

page A

An Introduction to this Centennial Story

by the Rt. Rev. Wm. B. Spofford Jr.

4th Bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Oregon

A small wooden church nestles below a hill, in a rugged canyon, in the very heart of Eastern Oregon. It has stood there for one century now, notwithstanding the pressures of the sloping hill, and sharing the life of Christ with the community and the area. During that century, there have been many changes. Miners, ranchers, loggers, railroad personnel have used this Church. So, too, have their families. It has had, and had, lay-readers, guilds, altar workers, acolytes, Church School students, confirmation classes. As a congregation, it has never been large. And, unless there are significant population shifts and sociological changes, it will never be large.

But faithfulness must not be measured in terms of earthly statistics of success! Its ministry has been of all sorts-----full-time paid clergy; wandering mission workers; and, currently, during its one-hundredth year, it is served by a non-ecclesiastically employed priest, who earns his living as a vice-principal of a small town high school and teacher. What the future holds for that ministry, at this juncture, God alone knows.

However, a church which can stand for 100 years in that setting is worthy of its memories and is due honor. This booklet is about St. Thomas' Church, in Canyon City, and its ministry in the large area of Grant County. May the congregation always be able to, truthfully, celebrate its smallness, because in such a state of being it has a chance to come to a real understanding of the Christian community or *Keinonia*....a gift which it has to share with God's entire creation. So, read, and enjoy. . . .

WM. B. SPOFFORD JR.

4th Bishop of Eastern Oregon.

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS
of
ST. THOMAS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH, in CANYON CITY, OREGON.
1876-1976

an historic Church in an historic City.

by the Rev. Louis L. Perkins, Historiographer
of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon.

Proverbs 20:27 "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord!"

Proverbs 31:18 "And his candle geeth not out, by any night!"

- - -

A few years before the dramatic discovery of gold near that famous Sutters Mill in California (in 1849) a party of covered-wagon immigrants, going west toward Portland and the Willamette Valley, were travelling along the old Oregon Trail---but somewhat to the south of its customary landmarks. Then at one point on their southern detour they noticed, as they camped for the night, some "lumps of a rusty looking yellow metal" in the bed of a certain small creek nearby. As they related this happening to friends later on they said, "It was just a small creek leading out of the Blue Mountains" in central Oregon. But merely as a matter of curiosity they put some of those small rocks into a "blue bucket", and carried them along as they trekked toward The Dalles in their covered-wagon.

About fifteen years after that, as a party of gold prospectors were heading directly west for the now celebrated gold fields of California, they heard about the story of those Willamette Valley immigrants who had found "lumps of a rusty looking yellow metal" which they had carried to The Dalles "in a blue bucket" as curiosities. "Maybe, just maybe" these gold prospectors thought, "those rocks were not just ordinary curiosities!" But...where was that "small creek leading out of the Blue Mountains"....?

With this as a cue those gold prospectors decided that perhaps they didnt

Page 3

whole population of Multnomah County (in and around Portland) was listed in the Federal Census of 1860 as having only 4151 inhabitants. And Wasco County---which at that time meant all of Oregon east of the Cascade Mountains---listed only 1809 people. Note that later on every other county in Eastern Oregon (there were 18 in 1974) was subdivided at one time or another from this original Wasco County!

Now this gold fever in Eastern Oregon sucked in people from all directions in the U.S.A. As a result, the Oregon State Legislature---(Oregon had only been admitted as a state in the Union in 1859) set aside Baker County in 1862 (with the community of Auburn, 12 miles south of Baker as its county seat); and in 1864 the Oregon Legislature set aside Grant County, with Canyon City as its county seat.

By the time of the Federal Census in 1870, the population of Grant County had shot up from almost nothing to 2251 inhabitants---4403 in 1880---5210 in 1890---and 5908 in 1900. This was Grant County's high point in population for a long time. Not till after 1930 did a slow increase begin again.

Most of the people in Grant County lived in and around the gold town of Canyon City. But a few lived 15 miles east of Canyon in what was called Prairie City---a farming and lumbering community. But gold seeking and gold mining was the economic base of most of the people living in Grant County at that time. Even those in Prairie City were really a support group for all this gold mining in terms of meat-cattle, vegetables, and timber to shore up the mine shafts and to build the homes and the shacks in which the miners lived.

The national Episcopal Church sent its first missionary Bishop to the Pacific Northwest seven years before the gold strikes at Sumpter and Canyon City. This first missionary bishop was the Rt. Rev. Thomas Fielding Scott---with jurisdiction over both the Oregon and the Washington Territories. Scott arrived by sailing ship "around the Horn" in Portland on April 12, 1854.

Page 5

Morris was consecrated a Bishop in New York City on December 3rd, 1868. After some travel around Pennsylvania and New York (State), to raise funds for the "schools of the Episcopal Church in the Northwest" Bishop Morris sailed on an ocean voyage to Panama; across the isthmus by train; then on a second ocean voyage up the west coast to Portland---arriving there on April 21, 1869.

With the Civil War ending in April 1865, with the Episcopal Church reunited between its separated northern and southern dioceses (in October 1865), and with national Missionary funds now more available, the question was raised again about the Episcopal Church going east over the Cascade Mountains "into these mining regions of Eastern Oregon."

On the other hand, with the main line of the Union Pacific Railroad completed (in May 1869) clear across the middle expanse of America, people began coming more easily into Eastern Oregon. They came now by railroad to Green River, Wyoming, and thence by covered wagon over the shorter run of the Old Oregon Trail. They came for cattle ranching and lumbering as well as for gold mining.

In 1870 Bishop Morris first came east from Portland into this region by wagon-stage to The Dalles, and Pendleton. Then by horse-back he rode over these formidable Blue Mountains beyond Pendleton in 1872 and reached La Grande, Cove, Baker. This time he brought with him an "itinerant preacher for the Eastern Oregon mission"---a very remarkable and dedicated cleric by the name of The Rev. Reuben D. Nevius.

