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## H.C. Welker: The life of a Presbyterian minister and his ministry in prairie and Great Plains communities 1886-1964

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**H. C. WELKER:  
THE LIFE OF A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER AND HIS  
MINISTRY  
IN PRAIRIE AND GREAT PLAINS COMMUNITIES  
1886-1964**

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

By

Patricia Ann Welker

August 1994

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H. C. WELKER:  
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IN PRAIRIE AND GREAT PLAINS COMMUNITIES  
1886-1964

Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College,  
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree Masters of Arts, University of  
Nebraska at Omaha

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## ABSTRACT

The histories of seven western communities and seven churches served by one minister help document the importance of Presbyterianism in western life between 1919 and 1952. H. Clare Welker became a Presbyterian minister in 1918 after having served seven years as a teacher, principal and superintendent in three western Nebraska school systems. School teaching and administration had provided good preparation for his future work in church management. His ministry took place in individually diverse western communities where the church occupied a dominant place. Issues that affected the community also had an impact on the church, and Welker actively took part in their resolution. His personal contacts with most residents of the community, even beyond the members of the church, characterized his open-arms ministry, and his pastoral care earned him wide acclaim from virtually everyone who knew him. Presbyterian congregations expected their minister to preach the Bible and minister to their needs, and Welker served well in both capacities. Yet, he also served the larger community by resisting the intimidation of the Ku Klux Klan in Sidney, Nebraska, by helping Japanese-American internees at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center near Powell, Wyoming, and by serving in a leadership role in many civic organizations. Within the church, Welker faced an apparent power struggle

with the choir director in Brighton, Colorado, and a conflict with his officers over fund raising for an addition to the church in Loveland, Colorado. Despite these difficulties, he never failed to stand up for his beliefs.

Wherever he settled, Welker found that even the smallest communities exhibited pride, and they ardently worked to attract commerce and new residents through Chautauquas, county fairs, school programs, and civic and fraternal organizations. Over the years, modern technology and changing societal norms gradually moved the small community's central focus away from the church toward other activities. New approaches in the church's theology and structure that had occurred by the mid-twentieth century presented great personal difficulty for Welker. These changes, he believed, represented a weakening of the Presbyterian heritage.

This study presents a significant contribution to our historical knowledge because it portrays a man's life with great detail; it provides insight into the Presbyterian Church's day-to-day operations between 1919 and 1952; and it highlights the issues that confronted communities as well as public reactions to those matters.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page		i
Thesis Acceptance		ii
Abstract		iii
Table of Contents		v
Map Table		vi
Introduction		1
Chapter I	Early Times, 1886-1912	11
Chapter II	Decision Time, 1912-1916	48
Chapter III	A Time of Preparation and Service 1916-1928	83
Chapter IV	A Time of Conflict, 1928-1936	125
Chapter V	Hard Times and Good Times, 1936-1944	165
Chapter VI	Changing Times, 1944-1964	203
Conclusion		236
Appendix		245
Photographic Section		256
Bibliography		267

## MAPS

Map 1	Birthplace of H. Clare Welker	12
Map 2	Residences of H. Clare Welker, Nebraska	41
Map 3-4	Chautauqua Circuits in Nebraska, 1913-1914	50
Map 5	Superintendent of Schools, Gordon, Nebraska	64
Map 6	First Pastorate, Morrill, Nebraska	92
Map 7	Second Pastorate, Guthrie Center, Iowa	106
Map 8	Third Pastorate, Sidney, Nebraska	126
Map 9	Fourth Pastorate, Brighton, Colorado	143
Map 10	Welker Cabins, Estes Park, Colorado	167
Map 11	Fifth Pastorate, Oakesdale, Washington	173
Map 12	Sixth Pastorate, Powell, Wyoming	178
Map 13	Seventh Pastorate, Loveland, Colorado	205
Map 14	Preaching in Retirement Years, Colorado	223



## INTRODUCTION

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. . . How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?  
Psalm 137: 1-2,4 RSV

By the 1870s the Great Plains represented the aggregated hope for a vast throng of mobile Americans who were seeking a new beginning under the 1862 Homestead Act. Families replaced the single male trapper, miner, soldier and adventurer with their determination to create permanence on the frontier by the establishment of farms and communities. In the high plains of western Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming, harsh climate and rugged topographical differences forced the adoption of new methods of farming and unfamiliar styles of living on the uninitiated. Immense expanses of arid land contrasted sharply with the heavily forested and verdant lands from which many had migrated. Even on the prairie of Iowa, lonely settlers grieved for the family, friends, and familiar surroundings left behind. Not deterred by hardships or dismal surroundings, however, the pioneers settled in increasing numbers until, by 1900, population growth had created states out of these former territories. Many of these hearty pioneers hoped to build a new Eden in the West by duplicating eastern life as quickly as possible.<sup>1</sup>

Families came by covered wagon and railroad bringing with them as much of their past as possible. Furniture, dishes, and personal mementos that had no monetary value created a feeling of home in their primitive sod houses. They also brought their ideals, their morals, and their religion to establish anew their old beliefs in a "strange land." Shortly after the establishment of an infant community, the citizens worked together to erect a church, often on a lot provided by the railroad or land company that promoted the settlement. Even in this new environment people maintained their former religious preferences. Protestant mainline churches--primarily Methodist, Christian (Disciples of Christ), Presbyterian, Congregational, American Baptist and Lutheran--as well as the Roman Catholic Church, were frequently present in many of the larger towns. The Protestants, who typically met three or four times a week, usually comprised the largest assemblies in community life. Although the denominations maintained their separate doctrinal identity, they often worked together to advocate a community-wide code of conduct.<sup>2</sup>

Greatly disturbed by the prospect of their church members migrating to a "wild" and unknown frontier without spiritual support and guidance, the national church bodies began a massive effort to supply missionaries and ministers to the sparsely settled regions of the West. The Protestant influence spread from the northeastern states into the Plains

region by committing to a Yankee credo that dominated their approach to evangelism. It stressed that life was a struggle, but each individual accepted responsibility for his or her own well-being without government dependency. Democracy and capitalism represented the highest political and economic systems, where success was a measure of character and depended on the will to succeed. Finally, the righteous assumed responsibility for the welfare of the community. Separation of church and state applied to teachings of sectarian doctrine, but moralistic legislation benefited all members of society and therefore was justified in their minds.<sup>3</sup> Despite the great changes in American life during the next fifty years, these late nineteenth century religious tenets remained firm for much of the Plains population. When philosophical conflict did come, it pitted the moralism expounded by schools, pulpits and press against the unbridled individualism which traditionally had dominated the frontier spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Religion had a great impact upon the development and establishment of the character of the Great Plains, but unfortunately it was often ignored by historians. Part of this oversight rests upon the absence of a unified religious experience or point of view which can be readily studied. Various Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church made their impact upon community opinion, values and institutions, but each was different and not identifiable as a singular

religious influence. Denominations disagreed on the interpretation of such issues as prohibition, women's suffrage, and even moral values.

The Presbyterian minister presented in this paper, possibly typical of Presbyterians but not a composite of Protestant pastors, served seven communities in Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado and Washington between 1919 and 1952. The story of his life and the communities he served helps define Presbyterianism at the local level, and tests the meaning of the broader movement from within a microcosmic setting. Because the first fifty years of the twentieth century filled Americans' lives with new technologies, social tensions and changed values, it is a worthy period for study. Furthermore, the challenges confronted by this one Presbyterian minister, Clare Welker, help personalize the story of social change and social continuity.

Welker grew up in Nebraska and his life was the individual story of the making of a minister. Influenced by several churches and ministers while yet in high school, he assumed a leadership role in the church. An early commitment to become a minister weakened and almost died during the ensuing eleven and a half years before he entered seminary. His personal struggles and the influences on his life exerted by the various communities led him through a long and circuitous route toward his goal. By making the decision to

become a teacher at the end of college, he chose not to even consider the ministry. Through his seven years of teaching and administering, and his four summers of deep involvement in Chautauqua, the dream returned and ultimately became fulfilled.

The ideals and moral code of Protestantism dominated the social conduct of most prairie and plains communities in the early twentieth century. Although the Catholic Church was present in almost every town, it represented a minority, and disagreements existed between these two major Christian traditions. Catholic emphasis on the church as the mediator between God and man caused many Protestants to believe that Catholics lacked freedom in their religion and this was somehow un-American. Generally, however, the relationship between Catholics and Protestants on a day-to-day basis was friendly, and commercial and social interaction presented no problems. The real prejudice directed itself toward the far away hierarchy and the Pope. Protestants placed great emphasis on individual responsibility both for their own salvation and the moral environment of the community.<sup>5</sup>

Among the five major Protestant denominations found most frequently in Great Plains communities, the Congregationalists, American Baptist and Disciples of Christ practiced a congregational form of government. This meant that each local church congregation made all decisions concerning its minister, congregational life, and doctrine.

The Methodists and Presbyterians represented a connectional form of government in which the congregation and pastor owed certain obligations and responsibilities to higher bodies in the denomination. A group of elders elected by the congregation governed the local Presbyterian Church. The ruling and teaching elders, united through many congregations, constituted the governing authority for Presbyterians. This body, called the Presbytery, represented the first court above the session of the individual church and united the churches of an area in common goals. The minister's membership resided in the Presbytery which approved his call to a local congregation. The Presbytery also acted as a mediator when conflict arose within a congregation or between the congregation and the minister. An administrative body made up of ministers and elders, known as the Synod, coordinated the work of several Presbyteries. Ministers and elders attended the Synod. The national body, called the General Assembly, met once a year in various parts of the country where representatives elected by the Presbyteries conducted the business of the church. Some actions of the General Assembly were binding on the churches, while others only recommended action. The various bodies of the Presbyterian Church placed responsibilities on the minister above and beyond his service in the local church.<sup>6</sup>

Clare Welker believed in the Reformed Faith and committed himself to the Presbyterian Church. His ministry

included service as moderator and stated clerk of Presbytery, commissioner to the General Assembly, and member and chairperson of numerous committees and commissions of the Presbytery. Although at times in disagreement with the actions of the church's higher courts, he supported the process of the Presbyterian system and worked within it. His conservative theological views adapted well to the rural communities where liberal ideas seldom received a hearing. Each of his pastorates expressed their own individual characteristics and were influenced by the changes in society, his faith journey, and the needs of the community and congregation.

Many church histories have recorded a brief story of each minister who served their congregation, but few historians have followed a pastor throughout his life and have examined the broader implications of his ministry in several different regions. This study explains Welker's diverse roles in these communities, the difficulties he faced within the communities and the churches, and the patterns of his life and ministry over many years. This period of history between 1919, when he began his first pastorate, and his retirement in 1952, witnessed a shift in society away from church loyalty to more involvement with the great technological advances of the times and forced the church to reexamine its image. From the grassroots level Welker dealt not with great national issues, but with the everyday

challenges and events that faced the individual people in the local community.

Robert P. Swierenga defined the "new rural history" as the "systematic study of human behavior over time in rural environments." Peter N. Stearns wrote that the "new social history" attempts to achieve, "historical perspective on the everyday activities of ordinary people."<sup>7</sup> In keeping with these mandates, this paper views the church from the local perspective of the people who lived in the community and the minister who served them. It also studies the pastor as a person whose maturing years had relevance on his later ministry. Through newspapers, county and local histories, diaries, interviews, church histories, and census records, issues of importance to the community can be placed within an historical context. By taking a larger view of these happenings, a clearer picture of human behavior in small town America can be delineated.

This thesis owes its inspiration to the sixty years of diaries meticulously kept by my father-in-law, The Reverend H. Clare Welker. I express my appreciation to him for his contribution to our historical knowledge of the dynamics of church and small town life during the first half of the twentieth century. Likewise, I would like to acknowledge the Presbyterian churches in Morrill and Sydney, Nebraska; Guthrie Center, Iowa; Brighton and Loveland, Colorado; and



Powell, Wyoming, which so graciously allowed me access to their records and papers. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the professional staffs of the Nebraska State Historical Society and to the Colorado State Historical Society, as well as the library staffs at the public libraries of Morrill and Sidney, Nebraska, Guthrie Center, Iowa, Brighton and Loveland, Colorado, Powell, Wyoming, and the Adams County Historical Society. A special thanks is also extended to the University of Nebraska at Omaha reference and interlibrary loan librarians. Equally helpful were the persons cited in the text who so graciously invited me into their homes and consented to interviews that helped give personality to the story. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Michael Tate and Dr. Harl Dalstrom of the University of Nebraska at Omaha History Department, and to Dr. Charles Gildersleeve of the Geography Department who so patiently edited and guided me through the process of writing. My appreciation also goes to my daughter, Carol Welker, who prepared the pictures for publication. Finally, my eternal gratitude is extended to my husband who both encouraged and criticized my work and stayed with me every step of the way.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Elliott West, *Growing Up With the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1945), 37.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas J. Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots: An Iowa Small Town in the Early Twentieth Century* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 13-14.

<sup>3</sup>Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots*, 45.

<sup>4</sup>Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots*, 13.

<sup>5</sup>Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots*, 43-44.

<sup>6</sup>Julius F. Schwarz, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Nebraska* (N.p.: n.p., 1924), 7-13. Reader should consult this book for a more complete and in depth description of the Presbyterian Church.

<sup>7</sup>Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots*, x.

## CHAPTER I

## EARLY TIMES, 1886-1912

God gives us so many talents and allows us to choose the way we want to develop them. Can I do any more good with my talents than by preaching?<sup>1</sup>

The family of H. Clare Welker typified the restless pioneer spirit in its search for new opportunities in the developing West of the late nineteenth century. The lives of Americans on prairie and plains well represented a people adjusting to a new environment and a style of life different from their eastern forbearers. The history of Clare Welker began not far from the nation's birthplace and ended on the Great Plains at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. His father, West David Welker, was born December 28, 1853, at Path Valley in Franklin County, Pennsylvania. Sarah Alice Woods, his mother, was born north of Blain in Perry County, Pennsylvania, on October 20, 1852.<sup>2</sup> Her ancestors had resided in America even prior to the Revolutionary War, and they included General Anthony Wayne who had gained military fame during the Revolution from his 1794 victory over confederated Indians at Fallen Timbers in the Ohio country.<sup>3</sup>

Following their marriage on January 6, 1881, West and Sarah Alice Welker resided five years on the Welker farm at Blain, Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup> (See map 1 page 12) Mabel Grace, their



first child, arrived on November 23, 1881. Vallie Woods was born January 25, 1883, and Herman Clare, the subject of this study, was born on March 14, 1886.<sup>5</sup> Not content to remain among generations of family and friends, West Welker, perhaps enticed by advertisements of midwestern opportunities, decided to move to Williamsport, Indiana. In the spring of 1886, his wife and three children, aged five, three, and six weeks, journeyed to a farm along the Wabash River where they lived for three years. For an additional year they lived in Lafayette, Indiana, but the lure of new opportunities resulted in yet another move. Welker traded his farm in Indiana for an unseen parcel of land in Chicago. A new son, Raymond Linn, was born on January 26, 1888, and now with four young children, the family embarked from Indiana on a new adventure.<sup>6</sup>

Chicago loomed like a young giant at the foot of Lake Michigan where by 1890 it stood as the hub of transportation and manufacturing for the mid-west with 1,500,000 people.<sup>7</sup> Clare Welker and his siblings must have been awed by the size and activity of such a large metropolis. Unfortunately, West Welker soon discovered that his land was nothing more than an unpromising piece of swampy marsh. Unable to finance the drainage of the property, he settled his family at 5615 State Street and opened a feed store. To augment their income, the family maintained a milk route which necessitated deliveries from a bulk milk can on a horse-drawn wagon. Clare and his

brother, Linn, dipped the milk into the customer's containers as they made their way along State Street.<sup>8</sup> There were no other records of the Welker family in Chicago except that a third son, Wayne West, was born on July 6, 1893.<sup>9</sup> That winter, following the Columbian Exposition of 1893, West Welker sold the feed store, packed up his family, and traveled west to Nebraska.

Clare Welker, now eight years old, experienced the West at a very impressionable age. As for thousands of others before him, this move truly began a new way of life. Just as he was becoming accustomed to the big city, he and his family faced adjustment to a semi-frontier life-style. With two young sons to help him, West Welker rented a quarter section of land three miles northwest of Carroll, Nebraska, in Wayne County. (See Map 2 page 41) Located on the divide between the Elkhorn and the Logan valleys, the farm rested upon rich dark clay loam which produced good crops.<sup>10</sup> The St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad bisected the land from east to west, and on the north side of the tracks stood a small house and barn. Crops planted that first year included wheat, oats, corn, millet and rye. Their team of work horses and wagon arrived from Chicago by "immigrant" train which also transported their household goods. Additionally, they purchased two more horses, two cows, a brood sow and some chickens, as well as a disk, harrow and walking cultivator. Clare Welker became intimately acquainted with the machinery and techniques of

farming as he worked tirelessly alongside his father and brother.<sup>11</sup>

The virgin land required special outfits to break up the dense root mass of the native grass. These traveling gangs shocked young Welker with their slovenly outfits and the deplorable condition of their horses and mules. They traveled with their own chuck wagon and tents for sleeping.<sup>12</sup> That first year began in a blizzard and ended in almost total disaster when scorching winds withered the grain and caused the corn to produce only runted ears. Harvest time necessitated neighborly cooperation to thresh the grain and husk the corn. The farm wives and daughters provided two large meals a day for the crew of a dozen or so men, thus making their work as difficult as that of their husbands and fathers. Although Welker made no further comment about the ensuing years on the farm, his later life confirmed that he gave no consideration to becoming a farmer.<sup>13</sup>

After two years of farming, the family moved on March 9, 1896, to nearby Wayne, Nebraska, which had been established by the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad five years earlier. (See map 2 page 41) From its founding the town grew rapidly until, by 1890, the population totaled 300. The Presbyterian, Baptist, and Lutheran churches served the people's spiritual needs, while several grocery stores, banks, drug stores, agricultural implement dealers, and lumber yards met their increased physical needs. The *Wayne*

*County Review* newspaper moved from LaPorte to Wayne in November of 1881 to accommodate the shift in the county's population.<sup>14</sup> Most of Clare's early education through the ninth grade transpired in Wayne. The death of Wayne West occurred during the first year on the farm and the last child, Gladys Elmira, was born in Wayne on July 19, 1897.<sup>15</sup> No records indicated if West Welker gave up farming following the move to Wayne, but when he relocated in Omaha he worked for the Western Stock Feed Company, a manufacturer of western livestock food and hog and horse treatments to destroy worms, prevent cholera and plague, and revive run-down and out-of-condition animals. As a salesman for this company, he worked out of their headquarters in Omaha, though he may have begun this work while previously living in Wayne.<sup>16</sup>

The first evidence of Clare Welker's affiliation with the church appeared in 1902 when he received a New Testament from Sunday School teacher Paul Young. The inscription read, "to Clare Welker, Wayne, Nebraska, April 26, 1902." Beneath this Welker wrote,

Paul Young was my S. S. teacher in the First Presbyterian Church of Wayne. I finished the ninth grade there. We moved to Omaha that fall, 1902. I entered tenth grade in Omaha High School. If I remember correctly I read this N.T. all the time I was in college.<sup>17</sup>

That fall West Welker again moved his family from a farming community to a big city and settled at 211 South 25th Avenue. (See map 2 page 41) Later they moved to 124 North



24th Street.<sup>18</sup> Omaha, with over 100,000 in population, did not compare with Chicago, but it had become an important regional metropolis. Growth in the business community was aided by the railroads which helped establish the city as one of the most important commercial and industrial centers of the West. Between 1900 and 1910 the "Golden Age" of agriculture reigned in Nebraska, and the resulting grain trade enhanced Omaha's economic growth.<sup>19</sup> Already by 1891, one of the largest viaducts ever built reached completion on Tenth Street; by 1905 the first movie house opened; and by 1910 motor vehicles had appeared.<sup>20</sup> Omaha outdistanced other midwestern communities in its positive and welcoming attitude toward newcomers that encouraged business and development. On the negative side, it retained the stigma of a wide open town and the reality of a corrupt political system.<sup>21</sup>

Mabel and Vallie Welker had finished high school in Wayne just about the time Clare and Linn were entering secondary school. Omaha's reputation for good schools may have been an impetus for Welker to seek a better education for his sons. Central High School, where they attended, ranked as an outstanding high school in the United States and its pupils were well known for their scholarly achievements. Graduates attained admission to reputable colleges and universities without further prerequisite of examinations except where required by the college board.<sup>22</sup> Central High School provided Welker with a good education that later

allowed him to attend college and seminary, but even more important, Omaha presented him with two other opportunities that would greatly affect his future.

An important era began for Welker on December 31, 1903, when he made the initial entry in his first diary that became a daily record of his deeds and thoughts during the next sixty years. These diaries provided the threads that connected the parts of his life within the framework of events and places. The diaries, along with several picture albums and slides, his personal papers that included several dramas he wrote and produced, short readings, seminary class notes, and an extensive file of sermons developed over nearly forty-five years in the active and retired ministry, formed the detailed record of his public and private life. During the last two or three years of his life, Welker reviewed his diaries and in a note dated April 7, 1961, he wrote,

I started these diaries in 1904 when I was working as a 'page' before and after school, in the Omaha Public Library. The librarian allowed me to keep track [sic] of the hours that I worked and Grandfather [father] (W. D.) Welker gave me a little advertising diary to use for this purpose. This is the volume for 1904.<sup>23</sup>

The diaries began almost immediately to reveal something of the personality of this young man. The first year he painstakingly recorded his hours of rising and going to bed and his hours of work, thus demonstrating an organized and self-disciplined life.

Welker's interest in school centered on his manual training classes and he especially noted the personal impact of an excellent teacher, John E. Wigman, who had taken students to the Chicago Exposition in 1893 to display their work. The course involved architectural drawing, wood turning and joining, metal molding, and other skills.<sup>24</sup> Welker built a mahogany inlaid star table in the spring of 1904 and recorded each step of the process.<sup>25</sup> He also made an inlaid gavel, a sample case for his father, a globe, and many other items that he gave as gifts.<sup>26</sup> A few times he recorded his grades as A's and B's, but he seldom mentioned classmates or teachers. His family life during these high school years received little attention in his diaries except that his father was absent for long periods due to his job as a salesman. Mabel, his older sister, became engaged and Vallie went to work as a secretary at the Board of Trade Building.<sup>27</sup>

The first major change in his life happened on January 4, 1904, when he gained employment at the Omaha Public Library. He enthusiastically wrote in his diary, "This marks the beginning of a great epoch in my life."<sup>28</sup> He fell in love with the library and learned the various tasks ranging from circulation to reference, and finally to being appointed custodian of the Egyptian Collection and Museum. He worked everyday after school and all day on Saturday at a salary of approximately \$14 a month. This became the all-consuming

activity in his life, and except when he was sick, he never missed a day.

The second Omaha Public Library building opened on July 5, 1894, at a cost of \$112,000. Located at Nineteenth and Harney streets, the library was a magnificent building, which by 1901, housed the chief librarian plus twelve assistants, one extra cataloguer, one substitute, two pages, two binders, one engineer, and two janitors.<sup>29</sup> The library made steady progress as an educational institution. According to the *Omaha Mercury* of February 13, 1901, it was, "an institution of which the city may well boast." The *Daily News* stated on February 19, 1902, "the library service of the city of Omaha has given the residents a matter for self congratulation."<sup>30</sup> The reference department contained over 5,000 volumes and the finest collection of newspaper files in the state. It boasted the largest collection of bound volumes of magazines found in the entire West.<sup>31</sup>

The Public Library Museum resulted from the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition held in Omaha in 1898. The Exposition donated and the library purchased numerous items to create an extensive museum on the third floor of the public library.<sup>32</sup> Welker began to work there on May 20, 1904. The following year he recorded that he had worked with the hand of an Egyptian mummy.<sup>33</sup> This exhibit so interested him that he researched Egyptology and prepared a lecture on the archeology of Egypt. Entitled, "The Works and

Workmen of Ancient Egypt" it was later printed in pamphlet form. With explicit details he chronologically described the various tombs and temples ordered by the kings of the thirty-one dynasties. His lecture related some of the myths and legends surrounding the kings and a description of the secret embalming process that allowed modern man to view the real faces of the ancient Egyptians. Welker stated,

It is strange but seemingly true that the most important things in the records of ancient history seem to have been lost while the more trivial facts have been preserved to us. From these alone we are forced to draw all conclusions.<sup>34</sup>

His library work began a lifelong interest in history that developed first in his career in teaching and later as an integral part of his preaching and teaching in the church. He believed that the lessons of history were both important and applicable to everyday life. The lessons of organization, planning, appreciation of culture, and the impact on his life of the library staff helped shape his future ability to serve the church.

The summer of 1904, Welker and his brother worked on farms near Wayne, Nebraska, for summer income. Thinning beets, cutting hay, hauling hogs, and picking fruit kept them busy. In May 1905, Welker decided to accept full time employment at the library instead of returning to the country. He spent considerable time that summer escorting guests through the museum and working with the collections. The recently introduced Dewey Decimal System became Welker's

project for the summer. After mastering this cataloging arrangement, he catalogued the entire museum collection.<sup>35</sup>

The second great opportunity that led to Welker's decision to become a Christian minister centered in his church activities. The diaries recorded his attendance at church and his increased involvement in its life and programs. He attended several Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches establishing a lifelong pattern as he remained very open to worship in other denominations. In 1902 he joined St. Mary's Avenue Congregational Church at Twenty-seventh and St. Mary's Avenue.<sup>36</sup> He regularly led Christian Endeavor (a group for young people) and Bible study at St. Mary's Church, and he developed a close association with Minister Robert Yost who was a Presbyterian.<sup>37</sup> Yost, probably the most influential minister in Welker's life at this time had come to St. Mary's from Cortland, New York, with the reputation of being one of the most promising preachers in the state.<sup>38</sup> Following many serious discussions with Yost and Dr. Daniel Jenkins of Omaha Theological Seminary, Welker decided to join the Presbyterian Church and attend Hastings College.<sup>39</sup> Through his attendance at First Congregational Church, Welker listened to Dr. Hubert C. Herring whom admirers stated had been a "good preacher, cleared the debt, and left things in fine order." Herring always wore a Prince Albert coat to preach and this unique dress was adopted by Welker throughout his later ministry.<sup>40</sup>

On February 5, 1905, Welker made the decision to become a minister. Throughout the previous month his numerous diary entries expressed his soul-searching thoughts in preparation for his decision. On the flyleaf of his 1905 diary he set the motto of "think" for the year. His expressions over the next few weeks questioned how he should live his life. He stated, "Be glad of life because it gives you a chance to love and work."<sup>41</sup> He prayed that God would correct his faults, give him strength to overcome temptation, and take away his doubts.<sup>42</sup> In considering the ministry he recognized the long and arduous effort to attain the goal and the lack of financial reward, but yet he wrote on January 4, "At Thy Word I will. . ."<sup>43</sup> A month later he emphatically wrote, "I am going to be a minister."<sup>44</sup> Despite this initial spirit of commitment, eleven and a half years elapsed before Welker entered seminary, and at times, it appeared he had given up the idea of ministry.

The balance of his senior semester continued normally with library work, school and church. In April 1905, his family moved again from 124 North 24th Street to 2625 Decatur. This area had been platted before 1880 for middle and working class homes. However, new building occurred around 1900.<sup>45</sup> That spring Welker became involved in the city mission directed by Missionary A. W. Clark. The mission, established in 1875, stated that its objective was "to advance the interests of the Christian religion by active

work." Its efforts included an industrial school, Sunday School and a relief department. The average attendance in each school was 125.<sup>46</sup> As a volunteer at the mission located in an old school building on Tenth Street, Welker began to teach a class on simple woodworking skills to a group of "street urchins." This missionary service continued until he left Omaha.<sup>47</sup>

Graduation was an exciting time. He first mentioned walking home with girls in May and June, and he escorted Helen Woodward, a classmate, to the Senior Banquet. He sent out graduation invitations, attended Baccalaureate, and graduated on June 16, 1905, at age 19.<sup>48</sup> On July 10, he decided to matriculate at Hastings College in Hastings, Nebraska.<sup>49</sup>

Traveling west, Welker crossed the ninety-eighth meridian for the first time and entered the Great Plains. He noticed a dramatic change in the landscape as the hills and trees of Omaha faded behind him. The gentle rolling grasslands of central Nebraska still had the look of the frontier as small towns and widely spaced farms infrequently broke the line of vision. Hastings received its name from the man who built the St. Joseph and Grand Island Railroad. At its junction with the Burlington line a trading post had been established as early as 1872.<sup>50</sup> Located in south-central Nebraska, Hastings soon attracted citizens eager to establish institutions of settled community life. (See map 2 page 41)



Hastings College, founded in 1882, resulted from the efforts of pioneers whose first thoughts were of education and religion.<sup>51</sup> A small group of mostly Presbyterians committed to Christian education established the college with wholehearted support from the town and the Presbytery. Financial problems became more evident as time passed and, without an endowment, the college faced one crisis after another. Generous benefactors such as the Cyrus McCormick family, the Board of Aid of the Presbyterian Church, and especially the people of Hastings, kept the doors open.<sup>52</sup> Dr. E. Van Dyke Wight, pastor of the Hastings Presbyterian Church, became president in 1902 and remained through Welker's junior year. Wight's efforts brought considerable funding to the college that helped stabilize its finances and expanded the physical campus. During his tenure many campus groups developed including the Pestalozzian Literary Society and the Athletic Organizations. Student athletes organized their own sport, established their rules, and paid their own way.<sup>53</sup>

Hastings exemplified a school based solidly on Christian principles. The founders and ongoing promoters were persons of strong Christian principles, and most students came from homes with a Christian background. The relationship of sports to these principles demonstrated itself when Edward R. Bucknell from the class of 1899 represented the United States at the Paris Olympics in 1900. A long distance runner, he

refused to participate in his event because it was scheduled for Sunday. Although he forfeited his chance for a gold medal, he ran the race alone on Monday and bettered the time of the participant who had won.<sup>54</sup>

Hastings College in 1905 consisted of two buildings, McCormick and Ringland Halls, that housed the students and classes. That year, male students dug trenches to install plumbing and furnished the labor for wiring the buildings. Alexander Hall was dedicated in 1907 and a new library and science building became a permanent home for the library in 1908.<sup>55</sup> The college offered two degrees, had an academy for high school students, provided a normal school for teacher preparation, and had recently added a music conservatory.<sup>56</sup>

When the afternoon train arrived on September 7, 1905, YMCA representatives met Welker and other students with a team of horses and a carryall to transport them across the cornfields to the campus. Welker rented a room at Dean Filson's where he made close friends with the four other boys housed there.<sup>57</sup> Having said good-bye to his fellow workers at the library, his classmates, and his family, Welker started college as the first step toward the ministry. He stated in his diary that Yost had told him that he believed it was right for him to become a preacher because God would not have given him the opportunity if it were not right to take it.<sup>58</sup>

During his first extended stay away from home, Welker found that college brought a dramatic development to his

personality. He adopted a pattern that school should not interfere with whatever he wanted to do, and in some ways this remained with him throughout the four years. A side of his nature that had not revealed itself in high school suddenly appeared as he and his roommates planned one prank after another. In September he had trouble with a student named McDavitt in the library. Four days later McDavitt locked him in his room. With a rope he got out of the window and slid to the ground. At the next chapel service the students clapped when he arrived, and the college paper gave the story a big write-up.<sup>59</sup> Favorite pranks included raiding the watermelon wagon, swiping candy from the girls, and "borrowing" a chicken and having a "feed."<sup>60</sup> On December 18, 1905, he wrote that he and his roommate, Knapp, went downtown and raised Cain generally.<sup>61</sup> In the second semester Welker dressed up like a girl and went to the library. He reported that the students recognized him as soon as he walked in.<sup>62</sup>

The pranks extended beyond the students to the faculty as he and several friends put red pepper all over the Greek professor's room. "We had fifty cents worth so did it up red!"<sup>63</sup> Welker had a real conflict with the Greek professor his first year and dropped the course. He did not complete Greek until he was a senior. At the end of his freshman year he recognized the difference in his life and wrote in his diary, "What a change from one year ago."<sup>64</sup> Having established a reputation at school as a mischief-maker, he

also became a problem student. He worked only at those things that interested him and received reprimands on several occasions for cutting classes. College President E. Van Dyke Wight gave him twenty-four hours to take exams or be expelled.<sup>65</sup>

English topped the list of his favorite subjects, and he became involved in debate and oratory. A note in the college magazine, *Collegian*, stated that Welker was proving himself adept at extemporaneous speaking.<sup>66</sup> He joined the debating club and the Pestatozzian Literary Society. Throughout the winter of 1906, Welker attended the Lyceum Lecture Series, and showing a serious side to his nature remarked that Father Vaughan's lecture on "Sermons from Shakespeare" was one of the best he ever heard.<sup>67</sup>

Another change that manifested itself was an increased social life and great interest in girls. A popular activity, "the feed" brought students together in the dorm, the church, or outside where they prepared food and ate with much fun and fellowship. The church and YMCA sponsored parties, but often the students created their own. Whatever the occasion, Welker usually had a date, and sometimes walked home with several girls. He became involved with the Athletic Association by contributing and raising funds. For a while he participated on the track and football teams, but became a better rooter than a player. His brother, Linn, who followed

him to college, excelled in track, winning both the mile and half mile at the state track meet his senior year.<sup>68</sup>

Welker easily transferred his experience from the Omaha library to the college library where he began work on September 13, 1905. He assumed responsibility to classify the library collection according to the new Dewey Decimal System. With few good books for reference use, he began a personal campaign to collect magazines, and he spent many hours cataloging and filing them. Another area where he devoted much of his time involved the cataloging of government reports and documents.<sup>69</sup> An article in the December *Collegian* credited Welker with bringing an experienced hand to the classifying and cataloging of the library. An orderly and systematized appearance now dominated the room of 6,000 volumes that formerly had displayed no order on the shelves.<sup>70</sup>

Welker's habits remained the most unchanged in his church participation. He regularly attended church, Sunday School and Christian Endeavor and quickly assumed a leadership role in Christian Endeavor and Sunday School. Students conducted prayer meetings on campus and attended required chapel services.<sup>71</sup> Welker joined the Presbyterian Church on January 7, 1906, but throughout his college career he attended the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches plus others on several occasions.<sup>72</sup> After attending a revival at the tabernacle, he wrote, "Who is a Christian? One who obeys

the law, one who does all he can, one who leads a life of sacrifice."<sup>73</sup>

Welker might well have been nicknamed a "people's person." His diaries overflow with the names of the people with whom he associated and this recording continued throughout his life. He dated many girls during his college career, but seemingly had serious relationships with only three, all of which eventually ended. His future wife was a student in the Hastings' College Academy during his senior year, but she remained outside his circle of friends. Several years later at an alumni reunion he became acquainted with Frances Louise and shortly thereafter he proposed marriage. His friendships included fellow students, teachers, preachers and working associates. His personality craved association with others and neither work or school interfered with social opportunities or social interaction at the "Pioneer" or the "Gay," two favorite local restaurants. A popular student, he appeared to follow his own advice that he recorded in 1908.

Plan every event beforehand.

This takes thought.

Pull everything off according to schedule.

This takes determination.

Avoid all friction.

This takes kindness.

Work every man you can.

This takes tact.<sup>74</sup>

Welker became a leader on campus by his sophomore year, being elected to the staff of the *Collegian*, football

manager, president of Pestalozzian Literary Society, and class president in his junior year.<sup>75</sup> His popularity was confirmed when the students raised the money to send him to Omaha to the state oratorical contest where he represented the college and won seventh place. They also voted that he repeat this oration in chapel.<sup>76</sup>

Welker devoted much time and energy to the preparation of orations and he received professors' compliments for his improved work. His weakness occurred in formal oral expression and he took elocution lessons in his junior year to improve the skills that would be so important in his later ministry.<sup>77</sup> An outgrowth of his interest in debate and oration was participation in drama. "House of Bondage" ranked as one of the best plays he had seen and he wrote, "Every time I see a good play, I feel more strongly the desire to enter such work."<sup>78</sup> This interest became an increasingly serious involvement that resulted in the writing and production of a three-act play, "The Parting Wall." Presented at the Kerr Opera House, May 24, 1909, it received fine write-ups in both Hastings' papers.<sup>79</sup> The June edition of the *Collegian* credited the play's success to Welker's thorough management of details, his excellent work as drill-master, his skill in the leading part, and his advertising methods. The article concluded, "It is testimony to Mr. Welker's pluck and perseverance that he had courage to stage his first play among home people who are a proverbially

critical audience, but the hearty way in which it was received testifies to the quality of the play.<sup>80</sup> This triumphant experience caused Welker to write several other plays and, for the moment at least, increased his desire to become a playwright.

Drama, however, was not to be his vocation, but many of the experiences gained in college prepared him for a choice of careers. His job of firing the furnace and cleaning the Presbyterian Church, where he lived in the tower, continued until April 30, 1907. Then he moved to a room over Twidales Shoe Store.<sup>81</sup> In his junior year his family moved to Hastings and he lived at home. That fall he gained employment as janitor of the Congregational Church.<sup>82</sup> He worked at the library through his sophomore year and the resulting expertise allowed him to make application for a librarian position in Idaho.<sup>83</sup> During his junior year, Welker went to work for C. W. Way Architectural Firm in Hastings. He advanced rapidly and was soon drawing blueprints and letting contracts which required frequent travel. Throughout the summers of 1908 and 1909 he worked there full time.<sup>84</sup> He edited and published *The Way*, a monthly trade magazine of the company. In January 1909, the owner requested that he remain with the firm after graduation. To further supplement his income, he waited tables at several restaurants and wrote for both Hastings newspapers, *The Republican* and *The Tribune*.<sup>85</sup>



In the summer of 1907, Welker received the unique opportunity to manage the dining hall for the Chautauqua, and the headline of one Hastings newspaper declared, "Exclusive Management Awarded to Popular Hastings College Boy." The article stated that the dining hall would serve 120 people at a time and that Welker had already secured cooks, dishwashers and dining room help. A second article stated that Welker was proving an efficient manager in providing facilities and hiring high school and college students as workers.<sup>86</sup> The project operated smoothly and ended with a profit of \$21.00. The balance of the summer Welker operated a grain elevator at Prosser, Nebraska.<sup>87</sup> Hard work and entrepreneurial skills seemed to be well-ingrained in his character even before he found a fulltime vocation in the ministry.

Except for a few months in his senior year when the pattern of church attendance was broken, Welker remained faithful to both the Congregational and Presbyterian churches. He developed a close relationship with Congregational pastor Hiram B. Harrison and, possibly because of this friendship, he transferred his membership to the Congregational Church on August 9, 1908.<sup>88</sup> No explicit reason accompanied these changes in church membership, but in his freshman year he had commented, "Any man with a new idea which his own church will not accept goes into the Congregational Church. The Presbyterian Church has the most numbers hence is it not the best?"<sup>89</sup> Previous to this time in

1907, Welker had accepted an invitation to preach in a Congregational church in Silver Creek, Nebraska, where he traveled for three Sundays in September and one in November. Possibly because of the distance involved, Welker discontinued these preaching engagements, and accepted no further invitations to preach during his college career.<sup>90</sup>

Graduation day arrived and, with his family in attendance, he received the Bachelor of Arts degree given for Classics Studies. With his call to the ministry hidden deep in the almost forgotten recesses of his memory, he left Hastings and a significant part of his life to be a teacher in Fremont, Nebraska. He accepted an offer from Superintendent A. H. Waterhouse of Fremont to teach history and debate at the local high school.<sup>91</sup> A college classmate, Dr. E. S. Sherrerd, later wrote to Welker's wife after his death, "Clare played such an important part in our lives. My college memories of him are all pleasant and full of his sense of humor. We had good times together."<sup>92</sup>

A prosperous city, the seat of Dodge county, Fremont was situated at the top of a triangle approximately fifty miles from Lincoln and Omaha. (See map 2 page 41) The Union Pacific Railroad provided a route to the East for the grain and livestock products of the rich Platte and Elkhorn valleys. In addition to its importance as a shipping depot, Fremont had grown in manufacturing. May Brothers' wholesale firm competed equally with businesses in the metropolitan

areas. At the turn of the century the people of Fremont enjoyed "good times" with many substantial businesses, first-class hotels, costly private residences, and good newspapers. With approximately 4,000 residents, it was becoming an important city in Nebraska's interior.<sup>93</sup>

Welker soon established himself in the school, but not as well in the community. Obviously missing his friends from college, he found few people his own age with whom to develop a social base. In contrast to Hastings where he had traveled home only at Christmas, a trip to Lyons occurred at least once a month. On other weekends he visited the library staff or his sister, Vallie, in Omaha, or traveled back to Hastings for a football game or just to see old friends.<sup>94</sup> At the end of 1909 he expressed his pessimism by stating: "What will the New Year bring forth? What progress will I have made? Only perseverance can effect--only time can answer."<sup>95</sup> Over the next two years, Hastings remained as the highlight of Welker's life, and commencement of a career teaching in Fremont appeared to him as an anti-climax.

