

5-31-64

# Mission Swallows Switch Churches—

By MARGARET KOCH  
Sentinel Staff Writer

The masons and plasterers are hard at work at First Congregational church.

They wear feathers to work. And fly to and from their building jobs under the eaves and on the rough stone face of the church building.

Their shop talk is made up of guttural grating noises and creaking notes.

And they like the First Congregational as much—maybe more—than the old Mission San Juan Capistrano to which they have flown annual pilgrimages for at least 200 years.

The cliff swallows have moved in.

And the Congregationalists look upon the feathered invaders with mixed emotions.

"... Roman Catholic Capistrano has sent out its swallows—a new dimension to this age of ecumenicity..." commented Rev. J. Bernard Corneliussen in part.

"Fascinating to watch—flights come and go as regular as clockwork—there are hundreds and they are starting to build on other church buildings too..." from a secretary.

"Messy, but we wouldn't dream of disturbing them..." another comment.

Everyone carefully avoids the path under the nesting area. Swallows are not neat housekeepers.

But news of the swallow nursery has spread in wide ripples. First, school children came with sketch books and pencils. Strangers with binoculars and bird books have been appearing in ever-increasing numbers.

The swallows go right on building their mud nests on the church walls. They skim over the neighboring reservoir to get drops of water for the mud which they carry in their beaks to plaster on the church wall. There it dries and forms a hard crust—hundreds of such dabs of mud add up eventually to a gourd-shaped mud nest. There the mother bird lays four to six eggs, white with brown, gray and black speckles. The nest is lined with soft feathers.

The swallows at Capistrano have a habit of always arriving in the spring on March 19, St. Joseph's day.

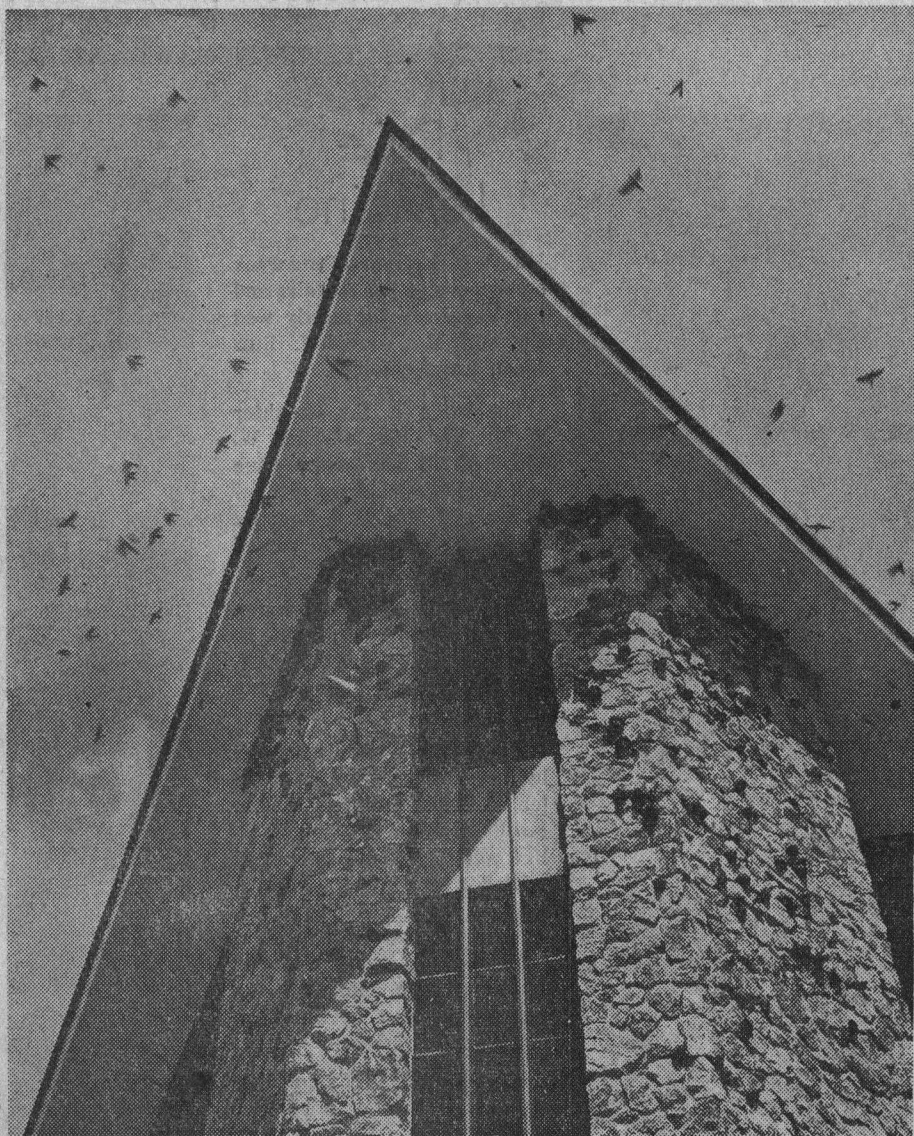
No particular date has been noted for the Congregational flock which has been coming there only for the past three or four years. There are records, however, of similar flocks arriving in the Pleasure Point area and at the Pacific Limestone Products company quarry off Spring street for at least 45 years.

