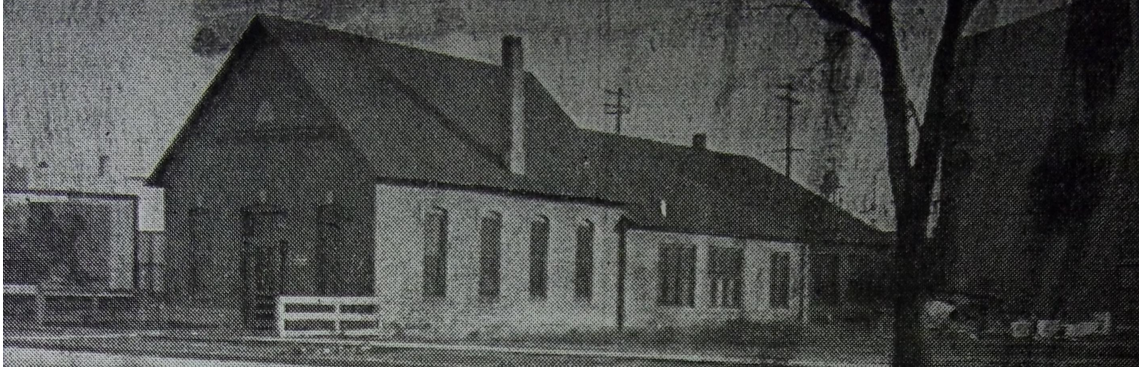


First Methodist Episcopal Church Handsome Brick Structure



By Kathy Jordan

Just one year after the 1882 incorporation of the town of Grand Junction, the pioneer community got its first house of worship, The First Methodist Episcopal Church South.

From the description in The Grand Junction News, it was a “handsome brick structure with six stained glass windows.”

Marcus B. Ross, John F. Gavin, J.L. Duckett and J.B. Duckett were listed as incorporators for the church.

. Before the church was built, the congregation worshiped at the Town Company’s office on the corner of Main and Seventh Streets and at A.A. Miller’s building on Main Street.

The Grand Junction Town Company had dedicated four lots on each northeast corner of White Avenue at Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Ninth and Tenth Streets for local churches. However, according to Mesa County land records, the Methodist Episcopal Church South purchased lots at two other locations. One purchase was in block 60, between Fifth and Sixth Streets and Chipeta and Ouray Avenues. The other two lots were in block 104, between Fifth and Sixth Streets and Rood and Main Streets.

This second location was where they built their church, although this location does not coincide with that listed in the Grand Junction News. The News listed the location of the church on White Avenue near Sixth Street. But a search of county deeds uncovered no early link placing the M.E. Church South along White Avenue. However, a cutline on a church picture which ran in The Daily Sentinel in 1958 listed the address as 543 Rood Ave., which would be lots 11 and 12 in block 104.

Now on with the story of the church:

The Grand Junction News, which published once a week in 1883, kept readers informed of building progress with one or two sentences every so often.

On April 28, 1883, the News reported that “The walls of the M.E. Church, south, are starting skyward. The building will be 24x30, with walls of adobe and brick.”

By the end of May, Mrs. Amsbury and Mrs. Carpenter had collected enough money to purchase an organ for the church.

On June 9 a two-line news item reported that with the help of all denominations and the entire town the new brick church was nearly completed, and on June 16 it was reported that services were being held in the new church.

The new brick church, with its stained glass windows, chairs(not pews), carpets and handsome pulpit chair, was dedicated on Sunday, July 5, 1883.

The completion came none too soon because Grand Junction leaders had invited the Colorado State Press Association to stop here on their excursion to the West Coast, and the editors had quickly accepted the invitation.

The townsfolk had only one full day to prepare for the visiting editors.

The new church was chosen for the reception. The congregation quickly transformed it into a reception room decorated with interlocked red, white and blue. Streamers were draped about the pulpit and chandeliers, with flowers, an American flag and a welcome sign above the speaker’s desk.

After the editors had returned home, several of them sent letters to the News, each one commenting on the beauty of the new church.

The editor of the Canon City Record wrote that the editors’ carriages were met at the depot and escorted to the “M.E. Church, a neat brick structure, which had been decorated with flags and evergreens with the word ‘welcome’ in the center. Ice cold lemonade was furnished to the dusty, thirsty travelers.”

The M.E. Church South didn’t last long in Grand Junction, possibly because the members didn’t have enough money to continue supporting it.

By Nov. 8, 1884, the announcement for church services at the M.E. Church South no longer ran in the News. Instead it listed the Peoples’ Church as holding services at the old M.E. Church South location. According to deeds on record in Mesa County, the First M. E. Church South sold its property to the Fifth Street Methodist Episcopal Church of Grand Junction in February 1890. In November of that year, the Fifth Street Methodists sold their building to the First Congregational Church of Grand Junction. That church used the building until it was rented to School District No. 1 in 1904.

Within a few years, the property was sold to the School District. The district then combined the early-day Whittier School with the church building, and it was used as overflow for high school students. . The church portion of the building was demolished in 1938, and a new section was constructed and used by District 1 Administration as offices from 1940 until 1958.

The school district sold the property to James Gormley in 1958.

Now a memory and a few faded pictures in a long-ago newspaper are all that remain of the first church built in Grand Junction.