

The Methodist Story – 1909-1911
Polson, Montana

Compiled
by
Bernice K. Apple

From the issues of Polson's first newspaper:
"The Lake Shore Sentinel"
1909-1911

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Editor's note: The Methodist story is an excerpt taken from a book I am compiling on the formative years of Polson, Montana, from the 1909-1911 issues of The Lake Shore Sentinel, which claimed to be the first newspaper on the Flathead Reservation, and was in existence from September, 1909 to September, 1911. This is not a complete or historical account, only a compilation of facts as previously recorded.

About seventy years ago – September 1909 – the city of Polson, Montana was born into existence with the sale of lots by the U.S. government.

A number of churches were represented at this sale, and the list of those who procured them included the Episcopal Church (lots 1 and 2, block 28), Congregational (lots 7 and 8, block 29), the Roman Catholic Church (lots 11 and 12, block 29), and the Methodist Church (lots 7 and 8, block 8).

The Congregational Church was organized in Polson in October, 1909, but by mutual consent of the members, under the leadership of Reverend F. Ellsworth Smith of Great Falls, it was decided to work with the Methodist church until the next spring, so as to help get the Methodist church built. Thus with the help of the other churches in the area, the Methodist church became the first Protestant church built on the reservation.

The Lake Shore Sentinel, Polson's first newspaper gives the following facts:

September 16, 1909 – *Minister arrives in Polson to take Methodist Pastorate*

"Rev. H. H. Twyford of Denver, Col., arrived in Polson this week and will accept the Methodist pastorate here, to which he was assigned by the recent conference of the Montana M. E. Church. The Rev. Mr. Twyford was formerly pastor of Harkness Heights M. E. Church in Denver, where he was most pleasantly situated and well liked by his congregation, but he was lured by the glowing accounts he had heard of Polson and asked to be transferred to the Montana conference that he might accept the charge here. Regular devotional work will be conducted by Rev. Mr. Twyford beginning next Sunday, in a tent to be put up this week on the church property here. This tent will be used until the completion of the handsome new edifice which the Methodist denomination will build in Polson this fall. Mr. Twyford will very soon be joined by his family, who at present are visiting friends in Kalispell."

October 1, 1909 –

"Carpenters this week finished the building of the Methodist parsonage and this will be occupied within a few days by Rev. H. H. Twyford and family. Mr. Twyford is the minister who recently came from Denver to accept the charge here."

October 15, 1909 –

"The cornerstone of the Polson Methodist Church will be laid next Sunday afternoon at two-thirty o'clock. The services will be in charge of Rev. O. A. White of Kalispell, district superintendent. Rev. Mr. White will preach in the tent at 11 o'clock in the forenoon."

October 22, 1909 – *Cornerstone Laying Impressive Ceremony*

"First Methodist Church of Polson will be completed soon. A large crowd, among them many out-of-town people, was present last Sunday afternoon to witness and take part in the impressive ceremonies of laying the cornerstone of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Polson. Rev. O. A. White of Kalispell, presiding elder of the church district in which Polson is located, had charge of the service, being assisted by Rev. H. H. Twyford, the pastor, C. E. Redecker, and the board of trustees of the church. The stone was put in place by J. E. Hern and L. H. Bailey. Within the cornerstone was placed copies of the Discipline of the M. E. Church, Journal of the North Montana Conference, Pacific Christian Advocate, Gospel of St. John, and The Lake Shore Sentinel, names of the official board of the church, membership of Polson Chamber of Commerce, names of all subscribers, several silver coins, and one copper coin. The generous

spirit of those in attendance on the ceremonies was amply shown in the collection, the sum of \$1,112 being pledged for the church. Work on the main body of the church will be started Monday. The carpenter work will be done by Contractors Bailey and Hern, whose bid of \$1,165 was the lowest received. The building is to be completed within sixty days."

December 25, 1909 –

"Marking a movement of expansion on the part of the Methodist Episcopal denomination is the purchase of Ronan, Dixon, and St. Ignatius lots upon which to erect church edifices in those towns. Although it is not now the intention of the denomination to start the building of churches in the growing communities, it was deemed advisable to secure suitable locations where the churches would be built at a later date."

February 4, 1910 –

"There will be a grand box party held on Thursday evening, Feb. 10, in Gabb's Hall for the purpose of raising funds toward the new M. E. Church. A special program is being arranged so that the occasion undoubtedly be one of much interest. One of the gentlemen who is interested in the project will make a present of a five dollar gold piece to the lady whose box or basket brings the highest price. This should certainly set the pace for the young men to see that their sweetheart gets that gold piece."

March 11, 1910 –

"Much favorable comment is heard on the new Methodist church, which is rapidly being completed. The structure is of mission style, and when finished will be one of the handsomest church edifices to be found in this state."

