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SIXTY-SECOND YEAR—NO. 47

BIRMINGHAM, OAKLAND COUNTY, MICHIGAN, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1940

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History of Birmingham Churches: St. James

Congreg'n Dates To Meeting Here On April 12, 1894

(Editor's Note—Starting here with the first of a series of articles telling of the history of Birmingham's churches. Most of the material will be written by the Rev. Theodore Wugcazer, Jr., pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, who gathered the information from the files of the Eccentric while working for his master's degree at the University of Michigan, and has been persuaded to do the series on this page. Supplementing each article will be information from posters, chronicles, date records not studied by Mr. Wugcazer. Persons who clip and save each article will get a true history of Birmingham's churches.)

By THEO. WUGCAZER, JR.
Birmingham has had in its history 10 church organizations, to say nothing of occasional visits by the Salvation Army and a short-lived attempt on the part of a group called Liberal Christians to conduct services in 1894. In fact, the Eccentric at one time made this comment: "We have eight church organizations in proper condition. If you can't get to heaven via Birmingham, why try elsewhere?" (Feb. 7, 1939).

St. James Episcopal Church
Available information points to the fact that this church has always been outstanding in its progressiveness. In point of membership it has never been the largest of local churches, yet it has presented many features to local church life.

The first formal Episcopal service was conducted in Library Hall, Sunday afternoon, April 1, 1894. Scarcely two weeks later (April 12) a congregation was organized at the home of E. G. Stevenson, and subsequent services were conducted in the Baptist Church every Sunday morning at 10:30, with Sunday School at 11:45. The name "St. James" was adopted a month later, and at the same time an announcement was made to the effect that a new brick church would soon be under construction.

Various activities were published in the columns of the Eccentric weekly under the heading "Church News." This is the first local church to announce services and meetings regularly.

The same year (1894) work was begun on a permanent church building. A great deal of the work was donated. Frank Peersall hailed the first load of stone in December. The Eccentric commented as follows:

"All this goes to show that there are good men in the world after all, and when a fellow gets the cranky notion in his head that the population is divided into two classes, one of which is industriously trying to eat the other, the sooner he runs up against men mentioned above the better." (Dec. 13, 1894).

The Vestrymen declared that they wanted a church building "such as our village would not be ashamed of. In March, 1895, the new building was completed at a cost of \$5,000, exclusive of donations. The first rector was the Rev. Mr. Carey, who in May, 1895, moved his family here "at least for the summer."
First confirmation in 1896
The first confirmation class—a class of 17—was confirmed by Bishop Davies, June 7, 1896.
From this point on it is difficult to present a clear-cut history on the basis of newspaper accounts. Yet it is very apparent that St. James Church did not only fit into the current of local church life, but that in many respects it revealed certain qualities of leadership. Every now and then it embarked upon a program, or added certain features designed to improve the quality of church services that caught public notice. For example, it introduced the vested choir to local congregations (1897). Indeed, so popular did the choir become that one boy walked 2 1/2, another 5 1/2 miles to

Episcopal Church Edifice



rehearsals. Evening services were conducted, beginning in Jan. 1895 and their popularity was greatly increased when acetylene light was installed a few years later. The gift of Mrs. Charles Stinchfield, first local Protestant church to conduct a Tre Ore service on Good Friday (1910), and a night Christmas Eve service (the same year) and weekday Lenten services (1914).

Rector Is Built
In June, 1895, a "short, sharp, and effective canvass" got under way for a rector. This was undertaken because the church had been free of debt for several years. This canvass appeared to be popular, popular proportions, for in three successive issues of The Eccentric the names of the donors were published.

In addition to the features mentioned, the church has carried on an extensive mission activity. This is brought to light in a very interesting account of August 18, 1913.

"Rev. Kraft officiated at Pine Lake. The 'Parish Motor Car' made an early morning run in time for the 7:30 service; breakfast was served at 8:15, and the Rector made an address. The 'Parish Motor Car' returned home in time for the 10:45 service, gathering up some good parishioners enroute. In the afternoon the same vehicle conveyed the rector to St. Philip's Mission in Rochester and home again by 6. Blessed be the 'Parish Motor Car' what would we do without it!"

(Note—Following is additional information about St. James Church taken from a parish booklet published last November.
Meetings Before Civil War
"Records show Episcopal meetings in Birmingham even before the Civil War. Parishes were being formed throughout the State and it comes out that Mr. C. T. Towbridge, Mayor of Detroit and Secretary to General Cass, was influential in forming missions. Mr. Towbridge was the grandfather of our own George T. Hendrie, a present Parish member."
"The definite organization of the Parish began in 1894. The group

