



CHM 150 Techniques of Historical Investigation

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A HISTORY OF THE FLORENCE METHODIST CHURCH  
FLORENCE, COLORADO

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The Iliff School of Theology  
Denver, Colorado  
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## PREFACE

This history is not intended to include all that might be written into an account of the church at Florence. I have only mentioned the Sunday school in an incidental way. I did not have records enough to make it worth while to include a section in which this department would be treated. The church has had, in times passed, an outstanding choir. This fact I have learned, but I could not get the proper data to include a section concerning the activities of the choir. Therefore, I did not include that. There were periods of time in the history of the church when it seems that nothing was happening. I have passed over these with but little comment.

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Churches in Coal Creek and Rockvale.....	13
Cement in the Life of Florence.....	18
Rev. S.H. Kirkbride, 1898-1898.....	18
Rev. A.L. Chase, 1898-1899.....	22
Rev. J.C. Horn, 1899.....	24
Rev. J.W. Keely, 1899-1901.....	24
Rev. Thomas Andrew, 1901-1902.....	24
Rev. F.T. Krueger, 1902-1904.....	24
Rev. George S. Parker, 1904-1905.....	26
Rev. H.M. Fingree, 1905-1908.....	26
Rev. W.C. Milliken, 1908-1910.....	29



# TABLE OF CONTENT

Florence Platted, 1872 .....	1
Uncle Jesse Frazier.....	1
Edwin Lobach.....	2
Senator James A. McCandless.....	3
Early Methodist Work in Florence.....	5
Rev. J.F. Harris, 1882-1884;.....	6
List of Members Received First Year.....	8
First Officers.....	9
Rev. Thomas P. Cook, 1884-1887.....	10
Rev. John Harrington, 1887-1889.....	10
Special Recognition.....	10
Rev. Joseph A. Smith, 1889.....	11
Rev. H.R. Antes, 1889-1893.....	11
Oil Groth in Florence.....	11
Florence A Boom Town.....	14
Florence and Coal Mining.....	17
Churches in Coal Creek and Rockvale.....	18
Cement in the Life of Florence.....	18
Rev. S.H. Kirkbride, 1893-1898.....	18
Rev. A.L. Chase, 1898-1899.....	22
Rev. J.C. Horn, 1899.....	24
Rev. J.W. Neely, 1899-1901.....	24
Rev. Thomas Andrew, 1901-1902.....	24
Rev. F.T. Krueger, 1902-1904.....	24
Rev. George S. Parker, 1904-1905.....	26
Rev. H.M. Pongree, 1905-1908.....	28
Rev. W.C. Millikan, 1908-1910.....	29



Rev. James R. Thomas, 1910-1914.....	29
Rev. William F. Clark, 1914-1915.....	31
Rev. William J. Kidd, 1915-1917.....	31
Rev. A.L. Leech, 1917-1918.....	32
Rev. H.G. McCallister, 1918.....	33
Rev. J.H. Boner, 1918-1919.....	33
Rev. George E. Pennell, 1919.....	34
Rev. F.F. Gibbs, 1919-1921.....	35
Rev. R.H. Warren, 1921-1922.....	35
The Fire, November 26, 1922.....	36
Rev. M.C. Dorsett, 1923-1925.....	39
Rev. J.E. Robinson, 1925-1927.....	40
Rev. J.E. Bula, 1927.....	40
Rev. J.C. Watson, 1927-1929.....	40
Rev. E.O. Harbour, 1929-1931.....	40
Rev. Alexander Bryans, 1931-1932.....	40
Rev. W.T. Gatley, 1932-1934.....	40
Rev. J.T. Bainbridge, 1934-1937.....	40
Rev. B.R. Lawton, 1937-1938.....	40
Rev. Coulter, 1938-1941.....	40
Rev. E.H. Hoffman 1941-1943.....	41
Rev. Thomas Franks, 1943-1945.....	41
Rev. F.H. Napier, 1945-1949.....	41
Rev. J.R. Jones, 1949-1952.....	41
Rev. J. Marlin Barker, 1952-1954.....	42
References.....	46



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Florence. There was a seedling tree that, by chance, sprang  
up in his orchard. This tree bore what came to be known as  
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ety ever originated in this state." By 1879, Uncle Jesse

The town sight of Florence, Colorado was laid out  
by James A. McCandless in the year 1872. Previous to this  
time the community had been known as Frazierville, a farm-  
ing community, some seven to ten miles south of Canon City,  
on the Arkansas River, in what is known as the Upper Arkan-  
sas Valley. This portion of the valley was settled about  
the middle of the eighteenth century. City for marketing.

Uncle Jesse Frazier: Jesse Frazier, better known as  
"Uncle Jesse," settled on a farm, just west of the present  
town of Florence, in the year 1859. His wife was the first  
white woman to make her home in Fremont County. The Frazier  
home was located on the Arkansas River about eight miles  
below Canon City, and was the first farm in the county of  
Fremont. "To him (Uncle Jesse) is conceded the honor of  
having plowed the first furrow in the county, toward making  
him a farm."<sup>1</sup> His plow was of the most primitive type. He  
made it by cutting a forked cottonwood tree and using one  
prong for the plow beam and the other for the plow share.  
Yet, he raised considerable vegetables and some "Mexican  
corn." To Uncle Jesse goes another distinction: He was the  
first to plant an orchard of fruit trees. He hauled the  
trees from Missouri in an ox wagon and set them on a track



of land that is now a part of the residential section of Florence. There was a seedling tree that, by chance, sprang up in his orchard. This tree bore what came to be known as the Colorado Orange Apple. It was well adapted to this climate, and has been described as "the only worthwhile variety ever originated in this state."<sup>2</sup> By 1879, Uncle Jesse had an orchard of about 2,500 fruit bearing trees, of which 2,000 were apple trees. The sale of his fruit, alone, gave him a comfortable income, not to mention the other products from his farm. James A. McCandless: Another man who should

Another early activity of Uncle Jesse's was mining coal, at Coal Creek, a few miles south of his home, and hauling it in an ox cart, to Pueblo and Canon City for marketing.

