

had been blasted at an earlier time, but it was also a reminder that Camden was progressing.

Although one hundred-fifty years have elapsed since the first store was started to serve the village and rural community, the number of business houses and industrial plants have not increased extensively. The town has not grown into a large industrial center and still must be regarded as a

rural district. However, it has had enterprising men and women over the years who have continued their families' establishments. Others have kept abreast of the times by founding new businesses and industries which have enabled them to offer opportunities for employment to many of the local citizens.

## CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN CAMDEN

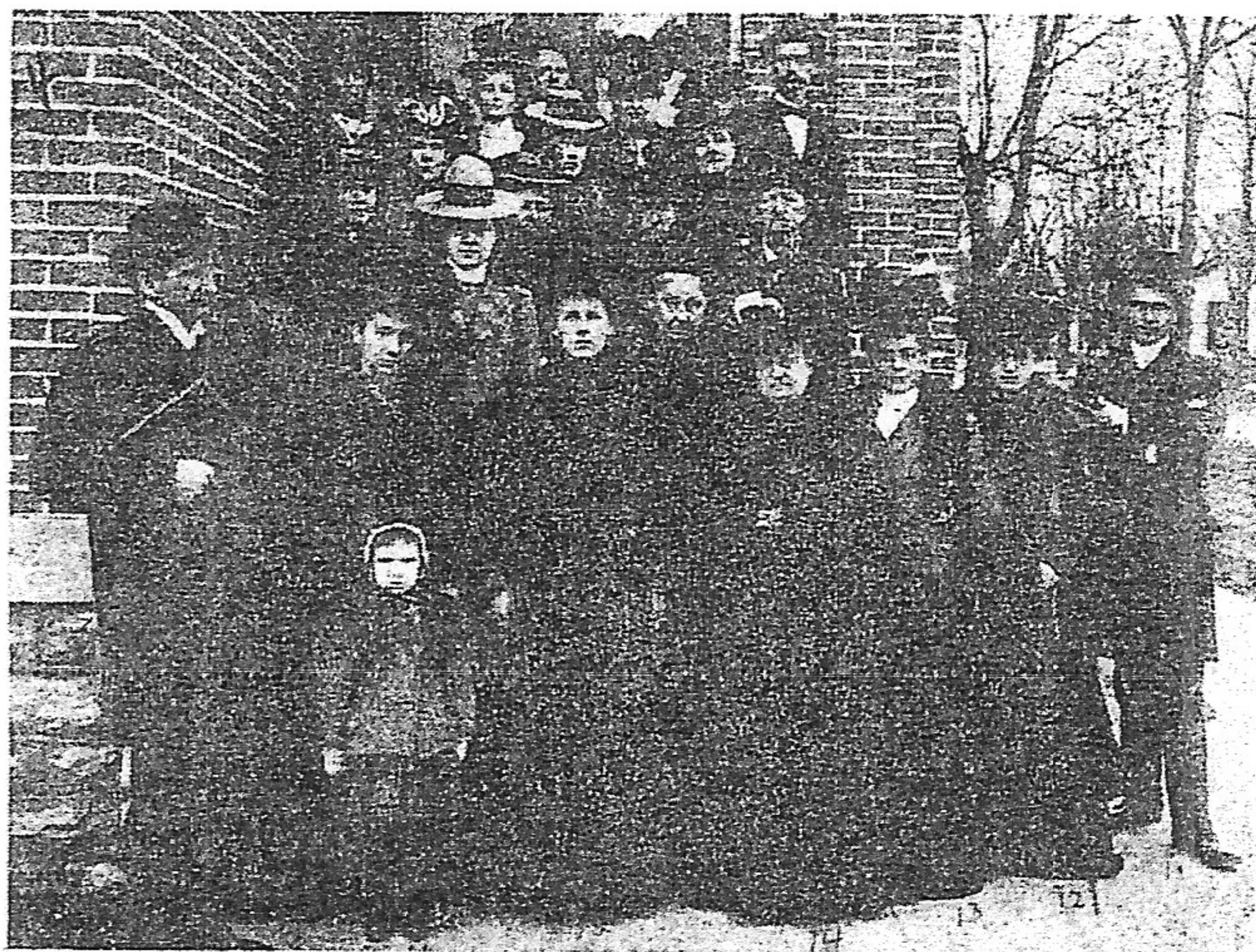
### CHURCHES, CLUBS AND LODGES — 1817-1968

One of the earliest and most important influences in the lives of the Camden settlers was the church. It provided a stabilizing influence for the turbulent times. It furnished these settlers with moral, spiritual and intellectual stimuli and inspired them with confidence to face the future.

