

Presbyterian -

Later: Belardi Memorial Library

REMINISCENCES OF THE EARLY YEARS OF THE LITTLE CHURCH
or

What it meant to be a daughter of the Pastor in those early years

In March of 1899 our family arrived in Felton - our Father - the stated Home Missionary Supply for Felton, Ben Lomond, Scotts Valley and Bonny Doon.

We took over the big Hayes house on the hill and reopened the little church for its first Sunday morning service. Outside of the preacher's family, the audience consisted of one little Italian Catholic grandmother who muttered prayers and crossed herself all through the service. (God bless her.)

This meant that we had to meet and know the people of the entire valley. Those who had founded the church had passed out of the picture. New interests had to be aroused among the people and the Sunday school and young people organized.

We owned a frisky sorrel mustang and a presentable little buggy called a road wagon. These took Dad and Mother from one end of the valley to the other; over to Scotts Valley and up to Bonny Doon - where the school house was used as a meeting place.

The challenge was to interest and arouse the parents and their children. Sunday school was begun and soon grew into a sizable group. Again, our energetic mother and her daughters worked weekly to prepare appealing treats for each child who attended: candy, popcorn balls, fruit - colored pictures as prizes - the numbers grew.

At this time Felton was a typical country town. Saturday night it echoed with revelry - the town dance hall was a meeting place for young and old who continued their activities until dawn announced another sabbath. The church bell was rung as usual and we began another day of Bringing in the Sheaves.

Getting our education was not easy either. We boarded the little narrow gauge train that ran between Boulder and Santa Cruz. High school children from Felton had to reach the depot at 7:15 A.M. whether we ran or walked. Most of the time Dad hitched up our little horse and drove us over to the depot. In winter he also met our train and we drove home by light of a lantern tied to the buggy. Of course, the minister's family became the focus of many practical jokes. One morning after Halloween we found our little buggy hoisted to the top of the town flag pole. Our Daddy was really upset and took action to recover it. Another instance - shortly after we arrived, our hen house was raided - beautiful fat leghorns and buff coachins made a delectable feast for quite a lawless bunch of young folks.

The assistance from the Home Mission Board was negligible, less than \$20.00 a month. They did send an occasional missionary box to assist, but these proved a tearful disappointment. Someone's old clothes that mother distributed to help the local needy.

In time we had two Sunday services in Felton, morning and evening - Sunday school and church services in the afternoon in Ben Lomond - then home for Christian Endeavor and the evening service. Midweek services in Bonny Doon and Scotts valley as the opportunity provided.

Sunday was a day of labor - the hourd from 10:00 AmM to 9:00 or 10:00 at night. Six services in all. We travelled by horse power through deep dust in summer and deep clay mud in winter - sometimes almost a foot deep. But rain or shine our valiant father never gave up. He said that as long as he lived the little churches would never be closed again.

During this period the church became an active focus - moral, social, and religious for the community. In those days the residents of Felton were those who worked in the saw mills - teamed the lumber for the mills and 6 foot logs for the lime kilns. Industry circled around the lime kilns, lumbering, small farms, a blacksmith shop, one store that housed the post office, a livery stable, and many centers where men gathered to drink to spend their time off.

Those were the horse and buggy days - when we had to take a day off to shop in Santa Cruz - when we drove through mud sometimes a foot deep down Highway 9 and subdued our frightened horse when we met ox teams along the road or a 4 horse tally ho full of sightseeing tourists. The road was narrow and the drivers none too careful.

But there were good times too, to remember. The annual Christmas tree was one that drew the entire community. The young people and children were drilled in plays, carols, pagentry, and recitations for the event. The church was turned into a veritable fairyland of beauty - the Christmas tree touched the ceiling. All worked in happy unison for this occasion, and the appointed committee solicited the town for money to buy goodies for the children. Consequently, on the night of the Christmas entertainment, the little church was packed with smiling, anxious relatives and friends, and children ready to do their best. After the program, gifts were passed out to young and old. These had been piled high under the Christmas tree - all brought gifts for friends. Candy in brightly colored bags was handed to each child.

Again in the speing the Sunday school picnic was a time of glorious fun. Cakes were made in each household, ice cream was frozen in every available freezer that could be found. Young and old gathered in Sycamore Grove, just across the covered bridge. Games were played, races and contests of skill enjoyed, some sang for us, and all finished by eating. Children enjoyed the great swings that hung between tall sycamores.

These years were a period when love and devotion of a few kept the church alive and their service had a wide influence for good. With the opening of Mount Hermon and the neighboring real estate tracts, people began to appear - who expanded the number of workers - also brought their abilities to meet the needs of the community. Felton grew.

So from horse and buggy days and their early struggle, our little church and our community have maintained a steady growth. At this time we give grateful recognition to each succeeding pastor and to those who assisted them.

Every outer expansion, whether in business, education, community life, or community safety, has to have a pattern and workers who will fulfill that pattern. Love and energy and time have to be given freely to attain results.

Now again our original little church building becomes a focus for a community activity and a housing of a community library - a gift in memory of one who loved and shared its early blessings.

Many of Felton's present citizens share happy memories of the little church and its activities. So its original building remains a land mark that is a reminder of Felton and its early days.

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