was then in charge of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew in Pontiac. Original meetings were held in old Library Hall, later being transferred to the Baptist Church. This was the old white Baptist Church, Bess Graham tells us, where she spent every Sunday as a little girl. Now she comes to sing in our present choir."
"The Bigelow's
"Belle Whitfield Bigelow, Mrs. Graham's mother, taught the class. The Bigelow's entertained the preacher in their brick house across from St. James. That old-fashioned house, now a gas station, had two ironing board windows in which Mrs. Bigelow kept two handsome palms. When the Church was built, they sent the palms across the street every year for decoration on Palm Sunday."
"St. James Church was organized under this name on June 15, 1894. Captain Ed. Mrs. J. Alan Bigelow and Mrs. Bigelow's brother, Mr. Almeron White, together with Dr. and Mrs. C. M. Rowland and about twenty others signed the articles. They planned to build the church very soon. Mrs. Winthrop Allen tells us of the interest of her father, Mr. Hervey A. Parke, felt in the building campaign because his mother, Rhoda Speer Parke, was a churchwoman. Data shows that Mr. Parke, who was born in that charming log and white house on Longe Fine and Woodward, gave very generously to the building fund. Later, he gave a vacation organ."
"Our first people purchased the lot on which the Church now stands approximately 27 1/2 acres. Walker dug the first shovelful of dirt. His family, Mrs. Walker and Miss Emily Walker, are with me today. When finished, the Church cost about \$4000. The opening services were held on November 24, 1895."
275 in Church School
Today, the Church School serves approximately 275 children and is directed by Ruth Middleton, assisted by Jennie Gordon and has a staff of 41 teachers and officers. There are two choirs, the Primary and St. Cecilia's.
The Women's Guild, which have a total membership, work in seven groups under the general direction of Adele Baker.
The Choir, under the direction of Waldo Fellows, has a membership of 30. Gail Bangs is organist.
The "St. James' Girls" are composed of 25 boys who assist the rector during services. The group is organized and trained by Ed. Bett and his assistant, Bill Martin.
The Altar Guild, headed by Hattie Utter and Helen Buck, includes 31 women.
Total parish membership is about 450 families. The annual budget called for expenditures of \$16,500.

Present Rector
THE REV. WARNER L. FORTSMYTH, rector of St. James Church, preached his first sermon here June 5, 1927, coming here from Baltimore, Md. Previously, he was rector of the Episcopal Church at Alpena. He is a native of Philadelphia and the son of a clergyman.

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Harmon Storm Sewer Is OK'd

A final hearing was held Monday night on the Harmon, Vinewood, Lakeview, Woodland and Greenwood storm sewerage district, with the City Commission confirming the assessment roll and opening the path for the start of work within a week or two at the foot of Harmon, at Quanton Lake.

Several people were present to ask questions, among them Harvey Whalen and F. H. McKinney. Whiting Raymond, real estate man connected with the Baldwin weather development, said: "We don't like the prospect of the expense right now but we feel it will cost more later if there is no WPA labor available."
The cost is being assessed at the rate of \$8.80 per thousand square feet, payable over a period of five years. Assessments will be reduced through the use of WPA labor, although this adjustment can not be made until the project is completed and all bills are paid. The project will not get under way in earnest until weather conditions are better, it was stated Monday night.

Investors Turning To Real Estate

"Many investors, realizing that real estate is the basis of all wealth, are diverting at least part of their funds into income producing property," according to Myron E. Snyder, of Snyder, Buck & Bennett.
"This is evidenced by many transactions of this nature made by our office," state Mr. Snyder.

"Some of the most recent investment deals involved an apartment building on Bloomfield Court, another apartment on West Long E. Snyder, of Snyder, Buck & Bennett, of the same firm, says "Judging from the number of homesites now being sold, Birmingham is destined for the largest volume of new construction it has witnessed since 1936. Birmingham is ahead of the average for the nation in new construction. It appears that many Detroit families are realizing that Birmingham, with its fine schools and natural environment, is the ideal place in which to live and rear a family."

City Manager Picks Insurance Agency

The group hospitalization policy offered to City employees by the Aetna company of Hartford, Conn., has been selected by City Manager Donald C. Egbert as the most favorable. It was approved Tuesday. The Michigan Group Hospitalization Society plan was also under consideration. Employees who voluntarily join the plan will have the fees deducted from their wage checks.

Hearing March 11 On Zone Change Asked by Bennett

Results of a poll taken among neighbors regarding the proposed rezoning for the Clyde C. Bennett property, 119 South Adams, corner of East Maple avenue, were presented to the City Commission, Monday night, by Manager Donald C. Egbert.
Neighbors in the immediate vicinity were reported unopposed, although two others not adjacent were listed as opposed. Egbert said: "A formal hearing was set for March 11, at which those concerned may air their views."
Bennett seeks to make a two-family home of the large residence on the site, as well as damaging a City tree. None was hurt.

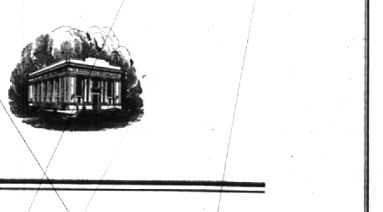
Two Pontiac drivers, Elmer P. Clark, of 37 Taylor, and Mrs. Kenneth Mead, route 7, collided last Friday evening as they both drove north on Woodward, near Wimble-

Car Crashes, Hits Shrubbery Nearby

One of the periodic neighborhood intersection crashes which occur in the City took place last Thursday morning at Madison and Poplar.
According to the police report, one of the drivers, S. S. Hastriter, of 175 Abbey road, was going west on Madison, while Glenn Waggoner, of 539 Henley drive, was going south on Poplar. The street was icy, and as the two cars crashed together, the Waggoner machine spun around and landed machine upen around and landed on the edge, as well as damaging a City tree. None was hurt.

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