Because the Methodist theology was a little more liberal and their organization more efficient they soon became the dominant church on the frontier. Circuit riders first brought the gospel to the widely separated cabins and itinerant ministers were common in all sects, but Methodists were more systematic in their efforts. A young minister would stop at a cabin and inquire if any Methodists were in the neighborhood. After he located a few, an evening service was arranged and an organization or class was formed. Before the circuit rider left the next morning he made arrangements for another preaching sermon when he came that way again. Within a few years a thriving church with its own pastor was developed in the community.

In a similar way on May 31, 1817, Camden's first church, the Methodist Episcopal, was organized. At that time James Moore, Sr. and his wife, Mary, gave in trust a lot near the old cemetery on the west hill on which to build a place of worship for the use of the members of the church. No doubt the Camden Methodists met in various members' homes until 1825. It was in that year a church was built on the land donated by the Moores. In

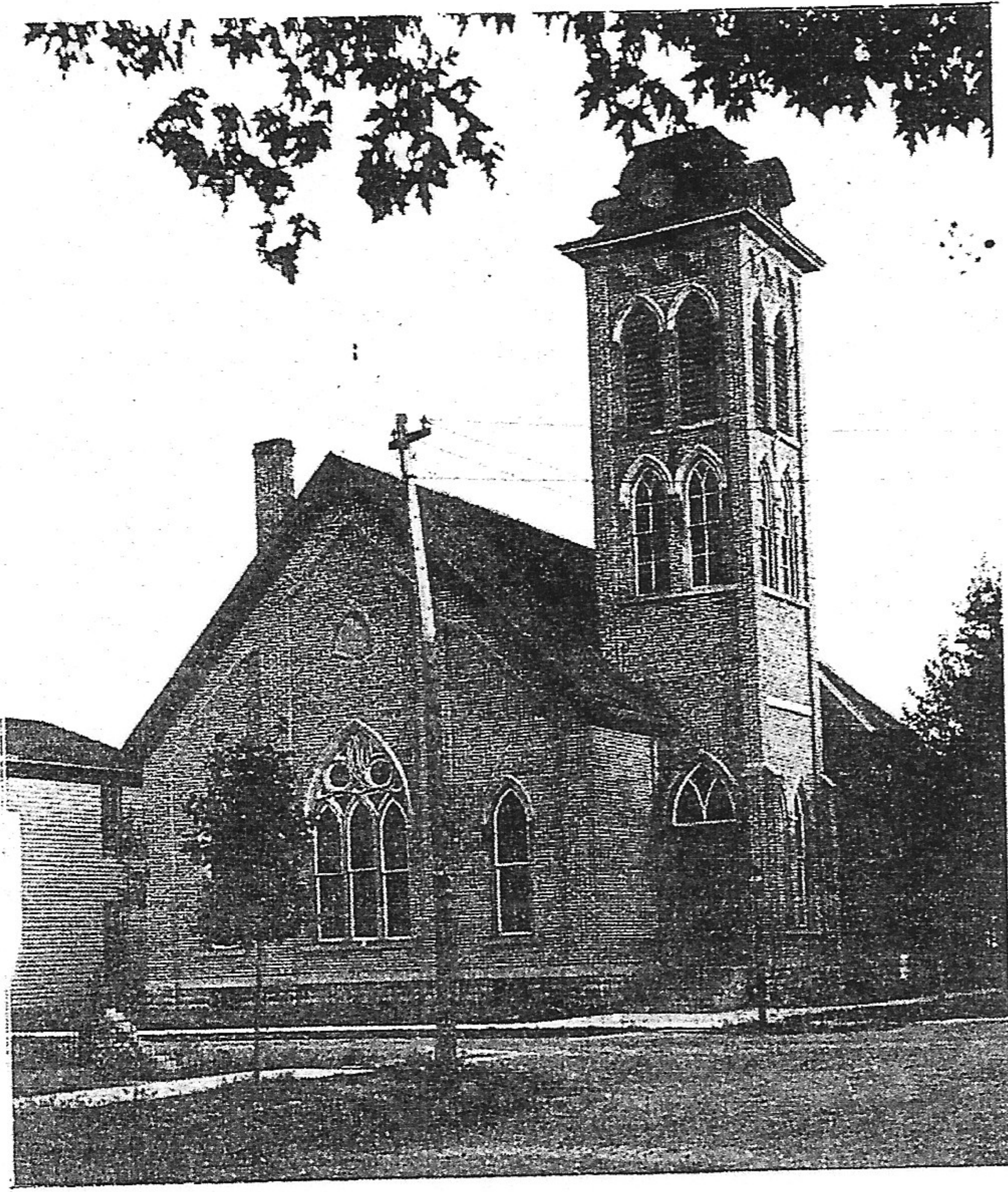
1836 the congregation purchased land on the southeast corner of Hendricks and Lafayette Streets and erected a new church. This building was used until 1849 when a new one was begun. Two years later this new one was completed at a cost of \$1,200. This structure was used until the erection of the present brick building in 1888 at a cost of \$1,500. In 1956 a new addition was started to the church. It was completed a few years later and contains church school classrooms, kitchen, dining room, minister's study and a chapel. This year in 1968 a merger became final on a nationwide scale of Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist Churches and the name now is the United Methodist Church.



