

Alfred Historical Society
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PARISH HOUSE CELEBRATION

A paper prepared by

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PRELUDE

This paper was written by Mrs. E. P. Saunders (Mrs. Carrie B. Saunders), a long-time member and officer of the Alfred Ladies Society. It was presented to the Ladies Aid Society on the date the Parish House was free of the debt incurred in the construction of the building, which was May 5, 1922.

PARISH HOUSE CELEBRATION

After over 16 years of strenuous effort we have completed paying the debt on the Parish House and we meet this evening to celebrate the event.

Were we like the students we would gather all the dry goods boxes and baskets and have a big bonfire. Let the young folks have the monopoly of that. Had we ever had a mortgage on the Parish House we might have our bonfire and burn the mortgage, but we have not even that to burn; just a few cancelled notes which the Committee will dispose of later.

At the time the church trustees were to help us raise the money to finish the payments, the Treasurer, Prof. William C. Whitford looked around to see where he could find the money at 5%. One man he went to said "Yes I can let you have \$2,000.00 at 6% and take a mortgage on the Parish House. Prof. Whitford said "Nothing doing." "We are to find that money at 5% and no mortgage goes on the building" and so it was.

Perhaps the origin of the Aid Society and the methods of raising money previous to building our Parish House might be of interest to you. The book containing the original Constitution and By-Laws can not be found. The oldest book we have says "Secretaries Books from 1847 to 1876 but the first minutes entered in this book are dated September 3, 1862. So it is to be inferred the Society was organized in 1847. It is very much to be regretted that the book can not be found.

The Society was at this time called "The Ladies Benevolent Society". The first minutes commence "The Society met pursuant to adjournment", this being the opening sentence always used at that time.

September 1862. Voted that for the ensuing year each member bring in monthly, one shilling in value."

May 1863. "Worked for the soldiers today". This sounds as if it might have been a recent report.

In February 1865 is found the following resolution: On motion a resolution was read and adopted restricting the common practice of providing tea to a fine of one shilling each to those that provide and to those that partake. The resolution to be enforced until our next annual meeting. The money collected in fines to be appropriated to the use of the Society. It was quite evident they thought the ladies would not live up to this resolution. At this same meeting we find the Society collecting clothings for the freedmen. Also the record appoints a Committee to visit a sister and see that her children come to Sabbath School. Remarks were made about making the Sabbath School more attractive for the children.

In September 1868 the Society was reorganized and a new Preamble and Constitution was adopted very much like the one of today. At this time it was decided to have suppers and to charge 25 cents for the supper.

March 1870. Mention is made of an oyster supper for the benefit of the Church.

In 1871 it was voted to help theological students by fitting up rooms for them.

In May 1872 it was voted to serve refreshments some where, for Commencement.

In 1873 it was voted to get the red and grey carpet for the Church. I can remember this carpet when I first came here to college.

In 1874 the Society bought a new pulpit for the Church, price \$48.00.

October 1874. Took up a collection for the benefit of the grass hopper suffers in Nebraska. This money with some clothing was sent on by the Society.

In May 1875 is a motion thus: "Moved and carried that we have an extra meeting of the Society in two weeks to work for Professor Allen (No Prezy in those days) on the University grounds. On May 19 the Society met

according to adjournment on the University grounds. Under the direction of Prof. Allen the ladies proceeded at once to afternoons work of raking, hoeing, pulling of weeds and clearing up the grounds in general. The ladies were treated to lemonade by Prof. Allen. After three and a half hours of faithful labor they were paid the sum of \$10.00 and Professor Allen took them to the University Hall where Mrs. Baker served a very nice tea to them. There were 15 ladies who worked.

September 1878. Purchased flower stands for the pulpit.

November 1879. Voted to help Miss Nelson in preparing her outfit before she went to China.

In 1880 the Village Improvement Society must have been organized as the matter of improving the sidewalks was brought up and a committee was appointed. Some of us, as students, can remember the board walks of those days.

1883. The first need of our Parish House was realized. A committee was appointed to procure rooms for the Society to meet in.

In 1889 the mater of "church parlors" was again brought up in the Society and as some of you will remember the suggestion of raising the Church and putting the parlors was made.

In 1884 the Society was first arranged into districts and at this same meeting it was decided to have lap boards and that each member should bring her own napkin.

April 1884. A special meeting was called to discuss incorporating the Society and when it was decided to do this it was also voted to take 2 shares of the Alfred Mutual Loan Association stock. This was the year the Ladies Aid Society was organized.

Each spring and fall we notice that it was voted to send a box or money or both to the Home of the Friendless in New York City.

In 1885 the name of the Society was changed from the Ladies Benevolent Society to the Ladies Aid Society. About this time the society began to work for the pipe organ. To this enterprise much credit is due Mrs. G. W. Rosebush who worked untiringly for the organ until it was paid for.

In September 1886 a lunch counter was arranged on the fair grounds, the proceeds for the fair grounds.

In March 1886 it was voted that the pulpit be cut down to about two-thirds its original size.