Welker joined the Congregational Church on September 5, 1909, but did not assume an active leadership role and in his second year his attendance became infrequent.<sup>96</sup> Although Welker's church-life and social activities were considerably modified from his days at Hastings, he entered wholeheartly into his school work. His interests led to the organization of a debate team and dramatics club that proved very

successful.<sup>97</sup> Asked to prepare a play for the senior class, he wrote and produced "Specially When," a major production presented March 11, 1919, at the Larsen Theater.<sup>98</sup>

In his first year, Welker organized a Friday Night Club for the students. This social activity became very popular and he developed a good rapport with most of the students.<sup>99</sup> During that fall, applause greeted his arrival at the Senior-Junior Hop which he commented was "quite an ovation."<sup>100</sup> Both years he expressed sadness when the senior class graduated, and they reciprocated with a party in his honor when he left Fremont.<sup>101</sup> His tenure, however, brought forth uncertainty about his future, and he wrote in October 1910, "I can not help but wonder what I have accomplished in what shape. I only pray that it may be for the best."<sup>102</sup>

During the summers of 1910 and 1911 he returned to Hastings, perhaps seeking to rekindle the flame of his former happiness. He accepted two traveling positions--one to advertise Chautauqua and the other to recruit for the college.<sup>103</sup> The second summer he worked at several jobs, picking up on his old college work with the Way Architectural Firm and reporting for *The Republican*. By 1911, few friends remained in the area and time moved slowly. A highlight of the summer occurred when a mutual friend, Curt Alexander, invited him to meet William F. Cody. He attended the Buffalo Bill Show and afterwards met and had dinner in the commissary with Cody and his party. The following evening, according to

the Hastings paper, Clare Welker's name appeared among the invited guests at a small dinner party given by Cody.<sup>104</sup>

Early in 1911, Welker decided to seek other employment for the following year. He applied for principals' positions at Beaver City, Nebraska, and Hastings High School. He also interviewed at Minden and Fairmont, Nebraska.<sup>105</sup> On May 10 he received word of election as principal at Chadron, Nebraska, but he refused the offer because the salary was only \$85.00 a month, the same as his present income. On May 16 Chadron made a second offer of \$95.00 and he accepted.<sup>106</sup>

At the end of August as Welker rode the Chicago and North Western Railway to Chadron, he noted the beautiful canyon of jack pines just outside Lone Pine, Nebraska. Flanked by hills that to the north became the Badlands, Chadron owed its founding to the railroad.<sup>107</sup> In 1885 the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri River Valley Railroad built its terminus there and employed seventy to eighty percent of the male population. The roundhouse became a way-station for everyone from desperados to mayors and dignitaries from back East.<sup>108</sup> (See map 2 page 41) This move brought Welker further west and into a more definite frontier setting than he had experienced previously. He noted that the school had just completed the construction of indoor toilets.<sup>109</sup> Seven saloons dominated the town of 2,687 people, and claimed to have better food than the restaurant, but Welker refused to patronize them. Since becoming eligible to vote he had

repeatedly cast a "dry" ballot.<sup>110</sup> Located not far from Fort Robinson and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to the north, Welker was impressed with the "real" Indians, cowboys and cavalrymen that he observed on the streets of town.<sup>111</sup>

The high school occupied the second floor of the school building, and it had more than its share of unruly students. At the first assembly, to test the new principal, a six foot, 170-pound student threw a book across the room. Welker ordered him to leave and then left the room himself. Not knowing what to expect next, the confused student left and the incident was ended.<sup>112</sup> When the football team played at Rushville, Welker refused to allow the team to participate in a local dance and he received strong criticism from a Catholic mother of a team member. She hired a lawyer, but the school board and Catholic priest stood behind him and helped solve the problem. It became known to Welker at this time that two principals had been terminated during the previous year because of student behavior.<sup>113</sup> Welker may have been reminded of his own previous red pepper prank at Hastings College when he now expelled two boys for causing a disturbance in assembly with "red pepper."<sup>114</sup> In spite of these incidents, he developed a close relationship with the students and, at their invitation, went bob sledding and sleigh riding with them.<sup>115</sup> Students often came to his room at the YMCA to get help with their studies or just to talk. In January he organized a Friday night club for the juniors,

and this group became very close friends. He found it most difficult to tell them his plans to leave Chadron. At the end of the first year, however, Welker received reelection to his position, but no salary increase.<sup>116</sup> Upon learning of the superintendent's vacancy at Gordon, he applied, but turned down their offer twice until they consented to a salary of \$110 a month.<sup>117</sup>

After leaving Chadron, Welker spent some time traveling to visit old friends at Omaha and Hastings, and family members in Lyons. His sister Vallie, ill with terminal cancer, was living at home. A trip on May 29 to visit Fremont High School turned into an unforgettable experience. At the class day exercises he found the reception exhilarating. The students were extremely glad to see him and he wrote that it was the most enjoyable day of his life.<sup>118</sup>

In June the superintendent of Ainsworth, Nebraska, and the county superintendent joined Welker at Springview, Nebraska, where they taught an eight-week Teacher's Institute. The town of some 300 people had no social activities and even church services were held only on Sunday evening. He filled his days with teaching and long walks in the country. During the last week of summer school, all the county teachers gathered for a required one-week institute to renew their teaching credentials.<sup>119</sup>

On August 2, when the school ended, Welker caught the stage-coach to Ainsworth and from there by train to Denver where he began the first planned vacation of his life. While in the company of several friends, he spent almost two weeks at Grand Lake, Colorado, hiking, boating, loafing, and being awed by the beautiful scenery.<sup>120</sup> This experience in Colorado so impressed Welker that he later returned there to vacation and build a summer home. After this wonderful trip he felt ready to begin his new assignment.

The move to Gordon represented a change in Welker's approach to a new job. He visited the town before applying for the vacancy and expressed approval of the school. Having obtained the salary he wanted and the position of superintendent, he felt in control of the situation. Four years later, Welker would resign to enter Princeton Theological Seminary and the Presbyterian ministry. In the meantime, however, his work in Gordon and with the Chautauqua matured his understanding of himself and led him to a recognition that he had received a calling to meet the community's needs through full-time service to the church.





## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Welker Diaries," Flyleaf of 1905 diary. Citations in this chapter are from the 1905-1912 diaries in the possession of David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>2</sup>Alice Woods Welker, *Woods: Being the History of the Family of That Name As Far Back As I Can Learn Of It* (N.p.: n.p., n.d.), 25.

<sup>3</sup>Welker, *Woods*, 7.

<sup>4</sup>Welker, *Woods*, 25.

<sup>5</sup>Geneological lists by Raymond Linn and Herman Clare Welker, "Welker Papers." These papers consist of letters, miscellaneous notes, geneological lists, and recollections and are in the possession of his son, David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska. Also see Welker family tombstones in Lyons, Nebraska cemetery.

<sup>6</sup>Welker, *Woods*, 25.

<sup>7</sup>Edward Wagenknecht, *Chicago* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 4-6.

<sup>8</sup>Miscellaneous notes of David J. Welker, "Welker Papers."

<sup>9</sup>Welker family tombstones in Lyons, Nebraska Cemetery.

<sup>10</sup>*History of the State of Nebraska: Counties, Cities, Towns and Villages* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1882), 1476. Herman Clare Welker, "First Year on a Nebraska Farm," *Nebraska History* 37 (March 1956), 51.

<sup>11</sup>Welker, "First Year on a Nebraska Farm," 51-52.

<sup>12</sup>Welker, "First Year on a Nebraska Farm," 53.

<sup>13</sup>Welker, "First Year on a Nebraska Farm," 55.

<sup>14</sup>*History of the State of Nebraska*, 1478.

<sup>15</sup>Welker family tombstones in Lyons, Nebraska cemetery.

<sup>16</sup>"Welker Diaries," 1904 flyleaf.

<sup>17</sup>Welker's personal copy of *New Testament* (New York: American Bible Society, 1898), flyleaf.

<sup>18</sup>"Omaha City Directory," 1903.

<sup>19</sup>Lawrence Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell, *The Gate City: A History of Omaha* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1982), 127-128.

<sup>20</sup>Dorothy Devereux Dustin, *Omaha and Douglas County: A Panoramic History* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1980), 88-89; and James W. Savage and John T. Bell, *History of the City of Omaha, Nebraska* (New York: Munsell and Company, 1894), 283.

<sup>21</sup>Larsen, *The Gate City*, 156, 193.

<sup>22</sup>"Elementary and High Education, School-Public." Unpublished papers on Omaha, Federal Writers Project Papers of the Works Progress Administration in Nebraska, Special Collections, University of Nebraska at Omaha Library, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>23</sup>Welker, Clare, note to self, April 7, 1961, "Welker Papers."

<sup>24</sup>Savage, *History of the City of Omaha, Nebraska*, 314

<sup>25</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 22; May 3, 4, 17, 25, 27; June 1, 8, 10, 1904.

<sup>26</sup>"Welker Diaries," October 8, 13, 21, 1904; May 19, 1905.

<sup>27</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 19; May 14, 24; December 24, 1904.

<sup>28</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 5, 1904.

<sup>29</sup>Philip A. Kalisch, "The Early History of the Omaha Public Library" (Masters thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1964), 117.

<sup>30</sup>Kalisch, "The Early History of the Omaha Public Library," 114.

<sup>31</sup>Kalisch, "The Early History of the Omaha Public Library," 101.

<sup>32</sup>Kalisch, "The Early History of the Omaha Public Library," 89-90.

<sup>33</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 20, 1904; April 12, 1905.

<sup>34</sup>Herman Clare Welker, *The Works and Workmen of Ancient Egypt* (N.p.: n. p., n.d.), "Welker Papers."

<sup>35</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 18, 23, 28, 29; July 1, 11, 12; August 13, 15, 23, 29, 1904; May 22; June 19; July 3, 13, 20, 1905.

<sup>36</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 30, 1904; and Winthrop B. Lane, editor, *One Hundred Years of History: First Congregational Church, Omaha, Nebraska, 1856-1956* (N.p., n.p., n.d.), 47-48.

<sup>37</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 8, 15; June 28, 1905. Consult diaries for regular church attendance in 1904 and 1905.

<sup>38</sup>Lane, *One Hundred Years of History*, 15.

<sup>39</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 23, 1905.

<sup>40</sup>Lane, *One Hundred Years of History*, 12-14.

<sup>41</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 16, 1905.

<sup>42</sup>"Welker Diaries," Flyleaf of 1905 diary; January 3, 20, 1905.

<sup>43</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 4, 5, 1905.

<sup>44</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 5, 1905.

<sup>45</sup>*Patterns on the Landscape: Heritage Conservation in North Omaha* (Omaha: Klopp Printing Company, 1984), 10-11.

<sup>46</sup>Savage, *History of the City of Omaha, Nebraska*, 211-212; and *One Hundred Years of History*, 56.

<sup>47</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 4, 11; April 1; May 2, 1905.

<sup>48</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 1, 2, 16, 17, 1905.

<sup>49</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 10, 1905.

<sup>50</sup>Henry G. Smith, *The Book of Hastings: A Sketch of the Town With Illustrations* (Hastings, Nebraska: Adam Breeds Publishing Company, 1906), 75.

<sup>51</sup>Frank E. Weyer, *Hastings College: Seventy-five Years in Retrospect 1882-1957* (Hastings, Nebraska: Hastings College Anniversary Committee Publishers, 1957), 19.

<sup>52</sup>Weyer, *Hastings College*, 20, 27, 39, 41.

<sup>53</sup>Weyer, *Hastings College*, 43, 45-47.

<sup>54</sup>Weyer, *Hastings College*, 45.

<sup>55</sup>Weyer, *Hastings College*, 47-48.

<sup>56</sup>Weyer, *Hastings College*, 28.

<sup>57</sup>Weyer, *Hastings College*, 53; and "Welker Diaries," September 7, 1905.

<sup>58</sup>"Welker Diaries," Flyleaf, 1905.

- 59 "Welker Diaries," September 22, 26, 27, 29, 1905.
- 60 "Welker Diaries," October 4; December 14, 1905; January 19, 1906.
- 61 "Welker Diaries," December 18, 1905.
- 62 "Welker Diaries," February 3, 1906.
- 63 "Welker Diaries," March 9, 1906.
- 64 "Welker Diaries," January 3, 1906.
- 65 "Welker Diaries," May 29, 1907.
- 66 "Welker Diaries," January 8, 1906. Undated article from *Hastings Collegian* in diary.
- 67 "Welker Diaries," March 12, 1906.
- 68 "Welker Diaries," January 16; February 24; March 15, 27; April 3, 30; May 1, 7, 14, 16, 1906.
- 69 "Welker Diaries," September 13, 19; October 2, 1905.
- 70 "Welker Diaries," December 1, 1906. Undated article from *Hastings Collegian* in diary.
- 71 "Welker Diaries," October 22, 1905. Consult diaries 1905 and 1906 for regular church attendance.
- 72 "Welker Diaries," January 7, 1906.
- 73 "Welker Diaries," December 3, 1905.
- 74 "Welker Diaries," Flyleaf, 1908.
- 75 "Welker Diaries," September 28, 1906; April 5, 13, 1907; March 5, 1908.
- 76 "Welker Diaries," February 19, 29, 1908.
- 77 "Welker Diaries," January 3, 11; February 26; June 7; November 25; December 28, 1907; January 1, 1908.
- 78 "Welker Diaries," March 8, 1909.
- 79 "Welker Diaries," May 25, 1909. Undated articles from *Hastings Tribune* and *Republican* in diary.
- 80 "Locals," *Hastings Collegian*, XI (June 1909), 25.

- 81 "Welker Diaries," April 30, 1907.
- 82 "Welker Diaries," October 2, 27, 1907.
- 83 "Welker Diaries," April 13, 1909.
- 84 "Welker Diaries," June 13; September 2; October 3, 1908; January 12; February 15; June 19, 1909.
- 85 "Welker Diaries," October 31, 1908; July 5, 1909.
- 86 "Welker Diaries," July 5, 1907. Undated articles from Hastings newspapers in diary.
- 87 "Welker Diaries," August 1, 1907.
- 88 "Welker Diaries," August 9, 1908.
- 89 "Welker Diaries," Flyleaf, 1905.
- 90 "Welker Diaries," September 15, 22, 29; November 3, 1907.
- 91 "Alumni Notes," *Hastings Collegian* XI (June 1907), 24: and "Welker Diaries," April 30, 1909.
- 92 Dr. E. S. Sherred, to Louise Welker, Loveland, Colorado, February 3, 1964, "Welker Papers."
- 93 *History of the State of Nebraska Containing Counties, Cities and Towns and Villages* (Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1882), 15.
- 94 "Welker Diaries," Lyons: September 11; October 9; November 20; December 18; 1909; April 23, 30; May 7, 14, 1910. Hastings: September 9; November 6, 24, 1909. Omaha: September 25; October 16, 22, 1909; March 19, 1910.
- 95 "Welker Diaries," December 31, 1909.
- 96 "Welker Diaries," September 5, 1909.
- 97 "Welker Diaries," September 7, 16; October 7, 1909; February 18, 25, 1910.
- 98 "Welker Diaries," November 8, 21, 1909; February 21; March 1, 10, 11, 1910; Copy of "Specially When" in "Welker Papers.
- 99 "Welker Diaries," December 9, 1909.
- 100 "Welker Diaries," October 29, 1909.
- 101 "Welker Diaries," June 3, 1910; June 1, 2, 1911.

- 102 "Welker Diaries," October 2, 1910.
- 103 "Welker Diaries," Consult diaries June 25-August 7, 1910 for Chautauqua; and June 28-July 20, 1910 for college recruitment.
- 104 "Welker Diaries," June 9, 26; August 13, 16, 17, 1911. Undated article from Hasting's newspaper in diary.
- 105 "Welker Diaries," January 19; March 15, 26, 27, 1911; and undated newspaper article from Hastings paper.
- 106 "Welker Diaries," May 10, 16, 1911.
- 107 "Welker Diaries," August 29; September 16, 1911.
- 108 *Chadron Diamond Jubilee 1885-1960* (Chadron, Nebraska: n.p., 1960) 13-14.
- 109 "Welker Diaries," August 31, 1911.
- 110 "Welker Diaries," January 22, 1912; and *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 92
- 111 "Welker Diaries," September 14, 1911.
- 112 "Welker Diaries," September 8, 1911.
- 113 "Welker Diaries," October 14, 15, 16, 19, 1911.
- 114 "Welker Diaries," November 3, 1911.
- 115 "Welker Diaries," December 21, 1911; January 12, 1912.
- 116 "Welker Diaries," March 12, 1912.
- 117 "Welker Diaries," March 30; April 19, 26, 29, 30; May 2, 1912.
- 118 "Welker Diaries," May 29, 1912.
- 119 "Welker Diaries," June 9, 21, 23; July 29; August 2, 1912; and "Report 3.2: Population Change 1900-1940" (Omaha, Nebraska: Nebraska State Data Center, 1991).
- 120 "Welker Diaries," August 5-14, 1912.

## CHAPTER II

## DECISION TIME, 1912-1916

I believe a call consists not in anything external primarily, but that it consists fundamentally and primarily in an unmistakable spiritual conviction that God is leading one to some particular field.

H. Clare Welker<sup>1</sup>

During his four years in Gordon, Nebraska, Clare Welker continued to refine his skills and to mature as a leader in the community. He came to this northwestern Nebraska town secure in his educational and administrative abilities, and possessing a record of strong and effective youth relationships. These traits came into full bloom in this semi-frontier settlement where he exerted leadership within the school, the church and the broader community. His pleasant and outgoing personality promoted public trust in his opinions and gained widespread support for his decisions.

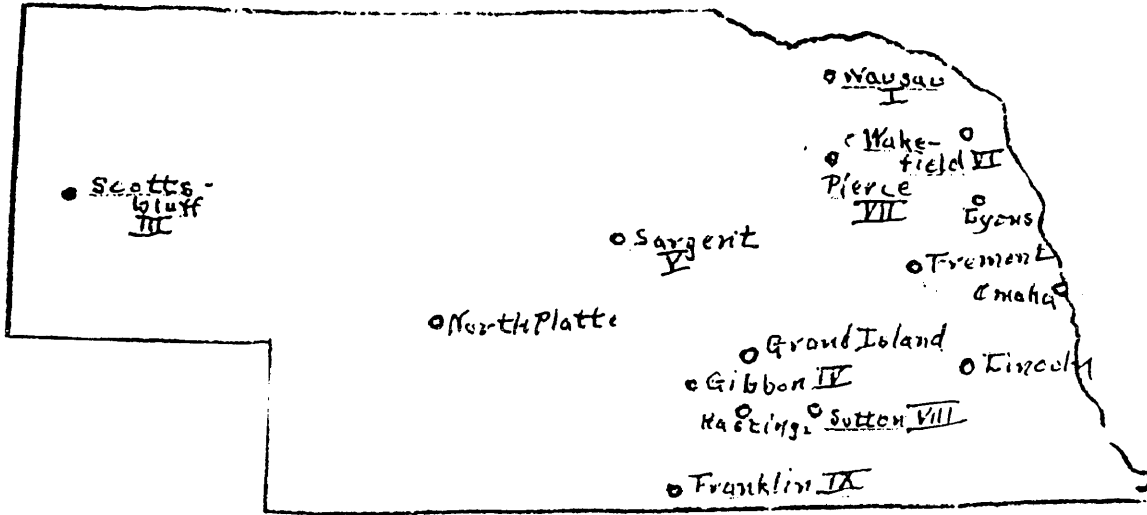
An important factor in this growth came from Welker's experiences in the circuit Chautauqua where he worked during the summers of 1913-1916. In April, near the end of his first year as school superintendent at Gordon, he received an offer to work for the famous Redpath-Horner Chautauqua as a platform manager.<sup>2</sup> The Redpath-Horner Chautauqua Bureau, under the direction of Charles F. Horner, was headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri, with circuits in Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Colorado, Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico,



Texas, and California.<sup>3</sup> Welker signed a contract to work as a platform manager in Nebraska and South Dakota during the summers of 1913 and 1914. (See maps 3 and 4 page 50) The National Lincoln Chautauqua of Chicago subsequently hired Welker for a similar position during the summer of 1915, and in 1916 he served as their circuit superintendent for Michigan and Wisconsin.<sup>4</sup> (See Appendix A)

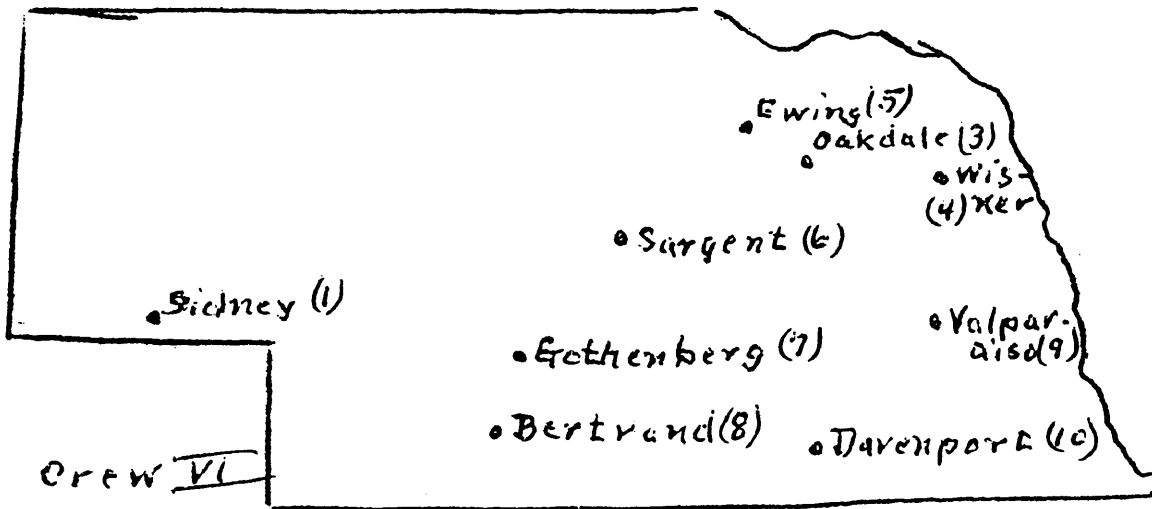
Circuit Chautauqua was developed by Keith Vawter of Chicago who devised the idea of moving the entire program from town to town. The permanently located independent Chautauquas had become uneconomical to operate, and their ideology that emphasized self-improvement and the regeneration of peoples had declined in popularity. Circuit Chautauqua, in contrast, encouraged and amused in a respectful way, allowing people to escape from their everyday lives. This traveling program existed between 1904 and 1933 as a social and cultural forum which mainly served the Midwest.<sup>5</sup> Likened to a comet, it rose quickly on the horizon, shone brightly for a time, and then rapidly faded after World War I. The program featured a balance between education and entertainment that eventually shifted more in favor of the latter. Chautauqua proclaimed that it was a forum for free speech that provided information on as many subjects as possible. Interspersed between the lecturers were high quality professional entertainers whose performances left audiences with a happy feeling and a light in their eyes. An

Sturgis, S.D. II Circuit Three - Crew II - 1913



Map 3 H. Clare Welker, Platform Manager of Redpath-Horner Chautauqua Circuit III in Nebraska 1913.  
Hand-drawn map by H. Clare Welker,  
"Welker Diaries," June 25, 1913.

Belle Fourche, So. Dak. (2)



Redpath-Horner Chautauquas - 1914

Map 4 H. Clare Welker, Platform Manager of Redpath-Horner Chautauqua Circuit III in Nebraska, 1914.  
Hand-drawn map by H. Clare Welker,  
"Welker Diaries," June 19, 1914

inspirational component provided a message of moral value that sought to stimulate people's self-confidence and encourage their fundamental goodness over the sinful side. Finally, and perhaps most important, it fostered good will and a spirit of community.<sup>6</sup>

Horner described the Chautauqua speakers as providing an "uplift," which was defined as that quality in the lecturer's life and demeanor that caused people to have higher ambitions, be better neighbors, show more affection to their children, and even to pray more often.<sup>7</sup> The circuit Chautauquas reached their highest point in the Midwest where relative cultural isolation created a craving for education and organized entertainment. Nebraska recorded the greatest concentration of assemblies during this period by providing one forum for every 4,767 persons.<sup>8</sup>

This vast organization of Redpath-Horner, which was scattered over many states, included twenty-two distinct groups of talented individuals who moved and performed amid rigorous schedules. An advance man and agent reported to each town at the appointed time, and thirty outfits of tents, crews, and platform managers moved in precision. The entire group depended on the loyalty and dependability of one another and they functioned with no direct supervision.<sup>9</sup> The programs ran from five to seven days, depending largely on the size of the communities that they served. On each circuit there were as many Chautauquas running simultaneously

as there were days of program provided. All talent groups appeared in each town in the same order; the first day talent opened all shows and the last day group closed them all. Five day circuits included seven tents with all accessories and crews. Each crew consisted of a platform manager, a children's supervisor, a crew foreman, a cashier, and a ticket collector. Five crews conducted each of the five Chautauquas, while the other two were on the move to the next town. The crew men were top students from the colleges and they formed an important part of the Chautauqua image.<sup>10</sup>

Welker fitted the general category of platform managers who usually were employed from the ranks of teachers and ministers. They received from \$30 to \$75 a week, an almost unheard of salary at that time. They made sure that the tent, the talent, and the crew arrived on time and that the materials were properly repacked for transport to the next site. Managers always appeared before the crowds well groomed and smiling for every session, no matter how late they had worked during the previous night.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes Welker's tasks included becoming a part of the crew as in Wausa, Nebraska, where he helped take down the tents well into the night. He worked until midnight at Sargent, Nebraska, assisting the crew on a stake line, and when a crew member became ill, Welker had to help "tear down" at Orchard, Nebraska. When crayon artist Ned Woodman lost his storage trunks, Welker built a makeshift easel for his

performance at Scottsbluff, Nebraska.<sup>12</sup> These multifaceted abilities were again called into play at Valparaiso, Nebraska, when Welker preached at the Sunday union service, and again when he entertained the audience in Munising, Michigan, after the talent arrived late. A few days later in Munising, Welker handled a near disaster when a heavy rainstorm brought down one end of the tent and caused a great deal of confusion.<sup>13</sup>

A second responsibility of the platform manager required that he meet the talent at the railroad, escort them about the town, and make sure that they received comfortable housing. All problems were referred to the manager who at times served as general supervisor, production and stage manager, diplomat, and parental figure.<sup>14</sup> Thomas Brooks Fletcher, a popular lecturer on Redpath's list, stated that the manager could make or break an attraction.<sup>15</sup> On the circuits he served, Welker spoke highly of these individuals. The general term, "talent," referred to all performers, whether lecturer or entertainer, and was in common usage throughout the Chautauqua system. A close association developed between Welker and many of the talent. He sometimes took strolls after the evening program and enjoyed late suppers with some of the young women entertainers, even though Chautauqua's rules of conduct forbade managers to associate with the female employees.<sup>16</sup> One of his favorite singing and performing groups was the "military girls" whose

performance in Wakefield, Nebraska, brought forth the biggest demonstration of the summer of 1913. Welker commented that "the crowd went wild." The week's program, starring Gifford Pinchot, the famous conservationist lecturer; the Fisher Shipp and Company, a musical trio; and the military girls, went so well in Pierre, South Dakota, that Welker recorded a "veritable ovation" at the station when they left.<sup>17</sup>

Welker, however, found that all was not harmonious because Fisher Shipp felt insulted when the platform manager failed to meet his train in Sutton, Nebraska. A second mishap occurred in Franklin, Nebraska, a week later, when Grace Smith fainted on the platform while presenting the preludes that preceded the main performance. Recovery was swift, however, and she was able to perform in the evening.<sup>18</sup> When some of the talent showed up late at Sargent, Nebraska, Welker felt that the tardiness was unacceptable and he had a forceful talk with them.<sup>19</sup> The first Chautauqua of the 1914 summer in Sidney, Nebraska, began very slowly until the fifth day when lecturer Nels Darling made a big hit. He spoke throughout the summer on the theme of "community interest." In Gordon, Nebraska, he stated that his ideas would make the town a larger, better community. Darling pointed out the town's mistakes, and stated that if corrected, farmers, merchants and businessmen would unite to travel together toward community success. He continued to draw large,

enthusiastic crowds throughout the summer by stirring people up and visiting with them on the streets between shows.<sup>20</sup>

The real work of the platform manager extended beyond the program to the negotiations for the following year's contract. Managers became acquainted with the townspeople and called them by name. A positive relationship with the guarantors assured a smooth transaction in renewing the contract and collecting any deficit that was owed.<sup>21</sup> Crawford A. Peffer, the Redpath director in White Plains, New York, claimed that the manager's most important job was to secure contracts. For this reason the best managers possessed outstanding public relations and salesmanship skills. They needed dignity and tact to meet local situations, according to William A. Colledge who served as education director of Chicago-Redpath.<sup>22</sup> The Chautauqua system not only relied on trust within its own organization, but also built a strong trust relationship with each community. The local committee signed a contract for purchasing a program a year in advance and pledging a specific sum to Chautauqua, but without any precise guarantee of dates or talent. The burden of responsibility rested on the committee to build enthusiasm, advertise events, sell tickets, and to "spruce up" the community by making it neat and handsome for visitors' inspection. People throughout the area mowed their lawns, trimmed their hedges, cleaned up their trash, and those who entertained the talent tidied up their homes.

Small towns often welcomed Chautauqua week as the highlight of the year. Community cooperation preceding and during this week led a committee member to remark, "If only we could all work together throughout the year as we do for Chautauqua what a great city this would be."<sup>23</sup> Ministers preached sermons on the values of Chautauqua and canceled mid-week services, thus allowing parishioners to attend programs. Businesses closed during the afternoon performances and families entertained Chautauquans in their homes.

The town offered hospitality to both crew and talent, and Welker found these opportunities helpful in building rapport and establishing a community desire for a repeat performance during the following year. Well-to-do businessmen took Welker for automobile rides around the area to show off their town. These were his first experiences of riding in a car since few rural communities had more than one or two. Sidney and Gothenburg, Nebraska, entertained the company with picnics, Franklin's farmers put on a watermelon feed, and Pierre, South Dakota, held an outdoor breakfast.<sup>24</sup> Several opportunities for sight-seeing occurred in 1915 when Welker worked in Wisconsin and Michigan. A fishing boat excursion on Lake Michigan, at a local business man's invitation, delighted Welker. In Munising, Michigan, he took a tour of a large paper mill, and outside Newaygo, Michigan, he enjoyed a trip to the Croton Dam, one of the largest power



plants in the country. The committee of Howard City, Michigan, invited him to a local baseball game, and he later commented that they were a fine bunch of fellows.<sup>25</sup>

When the time arrived to renew the contract, usually at that point in the week when enthusiasm peaked, managers remembered that Chautauqua was a business operated for a profit. Local sponsors, on the other hand, rarely hoped for a profit and they promised to be personally responsible for any deficit incurred.<sup>26</sup> Contracts stated that committees would pay for a specified number of season tickets, furnish the grounds for the performance, and rent or donate the lumber for seats and platforms. Communities shared in potential profits after they met the guarantee.<sup>27</sup> The platform manager deliberately chose the committee from the respectable, mature and moneyed people who generally represented the more conservative element of the community. In keeping with the sponsorship, Chautauqua programs reflected a socially and politically conservative flavor. Historian Donald Graham suggested that William Jennings Bryan set the pattern with his famous "Prince of Peace" speech. It represented a combination of Horatio Algier's victorian morality and Russell H. Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds" sermon that was delivered over 6,000 times.<sup>28</sup>

In many towns, Welker demonstrated his ability to work through problems and emerge with a signed contract. When Sturgis, South Dakota, the second town on the 1913 circuit,

faced a \$270 deficit on its contract, Welker used a process called "cleaned up from the platform" in which he simply called for donations from the audience to make up the deficit.<sup>29</sup> If a town failed to meet its guarantee, public attitudes toward a new contract were usually negative. It demanded considerable persuasion by the manager to "swing a contract" under these circumstances. At Ewing, Nebraska, in 1914, Welker convinced the committee that a competing Chautauqua at nearby Orchard lacked the quality of the Redpath program.<sup>30</sup> He failed to secure a contract at Franklin in 1913 and felt that he had not made a strong enough effort, perhaps because this was the last town on the circuit.<sup>31</sup> The greatest challenge of 1914 faced him at Valparaiso, Nebraska, where the committee "swore" they would never host another Chautauqua. Welker built enthusiasm throughout the week and secured the contract.<sup>32</sup> On August 26, 1914, he presented ten contracts to Superintendent R. R. Smith and learned that he alone of the twenty-three platform managers for Redpath-Horner had closed all his contracts.<sup>33</sup>

Deciding to see a different part of the country in December 1914, Welker signed with Lincoln National Chautauqua of Chicago as a platform manager. The *Gordon Journal* reported that Welker had received an excellent position and would earn \$45 a week with all expenses paid. The paper further stated that Welker had a reputation as one of the best Chautauqua managers on the circuits, and Gordon

congratulated him on this promotion.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, events took a downward turn during this season and he experienced more difficulty securing contracts. The National Lincoln Chautauqua allowed some exceptions to their contract rules, and towns inserted words into the agreement stating that every effort would be made to sell the required tickets, but the committee refrained from direct financial responsibility for the Chautauqua. When deficits occurred, it became more difficult to collect these debts, especially with a nonbinding contract. National Lincoln Chautauqua filed for bankruptcy in 1919, three years following Welker's service, and it became the first major Chautauqua Bureau to fail.<sup>35</sup>

In town after town Welker faced below average ticket sales and little enthusiasm for the program. Attempting to get some concerted local action, he and the local businessmen in Menomonie, Wisconsin, got into a "rough house." Welker's handling of the situation resulted in increased respect from the townspeople, and the man who had been most critical changed his attitude and helped sell one hundred tickets. Welker collected the deficit of \$120 and a new contract was signed.<sup>36</sup> He employed a different method to get the contract at Munising, Michigan, when some committee members refused to sign. He "walked the contract on the platform" by opening it up to signers whose reliability for payment was not guaranteed. This method was disapproved by the Chautauqua

Bureau, but Welker used it several times that summer. He wrote, "It is too much for me, that is one thing sure."<sup>37</sup>

In 1916 Welker served a much wider area in Wisconsin and Michigan as a circuit superintendent. This position removed him from the daily operation of the program and placed him in an advisory capacity supervising six platform managers and circuits. The job involved continuous travel by train to consult with each platform manager several times a week. He encouraged the managers, worked with them when things were going badly, met with committees when necessary, and handled personnel problems such as when managers or performers became ill.

Welker's daily activities read like a train schedule as he crisscrossed back and forth between towns in southwestern Wisconsin. From June 20 to June 24, 1916, his routine was typical of the entire summer. On the first day of the cycle, Welker arrived in Fennimore, Wisconsin, and found the manager very discouraged. He soon got the manager and the committee "pepped up." The next day at Highland, Wisconsin, he gave the manager some help. He received the news at Dodgeville, Wisconsin, on June 22 that platform manager, Merkle, had been hurt and could not open at Lancaster, Wisconsin. He returned to Fennimore and recruited Red Wheeler, former manager from the Nebraska circuit, to help out the problem there. Then he returned to Lancaster and met Heflen who had been sent in from Chautauqua headquarters to take Merkle's place. Welker

discovered the advance man was two days late at Darlington, Wisconsin, and their committee wanted to cancel the contract. On June 24, he came to Darlington and worked out the problem. Thompson, the advance man, arrived just as Welker left on the same train for Dodgeville.<sup>38</sup> Sometimes he would be in three or more towns in one day. The summer was a whirlwind of trouble-shooting between managers and disgruntled committees, all resulting in a rather disappointing experience. Returning to Chicago at season's end, he gave a complete analysis of the circuit situation to Alonzo F. Wilson, Director of Lincoln National Chautauqua.<sup>39</sup>

More than any other single factor, Chautauqua failed because the American people changed. Daniel W. Howell of Lake Chautauqua, New York, defined the three basic themes of Chautauqua as patriotism, Christianity, and an improved intellect.<sup>40</sup> Yet during this era, rural Americans became increasingly urban in thought and ambition, and the traditional morality and rigid Americanism no longer corresponded to the experiences of a majority of the audience.<sup>41</sup> Automobiles sent many rural Americans to the cities and other forms of entertainment, such as movies, competed for the audience.

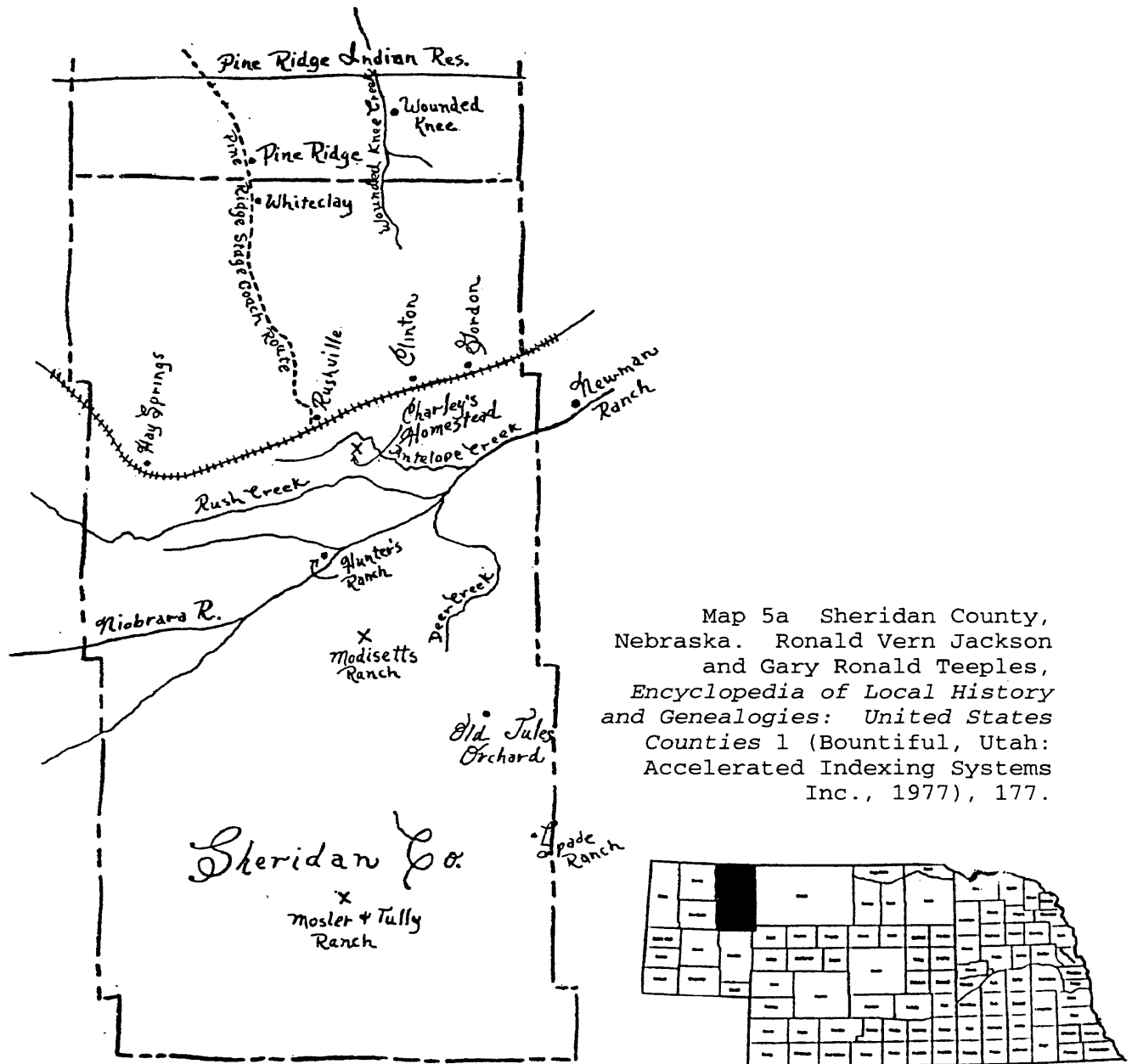
The decline, however, remained in the future because during the years 1913 to 1916 the Chautauqua platform echoed with the words of famous orators and stimulating speakers. The themes of inspiration, morality and success enjoyed great

popularity among small town audiences and provided the emotional feeling that made people eager to return for more.<sup>42</sup> In contrast to the program's strict morality, Chautauqua broke the code of Sabbath rest by scheduling programs on Sunday. On some of Welker's circuits church people attended regular services in the mornings and modified Chautauqua programs in the afternoon and evening. At other times the Chautauqua tent served to house a union service, and Welker preached at one of these.<sup>43</sup> Whenever possible, he attended services on Sunday morning or evening in local churches and accepted two invitations to preach.<sup>44</sup>

Welker felt inspired by Chautauqua's accomplishments in the communities he served. He observed people working together and responding to uplifting messages and educational opportunities. He recognized his ability to work with people, to be persuasive and encouraging, and to achieve results. Chautauqua taught him that he could make a difference, and he came to recognize that church work would give him the greatest opportunity to use all of these skills. Although he still enjoyed his work with young people, he felt a calling to broaden his association to include the whole community.

Chautauqua provided an important part of Welker's decision to be a minister, but his work in Gordon also helped to focus him more toward the challenge that gave him the greatest satisfaction. Welker had arrived in Gordon only

twenty-six years after its founding in 1885. (See Map 5 page 64) The town in 1912 exhibited many signs of progress, yet only a few years separated it from the frontier past. Located just northwest of the Sandhills, Gordon had not been initially attractive to settlement and only the most hardy pioneers took homesteads in the area. Jules Sandoz, an early resident, founded Mirage Flats southwest of Gordon in 1884 and spent much of his life encouraging settlement in the area. It was a hard country with a dry climate that produced feuds between cattlemen and farmers, and primitive living conditions for all. Sandoz later moved further south into the Sandhills and, about 1914 observed the last great cattle roundup and the passing of the open range.<sup>45</sup> Charley O'Kieffe, who spent his early years in a sod house fourteen miles southwest of Gordon, called it a place of buffalo chips and tumbling weeds during the 1890s. The town boasted a population of 500 complete with stores, hotels, lumber yards, and other necessary industries.<sup>46</sup> The first school opened in 1885, presided over by one teacher with twenty-seven pupils who ranged in grades from one to eight. Despite these rather primitive conditions, settlers came with a determination to establish a community and build for the future. In 1894 the school included the eleventh grade, but it was not until 1912, the year of Welker's arrival, that the twelfth grade was added to the high school.<sup>47</sup>



Map 5a Sheridan County, Nebraska. Ronald Vern Jackson and Gary Ronald Teeple, *Encyclopedia of Local History and Genealogies: United States Counties 1* (Bountiful, Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems Inc., 1977), 177.

In this sketch map of Sheridan County, the scale is approximately fifteen miles to the inch.

Map 5 H. Clare Welker, Superintendent of Schools, Gordon, Nebraska, 1912-1916.  
 Charley O'Kieffe, *Western Story: The Recollections of Charley O'Kieffe, 1884-1889* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), 7.



Welker's work in Gordon reflected a desire to enrich the curriculum of the school and to provide greater opportunity for the students to have wholesome and enjoyable recreation. During his first year the enrollment totalled 391 pupils who were scattered in several locations because the school population had outgrown the building.<sup>48</sup> This growth, also reflected in the larger community, gave opportunity for visionary individuals to establish programs that would meet the school's expanding needs. Shortly after he arrived, Welker announced the organization of a Glee Club and fifty students stayed after school to try out. Recognizing the critical need for a new piano, he suggested that a committee of high school students raise funds for this purchase. On September 24, 1912, the new piano arrived and the students completed ticket sales for a lecture program that would raise the funds. A Friday Night Club for Juniors and Seniors held their first event on September 26, with Welker and other faculty as part of this social group. He helped the football team establish a schedule of games and often accompanied them on their trips. In November, the school orchestra, which he organized, presented its first program and became one of the outstanding features of high school events.<sup>49</sup>

The problem of additional space for the classes came before the board in January 1913, and the debate centered on whether to build an addition or an entirely new building.<sup>50</sup> A small majority of the citizens passed an \$8,000 bond issue on

March 18, 1913, to build an addition on the school, and the new rooms and an assembly hall large enough to accommodate the entire student body, reached completion in the late fall.<sup>51</sup>

The morning of March 31, 1913, Welker conceived the idea to do something to raise money for the unfortunate victims of the Omaha tornado that had ripped through that city only a few days before. The *Gordon Journal* stated on the following Friday, "Many of us, no doubt had had the same thought in our minds, but with Mr. Welker to think was to act, and having good material to work with he at once got busy." A fund raising program was "thrown together," but the school and community had already developed considerable talent that could produce an outstanding event. Performers included the Glee Club, triple quartet, duets, solos, recitations and music by the orchestra.<sup>52</sup> Although it sought to raise money for the tornado victims, the program's greater outcome was a bonding of community spirit and a feeling of pride among the townspeople.