Reuben Nevius was first a young public school teacher in rural Georgia. As such in his early days he lived and boarded in the home of the Rev. Thomas Fielding Scott---later chosen as the first Episcopal Bishop of Oregon (1853-1868). Under the influence of Scott, Nevius studied and entered the Episcopal ministry, in Georgia. From 1855 to, 1866 Nevius served in Christ's Church, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. But here Nevius lost his wife and three small children in a yellow fever epidemic during the last months of the Civil War.

Shortly after this acute tragedy Reuben Nevius wrote to Bishop Morris

Page 7

with 15 more miles still to ride until we came to Canyon City. It was a very fatiguing journey of three days, much of the time over very rough road. Finally I came to Canyon City, where there is much promise and usefulness for the Church."

Ten years later when these trails and "roads" had been improved somewhat, Morris has this to say in his convection charge in Portland in 1883, "I have crossed the Blue Mountains six times by now, since our last Convocation, with a variety of experiences, both hot and cold--- -30° at Pendleton on one of my trips. Mud and snow, dead-axle ⁽¹⁾ and buckboard, ⁽²⁾ and with the customary bed and board that are furnished along the way, which are quite enough to satisfy the most ardent desires of those who wish to rough it!"

(1) "dead-axle" means going in a wagon that has no springs at all.

(2) "buckboard" means a carriage rig which has a slight spring effect, caused by the bending of the long wooden slats that support the rig.

So the Episcopal Church came to Canyon City, Oregon!

True, it was now twelve years since gold had been first discovered there. During that time this rough and ready mining town had grown crudely without any overall city plan. No doubt in those first twelve years some Christian people (of other denominations) carried out some sort of informal Christian home-worship in that mining town of about 2,000 inhabitants. But when the Episcopalians under finally moved ahead under Morris and Nevius' initiatives to build a church edifice in 1876, these Episcopalians (and others) were erecting the first Church building of any sort in Canyon City! And actually St. Thomas' Episcopal Church was to be the first Church by any name (but one) in all of Grant County. For almost at this same time (1876) the Methodists were erecting a Church building in Prairie City---15 miles east of Canyon City.

The deed for the land on which these early Episcopalians would soon build their church was given them (for \$1) by Mr. and Mrs. Geo. B. Fearing, on March 20, 1876. Geo. Fearing was the owner and operator of the largest mer-

Page 9

tory) is called locally a "Nevius Church". For it was the Rev. Reuben D. Nevius whose vision, initiative, planning and personal canvassing of pledges and contributions, which caused these and many other Churches to be built. True, the architectural plans came from the Episcopal Church's general missionary headquarters in New York City. But it was Reuben Nevius who saw to it that these many churches were erected according to these particular plans. . . .

1. Steep roof, at about a 60° pitch.
2. Solid, rough hewn timbers, of native Ponderosa pine.
3. Almost rectangular floor plan.
4. Iron braces inside at the eave level, which held the walls in place from the spreading effect of the high-slanted roof above.

Inside these "Nevius" Churches there were low-style, rough-hewn pews... plain panelled side walls....narrow, tall side windows...an organ at the back...and a bell in the belfry up at the front end of the ridge pole.

Six out of seven Nevius Churches still survive to this day in Eastern Oregon.

1. Old St. Paul's, The Dalles, which is not used for religious purposes at the present time....rented out as a community museum.
2. Old St. Peter's, La Grande, which was torn down in 1926, to make way for the present church building.
3. St. Stephen's, Baker, still in active use for 100 years---but somewhat remodelled in 1947, by lengthening the chancel and attaching wings.
4. St. James', Milton-Freewater, originally built for the congregation at Weston, Ore---but which was hauled bodily overland in 1946 for active use in Milton-Freewater, Ore., to the present time.
5. Ascension Church, Cove, which was 100 years old in July, 1974---used now mainly as a chapel for the camps and conferences at Cove Summer School.
6. St. John's Church, Union, torn down in 1927. The dissembled lumber was then hauled overland to Ascension Summer School at Cove. As it was reassembled there on the school grounds the steep roof was given up, but the original shape of the lower part of the church was retained. The resulting building was used for years as a dining hall

Page 11

-ing in 1870 to 5948 in 1900. It never went higher till in the 1930's. And since these figures are for all of Grant County; and since about 2/3s of these people then lived in and around Canyon City; it is perfectly obvious that the population of Canyon City (even with those in the rough mining camps nearby included) never went much above 5,000 souls. The figure of 15,000, therefore, is just another one of these boom-town yarns!

* * * * *

So the Episcopal Church came to the gold-rush town of Canyon City in 1874-1876. At almost the very same time Nevius started the Episcopal Church in nearby Prairie City---15 miles east of Canyon. The first services there were under the auspices of that indefatigable missionary---the Rev. Reuben D. Nevius. Initially the services were designed to be held with a joint use of the local Grange Hall in Prairie City...then in a planning stage. From Nevius' early notes we learn that "provision was explored to occupy this Grange Hall jointly, then abuilding"....."The Church part of the Grange Hall would be had by opening folding doors into the larger part of the hall."

But this scheme for joint occupancy never materialized, even with Nevius, the master church builder, to help it along. Possibly this joint occupancy was dropped when "a whole city block" was given to Bishop Merris by a local resident for an Episcopal Church in its own building in that city. Hence, a separate, individual church building was soon erected in Prairie City about two years after St. Thomas' in Canyon City was begun. The Prairie City Church was called St. John's.

Prairie City had nothing to do directly with gold-mining. But indirectly Prairie City might be called logistically a support base for the gold mining that was booming along in Canyon City. For Prairie was a farm and lumber community, which supplied meat and vegetables for those who lived and worked at Canyon. Besides, in its lumbering activity, Prairie City supplied the timber which built the homes and shacks at Canyon; and the strong logs and beams which lined the tunnels for pit mining in the Canyon Creek hillsides. Also, as we shall see later on in this Centennial Story, it was

Page 13

cattle raising, and lumbering. Also Canyon City held on stubbornly to its early established living as the county seat of Grant County.

When populations and fortunes have changed, some early designated county seats have been actually stolen by local vigilantes in the middle of some dark night. Some county seats have been "stolen" by political pressures applied to the members of the State Legislature.

