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Article Title: Pioneer Preacher—An Autobiography

Full Citation: George W Barnes, "Pioneer Preacher—An Autobiography," *Nebraska History* 27 (1946): 71-91

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1946GWBarnes.pdf>

Date: 6/13/2017

Article Summary: Barnes describes his experiences as an itinerant preacher obliged to search for his next meal and place to sleep as he traveled. He preached in Nebraska from 1856 to 1862 and was associated with four Nebraska Baptist congregations.

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Cataloging Information:

Names: George W Barnes, S P Alling, J M Taggart, B M Hill

Nebraska Place Names: Florence, Omaha, Bellevue, Cuming City

Keywords: George W Barnes, First Nebraska Baptist Association

Pioneer Preacher — An Autobiography

GEORGE W. BARNES

I first began to mix with this world, June 30, 1825, at Bals-ton, Saratoga County, New York. My parents, Simmon S. and Esther Barnes, removed to Kingston, Ulster County, when I was a mere babe; hence I always speak of Kingston as my native place because there I first knew anything of this world.

My father was a tanner and currier of the highest order in his trade. Both parents were faithful Christians. There never was a time while I remained at home, that both ends of the day were not hemmed in by prayer. Father had only a common education, ready accountant, fair writer and good business ability.

He took great pains to teach me in regard to temperance, that too when such training was rare. He never kept liquor in the house, not even cider. Had me sign a total pledge when I could hardly write my name. Forbade ever entering a place where rum was sold unless he sent me. As a result I never drank a glass of alcoholic liquors, not even beer; and to this day I feel a sort of dread in passing a saloon, while more than once when traveling have gone without meals rather than eat where rum was sold. Further, it made me an earnest worker in this reform from fifteen years of age, ever ready for the most advanced position.

At the age of eight a heavy sorrow came upon my young heart in the death of mother. She was of short, light figure, and frail. She used to pray for her two little ones—the other a sister six years younger. Her last act of this kind was to call me to her side as she sat in her rocking chair looking so pale and weak,

¹ This autobiographical sketch was written by the Reverend George W. Barnes, in the year 1885. Save for deletion of certain material not pertaining to the Nebraska frontier, and the modification of certain aspects of punctuation, it is published exactly as he wrote it.

having me kneel beside her, and commending me to God, and asking his grace to be early shed abroad in my heart.

She died soon after, and that was the first of my religious impressions. After that I never went to bed without praying to be made good like mother, so as to be prepared to meet her in that better land. A sense of unfitness for God's presence was felt, and a desire for betterment. No one knew of this; being so young I did not tell of my desires. With father I was always at church and Sunday school.

That was another marked feature of our home life. In about two years father brought another most devout Christian woman to lead our family life. As other children came and grew, the same regularity of attendance upon church and Sunday school was maintained. The children did not order home life, and the matter of remaining at home was never thought of; to go was part of life. Storms were seldom severe enough to keep the family away. The family mechanism always moved smoothly in this direction. If modern households were thus ordered there would be far less complaint concerning the children absent from public worship.

When about fourteen, during a series of meetings held by our pastor, Elder David Morris—one of the most indefatigable laborers I ever knew—my heart became more deeply interested and reached a final settlement of the great question for Christ. It has always been something of a regret that I did not have the clear cut experience of some. I could never fix the dividing line between the past and the present. The only satisfactory evidence I ever had of being a Christian was, and is, I love the Savior, and really desire to honor Him.

Myself and a number of others were baptized in the creek running one side of the town, upon a beautiful summer day, 1838.

For two years I served as a clerk in a large wholesale, and retail, dry-goods and grocery store. My education was limited to schooling in several select schools in our town, a few terms at our public school, and at our academy.

It was thought best that I learn a trade, and as an uncle was a harness maker, I was placed in his family, working at that

calling for a number of years. When twenty years old I was doing a small business for myself. My religious life was maintained with the church, seeking to live a consistent life.

At twenty one was married to Elisabeth Schryver, a Christian, a school teacher, and a woman of first quality in every respect, whose sturdy excellence and true piety has made her all these years a true yoke-fellow of whom one may well congratulate himself for the possession.

In the spring of 1852 business matters being very unsatisfactory, and a dear friend, Doctor Witherwax, who had married a cousin of father's, being on a visit from Davenport, Iowa, persuaded us to go west. The Doctor was engaged in a large practice, also dealing in land.

He encouraged me for business, and for usefulness sake to make the change, saying he would do all possible to aid me in any direction.

