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OUR PIONEER PILGRIMS

This Anniversary,- 75 years of church life, is a long time in individual human history. It means three generations of successive youth. If we believe, as we do, that each generation has something more of opportunity and we are worthy of it, then we have a right to pride in the long record of church service.

This is particularly striking because 75 years ago our home-town was still the crude and rough frontier.

This city's foundations were laid by men and women with the spirit of adventure, of ambition, of enterprise, and it took quality and courage in these men and women of decent living and wholesome ambition, to cast their lot in the Duluth of those early days. Saloons were open all night for the transient army of seamen, of lumbermen, and a little later, of miners. It required the leaven of wholesome example, such as the men and women of this early church possessed. We owe these early founders the tribute of today's appreciation. It is difficult to name individually the men and women of that early little army. But the story of their trials and successes should be preserved and recounted today for the new faith and courage which their memory creates.

From these early recollections, with perhaps a touch of humor in individual lives, but with the appreciation of their faith and courage, I'd like to mention a few incidents of those early days.

As you go into Salter Chapel, you see hanging on the northwest wall a fine crayon portrait of Dr. Salter, for whom the Chapel was named. It is the work of Duluth's David Erickson drawn from a photograph of his dear friend. He also chose the fine frame, which was the gift of Mrs. Bertha Webster, a fine member of our Church.

Dr. Salter was the first Pastor of our early Church. He was also a pioneer of frontier decency. He was able to rent a room or two on Lake Avenue where these sailors and lumber-jacks could go and read and play games. He persuaded men to support this and young men to come in the evening and teach gymnastics and games. Many remember him even today walking on Superior Street with his fine white beard, his friendly smile and blue eyes, persuading sailors to come to The Bethel which he called the place on Lake Avenue. When he died all the saloons in town were closed during his funeral, something which has never happened since.

His eldest son, Mr. Charles Salter, is a deacon in our Church at present.

Among the charter members of this early Church, Mr. and Mrs. Woodbridge were outstanding. When they came to Duluth the railroad was not finished the last 30 miles. So they had to go by stage or walk.

The driver asked the people who wanted seats in the stage to call out their names and Mr. Woodbridge called out "Miss Poole" - much to the chagrin of Mrs. Woodbridge, a brand new bride. Mr. Woodbridge, Mr. Kimball and 2 other men, all veterans of the Civil War, took up homestead claims adjoining, about 8 miles on what is now the Pike Lake Road. They lived the required 6 months there. This was the famous briery of the Woodbridge family. The Salters built a summer home there too and the Kimballs were not far away. Mr. Kimball used to often supply our pulpit when needed. His daughter is a member of this Church. All this part of the country was destroyed by that terrible fire of 1918.

In the little Church Mr. Woodbridge would always look around to see if there were any strange young people, and if so, would invite them home to dinner. Thanksgiving their home was full of young people. He always taught a Women's Bible Class, and very popular it was. When the Y.M.C.A. was formed he was its first President. Later he published a weekly newspaper.

Another fine man and charter member in the early Church was Mr. Roger Munger. He was interested in music and bought the first organ in the little Church. He had a good voice and sang bass in the choir and bore the expense of having other good voices there.

When the second Church on Lake Avenue was built, Mr. and Mrs. Munger gave a very fine rose window in memory of a son. Madm. Woodbridge gave the windows under the rose window in memory of her husband, Johnathan Edwards Woodbridge. All were purchased in Paris by a brother of Mr. Munger's who was studying art there.

When we moved to this present Church, that rose window was placed in the ceiling of Salter Chapel, and the Woodbridge windows are at the end of the foyer.

A grandson, Roger Munger Woodbridge, and his family, are present members of this Church.

Another gentleman active and effective in the life of this Church is a namesake of Mr. Munger. None other than Roger Munger Weaver.

Our next Minister, whose portrait hangs in Salter Chapel, was Dr. Edward M. Noyes, fresh out of Yale Theological Seminary. He and his lovely young bride from the East drew a host of young people into the Church. Among these were W. A. McGonagle, Theron H. Hawkes, A. W. Frick, Will McMillan, W. G. Heghardt and others who have with their wives been the main stay of our Church through the years. Many have children and grandchildren members here now.

Ours was a town of young people and the only man in Church with gray hair was Mr. C. A. Field.

During Dr. Noyes' ministry our second Church was built at the corner of Lake Avenue and Second Street.

Dr. Noyes was a very fast talker and got mixed up sometimes, as when he said we would sing such and such a hymn to the tune on the opposite side of the street. Once in Prayer Meeting he asked Deacon Woodbridge to talk on the turkeys in Church. Mr. Woodbridge got up and began to talk about the Churches in Turkey. But there was such a tittering he couldn't go on and thought for some reason they were laughing at him.

Dr. Noyes was here to help celebrate our Fiftieth Anniversary in 1921.

All these years we had plenty of church going. I wonder what the present generation would think of going to Church Service at 10:30, Sunday School after Christian Endeavor, about 6:30, and another service at 8 - 2 sermons on Sunday and Prayer Meeting on Thursday eves. No social activities ever on Thursdays.