Estimates of the numbers are always hard to make because swallows don't stand still to be counted.

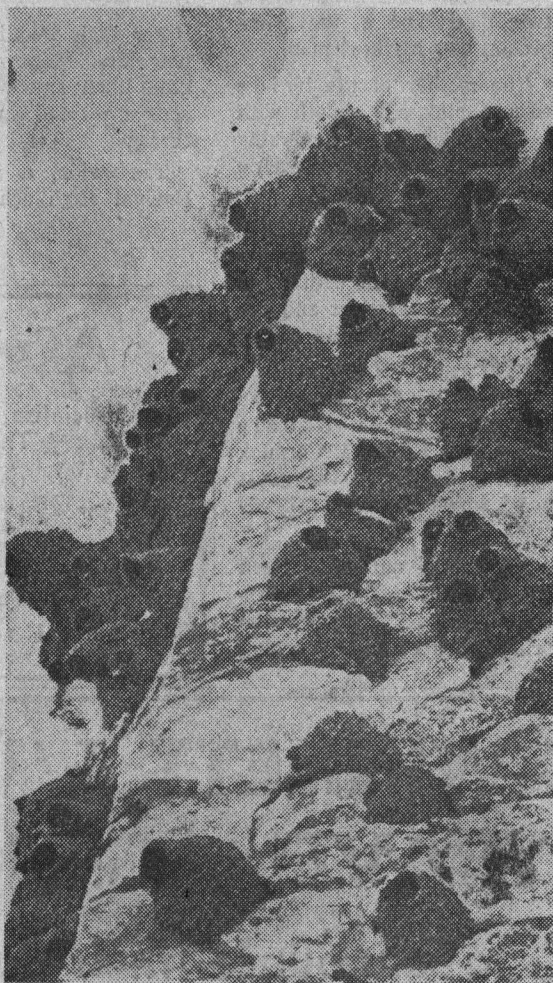
In answer to our query, Rev. Corneliussen quipped: "The First Congregational church has more swallows than any bar in town."

His sermon topic last Sunday was about—you guessed it—swallows. In it he made three points: the joyfulness of the birds, the wonder of their migratory ability and God's providence for birds—even for that sloppy housekeeper, the swallow.

And those church members who think the whole thing is for the birds anyway, may take comfort in Rev. Corneliussen's quote from the 84th Psalm: "... even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself..."



THEY CAME, they saw and they built—mud nests by the hundreds... Cliff swallows have moved in on First Congregational church at 900 High street. The busy birds are being greeted with mixed emotions.



CLIFF DWELLERS... in mud nests by the hundreds. The gourd-shaped nests are built, bit by bit, with tiny dabs of mud carried in the cliff swallows' bills. When the birds are through raising their families the nests become brittle and fall or are washed down by rain.