



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The St. Peter's Catholic Church in Echo was dedicated in 1913 but now lies in disuse.

## CHURCHES: Echo Community United Methodist Church was built in 1886

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increased attendance, the congregation dedicated a new structure April 3, 1922, on East Gladys Avenue. Expanding over the years to accommodate swelling congregations, the church continues to meet in that location.

For its centennial, "A History of a Church" was compiled in 2007 by Dave Hutchinson, Dorothy Irish and Lela Collier. It described the church's construction as a labor of love with most of the carpentry and masonry work performed by church members.

A trained civil engineer and architect, Henry John Ott provided instrumental input into its construction, son Walther Ott said in a letter about the church's history. Ott suggested design methods that would be long-lasting and require little maintenance.

Phil Hector, who has helped with the music program and finance committee, said the building remains in good condition, considering its age.

"It's a struggle for the congregation to keep it that way," he said. "It's old and had demands."

Hutchinson said Rev. Syd Bell had

hoped to ring the church's bell 100 times during the 2007 centennial. However, the rope broke during the process — and that's the last time it has sounded.

A highlight in the building is a number of stained glass windows. Provided as gifts and memorials, they add beauty to the sanctuary.



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The stained glass window at the end of the chapel at the First United Methodist Church in Hermiston was donated by the Ladies' Aid Society.

Of particular note is a large one of Jesus that was donated by the Ladies Aid Society, the precursor to the United Methodist Women's, Hector said.

Aside from the building and its history, Hector said a more important part of the church is the people. Attendance has dwindled over the years — regular Sunday services shrank to around 90 people 20 years ago and now hovers around 45. Despite the low numbers, Hector views the people as more important than the actual structure.

"At some point, you cross over to the memories of the people and the pastors," he said. "It's an ongoing river of service and faith."

### Echo

The city of Echo is proud of its heritage and history. The town makes it a priority to preserve and renovate its

historic buildings.

St. Peter's Catholic Church, de-consecrated in 1996, and the Echo Community United Methodist Church were both added to the National Register of Historic Places Aug. 28, 1997.

"For Echo as a whole, we as a community feel that our history and our heritage is represented by our historic buildings and sites," said city administrator Diane Berry. "It's what makes us special and unique."

St. Peter's Catholic Church, constructed in 1913 in the Portuguese Colonial Revival style, features a distinctive stucco façade. The interior houses ornate statues and a faux marble altar.

In 1996, it was donated by the Diocese of Baker to the Fort Henrietta Foundation. The building has received a new roof and some basic repairs, including replacement of some windows. The Echo Kiwanis have committed time and resources to help clean and repair



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

The Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church, west of Adams, was built in 1884 and is now a heritage site maintained by the Greasewood Finnish Heritage Society.

the building, as well as heading up fundraisers to contribute to the ongoing renovation.

The Echo Community United Methodist Church was originally built in 1886 on land donated by J.H. and Cynthia Koontz. A simple New England vernacular style, the church was expanded and transformed into the Gothic Revival style in 1910 when the Koontzes donated additional land.

The congregation, according to a history written by Bennie Lee Tolar, originally met at "Spikes Grove," a spot along the Umatilla River, located in a cottonwood tree grove south of town. Circuit rider ministers, who arrived by horseback, led the outdoor services. Families often camped along the river for a week or more while participating in worship services and communal meals.

### Greasewood Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church

Located five miles west of Adams, the Greasewood Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church was built in 1884. It provided a place of worship for the Finnish Laestadian community, with services presented in their native language.

According to "Pioneer Trails Volume 9," Finnish immigrants were lured to Oregon from Michigan to claim free homesteads. Many came to the area, building homesteads and farming the land.

"For one dollar, Peter and Josephine Enbysk donated one acre of land for the church in the center of the settlement," the article states.

Longtime Pendleton resident James W. Enbysk, who died July 2015, was among the descendants. He was proud of his heritage and often wrote articles for the Umatilla County Historical Society's "Pioneer Trails."

Although services are no longer held at the building, which is surrounded by wheat fields, the fenced churchyard springs to life as the weather warms with colorful wildflowers. The property is maintained by the Greasewood Finnish Heritage Society. In addition, it has been a featured stop during Century Farm Tours presented by the Umatilla County Historical Society.

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Echo Community Methodist Church in downtown Echo.