

STATE AND COUNTY NEWS



PROSPECT HARBOR CHURCH — Since 1903, members of the Prospect Harbor Methodist Church have worked together in paying off their original construction debt and then to remodel and improve their place of worship. (Crane photo)

Faithful Work Of Members Built Prospect Harbor Church In 1903

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PROSPECT HARBOR, Jan. 4—History indicates that the early colonists who settled in New England had three basic and crying needs—food, shelter, and a place to worship. Food and shelter were essential to maintain life; they could have existed without a place of worship. But whether they came from France, England, or Germany, they invariably built a place of worship as soon as they had food and shelter for their families.

A little more than a century after the English colonists held their first service in a crude meeting house at Plymouth, a group of Hessian colonists erected a log meeting house in Waldoboro. Later the small log structure became a full sized church which was called the "Old German Meeting House." In 1795 this was moved across the river and it eventually became one of the three oldest churches in Maine.

Beginning of Maine Church

The need for a place to worship is not confined to any age or any group. In 1903 a group of Methodists in Prospect Harbor decided that they wanted a church. They had no money, but they obtained a loan from funds set up by the Methodist Church for this purpose. Over the years many willing hands provided the funds to repay this loan and make many improvements in the church.

One of the group, Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, made pot holders and sold them for five cents apiece to buy a Bible for the pulpit.

After the church was finished the members turned their attention to paying off the debt. Funds were solicited by mailing tiny shoes made by the sewing circle. Attached to each shoe was a card which read:

The M. E. Society of Prospect Harbor are trying to build a church, Can you help us a little? Wallace Cutting, pastor. A poem at the bottom of the card read:

This little shoe we give you is not to wear. Please multiply your size by two and place therein with care. In dimes, nickels or cents, just twice the number that you wear. So, if you wear number ten you send us twenty see? Which dropped within the shoe, will fill our hearts with glee.

The pennies, nickels and dimes from this project was the first substantial sum obtained for the debt repayment. This project was followed by a fair. A clipping from the Bangor NEWS, pasted in an old scrapbook made by Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, states that the table for the sale of fancy work, homemade candles, and burntwood pieces was supervised by Miss Susie Over, who was assisted by Miss Lula Rice, Mrs. John Hutchings, and Mrs. Irving Moore. The apron table was under the direction of Miss Gladys Hutchings, and the doll table was presided over by Miss Selma Noonan, and Miss Lethia Temple. Mrs. Asa Stevens and Mrs. J. S. Coombs were in charge of the table which featured good things to eat. Among the items sold were pickles, preserves, jellies, and a bushel basket full of cream puffs. The sale was followed by a chicken supper after which Mr. W. F. Bruce auctioneered off all unsold items.

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Then a sewing circle was formed and this group took up the task of raising money to free their church from debt. They met in informal groups going to the home of a different member each week. They opened the meetings with prayer and scripture reading, and closed them with prayer or hymn singing. But they were more than a gathering to satisfy spiritual needs. Between the opening and closing ceremonies busy fingers made aprons, pot holders, quilt "puffs" and many other items that could be sold for cash.

Old records show that the sewing circle was not an affluent organization. The minutes of a meeting held on February 28, 1907, show that after buying 10 yards of print, three rolls of batting, and two balls of yarn, the balance in the treasury was 81 cents. The minutes of another meeting held on December 5, of the same year showed that the treasury balance, swelled by the income from a church supper, totaled the sum of \$11.28.

In addition to making things to sell, the sewing circle meetings were used to plan suppers and ice cream socials. Menus for the suppers were drawn up and each member pledged a pie or cake as their individual contribution to the supper. Baked beans and fish chowders were favorite menus.

Sometimes the members turned the meetings into a bit of recreation by holding a picnic type lunch; each member bringing some food that was shared, picnic fashion, around the tables that were covered with sewing materials.

Another interesting item in Mrs. Hamilton's scrapbook is a poster describing a play that was put on by the M. E. Society. It was called "The Suffragettes' Convention". The cast of characters included Miss Susie Over, Mrs. Katie Seavy, Miss Alta Cole, Miss Marion Wasgatt, Miss Delia Farley, Miss Gladys Hutchings, Miss Selma Noonan, Mrs. Maud Hamilton, Miss Lethia Temple, Miss Lydia Colwell, Miss Evelyn Wasgatt and Mrs. Bertha Noonan.

The one male part in the play, that of Silas Curtis an ardent suffrage advocate, was played by Henry Hamilton. Admission to the play was 20 cents for adults and 10 cents for children.

Down through the years since the little band of Methodists obtained the loan to build their church, many willing hands have worked to remove the debt. After it was paid in full, the church was remodeled and in 1943 the Methodist Society purchased the Henry Hamilton Store and made it into a work room for the sewing circle. In 1955 a modern oil furnace was installed in the church, and last year an electric church organ was purchased.

The Prospect Harbor church is one of the meeting houses mentioned in Margaret Henrichsen's book, "Seven Steeples." This book describes the experiences of the Rev. Henrichsen after she became pastor of the seven churches which were the background of her book.