Note: Sometime later in 1910, Rev. H. H. Twyford evidently was given another pastorate, although no news bulletin was found on this, because in the May 6, 1910, edition is found this item:

May 6, 1910 – New Pastor M. E. Church

"Rev. E. L. White, the new pastor of the First Methodist Church of Polson, preached his first sermon in the school house last Sunday evening. Rev. Mr. White is a forceful and eloquent speaker and the large audience that filled the school house to its capacity listened to an able and logical discourse on the high estate of 'Man, Whose Creator is God.' The Valley County News, Glasgow, Mont., has the following to say of the Rev. Mr. White: 'Mr. White has been pastor of the M. E. Church for the past four years and has brought this charge up from one of the smallest to practically the first in the district, and has during the entire time of his pastorate here drawn crowded houses at almost every service. It is generally conceded over the state that his reputation is second to none, and his resignation at this time is a serious blow to the church here and it would not be considered for a moment by the official board only for the fact that his health demands a change. He will preach regularly in Polson, by the charge is a small one and will not be such a strain on his physical condition, and he expects thus to be able to recuperate during the summer months and at the same time continue in the line of work to which he and his wife have pledged their lives. In leaving Glasgow, they carry with them the best wishes of the entire city for their future success and welfare, and the hope that the summer's rest will accomplish the desired result in the restoration of Mr. White's health.'"

May 20, 1910 – New Pastor and Mrs. White are given liberal pounding

"Many members of the Polson Methodist church and their friends, gathered at the manse on Wednesday evening and when they took their departure, left behind a goodly supply of the material blessings of life for the new pastor and his estimable wife."

"Methodist Church to be dedicated July 3. On Sunday, July 3, the new Methodist Church, which is the first Protestant church to be built on the reservation will be formally dedicated. Rev. Robert P. Smith, D. D., president of the Kansas Wesleyan University has been secured to deliver the principal address of the day. Dr. Smith is one of the most gifted orators of the Methodist denomination. Other clergymen who will be present at the dedicatory services are Rev. O. A. White, district superintendent of the Kalispell district; Rev. E. L. Mills, district superintendent of the Butte district, and others. It is probable a large number of people will come from Kalispell, Rollins, and other points to the dedication, and arrangements are under way to secure excursion rates over the various boat lines for their accommodation."

July 1, 1910 – Program of Dedication at Methodist Church

Saturday Evening

7:30 –

Song Service, A. W. Pipes

8:00 –

Hymn No. 147

Invocation, Chas. E. Redeker

Solo, John F. Cook

Scripture Lesson, Rev. E. L. White, pastor

Notices and Offering

Sermon, Rev. Oscar A. White, superintendent Kalispell district

Hymn No. 96

Benediction, Rev. E. L. Mills

Sunday

9:30 –

Sunday School

10:15 –

Communion service, Rev. O. A. White

10:45 –

Voluntary

Hymn No. 146

Invocation, Rev. E. L. Mills

Solo, Miss Anna Rollins

Scripture Lesson

Notices and Offering

Selection, male quartet

Sermon, Rev. Robert P. Smith, D. D., president Kansas Wesleyan University

Report of the building committee

Presentation of church for dedication by trustees

Dedication of church, in charge Rev. O. A. White

Doxology

Benediction

3:00 in the afternoon –

Voluntary
 Hymn No. 123
 Invocation
 Solo, Miss Anna Rollins
 Scripture Lesson
 Address, Rev. O. A. White, district superintendent Kalispell district
 Solo, John F. Cook
 Address, Rev. E. L. Mills, district superintendent Butte district
 Hymn No. 104
 Address, Rev. R. P. Smith, D. D., president Kansas Wesleyan University
 Hymn No. 67
 Benediction
 7:30 in the evening –
 Song service, Rev. E. L. White
 7:45 –
 Hymn No. 131
 Invocation, Rev. O. A. White
 Selection, male quartet
 Scripture Lesson, Rev. R. P. Smith, D. D.
 Solo, Miss Erva Trow
 Reception of Members
 Notices and Offerings
 Solo, John F. Cook
 Sermon, Rev. E. L. Mills, district superintendent Butte district
 Hymn No. 148
 Benediction, Rev. O. A. White

August 26, 1910 –

"At the conference last week, Rev. J. E. White, who had been temporary pastor of the local Methodist church, was appointed to a charge at Lewistown, and he and Mrs. White will leave for their new field at once, followed by best wishes of all who have had the pleasure of knowing them during their brief stay here. The local charge is succeeded to by Rev. Mr. Welch, who will reach Polson, probably tomorrow."

