

STEILACOOM'S

CHURCH



1883-1902



1902-1961



Dedicated 1961

by Val Dumond-Wheeler

STEILACOOM'S CHURCH

By: Val Dumond-Wheelehan

A History of
Oberlin Congregational Church
(United Church of Christ)
Steilacoom, Washington

1883—1983

STEILACOOM'S CHURCH

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Three buildings that have housed Oberlin Church, from 1883 to 1902, from 1902 to 1961, and the building currently used since 1961.

COVENANT

OBERLIN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF STEILACOOM, W.T.
1883

"We, Whose names are here unto subscribed, do hereby solemnly promise that as members of this Church of Christ, we will faithfully endeavor to honor it in our conduct and life, to give diligent attendance upon its services and ordinances; to refrain from opposing its faith; to submit to its rules and discipline; to labor and pray for its increase, purity and peace; and to walk with its disciples in love, seeking and improving opportunities to minister to them."

*(Signed) Arthur T. Burnell
Mary A. Burnell
Matilda Ball White
Lillie M. Wallace
Harriet H. Dyer
Spencer H. Dyer
Mary E. Wells
William S. Wells*

PREFACE

Oberlin Congregational Church of Steilacoom is taking the occasion of its 100th anniversary to look back and recall milestones in its century of service to the community of Steilacoom and to the world.

When people reach that significant 100th birthday, it is traditional to recall events and friends of the past. In the case of a church, the events are more than mere record, and the friends are more than just names. In the words of Pogo, "They is us!" People who fill the pages of church ledgers, notebooks and scrapbooks are alive. Their names live; their memories live; their deeds live; their children and their children's children live.

Their church lives.

Recording those events and people is sometimes referred to as "history." And that is not a finite task. For history does not occur at a precise instant—it is an unfolding of an event or events, perceived and altered as new occurrences result and are observed. History begins with an event or reminder of an event. That often is blended with memory, which varies from one memory to another, from time to time. All of this is mixed with the way a historic event is perceived and understood, and the way the individual relates to that perception.

So history tends to get mixed up. It wasn't clear to begin with, since events are not conveniently begun at precise moments in time, but are ongoing processes.

History, like birth, takes time. As human birth can be counted from many different moments or events—conception, first stirring, passage from the womb, cutting the umbilical, first breath—so can history. A church was not "founded" at an exact moment. It grew from ideas and hopes of a few people who may have brought up the idea to each other at varying moments, reaching a joint decision at another moment, moving ahead as plans grew and unfolded.

Here are some presented facts of recorded church events—presented through the records of those who were there and whose perceptions are remarkably and uniquely their own. The events may stir your own recollections of occurrences and thus, you may interpret your own history through memory.

For that part of history that lies beyond our own time, outside our own memory, we must depend on the recorded perception of others. Where these records are available, we have drawn most of this writing. It may differ from history interpreted by others, but the facts are adhered to as closely as possible through church records and files, and through newspaper items. The most reliable recorders have been chosen wherever they were available.

DEDICATION

This history of Steilacoom's Church is dedicated to Clenda Teevin Davidson, Historian for Oberlin Congregational Church since 1954. In words she has quoted from Historian Chapin Foster, "No future is safe where the past is forgotten."

She has helped us all to remember. (vdw)



Clenda Davidson, Oberlin Church Historian since 1954, is shown wearing a costume similar to those worn in 1883, the year the church was founded. She stands next to the pulpit given to the church in 1895 by A.S. Black and used until 1961.

**Oberlin Congregational Church (U.C.C.)
Post Office Box 1026
Steilacoom, Washington 98388**

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I. THE BEGINNINGS

Steilacoom one hundred years ago was a wild, unruly kid of a town. It had a scant three decades of history of its own. (The eons of history before that were unrecorded by the Indians and glaciers that moved peacefully about this corner of the continent.) Steilacoom's arrival in the early 1850's was the firecracker that set to life the whole Puget Sound region.

Early Steilacoom residents were mostly men, mostly young (the Balch boys were barely out of their teens when they paced off their donation claims), and mostly interested in making a living. They diligently set about pursuing lucrative trade, supplying timber to mushrooming California settlements that were bulging with gold prospectors.

Within a few years Steilacoom experienced its own Gold Rush. Lumberjacks, soldiers and merchants picked up supplies in Steilacoom and set out on a direct route for gold fields across the mountains. Steilacoom boomed. Hotels, stores, recreation parlors, liveries, saloons and lean-tos, all sprang up along the crowded waterfront. It was an exciting, though sometimes dangerous, place to be.

Soon women and children joined the men, and a semblance of family life was added to the town. Schools and churches were started, and Steilacoom seemed to be destined to become a leading seaport—"as soon as the railroad came" to tie it to America's interior.

In the early 1860's, six churches were being talked about around town. The Methodists already had their building down on Wilkes Street (1854); Presbyterians were building their church up on the hill at Rainier and Puyallup Streets (1863); the Catholics had established a convent and were about to move a church building from Fort Steilacoom (1864). And there was talk about other churches, Universalists, Campbellites and Quakers. The contract had been let for the Masonic Hall.

There were schools too in 1860—a public school with a woman to teach girls and a man to teach boys, with night classes four times a week. There was the academy taught by the Presbyterian minister, and there was a private school.

However, the promised railroad did not come to Steilacoom. Instead, in the 1870's the railroad became the needle that pumped life into Tacoma. And Steilacoom's expansion was doomed—or saved—according to your point of view.

The town dwindled in the 70's, both in business and in population, from 420 in 1858 to about 100 in 1870. The military had abandoned the army post in 1868; the gold rush turned out to be a trickle; attention turned to Tacoma and points north. As peo-

ple left, the schools and churches closed. Family-minded people became concerned as they realized there were no regular Protestant services being held. They had to rely on supply pastors who came around occasionally.

The town youngsters were meeting in cooperative programs like the one reported in THE TACOMA NEWS on October 19, 1882: "The Union Sunday School comprising teachers and friends of the Methodist and Congregational Sunday Schools of the city enjoyed a social occasion at the Methodist parsonage on Tuesday evening. It is contemplated to hold children's socials at intervals this winter."

Attention already had been drawn to Steilacoom by the young Congregational Home Mission Society that had begun to look for a site on the lower Puget Sound for a mission academy. Dr. George H. Atkinson was a part of a reporting committee at the second annual meeting of the Congregational Association of Washington Territory (W.T.), meeting at Alden Academy with Pilgrim Church at Fidalgo, W.T., in August, 1880. The committee expressed the need for an academy similar to the one at Fidalgo which had been established by Professor Arthur T. Burnell. It had already secured a location for the academy. As soon as a board of trustees was appointed, the incorporation could take place. Dr. Atkinson directed, "as soon as possible."

Dr. Atkinson had been territory superintendent since 1848 when it was still considered "foreign mission" territory. The name soon was changed to "home mission" on the urging of government officials who were trying to settle this area for the United States.

The site chosen for the territory's second Congregational academy was Steilacoom. The first Board of Trustees named, following incorporation, were: Dr. Atkinson, Rev. J.F. Ellis, Rev. C.C. Otis, Rev. E.C. Oakley, D.D. Clark, John Flett and A.T. Burnell, secretary and principal of the academy.

The newly named principal was described as a "cultured young divinity student from Maine." He had received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Oberlin College (Ohio) in 1875. His wife, Mary A. Frayer Burnell, also was an Oberlin graduate, receiving her L.B. (Bachelor of Letters) in 1876. An artist, Mrs. Burnell was named to teach at the new academy. Both had been working at the Fidalgo Mission for more than a year.

ValA Fts. 1,3 Hev. 2-83

The Normal Academy opened in September 1881 with minimum accommodations. Plans for a more permanent school proceeded and THE TACOMA NEWS reported on September 28, 1882: "The people of Steilacoom are pleased with the prospects of having a college established here. The old courthouse has been purchased by the Congregational Society for that purpose, who

will soon begin to work on the building and will be ready to open school on the first of January. Long may the enterprise prosper and may the people here and elsewhere show their good judgment in assisting it all they can."

And thus the excitement and expectations of this new undertaking grew throughout the community. The new Congregational Academy was taking root and growing.

The newspaper followed the progress with such items as: "The seats for the new academy arrived a few days ago and are very nice and comfortable. The room presents a fine, clean airy appearance. The teacher's desk is to come from Seattle then the furniture will be complete, with the exception of the professor's chair. It is rumored that the ladies of Steilacoom talk of getting up an entertainment of some kind, the proceeds to be devoted to the object of buying a good comfortable chair."—TACOMA NEWS, December 28, 1882.

The courthouse referred to was built in Steilacoom in the late 1850's and abandoned by the government offices when Pierce County seat moved to Tacoma in 1880. It was used by the Steilacoom Academy until 1884 when the public schools took up where private academies ended. The old courthouse was Pierce County's District Number 1 school system until 1892. Before the old building was razed in 1932, it served as a boarding house, private home, and a theater where some of the community's first silent movies were shown. A marker at 611 Martin Street now designates the historic area.

Professor and Mary Burnell moved to Steilacoom from their mission at Skokomish on February 6, 1883. The newspaper stated they had "chartered the steamer 'Gem' of Union City to bring them direct hither with their household effects." It would be six months before the newspaper would report: "Prof. Burnell's new house at the upper town is beginning to assume fair proportions, and will add much to the appearance of the place." The Burnell House, located at Saltar's Point, subsequently was sold to the Claussen family.

All this time the Congregational Society had been getting together in Steilacoom with the intent of establishing a church. The town had been without a formal Protestant church organization long enough. The organizational meeting of the church on March 5, 1883, was duly recorded in the church's first book of records, along with a copy of the Church Covenant and the Confession of Faith, Standing Rules of the Oberlin Congregational Church of Steilacoom, W.T., and a list of members, how they were admitted and how dismissed.

The record indicates Professor Burnell was ordained as a minister of the Congregational Church on February 14, 1883, at the nearby Lake View Church, which he also served.

The newspaper covered the organizational meeting as follows (THE TACOMA NEWS, March 8, 1883): "The Presbyterian church of this place has been purchased by the Congregational Society the design having been painted and otherwise repaired, a new belfry added and a bell. Last night Rev. Mr. Atkinson, of Portland, organized a Congregational Society here. Quite a number of members presented their letters of dismissal from other churches and joined this. Rev. A.T. Burnell and W.S. Wells were elected trustees and Miss Lilian [sic] Wallace clerk."

The church records told the entire story: "Steilacoom, W.T., March 5th, 1883—Minutes of the organization of the Congregational Church at Steilacom, W.T. March 5th, 1883. Services commenced at 7 o'clock in the evening. Opening hymn, 'Sweet Hour of Prayer' accompanied by instrumental music.

"Sermon delivered by G.H. Atkinson, D.D. his text John 9th and part of the 31st verse. 'If any man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth.'

"Six church letters were read, those of Rev. A.T. Burnell and Mrs. Mary A. Burnell from the Congregational Mission Church at Skokomish, W.T. in year 1883. Mr. Spencer H. Dyer and Mrs. Harriet H. Dyer from the First Cong. Ch. [sic] Frankford Mich. in year 1875 and Mr. William S. Wells and Mrs. Mary E. Wells from the Cong. Ch. Semiahmoo W.T. (Blaine) in year 1879. Mrs. Matilda Ball White dictated a letter to be sent to the Presbyterian Clergyman, Rev. J.R. Tompson [sic] of Olympia, asking for the recovering of her Newark, N.J. letter by which she united with the Presbyterian Church of Steilacoom upon its organization here in 1860, now disbanded.

"In anticipation of the receipt of such letter Mrs. Matilda Ball White was received to membership; also Miss Lillie M. Wallace whose letter from the Pilgrim Church at Anacortes had not yet arrived.

"The confession of faith was read by the Doctor receiving assent from those thus organizing themselves into Cong. Ch. of Steilacoom. He then welcomed them by the right hand of fellowship. The members celebrated the Lord's supper; after which Lillie M. Wallace was elected clerk, Dr. Atkinson, Rev. A.T. Burnell and William S. Wells trustees of the church and Rev. A.T. Burnell was invited to act as Pastor who is at present, Principal of the Normal Academy Steilacoom. (Signed) Lillie M. Wallace, Clerk"

ABOUT THE MEMBERS

Mr. Burnell had been graduated from Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, in 1875 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. His wife, Mary A. Frayer Burnell, was graduated from the same school in 1876 with an "L.B." (Bachelor of Letters). The Oberlin College Alumni

Association lists Miss Wallace as a student from 1884 to 1885; and Mrs. Wells as a student from 1877-78 and 1882-84. Mrs. Wells remained at the church until her death on February 19, 1904. Miss Wallace resigned as clerk before the July 1883 quarterly meeting. Mr. Wells was active in the church until 1889. He died soon after and is buried at the Steilacoom Masonic Cemetery. Mrs. White, who lived on a farm in the area now known as DuPont, was on the 1900 list of members, but was not mentioned in 1905's revision. Mr. and Mrs. Dyer left the town in October 1883.

At a subsequent meeting, March 13, 1883, the group agreed to adopt the articles of the committee report and adjourn as soon as possible "as the meeting was called prior to a sociable." The church name chosen was Oberlin Congregational Church, and the Confession of Faith was taken from "Roy's Manual," and duly copied in the record book (probably after the sociable!). The name is believed to be the wishes of the members who attended Oberlin College. A Congregational institution of learning, the college was named for John Frederick Oberlin, a French Lutheran pastor who greatly improved the miserable social conditions he found in his district in France. He was called a saint. Oberlin College was the first United States college to admit blacks (in 1833) and the first to grant degrees to women (1847). Oberlin theology has been called a modified form of Calvinism.

Steilacoom's church members agreed to give voluntarily to pay the church bills and pastor's salary. Standing Rules were recorded following the by-laws of the Oberlin Congregational Church in Oberlin, Ohio, "with slight amendments," and members agreed to observe communion "on the first Sabbath of each quarter through the year." The first such communion was held April 1, using the text from Hebrew 12: 1-2.

Dr. Atkinson notified the church in April he had insured the building for \$900 and the furniture for \$100, and asked the church to reimburse him the \$22.50 for the premium. The group had to apply to the American Home Missionary Society for help. That first amount was for \$300 to pay the insurance premium and to help support the pastor. It was not clear just what the pastor's salary was to be. Both Mr. and Mrs. Dyer pledged \$1 a month, as did Miss Wallace. Mr and Mrs. Wells each pledged \$5 a year toward the pastor's salary, and the Wellses pledged an additional \$12 a year toward a church fund.

In order to provide funds for mission purposes, a Mission Box was affixed to the door of the church to receive contributions.

The church officially was incorporated on April 27, 1883, the papers signed by Mr. Burnell, president; Mr. Wells, secretary; Dr. Atkinson, trustee; Mary Burnell and Mary Wells. They were recorded in Olympia on May 5, 1883.

STEILACOOM, SPRING 1883

Spring was making its appearance in Steilacoom. The newspaper reported "Everybody, under the inspiration of the glorious spring weather, of the past three weeks, is busy making gardens, setting out fruit and flowers." It further reported that "Living space was limited; there is not a vacant house in town, with an active demand for tenements."—THE TACOMA NEWS, March 22, 1883.

Also making an appearance in the area (and wiping everything else off the front pages of the newspaper) was the president of the Northern Pacific Railroad, Henry Villard, looking for the Pacific coast terminus of his railroad. The earlier arrival of the telegraph made it possible to track the great man's progress along the way from California and report it all in the newspaper.

Other interesting news items of 1883 were those about the "asylum for lunatics at Steilacom," which had 120 "inmates." The newspaper took great pains to provide details of who was being admitted and for what kinds of illnesses.

The Steilacoom Academy, meanwhile, was running at full steam. The News reported early in 1883: "A convenient and commodious building has been purchased fitted and furnished with 'standard' desks, blackboards, charts and maps for the opening of a graded school and academy on Wednesday, February 7, 1883." In April it reported, "The Steilacoom Academy under the charge of Professor A.T. Burnell, principal, seems to be in a very flourishing condition. Several pupils are in attendance from abroad and the entire number enrolled numbers about 65. It is said that rapid progress is being made by students of all grades. Several eastern families have lately settled in Steilacoom and vicinity."

In May 1883: "The Steilacoom Academy is just closing the first term of school for 1883. Sixty-six pupils have been in attendance most of whom reside in the county but a few of them are from other points. All the branches required by the school laws are taught and also history and physiology. The next term begins on Monday."

The first school vacation occurred on August 1 and lasted until September 25, thus apparently giving young Pastor Burnell time to work on his new home. Although the record indicates he and one delegate were invited to attend the Western Washington Congregational Association meeting in August, it doesn't indicate whether or not he actually went.

Neither were the children idle during the vacation. The newspaper stated: "The young people of Steilacoom intend giving an entertainment in the course of a few weeks for the benefit of the Congregational Church. The time has not been definitely set yet, but due notice will be given."

At the end of the first year of service to the community and world missions (10% of the funds from the Mission Box were declared for missionary purposes), the trustees agreed to mortgage the church property to receive another \$300 grant from the American Congregational Union. Six months later Mr. Burnell requested to be relieved of his ministerial duties so he could commit his time to serving as principal to the academy. He preached what he recorded as his "Farewell Sermon" on September 14, 1884. Two years later the Academy closed and the Burnells transferred their membership to "Eureka." (State unidentified)

CONGREGATIONALISM IN WASHINGTON

Congregationalism and state government both were undergoing some changes. Statehood in 1889 brought about a change in name for the state conference from "The Washington Territory of Congregational Associations" to "The Congregational Churches of Washington." Another new group was formed about the same time by the Rev. Samuel Greene (son of David Greene who wrote the commission for Marcus Whitman). Called the Congregational Sunday Schools and Publishing Society, it reflected Congregationalists' yearning for promoting education. There were about 40 Congregational churches in the new state of Washington. In the next eight years that number would increase to 130, about 60 of them a direct outgrowth of Greene's Sunday School organization!

In Steilacoom, Mr. Burnell had welcomed the Rev. David F. Taylor to Oberlin Church on September 14, but Mr. Taylor was not mentioned again.