Methodist — 1899

*Compliments of Deem's Restaurant — Camden*  
*Fred's Auto Parts & Repair Service — Somerville*  
*George Bros. Garage — Camden*  
*Humble Oil & Refining Co. — Camden*





**Methodist Church Built 1888**

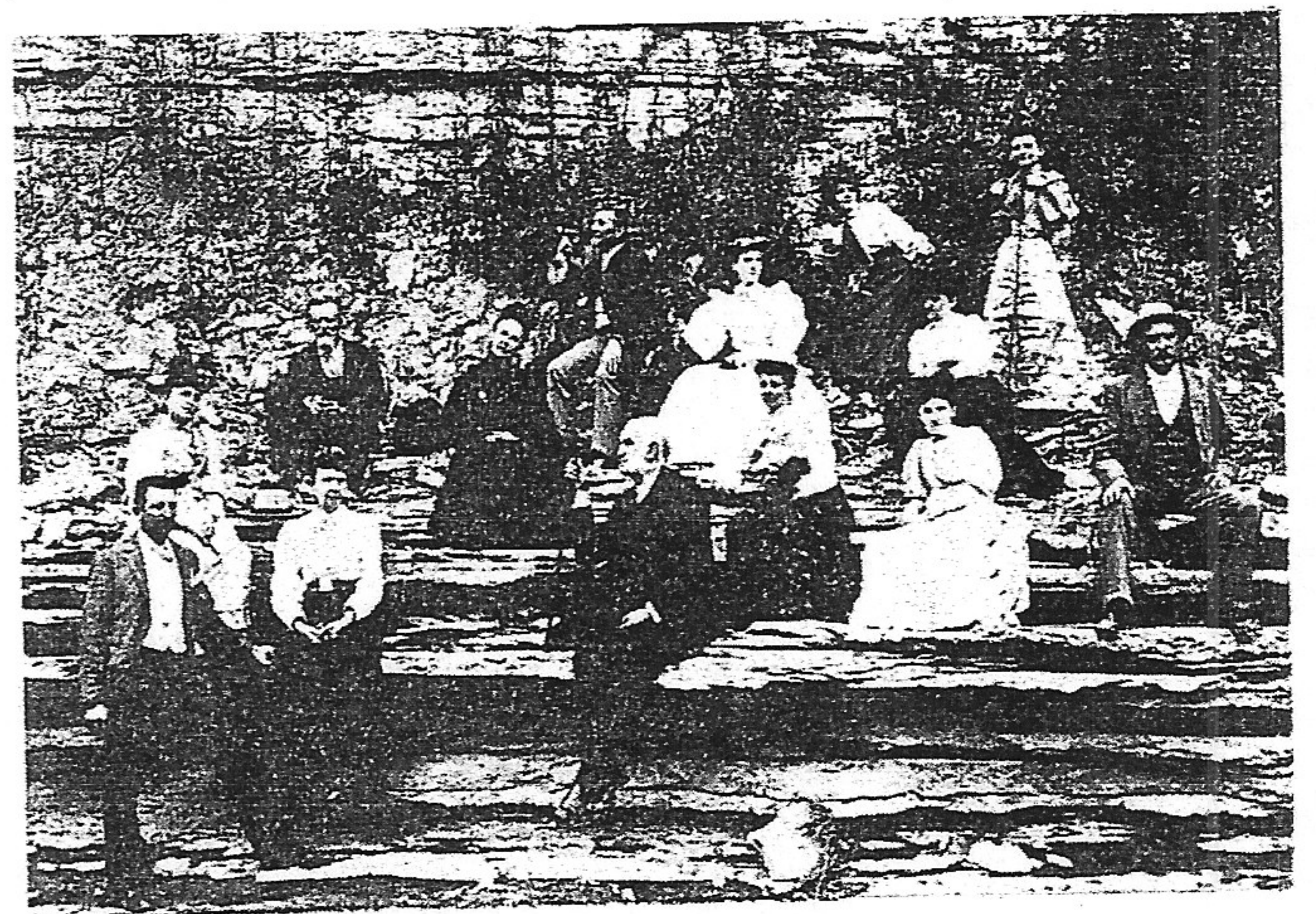
Another pioneer religious organization in the community was the Christian Church. About 1828 a church was erected north of Camden, known as Bank Spring Church. The denomination locally passed out of existence in 1840.

