

**Mt. Pleasant Community Church** of 160 years, compiled by Henry Strobel, 2014  
South of Stayton across the Santiam River in Linn County.  
41935 Ridge Dr Scio, OR 97374



How am I qualified to write about this church? Well, hardly, except that my good friend, Giles Brown 1904-1993 of Stayton, used to go there and play hymns on his violin. We were friends through our common interest in violins, and I did go to his funeral. Yes, he grew up in the "Brown House."

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**Old Mt. Pleasant Church Shows Vitality**

(Thanks to) *The Oregon Statesman*, Salem, 6 Apr 1969 (Yes, a little dated, so?)

**New Baptismal Font Recalls Stories of Past**

By JOSEPHINE SOMMER, Statesman Correspondent

STAYTON — When former residents return to worship this Easter in 115-year-old Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church, they will see a beautiful new communion table and baptismal font that may well stir a deeper spirit of worship.

These latest memorial gifts will also stir reminiscences of past improvements to the chapel four miles southeast of Stayton. The gift also may prompt memories of another period when the original font used by the Presbyterians of the community created a division which once closed the church door for a period of two years.

**Rev. Arne V. Magnuson**, who lives at 256 Gregory Lane SE, Salem, has served both the Mehama Presbyterian Church and the Mount Pleasant congregation since 1962. Today and every Sunday he holds a 9:30 a.m. service at the rural church and an 11 a.m. service at Mehama.

**A Circuit Rider** Thus he symbolizes the circuit rider who frequently preached at Mount Pleasant and other pioneer churches long ago. The Mount Pleasant Church has been a landmark in the foothills for many years. To the faithful congregation it represents stability and dedication— plus the kind of pioneer faith that persisted until farms appeared and settlements thrived. In spite of many ups and downs over the years, they have continued to maintain the old structure.

The single story structure, built in 1854, is one of the earliest examples of pioneer community effort to be found

in this part of the state. It was built on school land donated by **Washington Crabtree** and deeded for church purposes in 1877.

**Good Square Nails** When repairs were made in 1958-59, the original hand-hewn stringers were found to be as sound as the day they were placed and many old square, hand-wrought nails were still firmly lodged. The church, in its early days, served alternately as a meeting place for the Cumberland Presbyterian and the Christian denominations. **Benjamin Harrison Logan Irvine** belonged to the first group and Crabtree was a Christian. In those days, denominational doctrines often created uncomfortable situations. The new memorial baptismal font, for example, reminds of a time when the division between “sprinkling” and “immersion” groups attending Mount Pleasant Community church became so strong that Crabtree – on whose property the church stood – filled the church with hay and used it for a shed for two years.

Finally a reconciliation was effected, the church cleared and the baptismal font, which caused the argument, was repaired. “Now, even members of the Presbyterian church -- long a proponent of the sprinkling method—can request immersion if they wish,” explained **Mrs. Haskel Huntley**, one of the faithful, longtime members. “A few years ago, some of the Mount Pleasant congregation requested immersion and our pastor complied.”

The church’s fortunes varied with the times. Frequently the structure was used for other community meetings besides church and Sunday School. In fact, at one time during the early part of the 20th century, it was used as a 9th grade school room. **Rev. J. Y. Stewart**, a Yale graduate, filled the pulpit for 21 years—until his death Feb. 20, 1943.

At one period in the church’s history, the congregation became so small that serious consideration was given to discontinuing services forever. However, people like **Angeline (Ryan) Huntley** and **Mable (Schultz) Smith** don’t give up easily. Fortunately their marriages to **Haskel Huntley** and **Fred Smith** doubled the membership and helped start the dwindling congregation on the upward trend again. **Mrs. Smith** is still pianist at the little church. **Huntley** was Sunday School superintendent for many years and both couples were very active in the reconstruction period of recent times.

**Electricity Added** The first modernization came with the installation of electricity during the church’s centennial year, 1954, while **Rev. James Hardy** was pastoring both the Mount Pleasant and Mehama congregations. A few years later the decrepit roof and weathered siding called for a definite decision— and a Sears Roebuck Foundation cash award, given through the Oregon Council of Churches, helped provide incentive.

Gifts came in from unexpected sources and it took many hours of donated work and supplies by the membership before the foundation was repaired; a new roof added; some siding replaced; fresh paint applied inside and out. New curtains, altar carpeting, center isle runner, hymn book racks and a donated organ and refinished piano completed the new look in the interior. Plantings of annuals, some clearing in the grove and hanging baskets in the trees added to the picturesque grounds.

**Easter Celebrated** It was Easter Sunday, March 29, 1959, when an open house commemorated the church’s 105th year and gave opportunity for the congregation to show off their refurbished chapel. This Easter Sunday the new communion table and baptismal font will be admired but little publicized. The story behind the gift is known to the pastor whose spiritual counseling at a time of family illness led to the handsome gift and the request for no publicity.

An inconspicuous plaque on the table reads “In Memory of **Fred W. and Florence Mould**” and on the baptismal font, “In Memory of **William Richard Thomas Sr.** by his wife **Alice.**”

“I was built in the year 1854 by the early pioneers who came to make their in this beautiful valley. They hewed my foundation out of trees (still as solid as the day I was built). My lumber was hauled from Oregon City by ox-team which took days to make one trip. I have served the people of this community as the Lord’s House for 105 years. With your help I could serve you many more years and remain a

memorial of the sacrifices of the early pioneers. By **Venus Stanley** and **Freda Thayer.**"

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