The Rev. Charles E. Newberry and his wife Amelia P. joined Oberlin Church the following spring, moving from St. Ignace, Michigan. Shortly after their arrival in March 1885, Mrs. Newberry chaired a meeting to elect trustees to replace Dr. Atkinson and John Flett, who had resigned. Mr. Newberry and E.R. Rogers were named in their place on the Academy School Board.

The arrival of the Newberrys must have sparked thoughts of a parsonage, for one was built on the lot adjoining the church in 1888. Purchased from Robert Caines and Mary Fowler for \$75, it was held by the church until 1922. However, the Newberrys never lived in it. They left in October 1888 to take up a ministry in Coupeville.

First to occupy the new parsonage were the Rev. Loren W. Brintnall, his wife Abigail Hurd Brintnall and their daughter Edna Mae. The Brintnalls came from Sheldon, Iowa; their daughter, a teacher, came from Hull, Iowa (where she returned in 1891 as Mrs. Joseph Sheldon). Some of her descendants now live in Redmond.

The Brintnalls also had two grown sons, Dr. Burgess Brintnall, a Seattle physician, and the Rev. W.A. Brintnall who served churches in Little Rock, Iowa, and Ahtahnum, Washington. He is buried at

the Roy Cemetery. It was the doctor's son Bert who became a feature writer for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. He received national recognition for his coverage of the fall of the Narrows Bridge (Galloping Gertie) in 1940. Bert, born the same year that Oberlin Church was founded, died in 1971 at the age of 88.

Pastor Brintnall was an 1855 graduate of Oberlin College, and was 60 years old when he came to Steilacoom. He was an active pastor who nurtured the young church in its growth process.

The first revision of the Covenant, Confession of Faith and the by-laws was started under Mr. Brintnall's direction in December 1889 and completed in 1891. Most of the routine business was carried on at quarterly meetings—accepting new members, removing members, and hearing treasurer's reports. Annual meetings in January generally covered year-end reports and financial accounting. Most of the early "annual meetings" were held in members' homes, probably because of church heating difficulties.

One such annual financial report in 1890 carried the following account of expenditures:

BENEVOLENT CONTRIBUTIONS OF OBERLIN CONG. CH. STEILACOOM, 1890

The American Board Foreign Missions	16.60
American Congregational Union	9.85
American Home Mission Society	20.65
Washington Missionary Association	5.00
American Missionary Association	5.00
Missionary Dept. of C.S.S. & P.S.	1.50
(Congregational Sunday Schools and Publishing Society)	
General Association Assessment	3.60
4 Quarterly Payments on Parsonage	<u>60.00</u>
	\$122.20

This from a congregation with a membership of about 14!

By the time the Brintnalls left, about 20 new names had been added to the church membership, including Andrew and Weltha Bell, Miles and Annie Morgan, Nicolas and Emma Doering, Attorney and Mrs. J.W.H. Nichols, and three Eisenbeis women, Mrs. Rose, Miss Louisa and Miss Katie.

The Eisenbeis family was well know in Steilacoom because of Charles' bakery. Charles and Rose had three daughters who were active in the church, Louisa, Katie and Lena. Their lone son, Valentine V., married in 1918—a Tacoma girl, Mary M. and had one son Sidney, who joined the church in 1931. Rose served the church in many ways, but is most remembered for her work with the Ladies Aid. She was president in 1898-1900 and from 1902-1918.

The Bells came from Mt. Vernon, S.D. and were received into the church in January 1890. They went right to work, he serving as a Deacon for more than three decades, as a member of the Board of Trustees from 1889 to 1900, as Church Clerk from 1913 to 1917, and as Treasurer for more than 22 years, 1890 to 1912. Mrs. Bell, for whom one of the women's circles was to be named, was a Deaconess and served the Sunday School as a teacher, and as superintendent in 1901 and 1902.

Nick and Emma Doering moved to Steilacoom in 1880. He started a fuel supply business that would become the Steilacoom Transfer and Fuel Company, supplying wood and later coal and oil to the community. The Doerings had a large family, three of whom still live in this area. Their children: Inez, Frances Earl, Howard, Daisy Bell, Viola (Comstock), Matie (Parker), Russell and Virginia (Brown). Viola presently lives in South Tacoma, Matie in Lakewood, and Russell in Spanaway. Their father was elected to the Board of Trustees soon after he joined the church and served for more than half a century.

Mr. Brintnall requested to resign from the pastorate on March 30, 1892, because of ill health. In a beautifully worded tribute, the congregation reluctantly accepted his resignation and wished both him and his wife well.

In June a call was made to a "Rev. Mr. Elliot" who did not accept, and in October, the Rev. John M. Lydgate was called (and accepted) at a salary of \$800 a year. Oberlin was to pay \$250, Lake View, \$150; and the Home Missionary Society, \$400. All eight church members attending that call meeting agreed on the choice of this Episcopal minister. He moved into the parsonage with his mother, and was ordained in the Congregational Church in March 1893. A formal council was called to examine the pastor and conduct the ordination. Conference Superintendent A.J. Bailey led the impressive ceremony, assisted by representatives from six area churches.

The church charged Mr. Lydgate \$5 a month rent for the parsonage, in addition to which he had to pay \$75 a year to hire a horse and buggy to get back and forth to Lake View.

He proved a good, steady pastor, with a congregation that made regular contributions to support both foreign and home missions, as well as the Congregational Church Building Society (holder of the mortgage). In November 1893 the congregation adopted the envelope system of pledge collections, and the next month approved a community canvass to raise \$200 toward the pastor's salary.

That same year provision was made to pay the sum of 75 cents a month for ringing the church bell for services. The Doering children are believed to have been the first bell ringers (although Mrs. Parker doesn't remember getting paid for it).

By year-end Oberlin Church had an average weekly attendance at services of 36. There were 10 active members, three associate members. A year later average attendance was up to 47, with as many as 64 attending evening services and 30 at morning services.

Under the laws of incorporation, it became necessary to name certain church officers. In 1894 new by-laws were set up to meet these rules, including provision for a Clerk, Treasurer, three each Deacons, Deaconesses, and Trustees. The annual meeting was designated to take place the first Monday in January, with the pastor serving as Chairman, sometimes called Moderator. Yearly reports were to include those from the Pastor, Treasurer, Sunday School Superintendent, Christian Endeavor (youth group), S.C.T.U. (?), and as soon as organized, the Choir and Ladies Aid.

Ladies Aid Begins Work

Two new members joined the church in October 1894, and were to become instrumental in its future. They were Hattie Bair (Mrs. Warren L.) and Minerva Weston (she would become Mrs. Calvin E. Shults 15 years later).

Mrs. Bair and Miss Weston were among the women who met in November 1894 at the home of Mrs. Palmer (not further identified) to organize the Ladies Aid Society. Mrs. Bair was elected president; Mrs. Weltha Bell, vice president; Miss Kate Eisenbeis, secretary; and Miss Weston, treasurer. Mrs. Palmer, Mrs. Rose Eisenbeis, and Mrs. Bell were appointed to draw up by-laws. Others attending that meeting were Miss Hannah Smith and Mrs. Bair's little boy Godfrey, later known as "Cub."

On her birthday in 1922, Mrs. Shults (nee Weston) wrote a letter, in which she said: "December 19 (1894), the Ladies Aid held a social at Mrs. Eisenbeis. We had a 5 cent table and a 10 cent table, of little articles to sell. We took in over \$8.00 and had a pleasant time. On January 9, 1895, the Aid met at my house at 10 A.M. to make clothes for three Armstrong boys. The ladies brought things and we had a nice dinner. Mr. Lydgate, our pastor, was with us awhile and after dinner we had a short prayer meeting. Mmes. Bell, Black, Cornell, Wells, Armbruster, Hunt, Nichols, Bair, and Grandma Bair, Eisenbeis and Kate Eisenbeis, Miss Putnam, and, of course, mother (Mrs. Weston) and myself were present. On January 25, 1895, the Aid met at Mrs. Bair's at 10 A.M. and we tucked three comforts."

And so the work of the Ladies Aid had begun. For the next nine decades these women would raise money for the church by holding social events, by sewing, cooking and serving, not only to benefit this congregation, but to contribute to the community—both locally and throughout the world.

Mr. Lydgate was presented with a beautiful new pulpit in June 1895, the gift of building contractor A.S. Black, made especially for Oberlin Church. Black was the contractor who would put the roof on the new church in 1902 when the Congregationalists moved their church location. This pulpit was used until 1961 when the present church building was completed.

Minutes of the July 1895 quarterly meeting show only that "a vacation of two weeks was granted to Mr. Lydgate commencing July 22, 1895, in order that he might visit Alaska." He is listed on the 1895 member revision as "Absent."

The Rev. William F. Rose of Houghton (near Seattle) was asked to undertake the Oberlin ministry in April 1896. Joining the church by letter at the same time was Miss Cora N. Rose (whether a sister or daughter is not certain). The "miss" may be a misprint. For in May 1909: "A called meeting after morning service, a letter of dismissal and commendation was granted 'Mrs.' C. Rose at her request."

Mr. Rose was in failing health, however, and in February 1898 he requested to be relieved of his church duties. He died shortly after. Funeral services were held Sunday, February 20, with burial at the Steilacoom Masonic Cemetery. That evening J.M. Lackey filled the pulpit, and was called the following week to fill the pastorate.

The Ladies Aid had put on its first dinner and social in July 1896 at the Masonic Hall, offering its tasty specialty of strawberries and ice cream. Strawberry socials became the "rule" during Steilacoom's summer months. Of the \$28.80 earned at that first social (after costs of \$12.84) the Aid contributed towards: the parsonage debt, minister's salary, and 25 cents for the minister's carfare! Heady with success, another social was immediately planned—for October—but was postponed because: "Politics so thick, social postponed.—M.E. Weston, secy."

The quarterly meeting in June 1898 featured one of the dinners for which the Aid became acclaimed, lasting from noon to 8 P.M. On the menu were boiled ham, veal loaf, white and brown bread, new potatoes, peas, cabbage salad, clams, lemon and cherry pie, cake and ice cream.

The precedent was set and the Aid began a long, well-deserved reputation for putting on dinners and socials. The specialty was clams. Once a year the men would dig them, and the women would serve a banquet. Others of their specialties featured dinners of ham, chicken, chicken pie, sandwiches and deviled eggs, New England dinner, afternoon teas, dime socials, peanut-popcorn socials, and Lenten meals of beans, brown bread, scalloped potatoes and eggs. Sometimes the women charged admission for their super suppers, sometimes not. Once or twice a year (as financial needs arose) they put their "handy" work on sale. The

December pre-Christmas sale grew into an annual community-wide event.

The Aid served dinners, not only for Oberlin church functions, but for the Tacoma Aid Society (in August 1898 it earned \$34.41, a sizeable amount), and other regional meetings of Congregational and community groups. Steilacoom developed a reputation for good food. Regional meetings of various organizations were held in Steilacoom for just that reason. The Aid's reputation for good food is one that has withstood the years; it continues today.

Mr. Lackey moved into the parsonage. There is no other name in the records; he may have been a bachelor. The Aid came up with \$2 to pay for a bedstead, and they paid for material for a new parsonage fence. The pastor's monthly salary at that time was \$5, or \$10, or \$15, as the members could afford.



II. BEGINNING A NEW CENTURY

By the turn of the century, Oberlin Church had 17 members, 5 associates, and a budget of \$157.20. Mr. Lackey resigned in April 1901.

Steilacoom at the beginning of the new century had become a resort town. For a decade a street car had connected Steilacoom with Tacoma, and the little seaside town had become "the place" to have a summer home or cottage. Life was leisurely in this community, with a tennis club, mineral springs, resort hotels, and fine beaches to draw city dwellers for long weekends.

The streetcar ride came from Tacoma's 11th Street, through Regents Park, down Chambers Creek Hill, across three bridges before hitting Silver Beach, then up to Lafayette to stop in front of Bair's Drug Store. It remained in service until the Depression. Steilacoom's 1900 population was about 250.

Major Harry B. Hendley, called to Oberlin on June 24, 1901, was to receive a salary of \$600 plus the use of the parsonage. Steilacoom would pay \$300 and provide the parsonage; Lake View would pay \$200; and the Home Mission Society would pay the other \$100.

In August he and his bride of five years, Clara Whitney Hendley, moved into a newly painted and papered parsonage. Mrs. Hendley assumed the duties of Sunday School Superintendent and Major Hendley set about to consider plans for a new church.

Again it was the Ladies Aid that determined the action. Annoyed at dragging their long skirts through the mud that flowed down the church hill whenever it rained, the women had urged church officers to seek a new site. Miss Hannah Smith, a church member, held a lot at the corner of Lafayette and Pacific; the church trustees agreed it was a good place for a church. In April the Ladies Aid drew \$20 from their account, borrowed another \$25, and paid Miss Smith for the property. Then they turned it over to the trustees.

Meanwhile the trustees were trying to decide the best plan for the church—repair and stay in the old building, tear it down, or move the entire building. A church-wide survey (and the deed for the new property) concluded the best plan was to tear down the old building and rebuild at the new site, salvaging as much of the old building materials as possible.

About \$50 of salvaged lumber was used in the new building, along with new material and labor amounting to about \$500.11. Donated material and labor worth \$494.50 brought the total cost of the new building to \$1,044.61. While construction was underway, between February and June 1902, services were held in the Masonic Hall.

The Aid Society had the privilege of first using the new church on July 14 for a regular meeting when it was decided the next proj-

ect would be to purchase an ice cream freezer from Mrs. Bair. Later the group purchased a second freezer and ice cream dishes, (the better to prepare ice cream socials!).

A new decade, a new pastor, a new church building. Oberlin Church was becoming a central part of Steilacoom's community life.

The Dedication Year

The year 1903 was known in Steilacoom as the year of "the dedication." For the dedication of the brand new church building was a grand event. The little gray and white church at the corner of Lafayette and Pacific Streets looked a bit bare without greenery around it, but townspeople all described it as "beautiful." The dedication was to be part of the spring meeting of the Tacoma Association of Congregational Churches and Ministers, which was held in it on June 2 and 3, 1903.

One of the people attending was a newlywed named Mabel Merrill Morris. She had just married Willis E. Morris in Chicago and they were newcomers to Tacoma. Mrs. Morris accompanied her friend, Mrs. Reynolds, to Steilacoom that lovely June day. Forty years later she wrote: "I remember so well attending the Dedication. Mrs. H.A. Reynolds, member of the First Congregational Church of Tacoma, had a part in the program and invited me to attend with her. We came out on the old street car which then came in on the main street and stopped in the vicinity of the Post Office (Bair's Store). The Dedication had both morning and afternoon sessions, for I remember (and this was 40 years ago) that we brought a basket lunch and ate it down on the beach. There were no railroad tracks then. Many homes extended right to the water's edge. It was beautiful then as it is beautiful now."

Mrs. Morris returned to Tacoma so charmed by Steilacoom that she persuaded her husband to move here in 1918. He became mayor in 1924, serving until 1948, a colorful figure around town. As a choir director, he provided many grand moments of music for Oberlin services.

The business of that June Association meeting was concluded on Tuesday, so that Wednesday could be devoted to the dedication of what the newspaper called the "new and substantial meeting house to be known as the Oberlin Congregational Church." Mr. Hendley conducted devotions and a communion service Wednesday evening, assisted by several church members. Many area Congregational leaders took part, including C.E. Philbrook, Samuel Greene (of C.S.S. & P.S.), Edwin Eells (son of the church founder Cushing Eells), O.L. Fowler, Charles McDermott, W.W. Scudder Jr., Chaplain Stubbs and D.S. Johnston. Rev. Ford, of Tacoma's First Congregational, presided over the event with "his usual urbanity and effectiveness."

The church finished and dedicated, members then turned to refurbishing the parsonage, which mostly involved adding a front porch. (Steilacoom people have always enjoyed the view.)

In November Mr. Hendley accepted a call to Tacoma where he became the founding pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church. Before leaving Steilacoom, however, the Hendleys had pews placed in the new church, their contribution amounting to \$105.80. Mr. Hendley remained at Plymouth until his death in 1916. Mrs. Hendley died in California in December 1942.

A Missionary Interest

The Rev. William H. Cooke was called to Oberlin Church in November 1903. With him came his wife and three of his children, daughters Alma and Hester, and son Robert. Another son, Weldon B., was killed in an airplane crash in California in 1912, one year after his first solo flight. Alma became Dr. Alma Cooke, head of the Lintsing Memorial Hospital in the Shantung Peninsula in China, one of the missions supported by the Oberlin Ladies Aid for many years through the 1920's and 30's. Congregational Foreign Mission groups paid a quarter of the mission's support, the Chinese government paid the other three quarters. Oberlin's Sunday School paid for one bed at the hospital during the early 30's. The Aid sent Christmas boxes, clothing, food and money.

Apparently the hospital was lost during the Japanese takeover in the late 30's. A letter to Hattie Bair and Lucy Hunt in 1947 expressed Dr. Cooke's gratitude for support of her work at another hospital, this one at Taiku in the Shansai province. The letter shared the missionary's desperation at inflationary conditions caused by Communist control of the country. No further word from Dr. Cooke is recorded.

While support of missionary work has been an ongoing purpose of the Oberlin Church, during the early years it was part of the day-to-day functioning of the church. But even that function became a problem over the early years of the new century. These were lean years in town; the railroad had yet to stretch that far and industry was drying up.

In the church apathy appeared to be the problem at the 1904 annual meeting. After discussing the manner of electing trustees "it was decided to drop the matter until we be able to find the by-laws." Another question that needed clarifying was how to take care of cleaning chores at the church. When Professor Gideon D. Hines "moved we take turns, the matter (was) dropped." By the time the by-laws were finally located the congregation voted to change them again.

The membership list was revised in July 1905, showing 32 active and 14 inactive members. Incidentally, this was the first church meeting where the Ladies Aid report was included in the

minutes. The Aid was undergoing membership problems too; at times it was difficult to conduct business for lack of a quorum.

The Cookes submitted their resignation at the July 1906 quarterly meeting and moved to Oakland, California, where Mr. Cooke died eight years later.

For the next three years Oberlin was served by the Rev. Joseph D. Bowron, an Episcopal minister who had been living in Steilacoom. He had been credited with inspiring the building of an independent church on the east side of Union Street near Starling in 1857. Mr. Bowron, elected for six months at a time, apparently occupied the parsonage, for a new cook stove was ordered at the same time he was called.