These early churches were not organized many years until they had a rival church—the Presbyterian. If the churches were rivals for members, they were united against such vices as cardplaying, dancing, drinking and desecrating the Sabbath.

Rev. P. H. Gollaway of Oxford came to Camden (then Newcomb) in April 1833 to gather the people of the Presbyterian faith together and start an organization. There were 39 members in the new church. Where these meetings were held for the next six years is not recorded. In 1837 a Sabbath School was organized in spite of the fact that many people frowned upon such an organization. It was in 1839 that the first deed for a lot for the church is recorded. The ground was purchased on S. Main Street south of the present Neff

& Fry office building for \$25.00 and a rectangular frame building with cupola was erected.

After the railway came through Camden, the Presbyterians objected to the location of their church because of the noise, and finally in 1878 the members agreed to buy their present lot on N. Main Street. A frame building costing \$5,000.00 was erected. In 1902 the parsonage was built. In 1929 and 1936 the church was severely damaged by fires. However, it has had only a few changes on the exterior and the interior remains quite similar except for changes in heating, lighting and decoration.



**Presbyterian Picnic Back Bone about 1895**

The doctrine of universal salvation from sin was preached in Ohio in the 1820's, as an organized movement. Rev. T. S. Guthrie, a Universalist minister in Eaton created interest in that faith in Camden and was responsible for starting the church here.

In April 1868 Paynes Hall was secured as a meeting place and Rev. Guthrie was engaged to preach regularly. Soon The First Universalist Church of Camden was organized and a lot was procured on the northeast corner of Lafayette Street and Central Avenue. Members and friends responded liberally to the building fund and it was possible to erect the brick church the follow-

*Compliments of Preble County News — Camden  
South Side Lumber, Inc. — Camden  
Herbert Wagers, Attorney — Camden  
Witter Sunoco Service Station — Camden*



ing year. This denomination was active until 1910 when the church doors closed because the membership had dwindled to such a few members.

