

## History of St. John's Episcopal Church of Eveleth

The earliest Episcopal service in Eveleth, now remembered, was conducted by the Rev. C.F. Kite, General Missioner for Bishop J.D. Morrison of Duluth, in the summer of 1898 or 1899, and held in the large dining room of a big boarding house then standing in Fayal. It was attended by so many people that some had to stand outside for the service. In the latter part of 1899, a guild of Episcopal women, including Mrs. C.W. More, Mrs. J.C. Poole, Mrs. B.C. Prout, and Mrs. Geo. St. Claire was organized at the St. Claire home. Some other Episcopal families here prior to 1900 were those of Jno. Pope, Jno. T. Ormand, and Geo. Dormer.

Bishop Morrison made his first official visit to the Episcopal group here and conducted a public service on Mar. 24, 1900 in the Methodist Church, which was borrowed for the occasion. The first Episcopal child baptized here was John Harris Harding, Jr. baptized at home on Nov. 30, 1900, by the Rev. Louis I. Belding of Virginia. The first Episcopal wedding was conducted by the same clergyman on Dec. 19, 1900, at the Briton C. Prout residence in Fayal, uniting Mrs. Prout's sister, Joanna R. Welsh, and Mr. F. B. Keene. Public services were at first held at irregular intervals, as visiting clergymen were available. Archdeacon Appleby came occasionally. Fayal Hall became the place of meeting. A vigorous "Episcopal Mission Club" to promote parties, entertainments and an occasional concert flourished in the early years of the new century. New families came to town, like those of Dr. Barrett, Dr. Harwood and Geo. A. Whitman.

On October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1902, Bishop Morrison gave the people the status of "mission", at that time un-named.

The first clergyman in regular charge of this mission was the Rev. Herbert E. Ryerson, who conducted services every Sunday, beginning Jan 17<sup>th</sup>, 1903. He resided in Virginia. The Sunday school grew to 33 pupils and 4 teachers by June 1903. Mr. Ryerson left before the end of the year and was succeeded April 3, 1904, by the Rev. Wm. E. Morgan, Ph.D., a dynamic leader. On that date he effected a formal organization of the mission under the name of "St. John's", taking the name from an Ely church that was unable to establish itself. John H. Harding, Sr. was warden and Mason Bert was clerk and treasurer. The first class confirmed by the Bishop on May 22, 1904, consisted of Isle and Florence Knight, Wilhelmina Mulligan, Hannah Jackson Moon, Caroline Prince, Ethel Botrell and Helen Harwood. On Feb. 2, 1905, he confirmed Edward M. Dormer and Henrietta Davies.

In 1904 plans for a church building began to take definite shape. The Oliver Mining Company donated two good lots on the southeast corner of Pierce Street and Chandler Ave. Bishop Morrison stimulated enthusiasm by offering to pay the last \$500 of the cost of a new church. Dr. Morgan and a local committee made a thorough campaign for funds. The women worked hard to make money for building. Construction began on May 16, 1905. Mr. H.F. Marian was the contractor. A Mr. Bray of Duluth drew up the plans. The first service held in the church was an evensong service at 4:00pm scheduled for the first Sunday after August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1905. The first service celebrating communion was on September 17, 1905. The lovely new church was consecrated, entirely free of debt, on Sunday, Oct 8, 1905, by Bishop Morrison. Confirmed the same day, the first in the new church, were John W. Dormer and Evangeline Harvey Dormer.

In December of 1905, Bishop Morrison again met with the Episcopal congregation to discuss how much the church could pledge toward support of a new rector to serve Virginia and Eveleth.

The Rev. Albert Carswell of Randolph, Vt. became the minister in 1906, preaching his inaugural sermon on May 5 of that year. He continued as rector for seven years, the latter part residing in Eveleth, as did his successor, the Rev. Delbert F. Thompson. Other clergymen served briefly until the Rev. Jas. G. Ward took charge in 1917 and served effectively for six years. The Rev. Dr. Manfred Lilliefors and the Rev. Wm. Elliot each served for a time. The Rev. Arthur H. Beaty took charge Jan 1, 1930 and revived the work, in a pastorate of nearly 3 years. The Rev. D.W. Thornberry, D.D. came on Jan 1, 1933 and continued for nearly 12 years. The Rev. Frederick E. Stillwell came Jan 16, 1945.

When the City of Eveleth purchased for park purposes the large tract upon which the church stood, (the block was renamed Central Park and soon housed the Carnegie Library and beautiful flower gardens and a music pavilion) St. John's Church agreed to accept the offer of the City to relocate the church on equally desirable lots elsewhere. Accordingly, in the summer of 1913, the City moved the church to its present beautiful location, on the southeast corner of Pierce St. and McKinley Ave. on land donated by the Fayal Iron Mining Company at a moving expense "not to exceed \$1200 – the actual cost was \$379.27 – and that included repair of damages incurred in the move! The Presbyterian Church then located down the block from St. John's on the corner of Fayal Road and Chandler Ave was also moved at this time to the site next door to St. John's. (That move cost the City \$2295!)

(This information was compiled from a history written by Rev. Stillwell in 1947, gleaned from old church and diocesan records; a search of newspaper articles undertaken by Margaret More, and a study of the old vestry minutes and the aforementioned histories.)