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# OREGON CITY ENTERPRISE.

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## JUBILEE SERVICE.

**Semi-Centennial of the First Baptist Church.**  
ORGANIZED ON JULY 4TH, 1847  
Commemoration Services Held Last Saturday and Sunday—Old Time Scenes and Events Recalled.

The First Baptist Church of Oregon City was organized on July 4, 1847, and services in commemoration of the semi-centennial were held at the auditorium on the Chautauqua grounds Saturday afternoon and at the Baptist church in this city Sunday. During the Saturday meeting Chaplain C. C. Bateman of the United States Army, read a paper on Baptist patriotism and Mrs. W. C. Johnson gave the history of the organization of the church and the leading events that have transpired since.

Key. C. C. Bateman read an excellent paper on "Baptist Patriotism," but on account of limited space we are permitted to glean but a few extracts therefrom indicating the high character of the paper: "In the struggle for liberty, civil and religious, Baptists have borne an honorable and at times a noble part. It may be heartily granted, I think, that in heroic devotion to principle no people have displayed higher qualities.

The American revolution, as a fact in political progress, was the natural and logical fruition of the pregnant idea for which Baptists had burned and bled. Roger Williams carried the doctrine of soul-liberty to its logical conclusion in all affairs of government and Baptists in every part of the world from that day to the present moment have accepted that conclusion and will abide by it to the end. But Williams is in no sense the founder of the Baptist denomination and the service rendered to the cause of liberty was by no means confined to him. The hottest things in the world are ideas on fire.

The divine right of kings was an error that was consumed in the furnace of the revolution. The principle which made that revolution possible and successful has ignited a flame under thrones in the Western hemisphere in our own day. The blood of men who died for principle has consecrated the Western half of the globe to human rights. The very air we breathe makes brave our sons to resist oppression. The fall of the empire of Brazil and the collapse of the kingdom of Hawaii, are but recent chapters in the romance of a truth which may serve to punctuate a period in the march of enlightenment. Our simple scriptural faith affords a genial soil for development of patriotic American citizenship. The liberty with which Christ has made us free is the key to our whole position."

Mrs. Johnson's sketch of the fifty years' history of the church is given in full below:

**Introduction.**  
The history of Baptists in Oregon begins with the settlement of Elder Vincent Snelling and several Baptist families in the Tualatin neighborhood in 1843 and 1844; of the denomination with the organization of the "West Union" church in 1844; of Baptist ministry in Oregon City, with the advent of the first two pioneer missionaries, Elder Hezekiah Johnson and Elder Ezra Fisher, sent to Oregon with the immigration of 1845, by the Baptist Home Mission board, of New York, and of the denomination in Oregon City with the organization of the First Baptist church in 1847.  
The history of the Baptist church in Oregon City, during the first 50 years, naturally divides itself into four periods, viz.: the first, ending with the pioneer history of the state in 1859; the second period with the cessation of the ministrations of the pioneer elders in 1872; the third, in 1890, when almost all of the old order of things except true religion and Baptist polity had passed away in the church. The fourth extends to the present.

**First Period.**  
The First Baptist church of Oregon City was organized by Elder Vincent Snelling and Brother David Lenox, of the Tualatin church, July 4th, 1847, in the house of Deacon Payson H. Hatch, of the constituting members were seven, viz.: "Elder Hezekiah Johnson and Eliza Johnson, his wife; James McNary and Nancy McNary, his wife; Rachel Emeline McNary; John W. Jackson; Elizabeth Howland. The visiting brethren subscribed themselves."

For some time subsequently the church had no regular pastoral care but was supplied on one Sabbath of each month by the missionaries. A business meeting was held upon the Saturday preceding the first Lord's day in each month.  
The first accessions to the membership were of Brother and Sister Garrett, January 1, 1848. The first baptisms were of Mary, Martha, Esther E. Johnson, February 5, 1848. The first deacon was Brother James McNary, chosen in May, 1848. The first clerk was Brother F. A. Collard, chosen at the same time. The first trustees were James McNary, Ninveh Ford and James W. Jackson, appointed on the same occasion, to let the contract for a meeting house. The

first meeting house, also the first erected by Baptists west of the Mississippi river, was erected in 1848. Of the erection of this building there is no note in the church minutes.

