

# HISTORY OF HUDSON COMMUNITY CHURCH

By HILDA SCHREIBER

The little white chapel, that is near the cemetery and the Beaver Valley Grange Hall, was once the Hudson Community Church, where Sunday School and church services were held regularly, besides some weddings and funerals.

This community has always been interested in religious meetings. When the school house was a little south of where the Grange hall now stands, traveling preachers, temperance leaders, and singing teachers with their tuning forks would hold meetings. People would come many miles to be present. Mrs. Perrine from West Rainier was Sunday School Superintendent at one time. In 1891 May Richards (Johnson) was assisting in the Jimmy Hudson home, when she took their son, Herb, with her to Sunday School. She was criticized for this, as some thought that it was too far for a four-year-old to walk.

Eventually the old school house was replaced by a new one on the other side of Beaver Creek, in fact, where the Hudson school now stands.

In 1907 no Sunday School was being held in a public place, but May Johnson, being a member of the S. D. A. Church, was teaching her children Bible lessons at home one Saturday when Ira Parcher came on an errand and became interested. He suggested that study be held in a public place and invite members of the community to attend. This was considered, but decided to hold it on Sunday so more people could be present. The Grange Hall was not being used at the time that Sunday School would be held, so that was a good place to meet. Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Witham and family recently from England, were a great help, especially with the singing. Mr. Witham pronounced some words different from the way I was accustomed to—one was "Jehovah," which he called "Jehover".

Some of the teachers were: Alice Parcher in charge of small children; May Johnson, older ones, and Mr. Witham had the adults. His daughter, Beatrice, bought him a new Bible in 1908 to use in teaching.

Sunday School continued in the Grange Hall for some time. But there came a day when the Grangers wanted the building once a month at the same time that the Sunday School did. As it was summer, the Sunday School just moved outside under a large cedar tree, and continued with their happiness in having Sunday School together. The singing was with such enthusiasm that the Grange

members were disturbed in trying to conduct their meeting, and let their displeasure be known.

The loggers in J. B. Yeon's camp heard of the need for a place to worship and did many things to help. They and the whole community were very generous with donations of money, and anything that they could do—Catholics and Protestants alike. Basket socials were held to help obtain money to build a church. As the baskets were auctioned the bidding would be enthusiastic. Five and ten dollars was usual and many went much higher. The baskets were works of art with home made paper flowers.

When enough money was assembled for building material, the construction of the church began on land donated by Mr. Frank Rice. Frank Parcher tells of helping Chas. Clark shingle the roof. Chas. Clark was a carpenter in Rainier. Jean (McCollam) Parcher lived near by and watched the construction during 1909. The plastering, probably, was done by Mr. Gulker of Rainier. It was heated by a wood-burning stove near the chimney on the right side a few feet inside the Church. Early in the 1930s, stove pipe was added, and stove placed in the right hand corner. The present stove was donated by the Van Swoll family.

As soon as the building was completed, services were held there. It was understood that some church had to sponsor the organization. So the Minister from the Methodist church in Rainier was asked to help. Reverend C. T. Cook came and led out in the Dedication service in 1909. The Methodist Sunday School material was used at first, but soon the David C. Cook supplies were used and continued to be until Sunday School was discontinued.

A shed was built behind the church for horses during rainy weather. Tracy Parcher used it for his car during Sunday School beginning in 1919.

It is reported that Mrs. Morton was the first Sunday School Superintendent. Grandma Gamble, Alice Parcher, Ira Parcher and Mr. O'Neal had charge at different times. The Withams all helped. The children were Beatrice, George, Lillie, Walter, Bert, Gertie, Anna, Doris, Fred and Marie.

I remember the Oneal family being very active in Sunday School in 1911 and 1912. After church, some of the young folks would go home with them for noon meal. Mrs. Oneal always cooked extra for the group, but I remember one time being there for supper in the evening, after having the noon meal there, when there was nothing to eat but canned tomatoes and bread. So I ate the tomatoes and enjoyed them, but would never eat them at home. Part of the afternoon would often be spent in playing croquet at Jimmy Hudson's place.

The Church was the center of entertainment for the young folk. Parties and taffy pulls, etc., were held frequently in different homes which satisfied the need for getting together.