He was a staunch Methodist, and was active in the early Methodist work at Canon City and Florence. He was, perhaps, the most liberal giver the Methodist Church, at Florence, has ever had. of his herd of cattle and fine

Edwin Lobach: Edwin Lobach was another pioneer of the Arkansas Valley. He was a freighter in the early days. In 1862, he was in command of a train of twenty-six wagons, which were pulled by oxen, six yoke to each wagon. This train hauled freight between Leavenworth, Kansas and Denver. For awhile, after coming to this part of the country, 1868, he did construction work for the Union Pacific Railroad, and traded with the Indians. But when he decided to settle on a farm, 1870, and devote his time to agriculture, he purchased the Stephen Frazier ranch, which was located just west of Uncle Jesse's farm. This was one of the most pro-



ductive farms in the valley, and Mr. Lobach never failed an opportunity to improve it. It is today one of the best farms in the county, under the direction and cultivation of Phillip Lobach, a grand-son of Edwin Lobach.

Mr. Lobach had a distinction, all his own: It seems that beside being an expert farmer, he was the best broncho tamer in the country. He had a large herd of horses and trained them to be the white man's beast of burden, instead of bucking, vicious brutes.

Senator James A. McCandless: Another man who should be mentioned in connection with this history is James A. McCandless, a man of winsome personality and a leader among his fellows. He did more than anyone else in establishing the town of Florence. He moved from North Carolina and settled in the valley in 1866. He showed his skill as a farmer and rancher by his large cribs of corn from small fields, and by the rapid increase of his herd of cattle and fine horses. In 1869, he moved to the Chatfield farm, which was considered to be one of the best corn farms in the community. It was on a portion of this farm that Mr. McCandless platted the town of Florence, 1872, at the junction of the Coal Creek Branch Railroad. Coal Creek was at this time a thriving coal mining town.

While the surveying of the town sight was in progress the engineer, Townshand S. Brandeggee, became well acquainted with, and took a fancy to, the three year old daughter of Mr. McCandless. After the survey was completed Mr. Bandeggee asked what name was going to be given to the new town. Mr.



McCandless replied that no name had been decided upon. The engineer, who held the little girl in his arms at that time, suggested that the town be named "Florence", in honor of the little girl. Mr. McCandless agreed to the suggestion and Florence it was. The Town was incorporated in 1887.

Concerning other activities in and around Florence, Mr. McCandless, like Edwin Lobach, traded with the Indians, and because of his fairness with them, they called him "Ute's Mac." He not only won the confidence of the Indians, but of his white friends as well. He was active in politics, serving as a member of the state senate in its early sessions. He joined in partnership with A.M. Cassidy, who had come here from the Pennsylvania oil fields, in forming what may have been the first crude oil refinery in the state. He was one of the leading figures in the development of irrigation in the valley. The water rights for this project is one of the oldest in reference to taking water from the Arkansas River. The Union Ditch Company is still in operation in Florence. He was the first to organize a bank in Florence. It was Mr. McCandless who planted the first alfalfa in this section; he hauled the seed from California at \$40.00 per pound. He was one of the leaders in building the first road into Cripple Creek.

It has been said of Mr. McCandless that he was a "natural engineer," and possessed an extraordinary ability to size up and get to the heart of any proposition that came before him. To say the least, he was a tireless worker in his determination to see Florence grow.



Early Methodist Work in Florence: The first Methodist service held in the Frazier Community, now Florence, was in 1865. This service was, probably, held by Rev. George Murray, who had come to the Colorado Conference from Ohio that same year, and was placed in charge of Methodist work at "Colorado City, Canon City, and Pueblo, with Florence, Beaver Creek, and Fountain City in his Circuit."<sup>4</sup> The main points on the circuit were Colorado City, where Rev. Murray lived, Canon City, and Pueblo. It took the minister about six weeks to make the complete round of his circuit because he would stop at all the communities, on his circuit, and hold preaching services.<sup>5</sup>

In January, 1866, a Methodist Church was organized at Canon City by Rev. George Murray, the preacher in charge. However, he had held preaching services there before the organization of the church. It is quite likely that he held preaching services in the community which later became Florence during his first visits to Canon City.

In April, 1867, "a log church costing \$200, paid for by the Canon City Society was dedicated in the Frazier neighborhood near where Florence now stands."<sup>6</sup> Again in another place, from the above source, we find this testimony: "In June, 1868, Wm. M. Smith was appointed presiding elder and pastor at Canon City, but owing to Indian trouble, he did not move down. He engaged William Shepherd a local preacher and a blacksmith to fill the pulpit at Canon and Frazierville. The following year Brother Smith became the pastor and moved to Florence."<sup>7</sup>



This is in keeping with another record,<sup>8</sup> which states that, in 1868, William Shepherd organized the first Sunday school in a log house which was located at the extreme west end of what is now Main street in Florence. His other points of service were at Coal Creek and Hardscrabble. He would come out from Canon City, either by horse back or walking. Frequently he was accompanied by some of the young people from Canon City.

In 1870, an adobe school house was built in the Frazier Community. The school house is located on the west side of Sand Creek, facing Front street. This building was used for church services for several years.

From the records that are available it seems that Methodist services were held in Florence from 1865 until 1882 as a mission under the leadership of the Methodist Church in Canon City.

The Reverend J.F. Harris, 1882-1884: In May, 1882, Rev. J.F. Harris was appointed to the work at Florence. "At that time a saloon, an adobe hotel, and one store, in which the postoffice was also located, constituted the business section of the town. There was no church organization of any kind, and it was Dr. Harris who organized the Florence Circuit, consisting of Florence, Rockvale, Coal Creek, and Hardscrabble."<sup>9</sup> This may indicate that the mission work by the Canon City Church had been given up, or it may indicate that it had not been considered to be a church organization.

The first service held by Rev. Harris was on a Sunday



afternoon, in the roundhouse of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, which was located just south of the present railroad station. Later, however, the adobe school house, on Front street, was used for services. The first parsonage was built on the lot west of the school house during Harris' two years of service here. He was appointed to the Florence work in May, 1882, and was removed for another appointment in August, 1884.

The parsonage was listed in the Conference Journal for the first time in 1884, and was valued at \$1,000. It must have been completed during the conference year of 1883-84.