Where the Sunday School had been superintended by the wives of the two previous ministers, Mrs. Hendley and Mrs. Cooke, the job now was undertaken by the pastor. At the January 1907 annual meeting Mr. Bowron also suggested the church consider becoming self-supporting. In other business a committee was formed to once again review the church membership and report back. When they did on January 10, the congregation voted to ask for \$100 from the Home Mission Society for the coming year. Membership still was too thin for self-sufficiency.

In the year 1908, a mortgage in the amount of \$300 was taken on the church from the Congregational Building Society. It was signed by Mrs. Celia A. Cornell, Nicholas Doering, B.J. Rushmer, J.W.A. Nichols, and notarized by W.L. Bair. Nick and Emma Doering underwrote the mortgage, which finally was cleared in April 1961! No specific reason was entered in church records for the mortgage; nor is any reason given for taking so long to satisfy it.

Steilacoom's Bell

When the stone bell monument was built to house the historic town bell in September 1908, several church members took part. The bell originally belonged to the Methodist Church on Wilkes Street, the first Protestant Church building north of the Columbia River. It had hung in a wooden tower since the church was razed in 1894. Steilacoom's mayor James Slayden dedicated the monument in special services held by members of the Washington State Historical Society, Puget Sound Methodist Conference, and Pioneer Friends. Fifty years later Mayor Slayden would be on hand when another celebration marked the 50th anniversary of that dedication.

The bell has served Steilacoom intermittently through the years—as fire bell, church bell, air raid, celebration and funeral bell. It was rung at the end of two World Wars, and to greet countless new years. When it was rung for funerals, a short toll was given for children, a long one for adults. The Doering children rang the bell for many years. Milton Davidson had the

responsibility during his teen-age years. Gloria Schubert, a pastor's daughter, took her turn in the 50's. Bell-ringing became a source of concern during World War II when pranksters would ring the bell and disappear into the night. Steilacoom residents were unamused during those uneasy times. The bell came to be used less and less through the 1960's and 70's, and has come to a stop in the 80's.

The first major addition to the church took place in 1909 when the kitchen was added. E.B. Ennis, a contractor, built on the 10 x 30 area to help out the women who were putting on church suppers at the drop of a suggestion.

And political activism lived! Always alert to community affairs, the March 10 church minutes carried this: "The congregation respectfully should urge our state representatives to vote for the bill known as 'Ole Hanson's Anti-Race-Track Gambling Bill'."

No other explanation, although race tracks had been operating for years on the prairie behind Steilacoom.

Mr. Bowron isn't recorded as "resigning;" it would seem he had been filling in. The Rev. Harry M. Painter and his wife Grace were called to serve the Steilacoom church in April 1909, coming from the Almira Congregational Church. Mr. Bowron continued to live in Steilacoom, serving as chaplain at McNeil Penitentiary until his death in 1921.

The 1909 Mystery

When Silas D. Harvey joined the church in November 1906, he may not have expected to be put to work so quickly. However, he was elected clerk at the January 1907 meeting. His notes were complete for the most part, but he inserted a mystery with the following, dated April 1, 1909: "Returning after a six months' absence I find enclosed in this book the articles which are copied below.

"WHEREAS during the crisis in the history of this church which occurred in the spring of 1909 this church received the moral support of the Congregational ministers and churches of the State of Washington as evinced by many evidences of sympathy and fellowship and

"WHEREAS the Congregational Home Missionary Society came generously to the aid of the church and made it possible by its grant the continuation of the work of the church

"THEREFORE be it resolved that the Oberlin Congregational Church of Steilacoom hereby express its appreciation of these acts of fellowship and desires to express its thanks for generous aids to the Congregational Home Missionary Society and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of these resolutions be spread on the minutes of the annual meeting of this church

and a copy be sent to the Board of Directors of the Congregational Home Missionary Society of Washington.

“Adopted by Oberlin Congregational Church at its annual meeting January 5, 1909.”

Clerk Harvey must have been as much in the dark as anyone. No explanation of the “crisis” appears.

A crisis of sorts does appear two years later when the church was taken to court over nonpayment of back taxes for the parsonage. When the state legislature passed a bill in 1902 that would not allow tax exemption on church property not adjacent to the church, Oberlin had no problem; the church and parsonage were side-by-side up on the hill—for a little while. After the church was relocated down on Lafayette Street, the state dug up the law and proceeded to charge Oberlin with nonpayment of \$128 in back taxes. The state won the law suit and church members had to come up with the money. Several members, spearheaded by Trustee Nick Doering, loaned the church enough to save the parsonage. The complex records of how the money was tracked and repaid are enough to give any tax accountant a headache.

Mr. Painter's salary had come due in the meantime. At the March 1910 meeting the Ladies Aid cleverly promised to add \$150 to its annual salary contribution if the men of the church would paint the parsonage. It was done and the women kept their word. That same spring the old Sunday School organ was donated to the Hendleys at Plymouth Church, and Oberlin's Sunday School acquired a new piano.

Details of a marriage that took place in the church in 1909 imply an in-church romance. Mr. Painter performed the ceremony for Minerva Weston and Calvin E. Shults on September 18, at the home of Mr. Harvey. Miss Weston had come to Steilacoom fifteen years before, with her aged mother, Mrs. N. G. Weston (who was believed to have been born in 1800). Miss Weston herself was in her middle years. An active member of the Ladies Aid from its inception, Minerva Shults was honored each spring by the Aid on the occasion of her birthday, an honor that continued after her death in 1927 (she was 74). Mr. Shults, who served the church both as a Deacon and as Treasurer, died in a California Soldiers' Home in 1922. Mrs. Shults' niece, Mrs. Dorothy Gale, has prepared a scrapbook for the Ladies Aid to preserve memories of its early days.

Treasury reports of the early Ladies Aid reflect a cash flow that is best described as “in and out,” with never an overwhelming balance on hand. If extra funds were required, the ladies would hold a social, a 10-cent dinner, or whip up a quilt for sale. The women paid into the church funds to help with the pastor's salary, parsonage costs, church indebtedness, the mortgage, janitor, church supplies, cloth for sewing saleable items, and food for

preparing those special church dinners. Times required a watchful eye on handling finances, but the women never seemed to want. The treasury balance in the January 1914 report was only \$46.40, but the women had a comfortable, well-equipped kitchen all their own!

The church treasury showed a \$72 balance at that same meeting. Only seven members and the pastor were present. And it was a new pastor.

The Painters had decided to move to Park Avenue Congregational Church in Tacoma in October 1913. In November the Rev. Charles D. Gaffney arrived with his wife Nelle T. Again, Oberlin shared pastors with the Lake View and American Lake churches.

In order to get Mr. Gaffney back and forth between his churches, the Steilacoom congregation got him a motorcycle. They had to request a loan from the Home Missionary Society for \$144 to purchase it—and they received it without a question. Mechanization had come to Steilacoom.

GETTING “MODERN”

Times were beginning to change around the world. The nation was fighting the war to end all wars; the community was changing too. The long-awaited railroad finally came to Steilacoom, and Commercial Street lost its resort homes. Electricity had come to Steilacoom, and, of course, to Oberlin Church.

Electricity was used for the first time on May 17, 1915, at the annual meeting of the Tacoma Association held here. In another move toward modernization, a toilet and lavatory were installed inside the church, purchased with a \$100 gift from the Fannin Estate.

There must have been a sizeable number of children in town. The Sunday School boasted an average attendance of 48. And that year, 1916, was the year the present schoolhouse was built. Steilacoom's population was near 500.

Of enough importance to note in the records, sandwiches and coffee were served for the first time at a church business meeting in January 1916.

Mr. Gaffney accepted a call to the Walla Walla Congregational Church in July 1916. Seven years later he was called to the First Congregational Church in Salt Lake City, Utah. No record of what happened to the motorcycle!

When long-time church member Weltha Bell died in May 1915, the church clerk noted: “Mrs. Weltha A. Bell, member of this church for 25½ years, was removed to her Heavenly Father's home.” The notation was made by her husband, Clerk Andrew Bell, who held that job for two more years. It was Mr. Bell who researched and discovered the tax crisis of 1911. When he died in August 1922, Clerk W. C. Davie wrote: “Deacon Bell (was) an earnest, sincere

and an always ready, Christian gentleman. In him the Steilacoom church loses one of its main stays." Church services were conducted by the Rev. Edgar Wheeler of Tacoma. The church was "beautifully decorated. Attendance filled the room."

A succession of pastors appeared at Oberlin Church over the next few years. The Rev. James W. Price came in October 1916 from Oregon, with his wife Nellie and daughter Dorothy. He was paid \$8 a Sunday plus the use of the parsonage. He remained just over a year, leaving in December 1917 for the West Seattle Congregational Church.

The Rev. and Mrs. H. H. Abrams arrived in February 1918 from White Salmon, Washington, along with their son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. E. K. Anderson. Average attendance at church was between 20 and 30, and at Sunday School about 50. An epidemic of influenza closed the church for a few Sundays. In the summer of 1919 attendance was so low that Mr. Abrams asked for a vacation. The next February when he resigned, he requested payment of \$50 owed him for his summer salary. There was considerable discussion among the 11 members present as to whether or not the minister was owed the "vacation pay." Clerk Davie wrote in his book: "I will say the \$50 was paid Mr. Abrams and he left town on March 8th." Mr. Abrams also left the ministry to take up ranching in Toppenish.

Better times were beginning to appear. The Cascade Paper Mill had been built on Chambers Creek in 1917 and was beginning to shed some influence in Steilacoom.

When C. W. McLaughlin came to preach as an interim pastor that summer of 1920, many old-timers claimed he preached the best sermons they had heard, although there is no evidence he was an ordained minister. He preached both at Oberlin and the Park Church at American Lake, as well as at Western State Hospital on Sunday evenings.

That was a rocky year, 1920, at least for Oberlin Church, for no new members were admitted; one left. But attendance was improving! In April 1921 a total of 16 new members inflated the church rolls. There were the McLaughlins, Mrs. Gage Wheeler, Mr. and Mrs. M. E. Pease, Virginia Parker, Jessie Baker, Hughie Baker, Phillip McLean, Harold Space, Adelaid Watland, George Routenberger, Edwin Holt, and a Mrs. Dillsavor. Mr. and Mrs. James Jack joined two weeks later.

Clerk Davie didn't hesitate to interject his wry opinions into church records, going so far as to note the sermon of a certain supply preacher was "poor." When he was elected to several offices at the 1921 annual meeting, including Clerk and Sunday School Superintendent, he wrote: "Unfortunately there were no more offices so that W.C.D. could have had one."

There was no nonsense, however, when it came time for the quarterly meeting in August 1921. When Mr. McLaughlin was called to serve as pastor for another year he refrained from accepting unless three things came about: a monthly business meeting of church officials, a community canvass for funds, and a monthly meeting of Sunday School teachers and officers. Members agreed to the first two and referred the third to the Sunday School.

Evidently things didn't work out, and at the January 1922 meeting the pastor tendered his resignation, to take effect in March. Church officers declined to call another pastor immediately. Attendance was only 17 and they decided to depend on supply pastors from Sunday to Sunday.

By June, a Tacoma minister, the Rev. Frank J. Myers, had undertaken the temporary job of offering regular Sunday services. Since he traveled to Steilacoom from Tacoma each week, the church decided to sell the parsonage up on Rainier and Puyallup Streets. The sale was completed in September to Mrs. and Mrs. Olaf Anderson for a total of \$1,200, with \$250 down and monthly payments of \$25. Thus began the Parsonage Fund which was kept for years at the Tacoma Savings and Loan and which was to bail out the church treasury on more than one occasion. Furnishings from the parsonage were sold to church members. One such member, Norma Hatcher (Mrs. Walter Jr.) wrote a check for \$14 "for furniture, a bed, mattress, chiffonier." In those days chiffoniers were familiar items; checks weren't.

The Ladies Aid, which saw to the clearing of the parsonage and other details of the sale, was hitting its stride in the early 20's. The women regularly supplied flowers for the church each Sunday. They had sewing machines on hand for making aprons, quilts, baby clothes, and other handiwork to raise money.

Sometimes raising money meant more work than income. For instance, members often made rugs to sell at their fancy work sales. In 1922 it cost members \$3.60 for the material for three rugs. The rugs went on sale, two at \$1.50 each, and the third for \$1.25 (it was either smaller or not so pretty!).

The women were constantly replenishing their silverware inventory. They added a new floor in the downstairs Primary Room, made new curtains for the new downstairs windows, financed a new jumbo stove and electrical fixtures, and paid plumbing bills for the repair of the lavatory. They had the vestibule repaired and a light affixed to the church porch in time for Christmas. Clerk Davie recorded on November 19, 1922: "No church or Sunday School on account of so much sickness in town. Great changes have taken place in the lower floor of the church. The Primary Room, new floors, new windows, room ceiled, painted and stained, looks fine, and is a great credit to the ladies, who have done it all, including two stoves."

With so much renewal and carpentering going on, it is thought this is the time the steeple cap was removed from the church tower.

But there is more! The following year, 1923, major rewiring was completed and the church auditorium was refinished, revarnished and fitted with new carpet runners of green (sunfast) cork. Green covering also was put on the choir rail.

In June a celebration was held to show off the new look. Invited guests included Dr. Sprague, Dr. Edgar C. Wheeler (Pilgrim Church), Dr. Van Horn (First Congregational), and the Rev. Herbert West. Mr. West and his wife Blanche Keesling West, lived in Steilacoom; they bought the Gage Wheeler home on Commercial Street in 1921. Mrs. West had been taking part in Ladies Aid activities ever since. Mr. West, a Methodist minister, was serving a church in Gig Harbor. But more about the Wests later.

One of the highlights of this and other Oberlin services in those days was the music. A Music Committee had been formed and musical programs flourished with the aid of Mrs. Myers, a fine singer who was part of the new choir led by Mayor W. E. Morris. The choir sang at all the services, and was accompanied by organist Gladys Morris (later Mrs. Ed Runquist).

As 1923 wore on, further innovations were added. The Tower Room was furnished and heated, to be occupied by a girls' Sunday School class. All the windows were replaced in shades of brown, tan and green. New mahogany choir chairs were purchased. In all, the church furnishings were now insured for a total of \$750.

And more was planned! Soon there would be a new kitchen and Junior Room downstairs. And a raised walkway to the woodshed promised to keep Sunday-best shoes clean of mud.

The Ladies Aid continued its diligence in finding ways to finance all this work. The logistics of these events indicated a finely tuned organization. To make sure everyone was invited to one such dinner, "they placed advertising and notices at two grocery stores, the Post Office, the paper mill, Hospitality Inn at Custer and the Station." Admission was 50 cents for adults, and 25 cents for children. The women took in \$63.35 at the dinner, \$26.00 at the candy table, and \$30.60 at the fancy work table. Expenses amounted to \$5.20 for chicken and groceries! (That adds up to \$114.75 profit!)

One of the Ladies Aid long-time members and former president died in December 1923. The Clerk's record noted with great honor and respect the passing of "Madam Rose Eisenbeis." She had been a member since 1892.

Easter, always a special occasion, was noted this way in Clerk Davie's record for April 1, 1923: "Celebrated today Lord's Supper. Mr. Myer (sic) officiating, Post and Davie assisting. Mrs. Sophia W. S. Hawes was received into membership, letter from First

Methodist Church, Tacoma. The following were baptised (sic), Russel Doering, Virginia Doering, Mattie Doering, Russell Otis Welles, and Isabelle Jane Jacks. Large attendance, good sermon, decorations of jonquils and evergreens. Very pretty."

POTLUCK IS BORN

The Potluck Dinner was introduced at the January 1924 annual meeting by Mrs. Myers. The record read: "This year had an innovation, at 6:30 P.M. had a 'Potluck' lunch which was a grand success and enjoyed by all present." The "grand success" would not be repeated until 1931.

Part of that day's business was the report that an offer of first \$200 and then \$250 for the lot next to the church from the Saltar's Estate had received no reply. A new organ fund was started, and the young people of the church asked for Sunday evening song services.

The town bell again was being tolled for Sunday School. George Routenberg and Mrs. Salzer were hired to ring the bell, first for 50 cents a month, then later for 75 cents. Soon after James Jack was hired for the job.

Easter Sunday, 1925, welcomed 100 people in church. Children's Day services attracted "the largest attendance to date" (although exact numbers were missing), and the 1925 annual financial report showed a total \$805 received, \$644 spent, with \$120 going to the Board of Home Missions. The pastor received \$416, the janitor \$120. By November the Ladies Aid upped its expected servings for dinner to 50, and they had to hire dishwashers to help clean up. The work "bazaar" was applied to the December Ladies Aid sale for the first time, and \$145.65 was netted.

This grocery list was tucked into the Ladies Aid records for December 1927: "15 chickens, or 20; 14 # pork, 8 kettles potatoes, 8 cabbage salads, 35 pies, 8 pans biscuits, 3 quarts cream, 4 milk, 6 # coffee, 6 # butter." Those must have been 50 well-fed people!

The Myers family was getting ready to leave. But first Mr. Myers saw that a new water tank was installed and that the new swinging doors were installed in the auditorium. The couple then returned to Tacoma, satisfied they had done a good job leading Oberlin's revitalization.

Then came the Wests. Trustees met with Mr. West on March 8, 1926; the congregation met and overwhelmingly elected him on March 14. He preached the Easter sermon on April 4, as Oberlin's first full-time resident pastor. Thus began the longest tenure of a pastor at Steilacoom's Church.



III. THE WEST YEARS

Herbert and Blanche West were well-loved by their congregation from the start. The two worked side-by-side for more than a quarter century at Steilacoom's Oberlin Church, improving the church building and property, ministering to the needs of the people (both in the congregation and throughout the community) and nurturing the spiritual growth of young and old alike.

Mrs. West had joined the Ladies Aid even before her husband accepted the pastorate. She was vice president in 1925 and '26, and would continue her strong interest in the group for the rest of her life.

