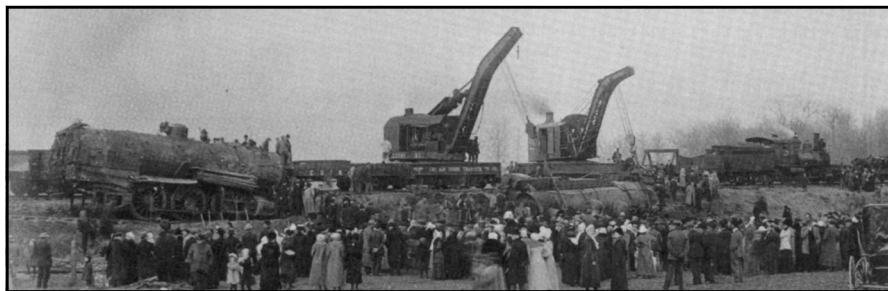
Thanks to a February, 2011, letter from Rev. Edward L. Eddy (age 91) some forgotten facts about Eddy and the Eddy family have come to light. Leadership and a missionary spirit has been a hallmark of the Eddy family. Several family members graduated from Topeka High School in the early 1900's. Their contribution to the world has left a significant mark, producing 10 missionary/pastors in four generations.

Railroad buffs know about the fatal train wreck that occurred close to Eddy in 1912. Early on the morning on Monday, November 4th, somewhere between 3:00 –3:30 am. Freight train # 92 was to have taken the rail siding in Topeka because No. 5, the east-bound (passenger) express, was due to pass. According to the late Glen Smith, longtime Topeka resident and fire chief, “the



engineer thought he could make it to Eddy, six miles east, to a siding there. He got three miles, and there came the express around the curve.”

The crew of the freight train jumped just prior to impact. Fireman Clarence Murden of the passenger train was killed instantly. Henry Hinkle, engineer of No. 5, was also fatally injured. Fred Rundell, the freight train conductor, who had run all the way to Topeka to report the accident, col-



lapsed and passed out in the depot.

Huge cranes were needed to clear the debris and get cars back on the rails. Topeka Historical Society photos show the crowds of, “rail-side supervisors”, who came from miles around and braved the November cold to watch the process.

It must never be forgotten that there would have been no Eddy, Indiana, had it not been for the Eddy family. The Wabash Railroad right-of-way cut across the north end of the Eddy's 80 acre farm in Section 35 of Clearspring Township. According to Edward Eddy, the railroad purchased five acres of land and built a station next to the road which ran along the east side of the farm. That station, which was called Eddy, provided passenger service for a period of time. A store which sold Standard gasoline, a church and several homes were also built adjacent to the north end of the property.

But the real story of Eddy is the remarkable Eddy family. In 1630, two brothers (John and Samuel), sons of William Eddy the Vicar of St. Bunstan (Church of England) in Cranbrook, just south of London, joined the Puritan movement. No doubt this was painful for their father the vicar. They had developed a friendship with John Winthrop, and as the tide of persecution increased the boys left their 10 siblings and sailed to Plymouth to be a part

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EDDY *continued*

of the Puritan colony. Today every Eddy in America can trace their heritage to one of these two men. How they came to settle east of Topeka is still unclear. The THS Alumni Directory records the names of numerous family members who graduated from Topeka High School: Francis Rollin Eddy (1900); Birch Ithamar Eddy (1907); Philo Eddy (1907); Vera Eddy Speidle (1912); Mary Eddy Chaney (1916); Jennie Eddy Billheimer (1919); Sherwood Eddy (1934); and Edward L. Eddy (1938).

Francis Eddy (1882-1980) and Birch Eddy (1887-



1980) were the sons of Rollin and Samantha (Bozer) Eddy. Rollin and

Samantha, who are buried east

of Topeka, were key leaders in Green Chapel. They were also instrumental in leading people like Harold North (who pastored several area churches) to faith.

Francis served as the president of the Wesleyan Methodist denomination for 12 years and in 1919, was one of the nine signers of the Articles of Incorporation of Marion College (now Indiana Wesleyan University).