For instance, the people of Burns, Ore., at one time stole the county seat by vigilantes from a place about 12 miles northeast of Burns, called Harney, or Ft. Harney. The county seat of Baker County, which was first established in a small community called Auburn, was stolen by vigilantes in the middle of the night, and later validated by the Oregon State Legislature to be thereafter at Baker City. The county seat of Union County was first (1864) in the small city of Union. But in 1890 when the city of La Grande boomed with the coming of the Union Pacific Railroad, the legislature itself "stole" the county seat away from Union and decreed that henceforth it was to be in La Grande. But Canyon City has managed to hang on to its status as the county seat of Grant County against "all enemies, foreign and domestic" for 112 years!...even when the old court house in Canyon City burned in 1953....and even though Canyon City's population is now down to less than 500 people!

But all thru these "changes and chances of this mortal life" St. Thomas' Episcopal Church has maintained itself intact; and it has made its Christian influence felt all over Grant County, even when few church people---very few at times---were active Christians.

Now, it wasn't so much the ~~appointees~~, professional clergy who sustained St. Thomas' Church midst its many difficulties all down the years. In fact, when one "looks at the record" (as Al Smith used to say on the "raddie") it is quite obvious that faithful, committed, long-time devoted clergy at St. Thomas' were few and far between. Ofcourse, the Rev. Reuben D. Nevius was a notable exception at the beginning. And that sturdy and devoted Bp. Morris was there as often as possible to back Nevius and others up.

Page 15

the Bishop and me into the road, leaving a most thore wreck and ruin, past the skill of any ordinary wheelwright to repair."

In the year 1885 Bishop Morris says in his journal of one of his other arduous journeys, "In June of 1885 I went south after services in Canyon City into the Harney Valley. Thence I went east to Prineville, and on north to The Dalles, all in a country that I had never before visited."

By 1890 the whole economy of Canyon City and its vicinity began to shift from gold mining to lumbering and cattle raising. Canyon City itself continued ofcourse in its established "business" as the county seat of Grant County. Much gold was still to be had for the digging---mostly by the hydraulic process. But most of ~~the~~ gold that had been so easily mined at first by the placer process was just no longer there. ~~Amid~~the most determ-ined efforts of deep pit digging brought little profitable return.

The chief factor that made this economic change-over possible and profitable was the coming of the railroad, even into the John Day Valley of Grant County. First by 1869 the transcontinental line of the Union Pacific RR was laid out clear across the middle band of the western and mountain states from Omaha (Neb.) to Cheyenne (Wyo.), to Green River (Wyo.), to Ogden (Utah), to Reno (Nev.), to Oakland (Cal.). Then beginning in 1885 the Oregon Short Line was constructed from Granger (Wyo.)---about 30 miles west of Green River (Wyo.)---northwest thru Idaho and Oregon (by way of Baker, La Grande, Pendleton, The Dalles---all in Oregon) to Portland, Ore.

Then by 1890 the scheme of a narrow-gauge branch line was begun from Baker City west about 28 miles to the gold fields of Sumpter thru the tall stands of virgin Ponderosa pine timber along the way. From Sumpter this branch line---called the Sumpter Valley RR---was laid out beyond over the steep Blue Mountains and then on down into the John Day Valley as far as Prairie City. This colorful narrow-gauge railroad reached Sumpter in 1896. It was extended over the mountains to Prairie by 1910.

It was this railroad that made the shift profitable, from gold mining to

Page 17

folk who claim any connection with the Episcopal Church in Canyon City. I found everything in a chaotic state at St. Thomas' Church. Really, Bishop, there is no congregation, no life, no enthusiasm for any real Church work."

Nevertheless, Goodheart had enough stamina to stay on in this difficult situation for five years, until the summer of 1905. During his tenure, "The Church was really renovated, and begun all over again. Several successful services were held in ranch houses in the Izee neighborhood---a district where an Episcopal cleric was an unknown quantity, and where one woman always referred to the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer as that 'strange Episcopal Bible'!"

Yet, for all these years, it was still the faithful few lay people at Canyon City who kept "the candle of the Lord" burning in such a way that "it went not out by any night"! They were the ones who, as someone said later on, "pulled the dying embers together and kept the sparks alive."

For example, it was this same Rev. Mr. Harris who in 1900 in his annual report to the Bishop at the Diocesan Convention that year said "upon certain festivals the ladies of that inner faithful group even acted as lay readers themselves, so that the services of the Episcopal Church were somehow kept moving. They told me to tell you, Bishop, that they were always looking for a priest---but if you had no priest for them, they would accept a deacon---if you had no deacon, they would take a lay reader---or even a woman lay reader if that were all you could send them!"

Some of these "who kept the sparks alive", and maybe one of these who passed on such insistent words to their Bishop was such a woman as Mrs. Neil Nivens, who was Sunday School principal for "many, many years---and then some". The records do not say exactly how many. Another was a long-time, faithful woman by the name of Mrs. Ruth Solinger---who died in her late eighties on March 20, 1953. This death occurred when the Rev. Albert Allen was the vicar in charge at St. Thomas' Church. "Surely she was one", Allen remarked at her funeral, "who kept the sparks alive for 40 years

Page 19

Episcopal Church in this new District. Robert Paddock was consecrated Bishop of Eastern Oregon on December 28, 1907, in Trinity Church, in downtown New York City.

Paddock left almost immediately for his western jurisdiction. But though from the "sidewalks of New York," Paddock knew this western country from childhood. For he was the oldest son of a former Missionary Bishop of the Washington Territory---the Rt. Rev. John A. Paddock---Dec. 15, 1880-to-March 3, 1894. For when the Church in Oregon became a Diocese in 1880, under Bp. Morris, the Episcopal Church to the north in the Washington Territory was separated from Oregon as a Missionary District, and Bishop John Paddock was elected its first Missionary Bishop.