The Ladies Aid in 1926 had \$273 in its treasury and was dividing its semi-monthly meetings into tea-for-the-first-meeting and lunch-for-the-second. It was Mrs. West who suggested the women set aside some social time for themselves. They had been working hard for 30 years and deserved it.

With the ongoing interest in music, a new organ was being contemplated as a new project for the Aid, the church choir was growing, and song practices were being held regularly on Wednesday nights.

Every summer the Aid enjoyed a summer picnic jointly with the Sunday School. More than 100 attended the gala event of the summer of '26. The Aid secretary noted in her records: "Some of the fathers joined their families for supper."

Mrs. West and daughter Evelyn June joined the church by letter in April 1927. Mr. West didn't join until October 1935 after he was ordained as a Congregational minister. That ordination ceremony was conducted as part of the 1935 annual meeting of the Tacoma Association, held again in Steilacoom.

Mr. West's ministry began with a salary of \$80 a month, but his pay would become a church issue before the Great Depression was entirely ended. The \$80-a-month was trimmed in 1929 to \$800 a year, and then in 1930 to \$600. At that, the trustees ran into trouble paying the 1932 salary. A \$39 deficit was paid off in part in 1934 and completely in 1936. The 1933 deficit of \$110 wasn't completely cleared until 1940. Meanwhile, the salary was reduced in 1934 to \$40 a month (with an honorarium to be paid if receipts allowed). The salary continued into the 1940's before such a bonus was paid. At year-end 1941, Mr. West received a \$50 bonus; at year-end 1942, \$100 bonus; with \$200 in 1943 and \$300 in 1944. By 1945 his salary was increased to \$100 a month, with a bonus of \$100 paid during the following two years. State conference officers constantly urged the trustees to adjust his salary, and many church members felt the Wests never were adequately repaid for their years of devotion and work. The Wests were the last to consider this an issue.

As the Roaring Twenties neared their close, the Oberlin congregation was busily moving ahead. The church organ, that was saved for during Mr. Myers' years, finally was placed in the church in 1927 "through the efforts of L.O. Loughlin." The organist was being paid \$10 a month, and the name of Sigrid Grondahl appears. She was to serve as church organist for most of the ensuing 40-plus years. She was provided with an organ pumper in 1929 when Sidney Eisenbeis, son of Val and Mary, was hired for the job. Mrs. Grondahl's son Bill also shared that duty. "The boys used to sit behind a screen and read comic books during the service," according to the organist.

New by-laws were adopted by the Ladies Aid in March 1928, providing for four standing committees: Flowers, Serving, Calling, and Entertaining. The December 1927 bazaar had netted \$96.50, so the women went about to spend it. They paid a three-year insurance premium of \$18.75 for church furnishings, contributed toward new hymnals, renovated the rest rooms, and hired a caretaker for the church.

Mr. Price was hired for the job on March 14, 1928, "to sweep the church room and downstairs room and lay the fires once a week" for \$5 a month plus 50 cents an hour for any extra work. Two weeks later he was replaced by Flora Hacker (Mrs. Harry), who was to be paid \$8 a month plus the additional 50 cents for extra work. No explanation in the minutes for this change. Mrs. Hacker was a woman from Scotland who transferred to Oberlin from the Little Church On The Prairie. Mr. Price was not further identified.

The Aid's first Mother-Daughter banquet (on record) was held in the spring of 1928, supplementing the famous Dads and Lads Banquet which had gained the women newspaper coverage in previous years. Charles F.A. Mann, newsman for the Tacoma News Tribune had recorded the shopping list for the 1926 father-son dinner. It listed: 40 pounds roast beef, 4 large bowls cabbage salad, 20 pies, 12 loaves bread, 3 pounds butter, 1 pound coffee, 6 cans milk, and potatoes. But there is no statistic about how many fellows were fed!

The first circles were formed within the Ladies Aid that same '28 spring. There were five, referred to simply by numbers, except for the "Maids and Matrons," organized especially for new, younger members. The first group included: Berdice Johnson, Virginia Gose, Serena Toole, Hazel Attwood, Alma Hatcher, Bea Noles, Grace Salzer and Barbara Chelius.

Women's Interests

Ladies Aid Minutes and records reflect the wide variety of women's interests:

POLITICS—"Mrs. Taylor (Dr. C.L.) spoke of three bills to come before the Legislature. One concerning the fight against narcotics,

one to prohibit selling firearms to anyone under 21 and another to prohibits street carnivals of a degrading nature. The Aid endorsed these bills..." (Ladies Aid Minutes, January 24, 1923)

MISSIONS—"The quota of the Jubilee Fund of the Woman's Board of Missions, which was established for the Steilacoom Church was \$35. This amount was raised and \$5 more—making \$40 in all, and the amount telegraphed to the national meeting being held in San Francisco. It was the last money needed to complete the Jubilee Fund (\$150,000) so was received with unusual enthusiasm and honor for the little Steilacoom church." (Minutes, September 25, 1923)

(NOTE: The Jubilee was the 50th anniversary of the Women's Board of Missions which was involved in supporting foreign missions such as the hospital operated by Dr. Cooke in China.)

ORDER—"The Acting President (Mrs. Kate Hatcher) suggested when anyone wished to enter the church they would kindly go to Mrs. Gambol's for the key instead of pushing the door open as has been the custom." (Minutes, February 13, 1924)

FUND RAISING—In March 1928 members of the Ladies Aid were invited to accept an invitation to take part in a "promotion." The promotion was scheduled to take place at a company on Sixth Avenue in Tacoma. The minutes read: "A number signified their intention to go when automobiles [sic] come." The Aid was promised 25 cents from the promotion for each person taking the trip. Thirteen went (according to the minutes) and the Aid received a check for \$3.00. No explanation for the 25 cents shortage.

MUSIC—The organ pumping problem was one Ladies Aid wrestled with for a long time. In December 1929 it investigated the cost of installing a motor to the organ and found it would cost about \$200. They decided to put off the purchase. Organ pumpers were getting 50 cents a month then, and \$200 would buy a lot of pumping time!

The 1928 organization meeting in September drew 85 women; 46 were members. Other statistics of note that year: the church congregation reported 36 members, with contributions to the Home Missions showing Oberlin as the second largest contributor in the state!

Steilacoom looked good in January 1929. The town's first gas station and garage was now located where Glenn Orr's wagon shop used to be. Tribune reporter Charlie Mann wrote just how great Steilacoom's optimism was. Sidewalks and streets were being paved, improvements were being made to the light and water plants. The new \$60,000 Steilacoom-Dupont-Fort Lewis highway was open "removing the present isolation on a dead-end road." A new wharf and dock were started. New homes were being built, with a \$3 million building planned for West Street and \$1 million improvements set for McNeil Penitentiary. McNeil would become a

federal site in 1935. Locally, the plans called for a "new town hall, Chamber of Commerce and library building, tennis court and new baseball stadium." Population for the town going into the 1930's was 722.

Lena Morris (Mrs. Roy), as Chairman of the Board of Trustees in January 1930, was the first woman to preside at an annual church meeting. The church was starting the year with a bare 19 cents balance in the treasury. William I. Leech was elected Trustee, a job he would hold for the next 21 years. In 1933 he was elected Chairman and presided over annual meetings for two decades. Nick Doering presided over the 1931 and '32 meetings before moving to the Board of Deacons.

The 1931 annual meeting was begun with a "Potluck" meal, the second of its kind and the last one to be written with quote marks. The balance in the treasury was \$30.30 and much work was underway.

A new chimney was being contemplated; a new stove had been purchased, moving the old one around until it too could be replaced. The new Junior Room was added that year, 25x23 feet more space for the 160 Sunday School members. The room was dedicated with a big Church Rally on November 6, with three Tacoma ministers present, the Rev. Carl H. Veazie (First Congregational), the Rev. Joseph Weiss (Plymouth), and the Rev. Edgar C. Wheeler (Pilgrim). Cornelius Karman, who built the room, also remodeled the kitchen in time for the Ladies Aid December meeting and bazaar. The Aid's new secretary Edna Dyer (Mrs. James) reported the bazaar netted \$68.04.

The next spring the Aid again reorganized, this time dividing into two circles, with "the pavement being the dividing line." Mrs. Alma Hatcher led Circle A with 26 members, and Mrs. Ethel Graham (Will) led Circle B with 16 members. When Mrs. Graham left a few weeks later she was replaced by Mrs. Norma Hatcher.

Golden Anniversary

The Golden Anniversary of Oberlin Church was widely celebrated in March and April 1933. The first 50 years were marked with special Sunday services on March 5. Mr. West used the same text as had Dr. Atkinson back in 1883, John 9:31. The Steilacoom Glee Club presented a sacred concert in the evening "which was enjoyed very much by a large attendance." The Glee Club joined the choir for a special Easter cantata that year.

The Ladies Aid celebrated the 50th anniversary with two events. On April 26 a joint tea was held with all circles. "Mrs. Blanche West, Mrs. James Jack and Mrs. Will Graham read the minutes of

the first church meeting held in March 1883. Mrs. James Wilhelmi, accompanied by Mrs. Larkins, whistled. There were 22 present."

Two days later the women reported 100 attending another anniversary celebration. "Mr. West led the devotionals, then a delicious potluck dinner, after which Mr. Bonney, Rev. Painter (Harry M. of Park Avenue Church), Rev. Weiss (Joseph, of Plymouth), Mr. Shaw and Dr. Veazie (Carl H., First Congregational) were the principal speakers. Many old pictures were shown, and an open discussion on early churches in our community." Mr. Painter was pastor in Steilacoom from 1909 to 1913.

Music had become a tradition in the Oberlin Church, with the Music Committee actively locating new talent. The "Steilacoom Glee Club" was referred to often, but never further identified. By Christmas 1933, the Christian Endeavor had been organized and "rendered a Tableau of the Nativity." Fine music and stirring worship services are not new to Oberlin.

Sigrid Grondahl's husband Sigurd was named Church Clerk in 1934. At one point a notation appeared that the minutes were read by "the clerk's secretary, Mrs. Grondahl."

As the Wests had promised early in their ministry, youth were beginning to become prominent in church activities. On Easter Sunday 1934 there were eight baptisms and 12 new members. The eight baptised were Shirley Jean and Kenneth Light Jr., Louis John Dunbar, Linda Lee McPhee, Robert James Runquist and Willis Edward Runquist, Robert Ronald Chapman, and Donald Stewart Johnson. The new members were Mrs. Ione Light, Vivian Joyce Light, Edward Runquist, Robert Pierson, Janet Ann Tollefson (Bailey), Marjorie May Morris, Ione Brookhyser (Karman), Byron Brookhyser, Keith Graham, Jane Frances Grondahl (Packard), Glenwood James Rosevear, and Shirley Louise Smith.

Christian Endeavor, a young peoples' group headed by the mayor's daughter, Marjorie Morris in 1937, reported 20 members and had sent delegates to both the Washington Youth Conference and the State Christian Endeavor Conference. At Christmas the group presented a play. At the same time the Junior C.E., led by Spencer Pitts, boasted 25 members. That same year Joyce Light and Jane Grondahl were elected as Junior Deaconesses.

Meanwhile the Ladies Aid was experiencing its own growing pains. Circles were discontinued in January 1935. But by October 1936 the records refer to Groups 1, 2 and 3! And by January 1937 six circles were in operation, each one named for its leader: Catherine L. Pitts, Alma Hatcher, Onnie Light, Julia Karman, Alice Rowe and Clara Weise. And all of them were busy!

They bought another new stove for the church, had "Mr. Ward and Mr. Muncaster" repair the church pews and put book racks on the backs. They initiated the painting of the church during the

1937 summer (probably white), and supported a janitor and lawn man. Hereafter the church often is referred to as "The New White Church," although its original paint was gray and of late has been refurbished in its "original."

Landscaping was done in the late 30's, mostly by Mr. West, himself an expert gardener. Dr. Charles Taylor, Western State's superintendent, provided shrubs and trees and Mr. West handled the planting and landscaping. Janet Judson Russell is credited with urging church leaders to install outside faucets for caring for the shrubbery. The Ladies Aid purchased a hose, and Mr. West took it from there!

Financing church work and mission giving was always a challenge to the Ladies Aid, and the women never seemed to lack ideas. They held dinners, socials, bazaars, picnics, sponsored a circus, plays, even a minstrel show (in 1937). They participated in merchandising gimmicks (one in 1929 with the Tacoma Products Manufacturers earned them \$41.50), sold everything from paring knives to nifty pot scrubbers known as "Dolly Duzzits."

One of the wilder ideas (although probably the least productive) was recorded in November 1935: Decided to have an Imaginary Bazaar December 11." The terse notation later was "\$7.80 taken in from the Imaginary Bazaar."

The socials were usually held in the summer months, and very popular throughout the town. In 1926 the menu included a piece of cake with ice cream for 15 cents. The Aid earned \$18.60 after paying for the 10 gallons of ice cream at cost (\$6.05). After one of the strawberry socials the women noted "even the crates had been sold."

Until 1938 Mr. West had been elected each year for a one-year term. At the January 1938 meeting he was elected for an indeterminate term. At year-end 1938 the treasuries of both the church and the Ladies Aid were about equal, both just under \$400. Subscriptions for 1939 amounted to \$374.50, and Robert Karman was elected to the job of Clerk. He would hold this office until 1971, the longest term held by any Clerk.

The auditorium platform was remodeled in 1938 by Glenn Orr, and new floor coverings were provided by the Aid. A treasurer's notation indicates receipt of "fire insurance payment for damage of \$82.50, painting, \$42.72, and for platform, \$29.37." Yet there is no other record of a fire. The Sunday School's purchase of new hymnals probably could be attributed to increased attendance. It is known that the platform across the front of the church auditorium was extended from side wall to side wall about this time. Also, those who remember those days of pot-belly stoves recall the threat of the stove that sat to the right of the congregation until the 1950's!

Youth Group Shines

A large group of confirmands was brought into church membership on Easter Sundays in 1936 and 1937, including Jessie Maxine Detty, Eugene Fredricks Pitts, Perry Needham Burkhart, Jean Dyer (Swanson), James Carmon Dyer (1936); VerNadean Dyer, Betty Dyer (1937). The Dyers are children of Edna and James Dyer Sr.

With all these young people in the church, the Pilgrim Fellowship was formed in 1939. When the group sponsored a concert performed by the Plymouth Motet Choir, two P.F. leaders were impressed with a beautiful, black cross the choir brought with them. Eugene Pitts, president, and Byron Brookhyser, secretary-treasurer, fashioned a similar black cross and presented it to the church. The P.F. advisor, Mrs. Charles Ingram, made a cream-colored back-drop which set off the cross strikingly. That cross remained behind the altar until 1961 when the church moved to a new building.

The following year pulpit chairs were given the church by Mr. and Mrs. William Krull in the name of their son John. The 24-year-old church member had died in 1940 of injuries sustained in an auto accident, and had left \$100 to the church.

The Pilgrim Fellowship also presented the church with new entrance doors in 1940; the Christian Endeavor Society refinished the Junior Room and built cabinets in 1941; the two groups merged to become the Young Peoples Society later that year. It was Eugene Pitts who presented the first Y.P.S. report at the 1942 annual meeting.

Other changes were occurring in the church. The Church Council idea was formed in January 1941 when it was proposed the church be governed by a committee composed of church leaders. Annual meetings were changed to the second Monday in January because of the conflict between the first Monday and New Year's Day.

Nick Doering was honored at the 1941 annual meeting by being named Trustee Emeritus in appreciation of his many years of work for the church. A member of the church since 1890, he had served most of those years as Trustee and many years as a Deacon. Mr. Doering died in September 1942; his wife Emma died in 1952.

The Executive Board of the Ladies Aid was formed in 1939. And the bazaar that year, held in November for the first time, netted \$94.69.

December 1941 was the date the country entered another World War. Yet the Church Board meeting held December 11 addressed more mundane problems: a new roof, a new furnace, sale of the old organ, what to do about two fir trees that had grown too tall and threatened the church roof. The new roof was added the next year

at a cost of \$255; the fir trees were removed (after much urging by Mr. Light and the city crews) late in 1949! (The oil furnace didn't materialize until late 1951; the old organ stayed around almost as long.)

While the minutes didn't mention war, the town and the entire country were mobilized for the war effort. Fort Lewis was humming. Steilacoom had fully one quarter of its 1,000 population assigned to regular duty in various segments of civilian defense: the air defense corps, ambulance corps, air raid wardens, first aid workers, fire wardens, and the pride of the Civilian Defense set-up, the air raid observation tower. The look-out operated around the clock, women taking day shifts and men taking night duty. Steilacoom felt well protected.

The Ladies Aid, grown to seven circles in 1942, composed of 125 members, now were purchasing war bonds and directing their activities toward the war effort. In 1944, for instance, the women prepared 12 Russian War kits, clothing for Russian War Relief, and for the Red Cross gave money, comfort, lap robes, etc. (The "comfort" may mean "comforter.")

The eighth circle was formed in 1944 to honor Mrs. Rose Eisenbeis. The Aid bought two more war bonds and then held funds in three bank accounts, handling an annual budget of nearly \$800. Before the war ended, the Aid purchased two more bonds, each in \$75 denominations.

Right in the middle of the war, the Aid took time to celebrate its 50th anniversary. On November 5, 1944, the women honored the first Aid president, Hattie Bair, then 84 years old. Mrs. Bair gave her account of how the church was named and how the Aid got started. Rev. McCormick, of Lakewood (not further identified), was the guest.

The Sunday School suffered during the war years because so many of its young people had joined the armed forces. By January 1943, church records state there were 23 young people from Oberlin on active duty. Before the end of that year there were 53 stars in the church service flag. Average Sunday School attendance was running between 56 and 79. However, the young people managed to pay the entire church benevolent contribution for 1943! Church School attendance grew after that year: 88 in 1944, 98 in 1945, and 97 in 1946.

The church's first gold star was placed in its service banner in 1943 when Charles Hugh Baker died at the age of 32 when the submarine on which he was serving was sunk. A long, red chancel curtain was presented to the church in 1947 and was hung behind the black cross as a memorial to this young naval officer by his wife Dorothy, his parents Jesse and Grace Baker, and his sisters Jessie Baker Welfringer and Genevieve Baker Larson. The curtain was made by members of the Blanche West Circle.



