

Our Jubilee Year “Ponderings From the Past” January 2007

During our Jubilee Celebration year, Joan VanPatten, a member of the Communications Ministry team will dig into the archives to feature some piece of history every month in Focus.

Fifty years ago, the Shenendehowa Methodist Parish was formed from the union of four small local Methodist churches -West Crescent, Crescent, Grooms and Newtown. Many of the charter members are still members of our church, and in this month's *Focus* we'd like to share some of their memories.

Norma Morris had attended the West Crescent Church since she was a child and she remembers their annual turkey dinners. There was no electricity at the church, so Alfred Stiles, who owned Stiles General Store across the street, ran an electrical cord from his place so that everyone could see better at the dinner. The church had no running water and no bathroom facilities. The turkeys were cooked in individual homes and carved at Nettie Morris's house (Norma's mother-in-law) which was close by, or at the Stiles Store. The rest of the food was prepared at the church.

The Women's Society of the West Crescent Church had many fundraisers, including selling boxes of gelatin, wrapping paper and Christmas and everyday greeting cards. They contributed \$10 a month toward the pastor's salary. In the early years, some of these small churches had to come up with ingenious ideas to provide help for their pastors. Each fall, everyone bought a pound or more of something that would help tide over the minister and his family for the winter months. This might be potatoes, apples, meat, bags of coal, eggs, home canned goods, etc. and they would all be placed on the altar rail at the Sunday service designated as the “Pound Party.”

In a 1982 issue of the *Focus*, Norma Morris wondered if anyone could remember the roast pork dinner held at the Grooms Church where 303 persons were served at a total expense of \$47.90, plus donations of vegetables and pies. She said the fresh meat was 17 ½ cents per pound and coffee was 21 cents a pound. The total income from the dinner was a total of \$101.10, and the profit was \$67.61.

In a 1995 issue of the *Focus*, based on recollections of Mildred Sweet in 1984, Hilda Watrous wrote: “Some people opposed the merger; it seemed like a tremendous undertaking. Our budgets were in the hundreds and some people couldn't see how we could raise thousands of dollars. The first Sunday in the new church was held before the building was completed. There were no windows and plastic had been fastened over the openings to keep out the cold. It was a windy March day, some of the plastic loosened, and all during the service we heard the flapping of the plastic.”

“The contractor hung the cross over the altar as the architect had instructed. Rev. Mikels liked the reverse side better because it showed up the cross better. So when the contractor went home at night, Rev. Mikels unhooked the cross and hung it the way he wanted it. The next day the architect had the contractor change it back. This went on several times.” Another side note: “The architect insisted on a special faced brick to be ordered from the South for the floor on the altar. When the contractor laid the bricks, he laid them upside down!”

Carrie Boyer