After considerable exploratory travel all over his new jurisdiction---by railroad, stage and horse-back, Bishop Robert Paddock gathered his clergy ---only four at that time---and some lay delegates together for a first District Convocation at St. Paul's Church, The Dalles, in September 1908. Besides these four clergy, there were but two lay readers, and one woman deaconness. But one of these few four clergy was that stalwart pioneer missionary by the name of Reuben D. Nevius---~~back~~ again as Rector of St. Paul's Church, The Dalles. For from about 1890 to 1906 Nevius had been at work in the Washington Territory under Robert Paddock's father at Walla Walla, Clarkston, Lewiston (Ida.), and several other towns along the newly developing Northern Pacific Railroad.

In the 18 counties of the Eastern Oregon Missionary District in 1908 there were approximately 130,000 inhabitants. It was an area of about 65,483 square miles. That made an average of about 2 people per square mile. In this vast area the Episcopal Church had about 500 communicants, plus about 500 other baptized persons, in some 10 scattered congregations. Most of these 130,000 people of Eastern Oregon, and the 1,000 Episcopalians in this area, lived along the Union Pacific Railroad in the north---in Hood River, The Dalles, Pendleton, La Grande, Baker, Ontario, etc. Some others lived along the narrow-gauge Sumpter Valley branch line out of Baker in Sumpter, Austin, and Prairie City. But then there were those



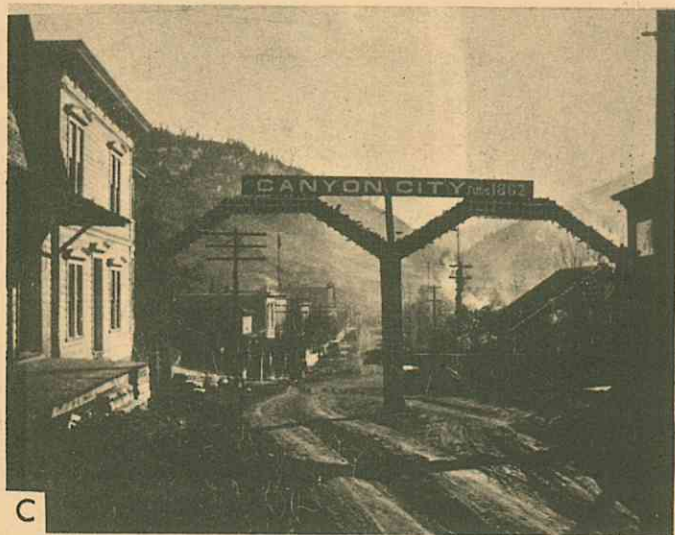
The Rt. Rev. Benjamin Wistar Morris... Bishop of the Episcopal Church for the whole State of Oregon from 1868-1907. After then Eastern Oregon was set aside as a separate jurisdiction.



A



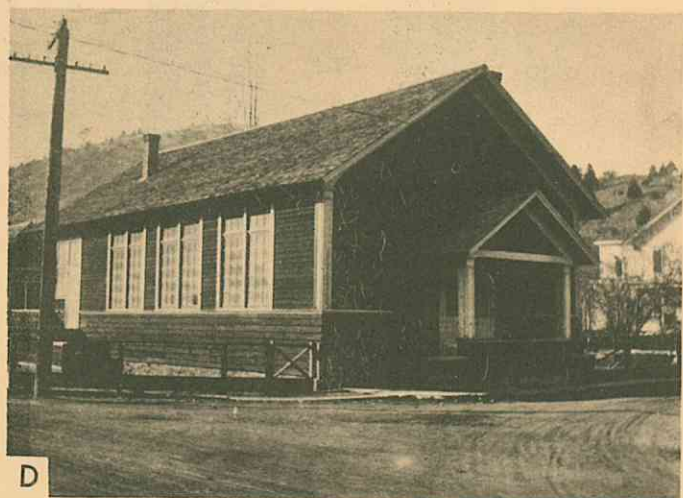
B



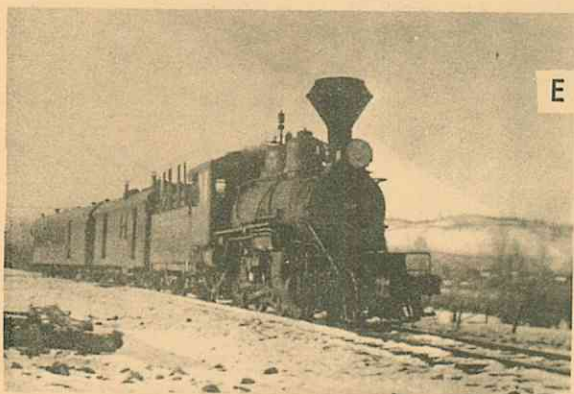
C



F



D



E

- A - The Rev. Reuben Nevius, pioneer missionary priest in C. City.
- B - Summer overview of Canyon City from a southeast hilltop.
- C - Entrance view to Canyon City, about 1900.
- D - The Guild Hall, N.W. across the street from St. Thomas'.
- E - Sumpter Valley R.R. entering Prairie City, about 1925.
- F - The Sunday School at St. Thomas' Church, 1927.



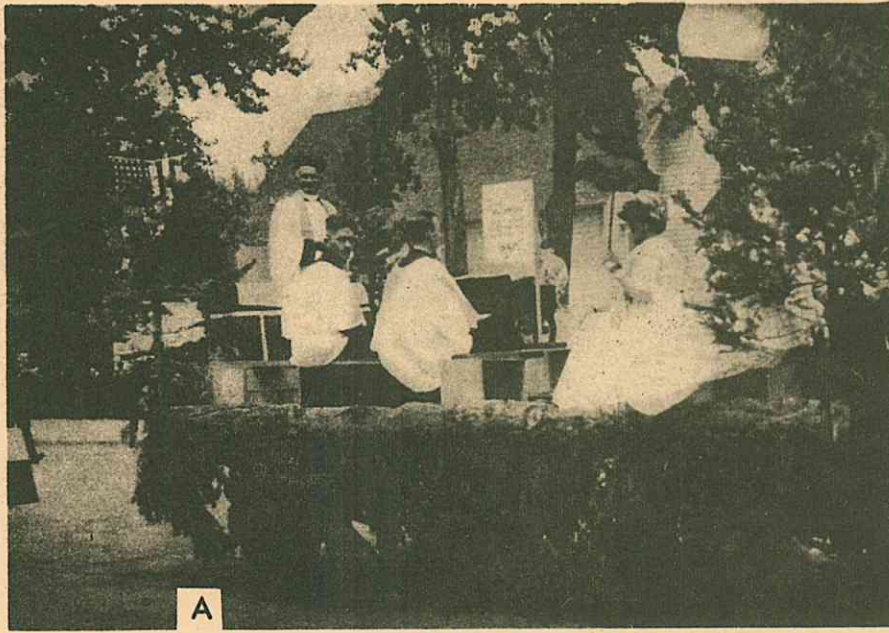
A - Ground breaking for Barth Hall in 1955 ~~1955~~, with the Rev. Albert Allen officiating.