In 1918 Rev. Sylvester Lowman, pastor of a Brethren Church in Dayton purchased the building for \$800.00. In a few months the Camden Brethren Church had been organized and was ready for dedication. A Sunday School was started at the same time. In seven months' time the church membership had grown to 85 members. The church continued to grow for sometime then came a decline which was caused by some unfortunate ministerial experiences. Membership fell off to such an extent



Universalist Church 1868—now Brethren Church

that in 1931 the church was closed. Again two years later, Rev. and Mrs. Lowman came back to Camden to take over the church and make their home here. Immediately plans were made to build additional Sunday School space on the east side of the church. In 1948 the Brethren felt the need for more expansion and four more Sunday School rooms were added to the south side of the church. The Brethren Church has had a great influence over the lives of many people. During Rev. Lowman's pastorate which ended in 1949, he took more than 250 people into the membership of the church.

Another church which has touched the lives of many people around Camden in later years is the Catholic. After there appeared a need for a church to serve a growing Catholic population, plans under the guidance of the Rt. Rev. Frances S. Smith were started for St. Mary's Church. A tract of 5 lots was purchased at the north edge of Camden on U.S. Route 127 (now 227) in the fall of 1941. Construction was started the following spring and St. Mary's Church was completed in approximately 90 days. The church is white frame of colonial design with a seating capacity of about 200. On July 17, 1942, His Grace the Most Rev. John T. McNicholas, Archbishop of Cincinnati, dedicated the new structure. A new addition to the church was added in 1960 and dedicated in November of that year. Rev. Anthony G. Andres is serving the parish at this time.

Another young church in Camden is the Baptist. It came here as a mission in 1950 under the direction of the New Zion Baptist Church of Hamilton, Ohio. In 1951 this group was organized as the Camden Baptist Church with 34 members. Church was first held in the Dover Theater building on S. Main Street and then moved to the large garage building just west of the present *Middle Grade School*. A new church was constructed on N. Liberty Street in 1952. Since then in 1961, a larger fine new addition has been added to it. The Baptist Church has one of the largest memberships in Camden.

*Compliments of A & A Oil Co., Arlie Alcorn, Jr. — Camden*  
*Howard A. Burch, Realtor — Eaton*  
*Camden IGA*  
*Camden Radio & TV*



Still another young church in Camden is the First Church of God. In 1939 when their services first started they were held in the Real Estate office on Main Street. After one or two other moves, a new church was built on N. Second Street and dedicated in 1952. At the present time, a newer brick church has been constructed by this congregation. It is on Route 127 north at the edge of the village. Their first service in the new church was held May 5, 1968.

Northside Chapel Church of God is the youngest church here. It was started in August 1965 in a residence about a mile north of Camden on State Route 227. Since then a new brick church has been built. Dedication services were held in February 1967.

### CLUBS

The advocates of temperance were working in Camden as early as 1854 but in 1874 the ladies of the village formed themselves into "The Home Guards of the Ladies Praying Society". It was their intention to raise funds with which to send a female delegate to Washington, D.C. to pray and plead with the President of the United States, his Cabinet, the Senate and House of Representatives to put a stop to the manufacture and importation of any and all alcoholic spirits.

While the money was being raised, the ladies were preaching, praying and picketing. The Society soon won a moral victory because in a short while Camden Council passed the McConnell Ordinance to "restrain and prohibit ale, beer, and whiskey in porter houses and shops, and places of habitual resort for tippling and 'intemperance'." However, the liquor problem was not solved for long in Camden because a beer garden opened just outside the corporation.

The Murphy movement was introduced into this community in 1877, having started in Pennsylvania the previous year. Frances Murphy attempted to reform by personal pledges to abstain from the

use of intoxicating beverages. A Union Temperance Society was organized in the Camden M. E. Church. All those who signed the pledge wore a blue ribbon to remind themselves and others of their sacred obligation. Camden at one time was visited by the great temperance worker—Carrie Nation.

The Philomathean Club is Camden's oldest literary club and Preble County's oldest women's club. It has always stood for self improvement and better community life. It was organized in 1895 by Mrs. Mary Craig. The word Philomathean means "Lovers of Learning" and the motto of the club is "From each one according to her ability, to each one, according to her needs". Immeasurable joy, inspiration and comfort has come to the people of Camden and the surrounding community from the Camden Public Library. This library is a monument to the Philomathean Club because it was those ladies who were instrumental in starting the library in 1896. By perseverance the library was kept in existence until it was taken over by the Camden Board of Education in 1906. At that time, the name was changed from the Philomathean Library to the Camden Public Library.