Oberlin Church's first building, formerly the Presbyterian Church, was purchased in 1883, torn down 1902.



The "Little White Church" was built in 1902 on the corner of Lafayette and Pacific Streets. The steeple cap shown here was removed in the mid-1920's. Originally painted gray and white, later was repainted all white.



William S. Wells, Founding Member, served as Trustee.



Mary E. Wells, Founding Member, served as Clerk.



View of the church before landscaping was done by Rev. Herbert West in 1940's.



The interior view of the old (Presbyterian) church on the hill at Puyallup and Rainier Streets (before the turn of the century) shows decorations of flowers and greens.



The interior view of the church on Lafayette Street shows the black cross and red chancel curtain used after 1947.



The Junior Choir is shown in the mid-1950's (probably Easter Service).



The Sunday School is shown with the bus that was used to bring all these youngsters in each Sunday—during the



The Rev. Harry B. Hendley, pastor from 1901-1903, and wife, Clara W., saw the new church built, then moved to Tacoma to found another church.



The "Little White Church" was completed with landscaping done as a loving contribution of the Rev. Herbert West.



Mrs. Hattie Bair, founder of the Ladies Aid, is shown wearing a dress from the 1800's on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Aid.



Andrew and Weltha Bell (left) with Rev. William H. and Mrs. Cooke (pastor 1903-1906). Mrs. Bell died in 1915, her husband in 1922 after long years of service to Oberlin Church. The Cookes moved to California after leaving Steilacoom



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An aerial black and white photograph of a residential neighborhood. The houses are scattered across a landscape with some wooded areas. A network of roads and streets is visible, including a prominent intersection in the center. The overall scene depicts a suburban or rural settlement from the mid-20th century.

1958



A meeting of the Ladies Aid at the boathouse Mamie Green about 1916. Pictured are: (1) Minerva Schults (2) Mrs. Thompson (aunt of ... (3) Mrs. Frances Smith, (4) Mrs. Libbie Wheeler (5) Mrs. M.E. Pease (6) Mrs. Ira Light (7) Mrs. Bertha Lang (8) Mrs. Rose Eisenbeis (9) Mrs. Wattland (10) Mrs. Gamble (11) Mrs. Weiss (12) Mrs. Mamie Green (13) Fred Chelius (14) Andrew Bell (father of Mrs. Pease) (15) Mrs. Huff (16) Webster Carr (17) Mrs. Mabel Carr (18) Mrs. Kate Hatcher (19) Mrs. Stein and (20) daughter Lorene (21) Esther Weiss and (22) daughter (23) Lucille Weiss (24) Mrs. Fred Chelius (25) Mrs. Erland (Dr. C. Taylor's mother) (26) Mrs. Holt (27) Ruth Holt (28) Mrs. Fredericks (29) Queenie Huff (30) Mrs. Herbert Post (31) Mrs. Harrison (32) (33) unidentified children. This is the boarding house operated by Mrs. Green after 1914.



Youngsters came to Sunday School in this "bus" in 1937. Adults shown are "Mrs. Tollefson," Mrs. Blanche West and Russell Doering.



The Rev. Herbert West, pastor for 25 years (1926-1951) and Mrs. West are shown in 1944 in front of their new

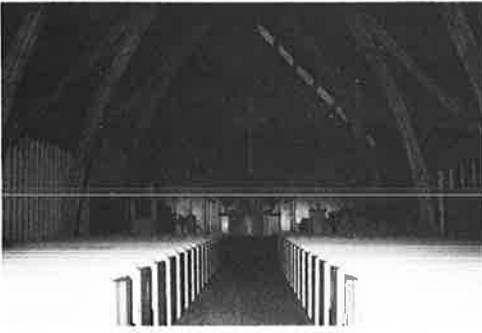


The newest Oberlin Church building was completed in two phases, the sanctuary in 1961, and the Fellowship Hall and offices in 1978.

"The Parsonage" was used to house ministers of Oberlin Church from 1951 to 1970, then sold to Marjorie and Robert Johnson who have restored it. The building is on the historical register and is operated as a gift shop.



Groundbreaking for the new church on July 17, 1960, shows the Rev. Lorraine Dossett holding the spade. Others are (l. to r.) Clyde Davidson, Patsy Faulkner, Robert Heitmiller, Charles Buchanan, Harry Anderson and Perry Sherman.



The sanctuary of the Oberlin Church, built in 1961, is shown here.



The first phase of the current church building, including sanctuary, classrooms, was built in 1961.



Oberlin Church, built 1902, used until 1971, now known as West Memorial Hall, is owned by Albert and Aurora Toth.



Serving tea in the spring of 1953, wearing costumes of the late 1800's are Oberlin Church women (left to right) Dorothy Gale, Helen Hunter, Caroline Miner, Ione Karman, Clenda Davidson and Sarah Robinson. The event was part of Steilacoom's Centennial Celebration.

Enter: New Friends

More familiar names begin to be found in church records as the 40's progressed. Mr. and Mrs. C.A. Spreen joined the church in June 1941. Mrs. Grondahl then served on the Music Committee, played the organ, directed the choir, and was busy with Ladies Aid activities. (She was president 1947-1950.)

Charles and Katharine Buchanan joined the church in April 1942, he by letter from Pullman, she by letter from Tacoma's First Congregational Church. Their children joined on Easter Sundays, Kathleen in 1944, and Charles D. in 1945. Mr. Buchanan immediately was elected a Trustee.

Bill Leech, still Chairman of the Trustees, chaired the annual meetings, but he was called Moderator beginning in 1943.

Clyde and Clenda Davidson and their son Milton, joined the church in April 1946. Clyde served many years as a Trustee; Clenda has been church Historian since 1954.

Byron Brookhyser was elected a Deacon in 1943; his sister Carol was elected Deaconess. Carol became the wife of Jack Wetherholt in 1949 and both continue to contribute their time as members of the Diaconate.

Many of the church's young people formed friendships that grew into lifelong relationships. Eugene Pitts, church youth leader, married Rachel (Rae) Johnson in 1945. Kenneth Light Jr. married Jane Bair (daughter of "Cub" Bair). Lone Brookhyser became the wife of Robert Karman (son of Cornelius and Julia, and long-time church Clerk).

Church organizations were added to the church calendar as needs arose. A Men's Club was formed in the early 1940's. It would disband and re-form several times over the next years.

Between 1944 and 1949 an activity club for young marrieds was active in the church. The group, calling itself the Home Builders Club, bowled, skated, went on picnics, attended plays, and generally had a good time. As many as 20 couples took part, many of whom were on temporary duty at Fort Lewis. Attending the first meeting at the Wests' home in January 1944 were the Ernest Waters, Maurie Robinsons, Cathells, Gil Harringtons, Bud Fountains, Harold Stantorfs, Charles Buchanans, Art Lincolns, Ron Crowes, Mrs. Evelyn Sutherland, and Captain and Mrs. Tom Curry.

After the War

When the European invasion took place in June 1944, the newly-elected Town Council requested a half-hour prayer service.

The Council recessed briefly for special services on June 9, held at the church and led by Mr. West. Special music was provided by Mrs. Grondahl. At that time her husband, Major Sigurd Grondahl,

was in active service, as was her son, Lt. Bill Grondahl. Only a week before she had learned that Bill, just turned 21, had received the Distinguished Service Flying Cross in recognition of his overseas service with the Air Corps. He was killed ten years later in a military air crash.

The war over, the church accepted post-war duties. In 1946 it reached its \$900 quota for War Relief funds to rebuild churches and missions destroyed by the war. A newspaper item credited Mrs. West with the Steilacoom Victory Clothes Drive which filled the Junior Room "piled high with boxes of clothing." The Steilacoom Transfer and Fuel Company's truck tires "were practically flattened out Monday night by the tremendous load of clothing Russell Doering took in to the Tacoma fire station for re-sorting and packing for shipment to foreign countries." Russell was managing his father's business which later was sold to the Lakewood Fuel Company.

Ada W. Graham retired in 1946 as church Treasurer. She had held that office since 1927, much of the time also serving as Clerk. She was replaced by Andrew Hunter, whose wife Helen taught in the Sunday School and played the organ when Mrs. Grondahl wasn't there.

The following item about Hunter appeared in the Tacoma News Tribune in April: "Orchids this week to Andrew Hunter, of Steilacoom, whose ingenuity in transferring the innards out of a new vacuum cleaner gave Oberlin Church a mechanical substitute for scarce organ pumpers. The church organ is now operated by a two-speed control on the suction side of the vacuum cleaner motor drive, and delivers soft music to accompany a prayer, or thunderous music for Easter singing when local citizens pay their annual visit to the church. Churches could be more practical and comfortable if there were more Andrew Hunters." The Church Accounts Ledger shows: "April 9, 1946—Electrolux Corp. \$71.84 in payment for Electrolux for organ." Hunter served the church as Treasurer for 12 years, until the family moved away in 1958.

In those post-war years the church had grown to 140 members and began to plan new and larger quarters. A Building Fund was established in 1946 using the remains of the Parsonage Fund (started in 1922 from proceeds of the sale of the old parsonage). Repairs were made to the tower and front porch foundations, a new rope was purchased for the church bell (it broke on New Years Eve as 1947 was being rung in), and fire extinguishers were donated to the church by George Keeper. In still another move to increase fire safety, an exit was cut at the back of the sanctuary, and plans were underway to replace the upstairs stove.

The Men's Club put in a sidewalk along the east side of the church in 1949, and a new concrete floor replaced the old wood one in the Primary Room. James Dyer Jr. was directing the Sunday

School, having returned from his art studies at the University of Washington. He was leading young people's groups and activities. While the floor was being replaced, he had the Primary Department meet at the school house.

The sanctuary was beautifully described by Mrs. Grondahl in a 1947 report to the Tacoma Association meeting in Steilacoom. She expressed the beauty of the "Vivid black cross against the red backdrop, and cool, green carpeting down the two aisles to the chancel, dark stained woodwork and cream walls." Mrs. Grondahl became Moderator of the Tacoma Association in 1955.

Perhaps because of her combined interests in the Ladies Aid and in music, Mrs. Grondahl was able to keep the choir supplied with music and, in 1948, choir robes. A wardrobe was built to hold the new robes. All this must have attracted new members, who were immediately reported in the local newspaper: "New Oberlin choir members are Mesdames Fred Miner, Otto Hansen, Orville May, Robert Karman and William Monroe Jr., also Kay Buchanan. Regular members include Mary and Jean Zurfluh, Sandra Grondahl, Carolyn Pitts and Nancy Ingels, as well as Mrs. Preston Gifford and Mrs. Andrew Hunter. Their choir director and organist, Mrs. Sigurd Grondahl."

And how those women could sing! Not only were they featured at the Easter morning services that year, but they presented an Easter Cantata, "Memories of Easter Morn" at an evening service.

Routine matters continued at the church which was nearing its half-century in the little, white church building. It was painted again. And a new oil range was added to the kitchen. In 1948 Steilacoom's population was well over 1,200, but holding its own as service families returned to the area to look for homes, and Fort Lewis began sending wartime inhabitants to their former homes.

The decade was ending; so was the era of the Wests. Dr. Archie Hook, Conference Superintendent, appeared at the January 1949 meeting to assist the church in finding ways to reduce the work load for Mr. West. He had been serving Steilacoom's church with a full program for youth and adults alike, as well as serving as chaplain at Western State Hospital for the past 25 years. He would lead services there each Sunday before conducting the Orberlin service. Dr. Hook gave the congregation guidelines for securing a student pastor to help out for the summer.

A Yale theology student named Robert Batchelder took the job for a salary of \$64 a month plus room, board and travel expenses. The Ladies Aid found him a room at the "Chapman home" and took turns supplying him meals. During that summer of '49 Batchelder formed a teen-age club, helped them fix up a recreation room in the Town Hall, ran a Vacation Bible School and led the Young Peoples groups.

That same year another church member was being honored at the other end of life's spectrum. "Aunt" Mamie Green was given a birthday party at her home on the occasion of her 78th birthday in February. She was the founder of the Mamie Green Circle of the Oberlin Ladies Aid. Born and raised in Kansas, Mrs. Green came to Steilacoom after her 1890 marriage to Charles Green. They lived in Dupont where he worked in the powder plant. In 1914 "Aunt" Mamie started a boarding house for men working on the Northern Pacific Railway. After her husband's death in 1935 she built a new home on the site of the old Orr vineyard and orchard.

A Special Man Retires

Bill Leech conducted his last annual meeting in January 1951, resigning his place on the Board of Trustees after 21 years of service. The congregation afforded him a vote of thanks. He remained active in church affairs until his death in 1975 at the age of 86.

The Church Council, late in 1949, discussed prospects of finding a new pastor, and decided to offer Mr. West a post as Pastor Emeritus, setting up a pension fund to care for their beloved pastor of 25 years. In order to free the hands of the Council to actively seek a new pastor, Mr. West tendered his resignation at the January 1951 meeting. That May he and Mrs. West were delegates to the state conference in Walla Walla. Mr. West delivered his last sermon on November 25, 1951; he died on January 24, 1952.

Mrs. West had worked as hard as her husband during those 25 years, serving as president and leader of the Ladies Aid, and as head of the Primary Department. She sold her home in Steilacoom in 1953 and moved to Tacoma where she died in 1959. The West Family presented the church with a pair of memorial candlesticks in 1957. When the new church was furnished in the early 60's, an altar which also serves as a communion table was presented as a memorial to the Rev. Herbert and Mrs. Blanche West by a loving and grateful congregation.

The Wests had one of those experiences during their ministry in Steilacoom that assures them a place in the posterity supplied by newspapers. They were in the right place at the right time to receive widespread news coverage.

The time was 7:18 P.M. on Thursday, February 14, 1946, when an earthquake of "plus 5" magnitude struck the Tacoma area. Some reports placed the quake at 7 on the Seattle seismograph. Some reports had the shock lasting up to 20 minutes.

"In Steilacoom, in the home of the Rev. Herbert West, a wedding ceremony was underway. The couple, Irene Mononnier of Steilacoom, and Darrell Redberg, of Seattle, had just finished the 'I do's' and Mr. West was about to pronounce them husband and wife when the earth began to shake. Said Mr. West: 'We offered

them protection under the archways of the doors in our home, but the bride and bridegroom remained in their places, and after things had quieted down, I offered prayer that concluded the ceremonies.' ”



IV. THE FABULOUS FIFTIES

It had been a long time since Oberlin Church had to search for a new pastor. So long, in fact, the officers had to (again) look for a copy of the by-laws. For the first time a Search Committee was formed. Chaired by Mr. Buchanan, the committee prepared an elaborate presentation of Oberlin Church, its history and its pastoral requirements.

The Committee brought Rev. George H. Schubert from Peshastin to preach on Sunday, April 24, 1951. The congregation immediately accepted this energetic pastor who had been ordained in the Congregational denomination five years before.

The Schuberts, George, Genevieve and their daughter Gloria, were the first to live in the church's new parsonage—the former Hatcher House across the street from the church on Lafayette. The house had been purchased from its owner, Mrs. Mabel Carr, for \$8,000, including house, garage, green house, two sheds, and two 60×120 lots. The church put down \$2,000 and agreed to pay \$50 a month at 6% interest. This house had been built in 1892 by Emma and Walter Hatcher Sr.

The Schuberts arrived in mid-August and “officially” began work on September 16. The most appropriate way to introduce the exuberant years of Mr. Schubert's ministry is to quote directly from his Pastor's Report made in December, just five months on the job: “May I ask that you please take into consideration that my convictions are just as real and vital to me as yours may be to you. But as pastor remember that after almost twenty years in this kind of work in the Lord's vineyard, I know that the work He has called me to do progresses only as we honor His Holy Word, His Church and His Fellowship. So may we continue to have perfect harmony in our work for the Master.

“We came to Steilacoom on the 13th of August 1951. My what a welcome we had, furniture in place, the beds set up and a large clothes basket of food. Yes, we came, we saw, we found a real welcome. The Hansen's (Otto) had us for dinner and the next day we had several surprises in store, a cake, a pie, and vegetables were brought in. Folks came wishing us a happy future here.

“Since coming to be with you less than five months ago, we have found a true spirit of Christian fellowship and unity. This is how the program has been advancing:

Sept. 9—Reception held. Truly a never to be forgotten highlight.

Sept. 29—Purchased 28 folding chairs for Junior Choir and auditorium.

Oct. 4—Rev. A.B. Ost of the Christian Fellowship Union (Mexican work.)

Oct. 8—Took charge of the meeting of Dr. Talbot in Tacoma.

Oct. 10—Tacoma Conf. Assn. and Pioneer meeting in Steilacoom.

Oct. 28 & Dec. 2—The Teizens of Simpson Bible Institute—Seattle.

Nov. 21—Hosts to the Lake City Community Church and Little Brown Church.

Nov. 22—Began job of installing fuel tank for the furnace.

Nov. 26—Cabinet for Primary Room.

Nov. 30—Our church and four others rented Ice Arena for party.

Nov. 19—The base for chimney was started.

Dec. 1—The first bricks were laid on the chimney.

Dec. 20—Marvin Swartz soloist—St. Paul's Choral Society.

Dec. 23—Four services including the S.S. program in Town Hall, 590 total attendance.

Bulletins—Total 3,230 or 6,460 sheets. I have had help cutting stencils and mailing.

"We made 101 visits to homes in Steilacoom. Some sickness, deaths, confined to the home, burdens and problems, generally to those unable to attend services. With this 19 S.S. services, 19 morning worship, 12 family nights, 15 evening (Sunday), 20 Junior Church services, 10 Family night junior, 18 junior choir—113 services.

"This work at the church has been a real joy and fellowship, first the sidewalk into the Primary Department, repairs to the doors, the emergency door in the auditorium behind the drapes, the chimney base and chimney, all this labor donated by those who had the know-how. A total of 283 hours labor. Permit me here to thank the men and boys who helped as well as those who gave. A personal appreciation to Otto Hansen who has been with me continually from the shopping for the furnace to the completion, many hours spent at supply yards, with furnace men and for materials.

"As we move forward into 1952 looking to our Centennial 1953 may we band together as a family to see and do God's will, for our church, our family and community. Yes—a healthy, growing church in Steilacoom."