Coincidentally, at the time of the program, the Box Butte Presbytery was meeting in Gordon, and several ministers and school officials attended the event. The *Gordon Journal* printed some of their remarks about the presentation. G. A. Gregory, State Inspector of Normal Training in High Schools, stated that no other school or even college could equal the entertainment. A minister from Mitchell, Nebraska, said that

his previous opinion of Gordon as a dead town out in the Sandhills had changed to a vision of a very active town with a high school of which they could be proud. James Brown, pastor at Alliance, Nebraska, commented that the pupils showed the results of fine training.<sup>53</sup>

Welker was reelected superintendent for the 1913-1914 school year and received a \$5 raise. State Inspector G. A. Gregory declared in an interview for the newspaper that he was greatly pleased with the conditions at the school. He especially pointed to the excellent spirit of cooperation that existed between the teachers and pupils in all grades and the high moral tone which helped develop the highest quality of manhood and womanhood. He concluded that this excellent school resulted from the fine teachers, the guidance of a superintendent who stood for the highest ideals, and the values of the town that allowed no saloons to discredit its high standards.<sup>54</sup>

Welker continued his encouragement of cultural programs and the *Nebraska Teacher* commended him for the school's outreach beyond Gordon. The magazine stated that Welker's faculty taught English and music in so practical a way that groups of students traveled many miles into the countryside to furnish entire programs in rural schools and churches. The programs reportedly presented selections as fine as any heard on the best Chautauqua platforms.<sup>55</sup> In February 1914, the classes raised money to purchase a victrola which Welker

felt would introduce the students to some of the world's best music. Groups frequently remained after school for the opportunity to listen to the records. The *Gordon Journal* stated that the new phonograph had proved to be very popular, and friends of the school were invited to donate good records.<sup>56</sup>

One lecturer who visited the school in February 1914 failed to receive Welker's endorsement, and their relationship ended in a confrontation before the school board. The lectures were called "social purity lectures," but either the man or the content of the talks failed to meet Welker's approval. The board allowed the presentation, but the lecturer accused Welker of treachery towards him. Welker wrote, "It was the worst thing I ever got dragged into." At the next board meeting he presented his resignation which was refused as public opinion gathered in his favor. Presbyterian pastor James Brown proved to be a strong and supportive friend throughout the ordeal.<sup>57</sup>

Welker sought to broaden the curriculum beyond the regular subjects of Latin, modern languages, advanced math and classical literature to include courses directed at students who were not planning a college career. Previously, in Fremont and Chadron, he had attempted to institute a manual training course but with no success. However, in March 1915, the school board pursued the idea and established manual training, mechanical drawing, and domestic science

courses beginning the following fall.<sup>58</sup> The curriculum also included musical training for all students above the first grade, and public speaking classes that Welker personally instituted and taught. The *Gordon Journal* emphasized that his work had resulted in Gordon being ranked as one of the better school systems of Nebraska.<sup>59</sup>

Patron's Day, an annual event, drew the community to view the school's activities amid morning and afternoon exhibits, meetings with the teachers, and a high school program in the evening. The different grades produced programs for parents and townspeople who reciprocated with favorable comments. Following Patron's Day, the *Gordon Journal* expressed the opinion that these entertainments created good feelings, and everyone hoped they would continue each year.<sup>60</sup>

Welker encouraged this relationship between the school and town, and he became more involved in the community life of Gordon than he had in Fremont or Chadron. He became a joiner of both "expressive" organizations and "instrumental" groups. These terms referred to the organization's purpose, and "expressive" clubs directed their attention primarily toward the social and personal needs of their members, while "instrumental" groups had specific goals to accomplish for the benefit of the entire community.<sup>61</sup> The early 1900s witnessed a ubiquitous national growth in the expressive organizations such as fraternal orders that included over

five million Americans.<sup>62</sup> Welker obtained his degrees in Masonry, Rebekahs, Eastern Star, and Odd Fellows in 1913, and in 1914, received induction into the Shrine.<sup>63</sup>

The Masons and their sister organization, the Eastern Star, were quasi-religious secret societies dedicated to the ideals of fraternity, charity and moral behavior. Through Masonry, members identified with late nineteenth century middle class values.<sup>64</sup> Members of the lodge retreated from the social, political, economic and religious conflicts of the day and cultivated love of God, fellowship and self-improvement.<sup>65</sup> Those who became Masons ideally represented the community's "good men" without regard to religion, nationality or class. They envisioned themselves as society's models who believed in God and led moral lives. In practice, however, the unwritten rules of Masonry preserved its membership for white, native, Protestant and middle class males.<sup>66</sup> In a small town with limited social outlet, the lodge had an attraction as a respectable gathering place which filled the gap between the exclusive clubs of the wealthy and the saloons. Its charitable features appealed to Welker since he often acted to help those in need.

Despite the respectability and stability of the Masonic Order, in many towns and cities across the country a conflict existed between its beliefs and those of the churches. The rituals contained a hodgepodge of religious elements, with some deistic influence and extensive borrowing from the

Judeo-Christian tradition. Masonry also declared an undefined religious content that allowed various interpretations. This led some to conclude that Masons were an alternative religion, while others maintained that its teachings aided religion.<sup>67</sup> It provided a religious experience of comfort and allowed a man to believe even if he was uncertain about what he believed.<sup>68</sup> An article in the *Gordon Journal* articulated the conflict that some felt about its lack of a Christian emphasis. Reprinted from the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, the article stated that John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, joined the Masons in 1788.<sup>69</sup> Welker likely perceived Masons and the other lodges that he joined as projecting a good influence in the community. The values of self-improvement, industry, piety, honesty, temperance and sobriety expressed themselves in the rituals, and moral lessons were taught which were similar to those of the Protestant churches.<sup>70</sup>

The social activities of the Odd Fellows and the Rebekahs often gained publicity in the weekly news. When they celebrated the ninety-eighth anniversary of the order's founding, the townspeople attended, the orchestra played, and a state senator praised the work of the International Order of the Odd Fellows. Welker acted as toastmaster and, according to the *Gordon Journal*, "in his inimitable style soon had the audience convulsed with mirth at his funny stories."<sup>71</sup> These organizations gave Welker the social

interaction and relaxation he enjoyed, and served to energize his extroverted nature. However, during his later ministry, he became less active in these fraternal orders and finally rejected them altogether.

Welker, however, did not limit himself to groups that mainly served his personal needs, for he also supported the instrumental organizations of Gordon. In September of 1912, he organized a superintendent's association of five or six schools in the area. These administrators met monthly to discuss ideas, plan policy, and enjoy fellowship.<sup>72</sup> The lecture course, instituted by the high school students to purchase a piano, continued under Welker's guidance, eventually becoming a major winter series of cultural and educational programs.<sup>73</sup>

The Commercial Club encouraged all civic-minded persons to join and, unlike the fraternal orders, required no invitation or initiation fee, which for Masons was as much as \$100. Welker began to attend the Commercial Club in October 1913, when discussion about a new depot held the town's attention.<sup>74</sup> At a second meeting in November only six persons appeared according to the *Gordon Journal* which reproved the citizens for making the picture show and the lodge a priority above the community's civic needs.<sup>75</sup> By January the club had ceased to function and the newspaper reported that the Chicago and North Western Railroad intended to add a waiting room to the present depot. A petition sent to the state



railroad commission strenuously objected to this idea and it requested a new depot. The article further stated that Gordon needed to reorganize its Commercial Club and "get busy" for the depot and the town.<sup>76</sup> According to Welker's records the club started again, and by May the work had begun for a complete depot remodeling that included two waiting rooms, electric lights, new furniture, inside toilets, and a drinking fountain.<sup>77</sup>

Following this success, community interest increased and other projects received attention. When the Methodists built a new church, an editorial in the *Gordon Journal* suggested that the old building be renovated into a YMCA.<sup>78</sup> The newspaper reported in May 1914, that Gordon was enjoying a \$100,000 building boom and the city planned to add day current to the electrical system in the fall.<sup>79</sup> In March 1915, Gordon became eligible for designation as a town of the second class, having achieved over 1,000 in population.<sup>80</sup> A series of front-page editorials in 1915 challenged the community to come out of the "rut" and make Gordon great. The newspaper boasted that the town had become a place of "bustling activity from daylight til [sic] dark" This progressive community proudly claimed one of Nebraska's best school systems under Welker's energetic leadership.<sup>81</sup>

The churches of Gordon exerted a strong influence on all aspects of community life, yet they claimed only about half the population among their members. A religious census on

October 1, 1914, revealed 195 Methodists, eighty-four Presbyterians, sixty-nine Catholics, twenty-five Church of God, and seven Seventh Day Adventists. An additional 426 persons preferred one of the churches listed, but had not joined. Another 207 citizens claimed membership in denominations not represented in Gordon.<sup>82</sup> Welker joined the Presbyterian Church and was instrumental in securing the services of James Brown as pastor in 1913.<sup>83</sup> A Hastings College graduate, Brown developed a close relationship with Welker that had a significant influence on the latter's decision to enter the ministry. This association led to Welker being invited to preach for Brown on several occasions. He also accompanied Brown on Sunday afternoons when he traveled to conduct services at Albany, Nebraska, a few miles west of Gordon.<sup>84</sup> In April 1913, Welker began singing in the choir and became the tenor in the male quartet. Many opportunities became available for him to sing with the quartet, and the choir presented several cantatas each year. On April 1, 1915, the *Gordon Journal* gave several fine compliments to the quartet, solos, and chorus in the choir's presentation of "The Lord of Light and Love" by Julian Edwards.<sup>85</sup>

Churches sought each year to renew their members and challenge those non-members to make a commitment. The more evangelistic congregations employed the revival meeting to bring enthusiasm and excitement to the preaching of God's

word. The Methodist Church in Gordon spoke of their revival as a great conflict between the power of sin and darkness and the power of God.<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, revivalism often ignored the intellect and reduced religion to emotion. Yet this emotionalism pervaded the church during the revival meetings and woke it from its lethargy as it sought to win more souls for the Master. During a revival, religion became simplified to a question of salvation or damnation.<sup>87</sup>

Presbyterians also sought regeneration of their members and the addition of new ones, but they stopped short of a revival. Their special services were titled "Decision Week" with preaching twice a day and three times on Sunday. At the end of the services participants received decision cards on which they renewed their commitment or made their first confession of faith and joined the church. Accounts of revival meetings and decision weeks were well covered by the *Gordon Journal* and all people were invited, regardless of denomination.<sup>88</sup>

At the Decision Week in January 1916, Welker renewed his decision to enter the ministry.<sup>89</sup> (See Appendix B) No longer a young boy just entering college with many possibilities before him, Welker was a mature man of thirty enjoying the height of success in his educational vocation. While much loved in Gordon and acclaimed on every side for his fine work, the call to ministry came again with urgency and he relinquished his career. To leave Gordon and enter Princeton

Theological Seminary, he declared, was a very difficult decision, but this time the determination to follow through was abundant. Possibly the influence of Brown, a graduate of Princeton, caused Welker to bypass the closer Omaha Theological Seminary to seek his theological training in the distant New Jersey town.

The school year ended with a number of dinners and parties in Welker's honor and gifts from the student body. He left Gordon on May 29, amid a big farewell at the depot and traveled to Lyons for a short visit. His sister, Vallie, had died of cancer in November 1912, and Gladys was now a student at Hastings. His father, who had never joined the church, made his confession of faith shortly after Vallie's death, and Welker's mother had written that her husband was a changed man. Welker developed a close relationship with his father and, on visits home during the Gordon years, they spent considerable time together. Mabel had divorced and remarried a man from Hemingford, Nebraska, where Welker had visited them on short trips from Gordon. Linn lived in Lyons where he had redirected his career from teaching athletics to accounting, and he worked for the local bank.<sup>90</sup>

On May 31, 1916, Welker left for Chicago and his last summer with Chautauqua. At summer's end he finished his report to the Chicago office and caught a train for New York and on to Princeton. On December 31, 1913, he had written, "Another year is gone. On the whole I am satisfied with the

things accomplished yet I want to do better things this coming year."<sup>91</sup> He had accomplished a great deal during his years in Gordon, but he had chosen a new direction for his life and surely wanted to do even better things.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 26, 1918. Note inserted in diary. Other citation in this chapter are from 1912-1916 diaries in the possession of David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>2</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 3, 1913.

<sup>3</sup>Donald Linton Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua: A Middle Western Institution" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1953), 287.

<sup>4</sup>"Welker Diaries," flyleaf of 1915 diary.

<sup>5</sup>Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," iv, v, 10, 18.

<sup>6</sup>Charles F. Horner, *Strike the Tents* (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, Inc., 1954), 23, 34, 174; and James Paul Eckman, "Regeneration Through Culture: Chautauqua in Nebraska, 1882-1925" (Masters thesis, University of Nebraska, 1989), 203; and Paul W. Glad, *The Trumpet Soundeth: William Jennings Bryan and His Democracy, 1896-1912* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), 9; and Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," 3.

<sup>7</sup>Eckman, "Regeneration through Culture," 203.

<sup>8</sup>Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," 25, 27.

<sup>9</sup>Horner, *Strike the Tents*, 85-86.

<sup>10</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 23, 1913. Typewritten sheet attached to diary.

<sup>11</sup>Horner, *Strike the Tents*, 74-75; and Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," 97.

<sup>12</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 28; July 7, 21, 1913; July 21, 1914.

<sup>13</sup>"Welker Diaries," August 9, 1914; July 20, 23, 1915.

<sup>14</sup>Sandra Manderson, "The Redpath Lyceum Bureau, An American Critic: Decision Making and Programing Methods for Circuit Chautauquas, Circa 1912-1930" (Masters thesis, University of Iowa, 1981), 38.

<sup>15</sup>Manderson, "The Redpath Lyceum Bureau," 39.

<sup>16</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 31, 1913

<sup>17</sup>"Welker Diaries," August 11, 1913.

- <sup>18</sup>"Welker Diaries," August 15, 20, 1913.
- <sup>19</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 28, 1914.
- <sup>20</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 23; July 7, 14, 1914; and *Gordon Journal*, July 9, 1914, 1.
- <sup>21</sup>Horner, *Strike the Tents*, 75-76.
- <sup>22</sup>Manderson, *The Redpath Lyceum Bureau*, 38-39.
- <sup>23</sup>Horner, *Strike the Tents*, 76-78; and Eckman, "Regeneration Through Culture," 207.
- <sup>24</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 17, 23; August 7, 20, 1913; June 30; August 3, 1914.
- <sup>25</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 15, 20; August 8, 10, 1915.
- <sup>26</sup>Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," 68-69.
- <sup>27</sup>Horner, *Strike the Tents*, 79.
- <sup>28</sup>Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," 87, 127-129.
- <sup>29</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 4, 5, 1913.
- <sup>30</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 17, 21, 1914.
- <sup>31</sup>"Welker Diaries," August 23, 1913.
- <sup>32</sup>"Welker Diaries," August 6, 8, 9, 12, 1914.
- <sup>33</sup>"Welker Diaries," August 26, 1914.
- <sup>34</sup>*Gordon Journal*, December 3, 1914, 11.
- <sup>35</sup>Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," 72.
- <sup>36</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 29, 30; July 1, 4, 1915.
- <sup>37</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 25; August 1, 29, 1915.
- <sup>38</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 1916.
- <sup>39</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 13, 1916.
- <sup>40</sup>Eckman, "Regeneration Through Culture," 205.
- <sup>41</sup>Manderson, "The Redpath Lyceum Bureau," 249; and Horner, *Strike the Tents*, 201.

- <sup>42</sup>Graham, "Circuit Chautauqua," 132.
- <sup>43</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 26; August 9, 1914.
- <sup>44</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 27, 1913; June 27; July 17; August 1, 8, 1915; June 25; July 30; September 3, 1916.
- <sup>45</sup>Mari Sandoz, *Old Jules* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 372, 387.
- <sup>46</sup>Charley O'Kieffe, *Western Story: The Recollections of Charley O'Kieffe, 1884-1898* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), 7, 210.
- <sup>47</sup>Sheridan County Historical Society, editor, *Recollections of Sheridan County, Nebraska* (Rushville, Nebraska: Iron Man Industries, 1976), 15, 71.
- <sup>48</sup>*Gordon Journal*, February 14, 1913, 1.
- <sup>49</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 4, 16, 24, 26; October 26; November 22, 1912; and *Gordon Journal*, September 27, 1912, 1, February 21, 1913, 1.
- <sup>50</sup>*Gordon Journal*, January 17, 1913.
- <sup>51</sup>*Gordon Journal*, February 7, 1913, 1; August 29, 1913, 1; August 29, 1913, 8; and "Welker Diaries," March 13, 18, 19; February 3, 7; November 4, 6, 7, 8, 1913.
- <sup>52</sup>*Gordon Journal*, April 4, 1913, 1.
- <sup>53</sup>*Gordon Journal*, April 4, 1913, 1.
- <sup>54</sup>*Gordon Journal*, October 15, 1914, 8.
- <sup>55</sup>*Gordon Journal*, January 15, 1914, 4.
- <sup>56</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 3, 5, 1914; and *Gordon Journal*, February 12, 1914, 4.
- <sup>57</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 25, 28; March 2, 5, 6, 7, 13, 1914.
- <sup>58</sup>Sheridan County Historical Society, *Recollections of Sheridan County, Nebraska*, 72; and "Welker Diaries," March 4; December 7, 1915.
- <sup>59</sup>*Gordon Journal*, March 11, 1915, 1.
- <sup>60</sup>*Gordon Journal*, September 15, 1915, 1.



<sup>61</sup>Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), xi-xii.

<sup>62</sup>Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, xi.

<sup>63</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 20; May 16; October 27, 1913; March 20, 1914.

<sup>64</sup>Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, xii.

<sup>65</sup>Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, xiii.

<sup>66</sup>Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, 9.

<sup>67</sup>Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, 37, 42, 50.

<sup>68</sup>Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, 70.

<sup>69</sup>*Gordon Journal*, May 23, 1913, 1.

<sup>70</sup>Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, 72.

<sup>71</sup>*Gordon Journal*, April 14, 1914, 5.

<sup>72</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 12, 1912.

<sup>73</sup>"Welker Diaries," October 31, 1913; November 23, 1914; October 22, 1915.

<sup>74</sup>"Welker Diaries," October 10, 1913; and *Gordon Journal*, October 10, 1913, 1.

<sup>75</sup>*Gordon Journal*, November 14, 1913, 8.

<sup>76</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 16, 1914; and *Gordon Journal*, January 17, 1914, 1.

<sup>77</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 22, 1914; and *Gordon Journal*, May 14, 1914, 8.

<sup>78</sup>*Gordon Journal*, March 12; April 16, 1914, 1.

<sup>79</sup>*Gordon Journal*, May 21, 1914, 1; and October 1, 1914, 8.

<sup>80</sup>*Gordon Journal*, March 4, 1915, 4.

<sup>81</sup>*Gordon Journal*, January 21, 1915, 1, 8; April 16, 1915, 1; April 22, 1915, 1; May 20, 1915, 1.

<sup>82</sup>*Gordon Journal*, October 1, 1914, 8.

<sup>83</sup>*Gordon Journal*, July 25, 1913, 1; and "Welker Diaries," September 9, 1913.

<sup>84</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 20; May 25; October 5, 19, 1913; April 12, 22; October 18, 1914; April 23; May 23; September 12; October 17; November 21, 1915.

<sup>85</sup>*Gordon Journal*, April 1, 1915, 1.

<sup>86</sup>*Gordon Journal*, December 15, 1912, 5.

<sup>87</sup>Glad, *The Trumpet Soundeth*, 5.

<sup>88</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 10, 1915; and *Gordon Journal*, January 13, 1915, 8; January 21, 1915, 4.

<sup>89</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 11, 12, 1916.

<sup>90</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 10; December 10, 1912; June 3, 1913; May 26, 1914.

<sup>91</sup>"Welker Diaries," December 31, 1913.

## CHAPTER III

## A TIME OF PREPARATION AND SERVICE, 1916-1928

God of our life, through all the circling years,  
we trust in Thee. In all the past, through all  
our hopes and fears, Thy hand we see. With each  
new day, when morning lifts the veil, we own Thy  
mercies, Lord, which never fail.

Class hymn, Princeton Seminary 1919<sup>1</sup>

Clare Welker attended Princeton Theological Seminary for three years between 1916 and 1919, while completing preparation for the ordained ministry of the Presbyterian Church. Many ministers served churches throughout the West from the frontier days onward with little or no theological education, but few of them were Presbyterians. This denomination had always stressed education for their clergy and they encouraged it even among the laity.<sup>2</sup> At Princeton, Welker received in-depth Biblical training, conservative theological thought, and exposure to many well-known ministers and missionaries.

At the turn of the century, this institution was a center of scholarly Old School Presbyterianism, and it represented a well-established theological tradition of conservative Calvinist thought. The Old School represented the Scottish influence on the Presbyterian Church that taught no deviation from the doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and an irrevocable commitment to the constitution

of the church.<sup>3</sup> J. Gresham Machen, a celebrated professor at the school and a national fundamentalist leader in the 1920s, had considerable influence on Welker's developing theology. "Dos", as the students affectionately called him, often met with small groups and engaged in lengthy theological discussions. Yet, when Machen helped found the fundamentalist Presbyterian Church of America in 1936, Welker wanted no association with it. Although he had little regard for the "modernists," he never adopted the rigid, inflexible stand of the fundamentalists either.<sup>4</sup>

When Welker entered the seminary the fundamentalist-liberal split had not yet occurred, and all candidates for the ministry assented to five essential doctrines--inerrancy of the scriptures, the virgin birth, Christ's crucifixion as divine judgment, the redeeming power of the resurrection, and belief in Christ's miracles. In 1927, the General Assembly modified this view by stating that no specific group of doctrines could be considered more essential and necessary than any others. Ministers then declared that the Westminster Confession of Faith contained the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, thereby leaving room for interpretation. The Westminster Confession dates to the middle seventeenth century when the British Parliament, under Oliver Cromwell, convened an assembly of mostly Puritan clergy to produce this creed. It declared that the

scriptures contain the sole doctrinal authority for the church, and it affirmed belief in predestination.<sup>5</sup>

As a pastor, Welker preached the doctrine of the reformed faith, but his role extended beyond the pulpit. He maintained a strong relationship with schools wherever he served, and he well utilized lessons learned from his earlier classroom experiences. He envisioned his role to be that of a general purveyor of culture in the community and as an active leader in the struggle to "clean up" the seamier side of western life. He perfectly fitted what historian Ferenc M. Szasz has recently labeled as the inexorably intertwining of western church life and community-based culture."<sup>6</sup>

Welker adjusted quickly to his new lifestyle as an older student of thirty-three, adopting serious study habits and finding little time for social activity. He wrote at the end of his second year that with God's help he had not missed a single session of class.<sup>7</sup> His heavy course load included Old Testament Canon, Hebrew, Greek, Systematic Theology, English Bible, Apologetics, Old Testament History, Church History and Homiletics. In subsequent years he added Biblical Theology, New Testament Introduction and Exegesis, Old Testament Poetic Literature, Apostolic History, Holy Spirit, Evidences, and Biblical Theology.<sup>8</sup> (See Appendix C) He experienced great difficulty with Hebrew and received tutoring to pass the course during the second year. Contrastingly, his writing and logical reasoning skills were demonstrated in a paper for

Evidences class that resulted in a commendation letter from his professor.<sup>9</sup> (See Appendix D)

Whenever possible, Welker attended lectures and sermons at the local churches and on campus. Once he expressed gratitude to God for the privilege of hearing a great speaker twice in one day.<sup>10</sup> Students from the seminary also received frequent invitations to fill the pulpits in towns throughout New Jersey and adjoining New York counties. Welker accepted many of these part-time opportunities which increased his sermon-writing skills and supplemented his income. During his senior year the Stockton Presbyterian Church of Stockton, New Jersey, hired him as a regular pulpit supply for Sunday preaching.<sup>11</sup> Finances became a problem in his middler year when he was forced to apply for scholarship aid and even sold his stock in the Gordon Bank.<sup>12</sup>

After refusing two invitations to return to the Chautauqua circuit, he requested and received work in Box Butte Presbytery during the summer of 1917. Upon his return to Gordon, he received a warm reception and preached several Sundays for James Brown. He then traveled to the Nebraska panhandle town of Sidney to organize a Presbyterian Church. A small group of people in Sidney desired to begin Presbyterian work, and Welker conducted services throughout the summer in the town library. After two months of planning, with the assistance of Sunday School missionary Samuel Light, thirty-one charter members organized the church

on August 26, 1917.<sup>13</sup> Welker left Sidney in September to return to seminary, but he was not forgotten. He received an invitation to accept the church minister's position when he graduated from school, and although he declined this initial offer, he did accept their call in 1928. With one year of seminary completed and now totally committed to his call, Welker came under the care of Box Butte Presbytery on September 11, 1917.<sup>14</sup> This step signified his candidacy for the ministry, and at the appropriate time this Presbytery would officiate at his ordination.

The following summer Box Butte Presbytery again called on Welker, this time to pastor the church at Sheep Creek, Nebraska. This church, located west of Scottsbluff and thirteen miles northwest of Morrill, had been organized by James B. Currens in 1915. Appointed by the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions as a Sunday School Missionary, Currens had established Sunday Schools throughout western Nebraska, western South Dakota, and eastern Wyoming, and from these initial programs thirty-six churches ultimately developed.<sup>15</sup> The church stood on a high knoll overlooking a little valley through which flowed Sheep Creek. As the church was nearing completion, the death of a young girl led to the development of an adjacent cemetery. The congregation continued meeting until the 1930s when better transportation sent people to nearby towns for church services.<sup>16</sup> Currens often visited Sheep Creek and Morrill where he had founded the Morrill

church in 1907. He developed a friendship with Welker that was renewed when the latter returned to Morrill in 1919.

The founding of Sunday Schools throughout the West became an important tool for Protestant evangelism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because it was impossible for denominations to place ministers and churches in every locality during that time, the Sunday School brought the Christian influence that was deemed necessary if western emigrants were to live as civilized and moral people.<sup>17</sup> It provided social and religious benefits for the individual and society, as well as instruction in conservative Protestant values.<sup>18</sup> Sunday Schools overcame many of the difficulties of denominational churches because they were nondenominational, had no need of a minister, and used prepared materials that were doctrinally and theologically simple. Eventually they hoped to become the nucleus of a new church and attract a resident minister.<sup>19</sup>

An important aspect of the program developed through the Sunday School Conventions where teachers received training that was supposed to be essential for producing moral, Christian people. Reformed Protestant ministers who usually dominated these conventions stressed teacher training and emphasized the Sunday School as an evangelistic crusade.<sup>20</sup> Morrill hosted the District Sunday School Convention for the western portion of Scotts Bluff County on July 10, 1919. Morrill's Methodist minister addressed the convention on the



subject, "Parents' Relation to the Sunday School," and the Dutch Flats' Methodist pastor spoke on "The Attitude of the Sunday School toward Temperance and Cigarettes." In the evening, Welker presented an address on "Teacher Training in the Sunday School."<sup>21</sup> Throughout the early 1900s, western Sunday Schools set the stage for the development of churches just as they had at Sidney, Morrill and Sheep Creek.

Welker began his work at Sheep Creek on May 19, 1918, calling on everyone in the area to attend. The work grew throughout the summer, and on his last Sunday, he recorded eighteen new members and the baptism of seven children.<sup>22</sup> His farewell at Sheep Creek, as at Sidney, was only temporary, for after graduation, Welker would accept the pastorates of the Morrill and Sheep Creek churches.

Shortly before leaving Sheep Creek, Welker made application to the Box Butte Presbytery for ordination. Although he had not completed his seminary education, he felt a strong desire to enter the chaplaincy and support the war effort. As far back as his high school years when he had been a member of the high school cadets, Welker had long been associated with the military. He belonged to the Nebraska National Guard throughout his college years and had received an honorable discharge on October 24, 1910.<sup>23</sup> Because of these prior associations, he completed the examinations and received his license and ordination at the presbytery meeting in Bayard, Nebraska, on September 4, 1918. Exactly a week

later, he registered for the draft at Rushville, but by the time the necessary paper work was completed, the war had ended.<sup>24</sup>

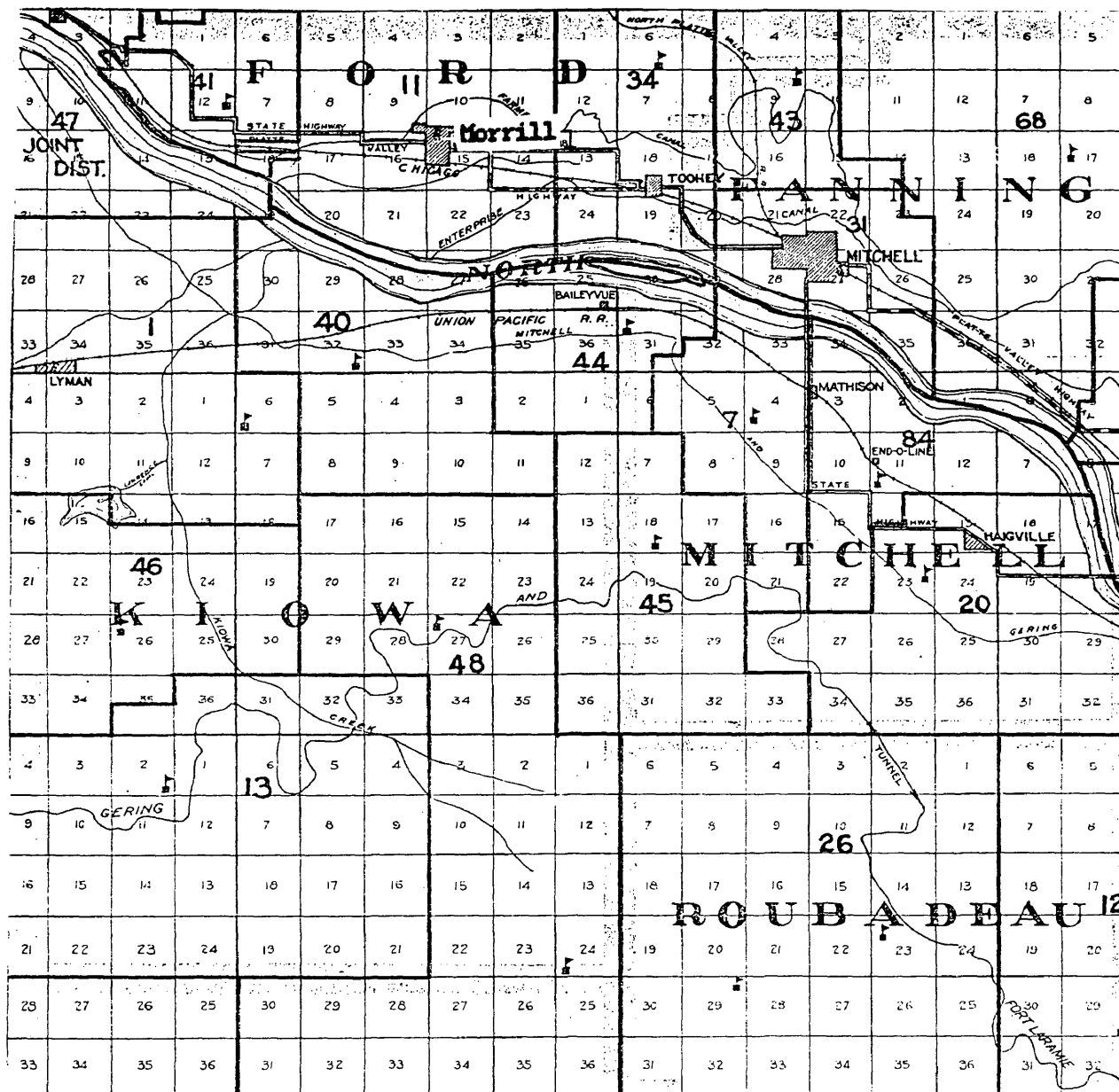
Welker returned to Princeton for his senior year and graduated on May 6, 1919. He then stopped to visit relatives in southeastern Pennsylvania where he had spent his Christmas holidays during the three years at Princeton. On these trips he became reacquainted with his aunts and uncles and their families, and he revisited his birthplace at Blain, Pennsylvania.<sup>25</sup>

Western Nebraska represented home to Welker and he eagerly accepted the invitation to serve the Morrill and Sheep Creek churches. He met in Omaha with William H. Kearns, synod executive of Nebraska, and agreed to a \$1,200 salary and a manse. The Morrill congregation called him with an unanimous acceptance vote on June 22, 1919, followed shortly thereafter with the same endorsement from the Sheep Creek church.<sup>26</sup> Having served the previous summer as Sheep Creek's intern, he now returned to a familiar place and to established friendships.

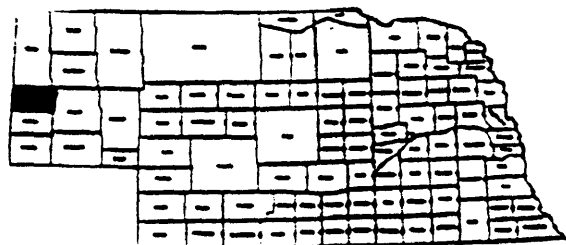
Morrill, in northwestern Scotts Bluff County, boasted in 1919, of being "a solid little town with excellent schools, progressive businesses, and pride in community development."<sup>27</sup> Charles Henry Morrill, president of the Lincoln Land Company, founded the town in 1907, after discovering that the Burlington Railroad planned to locate a depot in the area.<sup>28</sup>

Farming met with early failure throughout Scotts Bluff County as this dry land failed to produce adequate crops. Yet men of vision soon observed that the North Platte River and its broad valley could serve as a natural source of irrigation water. Willing to take great risks, they purchased irrigation bonds, and with the federal government's assistance, they created the Inter-State canal, the Farmer's Irrigation District's canal, and many other irrigation projects which turned the valleys of this semi-arid region into rich agricultural areas. A variety of vegetables, as well as grains and sugar beets, soon became major crops. With water easily accessible, cattle and hog raising industries also thrived.<sup>29</sup> (See map 6 page 92)

In 1914, Scotts Bluff County's per capita agricultural and livestock wealth led the other counties of Nebraska. The state considered this fast growing town of Scottsbluff its number three city, after Omaha and Lincoln, for shipping and agricultural production. Scottsbluff increased from a few hundred residents to 4,000 by 1920, and the entire county numbered 20,710.<sup>30</sup> A farm on the edge of the city sold in July 1919 for \$2,400 per acre. This price represented an increase of \$800 per acre within a few month's time, indicating the growing business and population of the city.<sup>31</sup> Morrill, located on the Burlington and Union Pacific lines, also had excellent access to shipping which assured it a national marketplace.<sup>32</sup>



Map 6 Morrill, Nebraska--H. Clare Welker's First Pastorate, 1919-1923. A Portion of Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska Map, 1928. Located in the Nebraska Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.



Map 6a Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska. Ronald Vern Jackson and Gary Ronald Teeple, *Encyclopedia of Local History and Genealogies: United States Counties 1* (Bountiful, Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems, Inc., 1977), 177.

Morrill occupied a place on the Chautauqua circuit, and each year with strong support from the community, it realized a profit from this program. In 1921, to kick off the Chautauqua Week, Morrill businessmen prepared a free barbecue dinner for all interested residents. During the morning a free ball game pitted two local teams, the "Fats" against the "Leans." All stores closed at 10:00 a.m. for the festivities. The Presbyterian Church canceled its evening services and the Methodist Church postponed all activities except Sunday School.<sup>33</sup>

The Methodist and Presbyterian churches served the spiritual needs of the Morrill area during Welker's years as pastor. Paul Hobson, who came to Morrill the same year as Welker, recalled that the two churches expressed some jealousy toward each other and were rather clannish. He and his wife, Fern, remembered Welker as being well liked, carrying on an active ministry, and committed to providing a social outlet for families.<sup>34</sup> When Welker arrived, church membership stood at 107, and Sunday School enrollment recorded 185. The official church history later stated that under the earnest and sincere ministry of Welker the congregation experienced outstanding growth. When he resigned in 1922, the membership had increased to 213, and Sunday School attendance had grown to 225.<sup>35</sup>

As a typical farming community, much of Morrill's population lived in the surrounding area, thus requiring that

Welker spend a major portion of his time traveling to call on the families. Transportation over poor roads presented a continual problem, and in bad weather services at Sheep Creek were canceled, and Morrill members were unable to travel to town to attend church. In the summer of 1919, Welker purchased a Model T Ford touring car.<sup>36</sup> On December 11, he commented that while he was returning from Sheep Creek on a raw and windy day. the side curtains provided little protection and the ride was very disagreeable. The previous Sunday he had not been able to drive because snow drifts covered the roads.<sup>37</sup> Two years later he traded the car for a Ford coupe with wire wheels which proved more reliable.<sup>38</sup>

Welker called on every Presbyterian and unchurched family living within five miles of Morrill. These visits, however, failed to include a small population of Mexican migrants who lived just outside town and who provided cheap farm labor. Two brief references to the Mexicans indicated the generally negative public attitude toward them. The *Morrill Mail* reported that a "Senor Mexicanna" tried to cash a forged check made payable to "\_\_\_\_\_" (anyway it was a Mexican name and we are not supposed to be able to spell it)." He was apprehended and locked up in the county jail.<sup>39</sup> Welker recorded that a Mexican woman died, and he visited her family. When he conducted her funeral the following day, he referred to her only as the Mexican woman.<sup>40</sup> The Anglo

population in most rural societies in the Midwest remained separate from the Mexicans.

Welker arranged much of his calling in groups, visiting four or five homes in one afternoon, and often being invited for the evening meal at the last home of the day. He recorded daily either the names or the number of persons he had contacted.<sup>41</sup> During his tenure in Morrill, ninety-one persons joined the church by confession of faith, and seventy-one by certificate of transfer. Over half of those making their first confession were baptized.<sup>42</sup> Welker made a significant impact on many persons who had failed to identify with an organized church after moving west. These adult confessions represented people who probably had a religious background, but in moving west, they lived isolated from the church. Morrill, by 1919, had become a stable and agriculturally successful area, therefore allowing more time for farmers to pursue their religious commitment.

Other methods that encouraged growth of membership included regular publicity in the *Morrill Mail*, and creation of church programs designed to meet the needs of young and old. Each week an extensive column of Presbyterian news appeared on the front page of the newspaper. It called attention to the programs, services, and meetings of the previous week, emphasized the fine spirit of the people, and praised the excellent attendance. The church extended a cordial invitation to the community to attend the outstanding

programs planned for the coming week. Those without a regular church home or Sunday School affiliation received special encouragement.<sup>43</sup> Welker held services each Sunday evening in Sheep Creek, but after the first year the Morrill work became so demanding that he withdrew from this obligation, and the church soon employed its own minister.<sup>44</sup>

The programs of the church increased under Welker's guidance. A boy's club, known as the Lincoln Club, brought together a large group of boys every other week for outings and programs. The club sought to shape the development of Christian character in young people by providing acceptable social outlets for them, and by being a positive influence in their social environment.<sup>45</sup> Paul Hobson, a teenage member of the church in 1919, stated that Welker was a lot of fun and the kids really liked him. He recalled that the youths would cook their own dinners at the church, and once, instead of washing the dishes, they hid them in the oven.<sup>46</sup>

In 1920, Welker began a men's club by inviting the businessmen of the community as well as the church members. Meeting once a month for dinner and high quality speakers, the club enjoyed considerable success, drawing an average crowd of thirty persons. A highlight of the year was the Father-Son dinner sponsored by the men's club. In March 1922, the highly successful event served 115 men and boys.<sup>47</sup> Welker recognized that few men and boys participated in church life, and throughout his ministry he sought to



interest them in the church, while satisfying their fellowship needs and providing information and inspiration.

The usual church activities grew as Welker worked actively to participate in every event. Prayer meetings, three choirs for adults and youth, Christian Endeavor, circles and missionary societies, Sunday School classes, and church officer meetings rounded out a full weekly schedule. In addition, most of the groups sponsored parties, picnics, church suppers, ice cream socials, and other entertainments which afforded the church members and the community with many activities that focused on church life. For six months in 1921, church volunteers constructed a basement, adding fifty additional square feet north of the original building. Hobson remembered that his father brought in a team of horses and helped dig the basement. He stated that the congregation intended to erect a building above the basement, but financial circumstances prevented the work until 1937.<sup>48</sup> With totally donated labor, including Welker's, churchmen roofed the additional Sunday School rooms and fellowship hall and dedicated their new facility.<sup>49</sup> Welker, being a member of the Presbytery of Box Butte, fulfilled his obligations to this body by regularly attending its meetings and serving as moderator from April 1920 to April 1921.<sup>50</sup>

Desirous of not focusing only on church work, Welker participated actively in the community. He joined the Commercial Club, but infrequently attended the Masons and

Eastern Star, a sister organization that included women. Elected to the school board in March 1920, he attended his first meeting in June and accepted the board's request to become president. Almost immediately, discussion arose about building a new high school. A bond election called in December, approved a \$90,000 bond issue. With the sale of these securities, an architect from Denver drew plans for the building. In May, Welker was reelected president. The two banks involved with the bond money attempted to persuade the board to delay letting the contracts until September. It later became evident that both banks were in shaky financial shape, and one failed shortly after the building was completed. The board rejected this offer and let the contract on August 1, 1921. At this point, Welker decided to resign from the board and he did so under much protest.<sup>51</sup> With construction of the school getting underway, he felt that he should devote more time and energy to his church work. The board regretfully accepted his resignation and declared in a resolution their appreciation for his wholehearted work for the schools.<sup>52</sup>

While living in Morrill, Welker returned to Hastings College for the annual alumni reunion in June 1920, where he met Louise Megaw, a young woman who had been at the Hastings Academy in 1909. Megaw remembered the well-known and popular senior, but Welker had not known her. He immediately asked her to the homecoming dinner where he acted as toastmaster.<sup>53</sup>

In July, he took his vacation time to travel to Lohrville, Iowa, where Megaw lived with her Presbyterian minister father. After a few enjoyable days, he returned to Morrill, but a second quick trip at the end of July moved the relationship to a more serious level. On September 29, 1920, with her father officiating, Louise came down the church aisle in a gown of white satin and met Clare at the altar where they pledged their marriage vows. After a brief wedding trip to Omaha and Lyons, they returned to Morrill where she received a warm welcome.

Louise had attended Hastings College and the Chicago Presbyterian Training School, but had resided with her father since the illness and death of her mother several years earlier.<sup>54</sup> Contrastingly, Welker had lived at the YMCA in Fremont and Chadron and at the Merchant's Hotel in Gordon. He had taken his meals at restaurants, and in Fremont he ate at a boarding house for one year, but did not chose to repeat this experience. Home-cooked meals and a home atmosphere were now welcomed, but he never gave up his enjoyment of eating out. Louise was quiet and unassertive, well suited to the 1920s' idea of a minister's wife. She took her place in the women's work and entertained individuals and groups at the manse. While Welker served as president, teacher, or in some leadership capacity in many groups, his wife served on committees or taught Sunday School. Her role as a mother and homemaker caused her to stay so much in the background that

Ruth Owens of Guthrie Center and Grace Griffin of Brighton did not remember her.<sup>55</sup> Action at the annual congregational meeting in March 1920, raised Welker's salary to \$2,000, making him among the better paid rural clergy of that time.<sup>56</sup>

Again Welker had attained a high degree of success in his work. The church had experienced phenomenal growth, he was welcomed in almost every home in the area, and the congregation responded to his leadership in their spiritual lives. A personal need, however, began to surface; Welker eagerly desired more theological education. Three years of post-college work had built a strong foundation, but the pursuit of a master's degree would allow him to develop his ideas and fine tune his knowledge. Graduating from Princeton had brought only a certificate of completion and he wanted a master's degree. His resignation of July 2, 1922, came as a complete surprise and was a major disappointment to the congregation. Two weeks later, the church reluctantly concurred in his request, and on August 7, Box Butte Presbytery dissolved the pastoral relationship. Over 250 Morrill friends attended the Welkers' farewell party and sadly wished them well.<sup>57</sup>

Traveling long distances in the early 1920s proved a major undertaking. The experience of such a trip by automobile was well illustrated by the Welkers when they chose to drive across country to Princeton, New Jersey, to begin his theological studies. They camped along the way and

made periodic stops to visit friends and relatives. They left Morrill on August 14, 1922, and traveled to Yuma, Colorado, where Louise's father had served as pastor. Heading east from Yuma on the Golden Rod Highway, Welker found the roads rough and the weather extremely hot. They stopped at a fine campground at Indianola, Nebraska, and the next night at Harvard. At a point just west of Holdrege, Nebraska, Welker observed crops badly hurt by the dry weather, but the fields were green throughout the rest of the route. From Lincoln to Lyons, Nebraska, they followed the legendary Cornhusker Highway which was in good condition. After a week in Lyons for visiting family, and after a brief stop in Omaha, the Welkers drove to Adair, Iowa, on the White Pole Road out of Council Bluffs. To avoid getting their tent wet in a steady drizzle, they broke camp at 4:00 a.m. and traveled on to Des Moines, Iowa, where they reached graveled roads. After Des Moines, it was back to mud roads and day's end found them only as far as Belle Plain, Iowa.