B - Barth Hall almost complete in 1958

C - The Rev. Albert Allen being ordained as priest by Bishop Barton in St. Thomas' Church, 1951.

D - "Bert" Allen dressed up as Reuben Nevius in '62-days Centennial parade, 1962.





A



B

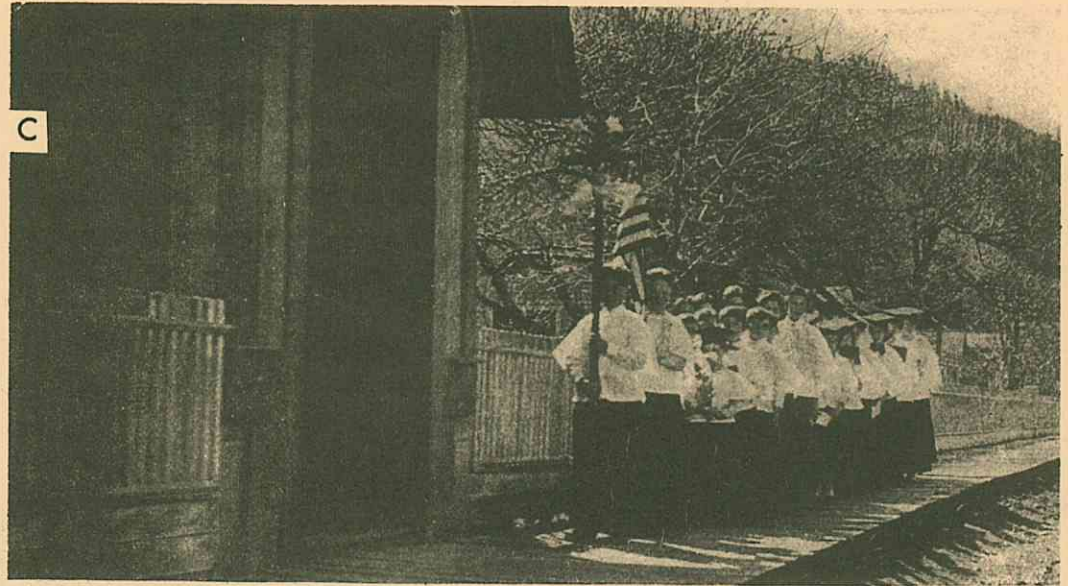
A - The original organ for St. Thomas' that "came around the Horn".

B - Hazel Morrison Perkins, 1937.

C - The Choir entering St. Thomas' Church, about 1925.

D - Interior of St. John's Church, Prairie City, Christmas 1924...
-26° outside!

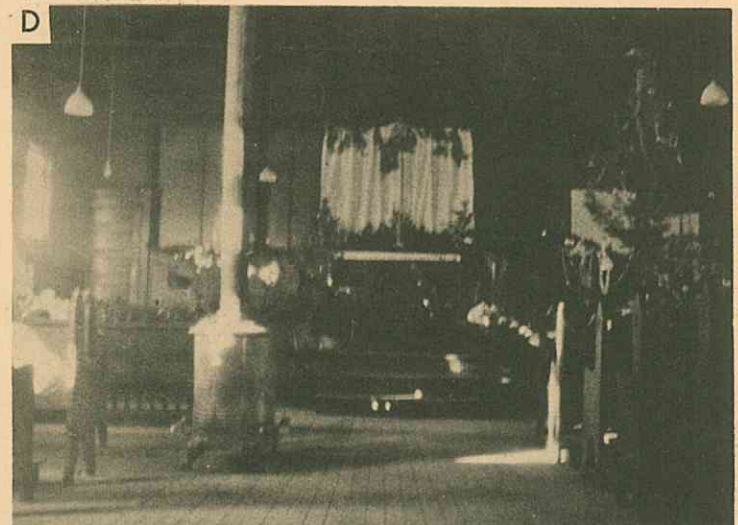
E - Exterior of St. John's Church, Prairie City.



C



E



D

Page 21

let there be the customary Methodist Church Services at 10 or 11 AM. In the afternoon, at 2 or 3 PM, let us have joint Sunday School classes for all Christian families and children together. In the evening, let us have a general interdenominational service of worship for every Christian group in that community."

Such a scheme worked in a few places, ^{but} among only a few other denominational Churches. Such a scheme was accepted by very few Episcopalians of that day!

Two---Bp. Paddock urged that the Episcopal Church in Eastern Oregon accept no money subsidy from the national missionary society of the Episcopal Church! Rather, he said, "Let the Episcopalians, and all those interested in the Episcopal Church, pay for their own religious life as they go along." However, Paddock did make an exception in receiving his own salary and some travel expense from "The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America" in New York City.

This second principle of Bishop Paddock didnt work well either! In the first place, the Church---whether Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopal---was an institution that hard pressed, pioneer families were largely unable to support out of their meager, hard-earned cash income in those days. Most East Oregonians---save for a few large ranchers---hardly had enough cash to keep body and soul together in that uncertain western economy. For example, at a large Episcopal Service in St. Thomas' Church, Canyon City, on one Sunday morning in March 1909---when over 100 people were assembled together with their own Bishop Paddock---the total cash income-offering for that Sunday amounted to only \$4.31! And that was a gold town, where cash was a bit more plentiful than in other areas..