Concerning the organization of the Florence Circuit, there is not adequate information available to reconstruct the true situation. It was pointed out, in an above statement, that there was no organized church in Florence at the time of Harris' appointment. Furthermore, it was pointed out that it was J.F. Harris who organized the Florence Circuit. However, there are records which show evidence of an organized church at Florence, Coal Creek, and Rockvale before the arrival of Rev. Harris, to take over the appointment. But the same records show that the churches were organized in 1882; and, probably, under the leadership of E.C. Dodge, pastor of the Methodist Church at Canon City. In "The Church Record" listing membership there are, at least, fifteen names that were recorded as having joined the churches on the Circuit in 1882, and E.C. Dodge is listed as the minister who received them. (0



The following persons are listed in the "Roll of Membership" as having been received into the churches by the end of J.F. Harris' first year, July, 1883, and the following code will be used to denote minister, year, and how they were received: "H" (Harris), "D" (Dodge), "82" (1882), "83" (1883), "L" (Letter), and "P" (Profession of Faith, or Probation):

1. David Allen - H - 82 - P.
2. Mrs. Agnes Allen - H - 82 - P.
3. G.M. Bryant - H - 82 - P.
4. Mrs. Martha Bryant - H - 82 - P.
5. Frank Berry - D - 82 - L.
6. Mrs. Susie Berry - D - 82 - L.
7. Mrs. Rebecca Blunt - H - 83 - P.
8. Wm. D. Blunt - H - 83 - L.
9. George Collard - H - 82 - L.
10. Mrs. Almira Collard - H - 82 - L.
11. Jesse Corn - H - 83 - P.
12. Mrs. S.A. Corn - H - 83 - P.
13. Miss Lelia Corn - H - 83 - P.
14. Mrs. Alice Dando - D - 82 - L.
15. Jesse Frazier - H - 82 - L.
16. Mrs. Elizabeth Frazier - H - 82 - L.
17. William Found - D - 82 - L.
18. Mrs. Naomi Found - D - 82 - L.
19. Edward Frantum - H - 83 - P.
20. John Morgan - D - 82 - L.
21. Mrs. Hannah Morgan - D - 82 - L.
22. Mrs. Hattie Mathias - D - 82 - L.
23. Miss Minnie Mathias - D - 82 - L.
24. Miss Maggie Morgan - D - 82 - L.
25. Miss Lizzie Morgan - D - 82 - L.
26. Thomas Miller - H - 83 - P.
27. Achsah Nash - D - 82 - L.
28. Miss Lizzie Nash - D - 82 - L.
29. J.K. Powell - D - 82 - L.
30. Arlington Reagle - H - 82 - P.
31. Samuel Richards - H - 82 - L.
32. Mrs. Amelia Stacy - H - 83 - P.
33. Mrs. Ann Thomas - D - 82 - L.
34. J.P. Thomas - H - 82 - P.
35. Mrs. Fanny Thickens - H - 83 - L.
36. D.Q. Williams - H - 82 - L.
37. Mrs. D.Q. Williams - H - 82 - L.
38. H.J. Williams - H - 82 - L.
39. Mrs. Hattie M. Williams - H - 82 - L.
40. J.M. Woods - H - 82 - P.
41. B.G. Woodford - H - 83 - P.
42. Mrs. Mary Wagstaff - H - 82 - P.



The following are the names of the first officers.

I am not sure that this is a complete number. It seems that there would be more than one Trustee. However, that is all that I can be sure of in this case:

1. Jesse Frazier: Steward and Trustee.
2. G.M. Bryant: Steward and Class Leader.
3. J.P. Thomas: Steward and Sunday School Superintendent.
4. Wm. Found: Class Leader and Sunday School Superintendent.
5. David Allen: Steward and Sunday School Superintendent.
6. D.Q. Williams: Class Leader.

The Class Leaders schedule was as follows:

1. G.M. Bryant: Thursday evening at Florence.
2. Wm. Found: Sabbath A.M. at Rockvale.
3. D.Q. Williams: Thursday evening at Coal Creek. 11

Concerning the membership: I do not know who were charter members. I have listed a code following each name in order that someone might know who among the first year members were considered charter members. The number of members at the end of the first full conference year, as given above, does not correspond to the number given in the Journal, 1883, as you will notice in the next paragraph.

I do not have access to the Conference Journal, 1882, but the 1883 Journal lists the Florence and Coal Creek was Circuit. J.F. Harris was appointed to the work for the second year. It had been considered as an organized Circuit for, at least, one year. In the statistics the Circuit is listed as having fifty-two full members, and seventeen probationers. For the support of the pastor \$747 was listed, which included the rent on the parsonage. The Journal listed \$180 Missionary Appropriation for the Circuit.



Rev. Thomas P. Cook, 1884-1887: Rev. Thomas P. Cook followed J.F. Harris as pastor. He was appointed in 1884 and served for three years. It was during his ministry that the first Methodist Church building was begun, and a new parsonage, as well. This church was a brick building located in the 300 block on west Main street. "Uncle Jesse" Frazier gave the first \$1,000 toward the building of this church. However, Edwin Lobach, A.M. Johnson, and a long list of others were liberal contributors, of money and otherwise, toward the construction of this house of worship.

Rev. John Harrington, 1887-1889: At the 1887 conference Rev. John Harrington was appointed to the work here. The church building and parsonage was completed. There are no details concerning the cost of the church or the parsonage. The other parsonage had been listed at a value of \$1,000, and the new one was listed at the same value. The first time that the Circuit was listed as having a church building was, 1887, and at that time two buildings were listed, but no value was given for either. But in 1888 the value of the two churches was listed at \$6,000. This included the church at Rockvale, which was completed at about the same time as was the Florence church. The Coal Creek church was not built until 1891.

Special Recognition: Special recognition has been given to the first three ministers to have served the Florence Circuit: "Never will the thoroughly efficient work of Pastor Cook, in every department of his labors, be forgotten."<sup>12</sup> And in connection with J.F. Harris, Cook's predecessor, and



John Harrington, Cook's successor, the following has been said: "Perhaps two of the best remembered pastors of the early Florence church were James F. Harris and John Harrington."<sup>13</sup>

From these testimonies, one might conclude that the first three pastors of the Florence Methodist Church were outstanding in their work and in winning the heart and loyalty of their people.

Rev. Joseph A. Smith, 1889, and <sup>Wm</sup> H.R. Antes, 1889-1893:

In August, 1889, Rev. Joseph A. Smith was appointed to the work at Florence, but he was in charge here for only a part of the year, having been transferred to La Junta; and Rev.

<sup>Wm</sup> H.R. Antes was placed in charge of the Florence Circuit, having been transferred from Holyoke, in the Northern District. Antes continued as pastor until June, 1893, when he was appointed to the church at Rocky Ford.