And so Mr. Schubert began a busy four years at Oberlin.

At his first annual meeting, the new pastor announced "Invasion Sunday" scheduled to provide the pledges to support the \$5,000 budget drawn up for 1952.

When Mr. Schubert referred to "Centennial" he didn't realize he would be pastor in Steilacoom for *four* Centennial years, the town celebrating four separate events.

1951—the town observed the anniversary of the site donation claims of Capt. Lafayette Balch and John B. Chapman.

1952—the observance of the establishment of the first post office in Washington Territory.

1953—the anniversary of the founding of the first Protestant church north of the Columbia River. The site of the Methodist Church, founded in 1853 by the Rev. John F. DeVore, is marked on

Wilkes Street with a bell tower erected in 1908.

1954—Steilacoom celebrated its incorporation as a town, the first in the territory.

The Town Celebrates!

Oberlin Church members played leading roles in the town celebrations. Clyde Davidson was General Chairman of the Centennial Event, and his wife Clenda was Publicity Chairman. Charles Buchanan served as Steilacoom mayor during those years; Eudocia Leech was the town Postmaster. George Bryan was Centennial Association Treasurer. On the Advisory Board were Gladys Parker, Russell Doering, Richard Fowler, William Radmacher, U.N. Durbin and William Leech. Committee Chairmen included Zenith Densmore, Parade; Lee Kalles, Ways and Means; Lloyd Norberg, Public Address; Mr. Schubert, Church Service. Among representatives of participating organizations are listed Mrs. Edgar Haas, Weltha Bell Circle; Jessie Welfringer and Elberta King, Steilacoom Girl Scouts; Mrs. Fred Allphin, General Aid Oberlin Church; and Richard Karman, Steilacoom Fire Department.

In addition to her community duties, Clenda Davidson was appointed in 1954 as church Historian, an office she has held since. The Davidsons were active in the church, Clenda as Deaconess and Clyde as Trustee. Both Davidsons operated the general store and took part in community activities. As charter members of the Steilacoom Historical Society (1972) they both may be credited with keeping alive much of the rich historical background of the town in general, the church in particular. Their son rang the church bell each Sunday from 1944 until he left for college in 1953. They took those duties for a time, until Mr. Schubert's daughter Gloria took over.

The church by-laws came up for revision again in 1952. This time the provision was to elect seven members for each board, Trustees, Deacons and Deaconesses, and to allow the pastor to appoint five members to the Christian Education Committee, the superintendent to be elected by the teachers. Provision also was made for monthly meetings of the combined boards—a kind of council. Mr. Schubert called it the "Pastor's Cabinet."

The chimney Mr. Schubert referred to in his initial report was a new one connected to the fireplace built by the Young People's Society and dedicated to Mr. West. In fact, the entire Junior Room downstairs was known as West Hall.

The oil furnace mentioned cost a total of \$1,269.69, and is the one discussed back in December 1941. It was paid for jointly by the Sunday School and the Ladies Aid.

Other repair and remodeling work included the dividing of the restroom into two separate, modernized rooms, partitioning

downstairs to form a Ladies Parlor, and adding a hot water tank to the kitchen. (The better to clean up after church suppers!)

The parsonage also underwent some remodeling in 1953, with a sun room and den provided. The major portion of the parsonage work amounted to \$1,200, mostly paid for by the Ladies Aid.

Six circles were formed in 1952. With this structure small groups of women could meet for social occasions and to plan separate projects. The Ladies Aid still met monthly for a business meeting and to plan joint projects. The circles were named: Hattie Bair, Kate Hatcher, Mamie Green, Rose Eisenbeis, Weltha Bell and Mary-Martha. A seventh circle, named to honor Blanche West, was added in 1954. The Hattie Bair Circle replaced the former Essie Dandeneau Circle, honoring the founder of the Aid who died in 1948 at the age of 87. Her children, Eudocia Bair Leech (wife of William I.) and Godfrey "Cub" Bair still reside in Steilacoom.

Other changes were occurring during the early years of the 1950's. The clerk's report was being typewritten. In the absence of Mrs. Grondahl (who had joined her husband on duty in Japan), the choir was being directed by Mrs. Otto Hansen, who was a fine violinist. The organ was being played by Helen Hunter.

As the Sunday School grew to an average attendance of 127 (in 1954) under Superintendent Jessie McDonald, the Junior Department had to be moved to the Town Hall. The all-time high in attendance was marked in March 1955 with 186 attending Sunday School. Caroline Miner (Mrs. Fred) was Primary Department Superintendent, and the church was using a bus to bring children from outlying areas. The next year Mr. and Mrs. Miner left for a year away on government business and James Dyer reclaimed the superintendent's job.

As part of the historical 1953 celebrations, Oberlin Church held a special 50th anniversary of the building of the "New White Church" on June 7, 1953. The occasion marked the five decades that the building had housed the Oberlin congregation. The original church look with its gray and white exterior was memorialized in an oil painting presented at the 1953 celebration by Artist Henry Leindecker. His daughter, Lenore Leindecker Rogers, is the artist who designed the cover of this book.

On hand to present the church's anniversary message was Dr. Claton Rice, Superintendent Emeritus of the state church conference. Later that year Dr. Rice and other members of the Tacoma Association honored the Steilacoom church by holding its meeting in it.

Mabel and Willis E. Morris celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1953—just a short time before Mrs. Morris died. Her husband, Steilacoom's mayor until 1948, died in 1964. She had come to Steilacoom for the first time to attend the dedication of Oberlin's church in 1903.

The Stewardship Committee was added to the church organizational structure in 1954, with Robert Heitmiller chosen to chair it. Pledges that year from 83 members amounted to \$6,375 (Pledges in 1982 from the first 83 members amounted to more than \$60,000.)

Chairmen for the annual meetings still were being elected at each meeting and usually were the Chairmen of the Board of Trustees. Leaders in the decade of the 50's included Mr. Hansen, 1952-53; William Bristow, 1954-55 and 1956; Mr. Leech returned to the chair in 1957 and 1958; Clyde Davidson led the meetings in 1959 and 1960.

Membership in the church in 1955 was 175, including several new members who had joined in 1954: Alma and Harry Anderson, Jean and Joel; Russell and Patsy Faulkner, Mrs. Doris (Ray) Fletcher, Elmer L. and Myrtle Kalles, Clarence and Helen Dowling, and Alan Spreen.

Another marriage between church members occurred in June 1955 when Catherine Pitts became the bride of Raymond W. Muncaster. Both had been active in the church since the mid-thirties; both had lost their spouses through death in recent years.

A Grand Event

Easter 1955 was the last conducted by Mr. Schubert but it was a grand event. There were 90 attending the sunrise service, 100 attending the Easter breakfast, 209 at the 9:30 service at the Town Hall, and 186 at the 11 o'clock service in the church. The Junior Choir had new white robes and ties, thanks to the Hattie Bair Circle, and the new Hammond organ, purchased in February, was making one of its first appearances.

The old church was becoming too small. In June 1955, the congregation met to accept the new church building program: "All votes were in favor of going forward with the new church program."

The Schuberts, having completed their growth program for Oberlin, felt it was time to move on, and accepted a call to the Battle Ground (Washington) Community Church. They left in October 1955, and the Rev. Fred Burkhardt, a history teacher at Clover Park High School, was invited to serve as interim pastor. Mr. Schubert has since retired from the ministry and remains at Battle Ground.

The community noted the moving of Mr. Schubert with this item in the Tacoma News Tribune: "Retirement next month of Rev. George Schubert at Steilacoom brings to a close a remarkable 4½ years record of achievement at Steilacoom's Oberlin Church not seen in the past 35 years. The last Enthusiast was Rev. Gaffney (Charles D., 1913-1916), and from that time on Oberlin lived in a quiet, largely unused fog. When Rev. Schubert came along the roof

blew off and the walls bulged. He rebuilt the picturesque old church and bought a parsonage and rebuilt it too.

“The Sunday School has overflowed into the Town Hall for a long time. The foxy Pastor frankly admitted the Church was in the finest shape in its long history and it has always been his policy to pull up stakes and pioneer elsewhere when he brought it up as far as he could go. Let somebody else carry it from there, is his motto, and by leaving now, Steilacoom has a fine chance of getting a Pastor likewise full of vim and vigor who can pick up conveniently where he left off. Hundreds of people wish Rev. Schubert well in his new southwest Washington pastorate.”

A new search committee was formed and took nearly a year to find a new pastor—and he was, indeed, full of “vim and vigor” ready to carry on. The congregation heard and called the Rev. Lorance Dossett in August 1956; he began his ministry at Oberlin in October at a salary of \$4,500 a year plus the use of the parsonage. With him were his wife Frances, sons Dick and Paul, and daughter Zoanne (now Mrs. David Wilkie).

A Building Committee, chaired by Buford Bombardier, had secured two lots on the corner of Rainier and Pacific, a donation in 1955 from G. L. “Cub” Bair. An additional lot was purchased two years later for \$1,500—the current parking lot. Members of that first Building Committee were: Mr. Dossett, William I. Leech, Clyde Davidson, Edwin Ellison, Jessie McDonald, David DeChant, Richard Karman, Robert Karman, and Perry Sherman.

Mr. Dossett’s first annual meeting (January 1957) amended the by-laws once more—this time to provide for a nominating committee. In addition, the Boards of Trustees, Deacons and Deaconesses were each enlarged to include nine (instead of seven) members. Mrs. Esther Spreen gave the Sunday School report that year as its new superintendent, and Harry Anderson was elected Treasurer.

The Building Committee was re-formed in March 1957, with Mr. Buchanan as Chairman. Members were Robert Heitmiller, Robert Karman, Mrs. Fred Miner, William Smith, Mrs. Frances Dossett, Lee Donigan, Mrs. Jessie McDonald, Edwin Ellison, and Mr. Dossett. A questionnaire was circulated to all members seeking suggestions about the proposed building. Then Architects Durham, Anderson and Freed presented a floor plan and model of the new building. The church that would replace the little white church that had housed Oberlin congregations for more than a half century would be built in two phases. The first would be the sanctuary and class rooms; the second would be the Fellowship Hall, office space and more class rooms. At first it wasn’t decided whether the Fellowship Hall would be on the first floor or in the basement. That decision came later. For the next 23 years the annual treasurer’s report would include the item “Building Fund.”

THE PRE-EASTER FIRE

As if to emphasize the need for a new building, and to speed up the process, a fire occurred in the old church in April 1958. During the night of Maundy Thursday fire broke out in the area of the furnace in the basement causing about \$2,000 damage to the furnace, a wall, the room, and two pianos. A newspaper reported, "a neighbor was awakened by cracking of basement window panes in the church." Easter services that April 6 were held at the Masonic Hall. For weeks the smell of smoke clung to the interior of the church, to the hymnals and choir robes.

The Deacons Fund was begun that year, when it was decided to collect a special fund at Communion Services to be used for community charity. Offices of Junior Deacons and Deaconesses were added to the by-laws in 1958. Filling those positions were Felix Robinson, John Ellison, Pat Oleson and Jean Anderson (Bier).

Young people have always been a strength of Oberlin Church, and innovative programs were always being presented. On the second Sunday in June 1958, members of the church took a look at the past by presenting an old-fashioned Children's Day. Sunday School members decorated the church platform with pink crepe paper and baskets of roses and greens. Sunday School had about 187 members at that time and enjoyed an average attendance of about 150. Later that year, on the last Sunday in September, a Promotion Day was held—on the same day the church celebrated the 75th anniversary of its founding.

That anniversary was observed on September 28, with special services conducted by Conference Superintendent Dr. Archie Hook. A memorial service honoring deceased church members was held, with commemorative flowers placed at the bell monument. Earlier that same month (September 19) the monument was the site of the 50th anniversary of its dedication (1908). Recognition was given to Steilacoom's Protestant churches, the Methodist, the Presbyterian, and the Congregational.

To commemorate the event, and to raise funds to repair the monument, a memorial ceramic plate was issued showing the bell monument. It was designed by James Redl, son of Mrs. Blanche Redl, and distributed by Hattie Bair Circle and the Daughters of the Pioneers. An earlier commemorative plate was made available by Hattie Bair Circle in 1953 to mark the 50th anniversary of the church building. That plate was designed by James Dyer Jr.

The Tacoma News Tribune and Sunday Ledger, covering the 75th Anniversary up-dated the church leadership, reporting on September 28, 1958: "Mrs. Esther Spreen, town librarian, superintends the Sunday School which 175 attend. There are nine circles in the Women's Fellowship group.

"Deacons, who take care of the spiritual affairs, are Harry

Anderson, chairman; Val Eisenbeis (oldest member, since 1902), Ray Muncaster, Lee Kalles, Don Herda, Jack Wetherholt, James Dyer, Jack Leech and Bob Karman.

"Trustees, who handle finances are Clyde Davidson, chairman; Bob Karman, Russell Faulkner, Ken Light, Richard Karman, Bob Heitmiller, Ed Ellison, William Leech, Charles Buchanan and Maurice Robinson.

"Deaconesses, who care for communion, visitation and welfare, are Mesdames Sarah Robinson, Jessie McDonald, Henry Leindecker, B. B. Bombardier, William Brookhyser, Dorothea Karman, Ray Muncaster, George Bolender and Karl Fredericks.

"Precious historic records are kept by Mrs. Davidson; Andrew Hunter, for many years treasurer before his retirement from McNeil Island administration, is now succeeded by Mr. and Mrs. Faulkner, who care for the building and regular funds. Robert Karman, who grew up in the church, is secretary (clerk)."

MINISTER OF MUSIC

The ministry of Mr. Dossett was extraordinary in that he and his family were talented entertainers as well as spiritually enriched leaders. Mrs. Dossett, trained in religious education and music, had assisted her husband in his ministry in Spokane, and continued the role in Steilacoom. Ordained in 1934, Mr. Dossett served the Hillyard Congregational Church in Spokane where he became known as "the Minister of Music" through a radio program he produced for many years.

In Steilacoom the Dossetts became known for their exciting musical presentations and interesting programs. Even annual meetings were enhanced with sketches and presentations, usually led by the Pilgrim Fellowship and youth of the church. The Men's Club, revitalized, appeared in the minutes of the January 1959 meeting, reported by Paul Quackenbush.

Actual building of the new church was begun in 1960. A loan of \$55,000 was received from the National Bank of Washington in January, and groundbreaking ceremonies took place on July 17. Special items were placed in the church cornerstone by members. Items included: a copy of the history of the church, Clenda Davidson, Historian; the Women's Fellowship Yearbook, President Marge Hatcher Brock; names of Sunday School teachers, officers and students, Superintendent Esther Spreen; a copy of the church's incorporation papers, Trustee Chairman Perry Sherman; names of the church's 226 members, Clerk Robert Karman; records of the Young People's Society, Paul Dossett and Bill Miner; names of members of the Building Committee, Chairman Buchanan. One other item was presented that day by Deacon Chairman Harry Anderson—a Bible belonging to Val Eisenbeis,

given him on his 9th birthday in 1892. Mr. Eisenbeis, the oldest living member of the church at that time, had been made a lifetime member of the Board of Deacons the previous year on the occasion of his retirement. He died in 1965.

The congregation began preparing for the move to Rainier Street. The last weddings were held in the now picturesque old church. Nancy Spreen and Dale Turnipseød repeated their vows there on November 20, 1960; Nancy Ingel and Harold Hellyer were married there in December. Church membership had grown to 219 and the Sunday School was averaging 140 attendance.

Construction costs for the first phase were estimated between \$75,000 and \$100,000. In addition to the \$55,000 loan, the church received a \$5,000 grant and pledges amounting to \$38,000 (with new pledges of \$12,000 estimated over the ensuing three years). The total actual cost came to about \$125,000.

Although the 1961 annual meeting was held in the old church, Chairman Perry Sherman recessed the meeting for 15 minutes so that the 50 members attending could move to the new church site, thus fulfilling a promise to meet in the new sanctuary that day. Mr. Dossett delivered a "farewell sermon" to the old church on March 12, 1961, naming the old building "The Herbert West Memorial Hall," an honor noted on the plaque over the front door. The old church would be used until 1971 for Sunday School, church dinners, circle meetings and other special events.

Services in the new church began one week later, on March 19. It was dedicated on April 23, with Acting Mayor Clyde Davidson hosting a service that included many area ministers, Conference Superintendent Hook, and Evan Davies, Tacoma Association Moderator. Mr. Dossett led the ceremony and was assisted by the Rev. Jack Tuell, Lake View Methodist Church. Other honored guests were area ministers, Everett Hunt (Plymouth), Clarence Dunham (Pilgrim), A. Vaughn Abercrombie (First Congregational), and Fred Towne (Christian Church, Puyallup).

The beautiful new sanctuary was the scene of the first wedding as June rolled around. The bride was Carol Ann Hudson; the groom as Gerald L. Hoxsey.

Not only was the Steilacoom church growing, but all of Congregationalism was growing. Within a month of Oberlin's dedication, a special meeting was called to consider membership in the United Church of Christ, the group that resulted from the merger between the Congregational-Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Churches. The Steilacoom church approved of membership and enlarged its name to: Oberlin Congregational Church (United Church of Christ).

So also was the church's women's organization growing. The "Ladies Aid" had become the "Women's Fellowship" in 1956. At one point it was made up of nine circles. As printed in the Women's

Fellowship Directory of Members (which began to be reprinted annually), the purpose of the group remained the same: "to enlist the women of the community in a fellowship of worship, education, service and giving to undergird the program of Oberlin Congregational Church as it serves the Spirit of Christ in the community and throughout the world." When the Constitution was revised in 1966, seven circles were still active: Ethel Howey, Hattie Bair, Weltha Bell, Kate Hatcher, Blanche West, Sarah Robinson and Rose Eisenbeis.



V. A COMMUNITY MOURNS

Tragedy struck Oberlin Church in September 1962, when death took Pastor Dossett unexpectedly, following heart surgery. The entire community mourned the passing of their minister and good friend. Just 52 years old, Mr. Dossett had expressed his desire to complete his years of ministering in Steilacoom. The Deacons honored him with a eulogy that said in part, "This house of God in which we worship stands as a monument to the man of God who labored here. We marveled at his ability to seek out and use our talents, whatever they might be, and to knit us together into a harmonious whole."