At DeWitt, Iowa, they gratefully arrived at their first paved roads. This soon ended, however, as they experienced very rough road along the west side of the Mississippi River. At Galesburg, Illinois, they visited relatives and, after passing through Chicago, made a side trip to Grand Rapids, Michigan, Louise's former home. A broken pinion gear made repairs necessary in Michigan City, Indiana, where the campground was nothing to "brag about." An abundance of

fruit trees and fresh fruit appeared along the roadside near Holland, Michigan, and they bought fresh peaches for seventy-five cents a bushel. After several days in Grand Rapids, they visited more relatives in Toledo, Ohio, and then, traveling south to Upper Sandusky, Ohio, they returned to the Lincoln Highway. In eastern Ohio, the highway was so rough they broke two leaves of the front spring.

On some nights when they could not find a campground, a grassy spot by the side of the road filled the purpose. A free campground east of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, had no water, and being "free" was the best that could be said for it. The road grades became very steep in western Pennsylvania, and about midday they stopped to have the transmission bands relined. Finally, they dropped into the Cumberland Valley and continued driving into the night to reach Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and a welcomed rest with relatives. On the last lap of the trip, the Welkers drove through the rich tobacco country around Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and into Philadelphia, where they turned south to Stockton and Princeton. No accidents occurred on the trip, but Welker expressed irritation about the "road hogs" encountered along the way. Arriving in Princeton on September 15, they had completed their trip in exactly one month.<sup>58</sup>

The Welkers settled into seminary life and began a full schedule of classes. Louise audited several courses, while

her husband enrolled in Great Preachers, Calvin, Philosophical Apologetics, Work of the Pastor, Birth of Jesus, Advanced Homiletics, Ten Commandments, the Doctrine of Sin, and Ethics.<sup>59</sup> In November, Welker accepted a regular preaching assignment at a Dutch Reformed Church in nearby Blawenburg, New Jersey, part-time work that continued until he graduated.<sup>60</sup> Despite their busy schedules, the Welkers managed to include several sightseeing trips to New York, Washington, D.C. and throughout New Jersey.<sup>61</sup>

Early in January 1923, Welker began to investigate possible positions for after graduation, and to this end he corresponded with Hastings College concerning the Biblical chair vacancy.<sup>62</sup> He preached before a church committee in Flemington, New Jersey, and at the Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.<sup>63</sup> After a very successful academic year, Welker received his Master of Theology degree (ThM) in Systematic Theology and Apologetics on May 8, 1923. Bidding Princeton friends good-bye, the Welkers started west again, setting up their tent at night in the nearest campground.

When they arrived in Fairfield, Iowa, they spent about two weeks with Louise's father who now served the Fairfield Presbyterian Church. Traveling around Iowa, Welker visited several churches that were seeking pastors, including Knoxville, Des Moines and Guthrie Center.<sup>64</sup> Shortly after arriving in Lyons to visit his parents, Welker accepted an

invitation to preach in Westminster Presbyterian Church of Lincoln. He withdrew his name from consideration after assessing that several of the elders and members were "badly tainted with modernism."<sup>65</sup> On July 4, he received a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Guthrie Center, Iowa. The offer included a \$2,400 salary and a manse. A few days later the church at Mitchell, Nebraska, contacted him for consideration, but he did not pursue this offer. He hesitated almost two weeks before sending a wire to Guthrie Center indicating his acceptance. Two days later he received an offer for a field job at Hastings College, but wrote that he had already accepted the Iowa position.<sup>66</sup>

Welker began the second phase of his ministry in 1923 as a well-educated and experienced man. Fresh from the halls of learning, he knew that circumstances and events in the nation had changed considerably since the end of World War I and his first graduation from Princeton. Protestant America faced a great dilemma in the 1920s. Prohibition, immigration, evolution, the Ku Klux Klan, Al Smith's presidential candidacy, and eventually the 1929 economic crash overwhelmed the churches that had believed in the culture-shaping ideas of the social gospel.<sup>67</sup> Likewise, Welker faced the challenge of a world that had lost much of its optimism in the carnage of World War I. Churches grew and prospered in the "roaring" 1920s, but the decade also experienced violent disputes, strange sects, and radical shifts in beliefs.<sup>68</sup> The liberal-



fundamentalist's split became more pronounced, resulting in sharply drawn lines between church members on many issues. Liberal Christianity stressed a less literal interpretation of the Bible, more involvement in community social affairs, and a sense of cooperation between churches. The fundamentalists insisted that the old ways of faith must be preserved.<sup>69</sup> Rural communities tried for years to preserve the old values, while they simultaneously incorporated the increased materialism and consumerism of the technological age into their lifestyles. Significant problems developed when the old values failed to fit the new industrial age. The automobile especially disrupted the apparent harmony of the countryside, and the rural family began to split apart.<sup>70</sup>

The landscape of Iowa appeared very different from the open plains that Welker had previously called home. Geographically, Guthrie Center, Iowa, was not part of the Great Plains which began in central Nebraska about the ninety-eighth meridian. Iowa had been settled earlier and had attained statehood in 1846. (See Map 7 page 106) The rich and fertile farmland received adequate rainfall and farmers generally experienced success with their crops. Guthrie County stood foremost in the state in agricultural and stock-raising resources. The immediate area of Guthrie Center pleased the observer's eye with its rolling prairies interspersed with hills and natural groves of trees. Streams meandered through the soil, providing a rich agricultural



Map 7 Guthrie Center, Iowa--H. Clare Welker's Second Pastorate, 1924-1928.  
 Ronald Vern Jackson and Gary Ronald Teeple, *Encyclopedia of Local History and Genealogies: United States Counties 1 (Bountiful, Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems Inc., 1977), 112*

potential. Farms covered the gently sloping hills, while corn and wheat fields extended as far as the eye could see. The native timber, mostly confined to valleys and ravines, appeared in good supply, and livestock dotted the arable tracts of land.<sup>71</sup>

Ruth Owens, a native of Guthrie Center, remembered Welker as the minister who officiated at her wedding to Arthur Lenox in 1926. Her parent's farm typified the many self-sufficient farms surrounding the town, complete with a few cows for milk and chickens for eggs. Horses and two-row cultivators tilled the land. Every neighboring farmer grew apples and strawberries, and children picked wild berries along the roadsides. Three grocery stores, a men's clothing store, a general store, and two banks lined the thriving main street. On Saturday night the country people came to town to shop and visit. Two trains a day came from Stewart and returned to connect with the Rock Island Line. To catch the Milwaukee Railroad, one had to drive to the nearby town of Panora. Two doctors, two dentists, and one osteopath also served the community. Few cars traveled the muddy roads in the early 1920s, and horse and buggy provided the main means of transportation. The flour mill that specialized in wheat flour and a special pancake flour comprised the town's only industry. During World War I when white bread was almost impossible to find, the farmers brought their wheat to the mill and in return received white flour to make bread.<sup>72</sup> The

churches commanded a major role in this community which well accommodated several active denominations.

The Presbyterian Church had been incorporated on April 1, 1882, although two pastors had served this small group during the previous seven years.<sup>73</sup> During Charles Bruce's pastorate in 1884, a building had been erected and membership had grown steadily. In 1911, the church officers planned a new building that was dedicated two years later with its beautiful stained glass windows and a full basement with kitchen and fellowship hall.<sup>74</sup> The Welkers began work with a church membership of 213 and a Sunday School enrollment of 165. The membership reached a peak of 239 in 1925, and remained near this level during Welker's entire ministry.<sup>75</sup> He was described in the official church history as an energetic and tireless worker.<sup>76</sup>

After a recount of the 1925 census figures, Guthrie Center claimed 1,808 persons, an increase of only eighty-one over the 1920 count.<sup>77</sup> Many rural communities were declining in the 1920s, but this town was at least holding its own. The post-war recession, however, influenced the community when the Chicago-Rock Island and Pacific Railroad reduced its service to one train a day on the Guthrie Center Branch. This also meant only one mail delivery each day, and public opinion blamed the railroads for wanting to increase their profits.<sup>78</sup> Teachers' salaries dropped in October 1923 to pre-war levels, and the newspaper stated that a surplus of

teachers meant that the higher incomes would never return.<sup>79</sup> On the positive side the automobile made steady gains and the county issued 4,000 licenses in 1923.<sup>80</sup> The Odd Fellows purchased a hall in October 1923, and the following year, when the Lions Club received its charter, members involved the whole community in a day of celebration.<sup>81</sup> The Rotary Club joined the group of civic organization in 1925.<sup>82</sup> Chautauqua and the county fair likewise brought out the whole county for a week of social and educational activity each summer. "We thought of Chautauqua as our vacation," said longtime resident Ruth Owens. For seven days this fine entertainment in the park represented the town's culture.<sup>83</sup> Chautauqua was, however, on the decline and, starting in 1925, it no longer brought a summer program to Guthrie Center.

The liberal ideas of the urban areas had not yet reached the small rural towns of these loyal Iowa Republicans. Local political activity received wide coverage in the *Guthrie Times*, and the four principles of the Republican Party, stated at their county convention, symbolized the conservative thought of Guthrie Center. Their platform declared that they stood for representative government, American nationalism, the protective tariff, and industrial stability and prosperity. With Calvin Coolidge's election to the presidency in 1924, the *Guthrie Times* stated of the

election results "and Iowa takes her place as one of the staunch republican [sic] strongholds."<sup>84</sup>

Citizens of Guthrie Center strongly supported the opportunities to demonstrate their patriotism through annual celebrations such as Decoration Day, Armistice Day, and Independence Day. On Armistice Day of 1924, a well-attended parade and patriotic program were followed by a football game, supper at the Church of Christ, the movie "America," and a dance at the Odd Fellow's hall.<sup>85</sup> A parade, speakers, and a large audience characterized Decoration Day in 1925.<sup>86</sup> About 10,000 people attended the old fashioned Fourth of July celebration that same year, and *The Times* reported that it was one of the brightest days for Guthrie Center. There was no roughness or drinking and no accidents. Several band concerts, interspersed with two baseball games, provided entertainment. A featured speaker addressed the crowd at noon, and this was followed by picnic lunches and free coffee. A Merry-go-round and Ferris Wheel entertained the young children.<sup>87</sup> Ministers appeared on the programs asking God's blessing for this promised land. Ever since the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century, a religious solidarity had existed in American Protestantism that this country occupied a special place in God's plan. Every denominational hymnbook contained patriotic hymns and Christians sang together "America the Beautiful."<sup>88</sup>

Another indication of the conservative nature of Guthrie Center involved the Women's Christian Temperance Union's (WCTU) activities. Almost every small town in the West supported a local WCTU, and in Guthrie Center the churches put their full support behind this organization. Periodically, an all-day convention used the church buildings for the organization's meetings, and on occasion the church services were conducted by the WCTU. Mary Sibbett of Wichita, Kansas, gave a temperance address at a union service in the Methodist church. She was known as the "Cyclone of Kansas," and the local newspaper stated that her address substantiated the title.<sup>89</sup> In March 1925, a WCTU convention at the Methodist church indicated the broadening activities of the organization when the leaders suggested a school program for the study of the Bible.<sup>90</sup> Although historians have disagreed on the effect that this organization had on public attitudes about the use of alcohol, *The Times* gave all honor to the white-ribboned ladies for their part in making the eighteenth amendment a part of the Constitution.<sup>91</sup> The apprehension of bootleggers brought swift justice. On September 17, 1923, a local bootlegger pleaded guilty and received a \$300 fine and three months in jail.<sup>92</sup>

In July 1925, the celebrated Scopes Trial made the front page of *The Times*, and the Methodist and Presbyterian ministers responded to the controversy. The legal question at issue was whether John Scopes had the right to teach the

theory of evolution in a Tennessee classroom, and Guthrie Center ministers used the opportunity to speak more directly on the conflict. Methodist minister, W. H. Meredith affirmed that the Christian religion could not be overthrown by atheism that was veiled in scientific research. Welker stated that the Biblical account of the creation was indisputable. On the date of Welker's sermon, the news confirmed the death of William Jennings Bryan, and Welker eulogized the man and contended that his sayings would live on and influence future generations.<sup>93</sup> *The Times*, in an exuberant editorial, praised Bryan as "the man who stood for mother's religion." The paper further stated that Bryan embraced a deep and abiding faith in the Bible, and it admired the fight he had made at Dayton, Tennessee, "when he tore down the devil and lifted up the blood-stained banner of the cross."<sup>94</sup>

As a more ominous sign of these changing times the Ku Klux Klan held a meeting in Guthrie Center on August 7, 1924. The *Guthrie Times* reported that 2,500 to 3,000 people attended a public lecture on the principles of the Klan. No recruiting occurred at the meeting, but announcements stated that membership would be solicited later. The *Guthrie Times* made no further reports on the organization's activities, and no evidence indicated that the Klan gained a foothold in Guthrie Center even though it did grow statewide.<sup>95</sup>



Five Protestant churches heralded the conservative social beliefs of Guthrie Center. From figures available in church records and those reported in the newspaper, approximately eighty-five percent of the population belonged to the five churches. In addition, a small group of Catholics had called a priest in 1908. The Methodists claimed 555 members in 1924, the Church of Christ recorded an average attendance at worship of 272 that year, and the Presbyterian church records gave a total of 239 members during the following year. The Baptists declared an average attendance of 166, and although no figures were available for the Wesleyan Methodists, they also showed a full program of activities in the newspaper each week, thus indicating an active congregation,<sup>96</sup>

The churches cooperated on some matters while simultaneously carrying on an evangelistic rivalry. A Ministerial Association worked closely with the schools by providing leadership at the student chapel services. In 1926, they started a Week Day School of Religious Education. All the churches cooperated with the school board to instruct students during released time at the various churches. Children, whose parents chose for them not to participate, remained at school to receive supplemental instruction with the regular teachers. The Iowa communities of Greenfield and Shenandoah had operated a similar plan for several years, and Guthrie Center believed increased moral and religious

training was needed.<sup>97</sup> An editorial in *The Times* praised the new program for bestowing a deeper reverence for sacred things and a higher regard for Christian living on future generations.<sup>98</sup> When the state legislature debated the issue of Bible-reading in the public schools, the Ministerial Association unanimously adopted a resolution urging that the Bible continue to be read to all students.<sup>99</sup>

The church news section of the *Guthrie Times* filled roughly a third to a half column each week for each church. In the column, the Sunday sermon received a review, schedules of events were announced, and comments on the attendance of the previous week elicited such words as "encouraging" "increased" "above average" "goodly" or "fine."<sup>100</sup> Welker often received praise for presenting learned sermons that grasped the hearts and minds of the audience.<sup>101</sup>

The churches appeared to play a numbers game, each trying to outdo the others in program and attendance. Each denomination expressed a strong desire to increase its membership and to recruit the few wayward souls who remained unchurched by conducting a continuous cycle of evangelistic services. Two or three week cycles of revival services sought to build up the spiritual life of the people and to bring them within the membership of the church. All revivals followed the general pattern of nightly services, two or more meetings on Sunday, and numerous weekday studies and prayer services. *The Times* encouraged attendance by stressing the

preacher's ability to attack sin, to preach his convictions, and to explain the scriptures. Those who failed to attend were informed that a wonderful spirit had prevailed and, on most occasions, every seat had been filled. In 1926 and 1927, the Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists joined in union revival services, declaring that the good people of Guthrie Center had united in this major program. In the fall of 1927, the Presbyterians decided to conduct their own services that were immediately followed on January 1, 1928, with a Methodist revival, and in late January with a similar Baptist activity. The Church of Christ continued throughout all these years to conduct its own services separate from the others.<sup>102</sup>

Welker's routine in Guthrie Center resembled his Morrill ministry where he had worked diligently to visit every family, whether Presbyterian or non-member. The men's club that he organized became a significant group and attracted forty to fifty persons each month.<sup>103</sup> The church engaged in the usual activities, supporting choirs, women's circles, youth meetings, instruction classes, and two full services each Sunday.

Welker's life outside the direct responsibilities to the local congregation included serving as moderator of the Council Bluffs Presbytery in 1926. His wife took an active part in church life by teaching Sunday School and participating in the women's activities. On August 11, 1924,

the Welkers became the proud parents of a son, Samuel Clare.<sup>104</sup> During the summer of 1927, they made their first trip to Estes Park, Colorado, to enjoy their vacation and became enamored with the area. Estes Park became the family's vacation place thereafter and attained important significance in their lives.

At the annual congregational meeting in 1924, the members requested that Welker continue his ministry another year.<sup>105</sup> The Presbyterian Church recognized the services of a minister in two ways. When called to a church, the presbytery approved and installed the pastor. This relationship was permanent and terminated only with the minister's resignation or action of the presbytery against a serious problem. The second form of service was as a "stated supply." This position was temporary and normally ended within a year or two, or else became permanent by installation. Welker went to Guthrie Center as a stated supply, and this designation was never changed. This meant that his ministry required renewal each year. In 1926, at the annual congregational meeting, the motion to retain Welker was supported "by an earnest talk on behalf of the present incumbent for his sincerity and faithful labor for the best interest of the church." The vote was almost unanimous.<sup>106</sup> Welker wrote that debate had occurred regarding the budget and the minister's salary, but the congregation agreed to continue his present salary.<sup>107</sup> His contract was

renewed again in 1927, but on January 15, 1928, he resigned to accept a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Sidney, Nebraska.<sup>108</sup>

It became evident by early 1925 that Welker desired a change of position. He applied for the pastorate at North Church in Omaha, Nebraska, and received a rejection in May. Again in 1926, he visited several vacant pulpits in Iowa, but nothing developed. After exploring the possibilities at York, Nebraska, and LeMars, Iowa, in January 1928, he preached at a congregational dinner at Sidney, Nebraska, where he had organized the church in the summer of 1917.<sup>109</sup>

Why Welker desired to leave Guthrie Center was not clearly stated in his journal. However, three possible reasons may have led to his decision. Of primary importance was his temporary relationship to the church as a stated supply. Not being the installed pastor, his position remained insecure and subject to termination at year's end. A second reason stemmed from a belief that the town was over-churched. Before coming to Guthrie Center, he had interviewed in a situation where he commented that the town already had three Protestant churches. In a small town where the vast majority of the people claimed church membership, little opportunity existed for outreach. Finally, the continuous competition between the denominations to increase their numbers often became more a performance to attract than

a sincere desire to serve. In November 1924, he wrote the following comments in *The Times*:

It is the writer's firm conviction that efforts to make our services of worship "popular" so-called have all too often resulted only in making them impotent, and utterly incapable of ministering to men's deep and abiding spiritual needs.

Clap-trap and tinsel, glitter and show may satisfy for the moment but it will be for the moment only. Man's immortal soul is not so constituted that it can long feed on such husks and not perish with hunger.<sup>110</sup>

In 1927, the Guthrie Center Presbyterian Church decided to return to its own evangelistic services and engage a guest evangelist. Dr. L. C. Bauer was described as a man of deep spirituality and great power who was neither an extremist nor a sensationalist, and who exercised great care not to embarrass anyone who attended the services.<sup>111</sup>

Leaving behind a strong program and the largest membership in the history of the church, Welker thus moved on to a new challenge amid the familiar region of western Nebraska.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Hugh Thomson Kerr, "God of Our Life," in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 275.

<sup>2</sup>Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, ed., *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements 1* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 507.

<sup>3</sup>Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists and Moderates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 39-40; and William K. Selden, *Princeton Theological Seminary, A Narrative History 1812-1992* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 14, 29.

<sup>4</sup>Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (Huntsville, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 40; and "Welker Diaries," February 18; October 12, 1917.

<sup>5</sup>Maurice W. Armstrong, *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 281, 285; and Selden, *Princeton Theological Seminary*, 7.

<sup>6</sup>Ferenc Morton Szasz, *Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and Mountain West, 1885-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 4.

<sup>7</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 20, 1918. Citations in this chapter are from the 1916-1928 diaries in the possession of David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>8</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 24, 1919; September 25, 1918.

<sup>9</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 7, 1918. For letter see Appendix A.

<sup>10</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 17, 1918.

<sup>11</sup>"Welker Diaries," December 3, 1916; November 1918-May 1919.

<sup>12</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 25, 1918

<sup>13</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 17, 20; June 6, 7, 22; July 1, 16; August 1, 15, 26, 1917.

<sup>14</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 11, 1917.

<sup>15</sup>*First Presbyterian Church* (Morrill, Nebraska: n.p., 1957), 1-2; and "Welker Diaries," July 16, 1918.

<sup>16</sup>*Atlas of Sioux County, Nebraska* (Lake Elmo, Minnesota: Tri-Tabula, Inc., 1978), 147.

<sup>17</sup>Carl Hallberg, "Sunday School: Evangelism, Religious Education and Social Values in Wyoming, 1868-1918," *Annals of Wyoming* 65 (Spring 1993), 23.

<sup>18</sup>Hallberg, "Sunday School," 35.

<sup>19</sup>Szasz, *Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains*, 78-79.

<sup>20</sup>Hallberg, "Sunday School," 32.

<sup>21</sup>*Morrill Mail*, July 10, 17, 1919, 1

<sup>22</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 19; June 30; September 8, 1918.

<sup>23</sup>"National Guard Honorable Discharge," "Welker Papers." These papers in the possession of David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>24</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 3, 4, 11; November 11, 1918.

<sup>25</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 6, 20, 1919.

<sup>26</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes" (Morrill, Nebraska: n.p., 1902-1931), 24; and "Welker Diaries," June 10, 1919.

<sup>27</sup>Jane Graff, *Nebraska, Our Towns: The Panhandle* (Seward, Nebraska: Taylor Publishing Company, 1988), 104.

<sup>28</sup>Graff, *Nebraska, Our Towns*, 105.

<sup>29</sup>Peter O'Shea, *The Land of Fulfillment* (Scottsbluff, Nebraska: Peter O'Shea, n.d.), 2-6, 9-10.

<sup>30</sup>*Fourteenth Annual Census of the United States, 1920*, III (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 602.

<sup>31</sup>*Morrill Mail*, July 3, 1919, 1.

<sup>32</sup>O'Shea, *The Land of Fulfillment*, 9-10.

<sup>33</sup>*Morrill Mail*, June 16; July 6, 10, 1921, 1.

<sup>34</sup>Paul and Fern Hobson, interview by the author, tape recording, July 23, 1993, Morrill, Nebraska.

<sup>35</sup>*First Presbyterian Church*, 2, 3, 5.

<sup>36</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 12, 1919.

<sup>37</sup>"Welker Diaries," December 7, 11, 1919.



- 38 "Welker Diaries," April 1, 1921.
- 39 *Morrill Mail*, July 24, 1919, 1.
- 40 "Welker Diaries," May 21, 22, 1920.
- 41 "Welker Diaries," May 4, 5, 7, 13, 19, 1921. Examples of calls made. Other listings throughout the diaries.
- 42 "Session Minutes," 35-55.
- 43 *Morrill Mail*, June 26, 1919, 1. See also each week's newspaper from 1919-1922.
- 44 *Morrill Mail*, July 3, 1919, 1; and "First Presbyterian Church Annual Congregational Meeting," March 18, 1920, 37; and "Welker Diaries," July 9, 1920.
- 45 "Welker Diaries," July 24; August 7, 21, 26, 1919. Continued on a regular basis in 1919 and 1920; and *Morrill Mail*, August 28, 1919, 19; and Hallberg, "Sunday School," 28.
- 46 Paul and Fern Hobson, interview.
- 47 "Welker Diaries," December 14, 1920; and *Morrill Mail*, March 9, 1922, 1.
- 48 Paul and Fern Hobson, interview.
- 49 "Welker Diaries," January-June 1921.
- 50 "Welker Diaries," April 20, 1920.
- 51 "Welker Diaries," March 24; June 12; December 6, 1920; March 14; April 4; May 2, 10; August 1, 2, 1921; and *Morrill Mail*, June 2, 1; August 4, 1921, 4.
- 52 *Morrill Mail*, August 4, 1921, 4.
- 53 "Welker Diaries," June 18, 1920.
- 54 "Welker Diaries," July 19, 31; August 27, 29, 30, 1920; and *Morrill Mail*, October 7, 1920, 1.
- 55 Ruth Owens, interview by the author, tape recording, June 1993, Guthrie Center, Iowa; and Grace Griffin, interview by the author, tape recording, July 29, 1993, Brighton, Colorado; and "Welker Diaries," 1920-1936.
- 56 "Annual Congregational Meeting, March 18, 1920," 38.

- <sup>57</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 2, 16; August 7, 10, 1922.
- <sup>58</sup>*Morrill Mail* October 12, 1922, 1, 4. Letter reprinted in the newspaper from Welker after his arrival in Princeton.
- <sup>59</sup>"Welker Diaries." Class schedule in back of 1922 diary.
- <sup>60</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 19, 1922.
- <sup>61</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 10, 1923.
- <sup>62</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 15, 1923.
- <sup>63</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 29; May 13, 1923.
- <sup>64</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 26-June 9, 1923.
- <sup>65</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 24, 1923.
- <sup>66</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 4, 16, 17, 18, 20, 1923.
- <sup>67</sup>Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "The Problem of the History of Religion in America," *Church History* 57 (1988 Supplement), 131. .
- <sup>68</sup>Gerald C. Brauer, *Protestantism in American: A Narrative History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 261.
- <sup>69</sup>James R. Shortridge, "Patterns of Religion in the United States," *Geographical Review* 66 (October 1966), 423.
- <sup>70</sup>Don S. Kirschner, *City and Country: Rural Responses to Urbanization in the 1920s* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970), 251.
- <sup>71</sup>*Past and Present of Guthrie County, Iowa: Together with Biographical Sketches of Many of its Prominent and Leading Citizens and Illustrious Dead* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1907), 42-43.
- <sup>72</sup>Ruth Owens, interview.
- <sup>73</sup>"Minutes of the Congregational Meetings, First Presbyterian Church (Guthrie Center, Iowa: n. p., 1882-1956), 1882.
- <sup>74</sup>*Centennial: First Presbyterian Church* (Guthrie Center, Iowa: n. p., May 9, 1975), 3-4.
- <sup>75</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes" (Guthrie Center, Iowa: n. p., 1919-1948), Annual Reports of 1923, 1924, 1925, 1928.
- <sup>76</sup>*Centennial*, 5.

<sup>77</sup>*The Times*, April 9; June 4; August 13, 1925, 1. The Guthrie Center newspaper was known as *Guthrie Times* through 1924 when it changed its name to *The Times* beginning in 1925.

<sup>78</sup>*Guthrie Times*, September 6, 1923, 1.

<sup>79</sup>*Guthrie Times*, October 18, 1923, 2.

<sup>80</sup>*Guthrie Times*, September 27, 1923, 1.

<sup>81</sup>*Guthrie Times*, October 4, 1923; July 3, 31; August 14, 1924, 1.

<sup>82</sup>*The Times*, March 12, 1925, 1.

<sup>83</sup>Ruth Owens, interview.

<sup>84</sup>*Guthrie Times*, May 22, 1924, 2; November 6, 1924, 1.

<sup>85</sup>*Guthrie Times*, November 6, 1924, 1.

<sup>86</sup>*The Times*, June 4, 1925, 1.

<sup>87</sup>*The Times*, July 9, 1925, 1.

<sup>88</sup>Ahlstrom, "The Problem of the History of Religion," 130.

<sup>89</sup>*Guthrie Times*, December 16, 1924, 8.

<sup>90</sup>*The Times*, April 2, 1925, 1.

<sup>91</sup>*The Times*, December 23; April 8, 1926, 1.

<sup>92</sup>*Guthrie Times*, September 17, 1923, 1.

<sup>93</sup>*The Times*, July 16, 1925, 1, 8; July 30, 1925, 4.

<sup>94</sup>*The Times*, July 30, 1925, 1.

<sup>95</sup>*Guthrie Times*, July 31, 1924, 3; August 7, 1924, 8.

<sup>96</sup>*Guthrie Times*, July 31, 1924, 4; January 15, 1925, 4; and "Session Minutes," 1925; and *Guthrie County, An Illustrated Past-A Great Future* (Guthrie Center, Iowa: Guthrie County Historical Society, 1977), 99-105

<sup>97</sup>*The Times*, September 9, 1926, 1.

<sup>98</sup>*The Times*, October 7, 1926, 1

<sup>99</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 6; October 28, 1925; September 23, 1926; and *Guthrie Times*, December 20, 1923, 10.

<sup>100</sup>*Guthrie Times*, August 9, 1923, 3; September 13, 1923, 6; October 4, 1923, 6; October 11, 1923, 3. These reviews and comments continued each week 1923-1928.

<sup>101</sup>*Guthrie Times*, October 4, 1923, 2.

<sup>102</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 3-24, 1926; February 6-27, 1927; and *The Times*, January 14, 21, 1926, 1; January 6; February 24; November 10; December 8, 29, 1927, 1.

<sup>103</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 6; March 16; October 2; November 4; December 7, 1925; February 1; March 2; April 9; October 1; December 3, 1926. Consult diaries for regular meetings each month. *Guthrie Times*, February 7, 1924, 2; February 14, 1924, 1.

<sup>104</sup>*The Times*, September 23, 1926, 1; and "Welker Diaries," August 11, 1924.

<sup>105</sup>"Minutes of the Congregation," March 10, 1924.

<sup>106</sup>"Minutes of the Congregation," March 22, 1926.

<sup>107</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 1, 10, 22, 1926.

<sup>108</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 14, 1927; January 15, 1928.

<sup>109</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 5; May 3, 16, 1925; June 11, 1926; May 15, 17; October 18; December 29, 1927; January 3, 1928.

<sup>110</sup>*The Times*, November 20, 1924, 2.

<sup>111</sup>*The Times*, December 8, 1927, 1.

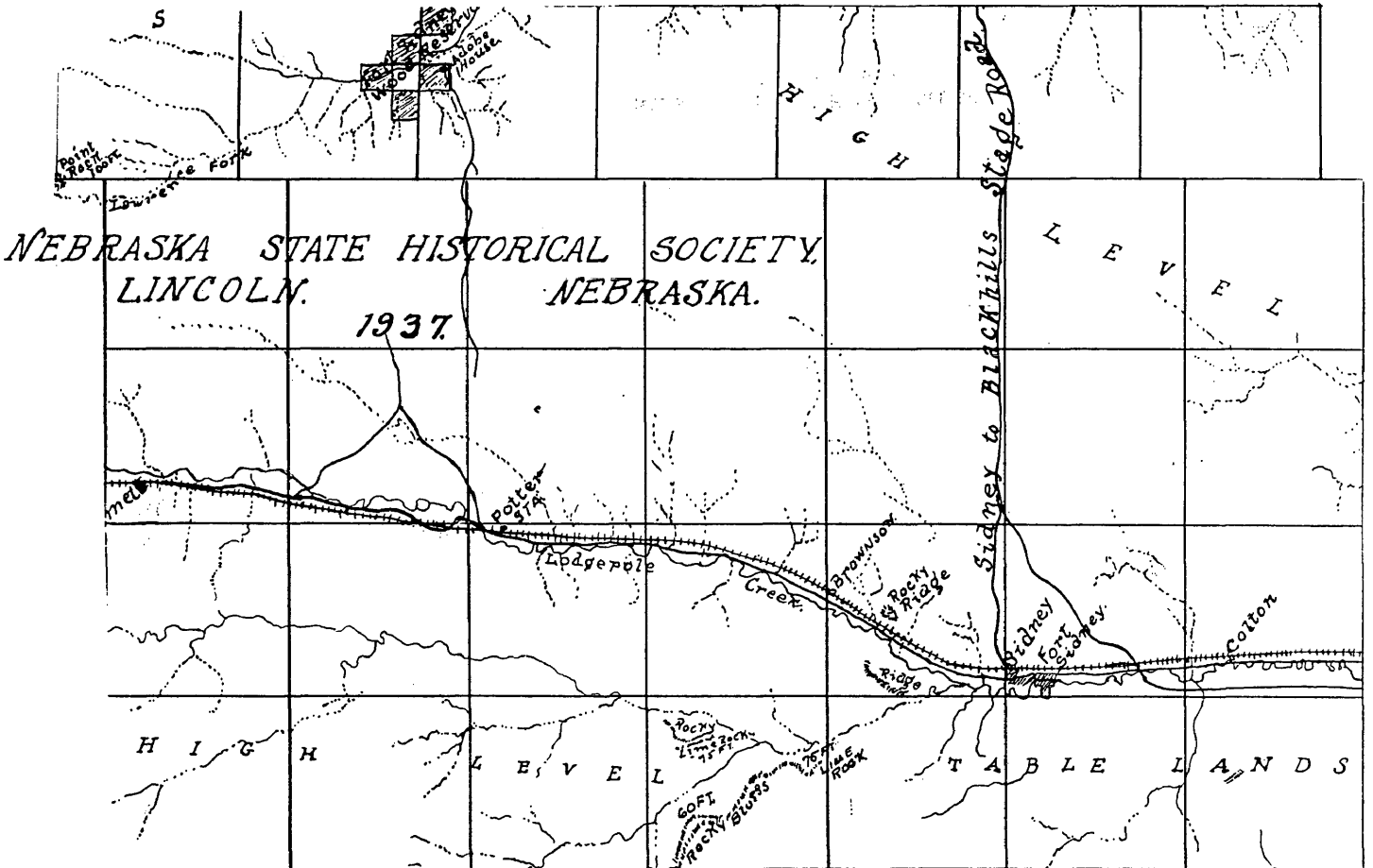
## CHAPTER IV

## A TIME OF CONFLICT, 1928-1936

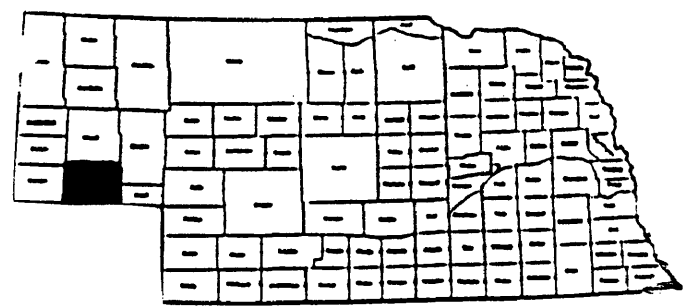
What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly,  
to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.  
Micah 6:8

"Sidney was always a wide-open community," declared Jack Lowe, a retired newspaperman and the unofficial historian of the town.<sup>1</sup> The Welkers soon discovered in 1928 the "Wild West" history of that Nebraska panhandle town and how it continued to shape a community different from Morrill, Nebraska, and Guthrie Center, Iowa. When Welker arrived in Sidney in 1928, the Presbyterian congregation was a small group without a church building. The town had emerged from the late nineteenth century frontier, and the remnants of that lifestyle still remained at the time of their arrival. Cheyenne County, typical of western Nebraska, had a landscape of gently rolling to rough land, covered with natural grasses. Characteristics of the area were the high winds and modest precipitation.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately after the Union Pacific Railroad had reached this point in 1867, a settlement had begun to take shape. After several conflicts between Sioux and the rail workers, the government established Sidney Barracks to protect the rail line, which further increased the community's population. Within three years, Cheyenne County had been created, with Sidney designated as the county seat.<sup>3</sup> (See map 8 page 126) The Black Hills gold rush of the mid-1870s



Map 8 Sidney, Nebraska--H. Clare Welker's Third Pastorate, 1928-1930. Cheyenne County Map 1887. Located in the Nebraska Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.



Map 8a Cheyenne County, Nebraska. Ronald Vern Jackson and Gary Ronald Teeples, *Encyclopedia of Local History and Genealogies: United States Counties 1* (Bountiful, Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems Inc., 1977), 177.

increased Sidney's population to 5,000 and gave it the reputation of a wide-open supply town. Gold miners, freighting outfits, and hundreds of workers departed Union Pacific trains at Sidney and traveled north along the Black Hills Stage Road. During both legs of the roundtrip, the gold-seekers frequented the town's saloons, dance halls, gambling establishments, and variety shows that remained open twenty-four hours a day.<sup>4</sup>

By the late 1870s and 1880s, Texas cowboys arrived with their cattle for market and added another economic boom to the community which simultaneously profited and suffered from the presence of many rowdy individuals. The regulators, citizens who tried to clean up the town, organized to drive them out, but without much success.<sup>5</sup> According to some observers, numerous robbers met the trains when they arrived in Sidney and attacked the travelers in broad daylight. The situation became so bad that in 1877, conductors locked their train doors and refused to stop in the town unless allowing passengers a chance to quickly disembark.<sup>6</sup> Out on "Boot Hill" 200 people lay buried, some of them the victims of Indian raids, lynchings, fights, drunken brawls and robberies.<sup>7</sup> Frequent visitors to Sidney included Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill Hickok, as well as outlaws Sam Bass, Butch Cassidy, and Doc Middleton.<sup>8</sup>

Decades after passage of the frontier era, Cheyenne County continued to experience large numbers of crimes even

into the late 1920s. Sidney still attracted persons intent on committing crimes and those who were escaping from the law. The increase in automobiles, while bringing greater freedom to persons in isolated communities, became a source of increased criminal activity. During May 1928, a young couple who had stolen a car in Kansas was arrested in Sidney.<sup>9</sup> A mini-crime wave began in November when two men arrived in town in a stolen car, abandoned it, stole the sheriff's car, robbed a gas station and a bakery, wrecked the second automobile, escaped in a banker's car, and were finally apprehended by law officers.<sup>10</sup>

The illegal sale of liquor contributed significantly to criminal activities. A pair of "rum runners," with a full cargo of liquor, bribed two prohibition enforcement officers with \$1,000 and were caught when they attempted to trade some diamonds for the bribe money.<sup>11</sup> Another illegal substance that caused trouble in 1928 was marijuana. When Morrill County law enforcement agents discovered a large tract of the plant, *The Telegraph* reported that not all the crop was intended for the Mexican trade. Many young Anglo men in western Nebraska engaged in smoking this hemp for the "kick" they received from it.<sup>12</sup> More significant were the robbery cases which ranked as the most frequent crime that ended in murder. In September 1928, a victim of an automobile accident was robbed as he lay injured on the side of the road. Five months later, burglars robbed the pool hall in



nearby Dalton, escaping with \$200 and merchandise. On December 27, 1929, the Sidney Fox Theater lost \$800, the entire proceeds from their Christmas show.<sup>13</sup>

Welker's work to build a strong and active church program was diverted by the continual criminal activity in the town. Concern about the crime and general level of immorality in Sidney represented a priority issue for the ministers' association. The churches, Welker believed, had a responsibility to combat these social problems.<sup>14</sup> On March 11, 1930, a tragic incident brought community attention to the problems created by illegal drinking. Eighteen-year-old Raymond Goodale died after being run over by a fellow classmate on a road nine miles southwest of Sidney. Dale Chambers, aged sixteen and the driver of the death car, admitted to drinking and excessive speed. The victim was the son of a prominent Sidney family and a member of the Presbyterian Church. Services for Goodale at the larger Methodist Church barely accommodated the overflowing crowd.<sup>15</sup> During the funeral, Welker preached a sermon on the immoral conditions in Sidney, and he commented that it caused "quite a stir."<sup>16</sup> Dale Chambers, also a member of a prominent family, pleaded guilty to manslaughter and received a four-year parole that included confinement to Cheyenne County, restriction from driving, and a requirement to remain in school through the twelfth grade.<sup>17</sup> Local resident Jack Lowe later stated that Chambers became a fine citizen of Sidney

and he resides there today. Yet the handling of the case caused bitter feelings because some people believed that the court authorities should have been more severe.<sup>18</sup>

Welker initiated an effort within the ministerial association for a community mass meeting that would develop plans to improve Sidney's moral conditions.<sup>19</sup> As the community returned to normal and bitter feelings faded, the motivation for social change also disappeared before any further action had been taken.

Sidney had grown rapidly in 1918, with the addition of eighteen new business houses and seventy-five new residences. The main street exhibited banks, shops, a movie theater, an opera house, and all public utilities. The Sidney Ice and Storage Company was the largest industry of its kind in western Nebraska by 1927. A courthouse and library likewise had recently been completed.<sup>20</sup> Lowe commented that the horse and buggy days were gone and almost everyone had an automobile. People remained in Sidney to shop because it was the trading hub of the area, complete with department and grocery stores.<sup>21</sup> Farming and the Union Pacific Railroad comprised the mainstay of the economy, and by 1928 agricultural production had greatly expanded. Allegedly, more farm machinery existed in Cheyenne County than any other district of its size in the world, and wheat production had increased between 1919 and 1924 by 10,193 acres.<sup>22</sup> World War I had brought prosperity to the western Nebraska farmers who

doubled their acreage in wheat production.<sup>23</sup> In the long run, many Great Plains farmers survived and succeeded because they had begun with large farms that technology would improve over time, and the less able had already failed and departed the area.<sup>24</sup>

*The Telegraph* reported in March 1928 that new families arrived every day to purchase farms in the county, and Sidney supplied the implement and machinery needs throughout the panhandle farming belt.<sup>25</sup> The first eight months of 1929 represented a \$300,000 building boom for Sidney. A new auditorium was completed that summer and a bond was voted for a new school in the fall. The 1930 census reported a total of 3,307 people in the community, indicating an increase of 500 since the 1920 count. Farms had increased by thirty percent throughout the county during the previous ten years.<sup>26</sup> Sidney was riding the wave of optimism and looking to a bright future when the stock market failed in the fall of 1929. At first the town gave little heed to this so-called "great disaster" because few, if any, persons in Sidney had money invested in the stock market. An editorial in *The Telegraph* on December 3, 1929, indicated a belief that President Herbert Hoover's action had averted any crisis and that fundamentally the country was sound.<sup>27</sup> The "hard times" came slowly, but by mid-1930 unemployment was high and farmers were deeply in debt. For the Great Plains the major collapse was farm prices, and a drought in the mid-1930s

eliminated the agricultural surplus which caused farmers to rely heavily on federal price supports.<sup>28</sup> Welker's brief pastorate in Sidney preceded the worst of the Depression, and before the stock market crash of 1929, his congregation stood ready to move forward and erect a church building.

The First Presbyterian Church of Sidney had special meaning to Welker because he had laid the groundwork for its organization in 1917. With the able assistance of Presbyterian Sunday School Missionary Samuel Light and Home Missions Committee Chairman George F. McDougall, the organizational meeting took place on August 26, 1917. Light became the stated supply, considered a temporary position, the following year, but remained the pastor until his retirement in 1927.<sup>29</sup> The official church history stated, "Welker was full of enthusiasm and a real pastor accomplishing an unusual amount of personal visitation and a dedicated spiritual leader. He and his family helped to create an atmosphere of well being and enthusiasm."<sup>30</sup> After Light's death in 1928, the congregation voted on April 15, 1929, to change the name of the church to Light Memorial Presbyterian Church.<sup>31</sup>

The religious community of Sidney embraced a different composition than Morrill or Guthrie Center. The Roman Catholic Church made up about half of the church-going population, while the Methodist Church represented the largest Protestant group.<sup>32</sup> The Disciples of Christ

(Disciples) and the Lutherans ranked next, with the Presbyterians and Episcopalians being smaller. *The Telegraph* reported Methodist attendance at 300 on August 1, 1930, and the Disciples had a Sunday School attendance of 187.<sup>33</sup> The Presbyterian records showed 105 members in 1930.<sup>34</sup> The Catholics also supported a parochial school and maintained a strong identity. Even when using a generous estimate of total membership, church membership probably constituted less than fifty percent of the community. Possibly due to a smaller membership, Welker only scheduled Christian Endeavor on Sunday evening and he held no evening worship or midweek prayer service.<sup>35</sup> More active was the men's club which enjoyed success as it had in Welker's previous pastorates.<sup>36</sup> The Protestant churches joined each summer to conduct a Daily Vacation Bible School that gained community attention and had an especially large attendance.<sup>37</sup>

In an unusual move, the North Platte Ministerial Association went on record as opposing the construction of a new Disciples' Church at Minatare, Nebraska, because they stated that the town was over-churched. The National Church Comity Conference of 1928 had declared that "over-churched" meant more than one church building and resident pastor for every 1,000 residents.<sup>38</sup> These problems had existed in Guthrie Center, but even in Sidney the number of churches far exceeded this quota, and this led to overlapping of programs and competition for members.