Mrs. Mary H. Craig — Organizer and first president of the Philomathean Club

*Compliments of City Loan, Vern Eyler — Eaton  
Eaton National Bank  
Wm. J. Friderici, D.V.M. — Camden  
Heller Oil Co. — Gratis*





**Florence Gwynne — President of Philomathean Club 1968**

By 1913 the library was housed in a room on the second floor of the Masonic Temple Building at Main and E. Hendricks Streets. The library moved to the first floor of the same building in 1928 where it is at the present time. In February, 1960 the Camden Public Library joined with five other county libraries to form the Preble County District Library. Robert Davies (a former superintendent of the local school) was the first president of this group.

The Chautauqua was a cultural movement which came to Camden in 1914 through the promotion of the businessmen of the town. The artists appeared each afternoon and each night for several days under a huge tent and the program was quite varied. Some of the finest talent in the country came to our town: lecturers, bands, stock companies, quartettes, soloists and others. It was quite a loss to the town when people failed after eleven years to support Chautauqua any longer.

An interest in the civic improvement and proper development of young people has been clearly shown in the program of another organization in Camden; namely, the American Legion. It was organized after World War I with I. M. Pheanis as the first commander. After a few years, this post became inactive and it was in 1936 that a new post was started at the instigation of George Pheanis and Trafford Boyd. The name of the post is Justice-Leibolt—in memory of Albert J. Justice, the first Camden boy lost in World War I and

Edward Leibolt, the first Camden boy lost in World War II. The Legion is both happy and proud to own a hall of their own now on S. Main Street. Richard Keller is the present post commander.

The newest service group in Camden is the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post #1577 which was organized in 1967 with George Willeford as Commander. In 1968 Jack Woosley holds that office.

The American Legion Auxiliary was formed in 1938 with Gladys Rodeffer as president. This group has always been active in promoting worthwhile projects. Veterans at the Dayton Military Home and Patrick Military Hospital in Dayton are helped by the Camden Auxiliary, as well as local projects. The name of the organization is Justice-Leibolt, also. Berdyne Michael is the new president for the year 1968-1969.

Delta Gamma Chapter of Delta Theta Tau Sorority, Inc., an international philanthropic, non-collegiate organization, was started in 1929 by a sister chapter from Lewisburg, Ohio. During the years this group has always been ready to lend a hand wherever and whenever needed. One of the sorority's newer projects is the awarding of a college scholarship—The Dr. C. E. McKinley Memorial Scholarship—each year to a deserving senior in the local high school. The first president was Charlotte Gabriel and the present one is Elizabeth Woosley.

In December 1932 a group of local young men organized a social club, named The Progressive Club. Harry Neff was the first president and Harold Overholser, secretary-treasurer. True to the name, the club has sponsored progressive moves in the community. Remodeling of the City Hall auditorium was their first project, others have followed through the years. The Camden Progressive Club has been one of Camden's largest contributors to community improvement and charities.

The Camden Lions Club was first organized in the early 1940's with R. C. Nein as president. The group was active for only a short time but was organized again in 1948 with Mr. Nein heading the club again. One of the principal objects of this group is to sponsor a sight saving program as

*Compliments of Delta Theta Tau Sorority, Inc., — Camden*



well as to promote good government and good citizenship. The City Park in the northern part of town is evidence of the group's interest in local improvements.

For many years Camden has been fortunate to have Mothers' Study and Discussion Clubs. One of the first such clubs was organized in the early 1930's. This interest has continued through the years so that today Camden has the Mothers' Discussion Group—with Dorothy George as president. Also, the Mothers' Social Club which was organized in 1953 with Ruth Ann Duskey (now Mrs. Richard Keller) as president. This year Beverly Bray heads this organization.

