

# CHURCH LOCKED UP

Church Members Find They Are Barred  
and Bolted from Their Church.

## APPEALED TO THE SHERIFF

One Faction Claims That the Church  
Door Was Broken In and the  
Lock Taken Away.

The members of the Harmony Grove Southern Congregational church did not meet together yesterday as they had intended and as had been announced from the pulpit.

Many of the church members assembled for divine worship but when they attempted to open the church building, they discovered that the lock had been broken and that another lock had been placed on the door.

Above the door knob was written, in flaming letters, a large notice, which warned them not to open the door or break the lock. The notice was signed by the trustees of the Harmony Grove Congregational church.

The trustees of the Harmony Grove Southern Congregational church immediately came to the city and a petition was prepared by Attorneys Bishop, Hill & Andrews. The petition prayed that the sheriff place the plaintiffs in possession and that the defendants be restrained from interfering with the church building or property. The petition was presented to Judge Richard H. Clark and the signing of the paper and granting of the order was his last official act. Judge Clark signed the petition about four hours before his death.

Yesterday afternoon Sheriff Barnes, accompanied by several of the indignant trustees, went out to the church, which is near Bolton, and the trustees were placed in peaceable possession. The sign was torn from the door and the building entered. This morning a meeting of the trustees will probably be held, at which time the acts of those who closed the church will be condemned.

The members of the church claimed in their petition that there was a society composed of several people well known in the neighborhood in which the church is located, who styled themselves the Harmony Grove Congregational church, a name which is almost identical with that of the church which holds the possession of the property. The petitioners claimed that none of the members of this society were members of the Southern Congregational church.

The petitioners state that they were in the quiet and undisturbed possession of the church until February 8th, when S. C. McDaniel, W. F. Brewer and C. C. King entered the church by force, breaking off the lock that was on the door and placed another lock in its place. They believe that the above mentioned gentlemen did an unlawful act and that it was malicious on their part. Since that time the church has been in the possession of the defendants and the plaintiffs have had no place in which they could hold divine worship.

### Church Members at War.

The petition states that J. H. Maloney, Mrs. J. H. Maloney, Mrs. M. A. Pitts, Mrs. Mahuldy Cobb and Mrs. Mary R. Cobb claim themselves to be members of a society which they have called the Harmony Grove Congregational church and that W. B. Armstrong is the pastor and W. F. Brewer, R. J. King, Wiley Rice, J. H. Maloney and John Cobb are trustees.

It is charged that this society, through S. C. McDaniel, W. F. Brewer and C. C. King, has broken into the house of worship owned by the Southern church and has taken possession of the building. It was to secure the possession of the building and restrain the other parties from interference that the petition was brought.

The church door was not only opened, but the lock was broken, so the petition states, and the lock which was once upon the door was carried away and another put in its place. Even in addition to all this, the petition continues, a poster was put on the door, which read as follows:

"You are hereby notified that any intrusion by opening this church, either for religious or any other service except by the regular membership of this the Harmony Grove Congregational church or by consent of the trustees of same, and any intrusion by any other persons whatsoever will be considered a trespass and will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law."

The action was taken by order of the church and the name of Mary R. Cobb was signed as clerk and Wiley Rice, John Cobb, J. H. Maloney, R. J. King and W. F. Brewer, trustees.

### Appealed to the Law.

When the members of the Harmony Grove Southern Congregational church found the door closed and read the poster, they were filled with indignation and righteous wrath.

The situation was discussed, when it was decided that the only thing that could be done was to appeal to the law for protection and present a petition praying for possession of the church building and an injunction restraining the others from interfering with the property again.

Judge Clark readily signed the petition and Sheriff Barnes left early yesterday afternoon for the scene of dissension. Sheriff Barnes placed the building in the possession of the plaintiffs and returned to the city.

### Asked the Sheriff To Hurry.

Mr. J. M. Bentley, who is a member of the Southern church or the church which brought the petition, accompanied the sheriff to the church.

He appeared at the sheriff's office early in the afternoon and was anxious that no time be lost in getting out to the building.

"No, tomorrow won't do," said he in urging the sheriff to go. "You see the other faction is to hold a meeting in the morning and we want to get possession of the building before they meet. We haven't any place in which to have preaching and we don't want the others to get ahead of us."

Mr. Bentley stated that he thought the other side was willing to let negroes join the church, though he wasn't positive. He said he objected to that and did not propose to have any negroes in the church in which he worshiped.

It is probable that the members of the Harmony Grove Congregational church will resort to a similar method used by the Southern church and will take steps to have the church building delivered to them by the sheriff.