

100th Birthday For Congregational Church

New Building To Be Started Within 10 Days

By Wally Trabing

God was the beginning and with the settling of the lands countless forms of worship reflected faith in this belief.

Down through the ages men, women, and children gathered and hamlets formed which grew into towns and these towns grew into cities, but as always in the beginning, was the church.

And so it was with Santa Cruz, which originally received its rallying strength around a mission and in the town's early struggle for growth its citizens practiced their freedom to worship with the forming of many churches.

And so it is that this year the First Congregational church in Santa Cruz is observing its centennial.

It comes at a time when its members and benefactors are building a magnificent new church which will soon rise in abstract beauty on High street, across from Westlake.

Much has been recorded in Santa Cruz history about the physical aspect of the church and its leaders. This may look impressive on paper. But actually, history depicts only 100 years of time, and its only important value, its contribution to the human soul, heart, and mind, cannot begin to be measured.

The organizational roots of the First Congregational church of Santa Cruz goes back to London in 1818 with the birth of Thomas W. Hinds.

Thomas' father was a paper-maker, but as the son grew toward manhood he found himself with a growing interest in the Church of England, but later broke away to join with "the Congregational sect". In this he found his life's work, and refusing an offer to carry on in his father's footsteps, went off to Glasgow, Scotland to obtain a university education and then to France to study the language.

In 1847 Hinds, then married and with two children, came to America and settled in Iowa. He lived in Farmington, Iowa for about three years, but for some reason, did not participate in the ministry, but became engaged in the mercantile business.

Hinds must have been born with an adventurous spirit. For in those days travel was hardship, and he had already experienced this in three countries and then in 1850, he took his greatest step into adventure.

With his family and their meager belongings he joined a covered wagon caravan for a treacherous trip across the plains to the coast. From the first there was trouble with food, weather, caravan management and Indians. Mrs. Hinds died enroute and was buried on the trail.

In San Francisco Hinds turned his vocation toward the church. He did some preaching, became a bible agent and worked on the new Congregational

This is the first Congregational church in Santa Cruz, started in 1857 and completed in 1858. It was built on Church

publication, "The Pacific", which is still being published.

After a year in San Francisco Hinds took what was left of his family to Santa Cruz and ultimately remarried. This was to be his life's settling place.

In 1851 he gathered a few friends about him to form the village's first Congregational church and acted for some time as its pastor.

These charter members were: Reverend and Mrs. T. W. Hinds, William Anthony, Mrs. Caroline Anthony, Mrs. M. E. Fowell, Thomas Pilkington, Mrs. Caroline Pilkington, Mrs. Harriet Rawson, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Ruffner, Nelson Taylor, and Richard Williams.

It was the fourth Congregational group to be organized in California, the first three being in San Francisco, Sacramento and in Oroville.

The first recorded meeting place was in a "grove". Another place of worship was in the "Acrean hall," where the Bank of America now stands on Pacific avenue. They paid \$10 a month rent.

Records state with the moving away of most of its members, the organization dissolved and it was not until 1857 that Hinds reorganized the church. This time it remained intact.

The group met for awhile in the "fandango" room of an old adobe building on Mission Hill on Davis street. It was once the town house of the Castro family, reminiscent of the gay days of the Dons, built in 1836. It was then the home of Deacon William Anthony and his wife, who were to become prominent members of the church. The first service was held on Sunday, September 13, 1857.

The Reverend J. S. Zelle became the first pastor of the church. The American Home Missionary society provided the first financial aid, but as the membership grew enough contributions were raised to buy a

street on the site of the present First Methodist church next to the Sentinel office. This building is, in fact, now part of the Methodist church. It was mov-

lot in a potato patch, which is now Church street, next to The Sentinel and the present site of the First Methodist church. It cost a reported \$1800. It was completed in 1858.

The members got together for a "raising" and bit by bit, the first church (in the above photo) took shape. It was reported that several of the members were injured when a scaffolding broke.

The congregation worshiped in a room in the old courthouse on the upper Plaza, while the building was being completed. It cost \$3500.

During those days Church street was considered "on the outskirts of town."

