

Churches of City Have Aided Much as Center of Homes

Early History of Ashland Shows Churches Here, Helping Pioneers Lay Foundations for Future City of Ashland. Ashland Called City of Homes

By Grace E. Andrews

Ashland may well be called a city of churches for there are within its confines fifteen organizations, the majority of which have well equipped and comfortable edifices, where those of different faiths may find a welcome and a place to work in definite fields of endeavor.

Ashland's church history is closely aligned with its growth as a city, and has had much to do with its development as a community, where those who wished to rear their families surrounded by church influences could establish homes, satisfied that because of this, much that made for harm, could not have place here.

Ashland's history exemplified this truth for very early, the saloon was discredited and eliminated; Ashland went dry long before her neighbors or the state at large.

In every movement for the betterment of the community, the churches have stood shoulder to shoulder in its support. The Southern Oregon Chautauqua, whose development and success attracted more than state wide attention is an example, and the more recent Y. M. C. A. movement, with its many clubs, for boys of varying ages, and its efficient secretary bears witness.

The increased church membership has kept pace with the city's growth. From the few pioneering souls, who made up the church rosters of the earlier churches established, there is now in a number of the stronger churches an enrollment of several hundred and Sunday schools in like proportion. Without doubt, when bells peal out each Sabbath morning, more than a thousand find their steps turning toward the Sunday school rooms in the various churches.

The building activity has kept pace with the increased membership.

Beginning with the laying of the corner stone, June 24, 1878, of the First Presbyterian church, on its present site, there are now worshipping in their own church homes, the First Methodist, First Congregational, Baptist, Catholic, Trinity Episcopal,

rank the equal in size and beauty with those of cities of larger growth.

Within recent years, the Methodist Presbyterian and Christian Churches have made substantial additions, approximating a cost of several thousand each, with Manse and Parsonage for pastor's home. Trinity Episcopal church has a beautifully planned Parish House since 1910 and the commodious Baptist church was built on Hargadine street, replacing the small structure on Church street. The new Christian Science church, at a cost of many thousands, was erected but a short while since, and the plans are now being drawn for a beautiful church home for the Congregationalists, to take the place of the one now occupied.

A brief word of earlier church history may be of interest. The first church organized in Ashland was the First Presbyterian church, August 28, 1875 by the Rev. Moses Allen Williams, with 22 charter members. The church celebrated its Golden Anniversary this year, with a three days' commemorative observance, and a return of a number of its former pastors: the first, the Rev. J. B. Donaldson, Dr. F. G. Strange, the Rev. H. A. Carnahan and the Rev. F. C. Koehler also were present. The corner stone of the present structure was laid June 24, 1878. For three years the services had been held in the school house on East Main street, where the Enders store now stands. The church was dedicated free of debt, on December 25, 1881. In 1905, it was decided to move the church nearer the corner of the present lot, build an addition to double its seating capacity, and to erect a Manse on the west side of the church. This was done. More recently another addition was made providing new Sunday school rooms and many classrooms, kitchen and a pastor's study, at a cost of several thousand dollars.

The First Congregational Church was organized on March 25, 1888, in the Baptist church, where they still continued to hold services until a parsonage was secured where they worshipped until the church was dedicated, December 30, 1889 at

a service in charge of the Rev. G. J. Webster, pastor with Dr. G. H. Atkinson preaching the sermon. At this service, all the churches in the city united. The lots where the present church now stands were purchased in 1887. Making it a matter of two years until the congregation was established in its own church home.

The first pastor was the Rev. G. J. Webster, and the Rev. W. Judson Oldfield the present incumbent has been its pastor for a number of years, and during whose pastorate the new church will be built.

The permanent organization of the First Methodist church was effected in July 1864 by the Rev. Phillip M. Starr, then presiding elder of the district. The charter members were, Mr. and Mrs. David P. Walrad, Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Rockefeller, Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Meyer, Mr. and Mrs. Heaton Fox, Mr. and Mrs. Brittan, Mr. and Mrs. William Jaquet, Mrs. Jacob Wagner and Mrs. Myer.

The church building was erected in 1878, with the foundation laid some time before. The parsonage in 1885, later enlarged and improved.

From the Organization of the class, in 1878, Ashland was a part of the Jacksonville circuit and in the fall of that year the church appeared as a distinct charge in the list of appointments with the Rev. W. P. Chapman, "preacher in charge." Lowell S. Rogers was appointed at the conference of 1879, and remained pastor for one year. In 1892 the pipe organ was purchased, during the pastorate of J. S. Smith. Improvements were made at different times, during the different pastorates, until at present, the church has one of the largest homes and a congregation numbering several hundred. The present pastor is the Rev. H. B. Pemberton, who has but lately assumed the pastorate. An interesting fact is that G. F. Billings was the Sunday school superintendent of the early union Sunday school for many years, later acting in that capacity the Methodist church until rather recent.

Eight charter members formed

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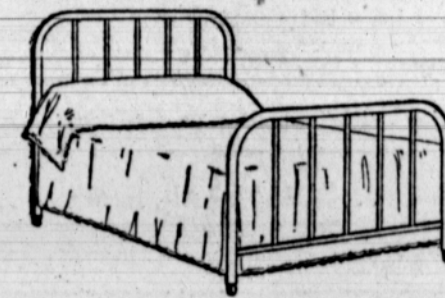
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