The first delegates to the first Baptist association in Oregon, the Willamette, meeting with the West Union church, were Elder H. Johnson and Elder Ezra Fisher, in June, 1848.

The first death of a member was of Brother John W. Jackson, in the summer of 1849. Throughout the year of 1849, the church suffered on account of the absence of many of its members in the gold mines of California.

The first call extended by the church was to Brother Hezekiah Johnson, with Brother Fisher to supply the place of Brother Johnson, for one-fourth of the time, February, 1851.

The first resignation of a minister was of Elder Johnson, in October, 1851.

At this time the church chose Brother Latourette, clerk. It also voted to call Brother G. C. Chandler to the pastorate.

The first pledge of money toward a pastor's yearly salary was of \$100, in July, 1852.

In February, 1853, Elder Chandler, he having declined to accept a second call to the pastorate, was requested to supply the pulpit half of the time and Brother Johnson the other half, which was agreed to.

In October, 1853, Brother Johnson was chosen pastor of the church.

In February, 1854, Elder Johnson resigned his pastoral charge of the church and Elder Fisher was unanimously chosen.

The first church organist, Cary Johnson, was appointed at this time; the musical instrument used in religious service was a melodeon, the first so used by Baptists on the Pacific coast.

The first revival movement in the church occurred in the spring of 1854. The first effort toward purchasing a Sunday school library was made in April, 1854.

In December, 1854, Brother Latourette resigned his office of clerk and Brother W. C. Johnson was appointed clerk in his stead.

In February, 1855, the church voted to request the services of Elder H. Johnson in preaching half of the time the coming year and that Elder J. D. Post be requested to fill the pulpit half of the time.



PRESENT HOUSE OF WORSHIP

The first sexton, A. M. Cornelius, was appointed at a yearly salary of \$5.00, at this time.

In July, 1855, Elder Fisher was "requested to fill the pulpit when we may be without preaching and he can consistently."

In December, 1855, Elder Geo. C. Chandler was unanimously requested to take the pastoral care of the church.

The first church treasurer, Deacon Newell, was chosen in June, 1856.

The first sister appointed on a church committee was Sister Johnson, in January, 1857.

In April, 1857, it was agreed that Elder Chandler supply the pulpit three Sabbaths in each month and Elder Johnson the remaining one-fourth of the time. The sum of \$250, raised by the church for ministerial support, to be proportionately divided between the two.

At the same time it was ordered that the church covenant and the articles of faith be read at each communion service, quarterly.

The first delegates to the general association, Elder Chandler and Bro. Post, were appointed September, 1857.

In May, 1858, the church invited Elder Johnson to take the pastoral charge "and preach as often as he can."

After supplying the church for some time, Elder Johnson transferred his labors to other localities. With the close of his pastorate, was finished the regular ministrations of the first two pioneer missionaries, and the first period of history of the Baptist church in Oregon City, a period marked throughout the arduous labor, religious zeal, and church and personal hardships now inconceivable.

The church minutes of this formative portion of history are a meager and inadequate record. They contain no account of the church work in education and temperance.

Elders Johnson and Fisher were, from the first, promoters of education. In Oct., 1851, they were especially commended by church resolutions for their interest and labors in this direction. The minutes of the Willamette Baptist Association show them to have been untiring in efforts to establish a Baptist school of learning. Such a school was organized in the house of Elder Johnson and taught by Elders Fisher, Chandler and Post successively, first in the meeting house and afterwards in the building erected in Oregon City for this purpose and known as the Baptist college, and finally merged into McMinnville college.

The church, during its first years, took a prominent part in the temperance movement, temperance then being a political issue. The church cov-

erant, as first subscribed to, contained a temperance pledge. The church, in a body, belonged to a temperance organization called "The Washingtonian Society." The society records show Elders Johnson and Fisher to have been most active and prominent members.

During the whole of the first period of its history the church was under the sole charge of the pioneer missionaries, Elders Johnson, Fisher, Chandler and Stearns.