Birch, trained as a teacher in Terre Haute, Indiana, taught for three years in LaGrange. Sensing the call to missions, Birch and his wife, Dollie, left for Sierra Leone, West Africa, where they served the next 20 years. Edward was born during those years in Africa. However, Edwards's re-occurring bouts with malaria forced Dollie to move back to Indiana with her seven year old. Birch would follow three years later.

In a recent telephone conversation, Edward related the story of his father's cousin who mocked the missionary call and move to Africa by saying, "Birch and Dollie can bury their lives in Sierra Leone if they want to, but we're staying here and making money." Both the cousin and his wife were in the grave by age 40, while Birch lived to the age of 93.

It should be noted that Birch's little sister, Jennie, was married to Paul Billheimer who's book entitled "Destined For The Throne" has blessed and challenged millions of Christian readers around the world. Paul Crouch of Trinity Broadcasting Network was so inspired by the book and the life of the Billheimers that he oversaw their care in their final years of life.

Birch's oldest son, Sherwood, pastored in Indiana and

Michigan for nine years before moving to Whittier, California. There he established a new congregation and was able to build a sanctuary to seat 600 people.

Birch and Dollie's youngest son, Edward, married Arlene Knotts on April 5, 1942. They moved to Flint, Michigan, to pioneer a new church. He returned to Marion College to complete his studies before leaving for the mission field. During his senior year of college, Edward was invited to pastor his home congregation, Green Chapel, for one year. And then, like his parents, he answered the missionary call and returned to Sierra Leone.



Serving as Field Secretary for the next 13 years Edward and Arlene worked to raise up leaders among the African nationals, one being the nation's future president. The Eddy's have three daughters; Patricia, Constance, and Jacqueline.

Upon returning from Sierra Leone, Eddy pastored in California for 24 years. During that time he was invited to give the message for the 100th anniversary celebration of his home church east of Topeka, Green Chapel. Edward says, "Being invited back and speaking in my home church was a great joy."

Following their pastoral work, Edward and Arlene were on staff with Billy Graham Crusades for six years. Then entering into a semi-retirement period he was assistant pastor to their son-in-law, Jon Farmer, for another two years.



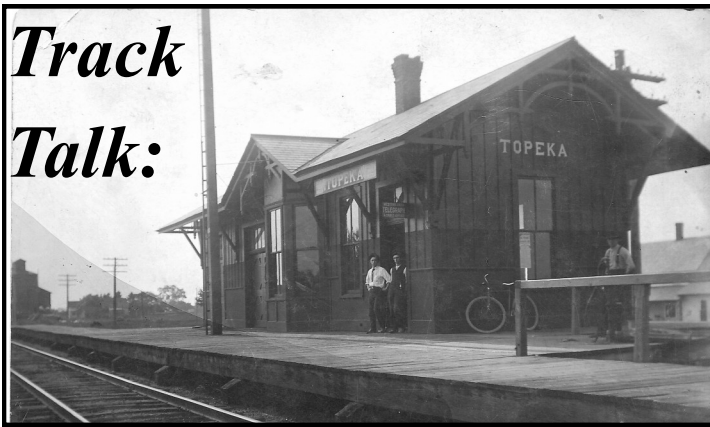
Green Chapel was built in 1877

Thus they concluded 50 years of active ministry, well sort of. Arlene still plays the piano for the 8:00 a.m. traditional worship service at their church, Foothills Community Church in Tucson, Arizona. Edward is currently preparing to give a report on 50 years of missions. Both are involved whenever and wherever they are needed. Arlene is 86 years old and Edward is 91.

The story of the Eddy family is just one more illustration that history is not about memorizing an endless list of dates and events from the past. It is about people who lived their lives and made a difference in the world around them. The faith and faithfulness of the Eddy family is a reminder to all of us that the "blessing of Abraham" in Acts 3:25 is true. "And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

People like the Eddy family inspire us to make a difference. And it's just another reason why we are proud to call Topeka our home.