Around 1861 Reverend W. C. Bartlett, later editor of the San Francisco Bulletin, succeeded Zelle, and this gentlemen headed a group which bought an 800 pound bell for the church. Because it was larger than any in town, it not only called Congregationalists to worship, but also called firemen to the fire station.

Other significant steps in this era were: 1868, eight members who lived near Soquel withdrew to form a Congregational church in that town; 1871, Dr. S. H. Willey, one of the early representatives of the American Home Missionary society became the pastor; 1880, the church building was enlarged at a cost of \$1200; 1881, a Chinese mission was organized by Mrs. Mahlon Willett, wife of the pastor then.

In 1886 the congregation had grown to such numbers that a decision had to be reached on whether to build or to enlarge the existing building. It was decided to build.

A lot was purchased at Lincoln and Center streets, and slowly the plans materialized with the growing contributions. In 1889 71 members were taken into the church, the largest number in its short history. Finally between 1890 and '91 a new church was constructed. Prices had risen. This one cost \$26,000.

The former church building was sold to the Methodists, who moved it back, erected an auditorium and enlarged the grounds by buying a house at the rear which had been built in 1857 by Bart Stevens and later occupied by the George Otto family. This part of the old Congregational church may still be seen and is still in use.

In the new Congregational building was installed the first pipe organ ever to be heard in Santa Cruz county. It is nearly 67 years old and still used today.

Sixteen ministers have served the church from Hinds to the present Reverend J. Bernard Cornelissen.

Other significant events since

ed back on the end for a social hall. The present church on Lincoln and Center streets was built in 1890-91.

1890 include: First manual history of the church was published, by a committee aided by the late Ernest Otto; 1906 a building on Center street was purchased and from a gift by Miss M. Baldwin, the Baldwin Memorial parsonage was built; 1907 a second floor over the old Sunday school room was built, making the present social hall; 1929, beginning of the long and effective pastorate of the Reverend Heber St. Clair Mahood who served for 19 years; 1933 celebration of the diamond jubilee with a four day program and a fund raising for needy rehabilitation of the church building; 1948, Reverend E. Cunningham arrived as a new pastor and the two-fold organization of church and cooperation was given up and a new constitution was written; 1954 a centennial building fund campaign was started.

Members who have been with the church 50 years or more are: Mrs. Fred Howe, Douglas Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Wessendorf, Mrs. George S. Azbell, Miss Mary Barson, Dr. Philip Bliss, Mrs. J. A. Church, Miss Jessie Disbrow, Miss Daisy Fikes, Miss Edith Fikes, Miss L. Alice Halsey, Mrs. Leland F. Hinds, Miss Mabel Lincoln, Miss Anna Linscott, Dr. and Mrs. Maynard Linscott, Miss Pearl Makinney, Mrs. Fred D. McPherson Sr., Mrs. Irma Nittler, Mrs. Joseph Riordan, Mrs. Rose Rostron, and Mrs. Dell Williams.

Clarence Robinson, chairman of the church's historical committee, has announced that a book on the history of the First Congregational church will be published. At present the committee is at work gathering material.

At a centennial dinner Friday night, Douglas Miller, chairman of the building committee, announced that the S. H. Cowell foundation had increased their gift for the church sanctuary another \$115,000, bringing the total grant to \$415,000. He also announced that he expected construction to get underway within 10 days. The first phase of the project includes a sanctuary, a fellowship hall and a Christain education building.

Nurses To Raise Scholarship Fund

Discussion on possible means of raising funds for a nurses' scholarship highlighted the first meeting of the District 13, California Nurses association held recently at the home of Mrs. Bertie Willits, Ben Lomond.

Mrs. Willits, Mrs. Vonnee Fisher and Mrs. Harriet Love, co-hostesses, served members and guests supper. Special guest at the meeting was Mrs. Dorothy

Along The Trail

by ken legg

The alder leaves fell on the road, were whisked to one side by the passing autos, and piled up in windrows along the side. At every open and grassy place rabbits were enjoying the tender greenery and in the spruce trees

One of these, which applies universally, is to grow food. Another is to provide recreation. This piece of ground was obtained by the government for the purpose of providing recreation. It has been