Mary Barker came to Sidney in 1929 to teach school and she joined the Presbyterian Church. She sang in the choir and remembered Welker as a very friendly and outgoing minister. Barker spoke of how the church met in the manse until a building was constructed in 1931.<sup>39</sup> The dream of a church building had begun before Light's retirement, and shortly after Welker arrived, the discussion began anew. For several months the officers developed the project and an architect drew plans for presentation to the congregation. On April 15, 1929, the church voted to conduct a building campaign. Dr. Marion Humphries of the financing department of the Presbyterian Church spoke to dinner meetings of the congregation, explaining the project and the potential financial assistance from the national church. The drive for \$30,000 was launched, and by June 9, a total of \$15,000 had been pledged.<sup>40</sup>

*The Telegraph* stated that the building would be the most beautiful edifice in western Nebraska.<sup>41</sup> Welker worked closely with the architect and felt great pride in the proposal, sharing the general enthusiasm of the congregation. A detailed plan of the entire structure was printed in *The Telegraph*, complete with architectural drawings and plans for a second unit to be added later. Yet amid the high expectations, church officers became cautious, and on June 16, decided that construction of the new church would be delayed until \$6,000 of the pledges had been received. At

the same meeting the officers authorized the clerk of session to borrow \$600 to pay Welker's back salary for approximately four months.<sup>42</sup> Obviously the church was experiencing some financial difficulties, and this decision effectively ended the building program for the remainder of Welker's pastorate.

Both the Disciples and the Methodists organized extensive revivals, but the Presbyterians did not conduct special services during Welker's tenure.<sup>43</sup> Yet when Billy Sunday, the most popular and well-known evangelist of the early twentieth century, conducted a revival in nearby Sterling, Colorado, many people from Sidney, including the Welkers, went to hear him. Sunday still drew great crowds even though his message had changed and he appeared to have lost his original appeal. Along with groups from their church, the Welkers made at least ten trips to the revival services.<sup>44</sup> On April 23, 1929, Sunday preached in Sidney for one service, and *The Telegraph* claimed his sixty-six years had not dimmed his ability to hold his listeners with the "truths of the Bible and the glories of religion."<sup>45</sup>

However, a study of Billy Sunday's broader ministry revealed that his approach had changed, and his ministry declined in the late 1920s. The hatred of Germans engendered by World War I resulted in Sunday's great dislike for anyone not 100 percent American, a definition that excluded foreigners, atheists, evolutionists and modernists.<sup>46</sup> Sunday's call for commitment primarily expressed the

acceptance of the prevailing morality without a personal spiritual change. His sermons in the late 1920s reflected conflicting statements such as freedom of speech for all except pacifists, socialists, anarchists, Bolsheviks, Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), labor agitators, and "pinko" liberals. Freedom of religion applied, according to Sunday, only to Christians, and all men were equal except Negroes and foreigners. The separation of church and state applied only to non-Christians, and he believed that all teachers should be Christians armed with a Bible in every classroom.<sup>47</sup> Sunday received praise from the fundamentalists and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). His basic religious and economic messages failed to have relevance to changes in society, and he represented the extreme fundamentalists who attempted to mix conservative Christian doctrine with pre-World War I moral values.<sup>48</sup>

Forced to reevaluate their beliefs in the 1920s, most Christians attempted to fit their understandings of Christianity into the changed society. Welker faced this challenge with the Ku Klux Klan in Sidney. The religious climate had been torn by the Klan controversy throughout much of the 1920s. Issues and events of these years caused him to choose and commit to positions that further developed the direction of his personal understanding of the Christian gospel. The Klan's success in rural areas among the middle class resulted from the fears and anxieties unleashed by



World War I. Many people in Nebraska expressed fears that foreign-born immigrants were a threat to the society, although in 1920 there were only 149,652 immigrants in the state, as opposed to 1,129,567 native-born whites.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan permeated every corner of Sidney, destroying lifelong friendships and bringing what Jack Lowe termed as "devastation" to the area's social and business life.<sup>50</sup> Klan members refused to conduct business with Catholics or Jews, and the Grand Dragon of Nebraska, Gail S. Carter, and the Imperial Wizard of the Klan, Hiram Wesley Evans, visited Sidney in 1925 to recruit members. According to *The History of Cheyenne County*, many who joined the Klan believed that the organization opposed evolution, resisted moral degeneration, and supported law enforcement. Some Protestant ministers joined and became very active, such as the Methodist minister who served during Welker's tenure in Sidney. On several occasions Klansmen, dressed in sheets, interrupted church services and gave financial contributions to the minister. Following this act, the minister often allowed the Klan members to lead the congregation in singing and the reading of statements to support Christianity. Klan advertisements on handbills and sometimes in the press, indicated their stand for law and order, justice and community morality, but also their stand against Catholics and anything that brought discredit to

Protestantism. The hard feelings created in Sidney remained for many years.<sup>51</sup>

The Supreme Court, in a decision sustaining New York law concerning registration of the Klan, declared in September 1928 that the Klan belonged to a class that used secrecy to carry out acts against personal rights and public welfare. The court stated that the Klan was conducting "a crusade against Catholics, Jews, Negroes and stimulating hurtful religious and race prejudice..."<sup>52</sup> In Sidney the most critical years of anger and hostility occurred in the middle 1920s, but it was evident that by the end of the decade many wounds were still unhealed. Jack Lowe remembered that when he returned to Sidney in 1928 after living two years in California, he had a shocking conversation with an old friend. Lowe was a member of the Episcopal Church and called his friend about attending church with him. He quoted his friend's statement that he still remembered, "We don't go to that church anymore, they got a regular priest down there so we quit 'em." Lowe recalled that Welker probably faced the difficult task of trying to heal wounds, as he knew several Presbyterians who were members of the Klan. It was a traumatic time, he said, and the healing finally came as the younger generation grew up, fell in love, and put the issue behind them.<sup>53</sup>

In 1928, the slogan that won the public contest to energize Sidney--"Practice the Golden Rule, Be Tolerant,

Cooperate, and Boost"--brought comment from the editor of *The Telegraph*. He stated that Sidney had not progressed in the previous four or five years because of a divided spirit. No concentrated cooperative movement existed because people lacked tolerant feelings. He believed that no one desired to live in a community where the inhabitants harbored feelings of hatred and ill will toward each other. A spirit of tolerance and good will must be practiced by all, he concluded, if Sidney would attain its deserved growth.<sup>54</sup> Two weeks after the editorial appeared, the Klan met in Sidney to boost the Republican ticket and to level tirades against the Catholic Church.<sup>55</sup>

The Welkers accepted an invitation from a couple in their church to attend what turned out to be a Klan meeting. Louis Kaub, the Methodist minister, addressed the group with an astonishing political speech laced with sensationalism, according to Welker. The Welkers refused to approve anything that occurred at the meeting and Welker observed in his diary that "Kaub was a nutty Klansman."<sup>56</sup> Welker's sermons in Sidney reflected strong doctrinal beliefs and an emphasis on moral living. He sought to develop a spirit of mutual respect as indicated in this paragraph from a sermon preached at the end of 1928:

How we think of our enemies? It is a great pity for people living in any community to feel that they are enemies of one another. There is so little excuse for real enmity. So few of our causes of trouble are in any sense worthy of serious consideration. Generally when we examine them carefully we find them to be exceedingly petty and insignificant. Yet even if there are those whom we feel to be our enemies and whose antagonism against us is not due to any fault of our own we should yet "love them", do good to them, pray for them, and bless them. 'For as he thinketh in his heart so is he' Proverbs 23.<sup>57</sup>

Welker's efforts brought growth to the church, but discontent continued, and in March 1930 he wrote that some people expressed displeasure with his preaching. He further commented, "will leave here if Lord so leads," and "the Sidney church and community are split by the klan."<sup>58</sup> Credited to outspoken opposition by influential citizens and a generally hostile press, the Klan declined in the late 1920s. Its promotion of violence and charges against it of corrupt leadership and greed sealed its fate by the early 1930s.<sup>59</sup>

During his stay in Sidney, Welker received visits from his sisters Mabel and Gladys, and in July 1930 he baptized Gladys' daughter June.<sup>60</sup> A trip to Estes Park became the standard vacation as Welker rented a cabin and enjoyed the mountains with his wife and son. Making a tour of relatives and friends, in 1929 the Welkers visited Louise's father and stepmother in Lohrville, Iowa, many old friends in Guthrie Center, and the senior Welker's home in Lyons.<sup>61</sup> Taking an active part in the extended church, Welker served as

moderator of the Box Butte Presbytery, and in 1930 he participated as an elected delegate to the Presbyterian General Assembly meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. Upon his return from this meeting, he learned that the officers had met while he was away and proposed a reduction in his salary, possibly because of his anti-Klan stance. In July, he preached at the First Presbyterian Church of Brighton, Colorado, and on August 10, 1930, he received a unanimous call from the congregation.<sup>62</sup> A fellow minister in Sidney who had labored with Welker stated that his work was of great substance, and not only had the church prospered under his able leadership, but the entire city had benefited from his ministry.<sup>63</sup>

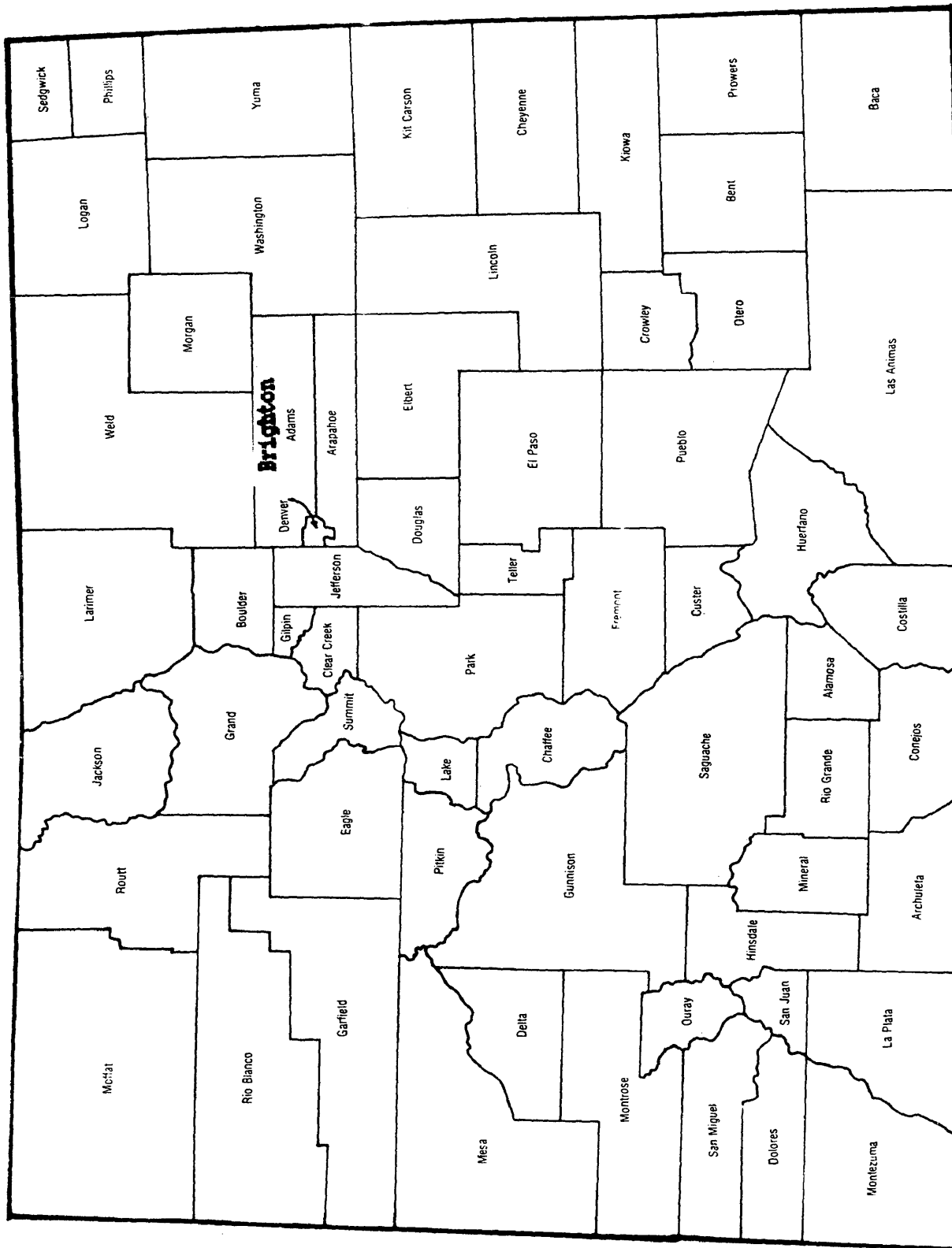
Welker began his ministry in Brighton on August 31, 1930. Slightly more than a month later, on October 8, the Welkers welcomed their second son, David James, into the family. Clare, now aged six, began first grade in the Brighton Schools. In 1931, Welker returned to Lyons to help celebrate his parents' golden wedding anniversary, but only two years later he traveled there again to attend his mother's funeral.<sup>64</sup>

Unlike the previous two pastorates, the Brighton Church, which traced its establishment to 1884, installed Welker as its permanent pastor. The congregation numbered 397, and they owned a large and attractive church building.<sup>65</sup> Welker immediately became involved in the work of the Denver

Presbytery by serving on the Church Extension Board, the Committee on Christian Education, and the Committee on Evangelism.<sup>66</sup> He commented that Presbyterian pastors were expected to be "good presbyters" by fulfilling their responsibility for the work of the whole church.<sup>67</sup>

Brighton, a town on the high plains of northeastern Colorado, differed in landscape from Sidney because only thirty miles to the west rose the majestic, snow-capped front range of the Rocky Mountains. (See map 9 page 143) The area was a garden spot of the beautiful Platte River Valley which specialized in commercial vegetable and fruit gardens and dairy farms. Although located only twenty miles northeast of Denver, the small town of 3,390 people was still a rural community in 1930. At that time the Brighton schools, which enrolled students from the entire area, recorded 5,979 pupils. The town was graced with good homes, paved streets, home mail delivery, and fine churches and schools. Besides farming, the Great Western Sugar Beet Factory employed 540 persons, and Kuner Empson Pickle Company, Blayney Canning Company, and Northern Colorado Dairy Company were also located there.<sup>68</sup> The growth of the sugar beet industry attracted cheap Mexican-American labor to the area to top the beets and harvest the crops. Many immigrants also worked the vegetable crops on the truck farms.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 resulted in a great increase of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the southwestern



Map 9 Brighton, Colorado--H. Clare Welker's Fourth Pastorate, 1930-1936.  
 Ronald Vern Jackson and Gary Ronald Teeple, *Encyclopedia of Local History and Genealogies: United States Counties 1 (Bountiful, Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems Inc., 1977), 70.*

United States just as increased needs of American agricultural labor simultaneously encouraged an open door policy.<sup>69</sup> The great influx of Mexicans gave a new impetus to Presbyterian missions and expanded their evangelistic efforts<sup>70</sup> About 1920, Robert McLean, head of the Spanish Presbyterian Ministries of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, shifted the work's emphasis from traditional pastoral missions to educational and social ministries centered around an institution called "The House of Neighborly Service." He stated "to win the good will and the friendship of the Spanish people is a pre-requisite for any evangelistic work."<sup>71</sup>

The Spanish Mission Board constructed A House of Neighborly Service in Brighton in 1925 to serve the large migrant labor force located there. This work called for the larger community to assume responsibility for this "alien" population in their town. First Presbyterian Church and the Denver Presbytery accepted this challenge and provided services to the Mexican-Americans until they organized their own church in 1940, which was called Brighton Second, but the name was later changed to El Buen Pastor Presbyterian Church.<sup>72</sup> Patricia Salzar began mission work in 1924 with a Daily Vacation Bible School.<sup>73</sup> Mary Greenawalt directed the program in 1930 that featured evening activities for twenty-five to thirty young men each night to encourage them to stay off the streets. Women and girls participated in sewing



classes, and first aid was provided for minor accidents and illness. This effort did more to interest Mexican-Americans in Presbyterianism and to better living conditions than any previous method of evangelism. The board of directors included representatives from city organizations and pastors of the Brighton churches.<sup>74</sup>

During Welker's involvement in the 1930s, the Depression brought hardship and prejudice to the Mexican-Americans, and some lost their jobs to Anglos.<sup>75</sup> Robert G. Barge, a long-time resident of Brighton, recalled that racism existed in the community during the 1930s. An Anglo could get a good job in the sugar factory or at Kuners, he said, but a Hispanic could not.<sup>76</sup> A concerted effort to relieve the labor situation in the Brighton area resulted in approximately twenty-four families returning to Mexico. They received financial assistance for the trip from the Great Western Sugar Beet Company and the railroads.<sup>77</sup>

From early in his Brighton ministry, Welker participated in the work of the mission by serving on its board, conducting infrequent services, and working with the Vacation Bible School each summer.<sup>78</sup> Under the direction of Marie Wright, who began work in 1935, the mission activities expanded to include a mother's home decorating group, a young people's Christian Endeavor, and an athletic club for older boys organized by C. F. Johnson and Welker. Attendance at church and Sunday School averaged about 60 persons.<sup>79</sup> A

nursery school opened its doors in September 1935 to help children learn English before they started public school.<sup>80</sup>

Since the Spanish mission was not an organized church, the First Presbyterian Church of Brighton recorded the mission's members on its rolls. The session reported on June 30, 1920, a reception of three members, on March 30, 1930, an additional six members, and on April 20, 1930, one more member.<sup>81</sup> Joseph Candelaria, leader of the Jerome Park Mission of Denver, requested in March 1933 that two elders be elected by the mission to First Presbyterian Church's session. By serving at the mission, these elders would help establish a better and closer relationship between the mission and the church.<sup>82</sup> Vincent Kolb, a minister at the mission, stated that the goal of the House of Neighborly Service was "to interpret to the Mexican people the best Christian American ways and in turn to interpret to the Americans the best of Mexican culture."<sup>83</sup> Evidence indicated that the Hispanics received a strong program of American culture, but the work remained within the Hispanic community and showed little interaction from the larger Presbyterian population, except for board members.

Another important work that involved Welker's service to the community was his counseling of inmates at the Adams County jail. It began January 3, 1931, with a visit to W. M. Hopkins, former president of the defunct Farmers State Bank of Brighton, who had been sentenced to five years in prison

for embezzlement.<sup>84</sup> Welker expanded these visits to include all the inmates and, on occasion, he conducted prayer groups. In his comments at the 1933 congregational meeting, he stated that he had been well received at the jail.<sup>85</sup>

On January 4, 1934, Welker visited Frank Schneider who had just been sentenced to life imprisonment for killing his wife. Welker established a relationship with Schneider and they corresponded over the next several years until the latter's release from prison when he visited Welker in Loveland, Colorado.<sup>86</sup> Welker's services were needed at the jail as *The Brighton Blade* reported a heavy increase in Brighton's criminal activity during the early 1930s. Over 200 persons were convicted within the first eight months of 1930. In June and July of 1932, sixteen men and boys began serving sentences at the state penitentiary and reform school during this "crime wave."<sup>87</sup> Although liquor violations accounted for the largest number of offenses, robbery, assault, murder and embezzlement had increased significantly.

Much of the crime related directly to the hard times people were experiencing from the Depression. Likewise, deaths by suicide showed a sharp increase in Colorado during these years. The number of suicides in 1929 totaled 168, but in 1930 these deaths had increased to 203. This fluctuation in the death rate corresponded closely to the changes in the business conditions of the country. Andrew Lechner of Adams County committed suicide on February 24, 1933, reportedly

having told acquaintances that he did not know how he would finance the planting of his spring crop.<sup>88</sup>

The Brighton Directory of 1931 listed eleven churches, with the Presbyterian being the oldest. The denominations included those mainstream churches already familiar from Welker's previous pastorates, along with the Church of God and the Four Square Church.<sup>89</sup> Although the Presbyterian Church appeared very large and strong when Welker arrived, the session decided to "clean the rolls," and by 1932, a total of 145 persons had been suspended for non-attendance and non-participation. During the same period the church received eighty-four new members, but forty-six others had joined separate churches in Brighton or in other towns where they had moved. From 1933 to 1936, eighty more persons were suspended; forty-two joined other churches, and ninety-six came into First Church's membership. These figures finally stabilized at about 280 for the duration of Welker's tenure. Over the same period the church budget dropped to less than half its original amount.<sup>90</sup>

Floyd Heneger, long time resident of Brighton, stated that the Depression forced area farmers into poverty, and many only survived with the help of the government. The Civilian Conservation Corps, he continued, hired some young men to build roads and trailways in the mountains. They received \$30 a month, and \$25 of this amount went to support their families. When the banks closed, many people lost

their money, and according to Heneger, it was a long time after they reopened before people had enough money to need a bank.<sup>91</sup> The Presbyterian Church history, written for its fiftieth anniversary in 1934, stated that the present well-loved pastor, H. Clare Welker, had faced the years of Depression with a cheerful courage. "He has manifested a Christian scholarship and grace and set a pattern of earnest endeavor worthy of the great commission of our Master. He looks forward with faith to the future, maintaining that our church and our nation can be right and can be successful only as they obey the commands of God."<sup>92</sup>

Welker began a strong program and reported at the congregational meeting on March 30, 1932, that the church showed a "fine working spirit."<sup>93</sup> In January 1931 and March 1932, special services of two weeks each afforded a unique season for spiritual refreshment and recruitment of new members.<sup>94</sup> In the weekly newspaper column announcing the church's services, Welker continually encouraged members' attendance. He stated that every true Christian was a full partner of Jesus Christ in the task of saving sinners and edifying saints. Because of this special relationship, each person should find it his or her duty to be present at the various services of the church and, by example, to witness to Christ's saving and sanctifying power.<sup>95</sup>

By 1932, financial problems had become more severe and Welker accepted a pay reduction to \$1,800.<sup>96</sup> Due to the drop

in city and farm property valuation, the school board reduced teachers' salaries by ten percent in March.<sup>97</sup> The economy continued to move downward as the last Brighton Bank closed its doors in July 1932. The mayor raised concern that many indigent families were moving into Brighton attempting to displace the local labor. By 1935 the Works Projects Administration (WPA) employed 716 persons in 14 projects throughout Adams County. In 1933, teachers and city council members voluntarily accepted a twenty percent cut in salary.<sup>98</sup> Welker, with a positive attitude that characterized much of his life, preached to the congregation in September on the spiritual possibilities of the Depression for good or for evil.<sup>99</sup> Earlier he had stated that the nation's present difficulties were not primarily financial or material but spiritual, and once people turned again to God, then God would turn to them in goodness and love.<sup>100</sup> His sermons reflected a belief that God sustained his people through all difficulties, and no events of the secular society should diminish that faith. He seldom preached on specific social issues, but encouraged his congregation to strengthen their commitment to Jesus Christ and the church.

In his 1933 congregational report, Welker praised the work of the Sunday School, the choir, the care of the property, and the "greatness of the work." During the discussion of the budget, he remitted \$100 of his salary to ease the budget crisis. A motion by Marie Stucki, wife of

the choir director, recommended that the pastor and his family be thanked for this generous gift.<sup>101</sup> (See Appendix E)

Appeals for strong commitment to the church and the Christian life through personal acceptance of Christian duties characterized many of Welker's sermons. The session unanimously adopted Welker's group of goals in 1933 that sought a stronger commitment and activity from the congregation. These proposals challenged the members to attend at least one service each Sunday and engage in daily family worship and daily prayer for a revival of commitment. Numerical goals of a twenty-five percent increase in Sunday School attendance, an average attendance of twenty-five at prayer meeting, and at least twenty church members endeavoring to win one or more persons into membership of the church, were some of the envisioned commitments.<sup>102</sup>

During these troubled times, the church choir grew rapidly under the direction of J. C. Stucki. The membership of twenty-two in 1933 had risen to thirty-four by 1934. At the congregational meeting, Stucki expressed appreciation for those who donated labor to remodel the choir loft. The choir presented several concerts in neighboring towns and had plans for more in the future. The director's excellent work received a vote of thanks from the congregation.<sup>103</sup> Welker often expressed praise in his journal and the newspaper for the choir's excellent work and the outstanding programs they presented on special occasions. *The Brighton Blade* took

special note of the choir's sacred concert in March 1935, by declaring that it far surpassed any similar event ever held before in Brighton<sup>104</sup>

Welker's report at the 1933 congregational meeting expressed appreciation for the privilege of serving the Brighton church. He stated that at one time he had felt church work was getting harder, but Brighton people were very approachable and his calls were welcomed. He expressed the hope that someday the church would experience a "heaven-sent" revival. The congregation responded with a unanimous vote of thanks to the pastor.<sup>105</sup>

By 1935, the Welker's were suffering genuine financial distress because their salary was not being paid at all. When opportunity arose to supplement his small income, Welker began substitute teaching in the local high school.<sup>106</sup> At the congregational meeting on March 27, 1935, he announced that \$200 was outstanding on his salary and \$600 remained unpaid from 1934. He expressed appreciation to the Ladies Aid which had contributed \$244.50 toward meeting these debts. With an offer to forget the past debt, Welker agreed to settle for the payment of the outstanding bills and the \$200. His efforts in this financial crisis appeared to indicate that his first priority was the spiritual development of the people, and a dispute over money must be avoided even if he took a financial loss. In his report he spoke of his pastoral visits, the continued jail ministry, and the special



services planned for Easter.<sup>107</sup> Welker's journals indicated that attendance at worship services fluctuated from fair to good, but membership held steady and thirty-six new members joined the church in 1935.<sup>108</sup>

In the fall of 1935, a development occurred that related directly to Welker's relationship with choir director J. C. Stucki and his wife. The Stuckies had moved to Brighton in June 1930 just before the Welkers. The following year, Stucki, a medical doctor, was elected to the Board of Trustees upon which he served throughout Welker's ministry. Sometime in 1933, he became the church choir director and built a strong and effective music program. The Welkers and the Stuckies became close friends as indicated by the numerous diary entries by Welker recording times they spent together. In 1931 and 1932, they often had dinner together, traveled to Estes Park, Ft. Collins, and Denver together, and spent Christmas and Thanksgiving together in 1930 and 1931 respectively. Marie Stucki had a serious surgery in 1934, and the Welkers visited her several times in Denver while she was hospitalized. During the summer of 1935, Marie Stucki's minister father visited Brighton, and Welker invited him to preach at the Presbyterian Church. This event, recorded in Welker's diary on July 21, was the last entry mentioning the Stuckies until October 29 when Welker wrote, "Learned that the Gaunts and Stuckies have gone into headquarters [Presbytery office] today to find out how they could oust

us." W.W. Gaunt was an elder and a choir member. Upon conferring with several members of both church boards, Welker discovered that the move was a total surprise to them.<sup>109</sup>

This situation in the Brighton Church between Stucki and Welker was not unique in the ministry. A church member, who for reasons that were never clearly stated, sometimes sought the resignation of a pastor through destructive and deceitful methods. The minister's normal strategies, when confronted with this kind of assault, involved patience, love, consensus, and cooperation, but they were generally ineffective. A person bent on destroying a minister often used intimidating power because he or she was willing to violate the rules of caring that most Christians sought to follow.<sup>110</sup>

On November 15, the session requested a meeting with Welker to discuss the possible dissolution of the pastoral relationship. They discussed the relationship of the pastor and session, the session and trustees, and the financial condition of the church and the pastor. The session, made up of the ruling elders under the direction of the pastor, constituted the authority for all spiritual matters in the local church. The trustees were responsible for the church property and the finances of the church.<sup>111</sup> The session concluded their meeting by suggesting that Welker resign before the end of the church year, that date being March 31, 1936.<sup>112</sup> Feeling a great lack of religious commitment within

the congregation, Welker preached with great power and conviction the next three Sundays as he sought a real revival among the people.<sup>113</sup> At some point during these months, Stucki and the choir stood and marched out of the sanctuary after they had sung the anthem and before the sermon as a protest against the minister.<sup>114</sup>

After a second session meeting on March 8, with no further evidence expressed for the session's action, Welker resigned. He added the restriction that his salary be paid in full, and \$200 of the back salary, that now stood at \$1,200, be paid.<sup>115</sup> (See Appendix F) This action by Welker may have resulted from the congregation and the denomination's lack of support. The Presbytery, which had the power to remove Welker if there was legitimate cause, took no action nor gave any support. The majority of the congregation, probably unaware of what was happening, failed to confront the issue and allowed Welker to be the victim. A few faithful volunteers at the April 1 congregational meeting raised \$235 to help pay the debt owed to Welker. Then, with a secret ballot, the congregation accepted Welker's resignation by a twenty-seven to sixteen vote.<sup>116</sup>

Welker left Brighton under pressure, but with no issues or problems clearly identified and no charges made against him. The evidence available in session records and Welker's journal pointed to a very sudden change in Welker and Stucki's relationship that suggested a private power

struggle. The staged walk out by the choir director and choir appeared to be a power play that encouraged the congregation to choose sides. No criticisms were recorded in any official meetings of the board or the congregation, yet Welker resigned, leaving his jail ministry, his Hispanic work, and his service to the Presbytery where he had recently begun to serve in an advisory capacity to other churches experiencing difficulty. *The Brighton Blade* announced his resignation by stating that Welker had been an excellent minister and a hard worker. It continued in a follow-up article on May 29 that Welker and his family were a decided asset in the life of Brighton.<sup>117</sup> Certainly hurt by Stucki's action, Welker may have felt great disappointment in the inaction of the congregation, and he lost respect for Jacob S. Dapp, Field Representative of Denver Presbytery, who failed to provide any support. Several years later during the Restoration Fund Drive in Loveland, Colorado, Welker told Dapp that he had not trusted him since his two-faced attitude in the Brighton situation.<sup>118</sup>

During the few months between his first knowledge of a problem and his actual departure, Welker looked diligently for a new position. Several churches were favorable to him, but they could not afford a living wage. He even consulted a teacher's agency in Denver, but there were no openings.<sup>119</sup> On May 29, 1936, leaving most of his household goods in storage, he packed his family and drove to Estes Park, Colorado. Ever

since his first trip to this small resort town, Welker had wanted to build a cabin in the mountains, and each summer the family continued to vacation at the Stitt cabins or the Dunraven Ranch. He had purchased a lot for \$100 in December 1933 that was located on the High Drive at the community's western edge. That next summer he made plans for a small cabin and the opportunity presented itself to buy an adjoining lot for an additional \$125.<sup>120</sup> In the summer of 1934, Welker and his son Clare built a small cabin, and at the end of the summer they started to lay a rock foundation for a large cabin.<sup>121</sup> During the following summer, they completed enough of the large cabin that the family vacationed in it during August.<sup>122</sup> When the family moved to Estes Park, Welker knew that they would need to live in the cabin by next winter, and he began to work diligently to winterize it before fall.

Welker had built a strong program in the Brighton Church. Throughout the difficult years of Depression, he encouraged his people to be faithful and committed, yet his own income reached the lowest point of his entire ministry. The official church history stated that the congregation experienced a laxity during the Depression years, but it told only part of the story.<sup>123</sup> In spite of these difficult financial times, it was not lack of money that caused Welker to resign. He worked for the peace of the church and refused to stay in a situation that might result in a church split.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Jack Lowe, interview by author, tape recording, Sidney, Nebraska, July 22, 1993.

<sup>2</sup>John T. Schlebecker, "Agriculture in Western Nebraska, 1906-1966," *Nebraska History* 48 (Autumn, 1967), 251.

<sup>3</sup>Jane Graff, coordinator, *Nebraska Our Towns, The Panhandle* (Seward, Nebraska: Second Century Publications, 1988), 22.

<sup>4</sup>Graff, *Nebraska Our Towns*, 22; and Wayne C. Lee, *Wild Towns of Nebraska* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1988), 78.

<sup>5</sup>Graff, *Nebraska Our Towns*, 22.

<sup>6</sup>Lee, *Wild Towns*, 78-79.

<sup>7</sup>Graff, *Nebraska Our Towns*, 23; and Lee, *Wild Towns*, 79-93.

<sup>8</sup>Graff, *Nebraska Our Towns*, 23.

<sup>9</sup>*The Telegraph*, May 18, 1928, 1.

<sup>10</sup>*The Telegraph*, November 16, 27, 1928, 1.

<sup>11</sup>*The Telegraph*, June 15, 1928, 1.

<sup>12</sup>*The Telegraph*, July 3, 1928, 1.

<sup>13</sup>*The Telegraph*, September 28, 1928; February 8; December 27, 1929, 1.

<sup>14</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 17, 1930. Citations in this chapter are from the 1928-1936 diaries in the possession of David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>15</sup>*The Telegraph*, March 14, 1930, 1.

<sup>16</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 14, 1930.

<sup>17</sup>*The Telegraph*, March 23, 1930, 1.

<sup>18</sup>Jack Lowe, interview.

<sup>19</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 19, 1930.

<sup>20</sup>Audrey J. Buhrdorf, director, *History of Cheyenne County, Nebraska* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1987), 208.

<sup>21</sup>Jack Lowe, interview.

<sup>22</sup>Buhrdorf, *History of Cheyenne County*, 209; and *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 709; and *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932), 1233.

<sup>23</sup>James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 268-269.

<sup>24</sup>Schlebecker, "Agriculture in Western Nebraska," 253.

<sup>25</sup>*The Telegraph*, March 13, 1928, 1; April 23, 1929, 7.

<sup>26</sup>*The Telegraph*, July 3; September 6; October 22; November 5, 1929, 1; May 8; August 23, 1930, 1.

<sup>27</sup>*The Telegraph*, December 3, 1929, 2.

<sup>28</sup>Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 290-291; and Schlebecker, "Agriculture in Western Nebraska," 263.

<sup>29</sup>*Light Memorial Presbyterian Church* (St. Louis: Pictorial Church Directories of America, Inc., 1979), 1.

<sup>30</sup>Mrs. J. W. Johnson, "A History of Light Memorial Presbyterian Church," 1958, 3.

<sup>31</sup>"Minutes of the Congregation Meeting, Light Memorial Presbyterian Church" (Sidney, Nebraska) April 15, 1929.

<sup>32</sup>Jack Lowe, interview.

<sup>33</sup>*The Telegraph*, August 1, 1930, 7.

<sup>34</sup>Johnson, "A History of Light Memorial Presbyterian Church," 2.

<sup>35</sup>*The Telegraph*, March 16, 1928, 12.

<sup>36</sup>*The Telegraph*, December 14, 1928, 1.

<sup>37</sup>*The Telegraph*, May 25; June 29, 1928, 1.

<sup>38</sup>*The Telegraph*, December 7, 1928, 7.

<sup>39</sup>Mary Barker, interview by author, tape recording, Sidney, Nebraska, July 22, 1993.

<sup>40</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 6, 18, 21; April 9, 10, 15; June 5, 6, 9, 1929; and *The Telegraph*, May 24, 1929, 7; June 14, 1929, 1.

<sup>41</sup>*The Telegraph*, June 2, 1929, 7.

<sup>42</sup>"Light Memorial Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," (Sidney, Nebraska), June 16, 1929.

<sup>43</sup>*The Telegraph*, October 23, 1928, 8.

<sup>44</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 28, 30; May 2, 3, 6, 15, 17, 1929.

<sup>45</sup>*The Telegraph*, April 23, 1929, 1, 5.

<sup>46</sup>William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Billy Sunday Was His Real Name* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 276.

<sup>47</sup>McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday*, 296.

<sup>48</sup>McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday*, 295.

<sup>49</sup>Michael W. Schuyler, "The Ku Klux Klan in Nebraska, 1920-1930," *Nebraska History* 66 (Autumn, 1985), 238, 242.

<sup>50</sup>Jack Lowe, interview.

<sup>51</sup>Buhrdorf, *History of Cheyenne County*, 208-209.

<sup>52</sup>*The Telegraph*, September 23, 1928, 11.

<sup>53</sup>Jack Lowe interview.

<sup>54</sup>*The Telegraph*, October 2, 1928, 2.

<sup>55</sup>*The Telegraph*, October 19, 1928, 7.

<sup>56</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 22, 1928.

<sup>57</sup>"Welker Sermons," December 1928. Sermons are in the possession of David Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>58</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 27, 1930.

<sup>59</sup>Schuyler, "The Ku Klux Klan in Nebraska," 246, 253.

<sup>60</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 12; August 22; November 29; December 25, 1928; July 3; November 28; December 24, 1929; July 12, 1930.

<sup>61</sup>"Welker Diaries," August 14, 1928; July 21, 23, 16, 1929; August 21, 1930.



<sup>62</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 22; May 25; July 13, 20; August 10, 1930.

<sup>63</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, August 29, 1930, 1.

<sup>64</sup>"Welker Diaries," August 31; October 8, 1930; January 6, 1931; January 27, 1933.

<sup>65</sup>*The History of Brighton, Colorado and the Surrounding Area, 1887-1987* (Brighton, Colorado: Curtis Media Corporation, 1987), 2; and "Welker Diaries," October 1, 8, 1930; and *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Statistics, 1930* (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1931) 610.

<sup>66</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 4; July 29; December 10, 1930.

<sup>67</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, July 3, 1931, 1.

<sup>68</sup>*The History of Brighton, Colorado*, 2, 81, 131; and *The Brighton Blade*, July 22, 1930; October 9, 1931.

<sup>69</sup>R. Douglas Brackenridge, and Francisco O. Garcia, *Iglesia Presbiteriana: A History of Presbyterians and Mexican Americans in the Southwest* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), 127-128

<sup>70</sup>R. Douglas Brackenridge, and Francisco O. Garcia, "Presbyterians and Mexican Americans: From Paternalism to Partnership," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 55 (1977) 166.

<sup>71</sup>Brackenridge, *Iglesia Presbiteriana*, 141-142.

<sup>72</sup>*The History of Brighton, Colorado*, 263; Brackenridge, *Iglesia Presbiteriana*, 148.

<sup>73</sup>Carlos E. Cortes, ed., *Church Views of the Mexican American* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 46.

<sup>74</sup>Brackenridge, *Iglesia Presbiteriana*, 143; *The Brighton Blade*, May 16, 1930, 1, 5.

<sup>75</sup>Brackenridge, *Iglesia Presbiteriana*, 158.

<sup>76</sup>Robert G. Barge, interview by Ricky Hernbloom and Darren Christiansen, Brighton, Colorado, January 1991. Transcript located in the Adams County Historical Society. (Brighton, Colorado)

<sup>77</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, May 10, 1932.

<sup>78</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 5, 1930; January 10; September 21; November 10; December 8, 1931; February 9, 1932; January 19; September 19; October 3; November 6, 1933; April 1, 16; May 6, 24, 1935.

- <sup>79</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, April 9, 1935, 3.
- <sup>80</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, September 10, 1935, 1.
- <sup>81</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes" April 20, 1930.
- <sup>82</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," March 28, 1933.
- <sup>83</sup>*The History of Brighton, Colorado*, 263.
- <sup>84</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, June 30, 1931, 1.
- <sup>85</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 3, 1931; February 6 to December 29, 1933 and throughout his ministry. "Minutes of the Congregational Meeting, First Presbyterian Church," March 29, 1933.
- <sup>86</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 4, 1934; *The Brighton Blade*, January 5, 1934, 1.
- <sup>87</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, August 5, 1930, 1; July 26, 1932, 1; January 13, 1933, 1.
- <sup>88</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, January 2, 1933, 1; February 28, 1933, 1.
- <sup>89</sup>"Brighton Directory" (Brighton, Colorado: Ralph R. Lee, 1931), 3.
- <sup>90</sup>*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.* (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1930-1936), 1930, 610; 1931, 609; 1932, 709; 1933, 439; 1934, 510; 1935, 458; 1936, 510.
- <sup>91</sup>Floyd Heneger, interview by Megan Harkless and Emily Davis, Brighton, Colorado, December 1990. Transcript located in Adams County Historical Society. (Brighton, Colorado)
- <sup>92</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, October 19, 1934, 1.
- <sup>93</sup>"Minutes of the Congregational Meeting," March 30, 1932.
- <sup>94</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 18 to February 1, 1931; March 14 to 24, 1932; and *The Brighton Blade*, January 13, 1931, 1.
- <sup>95</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, September 25, 1931, 1.
- <sup>96</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 29, 1932.
- <sup>97</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, March 25, 1932, 1.
- <sup>98</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, July 12, 1932, 1; March 24; July 7, 28, 1933, 1; December 17, 1935, 1

- <sup>99</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, September 16, 1932, 5.
- <sup>100</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, October 30, 1931, 4.
- <sup>101</sup>"Minutes of the Congregational Meeting," March 29, 1933.
- <sup>102</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," October 30, 1933.
- <sup>103</sup>"Minutes of the Congregational Meeting," March 22, 1934.
- <sup>104</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 16; December 24, 1933; March 24, 1935; and *The Brighton Blade*, March 12, 1935.
- <sup>105</sup>"Minutes of the Congregational Meeting," March 22, 1934.
- <sup>106</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 18; April 11, 16, 30; May 9, 16, 1935.
- <sup>107</sup>"Minutes of the Congregational Meeting," March 27, 1935.
- <sup>108</sup>*Minutes of the General Assembly*, 458; and "Welker Diaries," 1935.
- <sup>109</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 20; June 1, 28; July 3, 16, 24, 28; August 9, November 19, 26, 1931; February 26; March 9; May 31; June 10; November 2; December 26, 1932; January 24; August 25, 1933; August 20, 30; September 1, 1934; January 18; June 16; July 6, 21; October 29, 1935.
- <sup>110</sup>G. Lloyd Rediger, "Clergy Killers," *The Clergy Journal* 69 (August 1993), 10-11.
- <sup>111</sup>John Sutherland Bonnell, *What is a Presbyterian?* (New York: n.p., 1957), 3.
- <sup>112</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," November 15, 1935.
- <sup>113</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 17, 24; December 15, 1935.
- <sup>114</sup>Grace Griffin, interview by the author, tape recording, July 29, 1993, Brighton, Colorado.
- <sup>115</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," March 8, 1936.
- <sup>116</sup>"Minutes of the Congregational Meeting," April 1, 1936; and "Welker Diaries," March 28, 1936.
- <sup>117</sup>*The Brighton Blade*, April 3; May 29, 1936. 1
- <sup>118</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 16, 1948.
- <sup>119</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 28, 1936.

<sup>120</sup>"Welker Diaries," December 26, 1933; May 10, June 5-8, 1934.

<sup>121</sup>"Welker Diaries," June through August 1934.

<sup>122</sup>"Welker Diaries," June through August 1935.

<sup>123</sup>*History of the Presbyterian Church, Brighton, Colorado, 1884-1984*, 11.