In July I started westward, leaving my dear family, of wife and two little girls—my family has always been my all in this world—to make a home among strangers. When about to leave, our pastor, then Elder Relyea, said to me, "Brother, I want you to think if the Lord has not something for you to do beside being a man of business." This was a great surprise, for the like had never entered my head. I was active in church affairs, and had done some talking in our home lyceum, speaking some upon temperance; but for preaching, that was out of the question.

Residence in Davenport, until going to Nebraska. The good Doctor let me have a shop in one of his buildings and I went to work at my trade. My family came on in the fall, and went to housekeeping again.

Twelve members had come out of the First church because they felt they could not harmonize with the others, and organized the Second Baptist church of Davenport. These were a grand company of self denying disciples, putting their whole hearts into the cause. We cast our lots with this devoted band, making fourteen hopeful earnest souls believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Baptist church. . .

After being there two or three years my friends began to talk to me about preaching as a matter of duty. . .It seemed an impossible thing. My limited education seemed an insuperable

barrier, and I shrank from the high, responsible position. . . It was a heavy burden on my mind for a long time. I could not feel it was my place. Prayers and sighs were outlets for the turmoil within. I did not see any opening where they would want me to preach, and to change my whole plan of life at my age, thirty one years, was too much.

But as [they] said they thought that was my true sphere of work for Christ I began to yield. I said to [a friend] at one time, "I can't preach having never been taught how." He replied saying, "You preach every time you speak in meeting." I was in the habit of talking systematically, and of using the Bible for subjects, but never thought of anything like a sermon.

Yet it is a little peculiar. I recalled that at fourteen when I united with the church, I made one attempt to prepare a sermon with partial success. Finally after long and prayerful thought I consented to go before the church on trial by preaching a sermon and taking a license if they thought best. My trial sermon was from Phil. 111:10. . . With great heartiness and unanimity the church granted me a license to exercise my gifts.

Rev. Dexter P. Smith, one of God's grand men who had been for several years acting as secretary for the Sunday School Union in Iowa, wanted someone to travel through southwestern parts of the state to organize schools and collect funds, and secured me an appointment. So the Lord set me at work without delay. Buying me a spotted mustang pony, saddle, and bags, I was equipped for the mission. The pony was paid for as sound, but proved to be weak in the shoulders, frequently stumbling, and once, throwing me clear over his head, to the great danger of my neck.

The section of Iowa where I was to labor was thinly settled, and the people generally poor. Most lived in cabins, and their school buildings were of logs. Many of their cabins had but one room. When one came into such a cabin where lived two parents, and five or six children, you could not fail of anxiety as the sleeping hour came on. But like a dream, space and beds came as needed. The two beds like the two talents changed to four, for each proved to be double. From under each another rolled, and sometimes part of the family disappeared through a hole overhead. The guest commonly found a bed all to himself. The floor dissolved, leaving one wide sea of beds and heads. It might

not be edifying to tell how we went to our quarters, but it was funny. One room, nine persons, how to get nicely into bed, that was the awful question. Yet let each get beside his own place, put out the light, and it's wonderful how smooth the machine works. A sense of relief comes when you find yourself covered for the night.

The tables were without dainties. Corn-bread was the staple, mixed with water and hard crusted; dried apple-sauce without sweetening, and fried flich, or smoked side pork. Butter was rare, and so was milk, for a reason I never could explain. But a welcome was always hearty.

In most of the localities visited, there had been no religious service since the settlers came, and in most places they were glad of anything of the kind. My method was on entering a settlement to find first a Christian and confer with him about a school. If he had no interest, I sought another. Then riding about to every house, invite them all to meet me at the school house that night to talk over the matter of having a Sunday school.

This was of great value to me as an opportunity to learn how to address people, and think upon my feet. It was far better than to have begun preaching at once. I would open the meeting with prayer and reading, then state my design in calling them together. I was permitted to donate as much as they would raise for books, testaments, etc. In every instance I think a school was organized. The great difficulty was to secure a leader and teachers. In most cases a Sunday school was new to them, and yet they were eager to have one. . .

In one section on the Missouri bottom I found the roughest state of things. I got in Saturday afternoon, and the chief man could neither read or write yet wanted a Sunday school as he had several children. I rode over the settlement and made the appointment. At night the people came in, twenty or more. The school house was not finished, and no benches, or seats. As they came in, they sprawled around on the floor among the shavings. Only one had a coat on, most only pants and shirts. After looking over their faces in the light of a few tallow-dips stuck to the logs with knives, and shingles, I concluded a formal address would be folly. So taking the only thing to set upon, a nail keg, seating myself upon it, leaning on one elbow, and twirling my