Track Talk:



Schedule of Events:

April 2011

The Depot Museum re-opens on Saturdays from 9am to noon. Admission is FREE

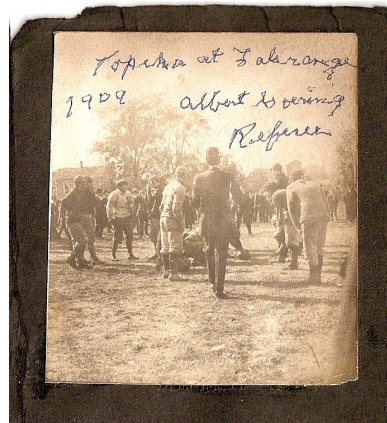
May 17, 2011

Program: To Be Announced

Topeka Branch Library (6:30 pm)

This 1909 photo of our THS football team in action comes courtesy of Nancy Sanburn from Arizona. At this point who won doesn't matter. We are just thrilled to have the picture.

Nancy's father was Josef Kauffman (Class of 1941).



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TAHS Quiz

1. Why do we study history?
2. Who was the first pastor of the Hawpatch Presbyterian Church?
3. What was the date of the fatal train wreck between Eddy and Topeka?
4. Where did Birth & Dollie Eddy serve as missionaries?
5. Who was the Vicar of St. Bunstan?

“We study history not to imagine what they were like, but to imagine what we might become.”

TOPEKA HIGH SCHOOL

1938

Darrel Steinbocker

Edna Eddy

Marion Kopp

Catherine Miller

Robert Scott

Mable Voss

Marie Yost

Wanda Strayer

Edward Eddy

Edgar Franklin

Owen Emmert

Lucille Peck

Ruth Strong

Richard Miller

Ernest Christner

Joan Glover

George Peck

Bernice Hostetler

Wayne Thompson

Ariens Gesch

Walton Funk

Max Hootley

Barner Studio
Topeka, Kansas

Answers: 1) To imagine what we might become; 2) Rev. James B. Plumstead; 3) November 4, 1912; 4) Sierra Leone, West Africa; 5) William Eddy

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Hawpatch History Detectives Investigative Report

Your Hawpatch History Detectives have uncovered a number of items of interest:

Hawpatch Presbyterian Church: From all the research we have done it appears that the Presbyterians on the Hawpatch never actually built a church building.

William McConnell Sr. played a predominant role in the formation of the Presbyterian congregation. According to R.H. Rerick's "1882 History of LaGrange and Noble Counties", the group organized and met in the McConnell home.

Rev. James B. Plumstead was the first minister, sometime before 1835. Rev. Christopher Cory also served the group in 1937 and 1838. Rev. J. Wolff followed Cory, staying in the home of Dr. John and Mary Denny for about a year.

Dr. John Brown, who had Congregational roots, joined the Presbyterian Church in 1837. The Congregationalists and the Presbyterians had reached an agreement that, if one established a congregation in a community, the other would not. On April 1, 1840, Brown was ordained as a ruling elder and

the church's name was changed. The church officially became the Hawpatch Presbyterian Church.

Unfortunately the group would not survive as members were gradually drawn to the Salem Church and the Presbyterian Church in Ligonier.

McConnell purchased the northeast quarter of section 35 in Eden Township in the fall of 1832. He served as the first postmaster of Hawpatch and is said to have been the first Justice of the Peace. He performed the first recorded marriage in Topeka on February 8, 1835, when Minerva Gaines married Norman Sessions. Their son (Norman Jr.) would later be mustered into the Indiana 44th Regiment on November 22, 1861.

William McConnell died at his home south of Eden Chapel on April 13, 1848, at the age of sixty-seven and was buried in the family cemetery. Prior to his death the farm had been sold to his son William T. McConnell. The first recorded burial in the family cemetery was that of Thomas McConnell, age 26, on August 22, 1836.



Grandpa & Grandma McConnell

On April 17, 1852, William T. deeded the cemetery to LaGrange County. Today it is known as the Gerber Cemetery and is located directly across the road from the Eden Cemetery west of Topeka.

HG

Photo: Any information on the first names of Grandpa & Grandma McConnell and where this photo was taken would be greatly appreciated.

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