Rev. Antes was well liked by the people of Florence. It was during his ministry that Florence was removed from the circuit and became a full time charge. It has been said that the church prospered under his ministry.<sup>14</sup>

Oil in the Growth of Florence: Florence became a municipality on October 4, 1887. This was the date of the first town election of officers. The following persons were elected: James A. McCandless was elected the first mayor; J.C. McKellip became police magistrate; for marshal C.A. Keighton was elected; the first city council were Charles Le Fever, A.L. Green, Julius A. McCandless, L.L. Percival, Vernon S. Simon, and A.M. Williams. This was the same year that the oil industry



began to boom.

The Florence-Canon City oil field is the nation's second oldest, and it is believed that the two oldest producing wells are in the Florence field. The oldest of the two wells is "Old 42," which was drilled in 1887 three miles northwest of Florence. The other well is "Old 86," which was put into production in 1896. It is three miles south of Florence. "Old 86," though not the oldest, is known as the "Granddaddy" of the Continental Oil Company. The production of this field has been reduced to only a fraction of what it was at the peak of output, around the turn of the century.

The oil discovery, in this area, was made by Gabriel Bowen, just one year after the nation's first discovery at Titusville, Pennsylvania, on August 27, 1859. This discovery was made about seven miles northeast of Canon City in the fall of 1860. In 1862, Mr. A.M. Cassidy came to Canon City, and joined with James A. McCandless in drilling five wells at Four mile Creek, east of Canon City and eight miles north of Florence. From that start, at least, 1,300 wells have been drilled. It was reported, in 1879, that about 300,000 gallons of oil had been manufactured and shipped to different markets in Colorado between the years 1862 and 1865. This oil was of a very superior quality, "both for illuminating and lubricating purposes."<sup>15</sup>

After a thorough investigation, by Mr. Cassidy, who had come here from the Pennsylvania fields, it was decided that the main body of oil would be found in the valley of the Arkansas River. During the 1878 work was begun on a well



within a mile east of Canon City. However, this section of the valley did not prove so productive as did the field at Florence. It was not until 1887, "when oil was developed south of Canon City, at Florence, Colorado,"<sup>16</sup> that real production begun. The output for this year was 76,295 barrels, and the following year, 1888, production jumped to 297,612 barrels. The peak of production was reached in 1892, when 824,000 barrels were taken. / From that time until the present there has been a steady decrease in production, except for a short time sometime soon after 1925.

In the early days of production, James A. McCandless and A.M. Cassidy, sold their refined product for a price ranging from \$2.00 to \$6.00 per gallon. The highest price was received when, at one time, Indians made it difficult for the ox wagons to get through to market.

From the early refinery sprang the big plants, located at Florence. There were such large companies as Continental Oil Company, and Standard Oil Company, of Indiana. Standard Oil Company handled not only the product of the local field, but trainloads of oil from northern Colorado and Wyoming fields, as well.

Two of the first refining companies in Florence were the United Oil Company, run by Denver capital, and the Florence Oil and Refining Company, headed by A.R. Gumaer. In 1916, the United Oil Company was taken over by Standard Oil interest. At this time the plant was enlarged and modernized. Later the Florence Oil and Refining Company was taken over by the Standard Company. With each year following until sometime after



1927 there was an increased efficiency and refining capacity.

About the year 1925 there was a vast expansion of the oil bearing strata to the south and west of Florence. This brought the output up to more than it had been for twenty-five years before.

There were about twenty oil companies in Florence, from start to finish, but the largest was Continental. This was the last company to sell its holdings and move out of the oldest oil field in the state of Colorado. The Continental interest was sold to Earl Hollandsworth, of Texas, in 1937. The last refinery was then moved away, and Florence had lost its oldest and most productive business. In fact, oil had been the cause of Florence; oil had stayed long enough, however, to establish a sure foundation for a town, a town that has remained, even after oil became a memory to the older people and a fascinating story to the younger folk.

Florence, A Boom Town: When gold was discovered in the Cripple Creek district there was one disadvantage which the miners faced, namely, a way in which to get the ore out to refineries. Shortly after the gold discovery in the district L. Williams, D. White, and Isaac Canfield rode horseback up Eight Mile Creek, over what became the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad, and what is now the famous Phantom Canyon highway. They brought back good news to the miners. An outlet for their ore would soon be an actuality.

It was only a few days later when work begun on a wagon road, which was pushed through in short order. This wagon road was followed the next year, 1893, by a narrow gauge rail-



road, the Florence and Cripple Creek. As soon as ore was brought out of the gold fields, ore mills and smelters were erected at Florence, and Florence took on all the aspects of a boom town. Creek district, and mills to process the ore

Gambling houses and saloons flourished as never before. There were not enough houses to accommodate the people. Tents were erected, and sleeping space was rented for \$2.00 per night. Families of five and six lived in one room of some of the hotels and boarding houses. The sidewalks could not accommodate the crowds that were on the streets. On certain days of the week no horse or wagon was allowed on Main street because sidewalks and street were filled with pedestrians from one side to the other. The oil industry was at its peak, coal mining was at a high production, and the Cripple Creek gold rush was spilling over into Florence. The town was in every respect a boom town.

The first track of the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad was built along the creek level. It was almost completely washed out during the first summer. But in this short time it had actually paid for itself, so the loss was not so great as it would have been if the road had not been paid for in full. However, this was too profitable an enterprise to forsake, so the railroad was rebuilt. This time on a slightly higher level; and again it went out in a flood; and again it was reconstructed; this time out of reach of anything short of a disastrous cloudburst.

The gold rush boom in Florence had its day and was over, enjoying only a short life. The mines in the Cripple



Creek district, came to be controlled by Colorado Springs capital. It was only natural that these mine owners wished to refine their own ore. A railroad was built from the Springs to the Cripple Creek district, and mills to process the ore were constructed at Colorado Springs. This brought an end to Florence and the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad boom. By the turn of the century Cripple Creek interest was directed to Colorado Springs.

Florence had been the point of change from all incoming trains for those who were going to Cripple Creek, or for those who were leaving the gold field. Sometimes there were so many people who were going to and from Cripple Creek that it would take two trains to transport them to their destination. Beside the hauling of ore from the mines, the passenger transportation had been a profitable business for the railroad. But with the building of a railroad from Colorado Springs to Cripple Creek some of this passenger business was taken from the Florence and Cripple Creek.

The railroad did not stop operation, however, until 1912, when a flood took out several miles of track. Business was poor, and had been for several years; and to rebuild would have been expensive. Therefore, the company requested the Public Service Commission to be allowed to abandon the road. The request was granted.