hat with perfect indifference, I began to talk in a hand to hand way, telling about Sunday schools and how they were managed. After talking enough, and answering questions to explain, I asked them if they would have a school. To this all agreed. When we wanted someone to lead, and act as superintendent, only one man could be found. He had belonged to the regular army, and was the only competent person. And the only one fully clad. The chief man, whom they called John, was liberal, and desirous to have a good supply of books and testaments. I made a list of supplies donating as much as they raised. I have often wondered what became of that school. I went home with John. When I wished to retire he told me to go up the ladder in one corner. The roof was so low one could not stand. I crawled along under the peak where I found several were laying upon the floor, and turned in. What the floor was covered with I never knew, but it was very coarse stuff. I wrote home that it was cornstalks, and cord-wood. I soon fell asleep, as I could sleep anywhere, and then was very weary. I woke up sometime in the night as a procession of rats or mice were marching over my face. My next nearest neighbor in our row struck them off with his hand from his face, and uttered a horrid oath as he sent them bouncing against the roof. I pretended sleep, and soon was at it again. That was a bed full to be sure. In the morning when I awoke, some were up before me. I saw turning out, five, and of both sexes, beside the rats. I would give ten dollars for a photograph of that bed-full or floor full, to keep as a memento of those days.

After nearly five months of this labor, all of which was laborious and new, much of the plainest fare, often amusing, sometimes ludicrous, yet of great service to me by putting me in close contact with the Savior, as being led to feel my constant dependence, beside acquiring the facility of adjusting myself to any circumstances, I resigned for other fields and labors.

Brother S. P. Alling of our church and some partners had taken up considerable timber and other lands near Florence and was getting ready to go out in order to put up a saw mill, and establish a business of builders' materials. He said to me, "Brother Barnes go with us and we will have a Baptist church—one of the partners who was going along with his wife were Baptists—

you be our pastor and we will build a good meeting house." The offer seemed so providential that it was accepted; as the Lord so promptly opened the way. Westward the great procession moves. Since Abram went west to Canaan the race have been trying to balance the world by getting on the western side.

We could start a church of seven members; Brother Alling and wife, Brother Chipman and wife, a sister Brewster, a former boarder in our family who had in the spring married Elias Brewster, a young lawyer, and already was living there with wife and self. It was necessary to go in advance of the family so as to secure a dwelling. Brother Chipman and family were on the ground. I arrived near the last of August, and got board with the Brewsters who had built a house.

At this time, 1856, Florence was a stirring place of ten or twelve hundred people and filling rapidly, located six miles north of Omaha on the second bench and bluffs. It was an opposition town, built in competition with Omaha, hence a warm strife was kept up between the places. It was claimed by the projectors that here was the only good place for a bridge when the coming railroad should put in an appearance, as here was "rock bottom."

Speaking of railroads reminds me of their great lack when we moved westward. In '52 when we came to Davenport, only fifty miles of the Chicago and Rock Island were built west of Chicago hence all the remaining distance across the state was by stage. So in '56 when starting west again only fifty miles were built west of Davenport to Iowa City, leaving three hundred miles of wearisome journeying in that old-fashioned way.

The first matter in hand was to get a place to put my family in on their arrival. None could be rented, for the supply was far short of the applicants, every stage coming in bringing new additions to our population. Everything had to be built first, and there were not enough mechanics to do the work required. Securing a good location, I set about building with my own hands a dwelling. The exceeding high price of lumber, pine selling for \$95 per thousand and higher and all building materials being so very costly—and having but little means, if any house was had it must be by my own hands. Having Yankee adaptation, and some pluck, work was begun by digging a cellar.

Readiness to take hold of anything to help oneself is of prime importance to a person going into a new country. A helpless one better stay east, whether in the ministry or any other calling. An M.E. local preacher came in town and seeing no opening at his trade—shoe making—went to teaming. One day coming from the mill with a load the reach broke. He went to a cabin near and told his mishap asking aid. The man said to him, "There is the axe go in the woods and make yourself another reach." The helpless one replied, "I am a shoemaker, can't make a reach," The other said curtly, "You have no business in this country if you can't help yourself to a reach." It is usually the help yourself kind that first go west, independent-push ahead.

Everything was new in Nebraska. It had only been open for about two years, its population being not far from eleven thousand. Sun rise and sun set found me at the house, for my make was to do with my might all I undertook. All the help I had was a carpenter to "lay out" the sills, except in raising. The size was 15x25; front, two stories, back part lean-to, giving two rooms downstairs, and one up. In the latter part of October the house was so nearly ready my family came out in company with Brother Alling. So tedious was the trip for Mrs. Barnes with two children, and riding day and night in an overcrowded coach, that she said, "I thought I should never get through alive."

