

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Poland Methodist Church 150th Anniversary Project

Poland Methodist Church 150th Anniversary

O. H. 131

MABLE MILLER

Interviewed

by

Wilfredo Rivera

on

May 4, 1981

MABLE MILLER

Mable Miller was born on August 21, 1906, the daughter of John and Martha Mosley in Boardman, Ohio. The Mosley family relocated to Poland when Mable was young and she attended school there. Unfortunately, Mable didn't complete her secondary education because of personal reasons. She did manage to attend some schooling in which a bookkeeping skill was acquired. She was a bookkeeper for four years and decided not to continue while raising her family of five children.

Mable is an active member of the United Methodist Church in Poland and is also involved with the educational system on Sundays. She enjoys cooking, knitting and conducting Tupperware parties.

Wilfredo Rivera

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INTERVIEWEE: MABLE MILLER

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SUBJECT: Poland Methodist Church 150th Anniversary

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R: This is an interview with Mrs. Mable Miller for the Youngstown State University 150th anniversary of Poland's United Methodist Church by Wilfredo Rivera at 8369 Chesterton Drive Poland, Ohio on May 4, 1981.

Mrs. Miller could you tell me a little bit about where your father was born and your mother and some stories you recall of your family's past?

M: My father was born in Hubbard in 1876. He lived in Hubbard and Vienna as a boy. He came to Poland at the age of sixteen. His family lived in Poland from then on. He became a blacksmith at a young age.

My mother was born in La Rae, Virginia and came to Greenford, Ohio at the age of four. After the age of four, her mother passed away. Her father took her back to La Rae and she lived in La Rae for several years until her father remarried. Then he came back to Greenford, Ohio. He worked in a greenhouse there. Then my mother never had too much of an education. She had to go out on her own at a very young age. She went to live with some people and work for her board and room. Then she came to Poland and met my father. She came with some people to work here as a maid. She met my father and they were married in, gosh, I think it was 1900 they were married.

Then my father had his own blacksmith shop in Poland. He was the village blacksmith until about 1917 I think. He went into the Sheet and Tube to work. They always belonged

to the Methodist Church. His family joined the Methodist Church when they came to Poland to live.

Then my father moved to Struthers and opened a blacksmith shop in Struthers, but they still went to the Poland Methodist Church. My mother was very active in the Ladies Aid Society. They helped finance the church by working in the church.

R: Where exactly was the church located?

M: The church was right on Main Street. Right where the Union National Bank stands now. And, we lived right next door.

R: Are there any stories that you recall about that church when you were young?

M: Yes, many many stories. We went over there and the church was small. We only had one great big Sunday school room. We used to take our chairs, we'd have an opening exercise, take our chairs and go to our corner and our teacher would teach our lesson. Then we'd have a closing exercise. Mr. Mark Kimmel was the superintendent of the Sunday school. Then after Mr. Kimmel passed away his son took over and was superintendent of the Sunday school. I have many fond memories of the Sunday school and the Epworth League. [the young people's group]. I was very active in the Epworth League.

We lived right next door, as I say, to the church. On Sunday evening, all the young people would come as far as our place and we'd have a lunch and then go to Epworth League. So we did have quite an active part in church as young children.

R: What was the size of your family?

M: I had one brother and one sister.

R: They attended the Methodist church also?

M: They attended the church too.

R: Who happened to be the minister at that specific time?

M: Well, I remember the ministers from Reverend Nichols. We had a Reverend Nichols and he was followed by Reverend Porter and Reverend Baker, Reverend Shenafelt and Reverend Clark. Reverend Clark was the minister that married my husband and I.

R: Can you tell me something about these specific men's backgrounds? How instrumental were they to the church?

M: Very good. We have always been very fortunate in having very good ministers. They've led the church on. Our church was very prosperous, you might say, because we've never been in any real difficulty, that I know of, anyway.

R: Which of these values did your parents stress the most and why? Hard work, religion, education or a career?

M: Well, I think they really stressed our religion first. Then hard work. They never stressed too much about our education and our careers. At that time, they just didn't do that so much. There wasn't that many young people who went to college then.

R: Can you tell me a little bit about the church itself while you lived next to it? The way it was structured?

M: The structure?

R: Yes.

M: Well, one thing I remember and feel awfully bad that we couldn't use them was the big stained glass windows. We had the window that faced our house was a window of Christ knocking at the door. That was a very impressive window. Then in the Sunday school room, there was a window. The one with Christ knocking at the door had been donated by Mrs. Jane Lewis. Then we had, in the Sunday school part of the church, we had a picture of President McKinley, a stained glass window worked out. This was donated by President McKinley's wife. They, at one time, went to our church. They lived in Poland.

R: How many years were you a member to this church or are you a member?

