



Building Remembrance for Reconciliation

Building Remembrance for Reconciliation: Our Story

Recent efforts towards racial and social justice, and remembrance and reconciliation, have taught us how important history and memorialization is to our community awareness and change.

Among the first settlers in Hastings were Black families who came North for better opportunities. They lived, worked, raised their families, fought for the right to vote, and worshipped God here. In 1890 they formed the first African Methodist Episcopal congregation in Hastings, and in 1892 began worshiping in their own church, Brown's Chapel, on the corner of 5th and Sibley Streets.

In 1907, Brown's Chapel was destroyed by fire when arsons cut a screen and lifted the window sash to gain entry. The walls, pews and floor were saturated with kerosene and set on fire. There is no record of the crime being investigated, and the culprits were never officially identified or charged.

Our hope is that in telling the stories of these early Black families that called Hastings' home and understanding the impact of this incident and many like it had on the community, will help us create racial and economic justice in the present.