Such a "St. Francis scheme of things" which Bishop Paddock had proposed would be especially hard on any clergy who were not bachelors as Paddock was. The "salary" of a local cleric with a family would be only what the local people could afford to give on that spot---plus any addendum that Bp. Paddock might be able to supplement out of his own salary.

Page 23

This left the Episcopal Church in Eastern Oregon in a deep limbo for two more years. Then when the national Episcopal Church met in General Convention in the fall of 1922, in Portland, Oregon, it elected a missionary Bishop in place of Paddock. The choice fell to a young (42), able, energetic, committed cleric by the name of William Proctor Remington—at that time already in Bishop's orders (since 1918), as the Suffragan (assistant) Bishop of the Episcopal Church in South Dakota.

With the coming of William Remington the whole pattern of missionary life and work thru the Episcopal Church in Eastern Oregon changed completely—and in Canyon City in particular. Now, outside resources could be brought in to supplement and encourage local Episcopal Church strength in each and every congregation. For Bp. Remington strongly felt that the church as a whole thru its national missionary society should answer effectively that old cry of the missionary field since the days of St. Paul, namely, "Come over and help us!" (Acts 16:9).

Bishop Remington came immediately to Eastern Oregon in early November 1922. And he came by means of a new way of transportation for that part of the country—by automobile! In fact, he drove in all the way from South Dakota, and stopped first at St. Stephen's Church, Baker. Then he went on to La Grande, and Pendleton—where he made his home and office. (Paddock had lived mostly in Baker, later on in Hood River, but mostly "wherever he hung up his hat")

After visiting the larger congregations along the northern stretches of his District, Remington then reached out into the interior and southern congregations...such as Ontario, Vale, Burns, Prineville, Bend, Shanike... and finally to Prairie City and St. Thomas' Church in Canyon City. From this time on Bp. Remington brought new life, new hope, new courage, new strength and help to scattered congregations—especially in isolated places like Canyon City.

The chief means of assistance that Bishop Remington brought to bear on the Church at the local level were (1) adequate fiscal support and (2) trained

Page 25

graduate of the Episcopal Theological School in Vambridge, Mass., class of 1925. He was ordained to the priesthood of the church in Ascension Church, Cove., Ore., that autumn. After a year of introductory work around Cove and Union, Sumner Brown was sent by his bishop to the John Day valley in the summer of 1926.

He was to be the first full time, resident priest of the Episcopal Church for the whole of Grant County that they had ever had! Brown stayed and worked in this situation for six full years.

At the height of Sumner's work on top of the excellent work and leadership of Miss Charlotte Brown, there were reported in 1920 to be 109 communicants in St. John's Church, Prairie City....."almost enough to make a parish", Sumner said. At St. Thomas' Church, Canyon City; there were reported to be "about 40". Naturally Prairie City was the best place for Brown to live, for there was the suitable rectory to live in.

Prairie City was the railhead of the Sumpter Valley RR from Baker, and the mainline of the Union Pacific RR beyond. By this colorful, narrow-gauge railroad the Bishop and the Archdeacon could come in and out. Also, the Browns could use this facility to get out themselves for business or a change of scene. From Prairie City Sumner Brown could travel by auto to Canyon City every week and stay in the "prophet's chamber" hard by St. Thomas'. "That 'prophet's chamber' is a transient rectory for me much of the time," he said.

The Women's Guild was first organized at St. Thomas' in 1889. We have the first original book of their constitution and by-laws, and some of their original minutes. It shows a goodly group of women determined and committed to their church on spiritual and material lines. The Guild was reorganized in 1906. It has lasted continuously ever since. Generally speaking this Guild has been the backbone of St. Thomas' congregational existence for 80 years or more. These faithful women supported their church almost entirely until the 1940's under Arthur Beckwith, and in the 1950's under Bert Allen. In 42 years of recorded work---1906-1958---these women

Page 27

But the accounts of the 1927 service do not tell us actually who their names were. Maybe some of them had come from a considerable distance just for this 50th celebration. We do know that Mrs. Ida Nivens was there. She was one who had lived in Canyon City and had been associated with St. Thomas' Church all her life. She and some others in attendance were these who had actually "kept the sparks alive" since the earliest days of St. Thomas'.

The full text of Bishop Remington's Sermon at this 50th anniversary service is preserved for us in the pages of Oregon Trail Churchman, for November 1927. The text which Bp. Remington chose for that sermon concerns a well of water---Jacob's well at Sychar in Samaria (John 4:5), where Jesus talked with that troubled Samaritan woman. From this as a start, Bp. Remington spoke of that material well of water that has flowed fresh and abundant all these years by the back of St. Thomas' Church out of that steep Canyon hillside. He told of how people in the early days of Canyon City had come in the gold rush days for earthly water, for earthly material things. But here at St. Thomas' Church all down the years people had been able to find another stream of living water in the person and faith of Jesus Christ. So the main thrust of Bp. Remington's sermon was to underline and highlight the saga of the faithful few of St. Thomas' congregation who had kept alive in Christian witness the body of Christ thru His Church there in Canyon City thru thick and thru thin---mostly thin!---for 50 years.

But Bishop Remington didn't pull any punches in his sermon. For in the course of the same he said, "Canyon City is not growing. In fact, it is losing population. Even so, it is the country seat of Grant County. So St. Thomas' Church is of that much importance in this area. Otherwise it is just a small church in a small town."

In closing he gave the assembled people (estimated at 140 at that time) these particular words for all these who live and work in small places, "Jesus never hesitated to turn his thoughts and work aside from his world-wide mission, and the universal greatness of His Kingdom, to have intimate converse with even one person---as He is doing here with this lone woman

Page 29

Sumpter Valley narrow-gauge Railroad went out of business for good.

So the Rev. Sumner Brown and family (two little children had been born to them by that time) had to leave Prairie City and Canyon City by the end of 1932. Brown went back to the Diocese of Massachusetts as the director of Christian Education. Miss Charlotte Brown had left Burns in 1930, to work in Hawthorne, Nevada. In 1940 at age 73 she died there of cancer.