Mrs. Dossett carried on as administrator for her husband's church until a new pastor was found. In 1972 she left for Japan where she taught English at a Japanese mission school for two years. She since has been active in church work in her home town of Sumner. Her children continue their ministry in the Puget Sound area, Zoanne as a noted singer and speaker with women's groups, Dick as a singer in Tacoma, and Paul at Friday Harbor.

The Rev. Tsutomu Tom Fukuyama was called to Oberlin Church in January 1963 and preached his first sermon on April 21 to a congregation of 326. "Reverend Tom" had grown up on Bainbridge Island where he attended the Eagle Harbor Congregational Church. Ordained in 1942 he served churches in McGregor and New Hampton, Iowa, before coming to Steilacoom. He arrived in town with his wife Betty and five children.

The arrival of the new pastor was just in time to perform a wedding ceremony for Lowell Bier and Jean Anderson. The couple had been looking for a minister to perform the ceremony when Mr. Fukuyama arrived. The wedding took place May 3, 1963.

Lee Stowell, Trustees Chairman, led the 1963 meeting when the call was made. Changes in the church by-laws were effected at that meeting and the next that restricted the Trustees, Deacons and Deaconesses to two consecutive terms of office, that arranged to serve communion on the first Sunday of each month, that arranged for a quorum to consist of 10% of the active membership, and that formed the Social Action Committee. Significantly, the Social Action group came into being during a politically active time in the country's history.

The early 60's, with the assassination of a United States President, the murders of other political leaders, and an unpopular war in Vietnam, strained churches across the nation. Congregations became vitally aware of the social needs among their neighbors.

In Steilacoom, a church recovering from the loss of its own leader was aware of human values, and was working to maintain strengths.

The new magnificent Rodgers organ was purchased with funds started from a \$1,000 donation from the McKee family. Mrs. Grondahl, Chancel Choir leader and organist, made the selection that cost a total of \$6,950. In a dedication service in January 1965, Ray Fletcher, Chairman of the Music Committee, presented the organ to the church; Don Miller, Chairman of the Trustees, accepted. It was dedicated to the memory of several church members.

Chaplain Wilson DeChant was made an honorary member of the Board of Deacons in 1964. The church's Memorial Book entered the second volume with the entry of Mayor Morris, former choir director. The book rested on a memorial table given to the church in February 1961 by the Women's Fellowship in memory of a dedicated member, Rowena "Deedie" Leindecker (Mrs. Henry). A third Memorial Book was given to the church in 1976 by the Davidsons in memory of her brother, John F. Teevin.

The first printed annual report made its appearance at the 1964 annual meeting. The following year was the first time a Moderator was named to chair church meetings. Jack Wetherholt was the last Trustees Chairman to direct the annual meeting. Mr. Stowell was honored as the first elected Moderator, presiding over the 1966 session which featured another "first" (in a long time). For many years meetings had been held in the evenings. The 1966 meeting was held at noon and was preceded with a potluck dinner—the first in many years, at least as far as records show. For the next several years the annual potluck dinner and annual meeting would be held in the Town Hall. Moderator Jessie McDonald was elected in 1966 (although she couldn't preside over the 1967 meeting because of injuries suffered in an auto accident; Mr. Wetherholt took her place. Fred Miner was Moderator in 1968 and '69; Mr. Buchanan was Moderator in 1970 and '71.

DIFFICULT TIMES

Like the socially disruptive times, church meetings during those years tended to be stormy and controversial. In 1967 an attempt was made to change the church name to Oberlin United Church of Christ. After a lengthy debate, it failed—the name remains: Oberlin Congregational Church, United Church of Christ. Another motion passed, however, to hold the annual meetings on the third Sunday in January.

Underlining the importance of human needs in society, the Social Action Committee was made into a Board in the 60's, and a special Board of Ministry To The World was added in 1969. Catherine and Ray Muncaster received special thanks of the congregation in 1968 for their "faithful devotion and many hours spent taking care of the Welfare Work of the Church and the Community."

Mr. Miner, it was led by Dr. James Smucker, Conference Minister, and no potluck dinner was served! By-laws were approved which added a provision for requesting or accepting the resignation of a minister. Action also provided for the use of Robert's Rules of Order at church meetings. The very lengthy meeting made several other changes in the by-laws. Toward the end of the meeting a motion was made on behalf of the Diaconate to take a vote of the congregation to call a new pastor. It was defeated. Instead, a study committee was formed to look into the church's problems. Called "Mission: Today," its purpose was to study relationships between the pastor and congregation, to study the life and mission of the church, and to make recommendations to fulfill the church's role to God and community during those trying times. Thirteen persons made up the committee which reported at the 1970 annual meeting. They were: Harry Anderson, chairman; Jack Buesch, Ray Fletcher, Earl Gordon, Sigrid Grondahl, Robert Karman, Tom Mooney, Del Muse, Vivian Robinson, Esther Spreen and Algene Stowell. Gail Mooney and John Wetherholt were named later as Junior Members.

Results of the "Mission: Today" survey were inconclusive. Chairman Anderson reported, "It was generally agreed that the objective of resolving dissatisfactions within the congregation had not been successful." A vote of confidence was offered to "Reverend Tom" at the 1970 annual meeting, along with the report.



VI. STEILACOOM'S INDIVIDUALITY

The 1970's were exciting and growing years in Steilacoom. They began with a town population of almost 3,000 people and closed with nearly 5,000. Early in that decade the citizens of the town decided to preserve the historic nature of Steilacoom and a large portion was designated "Historic District" on the National Register of Historic Places. The town was described as "populated with friendly, neighborly people with great individuality and strong civic pride," a distinctive combination.

The Town Council managed departments of police, fire, utilities, streets, the library and the museum. Steilacoom schools, Cherydale Elementary, Saltar's Point Upper Elementary, and Pioneer Middle School, were managed by the Steilacoom Historical School District #1 (the result of a merger with the Du Pont and Anderson Island districts). A high school was added in 1981.

The church and its pastor were growing in similar directions. Mr. Fukuyama was a man involved with the times; so was the church. The church took a great interest in community happenings; so did the pastor. He followed many study programs that would better equip him to deal with the ailments that were surfacing in society. A "Pastor Study Program" allowance was worked into the 1970 budget for \$100. Other budgeted items supplementing the pastor's \$6,300 salary included Pastor Health Insurance, \$150; Pastor Annuity Fund, \$957; Car Allowance, \$700; and Housing Allowance, \$2,133. Since the Fukuyamas had their own home, the church parsonage was sold in 1970 and the housing allowance established. The church's total operating budget in 1970 was \$23,655.

The parsonage was sold to Robert and Marjorie Johnson who have since restored the features of the original parsonage as an historical site.

The Women's Fellowship fall bazaar had to be held in the new building for the first time in 1973 because West Hall (the old church building) had finally been sold. The Torrey Laviks bought it for \$16,200, putting \$10,000 down and agreeing to pay the balance over a ten year period. The property later was resold and now belongs to Albert and Aurora Toth who have restored the gray and white exterior and are completing the interior as a residence, maintaining the historic qualities of the building.

The church's only recorded "Mortgage Burning Ceremony" occurred on the lawn behind the first section of the new church on November 4, 1973, four months ahead of schedule. Katharine Buchanan, Trustees Chair, led the symbolic service that followed a dinner for about 80 people. Paul Van Horn was the guest speaker; helping with the burning ceremony were Eudocia Leech, Perry Sherman, Doris Fletcher and Charles Buchanan. For a brief time the church was entirely without mortgage liens against it!

In other real estate matters, the two lots on Nisqually Street, originally purchased for the building of a manse, were sold—one to Tom Hedges and one to John F. Carey. The small parking lot on Pacific Street, was leveled off and insured. The area behind the new church building was blacktopped. Another major innovation of the early 70's was installation of a new sound system in the new sanctuary in 1974, donated by Mrs. Louise Norberg. An audio-visual screen was purchased about the same time by the Miles family in memory of Helen Hunter who died in 1974.

The early 70's were times of stress—both political and economic. Watergate was exploding across the country. Locally Boeing Aircraft plants were laying off workers. Terms were being used, like “continued unemployment” and “financial crunch because of inflation.” The church was responding to community needs by participating in the Food Bank located at the Little Church On The Prairie, among others. Charlotte Bass, retiring president of Women's Fellowship, and Trustee, took charge of this project. In addition, the church opened its doors twice a week to the cooperative pre-school program at a rental fee of \$10 a month. By 1972 the program was increased to five days a week and paid \$25 rent.

The Board of Ministry To The World sponsored after-church luncheons with guest speakers chosen to stimulate exchange of ideas on such topics as prison reform, marriage counseling, reaching and serving “displaced persons” in the community, alcoholism, drug addiction, venereal disease, teenage pregnancy, and the multitude of social issues emanating from the turbulent 60's.

The congregation was expanding its understanding of its own culture, but also learning about different cultures. Members took classes in Ikebana, judo, encounter, conversational Japanese, and then enjoyed sukiyaki dinners and heard the problems of Japanese war brides.

It was an ecumenical time, with discussions between area churches regarding mergers. One such discussion involved consideration of a “dual alignment” with the American Baptist Convention. Betty Loverin attended a United Ministries Workshop, investigating the possibilities of this proposed union between three denominations (U.C.C., Disciples, and Church of the Brethren). This union became a reality in 1977, combining many church activities between members of the three denominations in the Pacific Northwest.

OBERLIN WOMEN

Women have always figured prominently in the operation and growth of Steilacoom's church. Sarah Robinson was honored as a “Mother of the Year” in 1958 as a tribute to her involvement with

her family and the church. For the next 20 years a church woman was so honored. They included: Beatrice Brookhyser (1959), Evelyn Sutherland (1960), Katharine Buchanan (1961), Mary Eisenbeis (1962), Frances Dossett (1963), Edna Dyer (1964), Carrie Twibell (1965), Alma Hatcher (1966), Catherine Muncaster (1967), Algene Stowell (1968), Lena Morris (1969), Esther Spreen (1970), Sigrid Grondahl (1971), Gertrude Hanson (1972), Mamie Johnson (1973), Alberta DeChant (1974), Signe LaMont (1975), Eudocia Leech (1976), Betty Loverin (1977), Alma Anderson (1978), and Rachel (Rae) Pitts (1979). Traditionally, the announcement was made on Mother's Day. After 1979, all mothers of the congregation are recognized and honored each Mother's Day.

Women began to emerge in other roles during these years. Mrs. Morris had been the only woman to chair the Trustees and moderate the annual meeting until 1972 when Mrs. Buchanan was elected to that office. However, since moderators were elected separately by that time, it was Thomas Mooney who held the Moderator's job until 1974, when the first woman moderator was elected—Joan Curtis. As part of the Steilacoom Bicentennial Committee, Mrs. Curtis urged church women to begin work on a quilt for the historic occasion.

That same year in April, Durive Harris was hired by the church at \$100 a month to serve as Youth Minister. And it was in 1974 that the "mixed choir" was disbanded and a new Women's Choir was formed by Mrs. Grondahl (whether by choice or by necessity is not explained). It was earlier in the decade (1971) that the Boards of Deacons and Deaconesses were merged to form The Diaconate, made up of six men, six women and four junior members.

Ellen Pinto led a study on "Women's Lib and the Bible" in 1973, and a similar study of the use of inclusive language in the church was led by Val Wheelehan in 1981. The by-laws were rewritten to use consistent terminology and inclusive language during the term of Wheelehan as Moderator in 1981.

Several leading church women were lost to the church through death during the decade. Daisy Doering died in 1965 at the age of 69; Mary M. Eisenbeis died in 1967 at the age of 86 (her husband Val V. was 83 when he died in 1965); Dorothy Weston Gale, Deaconess for many years in the 1950's died in 1971, aged 91; Mrs. Beatrice Brookhyser was 76 at her death in 1973 (her husband Bill died in 1980); Helen Hunter, church musician, died in 1974 at the age of 71; Carrie May Twibell was 92 when she died in 1976; and Sarah Robinson died in 1977. All of these women had been active in the Ladies Aid/Women's Fellowship, as well as taking part in the ongoing church mission.

OBERLIN SPORTS

Sports entered the church's activity picture in the 70's. Oberlin

youth had been sponsoring backpacking and ski trips. In 1973 basketball and Junior High Slow Pitch softball teams were fielded on behalf of the church. C. William "Bill" Rogers coached and nurtured the initial efforts into an adult slow-pitch team that still holds its own in the county's Church League. A church basketball team, also coached by Rogers, won the league championship in 1973.

When Jack Leech retired as Treasurer for the church in 1972, the congregation expressed in the 1973 annual minutes "its sincere appreciation to Jack Leech for his many years of faithful service." Mr. Leech had held that job since 1960. Mr. Buchanan was elected to take over the Treasurer's position.

Bob Karman, who resigned as Clerk in 1971, had served conscientiously for 32 years. Carter Bass was elected Clerk to replace him. The congregation extended a vote of appreciation to Mr. Karman, belatedly, at the 1983 annual meeting.

By the 1975 annual meeting, the church was having membership problems. A survey assessing the congregation's needs resulted in a resolution presented by the Diaconate asking "that the church embark upon a program of outreach and renewal leading to increased membership and to fuller participation by the membership; that laity involvement is necessary; that resources beyond our church be fully utilized; that planning for the renewal begin immediately." Membership was down to 123 (from 224 in 1970).

Two amendments to by-laws were approached at a special meeting called in April. The first dealt with the manner of calling a meeting to request a vote of confidence in the pastor, or to ask for resignation. The second sought a ballot vote in matters of this kind. The former amendment did not receive the required three-fourths majority votes; the second passed. There were 71 voting members present.

However, prior to the business meeting, Moderator Curtis had read a letter from Mr. Fukuyama resigning as pastor, effective at year-end. He left in September, taking a month's sabbatical leave and a month's vacation, both with full pay. Mr. Fukuyama has since helped to organize the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Baptist Church in Renton, has served as an interim pastor in Seattle, and now serves as chaplain at American Lake Hospital.

His daughter Mary Alice has earned her doctorate and is on the counseling staff at the University of Florida; Peter Allen lives in Stamford, Ct.; David Thomas is in Seattle; the twins, Timothy and James, remain in Tacoma. Mrs. Fukuyama, a poet, is preparing several poetry works for publication.

A new Call Committee went to work under the direction of Mr. Buchanan, including Durive Harris, Robert Johnson, Betty Loverin, Caroline Miner, Robert Shaw and Esther Spreen.



A HEALING MINISTRY

The committee's first job was to secure interim leadership. The Rev. Maurice Haehlen, a retired pastor from Olympia, took the position with the help of a part-time Christian Education director. Nancy Schaub, a University of Puget Sound student was hired by the Christian Education Committee, chaired by Anne Munoz. Harris had resigned the post a few months earlier.

The dedication of the January 1976 Annual Report was a tribute to Mr. Haehlen and his wife Dorothy, citing the contributions of "the ministers who have so ably given of their time and talents in the past, to those yet to serve in the future, and especially to Maurice Haehlen, Interim Minister of the present." He and Dorothy performed their healing ministry to Oberlin's congregation until new ministers were found.

Ministers—plural! The Rev. John W. Drummond and Michaela Ruth Drummond (Mickie) were unanimously called as ministers by the 50 members attending the 1976 meeting. The husband-wife team arrived in March, in time to lead Lenten and Easter services. John had been a pastor at LaSelva Community Church and Mickie had been Director of Christian Education at Los Gatos Presbyterian Church, in California. On April 25, 1976, Mickie was ordained as a United Church of Christ minister in a special service attended by about 130 members and friends. Following the ordination both pastors were installed as Oberlin Church's new ministers.

By the end of the nation's Bicentennial Year many of the church programs had been revitalized, the budget was fully pledged at \$25,200, and plans for completing the second phase of the building (Fellowship Hall and office area) were underway.

Expenditures for 1976 amounted to nearly \$33,000, more than \$8,000 over budget. However, all expenses had been met and membership was increasing. Clerk Carter Bass showed a membership jump in 1977 to 161, encouraging enough for the Trustees to adopt a faith method of pledging in 1978. Subscriptions were requested *before* the new budget was drawn up, and resulted in a successful accumulation of \$39,226 in pledges to the General Fund, plus the Building Fund. Faith pledging was continued over the next two years.

Groundbreaking for the new section took place on Thanksgiving Sunday 1977, followed with a potluck dinner and celebration at the Town Hall. A major part of the Building Fund came from the Raise The Roof program which the Women's Fellowship had been conducting for several years. A total of \$6,100 was contributed toward the new building, earmarked for equipping the kitchen. When President Bev Braun turned over this fund she recalled the years of work and saving that this gift represented. Another \$1,000 was pledged by the women over the next three years. All this was in addition to the Fellowship's regular funding programs of \$480 a year

to the General Fund and \$300 a year to support the nursery school. Those devoted, hardworking women were still at it!

The Town Hall was the site of the last church dinner at the January 1978 annual meeting, with Robert Johnson as Moderator. James Harris was elected to have the honor of moderating the first annual meeting to be held in the new Fellowship Hall—January 29, 1979. When the minutes of the previous year's meeting were read, stating it had been held at the Town Hall, Mrs. Braun requested an addition to show "for the last time."

Construction of the addition was completed by John Korsmo, contractor, at a total cost of about \$257,000. The "new part" includes the Fellowship Hall, kitchen, offices, two new rest rooms, upstairs; the Fireside Room, youth rooms, library, museum and vault, downstairs.

Finishing work and decorating were handled by congregation members as funds became available. The Women's Fellowship planned and equipped the kitchen; work parties gathered periodically to paint, paper, finish floors, cover windows, and finally to build the downstairs kitchenette. Lenore Rogers chairs the Interiors Committee that coordinates all decorating projects as they come along.

Financially, special Building Fund pledges had been made for a three-year period, then were merged into the General Fund in 1980. The church mortgage, held by the United Church of Christ Board of Homeland Ministries, is being repaid at \$2,000 a month.

New—New—New

Dedication services were held October 27, 28 and 29, 1978—one year after groundbreaking. Dr. Dale Bruner, from Whitworth College, was keynote speaker. The three-day celebration included a catered banquet, men's breakfast, informal sessions and Sunday worship with the formal dedication service on Sunday afternoon. The Women's Fellowship had the honor of serving as hosts for event which included a ribbon cutting.

