

The History of St. Paul's
Episcopal Church
of
Kern County
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Preface

It is my purpose in this paper to relate the history of the Episcopal services in Kern County, and to give to this sufficient background from the Episcopal history of California to correlate it.

I am deeply indebted to the Rev. W. F. Patrick and to Mrs. Cora Bender for their help in furnishing sources of material used, and to the Rev. Rev. Louis Childs Sanford, D. D., Mr. Alfred Harrell and Miss Maude Metcalf for interviews.

Mary Elizabeth Mangyn

CHAPTER I

Early Episcopal Service in California

In Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, the Prayer Book Cross of solid grey stone, Ionic in form and fifty-five feet high, commemorates the first service in English conducted in what is now the United States. It bears the following inscription on the face, - "A memorial of the service held in Drake's Bay about St. John Baptist's Day, June 24, 1579, by Thomas Fletcher, Priest of the Church of England, Chaplain of Sir Francis Drake, Chronicler of the service."

(On the Reverse)

"First Christian Service in the English Tongue on our Coast.
First Service of Book of Common Prayer in our Country.
One of the first Recorded Missionary Prayers on our Continent."

(On Base front)

"Soli Deo Sit Semper Gloria."

Since the permanent settlements in California were made by the Spanish, no record is found of religious services other than Roman Catholic for more than two hundred and fifty years.

The next service in California was conducted in 1847 by the Rev. W. R. Leavenworth, Chaplain of Col. J. D. Stevenson's Regiment, Sunday, March 17, in a room in the Parker House in San Francisco.

"A good congregation was gathered by the efforts of Chpl Chaplain Leavenworth and a few friends, from the streets, the dance halls, and saloons of the town." (note)2

The discovery of gold changed this little Spanish port of "Yerba Buena" to the "American city" of San Francisco with about thirty thousand inhabitants. Although there was a great influx of the

Gift of George W. Childs, Esq., of Philadelphia
1 Dougla Ottinger Kelley's History of the Diocese of California, San Francisco, 1915, pp. 1 - 2 2 op. cit. pp.2 3 op. cit. p.5

adventurous type of men seeking the yellow metal, there were also a few professional men, government officials, and respectable merchants who were accompanied by their families. Among these newcomers were those newcomers who were religiously inclined and desired services.

Some of these in the fall of 1848 sent to the Mission Board requesting a Rector. Due to lack of organization of San Francisco church people, two missionaries were sent; one by the Mission Board and the other by friends in New York. Rev. F. S. Mines was the first clergyman to arrive, reaching San Francisco in July 1849. Fr. J. L. Dr. J. I. Ver Mehr did not arrive until a month later due to small-pox and a voyage around Cape Horn. The arrival of two clergymen instead of one might have been very serious except for the nature of the two men, who became the warmest friends; and the fact that the city grew so rapidly that the two men were needed. The Rev. Flavel S. Mines organized Trinity Church on his arrival, and on April 28, 1850, Grace Church was organized with Dr. Ver Mehr in charge. Both churches grew and prospered due to the rapid increase in population. Hardly had the first year elapsed when word was received that the Board of Missions in New York had passed a resolution to discontinue missions in California. This action of the board resulted in the calling of an Episcopal Convention of the few clergymen then in California. At the Convention the Diocese of the Pacific Coast was formed, and arrangements were made for the administration of the work. At the second convention three years later, 1853, revisions were made in the working plan, and delegates were chosen for the General Convention or Conference of the Episcopal Church which convened in New York City. At the General Conference the delegates were not given seats because the diocese was not recognized. The conference created a Missionary Diocese and elected Fr. William Ingraham Kip Bishop. He was hastily sent for and arrangements were made for his consecration. His

brother-in-law, Bishop of Maine, preached the sermon, and Bishop Kemp acted as Presiding Bishop and Chief Consecrator.

He set sail with his wife and son by way of Panama. The steamer, the Golden Gate, was only able to reach the little port of San Diego before it went to pieces. This necessitated a delay of a week before the passengers were able to continue their voyage.

On Sunday, Bishop Kip held morning service, and this was the first service that he held on the Pacific Coast.

On his arrival at San Francisco, Sunday, January 2, 1854, Dr. Kip was warmly greeted by a committee of churchmen. He began his labors at once and preached at Trinity and Grace Churches that same day.

Although distinctly an Eastern man, and without personal experience in any sort of pioneer missionary affairs, he was much interested in what was being done at that time in the new and rapidly settling Northwest, and no one could have entered upon the duties to which he had now dedicated the remainder of his life with a finer spirit or with higher ideals than Bishop Kip brought to the Pacific Coast. There were elements in his character and equipment of the very highest order; a gentleman in every fibre of his being, by culture and by inheritance; a churchman, by intelligent, strong conviction of the school of Hobart, a scholar in literature and art especially, in life habits a man of singular purity and sense of honor in thought and conduct, and withal physically a striking figure -- tall, well-built and handsome.

When Bishop Kip came to this state, he found only three clergymen regular at work, and the work progressed very slowly. He visited the various towns and posts throughout the state investigating the field and establishing missions wherever and whenever possible. Of his trip through the San Joaquin he writes, --

"For more than a year I had been attempting to visit the Southern part of the state, but was never able to do so; the unsettled state of the country infested by the worst class of whites and Mexicans, often robbing in large parties, rendered it impossible or unsafe to travel except with a large thoroughly armed party. Such a party I could not find until the present time, when Major Townsend, U. S. A., being ordered to inspect Forts Tejon and Miller, had to pass through the country, and I availed myself of the opportunity. Some other ^{having} friends offered to join us, for the purpose of seeing the country, we had a sufficient number for security. Besides Major T., my youngest son and myself, the party consisted of Hon. Edward Stanley (late of North Carolina), Mr. James F. Calhoun (late of South Carolina, and Mr. J. T. Smith of San Francisco."

The journey from San Francisco to Los Angeles was made by ocean voyage and took from October first to the fourth, 1855. During the time there was a storm and dense fog, the Captain being the same one as the one on the ship, the Golden Gate, thought the Bishop was a bad omen.

"Los Angeles has all the characteristics of an old Spanish town. It contains about 5,000 inhabitants, 2,000 of whom may be Americans or English Until within the last six months, there has been no English service of any kind in Los Angeles except those of the old Romish Church. As the preaching was in Spanish, the Americans never went to it, We had service morning and evening. ... the first time our solemn liturgy was ever heard in this section of the country. At the morning service there were about eighty present, and a much larger number in the evening...

"We left Los Angeles for Fort Tejon (about one hundred miles distant) at eleven o'clock. Our vehicle was a large heavy wagon, for

no other is adapted to the mountain passes through which our road leads. It was drawn by four mules, and we had a driver well acquainted with the country. Our driver was well armed, and the gentlemen with us had their rifles and revolvers.⁸"

It took the party from Monday until Thursdaynoon to reach Fort Tejon. The group had suffered from heat and lack of water.

"The fort at the Tejon is on a little plain, entirely surrounded by high mountains....."

The journey northward was beset with many dangers and hardships. The party suffered from lack of water. It required two days to reach Kern River, thirty three miles of which we traveled without water. It took until the next Sunday to reach Fort Miller, where Bishop Kip held service for ninety men stationed there. Here the wagon was left and the rest of the journey was made by ^a stage which they were to employ to Snelling Tavern. From there they continued their trip by regular stage route.

ibid pp.

Note - This page and the ones before it have been lost from the remainder of Mary Elizabeth Mangun's paper, and have been typewritten to replace those lost from a rough manuscript which Mrs. Mangun had given to Miss Maude Metcalf.