So the local leadership of the church, both in Prairie and Canyon, went back again to these few stalwart laity---men and women---these few who knew the real "water of life" that their church stood for. These people maintained lay services, including funerals. Bishop Remington came occasionally for sacramental services. And once again the priest-rector at St. Stephen's Church, Baker, came over the Blue Mountains from time to time as "priest-in-charge".

Even on the local level at Canyon City the strength of immediate fiscal support weakened drastically. One result of this was that the Guild Hall, which the ladies had made possible with the sweat of their own hands, had to be given up as a church facility. With the reluctant approval of Bp. Remington, the Guild Hall was made over into apartments for rent in Canyon City. That is, these apartments were leased out for income purposes to keep St. Thomas' Church open and going financially. This episode became a long, tangled and sad tale of particulars, which finally led to the complete loss and sale of the Guild Hall (just across the street from the Church) in 1945-6.

No rectory, no guild hall, no vicar---nothing but the church edifice, with that small "prophet's chamber" at the back---and that spring in the steep hillside behind the church, which ran on plentifully.

Besides these setbacks at Canyon City, the church in Prairie City began to go to pieces spiritually and financially. Basically the people of St. John's, Prairie, just didn't have the devotion and the stamina and the spiritual stubbornness of the people of St. Thomas' Church, and these women of St. Thomas' Guild in particular. So, by four years after Sumner Brown had

Page 31

In fair weather or foul Arthur Beckwith came and went 70 miles each way over the Blue Mountains to Canyon City. That meant dirt roads in the summer, but almost impassible snow and frozen mud roads during the winter. In this way St. Thomas' Church was kept going, no matter what!...."and his candle goeth not out by any night!"

- - - - -
In October, 1945, Bishop Remington left the District for good, after 23 years of patient, pastoral labor, to accept a call as an Assistant Bishop in Philadelphia, under the Rt. Rev. Oliver J. Hart, Bishop of that Diocese. As a result, the Missionary District of Eastern Oregon had to get along without direct episcopal leadership for 12 months. Really, this was a very uncertain limbo for Eastern Oregon this time. For the national Episcopal Church had almost decided to give us Eastern Oregon as a missionary district by itself. Instead, the plan was to divide it three ways with Spokane (Wash), Idaho, and the Oregon Diocese which was west across the Cascades.

Ultimately, when the General Convention of the Episcopal Church met in Philadelphia in September, 1946, opinion prevailed to maintain Eastern Oregon as a viable district. Then convention proceeded to elect the Rev. Lane Wickham Barton (rector at East Orange, N.J.) as the third Bishop for Eastern Oregon. After his consecration in St. Paul's Church, Norwalk, Ohio, (his home parish) Bishop Barton came west on a quick trip to see the people of all congregations that fall.

During December 1946 Bp. Barton visited every congregation in his new jurisdiction---30 in all at that time. His visit to St. Thomas' Church in Canyon City took place (along with the Rev. Arthur Beckwith) on the evening of December 3rd, 1946. Then in June, 1947, Bishop Barton and his family came west for good, and moved into a permanent home and office in the city of Bend, Oregon.

For two or three years at the beginning of his episcopate, Lane Barton seemed to trying to assess the problems and the programs of all the congregations. Finally at the district convocation held in Burns in the spring of 1949, things began to develop creatively toward the future. First, Bp. Barton

Page 33

Then when George Cutcher was preparing to leave, Arthur Beckwith at Burns announced that he was going on to make a change of churches to Oakdale, Cal. To cap the climax of this whole train of events, on the last week-end of that Cutcher was there in Canyon City, a young layman (34) and a candidate for the ministry, Albert E. Allen, and his wife Helen, came to Canyon City to "look things over".

Giving a responsive "green light" to his Bishop (Barton), Allen was immediately appointed lay-reader-in-charge at St. Thomas' Church. He served in that capacity until his ordination as Deacon on October 3rd, 1950. He then became St. Thomas' first, full time, ordained resident clergyman!

The "Resurrection of the church in Canyon City" under George Cutcher moved on to be an "Ascension" under "Bert" Allen. Nor on Christmas Eve, 1950, "Bert" reported an attendance of 140 people...St. Thomas' normally seats about 120. Besides these 140, his musically talented wife, Helen, had brought together and trained a choir of 21 to lead this Christmas-Eve Service.

What was the secret of the "Ascension" under Allen? (1) Allen was a "Westernized Massachusetts man" (High School and University training in Seattle), who had chosen Eastern Oregon as his home---following 4 years in the Army in World War II. (2) Allen was a man-of-the-people, who had a background of business management (J.C. Penny store manager), ranching, and he had been a truck driver while reading for Holy Orders, as a Candidate for the Ministry from Trinity Church, Bend, Ore. (3) The 1950-s were the years of a real religious renewal all over the United States. (4) "Bert" was the first, full time, resident vicar that St. Thomas' Church had ever had, Other clerics had come and gone. Others had come to Canyon City from other places---from Prairie, from Baker, from Sumpter, from Burns. Bert Allen lived right there on the spot. (5) The financial resources of the national Episcopal Church and the district corporation of the Eastern Oregon Episcopal Foundation were now there at hand with "seed money" (and some direct grants) to help this determined and awakened congregation. (6) All at the same time the people of St. Thomas' were beginning to look frankly at themselves; and to really pull their share of the load. For example, Bert Allen gives

page 35

of which were not paved!

Barth Hall was built on two plots of land given St. Thomas' Church by the William Prophet family. Other land in that same direction was purchased by the parish, on which to build their new rectory. Thus the new rectory and the new parish hall were begun, built, and occupied to the great benefit and expansion of the life and work of St. Thomas' Church thruout all of Grant County.

But during all this local expansion with district and national assistance, note that the congregation at Canyon City was paying promptly its full missionary apportionment to the district and the national church to the tune of \$648.00 in 1955! "From 1950-55", says Allen in his parochial reports "there was a growth in communicant strength from 26 to 171; a total of 176 baptisms performed in my first five years; a total of 119 persons presented for Confirmation, to the Bishop; a climb of from 15 to 91 in Church School attendance; and the increase of ^{the} youth group from 0 to 36..!"

