

Founding of the First Presbyterian Church Hugo

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Mrs. Peters and her husband were founding members of the First Presbyterian Church in Hugo. Many years later she wrote a letter to a member of her family telling of her experiences. Shortly before our Centennial celebration a family member presented the letter to the church. The original was sent to the Oklahoma State Archives to be sealed in acid proof lamination and placed in the church's safety deposit box at the bank.

History of the Hugo, Okla. Presbyterian Church from 1902 -- to 1905 by Helen Peters.

On October 5, 1902, in a small house known as the "Courthouse," the Presbyterian Church was organized by Rev. W. E. McIllwain of the Indian Presbytery, and Rev. E. Brantley of Antlers, with the following members.

Mr. & Mrs. Bailey Springs, Mr. and Mrs. L. K. Peters, Mr. & Mrs. D. H. Trout, Les Wiley and O. L. Donaldson.

L. K. Peters was ordained elder in that first service, serving with Rev. Silas Bacon and Bailey Springs as acting elders.

Rev. Brantley served as pastor for several months or until Rev. R. P. Walker was sent by Dr. Morris who became our first pastor. His report in the book, "Romance of Missions" gives a full account of his pastorship. He and his wife lived with us until he found a manse, see picture in book. Mr. Dudley's history takes up from there. It seems quite authentic.

But there are some incidents which was [sic] really the first step in the organization of the church. Most of them were humorous that I would like to quote a few.

On or about Oct. 1st 1902 Rev. McIllwain came to our house. After introducing himself he told of his mission. He had been sent to organize a church in Hugo. He had learned that we were Presbyterian through Silas Bacon and he wanted our cooperation. He stayed in our home the following week. At his suggestion, he and I started out to find other Presbyterians by making a house to house, I should say tent to tent, canvas.

We stopped at every door introducing ourselves and explaining our mission. At the first tent door we were met by a young woman. After introducing Rev. McIllwain I introduced myself. "Oh," she said. "you must be the wife of Mr. Peters who works for Joel Springs." I answered in the affirmative, then told her my husband and I were Presbyterians and were anxious to get a church here. She gasped, "Oh Mr. Peters is such a handsome young man -- he doesn't look like a Presbyterian!" She gave me a frown. "Well," said Mr. McIllwain after we left, "how does a Presbyterian look - do you know?" I did not, and to this day I do not know.

At our next stop, the woman said as we introduced ourselves, "Oh, I'm a Methodist, everyone's a Methodist in Texas -- anyway I don't like the looks (again the looks) of Presbyterians. All I ever saw looked like they had a poker down their spines---" We left her for the (good looking) Methodist.

At our last stop before noon the woman met us with a fork in her hand, "I ain't got no time fer (sic) agents. I'm cooking for my men folks" -- (she's a Methodist I thought) "and besides I ain't foolin (sic) with strangers--" As she said that I heard a ferocious barking dog coming towards us. "That's right, Jack." she told the dog, "tell them to get moving" -- we moved.

At the dinner table Mr. Peters laughed at our experiences, "Oh well," he said, "you found out a lot about Presbyterians." Then he gave us directions to the other parts of town. Though the first day's work was discouraging at the end of the week we had met many nice, fine people who were promising prospects for church members. So on October 5, 1902 the Hugo church became a reality.

The beautiful edifice you have today stands as a monument to a great achievement and a monument to a fine people.

Sincerely,
(Mrs. L. K.) Helen Peters