M: Yes, I'm a member and I've been a member. I think I joined the church when I was twelve or thirteen. I've been a member ever since. But, as I said, I'm a cradle roll member. I've never gone to any other church in my life.

R: What do you think about this church?

M: I love it. It has been a big consolation to me to be a member of this church, because the members in the church have been very good to me. I've had quite a lot of trouble

losing different members of my family. It has been through the church that I've been able to get through it.

R: Do most of your friends attend this church?

M: Oh yes.

R: Did most of your friends when you were a child attend the church?

M: Yes.

R: What is one major event that you remember most about the church while you were a child?

M: Well, I don't know that I can say any. There was always a lot of activities in the church. They used to have socials where the whole family went, not only the young people, but the whole family went and enjoyed things as a family. That, I remember, those days quite well. I remember, oh, some of my Sunday school teachers that, well, they were just like a mother to me.

R: What is so unique about the Methodist faith?

M: Well, I think we believe in God and we try to stress that amongst our study in our Sunday school. Without that faith, we wouldn't be anyplace that's all.

R: You were married in this church?

M: Yes, I was married in this church. My children were all baptized in the church and they were all married in the church.

R: How long did you live in that house next to the church?

M: Well, I lived there as a child. Then when I got married, I was gone for ten years. Then I moved back and I lived there the rest of sixty years that my family owned the property.

R: What happened to the church?

M: It burned.

R: It burned?

M: Yes.

R: Can you tell me what were the causes of the fire and what was done?

M: They thought probably electrical wiring. They thought that it started in the electric wiring in the organ. That's where the fire seemed to be in the beginning. It was sure an awful sight. It made you sick to stand there and watch it burn. There was nothing they could do. It took all of the church, but it didn't hurt the Sunday school.

We had built on to the church in, I think that was in 1947. We had built Sunday school rooms on. There was two floors. There was a fire wall between the two buildings, so that the fire didn't get back into that part. We held church and held Sunday school in there. We rented the North Elementary School and had church there until we could get into our new church. The church burned in 1957, April 1, 1957, and I think, in two years, we went into the new church, but it wasn't completed. But, it was done enough that we could hold services.

R: How did the people react?

M: They were wonderful. Everybody just got down and got to work and worked real hard to try to build this new church. They really worked hard.

R: Why didn't the people decide to reconstruct the first building?

M: Well, we had been in the process of buying property around there, because we had outgrown the building. The church wasn't large enough. It was going to be very expensive to buy up more property. We had bought one property and were thinking of buying some more when this happened. It was going to be very expensive. Two of the members of the church had property on the Boardman Road where the church now stands and they kindly donated that property. We could build a whole new church. The contractor bought the old church and turned it into a bank.

R: Who were the donaters of the land, do you know?

M: The donaters of the land were Ernest Withers and Bill Evans.

R: In what year was the church finally completed?

M: Oh, I couldn't tell you that without looking it up. I do have the dates, but I'd have to see. But we worked. We had a stand at the Canfield fair. We worked night and day. We had a cafeteria type lunch place at the Canfield fair. Everybody in the church worked real hard to pay this church off.

R: Did you hold these special occasions every year at the Canfield fair?

M: Every year for, I think, about ten years we went out there. We made lots of money and put it all right into the building fund. The Sunday school class that I belonged to used to serve dinners, serve the Kiwanas Club and the Rotary Club. We made pies and sold pies. Some of us women worked up at the church everyday for awhile and made these pies. We made enough money on these things that our class put \$16,000.00 into the new building. We're the oldest class in the church. So, we felt very proud of that.

R: How many members were there to the congregation before the church burned down?

M: Somewhere between 900 and 1,000.

R: Back then?

M: Yes.

R: And how many are there presently?

M: I'm not exactly sure, but I think somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,100.

R: At the time of the burning of the church, who was the present minister?

M: Reverend Marston.

R: What do you recall about this specific person?

M: Well, he was very ambitious. He felt right along that we needed a new church and he got right busy and got committees appointed and started right in to see what we could do about building another church.

R: Did anybody at the time suspect arson?

M: Not that I know of.

- R: Don't you feel that it was rather a coincidence that the church burned down and right away they were talking about building a new church and then the fire came up?
- M: Well of course, we just didn't want to be without a church. We wanted a place to worship.
- R: After this Reverend left, who came in and replaced him?
- M: Reverend Hess, John Hess.
- R: Can you tell me a little bit about Mr. Hess, Reverend Hess?
- M: Well, he was a very ambitious sort of a person. He helped us to work. We were still working on the fair when he came here. He just put on his apron and helped us work just like everybody else. He was a good hard worker and a good minister. He had a nice family.
- R: What do you remember most about Reverend Hess? How instrumental was he to the church?
- M: Very good, he was very good. He was very good with calling on the shut-ins and calling on the sick and ministering to all the needs of the people.
- R: During this time like late 1950's early 1960's, you had started a family, am I correct?
- M: Oh yes. In 1928 we started our family.
- R: How many children did you have in your family?
- M: I had five children. I had four girls and a boy.
- R: During this specific time, which value did you stress the most? Was it hard work, religion, education or a career?
- M: Well, we tried to stress education and then religion with our children. We started them into church and Sunday school when they were very young. We stressed that they all graduated from high school. None of them went on to college, but they all ended up having good jobs and, of course, married.
- R: How did the church, at that specific time period, handle the present crisis situations. For example, the Vietnam War starting up, the threat of radical groups getting together? How did the church respond to issues like that?