## CHAPTER V

## HARD TIMES AND GOOD TIMES, 1936-1944

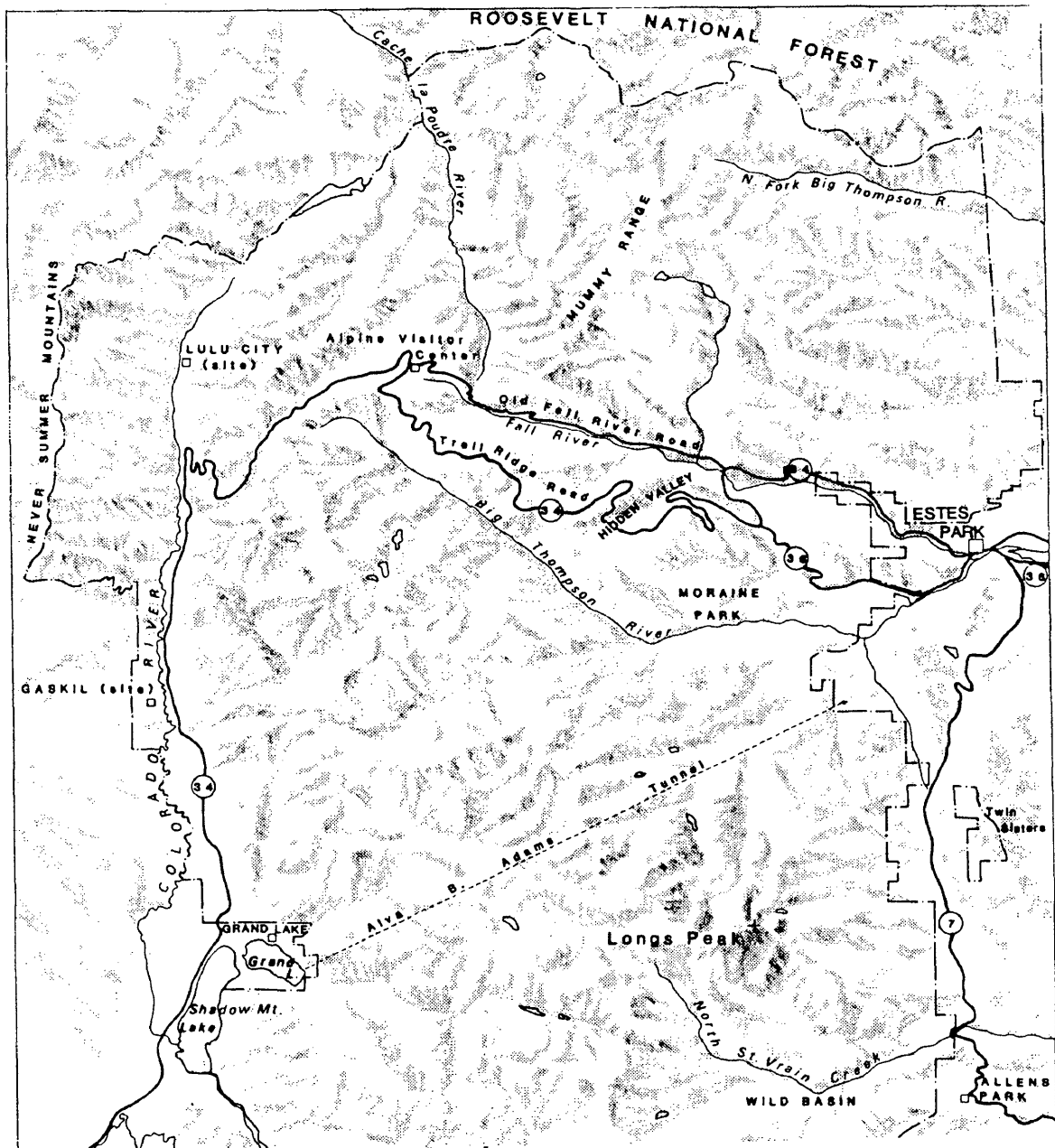
The year, 1937, was one of our most trying. The "depression" was at its worst and until we went to Oakesdale we were without a pastorate. . . We faced many difficulties during this period, but "out of all the Lord delivered us." Thanks dear God!<sup>1</sup>

Clare Welker's worst fears had been realized by 1936. The Depression still held the country in its clutches; unemployment had become a personal reality for him; and his financial resources were depleted. President Franklin Roosevelt, in his second inaugural address on January 20, 1937 stated, "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished," and this seemed to be the case in Colorado.<sup>2</sup> By August of 1936, an even worse economic slump had developed that sent national unemployment back to twenty percent, and even with additional federal spending, there was little to indicate that economic strength would return anytime soon.<sup>3</sup> Churches needed ministers, but they were too poor to provide a living salary, and the more prosperous ones received many applications. The situation, however, fell short of disaster for the Welkers because of prior planning. The almost-completed summer cabin that Welker had been building for the past two years as a vacation home would now be their permanent residence. Never giving into despair, he

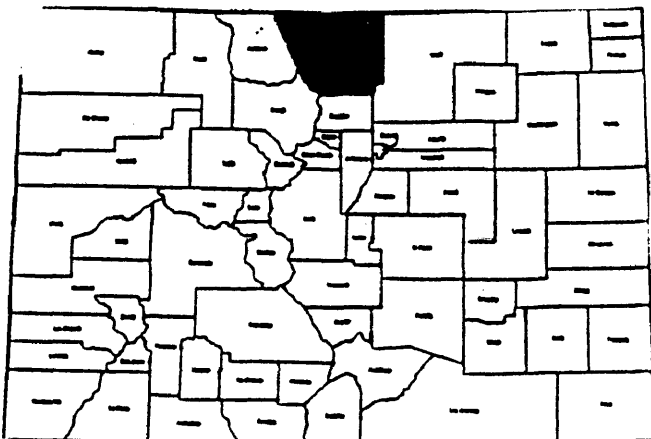
settled his family, worked to winterize the cabin, and began seeking a church position.

Welker's property was located two and a half miles west of the town of Estes Park, Colorado, on the High Drive which provided a panoramic view of the west end of the valley and Long's Peak. He had chosen a perfect spot for a summer retreat, following the lead of many other people who found this region to be an enchanted place. The larger valley of Estes Park covered an area of approximately 100 square miles which was surrounded by high, snow-capped peaks. (See map 10 page 167) Joel Estes, whose name the village bore, had arrived in the park in 1860 as its first and only settler for several years. He discovered the area while on a hunting trip with his son and decided it would make an ideal mountain retreat. After six years of harsh winters and with little success at raising cattle, the Estes family left the park. Other people, however, had begun to settle throughout the valley and pursue high country cattle ranching. All who came expressed delight in the rugged beauty of the towering mountains, primeval forests, and the abundance of wild-life. Welker, likewise, developed a life-long love of the region.<sup>4</sup>

Ranchers discovered, as had Joel Estes, that cattle raising realized little profit due to the harsh winters, and attention turned very early to the tourists who came to enjoy the area's great beauty and outdoor life. In 1877, the Estes Park Hotel opened and the tourist business began in earnest.<sup>5</sup>



Map 10 Estes Park, Colorado--  
 Site of Welker Cabins and His Home  
 1936-1937. C. W. Buchholtz, *Rocky  
 Mountain National Park: A History*  
 (Boulder, Colorado: Associated  
 University Press, 1983), 2.



Map 10a Larimer County, Colorado.  
 Ronald Vern Jackson and Gary Ronald  
 Teeple, *Encyclopedia of Local History  
 and Genealogies: United States Counties  
 1* (Bountiful, Utah: Accelerated  
 Indexing Systems Inc., 1977), 70.

Access to the area had improved in 1874 when the Estes Park Wagon Company carved out a toll road from Lyons to Estes Park.<sup>6</sup> By the turn of the century, guest ranches and hotels appeared on the landscape, and small rental cabins dotted the area. Numerous families became seasonal residents who stayed in the resorts or built their own cabins. Eventually, the summer residents helped establish the village of Estes Park as their need for supplies increased. Incorporated in 1917, the village boasted general stores, photography shops, a laundry, a stage station, and the Hupp Hotel with "twenty-three rooms, steam heat, and hot and cold water."<sup>7</sup> The creation of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915 brought 51,000 visitors the following summer, and 170,000 two years later.<sup>8</sup> Despite the Depression, the summer tourist trade had expanded by 1936 when the Welkers moved to Estes Park, and in 1938, 660,000 persons traveled into the park, many of them to traverse the newly-opened Trail Ridge Road across the Continental Divide. Estes Park thus realized a harvest of tourist dollars in an entrepreneurial environment.<sup>9</sup>

As young David enjoyed the summer vacation playing on the rocky hillside, Clare and his father completed a cistern to provide winter water. This completion came only one day before the supply of summer water, which came from the springs above their cabins, ended for the season. Shortly after Labor Day, which marked the end of the tourist season, Estes Park settled into a quiet little village of a few



hundred people. Welker hauled drinking water from the town's gas station each day when he took the boys to school. Before the snows came, he shingled the cabin and built a chimney for the fireplace.<sup>10</sup> During the winter, he enclosed the back porch and applied wallboard to the inside rooms. Work began on electricity for the cottage, but this project was not completed until 1939, so kerosene lamps provided light for the family. In February 1937, he began excavating a basement with pick, shovel and wheel barrow. By early spring a rock wall enclosed the lower part of the front porch and stone steps led up from the yard to the porch. Welker also added a room onto the little one-room cabin he had originally built on the site.<sup>11</sup> Following several months of blank pages in his diary, he noted that because of the intense work on the cottage he had failed to keep his daily record, the only time omissions occurred in his journal.<sup>12</sup> Although not finished in every detail, the cabin adequately served the family's needs throughout the winter.

On October 26, 1936, Welker received an invitation to supply the Estes Park Community Presbyterian Church during the pastor's vacation, and the family lived in the church manse until early December.<sup>13</sup> The Presbyterian Church of Estes Park had organized on December 31, 1907, over the protest of several Protestant ministers. A program of community Sunday School and preaching services had existed for several years, and the ministers desired it to continue

as an interdenominational effort. Located on the main thoroughfare of town, the church building only accommodated the regular membership, but the large tourist population in the summer required the facilities of the city auditorium.<sup>14</sup> During the tourist season, this church of 226 members presented nationally known speakers such as John Timothy Stone, famous minister of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, and they frequently attracted standing-room-only audiences.<sup>15</sup>

From June 1936 through September 1937, Welker preached almost every Sunday. Income from these engagements became his only means of support, and on occasion he traveled 200 miles to supply a pulpit. Some of these opportunities served a dual purpose, for when the church pulpit was vacant he indicated his interest in the position. This led to several invitations from small churches that he had to reject due to their inability to pay a decent salary. Official church statistics indicated that Wray, Colorado had no operating budget; Nunn, Colorado listed \$515; Carr, Colorado had \$740; Del Norte, Colorado showed \$1,439; and yet all had offered Welker a position.<sup>16</sup> His efforts to receive a call from a more affluent church were unsuccessful. He applied and preached at Cheyenne, Wyoming, Golden, Colorado, South Broadway Church of Denver, Longmont, Colorado, and Monte Vista, Colorado. As one of the four finalists for the Cheyenne position, he did not receive the call, but this

indicated the high level of competition he encountered in the search. Perhaps making his efforts more difficult was the fact that he was fifty years old.<sup>17</sup> For a short period in 1936, Welker thought seriously about buying and operating an apartment complex in Denver, and he visited several possible sites. Having almost completed a deal on December 12, he backed out of the pending contract at the last minute.<sup>18</sup>

Following the family's survival of a very difficult winter, Welker began in the summer of 1937 to widen his horizons and seek possible employment in other areas of the country. On October 2, he received a call from the Federated Church of Oakesdale, Washington, for the position of a six months stated supply. In spite of the distance and the problems of moving his family to a very different environment, he immediately wired his acceptance, and nine days later the family began the drive to Washington.<sup>19</sup> Welker made no comment about the salary offer, but the church's operating budget in 1937 was \$2,954, plus a reserve of special receipts totaling \$8,875, indicating that he probably received a substantial salary.<sup>20</sup>

Whitman County, in southeastern Washington, stretched westward from the Idaho border, encompassing over one million acres of land. The region, a part of the so-called inland empire, had a varied topography of plains and elevated plateaus with wooded valleys and hills. In the plains area the natural grasses provided excellent pasturage for cattle

and sheep.<sup>21</sup> Census records indicated that Whitman County raised 66,778 sheep in 1930, and David, as a second grader, remembered vividly the spring trek of the sheep as the sheep herders drove them through the town's main street to their summer pasture. He stated that it was like "wall to wall" sheep as they came into the yards and even onto people's porches.<sup>22</sup> In the Oakesdale area the plains gave way to steep hills devoid of both trees and rocks. Because of the hills, livestock was not raised in the immediate area. (See map 11 page 173)

Whitman County was an agricultural paradise and produced 11,992,444 bushels of wheat in 1929. Michael D. Anderson, who grew up on a ranch not far from Oakesdale, recalled as a young boy driving a caterpillar tractor because only its deeply set treads could achieve traction on the wheat fields which extended up and down the steep hillsides.<sup>23</sup> Isolated from the larger cities of the region, Spokane became the distribution center for the inland empire of eastern Washington, the Idaho panhandle, western Montana, and northeastern Oregon.<sup>24</sup> Whitman County's population in 1930 stood at 28,014, and farming ranked as the occupation of 96.6 percent of the people. Oakesdale was a rural community of approximately 400 people engaged primarily in wheat production.<sup>25</sup> The Welkers found the landscape quite unlike eastern Colorado, had special difficulty adjusting to the humid climate, and they longed for the semi-arid Great



Plains.

The impact of the second half of the Depression may have been slightly mitigated in the eastern Washington valleys as people escaping the hard times in other areas arrived and took over abandoned homesteads, or received jobs as migrant workers. The United States Census of 1930 recorded only 260 unemployed in the county.<sup>26</sup> Washington had taken full advantage of the New Deal farm programs, and since almost half of the farms were owned free and clear, most farmers avoided the worst financial stress of the Depression.<sup>27</sup>

The Pacific Northwest presented a more liberal religious perspective than the more conservative communities of the Great Plains. Within a large area stretching from California to Washington, existed the largest percentage of unchurched persons in America. Churches there, as on the Great Plains, altered the style and priorities of the eastern churches' traditions to reflect the more diverse life-style of westerners. More casual in their worship services, Welker preached in a cut-a-way coat, not a robe, and the service proceeded at the minister's discretion without a formal bulletin or congregational responses. (See Photographic Section) The Far West practiced a more complete separation of church and state, with religious activities such as prayer and Bible reading seldom practiced in the public schools.<sup>28</sup>

The Oakesdale Federated Church reported 170 Presbyterian members when Welker arrived. The church had been created by

the cooperation of the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists to form a federated church. Except for a small Baptist Church, made up of some Baptists and Methodists who chose not to join the union, the church represented the Protestant presence in Oakesdale.<sup>29</sup> By definition, a federated church retained its affiliation with all the denominations involved in the union, and separate rolls of members were maintained for each church body. New members were enrolled in the denomination of their choice, and thus only the Presbyterian members appeared on the official minutes of the General Assembly. The minister attempted to relate to all three affiliated groups.<sup>30</sup>

Welker went to work with enthusiasm and divided the town into districts for personal calls. He likewise visited in the schools and became acquainted with the business people, even attending the Commercial Club on a regular weekly basis.<sup>31</sup> The church warmly welcomed the Welker family, and on December 15, presented them with about 100 quarts of canned goods. In early 1938, a men's club began meeting; an Outlook Club opened for young men; and an instruction class began for about seventeen young people.<sup>32</sup> A series of special services in March resulted in eighty-eight decisions. Many of these were evidently renewals of commitments already made, but twenty joined the church on April 17 on confession of faith, nine becoming Presbyterians.<sup>33</sup> Welker reported good attendance at worship services throughout his stay, and at

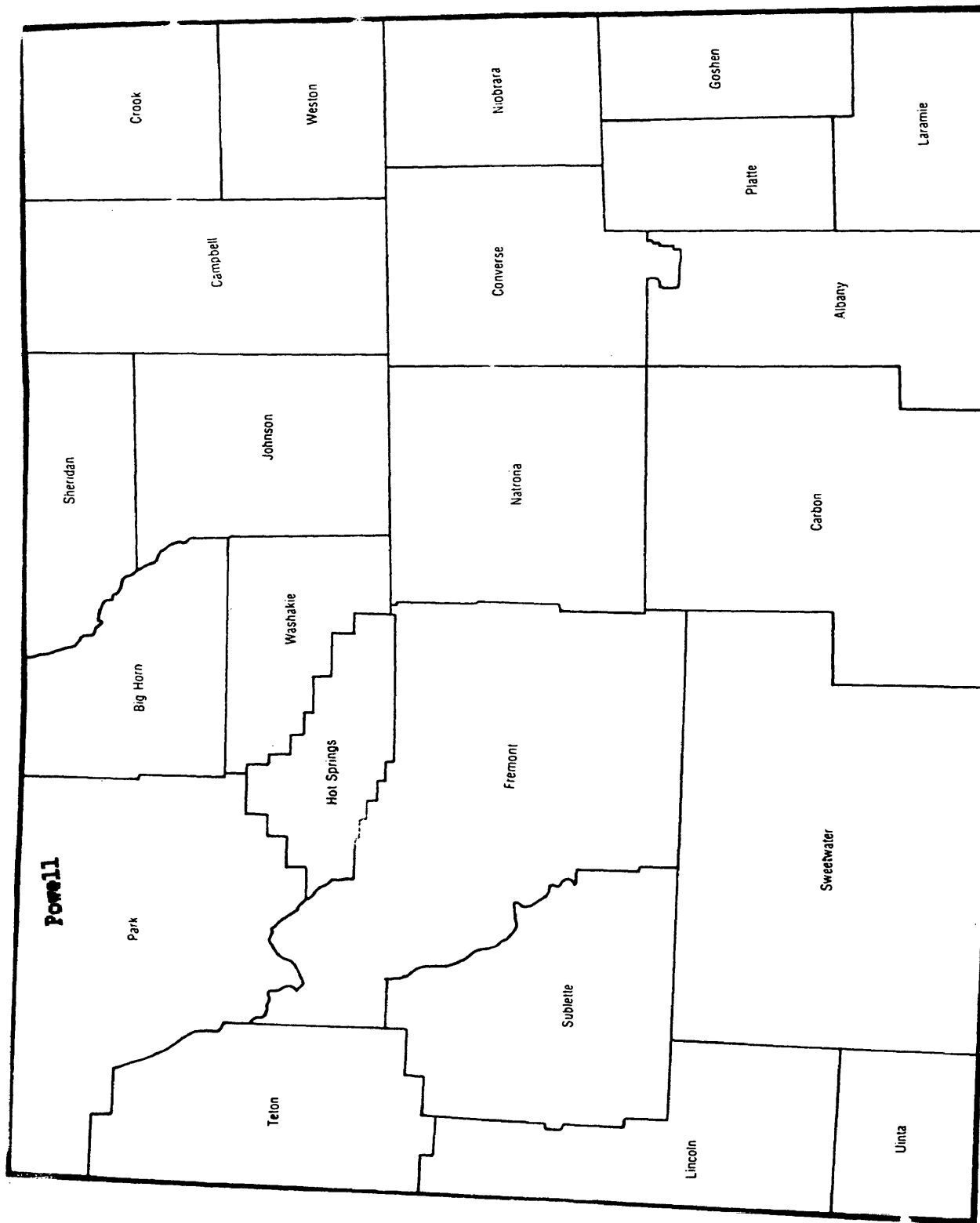
the congregational meeting in March, his six month's status must have been extended because he continued to serve through the spring and summer.<sup>34</sup>

In June, the Welkers returned to Estes Park for vacation. Searching actively for a more permanent position and wanting to return to the familiar environment of the Great Plains, Welker contacted several churches about permanent jobs. On July 21, he met with the pulpit committee of the Union Presbyterian Church in Powell, Wyoming, and applied for the vacancy. He returned to Oakesdale without his family, indicating that he did not plan to continue there much longer. The Welkers had expressed unhappiness with the Oakesdale school system which practiced the "open classroom" method of teaching, and they decided to put the boys back in the Estes Park schools. He received a request on August 30 to preach in Powell, and when he informed the Oakesdale church board that he had applied for the Powell position, they effectively ended his pastorate. With no assurance of a call to Powell, he left Oakesdale on September 1, and after preaching in this northern Wyoming community, he returned to Estes Park. Again he received only an offer of a stated supply position at Powell, but he accepted. Taking the boys out of school at Estes Park and closing up the cabins, the Welkers moved, in the late fall of 1938, to a unique region known as the Big Horn Basin in the High Plains of northern Wyoming,<sup>35</sup>



Entering the Powell Valley from the north, the observer viewed a green patchwork of growing crops stretching for miles. The Big Horn Mountains lay to the east, the Bear Tooth's loomed in the northwest, Carter and Heart Mountain extended to the west, and the Absaroka Mountains stood to the south. To the north, Polecat Bench ran northeastward for over twelve miles along a broad treeless terrace that rose over 500 feet above the Powell flats. Heart Mountain stood majestically like a guard over the whole Shoshone irrigation valley. (See Map 12, page 178) The great Buffalo Bill Dam, formerly the Shoshone Dam built in 1910, had changed the semi-arid valley into a rich agricultural area. Powell's irrigated farms produced sugar beets, beans, potatoes, alfalfa, grains and vegetables, notwithstanding the average annual rainfall of only 5.60 inches. Located just east of Yellowstone National Park, Park County contained national forest lands and reclamation grazing lands, the latter allowing for an important livestock business.<sup>36</sup>

Incorporated in 1910, Powell received its name from the famous explorer, geologist and pioneer in the field of reclamation, John Wesley Powell, who had dreamed of irrigating this arid valley that would become known as the "garden spot of Wyoming."<sup>37</sup> An oil strike in Elk Basin just north of Powell in 1915 developed into a significant field that brought the Ohio, Midwest and Standard Oil Companies into the Big Horn Basin. Belle Jones, a long-time resident,



Map 12 Powell, Wyoming--H. Clare Welker's Sixth Pastorate, 1938-1944.  
Ronald Vern Jackson and Gary Ronald Teeple, *Encyclopedia of Local History and Genealogies: United States Counties 1 (Bountiful, Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems Inc., 1977), 291.*

recalled that the oil boom helped keep the economy going during World War II, while simultaneously contributing to the war effort. Elk Basin had a large payroll and Powell received most of its business.<sup>38</sup> New oil strikes in 1942 and 1943 resulted in the building of thirty new homes and a trailer park in Powell to accommodate the increased oil field population.<sup>39</sup>

By 1940, Powell had grown to a population of 3,000, but according to Gladys Heasler, an early resident, it remained about thirty years behind the rest of the country in transportation, thought patterns and moral codes.<sup>40</sup> The town's only passenger rail service, the Frannie-Powell-Cody line, passed through Powell only during the summer tourist season.<sup>41</sup> People seldom traveled the 100 miles north to the large town of Billings, Montana, for shopping and recreation. Heasler also pointed out that entertainment consisted of the local movie house and public dances that both young and old enjoyed. She praised the school system that had always had a top quality academic program and which served a large area of the valley. David Welker, who attended the Powell schools for six years, recalled that the school system had the reputation as the largest school bus district in the United States, with twenty-one busses lined up each afternoon in front of the school building.<sup>42</sup> Heasler claimed that Powell accomplished quite a *coup* in March 1941 when it opened the first radio station in the Big Horn Basin. Not wasting any

time, several ministers in Powell met and arranged to broadcast a regular devotional program over KPOW. The ministers agreed to take turns at this responsibility, but Welker assumed overall direction of the effort and built a strong radio ministry.<sup>43</sup>

Before World War II, Powell appeared to be a town of peaceful tranquility, isolated geographically from the problems and conflicts facing many small towns across the country. According to the *Powell Tribune*, crime was almost non-existent, with only two or three robberies a year and no cases of murder. The town had a few families of Mexican descent and some Japanese farmers, but ninety-five percent of the people were Anglos engaged in agricultural pursuits.<sup>44</sup>

In March 1939, an incident rocked the community which further illustrated the strain of the latter years of the Great Depression. Earl Durand, a young man of a prominent Powell family, had been jailed for illegally killing an elk out of season. After escaping from incarceration, he shot and killed Deputy Sheriff D. M. Baker and Town Marshall Charles Lewis, two law-enforcement officers who had pursued him.<sup>45</sup> News of the shootings on March 16, 1939, arrived at the high school auditorium shortly before the Presbyterian evangelistic service began. This service concluded a three week series led by traveling evangelist Gypsy Pat Smith who had been preaching to capacity crowds. Although considerable confusion occurred, Welker indicated that the service

proceeded without incident. The following morning Welker called on Lewis' wife, and then drove to the Durand farm to express his concern and sympathy to the parents of the alleged killer. Neither of these families were members of the Presbyterian Church, but Welker characteristically responded whenever he sensed a need.<sup>46</sup>

About a week later, during a massive man-hunt in the nearby mountains, Durand eluded the posse, reentered the town, and held up the bank. He tried to escape with three hostages, but was shot in a western-style gun battle on the main street. He then shot himself in the head, ending a tragedy that according to the newspaper "served to bring the people of Powell and all the nearby Montana-Wyoming country to a point of nervous excitement such as was never before experienced in this part of the West."<sup>47</sup>

Instead of being a poacher and a cold-blooded killer, Durand was a mountain man, a hold-over from the late nineteenth century who only wanted to be left alone, declared Gladys Heasler.<sup>48</sup> Welker noted that poaching was common and usually ignored by the law enforcement agents. He stated privately that the pursuit of Durand was a charade in which the posse over-reacted as if they were trailing a dangerous desperado. He perceived that Durand was made a scapegoat because he did not fit into the established society.<sup>49</sup> Allen G. Richardson who lived on a ranch outside Powell counted Durand as a good friend. Ignoring the poaching laws, they

sometimes hunted together in the winter months. Durand and Richardson would share the meat, but Durand always gave a large portion to the poor Mexican farmers who lived near his farm. Richardson stated, "Durand was a compassionate sort of person who worried more about someone else not having anything to eat than he would about himself."<sup>50</sup>

According to Heasler, the community and law-enforcement agents had ignored Durand until a "cocky" undersheriff decided to get him. During his incarceration for the poaching offense, police officers harassed and teased him about spending the rest of his life in prison. Durand could not handle confinement. A bright young man, he had dropped out of high school several years earlier to spend most of his time in the mountains. The men he shot were trying to arrest him, and he begged them to stay back. He told one man, who later died, that he would not return to jail under any circumstances.<sup>51</sup> Welker had sympathy for Durand's desire to be out-of-doors in the mountains and described his fear of incarceration like a man getting a shave and feeling smothered under the hot towel.<sup>52</sup> The whole incident would never have happened, concluded Heasler, had the authorities expressed compassion and understanding.<sup>53</sup> Although Welker opposed breaking the law, he viewed Durand's efforts to feed the poor Mexican farmers as very commendable.<sup>54</sup> Durand's sister stated in a tribute to him in the *Powell Tribune* that he was a man who dared to live according to his convictions,

ideals, and faith in God.<sup>55</sup> The empathy and compassion of Powell's people would again be put to the test as major changes occurred with the coming of the war.

Powell was adequately served by seven churches when Welker arrived in September of 1938. At least three more were organized during his tenure. The Presbyterians established the first church in Powell on February 14, 1909, and dedicated a building on May 11, 1911. Named the Union Presbyterian Church, it had among its charter members persons from thirteen denominations.<sup>56</sup> A letter from J. Melvin Evans, Clerk of Session, dated January 9, 1939, to Hugh Kerr Fulton of Rawlins, Wyoming, stated that the Powell Presbyterian Church, from its beginning, had undoubtedly been the strongest Protestant Church north of Casper.<sup>57</sup> The history of the church had followed the pattern of calling a minister as a stated supply, and then after several months, if both pastor and congregation were agreeable, the minister was installed as the permanent pastor. In Evans' letter, he commented that Welker was doing a fine job. He declared that the new minister exhibited the characteristics of a strong and unusual man who promised to lead the church toward a "splendid future."<sup>58</sup>

The Welker's sons were old enough now to establish themselves in the community, especially Clare who would complete high school in Powell. He was quite tall at six feet three inches, very outgoing and likable, but also full

of mischief. Welker must have been reminded of his days at Hastings College when he now observed the high school pranks of his son. Unlike Welker, Clare had the stigma of being the preacher's kid, and that meant a certain protocol was expected. Heasler remembered that at graduation, Clare shocked everyone by crossing the stage with his graduation gown flowing behind him and wearing cowboy boots, completely out of step with the occasion's formality. His outgoing personality was well known and the Joneses and Heasler remembered him fondly from their school days.<sup>59</sup> Following graduation in 1942, Clare returned to Estes Park for awhile, continuing work that he had begun at the creamery in the summers. Later he moved to Casper, Wyoming, where he worked for Manning and Brown Oil Well Drilling Company.<sup>60</sup>

Welker's wife participated in the church and school life, while keeping up with an active schoolboy in David. Neighbors liked Mrs. Welker who, according to Belle Jones, was a stately, gracious woman. Pat Jones remembered her as a nice lady who always wore cotton dresses.<sup>61</sup> As a small child, Claudia Phillips Fisher recalled that Mrs. Welker often stood at the church door on Sunday morning handing to each child a little picture with a verse written on it.<sup>62</sup> When Welker's father died on May 23, 1939, he closed the chapter on his parent's home in Lyons. Just before he moved from Powell, he received word that his oldest sister, Mabel, had died on August 1, 1944.<sup>63</sup> Only brother Linn and youngest sister



Gladys remained of his family. The distance involved and Welker's church responsibilities prevented him from attending either of these funerals.

The church had a cohesiveness, stated Heasler, and people worked well together in the community. Welker had a positive influence on the town. He was not controversial, but a peaceable man, firm in his beliefs and yet gentle in his demeanor. He fitted into the community and always made people feel comfortable.<sup>64</sup> The church membership in 1938 stood at 288, and although Welker received 158 members during his six years of ministry, the membership remained constant. His initial salary of \$1,725 increased to \$2,000 by 1942.<sup>65</sup>

The Easter Sunrise Services highlighted the church year for the Joneses--twin brothers married to sisters. Each year Don and Keith Jones, who lived east of town, rode their horses out to the cross-crowned hill north of Garland where they roped some sagebrush and jerked it out of the ground. By the time the people arrived from Powell and Garland, they had a big fire blazing. After the service everyone attended a breakfast at one of the churches where the Methodists furnished the bread, the Presbyterians the eggs, and the Baptists the oranges.<sup>66</sup> Each summer the three denominations also cooperated in a united Vacation Bible School.<sup>67</sup>

In early 1939, Welker made plans with the Methodists to conduct a series of special services featuring revivalist Gypsy Pat Smith. A fellow of the Royal Geographical Society

of London and world-famous traveler and lecturer, Smith had recently returned from China, and he illustrated the talks with his China pictures. The meetings began on February 26 and continued until March 16, 1939, drawing large crowds to the evening services held in the city auditorium. Smith also spoke to schools, library clubs, the Civilian Conservation Corps, women's groups, and civic organizations in the towns of Powell, Lovell, Deaver, Garland, Cody, Frannie, and Bryan.<sup>68</sup> At the congregational meeting in April following this successful series, Welker received an official call to serve as the church's installed pastor.<sup>69</sup>

Welker's enthusiasm for youth work never diminished and he participated closely in this activity. The Christian Endeavor met in the church basement, recalled Keith Jones, and Welker served as the leader. Often the Baptist and Methodist youths would come even though they had separate groups.<sup>70</sup> On November 25, 1938, Welker accompanied twenty-four young people to an interdenominational conference at Worland, Wyoming, and later commented that the conference contained a "minimum of vital religion." A youth rally at Greybull, Wyoming, that twenty-one youths attended, received higher marks from Welker, and one at Basin, Wyoming, turned out to be the best they had attended. The Story Conference Grounds, the site of Presbyterian Youth Camps located east of Powell near Sheridan, enrolled three students from Powell in 1939 and several more in 1940, with Welker assisting in the

leadership.<sup>71</sup> The Father-Son banquet, a major event in the community, always drew a large crowd. Keith Jones recalled that as part of the program a father would speak and then a son would give a response. The year Jones gave the son's response, he recalled that the district judge sat next to him and "really shook him up."<sup>72</sup>

During Welker's tenure the programmatic work of the church steadily grew. Discussions began in February 1941 to increase the size of the church building due to overcrowding. Approved by the congregation in April, information concerning the new addition received publicity in the *Powell Tribune*. Possibly because of America's entry into World War II later that year, the plans were shelved and not acted on until June 1944. At this time the church board solicited a new approval from the congregation and work eventually got underway, but it was too late for Welker's involvement because by the end of the summer he had received another call.<sup>73</sup>

Welker accepted a strong leadership role in the wider church by serving as the Sheridan Presbytery's moderator in 1941, the Synod of Wyoming's moderator in 1942, and the Presbytery's Stated Clerk in 1944.<sup>74</sup> The *Powell Tribune* stated that the Welkers were publicly-spirited leaders. More than most ministers, Welker devoted considerable time to the building up of the Powell community. In addition, the newspaper concluded, he called upon every family in the valley, regardless of religious affiliation.<sup>75</sup> Welker's diary

recorded a systematic calling plan often totaling more than fifty calls a week.<sup>76</sup>

Welker appeared as a frequent visitor at the Civilian Conservation Corps Camp (CCC) that was located just across the railroad tracks in Powell. Camp BR-72 began operations in July 1938 as a part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal efforts to alleviate some of the hardships of unemployment. The program trained unemployed young men in conservation work and the development of the natural resources of the nation. They received \$30 a month plus food, clothing, lodging and medical care, and sent \$25 home to their families. In addition to the work accomplished by the men, they learned useful trades such as truck driving, auto mechanics, welding, concrete construction and carpentry work. Academic classes were also provided for those who had not completed grammar or high school.<sup>77</sup> The Powell CCC engaged in projects within the Shoshone irrigation district such as concrete lining of laterals, laying of telephone lines, gravel surfacing of roads, and dry rock paving in canals.<sup>78</sup> Until 1941, the boys came from the New England states and enlisted for terms of six months to two years. After 1941, a change in assignments brought recruits from the Southwest.<sup>79</sup>

Soon after his arrival, Welker became acquainted with Superintendent John Schell. As was his custom in calling on the camp, he soon came to know many of the young men and he visited them often. On several occasions he received

invitations to speak to the group, opportunities that he gladly accepted. Being such great distances from home, the young men appreciated Welker's visits which eased their homesickness, and from him they received understanding counsel.<sup>80</sup> The camp closed in May 1942 in order to direct both men and funds to the war effort.

With America's entry into World War II, patriotic rallies and victory meetings were commonplace. The bands played, the flag was saluted, and speakers called on citizens to buy defense bonds. Park County farmers likewise realized the importance of their agricultural products to help supply the war effort. The oil industry of Elk Basin went into full production as fuel became critical to the war effort, and precautions were taken to avoid sabotage.<sup>81</sup> Welker printed short comments within the church announcement page of the local newspaper, encouraging spiritual preparation for the conflict. On January 29, 1942, he conducted a special worship service on behalf of the President, cabinet members, Congress, and civil and military leaders. He especially invited the American Legion members to attend. The churches, according to Welker, represented one of the few agencies that stressed the importance of public morale, and he felt that those interested in the well-being of the country should strengthen their church ties. A sermon entitled "The Religious Background of the War in Asia," delivered in February 1942, sought to help the people understand the

religious beliefs of the nations engaged in the struggle, and how these beliefs affected their attitudes toward the war.<sup>82</sup>

Soon after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, a resolution adopted by Japanese-Americans in Wyoming was signed by seven men of Japanese ancestry living in Powell. The resolution affirmed their loyalty to the United States and their deep appreciation to the great nation in which they lived.<sup>83</sup> A Japanese-American farmer who lived north of Powell enlisted in the army two months later and this story of loyalty received front page attention in the *Tribune*.<sup>84</sup> The war created a strong economy for Powell because of the agricultural and oil needs of the nation, according to Belle Jones who believed the major hardships were the gas, food, and tire rationing.<sup>85</sup> However, spiritual and emotional loss struck the town hard whenever the *Powell Tribune* reported the death of a Powell boy in the war. On February 4, 1943, Welker recorded that Ray Moore, the first Powell son to die in the war, was killed and buried at Guadalcanal.

When 111,000 Japanese-Americans were removed from California in 1942 because of a widely held rumor that they posed a threat to American security, Powell found itself on the receiving end of 10,000 Japanese-American internees. The Heart Mountain Division of the Shoshone Project that was to provide additional irrigated farms to the area was one-third completed when word arrived that this site would house a

Relocation Center for Japanese-Americans brought from California.<sup>86</sup> This flat, treeless expanse of grayish brown bench lands, sparsely covered with sage brush and buffalo grass, appeared unappealing, but it offered a satisfactory water supply, ample road and rail transportation, power lines, and the opportunity for public works.<sup>87</sup> Camp construction began on June 8, 1942, and the project reached completion in sixty-two days. The camp consisted of 450 barracks, mess halls, recreation rooms, laundry and toilet buildings, two grade schools and one high school. In the administration section of eight office buildings, a separate mess hall and recreation room accommodated two hundred employees. The camp made a positive impression upon the Powell community for two reasons. First, it functioned like a prisoner camp, with armed guards and a barbed wire fence around the entire project to provide security for local residents. Second, it appeared to offer a simple and cheap solution to the critical farm labor problems of the county.<sup>88</sup>

In the first year of operations the relations between Powell and the camp appeared fairly normal, especially due to the new economic boom as local supplies flowed to the Relocation Center. In 1942, evacuees who assisted in the Wyoming and southern Montana harvest probably saved the crop.<sup>89</sup> Don Jones recalled that his father used some of the Japanese-Americans to help on their farm.<sup>90</sup> Several times during 1942 and 1943, various organizations in Powell

entertained members of the Heart Mountain administration and soldiers. When fifty internees volunteered for army service, a special gathering of 300 Powell and Cody residents honored them for their patriotism.<sup>91</sup>

The churches of Powell also became involved in the religious life of the Relocation Center. On September 22, 1942, women representatives of six churches met and planned ways to extend a neighborly hand to the newcomers at Heart Mountain. At the invitation of the Japanese women, two officers of the group attended a meeting at the Center.<sup>92</sup> Mary Oyama, writer of the Heart Mountain column that appeared weekly in the *Powell Tribune*, wrote a tribute to the Christian women on November 12, 1942. She stated that when almost everyone had deserted the Japanese-Americans, these women had remained steadfast in their friendship, and they had made a lasting impression on her.<sup>93</sup> The ministers of Powell and Cody met with the Japanese Christian ministers and pledged to collect hymnbooks, Sunday School materials, and religious literature for the Christian residents who comprised about a third of the total population.<sup>94</sup> Between 1942 and 1944, the ministers met monthly at Heart Mountain, but attitudes grew less friendly, and the *Powell Tribune* noted on April 15, 1943, that Welker was the only minister in attendance from Powell.<sup>95</sup> Welker preached to the soldiers at the Relocation Center on several occasions. At their invitation, he spoke to the Christian youth and adult



Japanese-American groups. He also collected clothes and magazines for the camp, and at Christmas time in 1942, gifts were sent not only from the local church, but the Relocation Center was adopted as a larger project of the national Presbyterian Church.<sup>96</sup>

In the late spring of 1943, rumors spread that Heart Mountain was a place of luxury and "coddling of evacuees," and hostile feelings grew in Powell. Barber shops, hotels and restaurants displayed signs that read "No Japs Allowed."<sup>97</sup> George Burke, a representative in the Wyoming legislature from Powell, succeeded in obtaining passage of a bill denying Heart Mountain Japanese-Americans the right to vote, and a second bill that denied them the right to own property also passed.<sup>98</sup>

The situation at Heart Mountain was far different from the rumors that spread throughout the Powell-Cody area. The Relocation Center, instead of granting privileges to the internees, denied them liberty, privacy, individuality and human dignity. The camp forced the Japanese-Americans to work at drudgery labor for seven cents an hour, and those who became too critical were removed from the area. The so-called self-government had to have the stamp of approval from the project director.<sup>99</sup> Living conditions were inadequate, especially during the first year, including the lack of appropriate winter clothing, non-insulated barracks, insufficient food, and widespread sickness. By the second

year many of these physical conditions had improved.<sup>100</sup> An open house for the press in August 1943 resulted in reports that conditions were about as far removed from comfort as could possibly be imagined.<sup>101</sup> Heart Mountain, throughout its history, was the scene of almost constant unrest, conflict and despair. A strong statement of opposition to detainment, drawn up by the dissidents in January 1943, stated that they were treated like prisoners of war under a miniature dictatorship.<sup>102</sup>

The Powell and Cody City Councils, concerned about keeping the Japanese-Americans from becoming permanent residents, jointly passed a resolution in May 1943 requesting that visitor's passes be heavily restricted.<sup>103</sup> Two weeks later the labor chief at Heart Mountain spoke at the Powell Club meeting and informed them that no Japanese-Americans would be released to assist in the harvest because of the negative community sentiment. He said, "Certainly citizens or law-abiding aliens cannot be expected to participate in your agricultural work if they cannot be accorded the same rights as other citizens or aliens."<sup>104</sup> When the need for harvesting crops became critical, the Powell and Cody city councils reconsidered and requested that the project director release internees for farm labor. Because the letter was distinctly conciliatory, the director lifted the ban.<sup>105</sup>

The City Council and the Powell War Dad's Club passed resolutions in 1944 requesting that all passes for the

evacuees be suspended, and demanding assurance that all the Japanese-Americans would be returned to the west coast following the war.<sup>106</sup> A group of businessmen and retailers in Powell disagreed with the council action and informed the director at Heart Mountain that they welcomed the Japanese-Americans. It was due to the camp trade that most businessmen had paid off their debts during the two years and had bought war bonds, recalled A. A. Fryer, local druggist and Presbyterian.<sup>107</sup> An unsigned editorial in the *Tribune* confirmed the underlying beliefs of those who wanted the Japanese-Americans kept out of Powell. It stated that Powell was "typically American" where people spoke the "American" language and acted in "American" ways.<sup>108</sup>

Gladys Heasler stated that her family had different feelings about Heart Mountain than many other residents did. She remembered that her father was furious when he learned that the Japanese-Americans were to be incarcerated. He stated that if the government could do this to Japanese-Americans, they could also do it to his family because they were full-blooded Germans. Her father was not a church attendee, but he felt great admiration for Welker who continued to visit Heart Mountain despite the hostile sentiment in the town. "That man practiced what he preached," declared Heasler's father.<sup>109</sup> On November 10, 1945, the last evacuees left Heart Mountain for California.<sup>110</sup>

A year earlier, in August 1944, Welker resigned his position in Powell and accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Loveland, Colorado. A restless spirit that appeared to motivate much of Welker's life may have led him to seek a new ministry at age fifty-eight. The *Powell Tribune* reported that Welker's resignation was reluctantly accepted by the congregation where he had been well-liked and his abilities appreciated. The Welkers expressed regret in leaving the town that had been their home for the previous six years. A large gathering of friends and neighbors bid them farewell, presented them with gifts, and several praised the fine qualities and pastoral abilities of Welker.<sup>111</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Welker Diaries," On flyleaf of 1937 diary. Citations in this chapter are from the 1936-1944 diaries in the possession of David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel I. Rosenman, Compil., *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941), 5.

<sup>3</sup>T. H. Watkins, *The Great Depression* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1993), 311-312.

<sup>4</sup>Enos A. Mills, *The Rocky Mountain National Park* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1924), 5-6. 8.

<sup>5</sup>C. W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park, A History* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1983), 72.

<sup>6</sup>Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 83.

<sup>7</sup>Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 117, 119.

<sup>8</sup>Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 151.

<sup>9</sup>Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 177.

<sup>10</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 29, 30; October 1, 12, 1936.

<sup>11</sup>"Welker Diaries," October 20; November 20, 25, 1936; January 5; February 17; March 16, 1937.

<sup>12</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 29, 1936.

<sup>13</sup>"Welker Diaries," October 26; December 4, 1936.

<sup>14</sup>W. H. Schureman, *Historical Sketch of the Presbytery of Boulder, Colorado and Its Enrolled Churches From Organization, 1883-1933* (Ft. Collins, Colorado: Robinson Printing, n.d.) 27.

<sup>15</sup>*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1936), 510; and David J. Welker, interview by the author, Omaha, Nebraska, April 15, 1994; and "Welker Diaries," July 4, 1937.

<sup>16</sup>*Minutes of the General Assembly, 1936*, 510, 513, 515; and "Welker Diaries, January 3, 10, 17, 24; February 1, 7, 15, 1937.