Everything was in progress, nothing finished. But one house was really complete, and that was built the year before. Many houses had only the outside; a few had one coat of plaster, as lime seemed very difficult to obtain. Our house was some like the Dutchman's who said his "was shingled mit straw." Ours was plastered mit muslin. The whole inside was covered with heavy unbleached muslin, drawn tight, tacked well to all the studding and sized with flour paste. Then it was ready for papering, and made a really comfortable house, looking well as plastered.

Our floor, however, was a fitting subject of history, and the source of much merriment. In the morning of the day we were to occupy I sent a team to mill to bring boards for floor. They were sawed after he came, from cottonwood logs nearly two feet through. This timber has more water, will shrink more—they say end-wise also—and twist more than any other I ever

saw. They said there was a board in town so crooked it could not lay still on the ground; and one was told of one on a fence so warped, that when a pig tried to get through into the corn field it came out on the same side it started in on. About three o'clock they were laid loosely on the timbers, for it would have been folly to nail them. As our things had only arrived in part, we borrowed a few, and began housekeeping anew after months of separation, a happy family. No place ever appeared better to the inmates than did our home in its roughness. Our table was the two sawhorses used in building, with two boards atop, and some muslin for tablecloth; our seats the trunks we brought. Kind friends had helped us in part to our first meal. The gratitude of our hearts was genuine as we invoked our Father's blessing upon that meal; and at night dedicated the house to Him who loved us, and bought us with his blood. The fare was simple, perforce, for butter was seventy-five cents per pound, and every delicacy alike expensive. As the floor began to dry it shrank and warped wonderously. Each board would cup so as to form about the fourth of a circle. If cross pieces had been nailed over the ends they would have made good troughs. Hence walking the floor was amusement, and danger. When you stepped on the edge the board sprung up on the other side like Jack in the box. If someone else lighter happened to be opposite they were likely to be hoisted. Then there was a constant clatter while passing around the rooms. When a certain stage was reached, they were turned, to repeat the same half-moon-on-its-back, the other way. After a long time when they seemed dry and were nailed down, they shrank still, and left great seams between that were filled with pieces fitted in.

The only house of worship was one put up for the M.E. church, a plain, neat, spineless building. We began our preaching in the dwelling of one of the brethren, also organizing ourselves into a church and electing one deacon, Brother S. P. Alling. He gave us the best sort of material for a deacon. He was kind, consistent, faithful, loving the cause and the Savior with a full heart, delighting to use his means for the good of others, and to honor Christ. There were but few Christians among that varied population, and religion met only a left-handed favor. The great mass seemed in a terrible hurry to build their houses, and push

their various enterprises to success and wealth. A very large proportion seemed to have come to make a speedy fortune, then return east and enjoy the same. Everything was made to bend that way. The Sabbath was painfully disregarded. You could hear the whiz of the saw, and the click of the hammer, at all hours of day and night for the whole week. The Lord's day found only a very few who honored its claims. . .

The little room where we met in the fall was filled to the full, bed, boxes, and chairs out into the hall, so close as to leave me bare standing room. One time when preaching, standing behind one seated, in earnest gesticulation I brought my fist down thump on his head, to the general amusement. I wrote east to friends that "I possessed great advantage over most preachers for I can apply the gospel personally."

Preaching was a real delight, Christ and his salvation was the staple of my ministry. My commission from the Home Mission Society was dated September 26, 1856 and signed by that noble brother, B. M. Hill, as secretary. He was always kind and sympathetic toward the missionaries, and worthily filled his place, an honored man in our denomination.

After our housekeeping was fully organized, then earnest study was the order for me. Before leaving Davenport some valuable books were purchased—such as the Comprehensive Commentary, Doddridge Expository, Butter's Analogy, Wayland Morrell Science, Composition and Delivery of Sermons by Ripley, etc. With these and the Bible my mind was occupied in storing and thinking. A brother Blackley came among us who was of large help to me at this time. He was a Presbyterian preacher and physician, a man of good mind, well stored, and a real Christian. An argument had a peculiar attraction; he would leave a good meal for a regular sett-too at it. Always kindly, no irritation. We had regular meetings every morning either at his or our house, where after a season of prayer, sermons or other topics of religious interest were talked over in a critical and helpful way. Our little informal conference was a school and an inspiration.