However, a road to Cripple Creek was greatly needed. With this in mind J. Victor McCandless, son of Senator McCandless, took the lead in building the famous Phantom Canyon/highway on the old railroad grade. This highway soon be-



came famous as one of the great scenic drives of the state. A part of this highway was washed out in the great flood of 1921, and the counties of Fremont and Teller had no funds with which to rebuild it. Whereupon, the Florence Chamber of Commerce called for volunteers and reconstructed the highway in about three months. This was an all out project. Everybody, rich and poor alike, turned out for work. Help came from Victor, Penrose, and Canon City. It was one of the largest volunteer jobs ever undertaken in the state of Colorado. This highway has meant a great deal to Florence in the way of drawing tourist trade.

Florence and the Coal Mines: No coal mines are located at Florence, but they are to be considered as tributaries to the town, being located within a distance of not more than twelve miles away; and some of them are much closer. The oldest coal mine in the state of Colorado is located at Coal Creek, only about five miles from Florence. It was at the junction of the railroad which served the mines at Coal Creek that the town of Florence was platted. As a rule the miners did not live in Florence because housing and a business section was usually provided at or near the mines. However, these mines have meant a great deal to the growth of Florence.

Coal mining, as a profitable business is older, in Fremont County, than the oil industry. But mining, like oil, is only a fraction of what it was at one time. During the early thirties of this century many of the mines stopped operation. This left hundreds of people out of work. This brought about reorganization in the mining industry. Many of the local people



who were miners, formed small companies. They leased the mines and equipment and continued to mine coal; but production was on a much smaller scale than previous operation. This type of operation is still in existence in many of the mines.

From the very first, Florence was the natural headquarters for the coal industry, and to-day it depends upon the mines for much of its business. church membership increased from

Churches in Coal Creek and Rockvale: From the time of the organization of the Florence Circuit, 1882, there were Methodist Churches at both Coal Creek and Rockvale, the two largest mining towns. These churches remained a part of the circuit for about eight or ten years, until Florence became a full time church during the ministry of H.R. Antes. However, no Methodist services have been held in either of these two coal mining towns for several years. The membership was transferred to the Florence Methodist Church, and the church building at Rockvale sold. The church building at Coal Creek will be up for sale as soon as proper action has been taken by the Conference Board of Trustees. There are only a few Methodist families left in these towns. he had officiated

Cement in the Life of Florence: Just before the turn of the century, some two or three, cement plants were erected a few miles east of Florence. Two cement towns were built, Portland and Concrete. Of the two, Portland still stands, and the plant there is still a boost to Florence business. Some of the people living there come into the Florence churches, while others attend the Penrose churches.

Rev. S.H. Kirkbride, 1893-1898: Now that <sup>we have</sup> seen the growth



and development of Florence as well a decline, let us return to 1893 and see the church, its growth and decline.

Rev. S.H. Kirkbride was appointed to this work in 1893, remaining five years. This has been the longest pastorate for any one man in the history of the church. The work of Rev. Kirkbride was outstanding. During the five years that he was pastor of this church the church membership increased from forty-four to one hundred fifty-four, and the Sunday school grew from an even one hundred to two hundred twenty-five. The increase of non-members who attended the church services was greater than the growth of the church membership or the Sunday school. Furthermore, the town of Florence was growing at still a greater rate than was the church.

Rev. Kirkbride came to Florence at about the same time that the town took on the aspects of a boom town. Those were busy days for a minister. The report to the fourth Quarterly Conference, June 5, 1894, will show the kind of work in which the minister was engaged. At this conference it was reported that the minister had preached one hundred eight sermons; he had made four hundred pastoral calls, and he had officiated at three hundred fifty-five "meetings of all kinds." The church membership had been increased by forty-eight; ten had been baptised, and there had been three weddings. From all indications, this is a fair description of the work done in any one of the five years that Rev. Kirkbride was pastor of this church. In addition to the above activities, he directed the construction of a new church building during his two last years.



During these years people were coming to Florence in such large numbers that the town was unable to properly house them. Money came easy for some, and was spent in the same way. However, no large portion of it found its way into the Methodist Church during the first few years. For the conference year, 1893-1894, the pastor received only \$927 for his support, which included \$150 for house rent. And only \$82 for benevolence.\* Yet, at the height of the prosperity of Florence, 1896, the pastor's salary reached a total of \$1,405. This was above the average for the churches in the Pueblo District. In fact, only six other churches in the district paid a higher salary.

When Rev. Kirkbride moved to Florence he found a church that was too small to accommodate the people. At almost every service people were turned away. The Sunday service of March 11, 1894, will serve to illustrate this fact: Every seat and chair was taken, and additional chairs were brought from the parsonage. Yet, about twenty persons stood throughout the service and a large number were turned away. Furthermore, the church was located near the railroad and a freight depot. There was so much noise that it was almost impossible to hold services. This difficulty, with the increase in membership, the continuing enlarging of Sunday school classes, plus the rapid growth of the town, made the Methodist Church, on Main street, undesirable and inadequate to meet the religious demands of the people. This called for a new and larger church in a new location.

A new church was only in the talking stage until 1897. On March 4, 1897, the trustees bought three lots on the corner



of Petroleum Ave. and Second street. This was to be the new location for the new and larger Methodist Church. The following announcement appeared in the local news paper, Oil Refiner, March 5, 1897:

"Yesterday the trustees of the M.E. Church purchased, for \$2,100, the three lots at the corner of Petroleum Ave. and Second St., from ex-Senator McCandless on which they will erect soon a church and parsonage costing about \$10,000.

"The site is a most desirable one, central and in a splendid locality, and the price, Well, Mr. McCandless make it so reasonable that everybody wonders at it.

"A meeting of the trustees and congregation was held last evening to discuss plans for an edifice which resulted in the instructing of the pastor to correspond with architects connected with the Church Extension Society and secure plans to select from.

"In the meantime a campaign of money-raising will be inaugurated by the church.

"That the Methodist people are in need of a new house of worship is apparent to everyone; the annoyance of the railroads in the present locality is unbearable, but notwithstanding this annoyance, the congregations are often greater than the present quarters will accommodate.

"The new edifice to be erected, the Refiner is assured, will be a credit in every way to the city."

The above announcement proved to be true in every respect, concerning the future church, except for the cost of the building. When it was completed the cost of the church



building alone was \$14,500. But Florence had one of the finest Methodist Churches in the Colorado Conference.