<sup>17</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 27; October 11, 18; November 1, 1936; September 5, 12, 19; February 26; April 4; May 1, 2, 30; June 20; July 11, 1937.

<sup>18</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 4, 9; December 9, 12, 16, 1936.

<sup>19</sup>"Welker Diaries," October 2, 11, 1937.

<sup>20</sup>*Minutes of the General Assembly, 1937*, 810.

<sup>21</sup>Joseph Schafer, *A History of the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930), 220; and *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Agriculture, II* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), 433.

<sup>22</sup>*Fifteenth Census, 1930, Agriculture*, 462; and David J. Welker, interview.

<sup>23</sup>*Fifteenth Census 1930, Agriculture*, 433; and Michael D. Anderson, interview by the author, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, April 15, 1994.

<sup>24</sup>Neil Morgan, *The Pacific States, California, Oregon, Washington* (New York: Time Incorporated, 1967), 12.

<sup>25</sup>*Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population, III* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), 1225, 1254; and *Fifteenth Census, 1930, Agriculture*, 433.

<sup>26</sup>*Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Unemployment* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 1058.

<sup>27</sup>*Fifteenth Census, 1930, Agriculture*, 466; and Watkins, *The Great Depression*, 194.

<sup>28</sup>Carl Guarneri and David Alvarez, eds., *Religion and Society in The American West* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1987), x, 9, 16, 18; and David Welker, interview.

<sup>29</sup>"Welker Diaries," December 9, 1937; and *Minutes of the General Assembly, 1937*, 810.

<sup>30</sup>*Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II Book of Order*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Office of the General Assembly, 1993), G-15.0204, G-16,0200.

<sup>31</sup>"Welker Diaries," October 19, 25; November 3; December 1, 1937.

<sup>32</sup>"Welker Diaries," December 15, 1937; January 16, 23; February 14, 1938.

<sup>33</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 21; March 6, 20; April 17, 1938.

<sup>34</sup>"Welker Diaries," October 24, 31; November 12, 14, 26, 28, 1937; January 16, 23, 30; February 6; May 8, 15, 29; August 7, 14, 21, 1938.

<sup>35</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 13; July 21; August 6, 15, 30; September 1, 1938.

<sup>36</sup>*Northern Wyoming Daily News*, Worland, Wyoming, June 7, 1962, 3; and Office of the County Superintendent of Schools, compil., "General Information on Park County, Wyoming," October 24, 1969, 1; and Allen G. Richardson, *Polecat Bench* (Laramie, Wyoming: John Mountain Press, 1983), 16.

<sup>37</sup>Park County Story Committee, *The Park County Story* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1980), 18.

<sup>38</sup>*The Park County Story*, 20; and Belle, Pat, Keith, and Don Jones, interview by the author, tape recording, Powell, Wyoming, October 2, 1993.

<sup>39</sup>*Powell Tribune*, December 3, 1942, 3; January 13, 1; May 18, 1944, 1.

<sup>40</sup>Gladys Heasler, interview by the author, tape recording, Powell, Wyoming, October 1, 1993.

<sup>41</sup>*Powell Tribune*, June 22, 1939, 1.

<sup>42</sup>Gladys Heasler, interview; and David Welker, interview.

<sup>43</sup>*Powell Tribune*, December 19, 1940, 1; January 23, 1; March 13, 1941, 1; and Beryl Gail Churchill, *People Working Together: A Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Salute to Powell* (Powell, Wyoming: Custom Printing, 1984), 59.

<sup>44</sup>*Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population*, 1381.

<sup>45</sup>*The Powell Tribune*, March 16, 1939, 1.

<sup>46</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 16, 17, 1939.

<sup>47</sup>*Powell Tribune*, March 23, 3; March 30, 1, 4, 1939, 8; April 13, 1939, 2.

<sup>48</sup>Gladys Heasler interview.

<sup>49</sup>David J. Welker, interview.

<sup>50</sup>Richardson, *Polecat Bench*, 141-142.

<sup>51</sup>Gladys Heasler, interview

- <sup>52</sup>David Welker, interview.
- <sup>53</sup>Gladys Heasler, interview.
- <sup>54</sup>David Welker interview.
- <sup>55</sup>*Powell Tribune*, March 30, 1939, 4.
- <sup>56</sup>*Union Presbyterian Church History, 1909-1984* (Powell, Wyoming: n.p., 1984), 1; and Churchill, *People Working Together*, 30.
- <sup>57</sup>J. Melvin Evans to Hugh Kerr Fulton, January 9, 1939, *Session Minutes, Powell Union Presbyterian Church*, 1939.
- <sup>58</sup>*Union Presbyterian Church History*, 5; and Evans to Fulton, January 9, 1939.
- <sup>59</sup>Gladys Heasler interview; and Jones interview.
- <sup>60</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 2, 1942; February 6, 1944.
- <sup>61</sup>Jones interview.
- <sup>62</sup>*Union Presbyterian Church History*, 23.
- <sup>63</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 23, 1939; August 1, 1944.
- <sup>64</sup>Gladys Heasler, interview.
- <sup>65</sup>*Minutes of the Congregational Meeting*, April 5, 1938; and *Session Minutes, Financial Report, 1942-43*; and *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1939-1944*.
- <sup>66</sup>Jones interview; and *Powell Tribune*, April 6, 1939, 1.
- <sup>67</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 11, 1940.
- <sup>68</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 23; February 26-March 16, 1939; and *Powell Tribune*, February 23, 1, 6; March 2, 1939, 1.
- <sup>69</sup>*Union Presbyterian Church History*, April 4, 1939, 6-7.
- <sup>70</sup>Jones interview.
- <sup>71</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 25; 1938; July 10-14; November 24, 1939; July 8, 1940; November 21, 1941.
- <sup>72</sup>Jones interview.
- <sup>73</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 12; April 1, 1941; May 25, 1943; June 12, 1944; and *Powell Tribune*, April 10, 1941, 1; June 15, 1944, 4.



- <sup>74</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 15, 1941; October 6, 1942; April 11, 1944; and *Powell Tribune*, October 8, 1942, 1.
- <sup>75</sup>*Powell Tribune*, August 31, 1944, 4.
- <sup>76</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 20, 1939.
- <sup>77</sup>*Powell Tribune*, May 8, 1941, 1.
- <sup>78</sup>*Powell Tribune*, July 20, 1939, 2.
- <sup>79</sup>*Powell Tribune*, December 12, 1940, 1.
- <sup>80</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 3; February 23, 1940; January 28; April 29, 1941; April 21, 1942.
- <sup>81</sup>*Powell Tribune*, December 18, 1941, 1; March 12, 1942, 1.
- <sup>82</sup>*Powell Tribune*, December 18, 1941, 5; January 8, 1942, 5; January 29, 1942, 1; February 26, 1942, 8.
- <sup>83</sup>*Powell Tribune*, December 25, 1941, 1.
- <sup>84</sup>*Powell Tribune*, February 27, 1941, 1.
- <sup>85</sup>Jones interview.
- <sup>86</sup>*Powell Tribune*, December 29, 1938, 1; May 28, 1942, 1; June 4, 1942, 1.
- <sup>87</sup>Douglas W. Nelson, *Heart Mountain: The History of an American Concentration Camp* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 12-13.
- <sup>88</sup>Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 13, 15-19.
- <sup>89</sup>*Powell Tribune*, September 3; October 1, 1942, 1; and Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 39-40.
- <sup>90</sup>Jones interview.
- <sup>91</sup>*Powell Tribune*, August 20; December 31, 1942, 1; April 15, 1943, 1.
- <sup>92</sup>*Powell Tribune*, September 24, 1942, 1.
- <sup>93</sup>*Powell Tribune*, November 12, 1942, 4.
- <sup>94</sup>*Powell Tribune*, September 3, 1942, 1; and Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 42.
- <sup>95</sup>*Powell Tribune*, April 15, 1943, 1.

<sup>96</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 15, 16; November 12; December 6, 28, 1942; May 9; August 22; October 16, 1943; February 26, 1944; and *Twentieth Annual Report of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* (New York: General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, 1943), 20-21.

<sup>97</sup>Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 45, 55.

<sup>98</sup>*Powell Tribune*, January 21, 1943, 1; and Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 51.

<sup>99</sup>Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 31, 33, 171.

<sup>100</sup>Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 24-28.

<sup>101</sup>Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 76-77.

<sup>102</sup>Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 81-87.

<sup>103</sup>*Powell Tribune*, May 6, 1943, 1.

<sup>104</sup>*Powell Tribune*, May 20, 1943, 3.

<sup>105</sup>Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 74.

<sup>106</sup>*Powell Tribune*, June 8, 7; September 7, 1944, 1.

<sup>107</sup>Nelson, *Heart Mountain*, 157.

<sup>108</sup>*Powell Tribune*, February 10, 1944, 4.

<sup>109</sup>Gladys Heasler interview.

<sup>110</sup>T. A. Larson, *Wyoming's War Years 1941-1945* (Laramie, Wyoming: University of Wyoming Press, 1954), 320.

<sup>111</sup>*Powell Tribune*, August 31, 4; September 7, 1944, 1.

## CHAPTER VI

## CHANGING TIMES, 1944-1964.

"the school grounds at Wayne"  
 "Mr. Wigman at Omaha High School"  
 "the country roads in Chadron"  
 "contract battle on the Chautauqua circuit"  
 "preaching in Brighton"  
 "working on the cabins in Estes Park"  
 "long train trips"  
 "crossing high bridges"  
 "tramping through mud"  
 "Farnam Street and north Omaha"  
 "dream of helping a runaway"<sup>1</sup>

At the close of his 1963 diary entries, H. Clare Welker recorded these bits and pieces of sentences, possibly of dreams he had near the end of his life. They touched on the numerous and varied experiences which held the most significance for him. Welker had begun life with the horse and buggy and he ended it with the jet airplane. He had experienced all the technology of telephones, radios, television, and numerous work-saving devices. The experiences of the Great Depression, of two World Wars, the New Deal, and the advent of the Cold War had made him a witness to the great changes of the first half of the twentieth century.

At a point near the base of the Big Thompson Canyon, only thirty miles from Estes Park, Welker returned to familiar territory when he accepted the First Presbyterian Church's call in Loveland, Colorado in September 1944. (See

Appendix G) There he found a town which had capitalized on its strategic location to achieve a measure of prosperity. Almost equidistant between Denver, Colorado, and Cheyenne, Wyoming, Loveland provided the entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park and served a major route along U.S. 287 to Yellowstone National Park.<sup>2</sup> David Barnes, an early pioneer in the area, had purchased 320 acres in 1870, and seven years later he had sold a right-of-way through the middle of his farm to the Central (later called Southern) Railroad. (See map 13 page 205) Barnes' farm literally became the town of Loveland, and several small communities such as St. Louis and Fort Namaqua that previously had begun in the area were soon absorbed by this railroad town. Named by David Barnes after W. A. H. Loveland, Superintendent of the Colorado Central Railroad, Loveland was first settled by disappointed gold miners who had returned to farming. Crops that grew on irrigated land produced more money than the elusive search for gold, and by 1890 the population had reached 698.<sup>3</sup> Incorporated in 1881, the early town supported a bank, general store, red brick depot, blacksmith shop, a boarding house and a saloon. David Barnes donated the land for the first two churches, and the Methodists and United Presbyterians happily accepted these gifts.<sup>4</sup>

As the center of an agricultural economy, the town developed factories for sugar beet processing, vegetable canning and meat packing. During Welker's years in Loveland,



the massive Colorado-Big Thompson Project, designed and built by the United States Corps of Engineers, reached completion, diverting water for irrigation and power from the Rocky Mountains' western slope to the eastern side, which included the Loveland plains. Irrigation virtually guaranteed abundant crops, successful dairy farms and livestock feeding lots.<sup>5</sup> Alta Roosa and her husband, an engineer on the Big Thompson Project, came to Loveland in the early 1950s, and watched the community's quick growth amid the influx of people for the project.<sup>6</sup> Cherries were a major agricultural product in the 1940s and 1950s, adding about \$50,000 to the economy each day during the harvest season. Migrants picked cherries for one and two cents a pound, and growers sold them to Kuner-Empson and Cherry Products Corporation Canneries in Loveland for eight and nine cents a pound. Unfortunately, competition with early harvests in California and Michigan, as well as the death of older cherry trees, ended the cherry industry in the early 1960s.<sup>7</sup> Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Loveland expanded about one mile north and south, and about one and a half miles east and west, according to David Willey, long-time resident and feed store owner. Beyond the town were twenty-acre tracts that added to the population of the area. He stated that some farmers worked in the sugar beet factory in season, and when Hewlett Packard Corporation, a pioneer in the computer industry, opened in 1950, the population mushroomed.<sup>8</sup>

On the land donated by David Barnes, the United Presbyterian Church of North America erected a building in 1878. This denomination had formed in 1858 with a merger of the Associate Presbyterian Church and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Their doctrines, traditions and institutions only slightly modified the doctrinal statements of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.<sup>9</sup> Within twenty-seven years, the congregation had out-grown this structure and they built a new edifice at Fourth Street and Jefferson.<sup>10</sup> Although this church prospered, a group of earnest Presbyterians who identified with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, desired to establish a church of their denomination in Loveland. W. H. Schureman, Sunday School missionary of Boulder Presbytery, worked with the congregation until on November 11, 1904, twenty-five persons organized the First Presbyterian Church of Loveland, and within three years they dedicated a church building.<sup>11</sup> The two Presbyterian groups worked side by side over the years, and finally joined in 1959 following the merger of the two parent denominations. Almost immediately eighteen families requested to withdraw from the union to organize the United Presbyterian Church of Loveland. Permission was granted and two Presbyterian Churches remained in Loveland.<sup>12</sup> The First Presbyterian Church had 227 members in 1944 when Welker's pastorate began, and an operating budget of \$3,449.

Welker accepted an annual salary of \$2,100, and in 1947 the congregation raised it to \$2,500.<sup>13</sup>

On September 17, 1944, Welker began his seventh and final pastorate. His service to the church had already spanned twenty-five years and would include another eight years at Loveland. By taking this position, Welker was again close to his summer cabins in Estes Park, and he continued to build there, eventually even realizing some financial benefit from this investment. Recognizing that funds for retirement would be a major problem, he built another cabin, rented to summer tourists, and attempted to sell the property.<sup>14</sup> Having left the relative isolation of northern Wyoming, Welker now found himself in the mainstream of America's changing life. The Second World War was ending, and the fundamental changes brought about by the war guaranteed that the community and the church would not return to their "pre-war" status.

The United States population in 1900 stood at approximately 76,000,000, and by 1950 it had almost doubled to 150,000,000. During Welker's youth, distances were limited by horse and buggy travel, people were self-reliant, and success or failure generally depended upon local conditions, not national or international events. The average wage earner in 1900 made only \$500 a year. By 1950, America's communities bore little resemblance to turn-of-the-century towns. An astonishingly productive economy, combined with the wider distribution of goods, caused changes in



American lives that resulted in a standard of living previously unknown anywhere in the world.<sup>15</sup> Millions of Americans in 1950 had incomes between \$2,000 and \$5,000 that lifted them out of poverty and into a middle class lifestyle. After the Depression, the birth rate increased to twenty-one and a half per 1,000 in 1943, an increase from seventeen per 1,000 in the 1930s. A person on the average could expect to live to age sixty-eight, instead of only forty-nine as had been true in 1900.<sup>16</sup>

Loveland represented a good example of this growth by increasing its population between 1940 and 1965 from 6,145 to 13,193.<sup>17</sup> The churches also experienced a rise in membership after World War II, indicating, according to some writers, an affirmation of America's ideals in the "Cold War" era to resist communist atheism. By the 1950s, social pressure almost demanded church membership.<sup>18</sup> Loveland was not the isolated rural community that Powell had been or even that Brighton had been during the 1930s. Located on a major thoroughfare between two large cities, its people readily traveled to Denver to shop, participate in cultural activities, and enjoy the bright lights of the big city.

Welker became a member of the Lions Club and the Chamber of Commerce and played an active role in both organizations.<sup>19</sup> A forward-looking group, the local Chamber of Commerce projected a bright future for business after the war.<sup>20</sup> By Christmas of 1945, the Chamber called for the construction of

a hospital, airport and recreation center.<sup>21</sup> The hospital project occupied major attention over the next several years, reaching its first phase fund-raising goal of \$122,538 on July 19, 1946. Many groups in the community supported the drive with major contributions. Eleven ministers declared "Hospital Sunday" to inform and encourage public support for the proposed facilities. With a real sense of community ownership, the town dedicated its new memorial hospital on November 25, 1951.<sup>22</sup> The Chamber of Commerce represented the town's efforts to make Loveland a major competitor among the front range communities. It drew wide support from the community by attracting 450 people to its 1947 membership drive dinner where Kenneth R. McFarland, Superintendent of schools at Topeka, Kansas, declared that organizations such as the Loveland Chamber of Commerce could make a significant difference in the community.<sup>23</sup>

As a sign of the changing times, civic organizations became more connected with their sister organizations on the state and national level. Welker's active association with Lions International led to considerable committee responsibilities, and he won election as a delegate to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convention in Colorado Springs in 1948.<sup>24</sup> Loveland hosted the Lions State Convention in April of 1946 and again in January 1951 with nearly 800 delegates

each time, overtaxing the hospitality resources of the community.<sup>25</sup>

Welker's son, David, graduated from Colorado A&M (Colorado State University) and entered the Air Force in 1952.<sup>26</sup> Clare, his older son, had been in the Middle East since 1946, employed by Halliburton Inc., an engineering firm serving oil field operators. After returning to the United States in 1950, he and his wife built a home in Estes Park, and he purchased the freight lines of the Rocky Mountain Transportation Company.<sup>27</sup>

Upon Clare Welker's arrival in Loveland, the *Loveland Reporter Herald* stated that he came with the highest recommendations possible regarding his pastoral activities.<sup>28</sup> He began his service in the First Presbyterian Church with his tried and true plan of getting to know the congregation and the community. "Welker called on everyone and he never knew a stranger," stated Bill Widman, a teen-ager and college student in the church during Welker's pastorate. Widman remembered that Welker would even go to Denny's Bar, one of the roughest places in town, and visit with the patrons.<sup>29</sup> "When we arrived in Loveland as strangers it was not for long," wrote Yvonne Johnson, former member of the First Presbyterian Church. The warm welcome they received from Welker ended their search for a church home.<sup>30</sup> The church congregation grew during Welker's pastorate beginning at 227 in 1944, and attaining a peak membership of 312 in 1951, then

leveling off at his retirement in 1952 to 293. The building's inadequate Sunday School space overflowed during those years.<sup>31</sup>

The urgent need for additional facilities became an issue of discussion in May 1945. The session appointed a committee to raise funds for an addition to the church, and a building fund box occupied a prominent place in the sanctuary each Sunday to receive free-will contributions.<sup>32</sup> In January 1946, an architect presented plans for the building, but funds were inadequate to take any action.<sup>33</sup> The plan to expand the church with a major addition took a detour when the officers and congregation decided to repair and remodel the present sanctuary in 1948. During August of that year church services were dismissed while the renovation proceeded.<sup>34</sup>

In March 1950, at the annual congregational meeting, two plans for an additional building on the present church property received a veto from the congregation.<sup>35</sup> The problem, according to David Willey, member of the building committee, related to who should build the addition. Welker's journal also reflected this concern. S. Gates, an elder and a carpenter by trade, offered to construct the building without profit. Some of the congregation felt this was a good way to save money, while other people preferred a professional contractor. Some people noted the difficulties experienced by the Loveland Evangelical United Brethren

congregation when they had recently built a church using volunteer labor. The church became divided over this issue, resulting in Gates' resignation from the session and withdrawal from the church, along with three or four other families.

The dilemma, however, was more complicated because the building fund by 1950 had only a little over \$1,700 in it. The critical need for an addition, stated Willey, contrasted with the lack of a building campaign because Welker felt all contributions should be voluntary and not canvassed or solicited. He had a policy never to mention money except once a year when required on Stewardship Sunday, and Willey concluded that the church budget faced a deficit almost every month.<sup>36</sup> By the fall of 1952, the congregation reached an impasse on this issue. Lack of receipts postponed the taking of bids, and although the contracts were ready to sign, the trustees remained unwilling to commit to the project. Eventually, following Welker's retirement, the congregation hired a professional contractor whom Welker had strongly favored, and they conducted a fund-raising campaign that he had opposed, never changing his belief that people will contribute when guided by the spirit of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

Welker's Loveland ministry met with greater changes than any other single period of his life. Beginning in the mid-1930s a marked change in atmosphere occurred in the Presbyterian Church, but this new perspective did not affect

most western rural churches until the adoption of the Faith and Life Church School Curriculum materials in 1948. The authors of these materials stated that because everything human moves in a continuous process of change, authoritative theological systems or social programs could not be dogmatic or inflexible. This concept did not detract from a Christian's personal knowledge of an unchanging God who encountered people in revelation. According to this new thinking, Christian teaching consisted of God's direct revelation, the scriptures, and a sympathetic understanding of the particular situation and unique needs of persons being instructed. This existential view made Christian teaching relevant to the actual problems and issues of life.<sup>38</sup>

Welker's long-held theology emphasized the communication of Biblical and doctrinal information. This knowledge, when conveyed to another person, opened the way for God to reveal himself and convert the person to Christianity. The dispute centered on whether the content of the curriculum constituted general information or truly represented the Person of Christ. Welker's more dogmatic beliefs emphasized memorization and factual knowledge somewhat devoid of flexibility.<sup>39</sup> The new approach, without denying the validity of this information, stated that God reveals himself to men and women in their present need. What the church teaches remains the same, but the interpretation of the teaching may change with the shifting situations of

life. People never remain at the same point in their understanding and response in relation to God.<sup>40</sup> Welker felt that changing times had no effect on a person's faith or theological understanding. These new interpretations were contradictory and left him unable to adapt to some of the newer approaches.

Fund-raising continued to be a problem for Welker. When the Restoration Fund, a movement established by the national church to provide assistance after the war, called upon all member churches to raise their fair share of the money, Welker disagreed that the national church body should have this control over local churches. Welker felt that a church should not be asked to raise a certain quota of funds. The Presbyterian Church, responding to the great need in war-torn areas of the world, established this special fund. It provided for reconstruction work in Europe and Asia, and helped with educational, pensions and mission needs in the United States. The final report in 1952 indicated that the churches raised \$23,680,931.<sup>41</sup> Assigned a fixed amount by the Presbytery, the Loveland session voted to have voluntary offerings for three months, but set no special fund-raising effort to meet the goal.<sup>42</sup> In 1948, when the church had contributed only \$510 of a \$2,470 allocation for the fund, again the church rejected the idea of a canvass and stated that members would continue giving on a voluntary basis.<sup>43</sup> In Welker's objection to the continued pressure from the

Presbytery for the church to meet this pledge, he indicated his distrust of Dapp, the Presbytery's field representative, and his dislike of this method of fund-raising. This attitude reflected no objection to the fund itself, but only a disagreement about raising the money.<sup>44</sup>

Another program established by the national church sought to strengthen the spiritual life of all people in a country rapidly becoming more secular. The evangelistic New Life Movement of the Presbyterian Church presented an ambitious plan to reach the unchurched who had been especially devastated by tragic losses during the war. As population increased, but church membership failed to keep pace, many Christians felt that fundamental Christian principles were no longer applied to human affairs. This three year campaign, launched in January 1947, resulted in 648,583 persons becoming Presbyterians, an average annual increase of 219,194, compared to 154,930 during the previous five years. Training schools established across the country prepared pastors to institute the New Life Plan in their churches.

Welker attended the training at Fort Collins in November 1948, but the Loveland church did not adopt the program.<sup>45</sup> Typical of the Presbyterian ministers of his time, Welker assumed charge and responsibility for all facets of church life from preaching to organizing the men's meeting. The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was



moving toward a more programmatic structure with a committee organization, but Welker had little interest in an administrative role.

David Willey stated that Welker was not a forceful leader, but he was an effective one. "He made us think we were making the decisions," explained Willey.<sup>46</sup> Welker's strength apparently lay in his preaching and his personal relations with people. Robert G. Hunt, whose father was an elder during the late 1940s and 1950s, remembered Welker as quite dignified and intellectual. Hunt had pleasant memories of Welker's work with the youth, especially a New Year's Day when the youth group visited the Welker cabin in Estes Park. After ice-skating and hiking, they enjoyed food, singing and a devotional.<sup>47</sup>

A major change from the national level in the late 1940s replaced the Christian Endeavor program with Westminster Fellowship. The new program featured a strictly Presbyterian focus and emphasized greater organization. Welker continued to encourage the youth work, and in September 1947, two young people from the church attended the National Westminster Fellowship Assembly.<sup>48</sup> Welker organized the strong church group of young married couples and young parents into the "Friendship Builders." Willey recalled being very active in this group which met regularly, and it was a strong encouragement to new members. On September 25, 1948, the

Welkers entertained the Friendship Builders at their Estes Park cabin.<sup>49</sup>

Amid all his internal church activities, Welker also fully supported the ecumenical spirit in the major Loveland churches. As a sign of the changing times, competition between denominations gave way to a strong cooperative effort. In contrast to the Guthrie Center evangelistic revivals of the 1920s where churches competed for members, Loveland churches made every effort to bring Christians of various denominations together and present a united front to the community. Dr. John Mackay, President of Princeton Theological Seminary and the World Presbyterian Alliance, stated that being Presbyterian was to be ecumenical. He said, "Just as it is the true nature of the Christian Church to be an instrument of God's glory and not to be an end in itself, it is the true nature of Presbyterianism never to be merely an end in itself, but to serve the Church Universal of Jesus Christ, the Church which is His Body."<sup>50</sup>

In 1947, the *Loveland Reporter Herald* printed church announcements for seventeen churches in Loveland which possibly was not totally inclusive of all the church groups. Five mainline churches, the First Presbyterian, First Baptist, First Christian, United Methodist, and the United Presbyterian represented the major churches that worked together in cooperative efforts. At times, other congregations joined in observing special services, but their

association with the larger groups was somewhat tenuous. Throughout most of Welker's pastorate these five churches conducted union services each Sunday evening, rotating the services among the various church buildings and ministers.<sup>51</sup> In May 1946, six churches joined for the tenth season of a union Vacation Church School, and the next year a seventh church joined the group.<sup>52</sup> As in previous pastorates, Welker took an active role in the ministerial association that produced over 400 church directories in 1948. Welker delivered the directories to each hotel and cottage court room.<sup>53</sup>

For the first time in Loveland, Welker and representative members of his church helped organize an interdenominational council of churches in 1945. The council officially sponsored many of the churches' union activities. In March 1949, Welker became a member of the council's executive committee.<sup>54</sup> Each year a series of Holy Week services featured leading ministers from neighboring towns and brought together members of several churches. On Friday of Holy Week all retail stores closed for the Good Friday observance.<sup>55</sup> For the first time since the war, the Easter Service, sponsored by the council of churches, met at the high school athletic field in 1946. Bald Mountain, twelve miles west of Loveland, was the site of this special service in 1950. In other years the large crowd met in the city auditorium.<sup>56</sup>

The council of churches organized and conducted the Annual Week of Prayer by drawing upon different local ministers to conduct the services throughout the week.<sup>57</sup> The council sponsored "Christian Education Week" by honoring Church School teachers and encouraging the observance of "family at home" night. A rally day service in each church the following Sunday ended the week's observance.<sup>58</sup> The Loveland council led a School of Instruction each year, providing leadership training for lay persons of all churches. Welker taught in this school on several occasions.<sup>59</sup> Other significant events that came under the council's sponsorship were the "Add-a-Man Club," a non-sectarian men's class, "Brotherhood Sunday" that offered representatives of the Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant's faith as speakers, and "Reformation Sunday" observance, usually held on Sunday evenings in the community building and featuring out-of-town guest speakers.<sup>60</sup>

Several churches, including the First Presbyterian, joined to sponsor a community Father-Son banquet on May 20, 1949. The 425 men and boys in attendance heard a speech by General Jonathan M. Wainwright, hero of Bataan during World War II, and Russell P. Kramer, head of the Denver office of the FBI.<sup>61</sup> These numerous opportunities of interdenominational worship and work increased a sense of Christian unity that Welker heartily endorsed. When

preaching on January 6, 1950, at the prayer-week service, he emphasized that sharing is part of the Christian way.<sup>62</sup>

Mrs. R. W. Widman, a member of First Presbyterian Church, nominated Welker in 1950 for "The Biggest Heart" radio program featured on KLZ in Denver. The program's purpose, according to Pete Smythe, well-known Colorado radio performer who was narrator-producer of the show, was to select and interview persons who had been exceptionally good to others. He recalled that Welker was a "terrific fellow." People throughout Colorado nominated persons whom they felt should be honored on the weekly broadcast. Smythe stated that hundreds of letters were received and the series ran for 13 weeks.<sup>63</sup> The *Loveland Reporter Herald* stated that the program saluted outstanding men and women who distinguished themselves for unselfish acts toward their neighbors and friends. Welker's story was dramatized over KLZ on November 24, 1950.<sup>64</sup> From the scrapbook that depicted the thirteen persons honored on the program, Welker was described as a minister of the Protestant faith who spread good will to others regardless of their creed. At the conclusion of the program, Welker stated his philosophy:

I learned three things. One, everyone has his problems. Two, you cannot do good for a fella unless you know him. Three, you do not get acquainted with people by just "sittin" around the house.<sup>65</sup>

On November 2, 1952, Welker resigned from the First Presbyterian Church of Loveland, and retired from the active ministry. At sixty-six he had served the Presbyterian Church thirty-three years, but his service would not end. Just as he had spent seven years in teaching and administration before entering the ministry, he would now spend his last twelve years continuing to preach and speak to many churches and civic groups, and working with troubled youths through the courts and school system.

Welker's personal commitment to people did not diminish with his retirement, and he continued to be "on the street" daily, as he referred to his visits with business people. In April 1959, he began meeting weekly with three other men for lunch. This group of business and retired men soon expanded to over eighteen, and became a regular weekly luncheon group which they affectionately called "The Grippers."<sup>66</sup> Welker also continued to visit friends at home and in the hospital. Both the Hammond and Kibby Funeral Homes called on him regularly to conduct funerals for people who had no church affiliation or when the family requested his services, and he noted thirty-nine of these services from 1953-1964.<sup>67</sup>

Although Welker chose to remain in Loveland after retirement, his church attention focused on guest preaching or attendance at other denominations in Loveland and at Presbyterian churches throughout the Presbytery. (See map 14 page 223) David Willey commented that Welker knew enough not



to continue to participate in the First Presbyterian Church after he resigned.<sup>68</sup> Welker accepted a stated supply position in 1953 with the Livermore Presbyterian Church, a ranching community located north of Fort Collins, to conduct services twice a month, and this responsibility continued until 1957.<sup>69</sup> His wife remained a member of First Presbyterian Church, and he attended a few events with her in 1953. Later she removed her membership to the Livermore Church, and they spent most of their Sundays traveling to various churches.<sup>70</sup>

The most immediate problem facing Welker upon retirement was the need for employment. At age sixty-six he had no retirement savings, having lived on a bare subsistence salary all of his ministry. Late in Welker's ministry the Presbyterian Church established a pensions program for its ministers, and the Loveland church contributed a percentage of his salary towards his retirement. His Social Security was based on such a low salary that both funds together would not provide a living wage. In March 1958, he began drawing Social Security checks in the amount of \$125 a month, and in 1960 he received a small pension from the Presbyterian Board of Pensions.<sup>71</sup> In July 1951, he bought a small house at 1212 Lincoln in Loveland, cashing in his life insurance to make the down payment. The house needed extensive work, and during his first year of retirement he renovated and remodeled the building.<sup>72</sup>



Shortly before retirement, Welker indicated his plan to retire in Estes Park and work with his son, Clare, but the acquisition of a job as Probation Officer for the southern half of Larimer County and Truancy Officer for the Loveland Schools caused the Welkers to move into the unfinished Loveland house.<sup>73</sup> The probation work with the county court and Judge Williams in Fort Collins, and the Loveland Police Department involved Welker in daily trips to the county seat to confer with the judge, counsel with probationers, and attend court sessions. He also traveled constantly throughout the county, checking on his probation responsibilities.<sup>74</sup> In January 1955, he was interviewed on KCOL radio in Fort Collins about his juvenile delinquency work.<sup>75</sup> Welker's probation work was less a job, than a ministry, as indicated by these notes entered in his diary:

January 29, 1953: called to police station to counsel two Spanish boys.

April 15, 1953: checked on four boys who are in trouble.

July 11, 1953: went to Mead to get a boy who had run away from home.

December 10, 1953: spent most of the forenoon in Berthoud trying to get a boy back on the right track.

May 11, 1954: Took five juvenile delinquents to Estes Park and let them work for Clare and then climb in the mountains. Fed them lunch and returned to Loveland. All have very poor home backgrounds.

December 3, 1954: working with ten boys to settle without court action.<sup>76</sup>

Paul Holderman, a Methodist minister in Loveland who assumed the probation position after Welker, commented that the police were pleased with the way Welker handled problems.<sup>77</sup> Welker served in these two positions until July 1961, ironically earning a considerably better salary than he had in the ministry.<sup>78</sup> His resignation followed the news that he and his wife had inherited a considerable amount of money from Alberta Lang, a very close friend through the years. The legacy elicited the comment from Welker, "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes."<sup>79</sup>

Throughout his retirement, Welker continued his activity in the Chamber of Commerce, the Ministerial Association, the Council of Churches, and the Republican Party. He attended precinct meetings and rallies, and was a delegate to the Republican State Convention on June 3, 1960. Following Richard Nixon's defeat in the 1960 presidential election, Welker wrote to him and received a response that was printed in the *Loveland Reporter Herald*. In part Nixon stated, "A message of congratulations after winning an election is of course always appreciated although not unexpected. But nothing could have meant more to us than to receive such a warm and thoughtful message after losing."<sup>80</sup>

Elected as a delegate to the National Parent Teachers Association (PTA) Convention in Los Angeles, California, in November 1956, the Welkers had a good trip and a good meeting, even taking time to visit the Grand Canyon on their

way.<sup>81</sup> In 1955, *Nebraska History* published Welker's article about his early life on a Nebraska farm. Following this successful publication, he submitted other articles to several journals and magazines, and completed a university extension course on writing through the college at Greeley, Colorado.<sup>82</sup> Although he no longer ministered to a church, Welker remained an active member of Boulder Presbytery, and in March 1957, he became a member of the executive committee. The following November he received election as Stated Clerk, a position he had held in other presbyteries. This job, a paid position, added considerably to his busy schedule, but he served faithfully until September 1960.<sup>83</sup> In addition to his probation work, guest preaching on Sundays, and his position as Stated Clerk, Welker received many calls to be a guest speaker. He addressed all the civic clubs, PTA's, Cosmopolitan Club, and numerous church groups of all denominations. He spoke on his juvenile delinquency work, religious subjects, and later, after his extensive world travels, he entertained groups with slides and talks about his trips.<sup>84</sup>

In 1957, son David graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary and entered the Presbyterian ministry in Fort Laramie, Wyoming, where Welker assisted in his ordination and installation in September.<sup>85</sup> That summer David married Pat Ambrose and the following year they moved to Venezuela and later Panama where they lived for five years ministering

through the National Council of Churches. Clare left Estes Park in 1954 for Australia and continued work with the oil companies. In 1956, he and his wife, Martha and their daughter moved to Caracas, Venezuela, continuing work for the oil industry. In 1960, Clare moved to Switzerland where he later worked in international securities. In December 1957, the Welkers traveled to Caracas to visit their son and family, and again in December 1959 when they visited both sons. After Clare moved to Switzerland, the Welkers traveled to Europe in August 1961, returning through Panama in early 1962 where David now lived. During this trip, Welker received word that his brother Linn had died, and he flew back to Indiana to attend his funeral.<sup>86</sup> His youngest sister, Gladys, had died in 1946 following surgery. The Welkers made one last trip to Europe in August 1963, followed by a trip to Altus, Oklahoma to spend Christmas with David and his wife and son, where David had recently accepted the pastorate of the Altus Presbyterian Church.<sup>87</sup>

On Tuesday, January 28, 1964, Welker entered in his diary, "I spoke to the Republican Women's Club at the Branding Iron this afternoon."<sup>88</sup> That evening while crossing a street in Fort Collins on his way to attend a concert with his wife, he was struck by a car and fatally injured. In his obituary, the *Loveland Reporter Herald* stated, "Welker's ministry, which began in 1919 in Morrill, Nebraska, had been

characterized over the years by his love of people and his sincere concern for their welfare."<sup>89</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Welker Diaries," End notes in 1963 diary. Citations in this chapter are from the 1944-1964 diaries in the possession of David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>2</sup>"Loveland, Colorado," Pamphlet published by the Loveland Chamber of Commerce, 1954.

<sup>3</sup>"Loveland, Colorado," n.p.; and Clara Bell, ed., *Loveland-Big Thompson Valley Centennial, 1877-1977* (Loveland, Colorado: Loveland-Big Thompson Valley Centennial Commission, Inc., 1977), 22; and Harold Marion Dunning, *Over Hill and Vale: In the Evening Shadows of Colorado's Longs Peak* (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Publishing Company, 1956), 318.

<sup>4</sup>Bell, *Big Thompson Valley*, 22-33.

<sup>5</sup>"Loveland, Colorado," n.p.; and Dunning, *Over Hill and Vale*, 300-301.

<sup>6</sup>Alta Roosa, interview by the author, tape recording, August 4, 1993, Loveland, Colorado.

<sup>7</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, July 15, 1987, 1.

<sup>8</sup>David Willey, interview by the author, tape recording, August 4, 1993, Loveland, Colorado.

<sup>9</sup>Frank S. Mead, revised by Samuel S. Hill, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 206-207.

<sup>10</sup>Arlene Ahlbrandt, and Kathryn Stieben, ed., *The History of Larimer County, Colorado II* (Fort Collins, Colorado: Curtis Media Corporation, 1987), 403.

<sup>11</sup>*Historical Sketch of the Presbytery of Boulder, Colorado and its Enrolled Churches From Organization, 1883-1933* (N.p.: n.p., n.d.), 46.

<sup>12</sup>Jean Goudy, Margaret Willey, and Zethyl Gates, ed., *The Presbyterian Churches of the Thompson Valley* (N.p.: n.p., n.d.), n.p.; and Alta Roosa interview.

<sup>13</sup>"Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America," (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1944), 612; and "Welker Diaries," May 18, 1947.

<sup>14</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 12, 1945; September 21, 1949; June 5, 1950; November 27, 1950.

<sup>15</sup>Frederick Lewis Allen, *The Big Change: America Transforms Itself, 1900-1950* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), 4-8, 14.

<sup>16</sup>Allen, *The Big Change*, 200-202, 212.

<sup>17</sup>*Plan for Growth: Summary Report for the City of Loveland, 1955-1965 with projections to 1999* (Loveland, Colorado: City Council of Loveland, 1965), 1.

<sup>18</sup>James R. Shortridge, "Patterns of Religion in the United States," *Geographical Review*, 66 (October 1976), 433.

<sup>19</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 3; February 27, 1945; May 27, 1946; April 9, 1948; January 21; May 7; June 25, 1951.

<sup>20</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, February 28, 1945, 1.

<sup>21</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, December 7, 1945, 1.

<sup>22</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, June 5, 1946, 1; July 19, 1946, 1; and Bell, *Loveland-Big Thompson Valley*, 169.

<sup>23</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, January 23, 1947, 1; Bell, *Loveland-Big Thompson Valley*, 167-168.

<sup>24</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 9, 1948; January 26, 1951.

<sup>25</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, April 26, 1945, 1; January 25, 1951, 1.

<sup>26</sup>"Welker Diaries," June 6, August 20, 1952.

<sup>27</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, March 2, 1950, 3; "Welker Diaries," January 5, 1950.

<sup>28</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, September 15, 1944, 1.

<sup>29</sup>Bill Widman, interview by the author, July 1993, Estes Park, Colorado.

<sup>30</sup>Yvonne Johnson to Louise Welker, February 4, 1964, Loveland, Colorado.

<sup>31</sup>"Minutes of the General Assembly," 1944, 612; 1951, 561; 1952, 561.

<sup>32</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes" (Loveland, Colorado: n.p., 1923-1948), May 14, 1945; October 7, 1946.

<sup>33</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," January 7; February 4, 1946.

<sup>34</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," June 1, 1948; and "Minutes of the Congregational Meeting, First Presbyterian Church" (Loveland, Colorado: n.p., 1940-1950), June 20, 1948; and *Loveland Reporter Herald*, August 6, 1948, 4.

<sup>35</sup>"Minutes of the Congregational Meeting," March 15, 1950.

<sup>36</sup>David Willey interview; and "Welker Diaries," September 19, 30; October 3; December 10, 1950; October 1, 1951; and "First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," October 1, 1951; January 13; April 7, 1952.

<sup>37</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 2, 12, 15, 23; October 8, 9, 24, 29; November 2, 1952.

<sup>38</sup>Maurice W. Armstrong, *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 301.

<sup>39</sup>Sermons of H. Clare Welker, "Welker Personal Papers," 1919-1952. Sermons in the possession of David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>40</sup>Armstrong, *The Presbyterian Enterprise*, 302-303.

<sup>41</sup>Armstrong, *The Presbyterian Enterprise*, 297.

<sup>42</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," September 9, 1946.

<sup>43</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," October 7, 1946; Winter 1948; March 1948; March 18, 1949.

<sup>44</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 16, 1948.

<sup>45</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 28, 1948; Armstrong, *The Presbyterian Enterprise*, 303-305.

<sup>46</sup>David Willey interview.

<sup>47</sup>Robert G. Hunt to the author, October 11, 1993, Springfield, Virginia. Letter in possession of the author, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>48</sup>"Minutes of the Congregational Meeting," April 4, 1947; and *Loveland Reporter Herald*, September 12, 1947, 3.



<sup>49</sup>David Willey interview; and *Loveland Reporter Herald*, September 25, 1948, 3.

<sup>50</sup>Armstrong, *The Presbyterian Enterprise*, 314.

<sup>51</sup>"First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," September 25, 1944; and "Welker Diaries," November 5, 1950; and *Loveland Reporter Herald*, December 21, 1945, 3; January 17, 1947, 4.

<sup>52</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, May 16, 1946, 1; May 24, 1947, 1.

<sup>53</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, June 26, 1948, 1.

<sup>54</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 19, 1945; March 4, 1949.

<sup>55</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, February 23, 1; March 24, 1945, 1; April 12, 15, 1946, 1; April 11, 14, 1949, 1; and "Welker Diaries," March 29-30, 1945; April 15-18, 1946; April 10, 1949.

<sup>56</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, April 17, 1946, 1; March 24, 1948, 1; April 17, 1950, 1.

<sup>57</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, December 29, 1947, 1; and "Welker Diaries," January 8-11, 1946; January 5, 1950.

<sup>58</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, September 27, 1946, 3.

<sup>59</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, February 17, 1950, 4; and "Welker Diaries," May 15, 1945; January 20, 1948; February 23, 1950.

<sup>60</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, September 8, 1944, 1; February 21, 1946, 1; October 26, 1950, 3.

<sup>61</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 19, 1949; and *Loveland Reporter Herald*, May 20, 1949, 1, 3.

<sup>62</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, January 6, 1950, 1.

<sup>63</sup>Pete Smythe, interview by the author, August 1993, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>64</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, November 17, 1950, 1; and "Welker Diaries," November 24, 1950.

<sup>65</sup>Scrapbook of The Biggest Heart Program on KLZ, Denver, 1950. Scrapbook in the possession of Pete Smythe, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>66</sup>"Welker Diaries," April 23, 1959.

<sup>67</sup>"Welker Diaries," All funerals were recorded with names of persons involved from 1953-1964.