I began the practice of writing one sermon a week, and kept it up for years; now have several hundred on hand. Our preaching services were held the first winter in a vacant house; he oc-

cupying one part of the day, I the other. There were about as many Presbyterians as Baptists in town. The singing was led chiefly by Mrs. B. and Sister Alling, and it was good spiritual singing that could be enjoyed. A photograph of that room would sell well it seems to me, and of all cold places that was the one. It stood on the side hill, on upright sticks, one side near the ground, the other, two feet above, giving full sweep for the wind under. Not finished inside, the clapboarding warped so as to insure full ventilation; the floor laid of green elm had shrunk, leaving seams half inch wide; this covered with Kentucky jean, which was laughed at by the winds as they lifted it in rolling waves from the floor. Rough boards fastened to the sides, some rude benches, and a few chairs furnished the seating conveniences, a box end-wise gave a place for the preacher, and a sheet iron stove the heating apparatus. The whole service in cold weather was passed by the congregation in more or less of suffering. Yet we had fair attendance, with the best attention. There was earnest effort to give the people something warm inside, if the externals were so cheerless.

That winter was severely cold and stormy. As a family we had a narrow escape from great suffering. The cold began early in December. Our wood pile was exhausted and a man with a team was secured to get a load from the woods a few miles away. As we started it began to snow some, kept increasing all day, so that when we returned about four P.M. the wind was high from the north, snow filling the air, and rapidly growing worse. For three days it was a regular blizzard, piercing cold, while about two feet of snow fell. The wood was thrown off on the south of the house to be out of the wind, yet so severe was cold and wind, that I could only cut a few arms full at a time, burn them up, then cut more. Had we not obtained the wood that day by no possibility could it have been the next, and our neighbors had none to spare. The Lord cared for us in a tender way, doing far better than we deserved.

We were more fortunate than some in regard to winter supplies. The amount raised was by no means equal to the population. I heard of a man below us who had some potatoes to sell, going at once, bought enough at \$1.25 per bushel. Flour could readily be had as a large stock was obtained by river in the fall. Butter

kept so dear it was dispensed with and molasses largely used. Mrs. B. got so tired of this, that for a long time she could hardly bear to see it.

There was a number of real good neighbors, so that society of a pleasant kind was not wanting. Sister Alling, the Deacon's wife, was a choice spirit—Christian woman in its very best sense, refined and companionable.

All missed, especially the children, the supply of fruits, such as apples, etc. Dried fruits were all that could be had as a rule. At Omaha a few were found and as mother peeled for use the children would stand about to take the peels fast as they left the apple.

In the spring Brother Alling put up a two story building for a store room and finished the upper part, seating it comfortable for meetings. This was a real advance and free of cost to us all. The matter of a good brick meeting house was talked of, Deacon A. offering to stand back of the enterprise financially. Brother Carroll of the Davenport church, an architect, gave us a front elevation and full specifications to contract with, for a building 24x40 of brick.

Coming in one day from calling, there was waiting me a thick set, shortish, heavy Pennsylvania Dutchman from Cuming City,¹ 20 miles above. In somewhat broken terms he wanted to know if I could come up there and preach, saying "I talk of buying a claim there but will not unless someone can be had to give us Baptist preaching." He had taken that long drive to find a Baptist preacher before deciding to locate. Similar earnestness was frequent. I agreed to visit the place at once sent an appointment by him. . . Visiting them as agreed several Baptists were found, and preaching was begun once every two weeks.

¹ Cuming City, one of the early towns in Washington County, was "claimed" in 1854, and located the following spring north of the present site of Blair. It was named after Acting Governor Thomas B. Cuming. It soon became a place of considerable importance and bright promise. By 1857 it had 53 dwellings, three stores, two churches, a school, and three hotels, in addition to a number of saloons. In 1858, a weekly newspaper, *The Cuming City Star*, came into existence. Beginning in 1869, however, when Blair was established as a point of crossing for the railroad, Cuming City went into an almost immediate decline and eventually disappeared altogether. Most of the buildings were removed to Blair.

Subsequently we organized a church of 14 members. I used to go up and back by stage. Our meeting place was a log school house. There was a very good class of people about Cuming City—the name was poetry for not a half dozen houses could be seen. It was very thinly settled as yet; long distances between claims. The people generally came to meeting, and I enjoyed preaching to them. The first baptizing was done for me by Brother Taggert as I had not yet been ordained.

My time now was taken up between Florence and C. C. Fifty-seven, that most severe financial depression came upon the country, paralyzing business over the whole land. It was felt perhaps more severely in the new countries as there were less moneyed facilities. The effect was sorely felt by my deacon at F. His project for a large mill was stopped. Also aid to our church building must be given up, so the matter fell through, for times kept growing worse. The place stopped growing, and some began to remove. At one time there were about 1,500 people in the place. The church made but little growth. . . .