There was also a fine group of Oberlin graduates who came into that little Church. Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Peck and their young people. Mr. E. W. Matter, also an Oberlin graduate, married the eldest Peck daughter, and their son and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Willard Matter, are members here. Mr. S. E. Matter came later and brought his bride, both just out of Oberlin, and their daughter and husband are interested workers here.

The pioneers of this Church as well as the moderns, always had the reputation of handling all situations very efficiently. This was never better illustrated than at the time of the great Hinckley Fire, that destroyed homes and villages and farms, killing and injuring hundreds of people. This happened the very last few days of Dr. Noyes' ministry, in 1894. The fire raged all Saturday and Saturday night. As our people assembled Sunday morning, Dr. Noyes announced that trains were coming in about noon bringing refugees who had been driven from their homes, and instead of a service, all would devote their time in preparation to receive and care for at least a hundred refugees. When the trains arrived and the refugees distributed among the churches, Pilgrim Church was ready with a hot meal. During the day cots were brought in and for 7 days the women of the Church provided 3 meals a day, and clothing and shelter for over a hundred homeless men, women and children. And let me say, facilities were not what we have today. There was no running hot water, the small S.S. rooms served as dining rooms and bed rooms. Mrs. T. J. Davis was appointed General Manager and never was there a better one. It is safe to say that all the available women had more or less to do, some giving their time, others giving money, or food or clothing.

Dr. Cornelius Patton succeeded Dr. Noyes in 1895. He was very much interested in missions. It was very difficult to manage the finances as it was the years of a hard depression, but he would get out his black board and after a good sermon would ask the congregation what they wished to give toward benevolences, and write amounts after each name. One day when things were going slow he told us we were letting Mr. McGonagle carry the load for all the Church.

I remember Ray Phillips about this time as a small boy coming to Church and sitting between his parents.

Dr. Patton went to Boston in about 1898 and later became a Secretary of our Board of Foreign Missions.

He also came for our Fiftieth Anniversary.

Mr. Alexander Milne was his successor. He died while serving this Church.

He had a hard time convincing people they should come to Prayer Meetings. The Deacons (6 in number then) were always supposed to be there and take part in the meetings. He once labored with Mr. Ames to come oftener, and Mr. Ames promised to come every Thursday but don't ever call on me to talk.

Meetings were held to consider giving up that service. I recall Mrs. Woodbridge once saying in her bright way that it looked to her as though the Church thought the Deacons needed a Prayer Meeting.

I remember Mr. Milne as being very sot in his Scotch way. He would never interfere with the War Department as he called the choir. He had a very lengthy marriage ceremony.

When I was about to be married I asked him as a favor to make his part of the ceremony short. I think he made it longer than usual.

Another portrait in Salter Chapel I wish to say a word about is that of Mr. Wardwell Ames. This was given to the Church by his daughter, Mrs. Rufus Draper.

Mr. and Mrs. Ames came to Duluth when we were in the Lake Avenue Church, about 1886. He was a most generous supporter of this Church and every good charity.

He was also very fond of organ music and used to ask Miss Carlotta Simonds, our organist then, if she would play his favorite piece, the Communion in G, by Baptiste, and she did it often to please him. After she went to Europe in 1907 he would ask Miss Rogers to play it. One of our fine musicians we have loaned to the Methodist Church got his first musical education pumping that organ as a boy. No electricity in those days.

Then Mr. Charles N. Thorp was called from the East in 1912. In his annual message he recommended that the Church appoint a committee to secure a site for a new Church in the East End and the present lot was bought even if near neighbors didn't relish the idea of a Congregational Church at their very front door.

We were fortunate in having at that time a large group of men and women interested not only in the Church but in all civic affairs. Without them this edifice could never have been built and equipped. I can mention only a few - Mr. C. A. Duncan, Mr. W. G. Hegardt, Mr. S. E. Matter, Mr. W. A. McGonagle, Oscar Mitchell and their wives.

Every one worked and gave most generously and if you younger members here ever have a look into that box in our corner stone, you will see the names on the bonds there. All bought these, even the children in the S.S.

This Church was built and equipped at a cost of over $150,000 and dedicated free of debt in December 1917. Something unusual in church building.

Mr. Thorp also interested some friends in presenting the first Tiffany Memorial Windows and others followed. We have two double windows left for memorials to some of the fine members of our Church.

It was very fitting that Mr. Ames' son, Ward Jr., and his business partner, Julius H. Barnes, should erect and equip the Boys' Y.M.C.A. as a memorial to Mr. Ames, on the site of our Lake Avenue Church.

Mrs. Ames and her family gave the Ames' Memorial Organ, which was the finest to be had at the time. And I hear that Miss Ruth Rogers will play Sunday morning the favorite organ composition of Mr. Ames, Communion in G, by Baptiste. I hope you will all be there.

Then Dr. Elderkin came in time to plan our Fiftieth Anniversary in 1921, which was such a success.

We are all very happy to welcome Dr. and Mrs. Elderkin here to our Seventy-fifth Anniversary.

Thank you.

(Mrs. E. D. Field)