

# Felton church turns 100

## First sanctuary was in current library

By Robin Small

Churches 2000  
It's time to light a candle for a local church. A birthday candle, that is, because Felton Presbyterian Church is about to turn 100.

A history of the church compiled by Elder Marge Viera details the life of the church beginning with its conceptualization in 1891, construction in 1893, and ending with its move down the street to Highway 9 in 1955.

Since July 1893 when the original church was built at Felton Empire and Gushee Roads, the chapel has had, over the years, 21 different reverends and is now the place of worship for some 200 members.

According to Viera, the need for a proper church was first discussed in the sleepy town of Felton in a June 1891 meeting at Alcazar Hall, which then served as the local place of public worship.

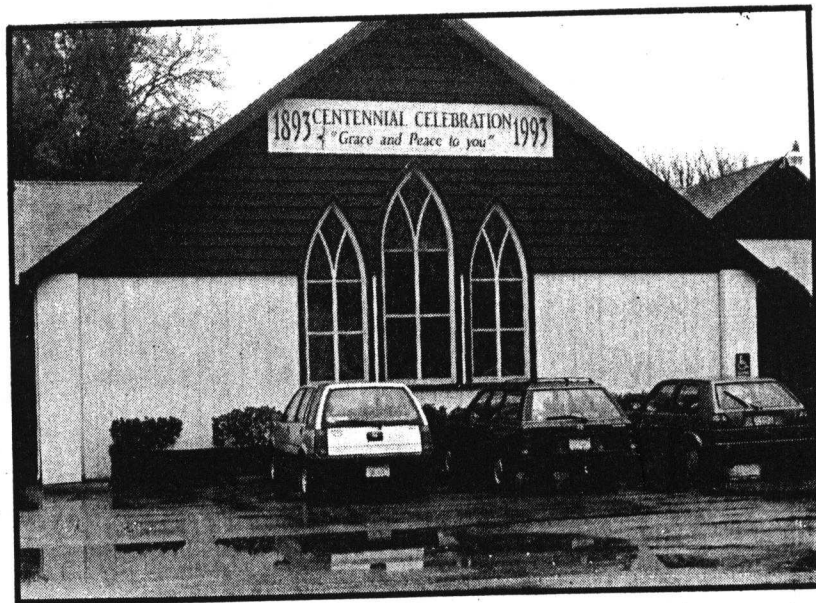
At the meeting, the Reverend Alex Eakin, a young missionary, and an elected board of trustees decided to build the First Presbyterian Church of Felton, and a year later the cost to build the church was as-

sessed at \$1,200. It was then found that the church would require \$1,000 a year to maintain.

March 1893, locals F.A. Hihn and George Treat donated the lot

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upon which the chapel would be built, with the stipulation that it would be built within a reasonable

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(Photo: Robin Small)

Felton Presbyterian's home has been in this structure at Highway 9 and Hihn Street since its move in 1955.

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# Church hits a milestone

at a cost of at least \$1,000. The Presbyterian Board of Home Missions donated \$500 and Dana Monterey also gave generously. Felton citizens raised the balance of the funds.

The church was dedicated with the following members: Mrs. J.E. [Name], Susie Drum, Mr. [Name] and two unknown others.

According to the history, a friend decided that the belfry bell and the two women bought the village's dusty bell for donations to pay for that would call worship services.

Mr. [Name] raised \$60 for the bell, which rings out over the Valley now in the building on Highway 9.

In the early 1900s, the Reverend Taylor found an unusual way to bring members to the church. According to Viera, it was his time that "the church had much fallen into disuse." Taylor claims Taylor's first service was by his own family and "a Catholic Italian lady who could not speak English."

The little Catholic lady continued to attend herself during the service, probably because she was in a hurry to get to Church!" Viera wrote.

It has it that the church became more popular when Taylor started Sunday school at which popcorn balls, candy and other treats were given to each child who attended.

Taylor's daughter, Helen Denton, later recalled, "We owned a Ford Model T and a pre-war little buggy called a Roadster. These took Dad and Mother to the end of the Valley to the church in Scotts Valley and up to Doon, where the school was used for a meeting place. We had two Sunday services."

In Felton, morning and afternoon Sunday school and church services, mid-week service in Doon and Scotts Valley were provided.

The story states that in 1906, during a sermon, Taylor was struck on the head by falling

out doors and beat them with boards and brought them back in - it wasn't easy — but immediately after, Mrs. Stacy bought new ones. Those were the good old days before the three-ply was put on the side walls. We tore out the old cement walls — plaster and laths by the thousands — and were forever after washing the plaster out of our lungs and hair."

The original building became the Felton Library in the 1960s after a local couple, Nick and Faye Belardi, bought it for \$1,000. The two had intended to make a home of the former place of worship, but Mrs. Belardi, who taught Sunday school in the Highway 9 church, was killed in a car accident the year of the purchase, and Nick donated the building to the community as the Faye G. Silvey Belardi Memorial Library.

The original structure is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Edith Fikes, a former librarian who is responsible for getting the church placed on the register, and her husband Walter raised \$1,000 from local citizens for restoration of the church through their weekly newspaper, the San Lorenzo Valley Reporter.

The second building which now sits on Highway 9 cost \$85,000 to build, and was dedicated Sunday, January 2, 1955, after months of planning. Building committee member, Don Kint, chronicled the process in a personal journal that is now a part of Viera's history book.

Kint, who served as the foreman on the construction job, wrote: "The Annual Budget (\$3,000) was almost impossible to meet even with a \$50-a-month assist from the Board of Missions. A major project was a heater for the church, [and] the remodeling of the basement of the manse for Sunday school. After the pastor (Reverend Pederson) moved to a house in Mount Hermon, the upstairs of the manse became a Sunday school (\$1,500). [Viera says Kint here is referring to the house just above the old church on Felton Empire Road].

"Next, the pastor decided to leave us and we wound up with a Baptist-trained Presbyterian, Reverend [G.]