The Methodist people had one of the most desirable locations in town, now they felt it their responsibility to build a church that would be in keeping with the location. It must be large enough to accommodate all the people who wished to worship within its walls. Furthermore, it must be constructed of material that would endure, as they thought, for centuries. The result of such planning was a sand-stone structure, built on the Akron Plan, which had an inside measurement of eighty-one and one-half feet by sixty-eight and one-half feet, with walls two feet thick. The steeple, with a huge cross at the top, was one hundred-three feet in hight. To be sure this was the finest edifice in the town of Florence, not to mention the fact that it was the largest.

Rev. Kirkbride engineered the building of this church, but it was not his privilege to remain in charge until it was completed. That honor went to his successor, Rev. A.L. Chase. At the Annual Conference, 1898, Rev. Kirkbride was removed as pastor of the Florence Church and was appointed to the Rio Grande District as Presiding Elder.

Rev. A.L. Chase, 1898-1899: Rev. A.L. Chase was appointed to this church at the request of Rev. Kirkbride, the retiring pastor. According to Kirkbride, Chase was the best man available for the work at Florence.<sup>17</sup>

"The introduction of Rev. Chase to Florence was a modest one, and he stepped quietly into his work. It was no light task put upon him. In addition to his ministerial and



pastoral duties, he directed the completion of the church building and planned for the payments. But he took hold of the work prudently and hopefully, displaying wisdom and winning the confidence and favor both of his own members, the other churches and community."<sup>18</sup>

The church was completed and ready for dedication by March 5, 1899. The dedication service was conducted by Rev. B.I. Ives, of Auburn, New York. The service began under the direction of the pastor, A.L. Chase, at 10:30 A.M. Other ministers who participated in the service were Rev. S.H. Kirkbride, former pastor, who was responsible for plans and the beginning work on the church; and Rev. J. Wallace Gunn, who was rector of the Episcopal Church. Professor F.H. Clark of the city schools and mayor P.T. McGuire also took part in the service.

There was only one thing which prevented an official dedication. That was a total of \$6,000 which had not been pledged. At the morning service it was reported that the total cost of the building was \$14,500. Only \$8,500 of this amount had been secured. An opportunity for pledges was given at the morning service and a total of \$5,400 was received at that time. At the evening service Rev. Ives announced that \$600 was needed before the dedication could be considered to be official. Another opportunity was given for pledges and the \$600 was secured. Therefore, the new Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated on Sunday, March 5, 1899, as the Frazer Methodist Church.\*

The completion of the church building was not the only



responsibility Rev. Chase fulfilled. He found that a new parsonage must be erected. Before he had been here a year he had not only completed the church, but he had completed the parsonage, as well, having done much of the work with his own hands. He, nevertheless, made 425 pastoral calls.

During At the, 1899, Annual Conference the Loveland Methodist Church made a request for Rev. Chase, and he was appointed to that church. The Florence church parted with their pastor with regret. He has been remembered in Florence as a man who possessed a cheerful disposition, a generous attitude toward the other churches, and as one who was interested in whatever he felt would advance the good of the general public.

took Rev. J.C. Horn, 1899, and Rev. J.W. Neely, 1899-1901: Rev. J.C. Horn was appointed to succeed Rev. A.L. Chase, but he did not remain here but a short time. Rev. J.W. Neely was appointed to finish the year. He remained until the end of the first quarter of the 1901-1902 conference year. His health became so impaired that he was forced to resign as pastor. During the illness of Rev. Krueger, the pulpit was

supplied Rev. Thomas Andrew, 1901-1902: Rev. Thomas Andrew was sent to Florence to finish the conference year 1901-1902, when Rev. Neely was forced to resign. He was earnest and faithful in his work, but he was not here long enough to accomplish very much. In memory of his son, David V. Andrew,

Dr. Rev. F.T. Krueger, 1902-1904: There seems to have been a spiritual revival in Florence during the pastorate of Rev. Krueger. He was a hard worker, and a student. His wife, who was a accomplished musician, was of great assistance to him while he was here.



was an accomplished musician, was of great assistance to him while he was here. No man has served this church who did more calling than Rev. Krueger. In spite of the fact that he was seriously ill during several months of his first year as pastor, he, nevertheless, made 425 pastoral calls. During his second year his health continued to be poor; he underwent an appendectomy and was in the hospital for several weeks. There was also other illness in his home; yet, he managed to make 475 calls. This made a total of 900 pastoral calls, and by a man who was ill most of the time during his pastorate.

During Rev. Krueger's first year the Methodist Church took part in a Union Revival held in Florence, which resulted in one hundred-two professions of conversions. "Decision Day" was observed in the Sunday school, and according to the Presiding Elder's report to the, 1903, Annual Conference, "forty-five pupils date the beginning of their Christian life from that day." 19

During the illness of Rev. Krueger, the pulpit was supplied by Dr. O.P. Moore, of the Michigan Conference.

In spite of the fact that the pastor was ill, the program of the church moved forward. Nothing was left undone. Mr. Edwin Lobach gave \$200 "by which he funds an alcove in Denver University Library, in memory of his son, Louis Ulysses, Dr. W.F. Brooks gave \$100 for the "Open Door Emergency Fund." 20

During the conference year of 1903-1904 it was said that Florence was the rallying point of the Pueblo District. Both the District Epworth League and the District Conference



were held in the Florence church.

Again during Rev. Krueger's second year there was a two weeks revival held, which resulted in twenty conversions and twenty additions to the church. This made a total of thirty-two who joined the church that year. And again Mr. Lobach made a contribution. This time he gave fifty dollars for books, which were placed in the University Library. About the only thing that Rev. Krueger was not able to do was to erase the church debt, which had been against the church since it had first been built. Many of the pledges were never collected.

Rev. George S. Parker, 1904-1905: At the, 1904, Annual Conference the Denver-Northwest District was created, and Florence was taken from the Pueblo District and became a part of the new district. Rev. W.D. Phifer, who had been Presiding Elder of the Greeley District was made Presiding Elder of the new district, and Rev. George S. Parker was appointed to the Florence church.

At the first Quarterly Conference the Presiding Elder learned of the church debt. He described it as the "most stubborn debt" that he had ever seen. In 1898, the church had borrowed \$2,000 from the Church Extension Society and had applied it on the new building. The church had managed to pay off all the debt on the new church, except this \$2,000. Only \$200 of the original loan had been paid, and none of the interest, which had built up to \$850 by this time. Other than this debt, which by this time was \$2,650, there was a \$400 floating debt, and yet another for \$950 at eight per cent interest against



the parsonage. This made a total debt of \$4,000 against the church for all purposes.