The vicious classes were not lacking among us; such are apt to float out on the current of emigration to new countries. Rum was plenty. That always augments and intensifies crime. One miserable drunken wretch was stabbed to death by another equally detestable scoundrel for intimacy with his wife. One day there was heard a loud hallowing, and great clatter of horses feet, toward Omaha. Looking that way quite a number of horsemen were seen riding at the highest speed and yelling like Indians. Several streets below they came into the village up one, and over another, when the report of pistols was heard, and the cavalcade stopped. It was a company from Omaha after a horse thief, whom they brought to a stand near the bank. He had stolen the horse in Iowa, and was delivered to those authorities. Horse stealing was perhaps the most common crime. At another time two men were found hanging to a tree just beyond our village. They were in jail at Omaha for horse stealing. A company of men went to jail took them out, and hung them there. It was a frightful sight, and yet seemed but justice. The son of one of our honored ministers in central New York was living in our place. He had a comfortable house, very nicely furnished, his wife an intelligent, sprightly woman. Indeed, they put on airs. As hard times came

on he tried to sell in vain. One night when both were absent at a ball in the town, his house was burned, under such circumstances that it was generally believed he fired it to obtain the insurance. The agent, however, would not pay, and he dared not sue for it, but left for Denver .

A peculiar trial to many was our high winds. Then, as now, they were severe and often did damage. Mrs. B. was sorely annoyed by them. Our house would rock very perceptibly, so much that she could not sleep. I could sleep anywhere. A great many times she awakened me to carry the bedding downstairs, where we would sleep on the floor the rest of the night. One day having been away, I was returning home at nightfall, when one of those fierce storms was coming. I saw the dark clouds rapidly cover the whole horizon as I neared the village. The lightning and thunder was most terrific. Sinai could not have surpassed it. Between the flashes it was so dark not a single object could be seen, while the wind blew about sixty miles an hour. Just as I came opposite a square, concrete, three story house, up to the level, and waiting the roof, in went the upper stories with an alarming crash. Running with all my might, and anxious about home, I reached there safe myself, and the dear ones secure, but greatly frightened. The good Lord spared us all harm while other buildings were unroofed, and had their chimneys blown down, etc.

My labors were regular between the two places. Our meetings at C. were of good interest. In the spring of '58 the church at C. called me to ordination, asking that the Association meeting at Nebraska City attend to the services. Here is a copy of all the proceedings of the Council in the handwriting of Brother Taggart.

Nebraska City N. T. May 27, 1858

Pursuant to invitation of the Baptist Church at Cuming City, a Council of Delegates from the churches of the Territory in connection with a convention for the organization of an Association assembled at 10 o'clock A.M. in the Bank building to consider the propriety of ordaining to the work of the Gospel Ministry their pastor Brother G. W. Barnes.

Rev. John M. Taggart was chosen and Rev. J. C. Bowen Clerk.

Delegates were enrolled as follows:

Fontenelle Church	Rev. J. M. Taggart
Rock Bluffs	G. W. Ethell Jas. Murray
Plattsmouth	C. L. West Samuel Brenton
Nebraska City	Rev. J. G. Bowen D. Hoffman

Proceedings of the Cuming City church calling for the ordination, also of the Second Baptist Church of Davenport, Iowa, authorizing the candidate to exercise his gifts in preaching were then presented and read. The candidate then proceeded to an interesting relation of his Christian experience, call to the ministry, and views of Bible doctrine. Whereupon the Council very cordially voted satisfied in every respect severally.

The close of the regular services on Sabbath morning in the Hall was appointed for the public exercises, and Brethren Bowen, Brenton and the candidate a committee to arrange them. The clerk was directed to furnish an account of the ordination for publication in the Christian Times at Chicago, Ill. and Western Watchman, St. Louis, Mo. On Sabbath May 29 at the designated hour interesting services were performed in the following order,

Sermon by Rev. J. M. Taggart
 Prayer of Ordination Rev. J. G. Bowen
 Charge of Ordination J. M. Taggart
 Hand of Fellowship J. G. Bowen
 Hymn and Benediction by the Candidate
 Whereupon the Council adjourned

John M. Taggart of Baptist
 Church at Fontenelle
 J. C. Bowen Moderator of
 Baptist Church at Nebraska
 City Clerk.

This was the first ordination of a Baptist minister in the territory and I am inclined to think the first of any. I may say that the pastor of the Presbyterian Church was present Saturday, adding interest by his cordiality, prayer and questions. On Sunday, of course, he had his own services. This was the day of smallest things for Baptists in the territory and these were all the ministers we had on the field. In order to attend this convention I had borrowed a horse from Cuming City and Brother Taggart walked over to our house over 40 miles, to ride with me the other 50 miles to Nebraska City. He wore Indian mocassins. He, if I remember right, was the first Baptist minister entering upon labors in the territory. Brother Taggart and myself came into very close and loving relationship. He was a rare companion, of most genial nature; sound to the core, a true man, inside and out. . . . His name will always remain inseparable from the early history of Nebraska Baptists.