November 11, 1910 –

"Some young people met in the Methodist church last Friday evening and enjoyed a good social time, being entertained by various amusing games, singing and by two fine selections of reading excellently rendered by Miss Norris. Before adjourning, an Epworth League society was formed for the purpose of promoting religion and social and intellectual culture of the young people of the community. The following officers were elected: President, Miss Jennie Norris; first vice-president, Mrs. Mamie Marcsy; second vice-president, Miss Edith Brown; third vice-president, Miss Edith Maynar; fourth vice-president, Mrs. Jacob Publer; secretary, Miss Bonnie Brown; treasurer, Gus Norris."

December 9, 1910 –

"The chicken pie supper and fancy work sale held by the Methodist ladies at the Bijou last evening was highly successful, the 'eats' being exhausted long before the hungry throng was fed, and every piece of fancy work being sold."

December 9, 1910 – Encouraging Reports submitted Methodist Quarterly Conference

"The second Quarterly Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church of Polson was held last Monday night. District Superintendent O. A. White presided at the meeting. Encouraging reports were given of the work already done and plans made for further progress. The pastor reported an increase of fifteen members, making fifty in all. The Sunday School was reported in flourishing condition. The number of pupils has greatly increased and officers and teachers are doing faithful work. The president of the Ladies Aid Society reported that their work is prospering and they now have a membership of 39 active and 2 honorary members. The Epworth League is fully organized and will have regular devotional, social, and literary meetings during the winter. Some new officers of the church were elected so that the members of the official board at present are as follows: Trustees: C. E. Redeker, A. W. Pipes, C. L. Dowell, J. F. Cook, J. E. Hern; Stewards: W. H. Cook, C. M. Sutherland, A. C. Retz, A. J. Buhler, A. T. Mizell, J. C. Foulkes, George MacAlear; President of Ladies Aid Society, Mrs. Arthur Mizell; Superintendent of Sunday School, W. H. Cook; President of Epworth League, Miss Jennie Norris. All of the officers and members are planning wisely for the building up of the Kingdom of God in this place. All who are interested in the religious welfare of the community are invited into the fellowship and labor of the church."

January, 1911 – (from notice column)

Methodist Episcopal Services – Sunday school 10a.m. Morning worship with sermon, every first, third, and fifth Sunday at 11 oc. Evening services, with song service, 7:30p.m. every Sunday. Epworth League at 6:45 p.m. Prayer meeting Thursday 7:30p.m. Rev. A. D. Welch, pastor.

May 19, 1911 – Church Dedication at Ronan Sunday

"The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Ronan, of which Rev. A. D. Welch of Polson is pastor, will be dedicated the coming Sunday. The new church is a well appointed edifice and is a monument to the untiring effort of the official board and the good people of Ronan to secure a house of worship. The formal dedication will take place at 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon."

August, 1911 – Program of Methodist Conference that Convenes in Polson Tuesday

Tuesday, August 15

1p.m. – Examinations

3p.m. – Meeting of the Examination Board

7p.m. – Street meeting

8p.m. – Epworth League Anniversary, address by Rev. C. W. Tenney of Helena

9p.m. – Reception to visitors at the church

Wednesday, August 16

8a.m. – Sacrament of the Lord's Supper administered by Bishop Neulsen

9a.m. – Business session

2p.m. – Anniversary of the Women's Home Mission Society

3p.m. – Anniversary of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society

7p.m. – Street meeting

8p.m. – Anniversary of the board of Sunday schools, addresses by Rev. P. W. Haynes of Great Falls and Rev. C. M. Donaldson of Fort Benton

Thursday, August 17

8a.m. – Devotions and exegetical study of the Bible, led by Bishop Neulsen

9a.m. – Business session

2p.m. – Anniversary of the Freedman's Aid Society
3p.m. – Anniversary of the Deaconess hospital and Deaconess school, addresses by Mrs. Ina J. Horsfall and Rev. W. W. Van Orsdel
7p.m. – Street meeting
8p.m. – Lecture by Bishop John L. Neulsen, subject: "America as World Power"

Friday, August 18

8a.m. – Devotions and exegetical study of the Bible, led by Bishop Neulsen
9a.m. – Business meeting
9a.m. – Laymen's business session
2p.m. – Anniversary of board of conference claimants, address by Dr. C. E. Clemans of Chicago
3p.m. – Round table in interests of Montana Wesleyan University, conducted by Dr. J. W. Hancher
4p.m. – Joint meeting of laymen and ministers
7p.m. – Street meeting
8p.m. – Anniversary of board of education and Montana Wesleyan University, addresses by Dr. J. W. Hancher and Bishop John L. Neulsen

Saturday, August 19

8a.m. – Devotions and exegetical study of the Bible, led by Bishop Neulsen
9a.m. – Business meeting
2p.m. – Anniversary of the temperance society, address by Dr. Clarence True Wilson of Chicago
3p.m. – Annual missionary sermon by Rev. Geo. E. Hutt of Dupuyer
4p.m. – Junior League rally led by Mrs. F. A. Armstrong of Kalispell
7p.m. – Street meeting
8p.m. – Anniversary of board of home missions and church extension, address by Dr. Ward Platt of Philadelphia