Boys and girls of this community too have been fortunate to have had the privilege of participating in scouting under the supervision of competent leadership. The Girl Scouts and Brownies were first organized in 1948. After eight years of an active program, they became inactive until 1964 when the Treaty Line Council of Girl Scouts helped to reorganize the Scouts. In March of that year investiture services were held for Girl Scouts and Brownies. Several interested mothers of the community were responsible for this venture.

The Boy Scouts are an older organization in Camden. Robert Marshall Troop #18 was started in 1935 with Faye DeCamp as Scout Master. One of their worthwhile projects was the renovation of the basement of the Town Hall to provide suitable Scout headquarters. Several years later the troop was sponsored by the Methodist Church and at that time, in 1951, the meeting place was changed to the basement of the church. At the present time John Biggs heads the Boy Scout organization.

Woodland Trails Scout Reservation provides excellent camping facilities for Camden scouts as well as all of the troops of the Miami Valley Council. This camp of 1800 acres including a 40 acre lake, pool, riding stables, chapel, camp sites and trails was dedicated in 1959.

Lodges with their high ideals for their members in serving both God and man have been an im-

measurable influence in the community from the very time of their installation. Five fraternal organizations have started and continued in Camden without interruption.



**Danser House — built in 1846  
site of Masonic Temple**

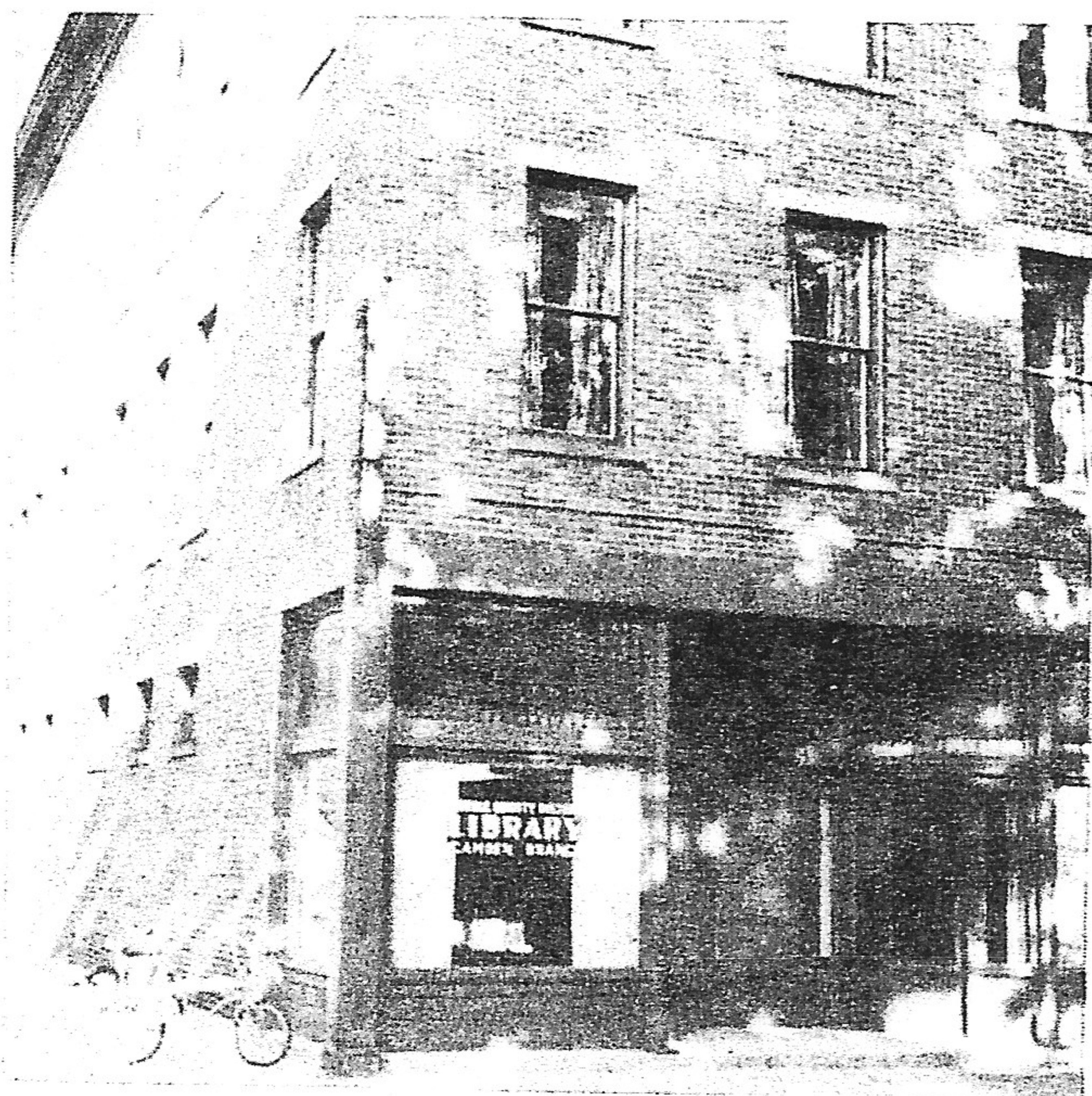
The oldest of these is the Camden Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons #159 which was established in 1848 with Jonathan Crowley as the First Worshipful Master. Wayne Parks is the present Master of the Lodge.

