

Kinnickinnic Church's 150th Anniversary Celebration

By Amy Thurston

Located at County J and JJ, the Kinnickinnic Church has served as a treasured landmark for many generations. The church was built in 1868 and was shared by the area's Methodists and Congregationalists for services on alternate Sundays. As Methodist numbers declined, Congregationalists bought the building in 1895.



Kinnickinnic Church in the Early 1900's

Early farmers and their families drove horse-drawn buggies for as many as ten miles to attend the religious services, returning at dusk to milk the cows. These worshippers also took time "to neighbor" at these gatherings as they discussed their mutual and personal problems. Harvest help outs and barn raisings were arranged at such times, and a warm sense of community emerged.

Bill Nye, a contemporary of Mark Twain, was a journalist, lecturer, and author who had associations with the little church. He lectured and preached at the Kinnickinnic Church on many occasions. Bill Nye also enjoyed practicing his speeches at the church. It is said that he acquired his substantial oratorical skills speaking to empty pews at the church.

The Congregationalists used the building as their church until 1951. Then it stood empty for eleven years.

The Congregationalists found a buyer who planned to convert the building into a house. Concerned about the loss of the church, some fifty people assembled at the town hall to oppose the sale. In 1962, they formed what became the

Kinnickinnic Historical Association. Since that time, the church and its grounds have been lovingly maintained by this group. The Kinnickinnic Church is on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.



The Kinnickinnic Church Today

Photo by Sally Jilek

Each year, an Ice Cream Social is held, and the proceeds are used to maintain the church. The next Social will be held on Sunday, August 5, 2018.

Currently, a committee is planning a weekend of celebration for the little church's upcoming 150th anniversary on September 15th and 16th, 2018. On that Saturday, the events will include a historical program at the church, including a letter from the December 1868 dedication, and sing along with organ. Also on Saturday, there will be a historical tour of the nearby Kinnickinnic cemetery. On Sunday we will celebrate with a service in the church, a potluck after the service, and children's games from that time period.

Please see the Kinnickinnic Historical Association's Facebook page for specific times as the celebration draws near. We'd love to have as much community involvement as possible. Please contact Jullianne Bartos at (julianne.mcgowan@att.net) if you would like to help make this a great community event as we celebrate the church's 150th anniversary.

Amy Thurston is a retired English teacher and has been President of the Kinnickinnic Historical Society since 1998.