Sunday, August 20

6a.m. – Sunrise prayer meeting, led by Rev. W. W. Van Orsdel
9a.m. – Love Feast, led by Rev. O. A. White
10:50a.m. – Sermon by Bishop John L. Neulsen
2p.m. – Sunday school rally, addresses by Rev. P. W. Haynes of Great Falls and Rev. J. A. Alford of Helena
3p.m. – Ordination of ministers and consecration of deaconesses
7p.m. – Epworth League rally
8p.m. – Anniversary of board of foreign missions, address by Rev. D. H. Kleinfelter of the Philippine Islands

All services are open to the public and everyone is invited. An admission of 35¢ will be charged to the lecture Thursday evening. All other services are free.

Next Sunday services at the Methodist church will close the work of the conference year. At the evening service, reports of the year's work will be given. There will be no preaching service in the morning, but the Sunday school as usual at 10 o'clock. The subject for the evening sermon will be, "What is a New Testament Church?" This will include a discussion of names and creeds and rites which go to make up a church of today.

Here are a few statements in regard to entertaining the annual conference which meets here next week. The Lake Hotel will be the commissary department of the conference. Anyone who has provisions of any kind that can be used in feeding the visitors can take it to the hotel and receive credit for its value. Donations in the way of bedding can also be used. Some empty rooms can be secured and will be fitted up with beds. Anyone who can help out in this way is asked to report to the committee on entertainment: Jas. Dawson, B. N. Mills, A. D. Welch.

The Fourth Quarterly Conference will be held Monday evening, August 14, at 8 o'clock in the church. All members of this quarterly conference are urged to be present and other members of the church and friends are invited to come and take part.

*Signed,
A. D. Welch*

August 25, 1911 – Notes of the Quarterly Conference 1911, Deaconess School and Hospital – Helena
"The Montana Deaconess School at Helena was represented by Miss Louise Stork, the superintendent. She presented in a brief way the need of this work, a school for boys and girls under 14 years of age.

'When a man loses his wife, he is at a loss how to care for his children. This school was opened to meet these particular needs. While the school is only two year old, yet, over 70 children have been cared for, coming not only from Montana, but Idaho, Iowa, and Canada, representing over eleven different denominations.

'Here the children have a good home and careful training to fit them for life's duties. All the grades are taught fitting them for the high school of the school. One of the additional features this year is Domestic Science, for which a kitchen has been fitted up. A competent teacher has been secured who will have charge of this department. School opens the 5th of September, 1911.

"The Montana Deaconess Hospital was represented in the Conference by the Superintendent E. Augusta Ariss, who have a brief sketch of the history of that institution. The Deaconess Hospital is the property of the Methodist conference, but is under the deaconess management. The hospital has had a most successful career since its opening 9 years ago. During the past year, 1,465 patients were treated, 661 operations were performed, and 143 births occurred. The hospital property consists of a fine new brick building with capacity of 70 beds and all modern conveniences such as a sun parlor, elevator, electric call system, modern operating rooms, x-ray machine, etc. A new nurses' home has been built during the year, named in honor of Rev. Van Orsdel, who has done so much for the hospital cause. The Hospital is in need of all sorts of supplies. Donations of fruit, jellies, linens, etc. will be gladly received.

"Other conference notes: The street meetings which were held every evening at 7p.m. drew large crowds. They were very interesting and no doubt there was good seed sown. The visitors one and all were delighted with Polson and the surrounding country."

The Lake Shore Sentinel consolidated with the Flathead Courier shortly after this date of August, 1911, and thus ends the compilation of the Methodist Story, 1909-1911. However, glancing through the Courier of March, 1914, I found this little enjoyable article which I pass on to you...

February, 1914 – *A Measuring Party*

*A measuring party is given for you.
'Tis something novel – something new.
We Methodist Ladies ask all to come,
And each one bring to aid us some,
Two cents for every foot you're tall.
We'll measure you on door or wall;
An extra cent for each inch you give,
And thereby show how high you live.
With music and song, refreshment and pleasure,
We'll meet one and all at the party of Measure.
Thursday evening, February 26th at 8 o'clock at the J. A. Cline home.*

Courier, March, 1914

"The evening session of the M. E. Ladies Aid which was held at the beautiful Cline home last Thursday, was not a Ladies Aid in the general acceptance of the term, but it was a real social function. About one hundred guests, both ladies and gentlemen, participated in the event. Everybody was measured and enriched the treasury of the society according to their height. There was a musical program of several numbers and a reading by Mrs. Matravers. Elegant refreshments were served in the dining room, thirty-five being served at one time."