The Masons now have a temple at the corner of Main and Hendricks Streets which they built and dedicated in 1912. Lodge meetings are held on the second and third floors of the building and the first floor is occupied by the Camden Branch Library.

In the same year, 1848, the Covenant Lodge #52, Somerville, Ohio, instituted in Camden Western Star Lodge #109—Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Six years later the lodge dedicated their magnificent lodge room at the corner of Main Street and Central Avenue and this has remained

*Compliments of Meadow Gold Dairy — Eaton  
Vince Mobley, Agent New York Life Ins. Co. — Somerville  
Rainbow Farm Service — Gratis  
Rust's Garage — Camden*





**The Masonic Temple built in 1912,  
Camden Library on first floor**

their home ever since. At that time John Broderick was Grand Master. At the present time Carl Wardlow is the Master of the lodge.

Whenever an Odd Fellow Lodge appeared in a town it was usually followed by a Rebekah Lodge. This was true in Camden, but at a much later date. Somers Rebekah Lodge was instituted in 1880. Ruth Overholtz is the present Noble Grand.



**Camden Chapter #443 of Eastern Star 1937**

*Compliments of Shank's Variety Store 1911 -?....— Camden  
Stephenson's Feed & Grain — West Elkton  
A. C. Barrett Contractor — Camden  
Beckett Barber Shop — Camden*

In 1921 the Oxford Chapter of Eastern Star instituted the Camden Chapter #443 of Eastern Star. Mrs. Naomi Randall was the first Worthy Matron and Howard Pattison the first Worthy Patron of this lodge. Now it is Grace and Emerson Unzicker who fill these offices.

The same year that the Eastern Star was organized in Camden the Daughters of America Lodge was installed. A team from The Pride of Richmond Council instituted Somers Council #213 and Mrs. Mary Shields was elected the first counselor—which office is now held by Mrs. Mattie Faye Barber.

Eight years ago the Camden Masonic Lodge sponsored the first chapter of Demolay in Preble County. It was instituted here in 1960 with 35 members. Jack Cox was the first Master Councillor. At the present time this group is inactive.

The Camden Assembly Order of Rainbow Girls was also instituted in 1960 with 57 charter members. This group was sponsored by the local Eastern Star. Cynthia Matt was the first Worthy Advisor. At the present time Linda Cole holds this office.

Four other fraternal organizations, the Knights of Pythias Lodge, the Pythian Sisters, Order of Redmen and Junior Order of United States Mechanics have been at one time active in Camden but now are non-existent.

## CAMDEN SCHOOLS

The same indomitable spirit that urged the pioneer in Camden to build churches and to start other cultural organizations helped him evolve an educational program which was quite adequate at the time.

It is believed the first school was started in 1818 shortly after the town was laid out and was conducted in a log building on North Main Street, where the residence of Mrs. C. E. McKinley now stands. Undoubtedly, the early teachers were paid by the parents of the pupils because the first gen-