

Churches important to early residents

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Special Writer

Methodist

Methodist circuit riders came to this part of the country as early as 1853. The first services were held at Empire in 1857 led by the Rev. Christopher Alderson of Corvallis, circuit rider for the Methodist Episcopal Church. Coquille became a part of this circuit in 1872 and services were held in private homes.

However, leaders from the Methodist Episcopal Church South (a different church) came into the area and in 1875 the membership numbered four: J.J. Lamb, Mary Ann Lamb, Delia Roy and Silvina Lindley. Traveling presiding Elder was the Rev. J.B. Perkins.

The first church structure in Coquille built by subscription was known as the Universalist Church used by all denominations and now owned by the Church of Christ, Scientist.

The Methodists formed an official organization in 1878. The pastor was the Rev. B.T. Sharp.

A lot was purchased May 24, 1888. A sum of \$75 was paid to James H. and Elmira Lamb by the Coquille Methodist Episcopal Church South, Columbia Conference. Work was started on the new building in 1888. During early 1889, the organ was moved from the Universalist Church and the first service was held. The congregation then was the Rev. W.B. Smith.

By September, 1928, a new church building was erected on the site of the former church at E. Second and Elliott with the Rev. S. D. Walters pastor at that time. This church was built by Carl Ensele.

During the 1920s and 1930s members of the M.E. Church (dating back to 1872) began to unite with the M.E. Church South (pioneer). These two bodies were officially united by the general bodies of 1939. In 1928 the Presbyterian church of Coquille closed and most of its members united with the Pioneer Methodist Church.

The first steps on the new educational unit were taken in January, 1963 when the option was taken on the lot south of the church. With this purchase, the building committee was formed and planning commenced.

Willard Morgan was asked to draw preliminary building sketches. During the building, it became apparent that for proper growth on this site, additional land should be purchased.

Drake Construction Company completed the major portion of the building in June 1966. The Consecration Service for the new Education Unit of the United Pioneer Methodist Church was held Oct. 2, 1966. Bishop A. Raymond

Grant of Portland, Kenneth Simonds, Supt. of Eugene District, and Hillis B. Slaymaker, local minister, helped with the service.

Faith Lutheran

Nearly 40 years ago, a handful of families from Coquille approached leaders of the American Lutheran Church in the Pacific Northwest about the possibility of beginning a congregation here.

The first pastor to serve the area was Rev. A.K. Bethmann, assigned by district officials to begin work in 1947. Walking just about everywhere he went, Pastor Bethmann worked with interested families to assemble the beginning of the congregation.

who have become Lutherans through adult instruction.

Catholic

In the first decade and a half of this century, when population of the Coquille Valley was small and scattered, there were few Catholic families. The largest number was probably in Powers, where a church was built in 1915. Before this time, the area was served by a Chapel Car, which went by rail to the logging communities to bring the priest and the Catholic Mass to the people.

During this early period, priests would travel from Roseburg and offer Mass in the homes of Catholics. The Leo Cary home on First street in Coquille

cially the need for classroom facilities, required a new church building. The present church at the end of Dean Street was built and used by the people for the first time on Easter Sunday 1967.

Episcopal

History is more than a mere chronicling of dates. History is people, events, tragedy and humor. The realization or shattering of dreams is part of the tapestry, also. The following paragraphs are quoted verbatim from an address of Bishop Benjamin Wistar Morris to the 1897 Episcopal Church convention.

"I began with the mission on the extreme southern coast, in charge of the Rev. Mr. Horsfall, commonly called the Coos Bay Mission, lying mainly between the Umpqua River on the north and the Windchuck on the south, a distance of 200 miles."

A year later Bishop Morris addressed the 1898 Episcopal Convention: "The most important gain and progress is to be noticed in the Southern Coast is the building of the new church at Coquille City, of the prospect of which I spoke in my address to the last Convention. I laid the cornerstone of this church on the 17th of September last 1897, and it was so far finished and furnished as to be quite suitable for the opening service on the fourth of January of this year, 1898."

The simple corner stone with the incised 1897 date can be seen at the present structure. The building of 1898 has been added to three times. The church proper was lengthened at the time George R. Turney served here, and under the leadership of the Rev. Robert Lessing, a guild hall, enlarged kitchen and parish hall were added. In 1952, the Rev. B. Jean Clark officiated at a ceremony blessing the present altar.

Christian

In 1888, C.H. Alley, a missionary preacher from Portland, organized a regular missionary point. The small congregation met in the building which housed the Universalist Church at what is now 306 N. Adams. By 1889, S.B. Hollenbeck of Fairview was doing the preaching for what was to become the Christian Church.

On Sept. 27, 1890, the church was incorporated as the Christian Church Association of Coquille City, Coos County, Oregon. Trustees were J.J. Wilson, J.A. Seed and Elizabeth Fouths. The following month on Oct. 14, property at 260 E. Fourth was purchased for \$40 and the first church building which is now the Coquille Grange hall was begun. In earlier days the church was known as the Church of Christ.

Older members report that the congregational lifestyle was quite conservative, and the use of alcohol, tobacco, and playing cards as well as dancing were severely frowned upon.



In 1949 the sixteen families assembled called Rev. Norman Orth to be their first full time pastor. It was under Pastor Orth's leadership that the congregation was officially organized, adopting a constitution, built a parsonage and made plans for a new church.

The church building was dedicated Dec. 16, 1951. In the six years of Pastor Orth's ministry the congregation experienced its fastest and largest growth. When he resigned to accept a call to another mission congregation in Seattle, the baptized membership here was over 370, most of the members being people

was often used for this purpose before the first church was built on third street in 1915.

Until 1921, the Coquille Parish was a mission served by the priests from Coos Bay. In 1921, it became a mission of Bandon and continued as such until the Bandon fire of 1936. In 1937, Father Daniel Kelly became pastor of the area and took up residence in Myrtle Point. He served the seven churches from Brookings to Powers.

The first church in Coquille served the parishoners well for over 50 years. Then the expanded congregation, and espe-