

Eagle Harbor Congregational Church Building Historical Significance Narrative

Eagle Harbor Congregational Church (EHCC) was organized and its first worship service was held in the settlement schoolhouse on December 31, 1882. That schoolhouse, located in what is now Winslow Green just north of the present Church location, served the Church until 1896. At that time the whole area was known as Madrone; only later did it become Winslow. EHCC was the first church on Bainbridge Island; it was the third in Kitsap County, Washington Territory. (Washington was admitted to statehood later, on November 11, 1889.) In the official Church minutes of October 4, 1895 it was recorded: "A special church meeting was convened at the Parsonage, the object being to consider the proposition to build a church on the Parsonage lot." The present sanctuary building is the church that was constructed.

A large portion of Madrone had been the homestead of Ambrose and Amanda Grow. The parsonage was built on their land which they had donated to the church. In 1895 they offered adjacent land for the building of the church. With funds raised from the congregation and the help of the Church Building Society of New York funds, the original church building housing the sanctuary, school and hall was constructed and then was dedicated on Sunday, November 1, 1896. It is noteworthy that a bell tower was also requested; its bell has called worshipers for all the ensuing years (with the exception of a few months in 1974 when pranksters stole it.)

In those early days the church was often the center for Madrone's seasonal activities. A large Christmas tree was set up and decorated with ornaments and candles, lit only when a standby crew with buckets of water was present. Gifts were exchanged and given to those in need; the presents included candy and oranges, a big treat in that era.

During World War I the church was the first aid headquarters for the town. Drills were held and members were trained to serve if necessary. Besides raising money, the women's groups helped care for the children of the migrant berry pickers from Canada, providing bible school and nursery care. They also organized the church as an emergency center for the Island during WW II. Helpline got its start among the women of Eagle Harbor Church, and the church's cupboards were the first Island food bank.

In 1925 a kitchen and Fellowship Hall were added to the Church. In 1947 additional space was gained with the acquisition of the old Winslow Library building, which originally was the Sons of Temperance Hall. In 1962 the entire church building was hoisted onto timbers and pulled along a plank road toward the south end of the property. Before it was lowered to its present position it was moved one quarter turn from the original eastwards orientation to its present location, facing north. An educational wing was added in 1966. Maintenance demanded that, to preserve the aging siding, an additional vinyl siding be added over the original boarding. The entire structure was completed in 1978 giving the building a uniform appearance with no change to the structure's original material. At the time of the 100th anniversary the sanctuary was renovated, including the sanding of the floors that uncovered the designs left by the "historical" worms in the original fir

flooring. The unique ceiling design, originally the cover for the ventilation duct, was retained, as was the original pulpit.

With the purchase in 1985 of the house and land adjacent to the church property belonging to Ray Stephens and his wife, the Church now is bordered by Finch Place Road on the West, Winslow Way on the north, Madison Avenue on the east, and its own parking lot on the south. Island residents of renown, Ed Ritchie, Bill Roberts, Leroy Tudor, Marty Crowder, Don Owens, Russ Freeman, the Stephens family and of course the Grow family, are only a few who have given time and money to keep this Church a symbol of Winslow's rich heritage.

In the century full of wonderful events and ordinary lives of the early pioneers on Bainbridge Island, many of whom were church members, one event will exemplify these people's devotion to this symbol of downtown Winslow. In earlier years the church was about to lose the building and land due to non-payment of taxes to the county government. Edward Scott, one of the church members, came to the rescue by rowing his small boat through Rich Passage to the county seat in Port Orchard and paying the grand total sum of \$1.18 in back taxes.

Walt Woodward, as editor of *The Bainbridge Review*, penned the following article on the occasion of the Church's Diamond Jubilee. He titled the article, "God's Little White House." An excerpt reads: "While we freely acknowledge that that is a Congregational Church, we submit that when a house of God stands for 61 years (the idea for the church was conceived 75 years ago), it tends to lose its sectarian identity. There are

thirteen faiths on the Island, yet members of each see in Winslow's little white church the message of God's eternity. Sentimentally, we treasure every sliver of wood in that church... Yet the little church could burn to the ground tomorrow and, while there would be great sadness, its stability would continue in our hearts. Physical destruction could not erase all the humble prayers read in that structure. Man would still struggle to his God. Blessings be on that little white church and upon all those who built it and kept it and yet keep it as a temporal tribute to God Almighty."