

Fredsville's 150th Anniversary Historical Reading

May 16, 2021

Today's 150th Anniversary Historical Reading is what Byron Johnson wrote and read fifteen years ago when Fredsville had a Cemetery Walk for their 135th Anniversary.

I, Bryon Roger Johnson, was born May 11, 1917 to Hans & Minnie (Jensen) Johnson. I was baptized at the Fredsville Lutheran Church three weeks later and was confirmed at age 15 in 1932. When I was 7 years old, my Mother passed away.

The church bell that you hear every Sunday morning before church services is a recording of the original bell. That bell was brought here from Dubuque, Iowa, some 100 miles away. Some of the church members, including my mother, traveled there in several wagons to pick up the bell. The wagons were loaded with feed for the horses and food for the help. I was never told how long their trip took. It did take many more miles than the current 100 miles as there was not a direct route for the wagons to go on. The bell was very heavy, and took several men to lift it. This original church bell is now located in the church cemetery.

The bell tolled several different times each Sunday morning to let everyone know that church was soon to happen. The bell was also tolled whenever someone died. First, the bell would ring for 2-3 minutes to get everyone's attention. Children were taught to stand still and be quiet. Then the bell would start to toll again. This time, each toll represented a year that the person lived. People would count the tolls and try to figure out who had died.

Before radio or TV, when someone passed away, notice of their death was sent to family and friends. Special stationery that was edged in black was used to write these death notices on. I remember my female relatives sitting at our family's kitchen table, writing the death notices for my mother.