- <sup>68</sup>David Willey interview
- <sup>69</sup>"Welker Diaries," September 1953 to February 1956.
- <sup>70</sup>"Welker Diaries," All Sunday activities are noted in diaries 1953-1964.
- <sup>71</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 28, 1958; April 27, 1960.
- <sup>72</sup>"Welker Diaries," July 6, 1951; January and February 1953; April 28, 1953; September 25, 1953.
- <sup>73</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 17, 24; December 2, 26, 1952.
- <sup>74</sup>"Welker Diaries," All court cases are listed in the diaries from 1953 to 1961.
- <sup>75</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 14, 1955.
- <sup>76</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 29; April 15; July 11; December 10, 1953; May 11, December 3, 1954.
- <sup>77</sup>Paul Holderman, interview by Alta Roosa, August 1993, Loveland, Colorado.
- <sup>78</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 19, 1953 to July 10, 1961.
- <sup>79</sup>"Welker Diaries," February 26, 1960; June 22, 1963.
- <sup>80</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, December 27, 1960, 3; "Welker Dairies, : January 5; February 18, 1953; January 4; February 1; March 1; July 8, 17, 23; September 13, 28; November 16, 1954; June 3; November 9: December 27, 1960.
- <sup>81</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 26, 1956.
- <sup>82</sup>H. Clare Welker, "First Year on a Nebraska Farm," *Nebraska History* 69 (March 1956), 51-57; and "Welker Diaries," January 5, 1956.
- <sup>83</sup>"Welker Diaries," March 18; November 18, 1957; September 5, 1960.
- <sup>84</sup>"Welker Diaries," November 6; December 8; 1953; January 6, 26; March 9, 1954; June 3, 1956; and one or two speaking engagements each month throughout his retirement when he was in Loveland.
- <sup>85</sup>"Welker Diaries," May 27; July 20; September 29, 1957.
- <sup>86</sup>"Welker Diaries," December 17, 1957; January 18, 1958; December 9, 1959; February 15, 1960; August 7, 1961; January 16, 23, 1962.
- <sup>87</sup>"Welker Diaries," August 5; November 19; December 12, 1963.

<sup>88</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 28, 1964.

<sup>89</sup>*Loveland Reporter Herald*, January 31, 1964, 5.

## CONCLUSION

Attempt great things for God  
Expect great things from God.<sup>1</sup>

Clare Welker wrote a letter to his sons on his seventieth birthday that expressed his understanding of the Christian life, how he hoped it would be the life of his sons, and ultimately how it was the goal he desired for all to whom he had ministered throughout his thirty-three year career. He stated that leading a truly Christian life depended entirely on one's relationship with God. The attainment of this relationship was through personal faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the teachings of the Bible. Welker taught and lived this faith throughout his ministry. He stated that he desired happiness for his sons, but that depended on their relationship with others. The first principle of real happiness, he concluded, was to be a friend to all.<sup>2</sup> (See Appendix G) He never tired of that message, and always sought to reach out to new people and bring renewal to those who needed it.

A key element of Welker's entire life that governed his every action resided in his devoted prayer life. He kept a small notebook containing lists of things that he made matters of prayer. Each day he checked off items after having prayed about them. These lists gave evidence of his concern about family members, friends, the church, the

broader community, and even national and international issues.<sup>3</sup> Often, late at night, his son observed him kneeling by his bedside in prayer, and he began each morning by leading the family in Bible reading and prayer. Throughout his life, Welker maintained an optimistic outlook. Possibly his intensive prayer life contributed to his ability to convey this attitude to those who knew him. He never made light of serious problems, yet he exhibited great self-control, and would withdraw from a conflict rather than enter into a verbal fight. Motivated by a deep spiritual strength, Welker weathered the storms of church strife, inadequate income, disappointing building campaigns, and unresponsive people, always believing that, "all things work together for good to those that love the Lord."

Beginning in his teenage years, Welker had a great interest in many subjects. He gained expertise in library work, woodworking, mechanical drawing, writing, oratory, play writing, and historical studies. Appropriately, by the time he graduated from college, several possible careers beckoned him. These eclectic interests led him into teaching and school administration, where he spent seven successful years. Despite his enjoyment of this work, he felt unfulfilled, and after four summers managing and supervising in Chautauqua, a new, more inspired, path led him to the ministry. The experience with Chautauqua had served him well by helping him recognize that service to the people through the church would

be his greatest calling. During the 1916 "Decision Week" at the First Presbyterian Church of Gordon, Nebraska, Welker ended his teaching career and entered the Presbyterian ministry.<sup>4</sup>

The people of Morrill, Nebraska, an agricultural community of two churches and his first pastorate, responded well to Welker's efforts. Although an intellectual man, he remained very close to his people and solved problems in a practical way. He was a familiar face to every family in the area, and never hesitated to call on people where there was sickness, death or other needs, irrespective of the person's church affiliation. He once sat with a family all night when a man was dying, and again at the home of a young girl who was near death. Paul Hobson, a young man in Morrill in the early 1920s, stated that Welker led the church youth group that provided the only social outlet for most young people. Welker's "young boy's club" met frequently for hikes to the river or other socializing activities that gave them a positive experience.

In Guthrie Center, Iowa, Welker experienced a high degree of church participation. As a conservative community where even the schools welcomed religious instruction for the students, Protestant churches often set the moral standard, and the residents felt this religious impact even if they were not members or regular attendees. The church dictated store closings and scheduled Sunday social activities. The

local newspaper strongly supported the churches and freely advertised their activities. During these years, revivals focused the attention of the entire community.

As a town that continued to be affected by the "wilder" aspects of the post-frontier era, church attendance in Sidney was often overshadowed by the efforts to apprehend criminals. During Welker's years in this western Nebraska town, liquor abuses and crime were major problems. The Sidney church in the mid-1920s suffered from human jealousy, hostility, and lack of compassion that led to internal friction which divided the church. Along with the general public, some church members refused to accept people different from themselves. The Ku Klux Klan in Sidney fanned the flame of prejudice against Catholics, and Presbyterians took both sides in this battle. The effects of this controversy still caused hard feelings in 1928 and Welker worked to heal the wounds caused by hate and prejudice.

The Depression of the 1930s took its toll on the Presbyterian Church in Brighton, Colorado, where Welker suffered from poor salary and lack of support. Despite the strong program, he felt there was a lack of spiritual growth, and he continually called on the people to be more committed. A conflict between Welker and the choir director ended in Welker's resignation at the height of the Depression. Welker's lack of details in his diary concerning this controversy may have indicated that no issues were involved,

other than a possible disagreement over their working relationship. His Brighton ministry was highlighted by service to the Hispanic community and to jail inmates. Welker's determined efforts to deal with his own unemployment during 1936 and 1937 further indicated his refusal to accept defeat and his deep faith that God would provide. He presented an optimistic outlook to his family, according to his son David, and he worked tirelessly to attain a position and continue his ministry.

Oakesdale, Washington, represented a short, but fruitful ministry. Although Welker traveled to Washington only because he felt he had no other choice in searching for a job, he gave the pastorate his full effort, and left the church with an increased membership and a stronger program. The isolated and conservative community of Powell, Wyoming, responded to Welker's caring and friendly approach. The anxieties of war-time were eased somewhat by Welker's ready compassion and full confidence that God was in control. He worked with the difficult situation of the Japanese-American Relocation Center where he reportedly practiced what he preached. He reached out to all people--rich, poor, criminals, Hispanics, Japanese, young and old--and was well received.

Welker's arrival in Loveland coincided with the end of World War II and the great changes of the mid-twentieth century. This represented the first time he had experienced



a church acting outside the central focus of the community. Even the newspaper gave significantly less attention to religious events. The town grew rapidly by seeking every new technology to compete in the expanding secular world. Welker continued his personal approach to Christian commitment by relating to business people and church members alike. Cooperation among churches of various denominations ranked high in the Loveland pastorate. This cooperation expressed itself in the weekly union Sunday evening services, jointly-held Holy Week and Easter services, and many other occasions. The church expanded in numbers, ultimately creating a critical need for additional facilities. Unfortunately, the disagreement over building an addition to the church led to Welker's retirement.

Welker's entire life offered evidence of his boundless energy and drive. His pastoral calling sometimes equaled thirty to fifty visits a week; he preached twice on Sundays; and he led prayer service at mid-week. He worked with the youth at camps, rallies, communicant's classes, young boys' groups, and in Christian Endeavor. His counseling included not only the church members, but also many persons from the larger community. By baptizing, marrying, and burying his flock, organizing and conducting meetings, and serving in offices at the Presbytery level, he worked tirelessly for the people he served. Considered theologically conservative by

the standards of his day, he yet remained throughout his life an advocate of social justice.

Finally, he entered the community's life with such participation that he received acclaim for his contributions each time he left an area. He gained public respect for his community leadership roles, and his ability to educate people about the important issues. His motto might well have been the phrase that appeared regularly in his church bulletin: "Attempt great things for God, Expect great things from God."

Welker's separation of the spiritual and secular worlds, although well entrenched in Christian tradition, proved a weakness in dealing with fund raising in the church. He felt that many things in society were not spiritual, and therefore, should remain separate from church life. His emphasis on the individual relationship over the group organization led to a highly personal approach to the ministry that sometimes conflicted with majority opinion, and with the post World War II thrust of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). His frequent moves to different communities appeared to be partially motivated by an underlying restlessness that constantly called him to move on. Louise Welker supported her husband throughout his life, moving without complaint and remaining content to let the public eye focus on him. Voicing her opinion at his retirement, Louise strongly requested that they remain in Loveland instead of moving to Estes Park.

The seven Presbyterian Churches served by Welker had been organized in the early days of their communities because a core of people fervently desired to meet their spiritual needs. Through its regular worship, Sunday School, men and women's meetings, and socials, the Presbyterian Church brought people together in fellowship, for comfort and spiritual growth. The church stood as a constant, serving people's needs from birth to death.

Vital to the growth of these seven Presbyterian churches served by Welker was the energy and dedication of the minister. Yet organizational support of the pastor remained a low priority throughout Welker's ministry, with annual salaries ranging from a low of \$1,200, to a peak salary of \$2,500 in 1947. Despite this obvious oversight, the inter-relationship of church, community and minister played an important role in the attitudes and mores of small western towns during the first half of the twentieth century. The Presbyterian Church failed to change communities into "Christian towns," but its influence greatly shaped and reflected the standards and direction of the people. Welker fulfilled his dream of being a minister and suffered the agony of conflict and disappointment, but he also rejoiced in the commitment and support of hundreds of Presbyterians over thirty-three years across the Great Plains and briefly in the prairie of Iowa and the hills of eastern Washington.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Saying that appeared regularly on church bulletins. "Welker Personal Papers," Personal papers in the possession of David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>2</sup>H. Clare Welker to David and Clare Welker, March 14, 1956, Loveland, Colorado. "Welker Personal Papers."

<sup>3</sup>*Prayer Notebooks*, "Welker Personal Papers."

<sup>4</sup>"Welker Diaries," January 11-12, 1916.

APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

**Daily Program****FIRST DAY**

- 10:00 a. m.—Youths' Chautauqua—Get acquainted time—Directed by Junior Supervisor for season ticket holders. Single admissions each morning, 10 and 15 cents.
- 2:30 p. m.—Opening exercises by the Superintendent. Delightful male quartet melodies—Solos, vocal and brass quartets—The Lyric Glee Club.
- 3:15 p. m.—Wedding ceremonies of European peasantry, beautifully costumed—May Shumway Enderly. Admission, 15 and 25 cents.
- 7:30 p. m.—Music to gladden the heart—Snappy concert with fine impersonations—Lyric Glee Club and Francis I. Hendry.
- 8:30 p. m.—Lecture—"Whose Neighbor Am I?"—Nannie Webb Curtis—Most popular woman orator in Chautauqua work. Admission, 15 and 25 cents.

**SECOND DAY**

- 10:00 p. m.—Youths' Chautauqua, followed by Round Table for parents and teachers.
- 2:30 p. m.—Rollicking program—The Original Alpine Singers and Yodlers.
- 3:15 p. m.—Address—"The America of Tomorrow"—Olin Mason Caward. Admission, 15 and 25 cents.
- 7:30 p. m.—"A Night in Tyrol"—In native costume—Amusement for old and young—"Daddy" Grobecker and his Alpine Singers.
- 8:30 p. m.—Lecture—"Community Organization and Why"—Olin Mason Caward—Community adviser. Admission, 15 and 35 cents.

**THIRD DAY**

- 10:00 a. m.—Youths' Chautauqua—Better each day. Demonstration of home parties.
- 2:30 p. m.—The best in music—Schroedter Quintet—An organization of high class.
- 3:15 p. m.—Lecture—"The Potter and the Clay"—Pottery made and displayed.
- 4:15 p. m.—Special for women—Exhibit of porcelain ware—What to buy and why—Questions answered—Smith Damron, the pottery man. Admission, 15 and 35 cents.

**Announcement:** Vesper service and other suitable features arranged for Sunday. Programs always adjusted for the Sabbath. Program subject to change.

**Season Tickets:** Single admissions for this wonderfully rich and big week's program exceed \$5.00 for adults and \$2.00 for youths. Save several dollars by buying season tickets. You will also help the local committee. Price of adult season tickets, \$2.00; youth's season tickets, 8 to 15 years, \$1.00. Buy your tickets early.

**LINCOLN CHAUTAUQUAS, CHICAGO**

- 7:30 p. m.—The Artists Concert -- Schroedter Quintet—All-star company of celebrities—Vocal and instrumental.
- 8:30 p. m.—Dramatic recital—"Across the Border"—Jeanette Kling—A Chautauqua favorite. Admission, 15 and 35 cents.

**FOURTH DAY**

- 10:00 a. m.—Youths' Chautauqua—New features. Neighborhood play.
- 2:30 p. m.—Popular concert—Ellis Brooks' Famous Chicago Band.
- 3:30 p. m.—Lecture—"Challenge of the Twentieth Century"—Maynard Lee Daggy. Admission, 15 and 35 cents.
- 7:30 p. m.—Grand musical festival—Solos, duets, quartets and novelty numbers—Brooks' Band. Interlude address—Mr. Daggy. Admission, 25 and 50 cents.

**FIFTH DAY**

- 10:00 a. m.—Youths' Chautauqua—Home Club Night demonstrated.
- 2:30 p. m.—Breezy entertainment—Emerson Winters Company.
- 3:15 p. m.—"The Man with the Hammer"—Dr. James R. Gettys. Admission, 15 and 25 cents.
- Children's Big Night**
- 7:30 p. m.—A lively half hour with Emerson Winters Company—Bird warblings, pianologs, and unique entertainment.
- 8:15 p. m.—Magic, mystery and fun—Edwin Brush Company—Chautauqua's highest type magicians. Admission, 15 and 35 cents.

**SIXTH DAY**

- 10:00 a. m.—Youths' Chautauqua—Finais in athletic tests—The child at work in the home.
- 2:30 p. m.—Mirth and music—Pauline Harrington Company—Three original, clever girls.
- 3:15 p. m.—Address—"Does It Pay?"—Dr. Lincoln McConnell, America's most popular Chautauqua lecturer. Admission, 15 and 50 cents.
- 7:30 p. m.—Grand finale—Joy night for everybody—Pauline Harrington Company.
- 8:30 p. m.—Lecture—"Dead Lions"—The acme of all Chautauqua lectures—Dr. McConnell. Admission, 25 and 50 cents.

Lincoln Chautauqua Program, Holland, Michigan,  
August 14-19, 1916.  
"Welker Papers," Omaha, Nebraska.

## Appendix B

**MY DECISION**

(Mark your decision with an X)

**KEEP THIS AS A REMINDER**

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1....        | To accept Christ as my Saviour.                                     |
| 2....        | To identify myself with the Church.                                 |
| 3....        | To pray more.   |
| 4....        | To read the Bible daily.  |
| 5....        | To attend Church more regularly.                                    |
| 6....        | To attend both services each Sunday.                                |
| 7....        | To attend Prayer Meeting regularly.                                 |
| 8....        | To join the Sunday School.  |
| 9....        | To join the C. E.   |
| 10....       | To join the Junior Society.   |
| 11....       | To join the Intermediate Society.                                   |
| 12....       | To join the Woman's Missionary Society.                             |
| 13....       | To join the Guild.  |
| 14. <b>X</b> | To prepare myself for some form of Christian work for my life work. |
| 15....       | To endeavor to lead people to Christ.                               |
| 16....       | To invite others to attend Church.                                  |
| 17....       | To call on strangers and the sick.                                  |
| 18....       | To undertake some definite Christian work.                          |
| 19....       | To reconsecrate myself to Christ.                                   |
| 20....       | To give a tenth of my income to the Lord.                           |
| 21....       | .....   |
| Name         | <i>H. Clarett Welker</i>  |

Welker's Decision Card from Gordon Presbyterian Church  
 Special Services When He Decided to Enter the Ministry.  
 Attached to Welker Diaries, January 11, 1916.

APPENDIX C

CLASS-ROOM SCHEDULE OF CURRICULUM, 1918-19.						
Time	MONDAY.	TUESDAY.	WEDNESDAY.	THURSDAY.	FRIDAY.	SATURDAY.
8:10	2. Elocution. 1. Gospel History. 3. Biblical Theology.	49 4. Gospel History. 3. Biblical Theology.	49 4. Gospel History. 3. Biblical Theology.	4. Elocution. 2. Biblical Theology.	4. Elocution. 1. Biblical Theology.	1. Homiletics. 2. Evidences of Christianity. 3. Church History.
9:10	<b>MORNING PRAYERS</b>					
9:30	1. Elocution. 3	42 1 & 2. English Bible (1st term). 3. Apostolic History.	1 & 3. Pastoral Theology. (1st term). 8.	42 1. New Testament Introduction (1st term). Exegesis. (2d term). 3. Systematic Theology.	1. New Testament Exegesis. 3. Systematic Theology.	1. Systematic Theology.
10:30	1. Elocution. 4	4 1. Elocution. 2. Church History.	4 1. Elocution. 2. Church History.	4 1. Apologetics.	1. Apologetics.	
11:30	1. Old Testament History.	1. Old Testament History. (1st term). Old Testament Introduction (2d term). 6.	1. History of Religion (2d term). O.T. History	6. Elocution. 1. Systematic Theology.	6. Elocution. 1. Systematic Theology.	
2:00		7.	7. Greek. I John	2. Missions.		
3:00				43 1. Church History. 3. Christian Sociology. (1st term).	43 1 & 2. English Bible (1st term). 3. Church History.	
4:00	2. Semitic Elective, Exegesis.	2. Old Testament Introduction. (1st term). Old Testament Poetic Literature. (2d term).	2. Evidences of Christianity.			
5:00	1. Hebrew. 42 2. Old Testament Exegesis (1st term) 3. Old Testament Prophetic Literature (2d term).	1. Hebrew. 42 2. Old Testament Exegesis (1st term) 3. Old Testament Prophetic Literature (2d term).	1. Church History. 10. 2. Homiletics.	44 1. Hebrew. 3. Homiletics.	1. Hebrew.	
7:15	5 1. Bible Reading	5 1. Missionary and Student Association Meetings. 6. Homiletics.	6 1. Homiletic Practice (7:30)	3. Homiletic Practice. (8:00)	1. Homiletic Practice. (7:30)	

Rev. C. E. Macartney will meet groups for Homiletic Practice Monday afternoon and evening. The numeral standing before a subject indicates the year of the Regular Course to which the study belongs.

Welker's Senior Year Class Schedule at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey. Attached to Welker Diaries, September 25, 1918.



## Appendix D

Princeton, Jan. 7 1918

My dear Mrs. Welker,

Let me commend very  
highly your excellent paper in  
Evidences.

Sincerely yours,

W. Brenton Greene, Jr.

Letter of Commendation to H. Clare Welker  
at Princeton Theological Seminary.  
Attached to Welker Diaries,  
January 7, 1918

## Appendix E

— 0 0

Brighton Colo, April 10, 1933

Rev and Mrs H C Welker  
 Dear Friends

By direction of the congregation, expressed at their annual meeting of the Church on March 29, I am addressing this letter to you to convey some token of the appreciation of that congregation, for your generous gift to the Church. I refer to the announcement that you were as a family united in remitting to the Church from the amount due you, its pastor, the sum of \$100.00.

This, in addition to the regular contribution which we know that you have made, and other gifts that we know less of, but which we know have been made, is most generous on your part and indicates to us that where the heart is, the treasure easily follows.

Ralph R Lee  
 Clerk of Session

Brighton Presby. Church

Letter of Appreciation for Welker's Remittance of \$100 of His Salary From First Presbyterian Church of Brighton, Colorado. "First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," April 10, 1933.

## Appendix F

Brighton, Colorado,

April 1, 1936.

To the Members of the Congregation  
 of The First Presbyterian Church,  
 Brighton, Colorado.

Dear Friends:

I hereby present my resignation as pastor, subject to the action of the congregation, said resignation, if accepted by the congregation, to take effect on or before May 31, 1936 at the discretion of the pastor provided, (1) that the current salary of the pastor shall have been paid in full from April 1, 1935 to date on which said resignation becomes effective at the specified rate of \$1800.00 per year. (2) That at least \$200.00 shall have been paid on the total of approximately \$1200.00 due to the pastor in unpaid salary for the two-year period from April 1, 1933 to March 31, 1935 and (3) That no action looking to the dissolution of the pastoral relationship shall be taken without the consent of the pastor till above conditions are met.

Respectfully submitted,



Pastor.

H. Clare Welker's Letter of Resignation.  
 "First Presbyterian Church Congregational Minutes,"  
 Brighton, Colorado, April 1, 1936.

## Appendix G

## A Call from the First Presbyterian Church of Loveland

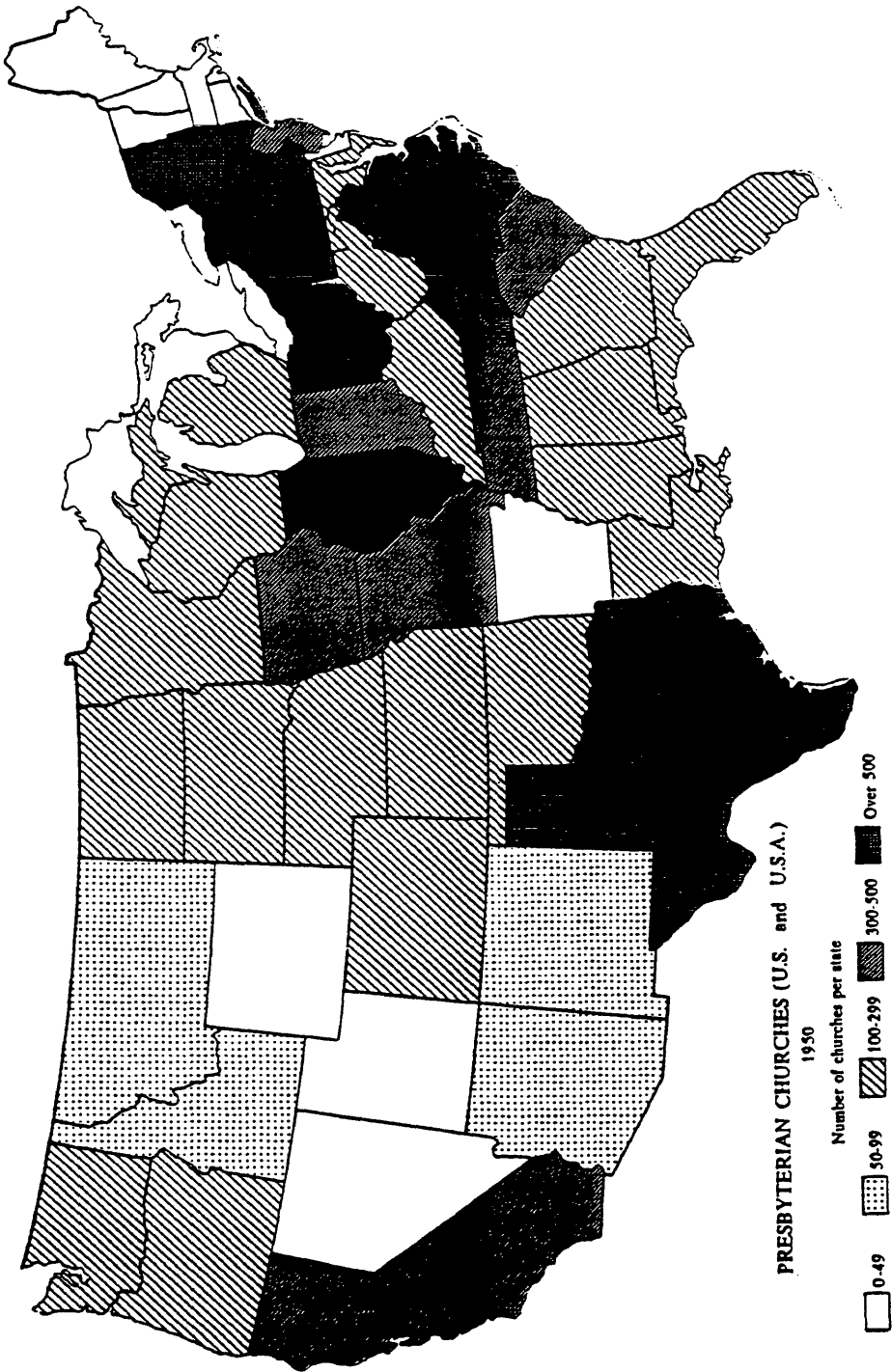
The congregstion of the First Presyterian Church of Loveland being, on sufficient grounds, well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, Rev. E. Clare Welker, and having good hopes, from our past experience of your labors, that your ministrations in the gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call and desire you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation; promising you, in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay to you the sum of \$2,100 regular monthly payments, the free use of the manse, the pension plan, and one month vacation per year during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church. In testimony whereof, we have respectively subscribed our names, this eighth day of August 1944.

*S. Gates* ----- Clerk of Session  
*W. H. Walker* -----  
*Otto K. Fick* -----  
*John Stochelgen* -----  
*Harry Wicks* -----  
*R. E. Wright* -----

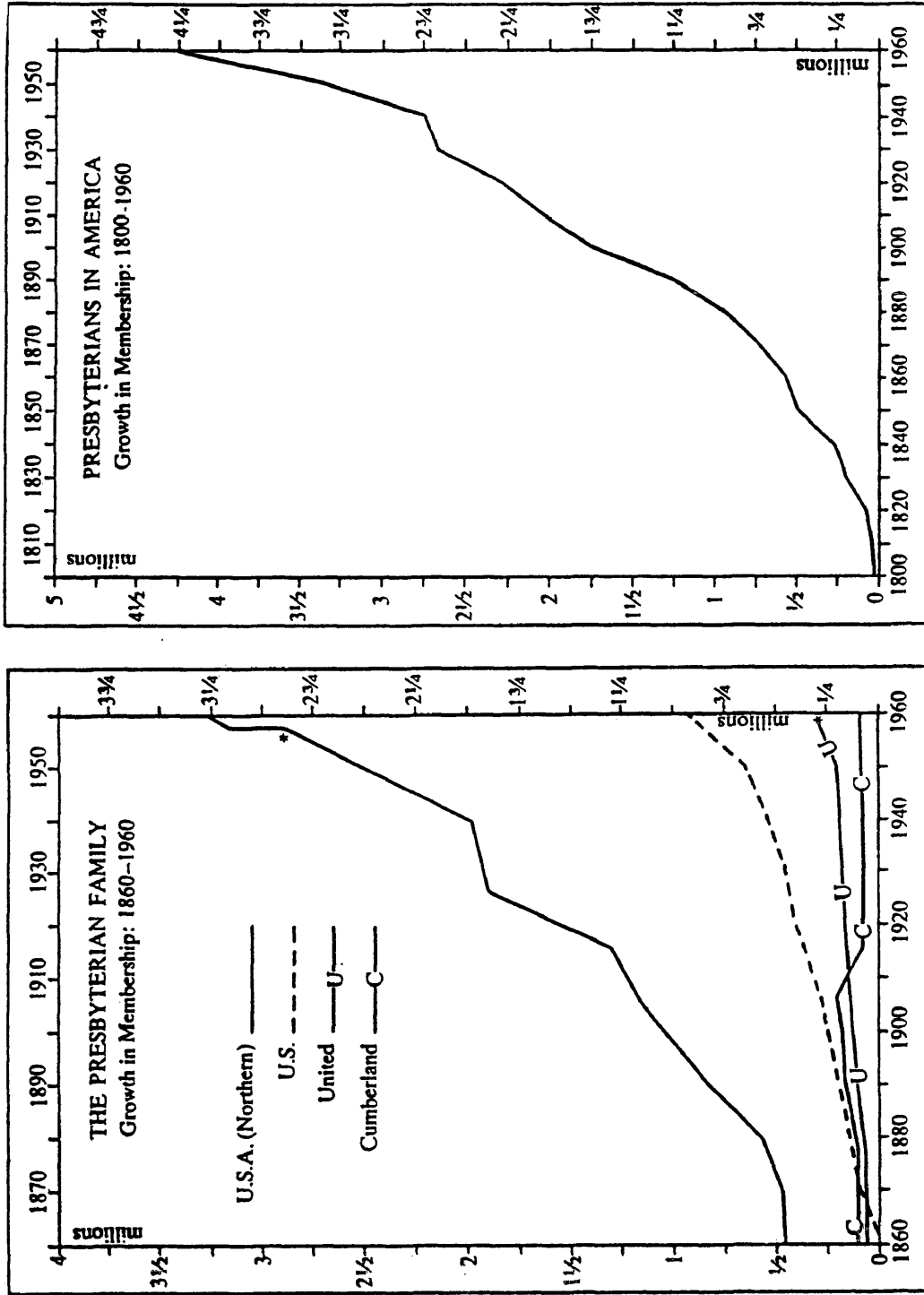
This is to certify after due and timely notice, I, Andrew W. Hollars, presided over the congregational meeting of the First Presbyterian Church of Loveland, Colorado, that the Rev. E. Clare Welker, was elected to the pastorate of said church with only one discenting vote. *Andrew W. Hollars*

H. Clare Welker's Call to the First Presbyterian Church of Loveland, Colorado, "First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes," August 8, 1944.

APPENDIX H



Edwin Scott Gaustad, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Harper and Row Publisher, 1962), 90.



\*The U.S.A. and United branches merged in 1958.

Membership totals include all groups cited in Figure 77.

Edwin Scott Gaustad, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America*  
(New York: Harper and Row Publisher, 1962), 91.

## Appendix J

Loveland, Colo., March 14, 1956

Dear Clare and David:

Today is my seventieth birthday. That fact, of itself, is of no great significance except as it causes me to consider certain other things.

One of these is the many good times we have enjoyed together. For our companionship as a family I am truly grateful. Of course there have been times when the sledging was pretty rough for all of us but, on the whole, the good times have far outnumbered the bad ones. Naturally I regret that I couldn't have done much more for you boys than I have but I am sure the hand of God has been in all our experiences as a family and that He will continue to prosper and bless us in the future as He has in the past.

In the second place this anniversary causes me to consider what I hope is in store for you and your families during the years which will intervene between now and the time when you will be celebrating your seventieth birthdays. First among these things is the hope and prayer that you will lead truly Christian lives. As you well know this depends entirely on the relationship in which you stand to God through your personal faith in Christ and with the help of the Holy Spirit. No matter what success or happiness you or I may have otherwise the end result will be real tragedy unless we live our lives in accordance with the teachings of the Bible.

Next, I hope for you and yours long life and good health. In a large measure good health depends upon us ourselves. Now we take care of our bodies is a very important matter.

Then I hope you and your families will all lead useful lives. Strangely enough I have no great concern about this item as I can't imagine you will ever do otherwise. At least to date you have never shown any tendency to waste your time and your abilities.

Lastly, if it be God's will, I hope you will lead happy lives. Happiness depends in a large measure on our relationship with those about us. In so far as possible, be a friend to all. This is the first principle of real happiness.

Above all don't ever lose your sense of humor. A happy disposition is better than all the medicine in the world. Learn to laugh with the other fellow and not at him.

Remember that we will always be praying for you.

Love to both,

*Father*

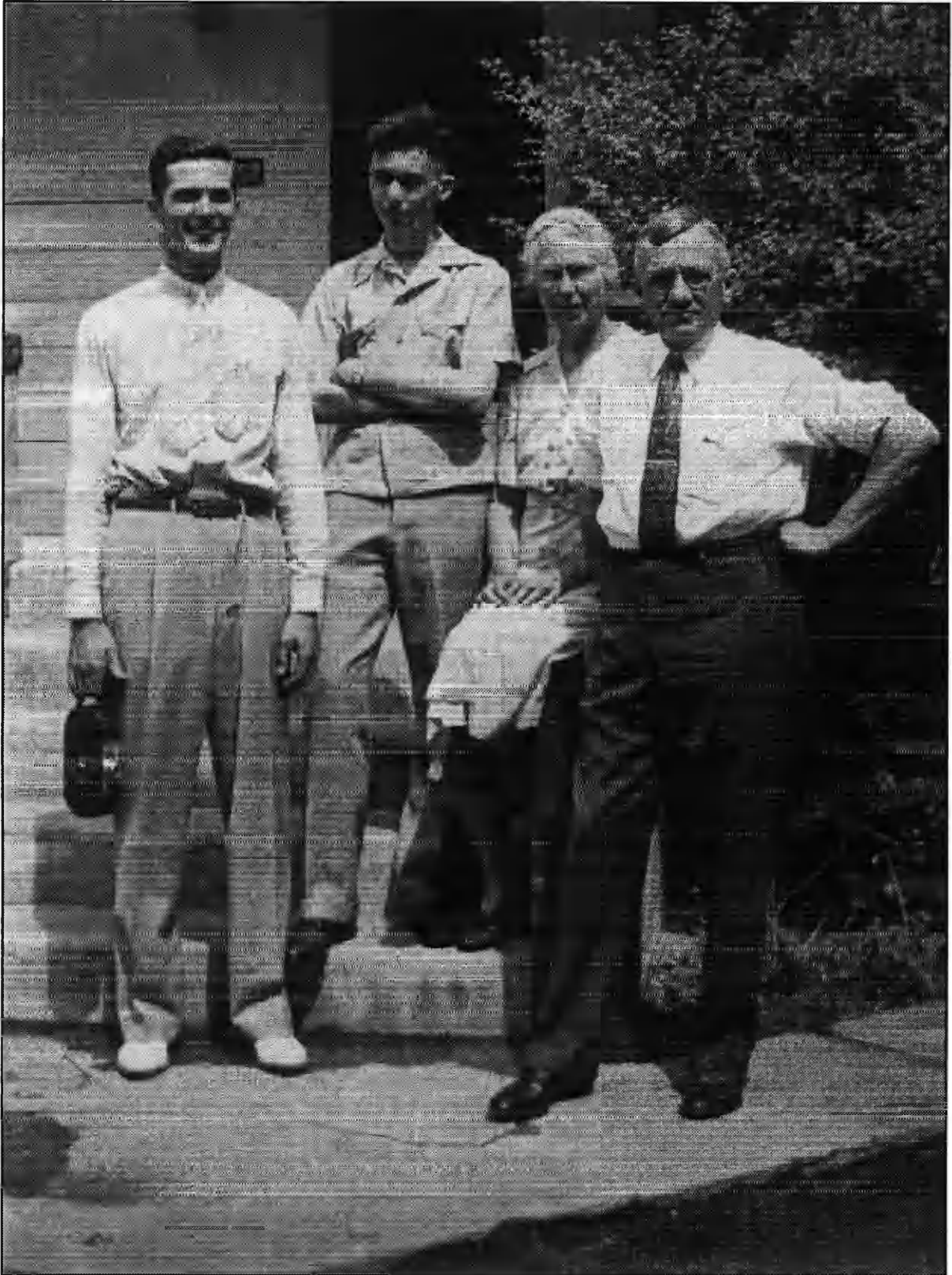
Letter From H. Clare Welker to His Sons, Loveland, Colorado,  
March 14, 1956.

"Welker Papers," Omaha, Nebraska..

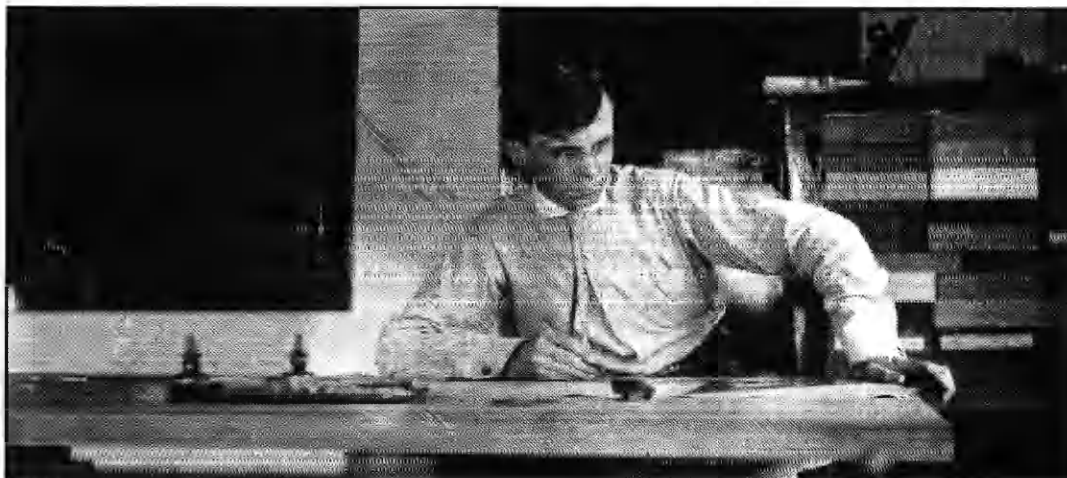
## PHOTOGRAPHIC SECTION

All photographs from Welker photograph albums in the possession of  
David J. Welker, Omaha, Nebraska





The Welker Family, left to right: Clare, David, Louise, H. Clare. Loveland, Colorado, 1946.



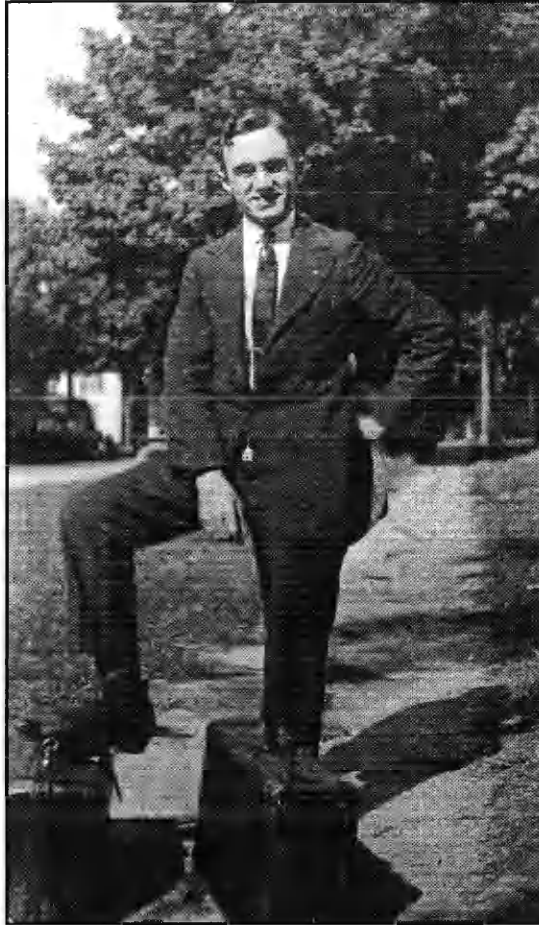
Welker Working at Way Architectural Firm. Hastings, Nebraska, 1908.



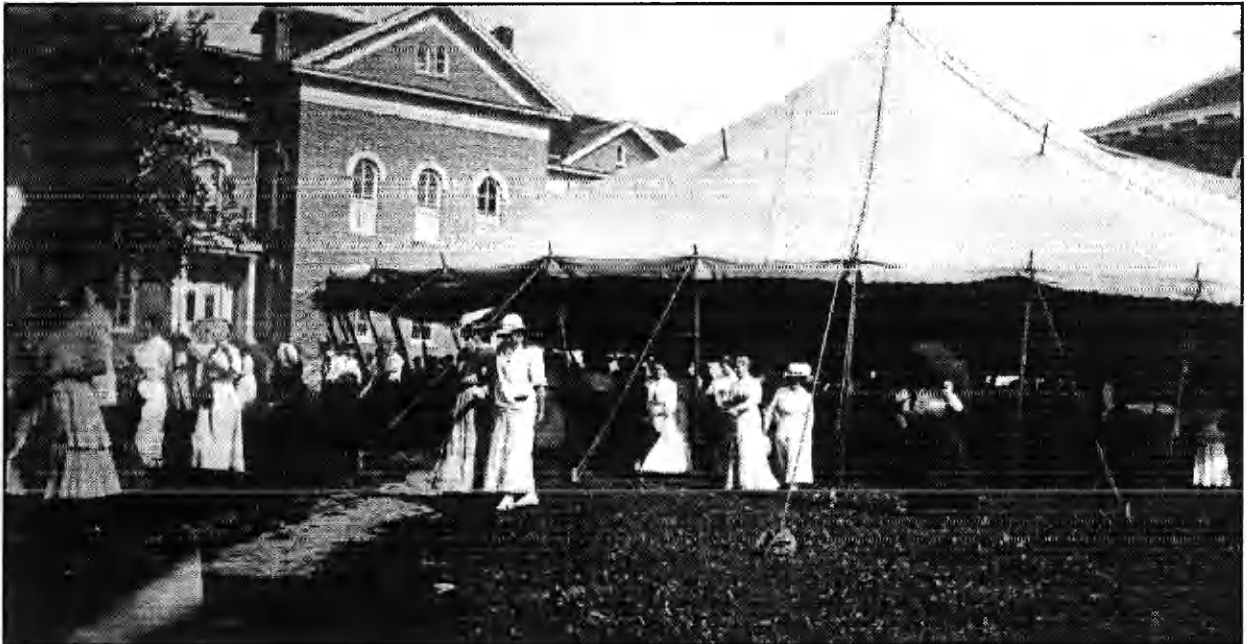
A Feed at Hastings College. Hastings, Nebraska, 1908.



Welker and the Girls at Hastings College. Hastings, Nebraska, 1909. (Welker on left)



Welker on the  
Chautauqua Circuit.  
Nebraska, 1913.



Chautauqua at Neilsville, Wisconsin, 1916.



Welker at Indian Round-Up. Gordon, Nebraska, 1915. (Welker on right)



Welker with Students at Gordon School. Gordon, Nebraska, 1915. (Welker in back row)





Gordon Faculty.  
Gordon, Nebraska,  
1913-1914.  
(Welker in center)



Welker's Family, Left to right: Mother, Vallie, Mabel, Gladys, Father, Linn. Lyons, Nebraska, 1910.



Welker's First  
Pastorate.  
Morrill, Nebraska,  
1919-1922.

The Welker's as Newlyweds.  
Morrill, Nebraska, 1920.



Welker's Second  
Pastorate.  
Guthrie Center, Iowa,  
1923-1928.



Welker's Boy's Club. Sidney, Nebraska, 1928-1930.



Welker's Fourth Pastorate. Brighton, Colorado, 1930-1936.



Welker's Fifth Pastorate. Oakesdale, Washington, 1937-1938.



Early trip to Estes Park.  
(Louise and Clare).  
Estes Park, Colorado,  
August 1927.



The Cabins at Estes Park. Estes Park, Colorado, 1948.





Welker's Sixth Pastorate. Powell, Wyoming, 1938-1944.



Main Street of Powell. Powell, Wyoming, 1939.



Welker's Seventh Pastorate. Loveland, Colorado, 1944-1952.



Welker in His Cut-A-Way Following a Wedding. Loveland, Colorado, 1950.



Welker's Seventieth Birthday Celebration at Lions Club. Loveland, Colorado, March 14, 1956.

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