This convention organized the First Nebraska Baptist Association. Nine delegates were in attendance. Cuming City sent only myself as circumstances were such no others could attend. The distance being over 70 miles, it made it quite a long ride and required more time than could be spared. The following winter at C. we had some very interesting meetings for about two weeks. The weather was extremely cold 18 to 20 below zero, yet the people turned out remarkable. One family was a surprise. They lived way back in a lonely bluff, only a poor cabin, the husband, wife and two children, three and six years old. All the team he had was a yoke of oxen, yet every night that family came. Their means of protection from cold varied from the ordinary. He had a high box on his sled; then the bed was put in; where the mother and children were put to bed with clothes all on, while the father walked beside to guide the team. The box was high enough to carry the wind over the bed and contents. One night it was so cold I feared they would perish before reaching home, the oxen of course going so slow, that I went out to see them load and be sure they were comfortable. The father carefully tucked them in, head and ears, and with, "Go along Buck and Bright," they started so slowly for home. That home when reached was warmed by only an open fire place, where a few embers had

been covered when they left for the meeting, so that a new fire had to be made when they reached home to warm up before going to bed.

The brethren at C. did a very kind act in giving me a fine four year gelding, a beautiful horse. Then Brother B. M. Hill spoke to some friends in New York and they sent me money to buy saddle and bridle.

The hard times continuing, population thinning out at Florence, the meeting house project abandoned, and Deacon Alling preparing to return east, led me to feel the need to look for another field. Omaha seemed the most important point. It was gradually absorbing our place. The contest of Florence was hopeless as Omaha had the start, the most money, and most of all the Capitol. Several of our people had moved their houses down. Finally when Brother Alling went west he sold his fine house with a cupola, that cost him nearly five thousand dollars, for four hundred. It was placed on long skids, and with twenty yoke of cattle drawn bodily to Omaha. The dear brother lost most all his means in that western enterprise. . . .

I wrote to Brother Hill about the field, when he advised me to go down and see what could be done at Omaha. I did so and found a few Baptists but no organization. The Society had put a man there but he had left without doing anything for the cause. For himself he built a good stone dwelling upon a donated lot. When he was there he might have secured one for a Baptist church well as not, but failed to do so. It was finally decided to move to Omaha next spring. . . .

While still at Florence Brother Taggart and myself made a trip of exploration through the southern part of the territory, bordering the river down to Kansas so that we might furnish information helpful to the board and secure if possible more workers in the field. The chief settlements were along the river as yet. We journeyed together in an open buggy and were gone about two weeks, learning facts, preaching, and laying plans for the future of the Baptist cause and Christ's kingdom in the territory. Nebraska City was supplied. At Plattsmouth, Peru, and Brownville we found points of real interest; a few Baptists in each, and an open door for a preacher if we could succeed in

getting one. The time was most favorable for occupying these points. Below Nebraska City there was no one at work for our Home Mission Society.

We united in an earnest appeal to the board, giving them the result of our voluntary explorations and urging them to send more laborers into the opening fields. Other denominations were in advance in almost every place. For lack of means or other reasons the needed men were not sent and our cause suffered greatly.

The spring of '59 found us settled at Omaha, looking after the Baptist cause there. Omaha was having the capitol located there, the most important place in the territory, it being the business and political center, with a population of about 2,000. The capitol building on the hill was an unsightly brick edifice, surrounded by huge pillars supporting the projecting roof. Most of the dwellings were plain frame buildings, a few were more pretentious, and a few of brick and one of stone. For stores there were one fine brick building, three stories, with two well stocked stores below, and several others with good stocks but cheap frame buildings. Quite a large trade was done with emigrants who made this a starting point for farther west; here buying their supplies, teams, etc., before starting their schooners out upon the wide prairie-sea. The hotels were very plain, except one in course of building, The Herndon, which really was large, three storied, and suitable for almost any city. The supply of drink-poison cursedly abounded, but the number of places where sold I have forgotten. . . .

The population mainly were of a very intelligent class, mostly from New York, and said to contain more college graduates than any place of like size out of New England. There were of churches a M.E., a Congregational, each with good brick buildings, a Lutheran without a house, all having settled pastors, the latter getting things arranged for building. Presbyterians and Episcopalians were having occasional preaching. In casting about, seven sisters with good letters were found. After our organization, it seemed best to have a public service of recognition in order to bring ourselves into public notice. As Brother Bowen had left Nebraska City and Brother Taggart was so far off the other way with no public conveyance, it was voted to ask Rev. J. W. Daniels, pastor at Glenwood, Iowa, to preach the sermon and publicly recognize us as a regular Baptist church.

