

# 1954 - Women Weak? They Led Building Of Ingomar Church 50 Years Ago

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INGOMAR, June 22.—“Oh you’re just a woman,” the men sometimes tell us, and perhaps they add, “and you know women are the weaker sex.”

Sure, I’ve had that tossed in my face a number of times, and I imagine every other gal has heard practically the same “song.” Well, right here and now I intend to tell you men about a group of women who proved they were far from weaklings, and further more, have a church to show for it.

In 1904, there was a small church located on the hill between the two villages of Ingomar and Enterprise. How long it had been there prior to '04, I can not say, but the years had been many and the building was badly in need of repair.

Everyone talked about its run-down condition but just like the weather, “no one did anything about it.” That is until seven of the church women met in Ingomar one evening at the home of Mrs. Sally Wachtel and decided to organize a society in the church.

The first official meeting was held on Jan. 21, 1904 at Mrs. Jane Summers’ home just north of the church. Officers were elected at this meeting and Mrs. Ella Eby became the group’s first president.

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**THEIR FIRST PROJECT** was to repair the church building, but there they hit the first snag. They learned that the edifice was beyond repair and had even been condemned. It must have looked mighty glum to them about that time. Their job was not to repair the old church, but rather, to build a new one.

They all agreed to tackle the

work of getting another church, and because of the willingness to help, they adopted the name, “Willing Workers.”

They began holding Sewink Bees every Wednesday afternoon to raise money and finally on April 12, 1905, they bought a plot of ground in Ingomar with the \$142.90 they had earned. They were one step nearer their goal—at least they had a vacant lot. The next hurdle was the biggest, however.

That’s where every member of the old church had to get busy. The men took over the construction work, but don’t think for a minute that these Willing Workers just sat back and watched. They borrowed a team of horses named Sam and Barney, from the Gebhart family and with them, the women loaded rocks and hauled them to the site of the proposed new St. John Lutheran church.

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**OF COURSE** that wasn’t the only part the society played in the

building of its new church. In history of the group, I read how they had stripped tobacco, picked burrs from wool, burned brush and made quilts. For just a quilt top they received 75c and for the completed quilt, (and the Worker furnished the thread and all the material) they received and astounding amount of \$2.10. It was slow and many times discouraging work, but they wouldn’t give up. On Dec. 16, 1906, the new church was dedicated.

In 1913, on the ninth anniversary of the society, the following report was given: 236 meetings had been held, 45 quilts had been made and with all the other odd and unusual jobs they had tackled, they learned that they had cleared \$1028.24.

That was in 1913. Since that time the group has redecorated and recarpeted the church three times, and bought new baptismal fountain and altar pieces. Now in 1954, under the leadership of Mrs. Bertha Duncan, the membership roll carries 47 names.

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**LAST SUNDAY** there was a big reunion over at the Ingomar church. It had been 50 years since that first meeting back in 1904 and the Willing Workers Missionary Society of the St. John Lutheran church celebrated its Golden anniversary with a tea at the church.

Of the original group, only five survive. Seventy-year-old Lola Paullus and 68-year-old Mamie Wachtel are still members of the church and the WWMS, while the other three survivors have moved from the vicinity and are no longer members.

It was a real homecoming Sunday afternoon, honoring a group of the weaker sex who can so rightly be called the “Willing Workers.”