The Hudson Church as it looks now



John Hudson, Ira Parcher, Don Parcher, Henry Morton, George Gamble, with the old Hudson Community Church in background.  
Photo taken about 1913 by Lee Johnson

The Oneal family, including children, Clyde, Thed, Carrie, Homer and Oral, were musical—played instruments, as well as singing, which made a very pleasant place to visit. The daughter, Carrie, when only 14 years of age, was appointed to select and obtain an organ for the church, which she did with the help of her uncle, Ashbury Hutchison, and it is still in the church. She married, and by the name of Carolyn James has been a prominent and successful music teacher, besides using her talent for entertaining veterans and others, and singing in her church in Vancouver, Washington. Her mother directed a cantata, "The Pink Rose," to raise money to seal the walls of the church. Ted Heath was assisting with a Christmas program and had the singers of "Silent Night" to give the effect of coming from a distance, by singing as they entered by climbing a ladder and going through a window. As Winnie Morton was climbing the ladder, it fell and nearly broke up the program.

The Stennick family came to the community in 1913. The children were enthusiastic and regular members. Jim has helped establish the date that the church was moved to a new position. The Chas. Crank family enjoyed attending Sunday School and social affairs. Margaret especially enjoyed the sand box studies. It is indeed a community church. When work days were called for everyone came.

Grandma Parcher always made and filled beautiful Easter basket for her pupils. Stella Stennick remembers one Easter, before leaving for home with her basket, Doris Witham, wearing a white coat, cracked her Easter egg on her head. To everyone's surprise, it proved to be raw. The wrong egg had been colored.

The children always took part in Easter and Christmas programs. When Helen Van Swoll was about five years old, she had learned a poem and was all prepared to say it, but when she looked down at a whole roomful of people, not a word could she say, which was embarrassing for her mother.

Church picnics were held on the beach of the Columbia river where there was plenty of sand to play in and water to use for swimming. Helen tells of some young folks being on a log which started downstream, and had to call for help to be pulled to shore. Joe Schreiber was the life guard for the picnic. Edythe Gamble assisted little Dorothy Schreiber to safety when she went out into deep water. One time Margaret Everman was at a picnic when a boat was used for entertainment. Grandma Stennick and Mrs. John Larson were in the boat when an ocean liner went by, which made large waves, causing frightened shrieks to come from the rowboat.

In 1928 the church was being almost surrounded by graves. As the cemetery needed more room it was decided that the church be moved to a new plot donated by Mrs. Rice for that purpose. This move was made by Chas. Clark, who was in charge of the ceme-

tery at this time. The building is 32' by 22'. Kenneth Schreiber made this comment recently: "My first memory of the church was when it was in its old location. I was very young, and the moving and placing it on the high wooden foundation seemed quite a feat. The bottom did not have the 'skirt' that it has now, and the wood for the heating stove was stored in plain sight underneath."

Mrs. Maurice Caudy had an active part in Sunday School during 1927 and 1931. She was, at different times, Superintendent, organist, teacher, and supervised students in planting flowers to beautify the church yard. One Sunday during the time that she was superintendent, for some reason, she was late in getting to church, so the children went down to the store on the highway and spent their Sunday School money for candy. When they arrived back at the church and told about the money, Mrs. Caudy was very unhappy.

In 1929 the Ernest Rainwater family came to the community. Mrs. Rainwater was superintendent and also taught. Their children were Everett, Harold, Ernest Jr., Richard, Margaret and Francis. It is of interest that there is a granddaughter married to a minister and lives in Manitoba, Canada. Another granddaughter and husband are missionaries in the Dominican Republic.

Vera LaFountain did many things for the Sunday School. Miss Little and Mr. Hammel were two of the public school teachers who helped at church.

The ministers from Rainier Methodist Church were a real help. They came out once each month and conducted the Church Hour. Their names would be familiar to Hudson Sunday School people. Reverend Fedje was a strong and wonderful person. I learned many things from him, including not to have flowers in a church. I was in charge of flowers for decorations, and had placed a small vase of sweet peas on the side of the pulpit one Sunday where Rev. Fedje was doing his preaching. He endeavored to avoid the flowers for some time, then picked up the vase and placed it on a table and said, "Flowers do not belong there."

There had been no Ladies Aid in the community for some time, so the ladies had a meeting and reorganized in 1933, with Mrs. Jonas Johnson as president. The church had been left in its new position without much being done to it. It needed a new roof, and with help from Rainier Hardware, Chas. Bross and Don Parcher and Mr. Chappelle, it was eventually completed. The Ladies Aid bought the shingles and served noon meals to the men who donated their labor.