M: Well, they weren't too happy about us being in war, but I think they co-operated with everything that needed to be done.

R: Are there any other events in this specific time period that you can express to us?

M: I really can't think of anything.

R: Okay, after Reverend Hess left, who was the next minister in line?

M: Reverend Lockert.

R: Lockert?

M: Glen Lockert.

R: What was his background all about?

M: Well, he was a very good minister and moved up to a higher position when he left here. He was a very good minister.

R: What was his philosophy about religion?

M: Well, just like all the rest of them I think. Like I said before, we've had all very good ministers. They've all been very helpful to the people in time of need and brought them out of situations. When they needed help real bad, they were there.

R: Who is your present minister?

M: Santomen, Dr. Joe Santomen.

R: A little bit about his background?

M: Well, he has only been with us for a couple of years, but he was at a church in Canton for six years. He's a very good man. He's very very good with the sick and the elderly about calling on them and ministering to them in time of need. He's a very likeable man. We like him very much.

R: The members of the congregation are of what ethnic background?

M: Well, I really don't know. A lot of the older members are just like myself, that were born and raised right around in this area. We, at one time, had a woman belong to our

church who was from Haiti, but right now she belongs to a Boardman church. She moved in that area and she goes to the Boardman Methodist Church. I don't know. We haven't had too many other nationalities that I know of.

R: What event do you recall most about the church besides the burning of the church?

M: The remodeling of the old church. That was a big event. As a young person in the Epworth League, we used to work real hard all year, and every year at Christmas time we took up collection of food and clothing and things and took it to the Elyria Home for the aged and to the Berea Home. Those are the things that we worked on. We used to put on little plays. Maybe we'd put it on in our church one night and go to some other church another night and make a little bit of money or those kinds of things. We built a tennis court, the Epworth League did, in back of the church and we had it for a long time.

R: How are the people of the church at the present time reacting to the present crisis situation, such as inflation, unemployment, issues along that nature?

M: Well, we've had quite a bit of that in our church. We've had quite a few members of our church that lost jobs through the Sheet and Tube closing and the Briar Hill Works, and different things like that which were kind of hard on the membership. But, I don't know everybody seems to try to keep up their end of financing the church and everything anyway.

R: What has been done to fight off these crises?

M: Well, our minister worked real hard with that coalition they had in Youngstown trying to see what they could do to get the mills going again.

R: I understand there are a lot of members of this church relocating elsewhere?

M: Right, right.

R: Especially the young people?

M: There were quite a few of them. We lost quite a few through that.

R: How instrumental are the young people of the church?

- M: Very instrumental. We have a very good group of young people in our church, very hard workers right now. They're taking over of the church in a wonderful way.
- R: What are they pushing or emphasizing most?
- M: Well, I think they emphasize religion and missionary work. They emphasize a lot on the missions of the church.
- R: And do they emphasize schooling itself?
- M: Oh yes, we have quite a few college graduates, quite a few school teachers, people who do stress education.
- R: Could you tell me a little bit more about the schooling system your church has or provides to the community?
- M: Well, of course, we have our Sunday school and they have a nursery on Sunday morning that they take care of the youngsters so that the young people can be in the service at the church. They also have a Bible School every summer. They put on a Bible School. They have M.Y.F. [the young people's group]. They have boy scouts, girl scouts.
- R: Mrs. Miller, this celebration of the 150th anniversary, what does it symbolize to the people of the church?
- M: Well, I suppose it's to show them what the church has been in Poland for the last 150 years and how far they've come probably.
- R: What does it mean to you?
- M: Well, it means to me that religion will win out I think or Christianity will win out. It wouldn't have stayed for 150 years if it wasn't something worthwhile.
- R: What's being done by the present minister to prepare for this celebration?
- M: I really couldn't tell you.
- R: Are there any other major events that had occurred while you were a member of the church that might be of importance to us today?
- M: We had a lot of our men went off to the First World War. Then, the women of the church worked very hard. Through the Red Cross we worked and knitted and made socks and

scarves and sweaters. things for the men. There was quite a number. We lost two boys in World War II from our church. World War I, I guess that was.