The Lord's day came, with large congregation, and Brother Daniels preached an excellent discourse upon the elements of a gospel church. He gave us the right hand of fellowship and the First Baptist Church of Omaha was afloat upon the sea of church life, composed of nine members, pastor and wife and seven sisters. We were weak indeed and strong in nothing but the promises of God.

Now a church home became a felt need. To preach in the house of another denomination kept one always hampered as to our views of church ordinances, a restraint ever unpleasant to one having clear and strong convictions. The Baptists ought to have had a free lot like those who had already built. A former appointee of the society, who labored there for a time, neglected the matter. Before I came the lots had been divided among the separate owners, and no single person would donate a lot. Being too poor to buy, a lease was secured in good location, the owner being glad to have it used for such purpose as it saved his taxes; hence we had it free. Meanwhile I started a paper to obtain means for material to erect a plain frame house for our worship home. . . .

Having secured enough money and labor, the work began on our tabernacle. It was frame, 20x32. A carpenter helped me about the frame and raising but a large part of the work was done by myself. I remember well that I was laying the last five courses of shingles the latter part of December and so cold that I had on an overcoat and lamb skin gloves, suffering all the time from cold. The Dutchman said he shingled his house with straw, we plastered our tabernacle with muslin and papered it. It looked neat and was real cosy, besides being under our own control. It was blessed to preach the Gospel there and usually to fair congregations. . . .

That winter some friends secured me the chaplaincy to the higher house of the legislature of the territory, which was retained for two winters. For such favor I was really thankful, as it furnished pecuniary aid. The members were a very respectable class of persons as a whole and treated the opening prayer with marked respect. One painful feature showed itself in the many divorce bills passed. Some miserable fellow from an eastern state would come out and reside a few weeks, secure the services of a

lawyer to draft and lobby a bill through the body. In many cases doubtless the absent party never knew of the proceedings until after they learned that the knot had been untied by special enactment. One season there were fourteen bills before the body. Such things were and are a disgrace to our Christian civilization. The idea seems so preposterous for such a body to act upon such a matter.

The hard times continuing our population did not increase very rapidly, so only a very few came to strengthen our hands. The spiritual condition seemed very low, only a very few conversions occurring in all the churches. The second winter a series of union meetings were held in the M. E. church as it was largest and most central. These lasted for several weeks and were largely attended, being led by pastors in alphabetical order, while all participated. Only a few conversions took place. It seemed as though the spell of evil proved too strong for the combined efforts of God's people. A few of these would have united with us but the tide sweeping to the gold mines carried them off upon its bosom. I think in 1860 I went to Bellevue, below Omaha eleven miles, a pleasant little hamlet, and found less than a dozen Baptists whom I organized into a church. Securing the use of the Presbyterian house, the only one in the place, began regular services every Sunday P.M. This being the fourth church gathered by my efforts. Preaching at Omaha in the forenoon, then to Bellevue eleven miles by three P.M. and back in the evening. The association met there the year following, a little company of five or six churches. . . .

The pastors of Omaha formed an informal conference, meeting weekly at our different homes to discuss our work, read sermons, present skeletons, etc. Brother Gaylord of the Congregational, Khuns of the Lutheran, and Davis of the M.E. made a pleasant group of preachers to mingle with in fraternal relations. . . . Omaha had no reason to be ashamed of her ministry, either for ability or moral worth. All were good ministers of the Gospel, not only causing no reproach but commending the institutions of religion by their godly lives.

The history of the Baptist cause in the territory was one of hard struggle and small advance during these early years. On two of my fields it seemed like building on quicksand. Flo-

rence passed away altogether; at Omaha but little progress and when there appeared promise, the Colorado fever carried off the hope. Now in 1861 the war was unsettling everything, affecting our church life well as other interests, there was nothing to encourage in our surroundings. The church at Cuming City was doing well under the faithful labors of Brother D. P. Hungete, who had taken up my work there. I began to feel a desire to see my eastern home again, having been away nearly ten years. Mrs. B. had been back once from Davenport. The board very kindly consented to my return the next spring. Hence, in May, 1862 we all made a visit to Kingston, New York, our native town. I went on to the anniversaries at Providence. It was pleasant to meet the board, and that noble brother B. M. Hill, the worthy secretary.

After remaining between two and three months and leaving my family, I returned, making my home at Bellevue. Preaching there until the last of October, I resigned my commission and returned east the first of November, 1862.