On April 12, 1934, the Ladies Aid paid Don Parcher \$8.00 for material used in cement blocks in foundation for the church. The janitor work of the church was cared for during this time by members of the Aid. Special days were planned for this work. The Aid began paying the insurance for the church. Some years before this,

Ira Parcher was paying it, when there was scarcely enough money to keep things going at home.

Mrs. Della Johnson advocated earning money through the Aid to have interior of the church decorated. It had been plastered and left white. The floor had been oiled but not covered. There was no platform for the pulpit to be on. The first step in obtaining money was a quick call on the business people in Rainier by Mrs. Johnson and Narcissus Parcher. They gave \$60.00 willingly. The Ladies Aid held bazaars, pie socials, and sold quilts and food, and had almost \$123.00 to use in 1935. Montgomery Wards had a special offer for churches that needed help, by donating wallpaper. Mrs. Johnson took advantage of this and received enough paper for the whole church interior. A wainscoting finished in a light brown was placed around the room. A platform was installed across one end of the church and covered with carpet. The Bonser brothers did the floor and woodwork, including seats. The floor was beautifully finished in dark red. Later, because of complaint of dust showing, was changed to brown. This was a mistake, but was done without due consideration.

Mrs. Jugnickle made a beautiful crocheted piece for the pulpit. The building was wired for electricity, and when the Methodist church in Rainier changed lighting fixtures, Hudson received their old ones. By the close of 1935 the church was all freshly finished and ready for re-dedication on February 2, 1936, with Rev. Ingold of the Church of God as the speaker.

Singing is a happy part of worship, and was enjoyed so much, that besides often having a sing in the church on Sunday evenings, members would meet in homes for an evening of singing together. There was not a trained voice among them, but each one was happy to spend an evening that way.

To be able to have some privacy for classes, curtains were held by overhead wires to divide the church into four rooms. Zella Parcher was one of those who taught the little folk with use of sandbox—many of the objects were home made, and children were permitted to move them about as story was told.

Through the years, all community funerals were held in the church, as there was no local funeral home for that purpose. When Lula Mae Van Swoll was a little girl she would stop at the church on her way home from school and attend a funeral if one was being held.

Five beautiful weddings were held in the church, as follows:

Sept. 3, 1942—Bob Bernard and Dorothy May Schreiber. Attendants, Ray and Ella Johnston. Minister, S. D. A. Church Elder Anderson. Reverend Orval Whitman of the Methodist Church, was guest.

August 31, 1947—Sam Robinson and Betty Bennett. Attendants, Paul Robinson, Dorothy Benett. Minister, Rev. Heath Lowry of Assembly of God.



February 21, 1948—James Maxwell and Lula Mae Van Swoll. Bridesmaids, Jean Fields, Norma Anderson, Jean Van Swoll. Best Man, Fred Foshaug. Minister, C. A. Benshadler of Jehovah's Witnesses.

August 28, 1949—Bill Everman and Vera Hudson. Attendants, Henry Lucker, Dorothy Hudson. Minister, Rev. Orval Johnson of Methodist Church.

December 4, 1952—Bill Stennick and Mary Walters. Attendants for Bride, Pat Watson, Louisa Jensen. Best Man, Martin Benson. Minister, Rev. Martin. Family wedding.

The building was used by other church groups. One was a missionary type church who have no formal name. With a Charter membership of 27, the Seventh Day Adventists used it from December 17, 1938, to October 21, 1957. The Church of Christ members met there from 1968 to 1970.

Sunday School as a community project discontinued in 1941. As Sunday School was not being conducted, one boy of the community, Bert Parcher, not a member of S. D. A. church, received a Bible for a year's perfect attendance at Sabbath School.

Finally the church was left without anyone to care for it, as it was not being used. The Cemetery District, a tax supported organization, decided that it could use the building for funerals, if necessary, and was willing to buy it from the Methodists. Some felt it already belonged to this community. After much discussion and several meetings, the Cemetery District paid the Methodist Church in Rainier two hundred dollars (\$200) on January 4, 1960.

The Cemetery District changed the name to Cemetery District Chapel and is taking care of the building and grounds, and permits anyone to use it for proper purposes who wish to do so.

The story of Hudson Community Church is not just about a building, but the influence that its use had on the community. It helped set a pattern of living: "A Belief In God and His Presence With Us In Our Daily Lives."