But then, after six abundant years, Allen accepted a call to move to St. Mark's Church, Hood River---one of the largest churches in the district.

When Allen left Canyon City, Bishop Barten appointed Mr. J.W. Southworth, a strong and committed layman from Seneca, as temporary lay-reader-in-charge. Then in October, 1957, 10 months after "Bert" left, The Rev. "Dead-eye" Dick Payne---coming right out of theological seminary in the East---took charge of St. Thomas' Church until 1960. The Church people and others in the Canyon City community had dubbed The Rev. Richard L. Payne as "Dead-eye" Dick because on his first try in his first deer season---that sacred (?) period in October for all western he-men---this green-horn from the East---shot his deer with his first bullet, right thru the neck of the fleeing animal at about 6 AM on the first morning of his October deer hunting season!

As a measure of how "sacred" the October deer season is, note the following true story.....Some years before when Bishop Remington was talking with the Sunday School at Canyon City, and was asking them if they knew en

Page 37

Parleur, who served St. Thomas' Church and all of Grant County for four years, before going on to Trinity Church in the city of Bend, Ore.

* * * * *

Then, St. Thomas' Church headed into a real "time of troubles"! For one thing it was the problem of the constant mobility of the people in the West, especially in a small town in the West. Constant mobility of families is something that weakens and disturbs every small town church. For it isn't the mobility of the clergy that ^{really} disturbs a small church congregation; but more so, it is the constant mobility of the lay people in a small town of the West that move, change jobs, ^{or} are promoted.

For example, in March 1973 a census bureau study revealed that 31.8% of the people of the United States change their residences every year. Most of these people move from one town to another, rather than from one street to another street in the same town. This mobile percentage of the whole population is probably higher in the West; and probably higher still in small size towns than in larger cities. For example, the efficient young executive in the US Forest Service is promoted from Canyon City to Portland; the clerk in the Bureau of Land Management is sent on to Eugene; the capable telephone repairman is passed on to a larger position with the telephone company in Klamath Falls; the able young school teacher takes a new teaching position in Salem; the State Police Corporal at Canyon City is moved to a higher position in Baker; the skilled timber faller moves to Burns; the crack salesman at the local Ford Agency goes on to Boise. Even the undertaker moves to take over some new position, in that ancient and honorable craft. Yes, doctors, dentists and lawyers sometimes move, also.

Besides, those who move are usually the young, the promising, the leadership type of lay people, climbing up the economic and social ladder of life. The moving of such promising young people weakens the local congregation in their going, especially if the movers are committed Christians in the local parish church. No doubt they strengthen the other church in the new place where they go; but the small church in the smaller community

turned toward an entirely new clerical setup for St. Thomas' Church in Canyon City, under the Rev. Richard Thew...from 1971 on.

"Dick" Thew is a born and bred Eastern Oregonian, from Cove. After college and ^{before} two years at the Episcopal Theological School at Cambridge, Mass., ^{he} was a high school teacher and athletic director at Condon, Ore. Then Thew became vice-principal at the Prairie City high school. At about the same time Bishop Spofford ordained him deacon and then as priest, and put him in charge of St. Thomas' Church in Canyon City.

Thus "Dick" became a new breed of Episcopal vicars, whom we call "non-stipendiary priests". That is, he works five days a week as high school vice-principal, student counselor, and sometime foot-ball coach, at Prairie. He gets his major cash income from his teaching job. On the other two days of the week he carries on his clerical work in Canyon City---together with regular services in Izee, Long Creek, and Seneca (all in Grant County). What part of the week he has left for his wife and growing family in another question...? He lives in a house across the street from his high school job.

* * * * *

Barth Hall is now paid for. It is at the present time being used as a multi-purpose building for church and community purposes. The rectory at Canyon City has been sold, so that, in line with Diocesan policy, clergy may procure their own residences--what and where they want. Living in Prairie, the Thews shuttle to Canyon and all other parts of Grant County.

With part of the money from the sale of the rectory the people of St. Thomas' are building a protective wall for the spring in the hillside by the back corner of the church; and then in addition a small, modest structure adjoined to St. Thomas'. This will provide in addition to the "prophet's chamber", a small congregational gathering place for coffee hours, social times, etc., after ordinary church services. The parish of St. Thomas' also pays Thew for his housing utilities and his church pension premiums. It seems to be a very helpful and creative step for the congregation of St. Thomas' in the mid-1970's.

which this beautiful church was erected. It has never ceased flowing all these years! It still gives material refreshment to the prophets, priests and lay people who have dispensed the sacraments and ministered the gospel of Christ continuously in the life of this parish church all these years!"

"The candle of the Lord" has burned in the "spirit of man" (and women) in St. Thomas' Church for almost 100 years! It has been mostly the spiritual stubbornness of the laity of this church who have not let that candle go out by any night! St. Thomas' Church had women lay readers in a day when such a thing was almost unthinkable in the Episcopal Church---something like the present controversy in the Episcopal Church about women priests. Charlotte Brown was a full time, resident, woman lay reader in Canyon City, Burns, Heppner, and other places.

It was the faithful lay women of the Guild, who bound themselves together in special work and devotion, who supported St. Thomas' Church financially in large part for years. It was the work of the faithful women of that Guild who established that Guild Hall---even making it over into rented apartments for needed church income during the depressed 1930's. These and other men and women were the ones who did every^{king} possible to see to it that this "candle of the Lord"... "went not out by any night"!

These were the people who "kept the sparks from going out." The "candle of the Lord", in and thru the Episcopal Church, went out for good in other places in Eastern Oregon---in Prairie City, in Shaniko, in Cross Keys, in Hardman, in Weston, ^{and} in Union. But not so in St. Thomas' congregation in Canyon City! This church has stood the tests of all sorts of difficulties, disasters, frustrations, setbacks, and what have you. In the face of all this and more it has maintained a fruitful ministry all these 100 years!

One result of all this is that the Oregon Commission of the National Park Service has recommended that St. Thomas' Church be recognized and set up as National Monument!

* * * * *

This is the miracle of this centennial at St. Thomas' Church! By the grace