In 1888 the Society assumed one of the Church notes of \$918.15.

In 1893 the Society fitted up the small rooms on either side of the pulpit platform and bought screends for the choir loft.

In 1894 was the first gentlemen's supper, the funds used to furnish the parsonage. The Five Corner's society which worked with this society assisted by furnishing the guest room in the parsonage.

At a meeting held September 5, 1894 the Society voted to send congratulations to Pastor and Mrs. Davis on the advent of a new baby boy.

June 1896. The Trustees reported that they were willing to leave the entire matter of redecorating the interior of the Church to the ladies.

January 1898. The ladies voted to assume the responsibility of soliciting pledges for the Church for the coming year.

December 1898. The Society voted to reseat the Church not to exceed \$475.00.

In January 1899 it was voted that if the trustees would lay a new floor the Ladies Aid Society would lay a new carpet before the new seats were put in. It was voted about this time that the stained glass windows were put in. It was through the efforts of Pastor Gamble, largely, that they were added to beautify the Church.

December 1899. Voted by the Trustees of the Church that they were perfectly willing that the ladies should assume the redecorating of the vestry of the Church. These church trustees were a most unselfish body.

May 1900. Voted that a committee be appointed to assist in refurnishing of the reception rooms at Ladies Hall (The Brick).

May 1900. Voted \$10.00 towards the Alfred Ladies Aid Society Scholarship Fund.

Our Society had now become so large that only a few homes could accomodate it, and after many a discussion it was decided to rent the first floor of Firemen's Hall for one year at \$48.00, the Society to furnish its own table linen.

In November 1901 a committee of four was appointed to investigate the cost of building church parlors. The committee was Mrs. E. P. Saunders, Mrs. B. C. Davis, Mrs. William C. Whitford and Mrs. D. B. Rogers. Many and long were the discussions over this subject as it was a big proposition for us to handle. As we had accumulated our funds we had bought more Loan stock until we had quite a little money on hand. Some of the members were sure if we commenced it we would finish it as the Alfred Ladies knew no such word as fail. Others more pessimistic knew it would not go through and we would always be in debt. One afternoon Mrs. Davis took Old Bess, their faithful horse, and took the committee to Hornell to visit the Parish House of the Episcopal Church. Rector Hoffman was very kind and he showed us all over the building explaining every detail. When we were through he said the cost was a little over \$5,000.00. We all said we could never hope to aspire to any thing as much as that. We reported at the next meeting and then more discussion followed.

When we presented the matter to the Church Trustees they said they would do all they could to assist us and appointed Charles Stillman, Charles Stevens

and Professor Tomlinson as a committee to assist us.

Our experience was like the experience of every other person who builds, it costs more than we first planned. When the building was finished it had cost us over \$8,000.00, but we all contended we liked the arrangement better than the parish hall in Hornell as their kitchen and dining room were on the second floor.

Our parish house was commenced in the Spring of 1906. In August myself and family went to Rhode Island to care for my mother in her declining days and upon my resignation as Chairman, Mrs. Boothe C. Davis was put in as chairman and a fourth person was added to the committee. Mrs. Charles Stillman was appointed and resigned and Mrs. Frank A. Crumb was appointed in her place. The night before we left I well remember the committee meeting we had at my home to decide on the fireplaces, mantles and kitchen locations.

The first regular meeting of the Society held in our new Parish House was held May 1, 1907.

Of the efforts of the ladies for the past sixteen years I need say nothing. There is not a lady here who has worked in the Society but who knows that nearly every legitimate device for the raising of this money from the serving of banquets to the saving of stamps on our Fleishman's yeast cakes as been resorted to. We would gladly acknowledge the help by the outside societies, Sabbath School classes and individuals who were not members of the Society.

We have all enjoyed the labor and we are happy that our building is now paid for. Not once do I know of any unpleasantness that has arisen during the period of working for this purpose.

To us it seems like one of our children. We have raised them from infancy: we have toiled day and night and when they go from the "Home Nest" we are still anxious that they stand for the principles we have tried to

inculcate in them and do much good in the world. I think we feel in a measure the same way about our Parish House. We have labored and prayed over it that it might be a part of our Church and community. Now that the debt is raised and we turn it over to the Church as a home for our Sabbath School, Christian Endeavor and any other church or social activity we feel that there should be a line drawn to its use. We also feel that it should be kept in the hands of our Church people and that its use should be dictated by them. Some think it should be turned over to the public to be used as the public thinks best and if it is injured we will still work for repairs on it. I can not agree with this theory. I think we should have regular rules and laws to govern it and that they should be lived up to. It is said that familiarity breeds contempt and that if the children and young people are allowed to use our Parish House as they wish to it will soon lose its sacredness and they will not have the respect for it that they should have for the Church and things pertaining to it.

How dear to our hearts is this house we have built, a place for our people to socially meet, which cost us much effort and treasures abundant and we now rejoice that the payments are completad.

We never said "No we can not complete it. We now have more debts than we are able to pay". But we rolled up our sleeves and united went at it and tonight we thank God he showed us the way.