R: What's the church mean to you?

M: Well, I don't know. I don't think I could live if I didn't have the church, if I didn't have those people. I don't know what my friends would be, because all my friends and the people are in the church. And, it's just something that I look forward to.

R: How do you keep yourself involved with the church?

M: Oh, I belong to Sunday School class, belong to the Women's Society. I go in every Tuesday and quilt. Some of us older women who can't work hard anymore, we make quilts and turn that money into the church.

R: How does your church and the surrounding churches in the community get along?

M: Very good, very good. We have a number of churches. We have two Baptist churches, a Lutheran church, a Friends church and two Presbyterian churches, and the Methodist and Catholic. And all the ministers work very well together.

R: Do they assist you when you have this Canfield fair occassion?

M: No, at that time we did that on our own. Well, I think maybe there were some of them that came out and helped us too. The Catholic church and our church has gotten along very good together. We even had a priest come to our church and baptize a baby, because the mother belonged to the Catholic church and the father belonged to the Methodist church and they went to both churches. So, when they baptized the baby both ministers baptized it. The priest came to our church and did it with a very impressive service.

R: Can you tell me where the church is heading in the near future?

M: Well, I think it's going to keep growing. I can't see it going down. I think that everybody is working toward a goal of it going on and on. I think there's definite signs of that.

R: Don't you feel our present crisis situation is going to play a big or important role toward the church? Is it going to have a major impact on the church?

M: Well, I don't think it's going to cause any damage to the church. I think the church is going to be the one that's going to help to pull us out of this present crisis. If anybody can, it'll be the church that will do it.

R: How can the church do this? How can it possibly do something like this?

M: Well, by the people sticking together and doing the right thing by it. And, I think that in numbers, by the people sticking together, it's going to help. They're going to help one another and by helping one another is the only way we're going to get out of this.

R: What has been done by the church to lend it's services in times of need today?

M: Well, our church has always done a lot of missionary work, and I think it's going to take missionary work to do it. Home missions as well as foreign missions.

R: Are all of the members of the congregation satisfied where the church is presently located?

M: Yes, I think so.

R: How long did it take the church members or the church itself to pay for the structure there on 224? Route

M: 224, it's the Boardman-Canfield Road.

R: How long did it take, would you say, approximately for the church to be finally paid off?

M: Somewhere between twelve and fourteen years. I don't think we worked fourteen. I think something more like twelve years when we burnt the mortgage on it.

R: What's the present minister doing to make sure that the church is maintained well, that nothing goes wrong like the old church? What's he doing to make sure everything's intact?

M: I think he keeps his official boards on top of everything. I think he has good help, and maintains a good janitorial service. He's got a good board, an official board

that runs the church.

R: All the work that's done within the church, are they done on a volunteer basis or is there a small amount of money that is given to the people for their performances?

M: No, no, everything is volunteer, except we pay the janitor and we pay the secretary. They're full-time workers.

R: They're employed by the church?

M: They're employed by the church.

R: Mrs. Miller, are there any other things of historical value that can help us out today that you recall while you are a member of this Methodist church?

M: Well, we inherited a background from the old members of the church. I think we have to look way back to the beginning of the church to see how they started out and how they progressed over the years to become what we have become today. It's our heritage that started us out.

R: What are some of your customs or traditions that you follow as a member of this church?

M: Well, we have prayer in our home. We read our Bible, we study our Bible. We study our Sunday school lessons. We take part in the church. The whole family takes part in the church.

R: How about holidays, are there any things unique about your holiday celebrations?

M: Well, we usually put the church first. At Christmas, we have a candle light service the night before Christmas in our church. We have a Monday-Thursday before Easter service that are very impressive services.

R: Were you ever employed?

M: Yes, I was a bookkeeper.

R: For what agency or firm?

M: For McClones Market. It was a grocery store and they had delivery boys and we had telephone service. People called their orders in and they were delivered. I took care of the telephones and was a cashier in that store four and a half years. I worked there before I was married. Then,

after I was married, I never worked.

R: Just domestic housework?

M: Yes.

R: What did your husband do?

M: He was self employed. He was a roofer, spouting and furnace, hot air heat.

R: Is he retired?

M: He's deceased.

R: Oh, excuse me. Would you say that your family was a very successful family?

M: Yes, they are. They've all done real well.

R: And do you emphasize that they emphasize to their own families the values that I mentioned earlier?

M: Yes, they all belong to the Methodist Church. My son died in 1970, but the girls all belong to the church here. Their children were all baptized and all joined the church.

R: Do they live in Poland?

M: They live in Poland and Struthers.

R: Mrs. Miller, on behalf of Youngstown State University's Oral History Program and myself, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for your time and effort today.

M: Thank you.

R: Thank you Mrs. Miller.

END OF INTERVIEW