

A Short History of the Fort Collins Seventh-day Adventist Church

The one-page history I'm sharing today comes from a 16-page history written in 1990 by Mary Lou Peckham. If you'd like a copy of that longer history, let me know--or Pastor, or Giny McConathy. We'll get a copy to you. It's well worth reading.

The church and school campus for which we're breaking ground today is a continuation of work begun long long ago. In the summer of 1886 a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist named J.D. Pegg held tent meetings in Fort Collins. As those meetings ended, ten people were baptized. Elder Pegg also sold books and started a Sabbath School class of 30 persons. The following February, twelve charter members put their names to the following covenant: "We the undersigned hereby associate ourselves together as a church, taking the name Seventh-day Adventists and covenanting to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

So, there was a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fort Collins. But there was no church building. At first, services were held in member homes. And before many months had passed, a small church was built on the northeast corner of Olive and Whedbee Streets, and that was the very first official church building of our congregation. Within about ten years that building was outgrown, so the members bought a church building from the Methodists. That second building was at 252 E. Mountain Avenue. Since the building was spacious, and since there were about fifteen children of school age, a church school was started. That was in about 1898.

But the parents thought that it would be better not to have a church school right in the middle of the city. So they raised money and made plans, and in 1901 erected a new building on the southeast corner of Magnolia and Whedbee, with school held in a building next to it. That was this congregation's third church building, and it served for more than 50 years.

Then it was time once again to buy land, draw up plans, raise money, and work hard to erect new buildings for the church and the school. Sound familiar? The school which we sold just last year and the church where we had Sabbath School this morning were built in 1954 and 1955.

We can tell by reading old minutes of board meetings that the members who have gone before us were very involved in church life--in personal ministries, in lay leadership of study and worship, in giving and fundraising, and in the building, upkeep, and improvement of the physical structures. I'd like to share a detail from the minutes of a board meeting held on May 13, 1907, exactly 110 years ago today. But first, let me ask the boys and girls something. Boys and girls, do you know what a hitching post is? -- That's right, it's a pole set in the ground where people could tie up horses and buggies. Well, 110 years ago today, our church board proposed that 18 hitching posts should be installed.

That seems so long ago, when horses used to wait outside the church while people were inside the church hearing the good news about Jesus' return. Jesus still hasn't returned. As it says in 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord isn't slow about keeping His promises, as some people think He is. In fact, God is patient, because He wants everyone to turn from sin and no one to be lost." So we still have work to do, and that's why today we're breaking ground for the fifth church building and the fourth school building of our congregation. May God give us the self-sacrificing commitment of our forebears. May God give us grace to tell the good news about His character in such a clear and winning way that people in Fort Collins will have all the evidence they need to make up their minds about Him. And then He will come. Amen.