Much of the church "business" had waited until the new building was completed. One of the first chores then was to secure a full-time custodian to care for this new and larger building. Karl Frederick was chosen and has served at the job since.

Carter Bass, who served as Church Clerk since 1971, retired and was replaced by Esther Spreen in 1979; she still holds that office.

By-law changes made in 1979 included elevating the Christian Education Committee to a Board status, with nine members. The Music Committee chair and the Women's Fellowship president were added to participation on the Council. By 1979 the Music

Committee was chaired by Bill Smith and had secured John Engen as Choir Director and Sue Burgoyne (Mrs. David) as organist. Mr. Smith and Mrs. Grondahl still assist as organist from time to time. Mrs. Grondahl, chosen as Church Women United's "Valiant Woman of 1979," was given a vote of appreciation at the 1983 annual meeting for her 55-plus years of music she shared with her church in Steilacoom.

The brand new building has been enhanced by many thoughtful memorial gifts. A peaceful inner courtyard has been beautifully landscaped and maintained by Joan and Boyd Curtis in memory of their son John. Rhododendrons were placed in front of the church in memory of Lloyd Norberg who died in 1964, and in memory of Eldean Pitts who died in 1979. A new spinet piano was placed in the Fellowship Hall by the Hatcher Family in 1980. Another spinet piano in the sanctuary was the gift of Hattie Bair Circle given in memory of Beatrice Brookhyser (1973). After William Brookhyser died in 1980, memorial pew Bibles were presented to the church in memory of both Brookhyser's. New hymnals had previously been given the church in memory of Mildred Fowler who died in May 1980.

The altar is a memorial to the Rev. Herbert and Mrs. Blanche K. West; the lectern Bible was dedicated in 1965 as a memorial to Nicholas and Emma Doering and their daughter Daisy. The eternal light candle burning over the altar is a gift of Sigrid Grondahl's. Many of the pews and stained glass windows were purchased through memorial gifts, as were numerous other church furnishings.

A pair of altar candlesticks was given to the Dossetts by the West family in 1957; a three-branched silver candleabra was given in memory of Charles W. and Ellen Hatcher Attwood (1971). A pair of brass vases was given in memory of Capt. William A. Grondahl by his parents (1954); a set of collection plates was given in memory of Evelyn Baker Marcum and her two small sons who were killed in a fire in 1954.

The large memorial window was given by Patsy Faulkner honoring her husband Russell W. Faulkner (1960). And back in 1919 a Communion Set was given the church in memory of Mrs. Gardner, mother of Herbert Post. Several education funds have been set up, including one in memory of James Fowler and one in memory of Lloyd Norberg.

The church organ and funds belonging to the choir have come from memorial gifts, as has a large portion of the church building fund. A Memorial Committee supervises these funds and records them in the Memorial Books.

An Endowment Fund was started by Charles and Katharine Buchanan in memory of their parents in 1981. The Fund also includes a bequest to the church from the Janet Tait Estate.

Under the urging of Pastor Mickie, a Stitchery Group was started to work on paraments for the sanctuary. The group completed sets of paraments and banners for each liturgical season. The work of this talented group has been displayed by the Puget Sound Needle Arts Guild, and members have conducted workshops for other churches in the conference. As memorials for Sarah Robinson and Hattie Bair, the Circles named for those women have contributed funds for the Stitchery Group. Stitchery members are Carol Wetherholt, Wendy Herd, Patty Forsyth, Esther Spreen, Ruth Manter, Cindy Winslow, Blanche Redl, Caroline Miner, Diana Rosevear, Janet Keniston (inactive), and Helen Allen. Designs are created by Lenore Rodgers.

An influx of new members in 1978 included one small baby, Tamara Ruth, who was welcomed into the Drummond family by the entire congregation. Other new members that year included Organist Sue Burgoyne, Wayne and Barbara Kohler, Ruth and the Rev. John Manter, Preston and Beth Carter, Coral and Norman Camus, Charles and Julie Lovell, Doris and Robert Weir, and the Winslows, Cindy and Gordon. New 1979 members were Ron and Suzette Frederick, John Mitchell, Barbara Greene and Shirley Roe.

A baptismal immersion tank, which was added as part of the new church, was used for the first time in 1979 by Mr. Drummond to baptize Shawna Craig, a young mother who joined the church at the same time.

A very special family was welcomed in 1981 after many months of introspection by the membership and after waiting long weeks for results. When the church decided to sponsor an Indonesian family, a committee, led by Ray and Doris Fletcher, spent weeks in preparation. It was April 1981 when the church welcomed to the community a Cambodian family of six belonging to Phlek Chan and Thai Poen.

A confirmation class in 1980 conducted by Ms. Drummond brought five young members into the church: Andrea Rogers, Andy Gimlett, Susan Grogan, Don Loverin and Melissa Slater. Other new 1980 members were John and Muriel Engen, Albert and Tevis Rose, Tom and Carol Tommervik, Karen and Bud Trueebenbach, Gloria Callahan, Norma Deyton and Joan Walston.

Changes to the constitution were minor during 1980 and 1981 when Ms. Wheelehan served as Moderator. One was the provision for an assistant treasurer. Elected as an assistant in 1980, Don Miller was elected to assume the Treasurer's duties in 1981. Mr. Buchanan, Treasurer since 1973, became the assistant. At the 1983 annual meeting Mr. Buchanan was given a vote of appreciation by the congregation for his many years' service as the "financial counselor" of the church and the community.

Another Oberlin ministry came to an end in December 1980. The Drummonds moved to Wisconsin after Christmas where they

remained one year. Now back in Washington State, Mickie is Christian Education/Youth Minister at the University Congregational Church in Seattle, and John is serving as an interim pastor until he receives a new call.



VII. TODAY'S OBERLIN FAMILY

Jack Wetherholt chaired the new Call Committee that included Mr. Buchanan, Audrey Tomasch, Beth Carter, Wayne Kohler, Tom Tommervik, and Wendy Herd. While the committee searched for a new pastor, it chose a member of the congregation as an interim. The Rev. John Manter, a retired New England Congregational minister, filled the leadership role during 1981. He led worship services, ministered to the community, and kept an eye on operating committees and boards. His wife Ruth took a leading role in the church school. Activity around the church remained high as the feeling of "holding the church family together" became strong. The Manters are credited with keeping the congregation "healthy," as well as bringing new members into the church.

Welcomed to Oberlin in 1981 were Kathy Crandall, Gail and James Larson, Douglas and Gloria Wing, Susan Austin and Florence Miller.

Also admitted to membership late in 1981 were the Allens, the Rev. George, his wife Helen, and two of their children, Betsy and Jonathan. A third child, David lives with his wife and children in Pasco.

It was a series of warm welcomes that greeted the Allens from Pasco, Washington. Mr. Allen stepped into the pulpit on December 6, 1981, to share a new ministry with Steilacoom's church.

Mr. Allen, a skilled musician, is a graduate of the Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts. The native of New England was ordained in the United Church of Christ in 1958. Helen holds a Masters Degree in Religious Education from Andover Newton. They served the First Congregational Church in Pasco since 1968.

At the January 1982 annual meeting the Allens were given a welcome by the congregation. The Manters were given a standing vote of thanks by fellow members for their year of devoted service. And M.S. "Tom" Tommervik was elected Moderator.

An old-fashioned "Ecclesiastical Council" was made part of Mr. Allen's installation ceremony on January 31. Taking part in the ceremony were the Rev. David J. Julius (First U.C.C., Tacoma), the Rev. Roland F. Schlueter (Normandy Park U.C.C.), the Rev. John Gibson (Plymouth), the Rev. Richard E. Arnold (Wayside U.C.C., Federal Way), the Rev. John Sandford (Elijah House, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho), the Rev. Daniel L. Tourangeau (Mr. Allen's former assistant who became pastor at Pasco's First Congregational), the Rev. Frank Stipek (Lowell Community Church, Everett), Lois Selmar, Associate Minister representing the Washington North Idaho Conference, U.C.C.; the Rev. Earnest L. Freeman, representing United Ministries District 3 (West Park Christian Church, Bremerton); the Rev. Gary R. Jepsen, representing the Lakes

District Ministerial Association (St. John's Lutheran Church, Lakewood); and Moderator Tommervik. Conference Minister W. James Halfaker sent his greetings.

Church work got underway immediately with an Officers' Retreat held following election of new officers. Twice a year the officers and members get together to review church goals and accomplishments. A Family Retreat was held at Pilgrim Firs in October for about 50 members of the Oberlin Family. At the close of the first 100 years, these retreats seem to be finding the status of "tradition."

Long-time church members have died recently, including Lena Morris, Oberlin's first woman Trustees Chair (1931), and Myrtle Wiltbank who died in 1982. Gertrude Hanson also died in 1982, following her husband Otto who died the previous year. Their son David Hansen preceded his mother in death in 1982. Edwin Ellison died in 1981; his mother Gena Ellison died the following year.

The Hundredth Year

As the first one hundred years closes, Oberlin Church has an active membership of 181. This includes 26 who joined the church in its 100th year: Margaret and Jim Gergely, Jim and Alice Kuklok, James and Dorothy Macky Sr., Dorothy Windsor, Dennis and Kathy Barth, JoAnne Gordon, Lonny and Monica Heaton, Stacey and Janeen Holman, Andrew Isacson, Frances and Walter Swanson, Larry and Linda Wergeland, Linda Work, Felix, Brian and Scott Robinson, Matt Burlingame, Elissa Harris and Betsy Wheelehan.

The budget proposed for the Centennial Year 1983 is \$91,951. If only those eight people who met together as a church for the first time 100 years ago could have dreamed what they were starting!

To complete the "history" of a growing church is impossible, since ongoing activity renders any final word obsolete. There can be no "end" to this account since there is no "end" to the church's work, mission and spirit. Things change and continue to change.

Where once a small group of parishioners took turns maintaining and repairing the church building, and administering to each other's spiritual needs and to the needs of the community, now separate and specialized organizations carry on the church's business.

In those early days everyone pitched in to help repair the building, contributing either money or work or both. Everyone took turns serving communion and leading prayer services, teaching the Sabbath School. And the means of fulfilling the church's mission work was a box hung on the door for contributions.

Now the Board of Trustees sees to the church building and

repairs, oversees the maintenance of the church, and keeps to the budget; the Board of Deacons arranges Communion services and assists the pastor in filling members' spiritual needs; the Board of Christian Education operates the Sunday School, the Youth Programs, Vacation Bible School, and other education services.

The Stewardship Committee plans membership and fund subscription and keeps an inventory of talents; the Social Action Committee involves the church with the local and world-wide needs of people, including the support of the refugee family; the Music Committee plans meaningful church worship experiences, including Lenten and Advent programs; Fellowship groups, Men's and Women's, contribute to the social needs of members; the Women's Fellowship contributes substantially to the church's General Fund, Nursery and Building Funds, and individual circles (now four—Hattie Bair, Rose Eisenbeis, Kate Hatcher and Sarah Robinson) raise money for individual charity projects, the Spring Luncheon and the November Bazaar. The Interiors, Memorial and Pastoral Relations Committees handle their respective duties to round out the church responsibilities.

Official church officers handle the records: the Treasurer, now aided by an assistant, handles all church financial records; the Clerk keeps records of members and official church business. An organist, choir director, secretary and custodian are on the salaried staff that works with the minister.

The minister, both a church member and a paid staff, assumes the special role of leader and counselor, with the function of preaching and leading worship, along with the responsibility of nurturing the individual spiritual lives of members.

Much has changed over the past century in the way God's work is conducted in the Steilacoom community through Oberlin Church. But the work follows the same direction with the same purpose as always. The covenant made in 1883 between eight people remains essentially the same in 1983 among 181 people: to share the gospel of Jesus, the Word of God, to nurture church members and to share the Good News with others throughout the community and the world.

It is stated this way in the current Constitution of Oberlin Congregational Church (U.C.C.):

"We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the Word and the will of God. We purpose to walk together in the ways of the Lord made known and to be made to us. We hold it to be the mission of the church to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world while worshipping God and striving for truth, justice and peace. As did our forebears, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God, and we look with faith toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life."

Amen!

APPENDIX

PASTORS OF OBERLIN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Arthur T. Burnell (wife Mary A.)		1883-1884
David F. Taylor		1884
Charles E. Newberry (wife Amelia P.)		1885-1888
Loren W. Brintnall (wife Abigail)		1888-1892
J.M. Lydgate		1892-1895
William F. Rose		1896-1898
Dr. J.M. Lackey		1898-1901
Major Harry B. Hendley (wife Clara W.)		1901-1903
William H. Cooke		1903-1906
Joseph D. Bowron		1906-1909
Harry M. Painter (wife Grace)		1909-1913
Charles D. Gaffney (wife Nelle T.)		1913-1916
James W. Price (wife Nellie)		1916-1917
H.H. Abrams		1918-1920
C.W. McLaughlin		1920-1922
Frank J. Meyers		1922-1926
Herbert West (wife Blanche K.)		1926-1951
George Schubert (wife Genevieve)		1951-1955
Fred Burkhardt	(Interim)	1955-1956
Lorance Dossett (wife Frances)		1956-1962
Tsutomu Tom Fukuyama (wife Betty)		1963-1975
Maurice Haehlen (wife Dorothy)	(Interim)	1975-1976
John W. Drummond	} Joint Ministry	1976-1980
Michaela Drummond		
John Manter (wife Ruth)	(Interim)	1981
George Allen (wife Helen)		1981-

Beverly Braun (Mrs. Russell)	1978-1979
Cindy Winslow (Mrs. Gordon)	1980
Mrs. Grondahl	1980
Mrs. Spreen	1981-

CENTENNIAL YEAR OFFICERS OF OBERLIN CHURCH

MINISTER	George Allen
MODERATOR	M. "Tom" Tommervik
CLERK	Esther Spreen
TREASURER	Donald Miller
ASST. TREASURER	Charles Buchanan
HISTORIAN	Clenda Davidson
ASST. HISTORIAN	Joan Curtis

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Boyd Curtis, Chr.	
Harry Anderson	Dorothy Macky
Lowell Bier	Larry Wergeland
Harold Birkey	Gordy Winslow
Gail Larson	Al Rose

DIACONATE:

Jack Wetherholt, Chr.	Sue Killam
Ron Frederick	Dorothy Macky
Earl Gordon	James Macky
Dagney Isacson	Chris Spreen
Bob Johnson	Nancy Turnipseed
Betty Loverin	Sue Burgoyne

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:

Cindy Winslow, Chr.	
Helen Allen	Linda Work
Suzette Frederick	Caroline Miner
Wendy Herd	Carol Tommervik
Signe LaMont	Betsy Wheelehan

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE:

Bud Truebenbach, Chr.	Jack Leech
Jean Bier	Stan Bartlett
Suzette Frederick	Carol Wetherholt

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE:

John Manter, Chr.	Wanja Birkey
Muriel Engen	Anne Munoz
Bob Loverin	Diana Rosevear

CHURCH COUNCIL, At Large:

Bev Braun	Lenore Rogers	Carol Wetherholt
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RESOURCE LIST

History Of The Northwest, by George W. Fuller, 2nd Edition,
Alfred A. Knopf Inc., New York, 1958

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Seattle Times
Seattle Post-Intelligencer
Tacoma Ledger
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Tacoma News Tribune

Oberlin Church Records
Annual Reports
Call Committee Reports
Clerk Records
Minutes of Congregation Meetings
Minutes of Ladies Aid/Women's Fellowship Meetings
Treasurer Records

Scrapbooks of Ione Brookhyser Karman
Esther Spreen
Dorothy Gale for Blanche K. West

Steilacoom Centennial Celebrations, 1952, 1953, 1954

Steilacoom Historical Museum Quarterly Reports

Volume of Proceedings of the Fourth International Congregational
Council held in Boston, Massachusetts June 19-
July 6, 1920, published by National Council of
Congregational Churches of the United States, N.Y., 1921

Washington, A History of the Evergreen State, Mary W. Avery.
University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1961

Where the Saints Have Trod, Congregationalism in Washington
Since 1838, Seattle, 1938

Yearbooks of the Congregational-Christian Churches

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

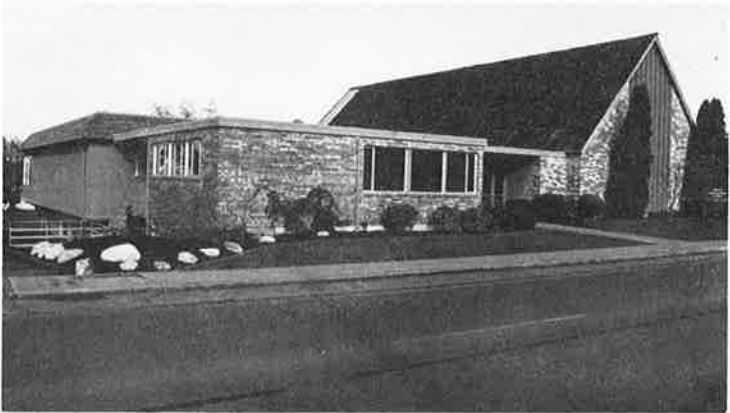
Photographs included in this book are gratefully furnished by William Herd, Charles Buchanan, and Church Historian Clenda Davidson.

Funds have been contributed by James and Dorothy Macky in memory of their fathers, Albert R. Essex Sr. and Beno O. Macky.

The Centennial Committee that has planned the special celebrations includes: Joan Curtis, Clenda Davidson, Wendy Herd, Wayne Kohler, Betty Loverin, John Manter, Lenore Rogers, Esther Spreen, Tom Tommervik, Nancy Turnipseed, Carol Wetherholt and Val Wheelehan.



George T. Allen is the minister of Oberlin Congregational Church at the beginning of the second century. He was called as minister in December, 1981, from the First Congregational Church, Pasco, Washington.



Stellacoom's Church stands today at the corner of Rainier and Pacific Streets, the newest of three church buildings occupied by the congregation over the past century. Memorial rocks at the corner were placed by loving relatives in memory of deceased church members, a project created by Jack Parker, who cares for the appearance of the church grounds.