



Rickie Bishop photo.

The Brown Church in Bear Valley – 1875 – Intersection of Highway 130 and Brown Church Road in the Town of Buena Vista, Richland County.

The Brown Church was built in 1875 with vertical siding with board and batten. This siding was later covered with horizontal lap siding. With the help of historians, architectural conservators and the memory of local old-timers the church was returned to its original appearance. Support from the community and a matching grant from the Jeffris Family Foundation of Janesville helped fund the extensive restoration. The church is used for special services, weddings and funerals.

The Bear Valley Cemetery was already established when the church was built. Since its inception, the church has been nondenominational. One of the primary organizers of the church was John H. Carswell who had been an abolitionist and active in the Underground Railroad in his original home of New York State. He had actively supported the efforts of John Brown in the raid on Harper's Ferry, as a result of these actions; he was excommunicated from the Baptist Church.

The Rev. John B. Loomis became the first minister of the church. Like Carswell, Loomis came from New York State and was a fiery abolitionist and was excommunicated from the Methodist Church for the same reasons.



Dr. Bertha Reynolds.

relocated to Milwaukee Dr. Bertha Reynolds became the area's only physician, which made her one of the first woman physicians in Wisconsin. A 1923 incident, fondly repeated many times, in which Reynolds, unable to reach patients due to spring flooding, drafted then-unknown aviator Charles Lindbergh to transport her across the Wisconsin River.

She died October 31, 1961, at the age of 93, and is buried in the Little Brown Church cemetery in Bear Valley. Frank Lloyd Wright's father, William Carey Wright, was a locally admired orator, music teacher, occasional



William Carey Wright.

Bertha Elizabeth Reynolds, a prominent citizen of Lone Rock, was born in Thiensville, Wisconsin, in 1868. Her parents, John and Margaret Reynolds, had migrated to Milwaukee from Quebec, Canada, three years earlier. Reynolds grew up in Ozaukee County, Wisconsin, on her family's farm. In 1892, the Reynolds family moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, where Bertha enrolled in the Lincoln Normal School, afterwards working briefly as a teacher. She had long harbored a desire to become a doctor, as nine other members of her family (both brothers and cousins) had done. One cousin, Walter H. Nielsen, the first dean of the medical school at Marquette University, discouraged her, indicating that medicine was an inappropriate career for women. She matriculated at the University of Nebraska, where she was also discouraged from pursuing the MD. In 1898, thirty-year-old Reynolds nevertheless enrolled in the Woman's Hospital Medical College of Chicago; she completed her MD in 1901.

Upon graduation she returned to Wisconsin, joining the practice of a brother, Dr. Nelson Reynolds. When Nelson Reynolds

lawyer, and itinerant minister. William Wright married Anna Lloyd Jones, a county school teacher, after the death of his first wife, Permelia Holcomb of Bear Valley. William Wright had been a Baptist minister, but he later joined his wife's family in the Unitarian faith. Anna Lloyd Jones was a member of the large, prosperous and well-known Lloyd Jones family of Unitarians, who had emigrated from Wales to Spring Green, Wisconsin. One of Anna's brothers was Jenkin Lloyd Jones, who would become an important figure in the spread of the Unitarian faith in the United States.

William Wright and his first wife, Permelia Holcomb, are both buried in the Bear Valley Cemetery.



The gravestone of William Carey Wright and Permelia Holcomb Wright and the restored Brown Church.



Greg Greenheck photo.

This early photo shows the horizontal siding still intact and without the steeple spire.