The pastor and Presiding Elder secured a gift of \$850 from the Church Extension Society, which paid the interest for the seven years back on the original \$2,000 loan. The pastor, with the aid of the Presiding Elder, began working on a plan to pay off this debt as soon as possible. At the time of the 1905, Annual Conference subscriptions to the amount of \$1,400 were on record and \$400 had been paid.

The congregation was described, by the Presiding Elder, as a handful of Methodist, who had been discouraged for years. "We must conquer this debt, or go out of business," the report read. It was further stated that a new heating plant was needed because the old one was burned out. "It seems," said the Presiding Elder, "that everything is to be done here." 21

There is one thing that the reader should remember in connection with the building of this church as well as the lingering debt: The church was planned for and built under the pressure of the boom days, which were created, in the main, by the gold rush in Cripple Creek. The boom was over by the beginning of the twentieth century, and the people were not fortunate enough to pay for their church and parsonage before the boom was over, and Florence people settled down to less radical living. Florence still had its oil and the coal mines were still in operation, but the oil had reached its peak and was now on the decline; the coal mines were out of town and did not contribute a great deal to Florence,



especially to the churches. The fact is that Florence reached its peak about the time the church was built, and then declined rapidly.

This is not to say that Florence was dead, but it is to say that many of the substantial citizens, many of whom supported the church, moved away. This left a large debt to be paid by a much smaller number than had been planned for.

Rev. H.M. Pingree, 1905-1908: Rev. Pingree seemed to have been just the man for the situation at Florence. He had been here only about four months when the mortgage on the church was paid off. The former pastor, Rev. George S. Parker, had started the drive for funds, and Rev. Pingree followed up with surprising success. On January 14, 1906, the "Old Mortgage," which had been so long an object of contempt, was publicly burned in the presence of a congregation of one thousand persons. "Some wept, some laughed, some were too joyful to keep their seats, when all broke out in that mighty hymn, "How firm a foundation," or bowed in a hush of prayer, making the occasion one never to be forgotten."<sup>22</sup> Rev. Phifer, the Presiding Elder, believed there was a moral in this achievement: "There is no church debt so hard, so old, so leprous, that it can not be paid."<sup>23</sup>

The paying of the old debt and the burning of the mortgage seemed to have put new life in the church. The congregation doubled, the Sunday school enrollment was increased, and there seemed to be plenty of money. The pastor's salary was raised from \$1,100 per year to \$1,200 per year, and a free house in which to live. During the conference year, 1906-1907, forty-



three persons were added to the membership of the church. The Sunday school was growing, especially in the boy's classes. The boys of the town loved the pastor; he had them at his command. They sang in his choir, they were in his Sunday school, and they came to hear him preach. The pastor and the boys went picnicing together, and it was the Methodist preacher who supervised the sports for them.

During the conference year, 1907-1908, new cement walks for both the church and parsonage were completed; and new plumbing was installed in the parsonage at a cost of \$540. All bills were paid in full.

Rev. Pingree was married, in May, 1906, during his first year as pastor of the Florence church.

Rev. W.C. Millikan, 1908-1910: Rev. Millikan followed Rev. Pingree as pastor here. It was during his first year that the "old worn out heating plant," which was mentioned during Parker's ministry, was improved. In 1909, the famous Evangelist, Billy Sunday, preached in the Methodist Church. The service was held on a Sunday afternoon, and the church was filled to over-flowing.

Rev. James R. Thomas, 1910-1914: Perhaps, of all the ministers that have served the church at Florence, James R. Thomas, often referred to as "fighting Jim Thomas," is best remembered. If it could be said that King Saul, of Israel, stood head and shoulders above the rest of the men of his day, the same could be said about Rev. Thomas, in comparison with his predecessors, and it might be added, his successors, except, not in a physical way. He was thought of as a "He-man's Preacher." Yet, the most



meek held <sup>him</sup> in high regard. He was not afraid of man or beast, work or play, danger or pleasant surroundings. In fact, he seemed to feel at home in whatsoever situation he found himself. It has been said by many of the present members of the Florence church that, if needs be, Rev. Thomas would preach to a man on Sunday and fight him on Monday.

Rev. Thomas had not been in Florence but a few weeks when word came to him that a certain saloon keeper had said that he was going to run the Methodist preacher out of town. Thomas was the kind of man who got to the root of things. When the report ~~was told~~ <sup>came</sup> to him he immediately went to the saloon and walked in as any customer would. The saloon keeper was behind the bar serving drinks. Thomas stepped up to the bar and asked the man, who was serving the drinks, if his name was \_\_\_\_\_. He was assured that he was correct. Then he said, "My name is Thomas, I'm the Methodist preacher here in Florence, and I understand that you said you were going to run me out of town. I have come to you to learn the truth." The man looked at him for a few moments and then said, "I did not say any such thing." "Good!" replied the preacher, "because I don't believe you're big enough to get the job done."

As the story goes, Rev. Thomas and the saloon keeper became the best of friends; and in spite of the fact that the saloon keeper was a Catholic, he came, several times, to hear Thomas preach.\*2

Rev. Thomas was not a man who went around looking for a fight, on the contrary, he was a friend to everyone who



would give him a chance, especially was he a friend to the working man. He visited the men at their work, in the coal mines, in the cement plant at Portland, in the field where they were plowing their crops, or any other place where they might be at work. He was not afraid of the dust and dirt that gathered around the working man. He not only visited in the mines, shops, and fields, but he was a regular visitor in the homes of his church members and non-church members of the town. In fact, he was, perhaps, the best known and loved, by the town, than any Methodist preacher to have served the church, even to the present time.

The work of Rev. Thomas, as pastor, was far from being revolutionary, but it was outstanding. During his first year the church paid a \$1,200 debt. There was an increased interest in the work among children and youth. The church membership increased, as did the Sunday school.

It was during the last year, 1913-1914, that the mines were closed because of "strike." Again the church had to borrow money. This time to carry on the church work. This seemed to mark the point as the beginning of a constant deficit in the church budget. Again and again the church was forced to borrow money at the end of the conference year in order to meet its claims.

Rev. William F. Clark, 1914-1915: Rev. Clark was pastor here for only one year. Rockvale was placed with Florence and the two churches were served by Rev. Clark.