**Second Period.**  
The first portion of the second period of its history of the church was characterized by privation and weakness. The church was without pastoral care and wholly represented by a Sabbath school and prayer meeting conducted by Brother W. C. Johnson.

The first license to preach, granted by the church, was to Brother Franklin Johnson, in March, 1860.

The business meetings from January to July, 1861, were not held, because of the damage to the meeting house by the flood, and the subsequent freeze during the winter.

During more than two years following the flood, there was no preaching on Sabbath, in consequence of the departure of several of the members and since Elder Johnson commenced to labor elsewhere. The business meetings were continued for some time and the Sabbath school survived.

In June, 1863, the holding of business meetings was resumed. The church was without any regular pastoral care, but held intermittent Sabbath services when ministers were provisionally with it.

In August, 1864, Elder W. N. Stearns was invited to take the watch care of the church and accepted; \$300 yearly salary was pledged and the Home Mission Society was petitioned for \$600, (which was refused).

The first death of a former pastor, that of Elder H. Johnson, occurred in June, 1866.

In June, 1867, Elder M. N. Stearns resigned the pastorate of this church.

In 1869, Elder George C. Chandler became pastor but came only at stated intervals to preach to the church.

In the early part of 1870, the church experienced a revival continuing for several weeks and resulting in the first considerable accession to the membership.

On July 2, 1870, a committee, composed of W. C. Johnson, Henry Warren and F. O. McCown, was appointed to ascertain what sum of money can be pledged toward the purchase of a lot and the erection of a suitable meeting house. In August, the same committee was empowered to sell the church property, purchase a new building site and proceed with building. L. D. C. Latourette was added to the committee. In November the committee reported the purchase of a lot for \$1,000 and a bid for the erection of a meeting house 54x32 feet, for \$4,000, and was ordered to accept the bid and proceed to erect the building.

In 1871 Elder Ezra Fisher died. The first loan contracted by the church was for sufficient money to complete the new church building in May, 1871.

On September 3, 1871, the new house was dedicated. The congregational and Methodist societies had no services, but joined. Rev. E. Fisher, the oldest Baptist minister in Oregon, and former pastor of the church, preached an interesting dedication sermon. The clerk read a brief historical statement. The debt of about \$2,000 was provided for by pledges and a collection, amounting to about \$2,057.

The first protracted meeting in the second meeting house was conducted for a few days in January by Elder E. Curtis, general missionary and agent of the Home Mission Society.

Elder, then Doctor Chandler not being able to give his whole time to the church or to reside in Oregon City, many efforts were made by the church through the Home Mission board to secure a settled pastor.

In August, in view of pending arrangements of the church, Dr. Chandler announced his resignation. He had engaged himself for a time at least to another church.

August 31, 1872, Brethren F. O. McCown, James Eaton, Henry Warren, L. D. C. Latourette and W. C. Johnson were elected trustees, and they were empowered to take the steps necessary to have the church incorporated. They were also instructed to convey to L. D. Cross the old church property for the sum of \$500.

With October, 1872, closed the second period of the history of the Oregon City Baptist church. During the whole of this time the work was carried on by the lay members with only the monthly supervision during the last few years of Dr. Chandler, who was the last of the pioneer elders to serve the church.

At the close of the year of 1872 the earliest members of the church there only remained in active service Brothers W. C. Johnson, the organist and Sabbath school superintendent, and L. D. C. Latourette, the senior deacon. There survived but one of the constituents, Sister Eliza Johnson, the widow of the first pastor.

**Third Period.**  
The third period of the history of the Baptist church in Oregon City begins in the last days of the year 1872, with the settlement of the first pastor who devoted his whole time to the pastoral work and preached regularly every Sabbath.

On November 30, 1872, Elder J. A. Wirth became pastor.

In January, 1873, the church agreed to raise the pastor a salary of \$1,000 if the Home Mission Society would aid to the extent of \$500. Later the Home Mission board appropriated \$250.

The first observance by the church of the week of prayer was in January, 1873. Meetings, with much religious interest, were continued during the remainder of the month.

(Continued on Page Seven.)