

Ira Rees and the Squaw Creek Church

Our church's history begins with Squaw Creek Church. In 1855, Reverend Ira Rees moved to Iowa from Indiana and settled in Story County. He organized a church at Iowa Center, just north of Maxwell. In 1858 he was appointed a missionary by the Iowa Baptist Convention to organize churches in Boone and Story counties. That year, Rees organized a church at Boonsboro (now incorporated into the city of Boone - although Boone was at that time called Montana).

The first mention of the Squaw Creek church is in the minutes of the Upper Des Moines Association, which was formed in 1860. Squaw Creek was one of five churches in the association, with 8 members and no pastor. In 1861 Ira Rees became pastor of the church. In his 1862 report to the state convention, Rees noted that the association now had 9 churches. He said, "We occupy a very important field. The whole of the northern valley of the Des Moines River seems in the Providence of God. We are now laying the foundation on which future generations are to build." He also noted that the churches were weak and that the work was a struggle.

Hoggatt School was built in 1862, on the east bank of Squaw Creek, near the present-day intersection of Lincoln Way and Maple Avenue. Not having its own building, the Squaw Creek Church met in the school.

In 1863, Rev. Rees moved on. In his book *Historical Sketches of Iowa Baptists* (1886), S. H. Mitchell noted, "Mention should be made of the departure of Rev. Ira H. Rees for a field farther west. The experience of this brother is a sad one to contemplate. He had settled on land on which the south half of the town of Ames now stands. Undergoing here hardships, poverty, and sickness, almost to the verge of despair, he finally sold out in the hardest of times just before the railroad came to relieve the depression, and went west to try the realities of another frontier settlement."



Hoggatt School

The town of Ames was founded in 1864, with the coming of the railroad. But without a pastor, the little church struggled. It did not appear in the 1866 associational records, and is listed in 1867, but without statistics. The Squaw Creek Church was reorganized in 1868 as the First Baptist Church of Ames, with 23 members.

The Hoggatt School was later incorporated into a dwelling in Ames. In 1981, the schoolhouse was restored and moved to its current location on the grounds of Meeker School.