Rev. William J. Kidd, 1915-1917: Rev. Kidd served the church for two years. He was a hard worker. He organized a



band of workers, which were called the "Evangelistic Band." There were forty-four women and forty-two men in this band. Eighteen women and fourteen men, who were members of this band, were members of the Methodist Church. But in spite of the pastor's efforts the church did not seem to move forward. Money seemed to be the one thing that the church did not have. At each of the Quarterly Conferences during the conference year, 1915-1916, a deficit was reported. The first two Quarterly Conferences of the year, 1916-1917, showed a balance in the treasure, but on August 25, 1917, the Official Board voted to borrow enough "money to make up deficit, and enough to pay for church envelopes."<sup>24</sup>

At the 1916, Annual Conference the District Superintendent, W.T. Scott, described the Florence church, along with fourteen other churches of the Colorado Springs District, as being "stationery." That was to say that the church had showed no progress for a number of years, and that there were no signs to indicate progress in the future.

Rev. Kidd and his wife were well liked, she, being a vocalist, was a great asset to the church.

Rev. A.L. Leech, 1917-1918: At about the same time that Rev. Leech came to Florence there was some talk of a federation between the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. At the Official Board meeting, December 5, 1917, "Rev. Leech reported Mr. Burchfield's suggestion regarding federation of the two churches. No action taken."<sup>25</sup> "Mr. Burchfield" was pastor of the Presbyterian Church at that time. At the second Quarterly Conference, December 16, 1917,



"Prof. Brown inquired as to the best method of procedure to effect a federation of the Methodist & Presbyterian Churches. Dr. Scott advised a thoro<sup>ugh</sup> discussion of the matter in our official board & congregation & a study of the discipline in regard to necessary changes."<sup>26</sup>

The following day, December 17, there was a special meeting of the board, and it was decided that the matter of federation would be placed in the hands of the trustees.

The committee of trustees met with a committee from the Presbyterian Church and worked out, what they thought, to be, a satisfactory agreement, which would federate the two churches.

At the third Quarterly Conference, March 3, 1918, "Prof. Brown reported for the committee who met with committee from Presbyterian Church regarding federation, stating that, both committees favored the idea.

"The matter was freely discussed and finally a vote was taken by ballot which showed 13 in favor of and 26 opposed to federation."<sup>27</sup>

The vote was decisive, and the matter was dropped.

Rev. Leech remained as pastor of the Florence church only a short time. World War I. was in progress, and Rev. Leech resigned as pastor to take a position as physical instructor with the Y.M.C.A.

Rev. H.G. McCallister, 1918: Rev. McCallister, a student, finished the year as pastor of the church, when Rev. Leech resigned.

Rev. J.H. Boner, 1918-1919: This was the year of the



Centenary drive for funds, and the epidemic of influenza. At the second Quarterly Conference, January 26, 1919, Rev. Boner reported that he had not accomplished very much because of so much sickness and the quarantine, due to the epidemic of influenza.<sup>28</sup>

On May 23, 1919, Dr. Scott, the District Superintendent, held a called conference. Rev. Boner had resigned as pastor, and had gone to the Methodist Church at Leadville, Colorado. The people of the Florence church were discouraged. They had been faced with a deficit for several years, not there was so much sickness in the town, and, in addition, they were expected to meet their quota of the Centenary drive for funds. The following is a quotation from the minutes of that conference:

"It was the general opinion that the best plan would be to close the church for the remainder of the conference year, Rev. Boner having resigned.

"Dr. Scott did not favor the plan, however, and said he thought he could send us a minister very soon, one who could raise the required Centenary subscription."<sup>29</sup>

Rev. George E. Pennell, 1919: The work at Florence seemed almost impossible, and changing ministers in the middle of the year did not lend itself favorably to the situation. Rev. George E. Pennell was sent to finish the year's work. The newly appointed pastor went about his work in a quiet and business way. He was not long in winning the confidence of the people. He was very skillful in his approach, and in a business way brought the church out to a "glorious victory." The victory was greater than might be expected be-



cause of the difficulty of the field during those years.

Rev. F.F. Gibbs, 1919-1921: Because of his wife's ill health, Rev. Pennell was forced to resign as pastor at the end of the conference year, 1919, Rev. F.F. Gibbs was appointed to serve the Florence church.

There had been, for several years, discussions concerning the remodeling of the interior of the church. At the first meeting of the Official Board Rev. Gibbs brought up the subject. He stated that the most important business at that time was the best plan for remodeling. There was much discussion, and several suggestions were offered but no action was taken. As far as the records show there was no further action or discussion concerning remodeling.

Rev. R.H. Warren, 1921-1922: Rev. Warren was appointed to serve the Florence church for the second year, but soon after the Annual Conference adjourned, 1922, he was transferred to another conference, leaving the church without a pastor for some time.

At an Official Board meeting, April 4, 1921, bids for redecorating the interior of the church were submitted by Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Pherson, and Mr. Milner. The matter was discussed but no decision was reached. Mr. Deibert volunteered to look after bids concerning the gutters that needed replacing. There is no record of any work having been done. The church was in need of repair, but there were other things that seemed more pressing than redecorating the church, so from year to year such expenditures were pushed aside in hopes of getting it done the following year.



The Fire, November 26, 1922: Sunday evening, November 26, 1922, at 6:00 o'clock, Frank Sikes and a companion were walking past the Methodist Church when they noticed smoke coming from the basement of the church. Upon investigation it was found that the church basement was afire. Mr Sikes turned in the alarm and in just a few minutes fourteen of the sixteen volunteer firemen answered the alarm with all the fire fighting equipment the town owned.

Upon arrival Fire Chief Ball went into the basement and found the fire creeping through the joist and between the ceiling of the league room. The smoke was so dense that firemen could work inside the building only a few moments at a time. Holes were chopped in the floor of the auditorium and in the walls with the idea of combating the flame. This did not help, for it was only a few minutes until the firemen were driven from the building. Thereafter all efforts were restricted to the exterior of the building.

The fire was kept within the walls for more than an hour before it broke through into the main auditorium and then up to the roof and steeple. When the fire reached the one hundred-three feet steeple with the huge cross at the top, it was a most spectacular sight. It was visible for miles in all directions. Great crowds gathered from the town and other parts of the county. Fire fighting equipment was brought from the coal camps of Coal Creek and Rockvale, but to no avail; the church was gone. Fire had destroyed the largest edifice of its kind in the city. The tallest spire in town was damaged beyond repair, and the huge cross burned



slowly for several hours before it gave way and crashed downward through the charred remains of the belfry.

After four hours of fighting a most stubborn fire, Dr. and Mrs. Hutton invited the firemen to their home for coffee, sandwiches, cake, fruit, and cigars, in appreciation of the efforts put forth to save the church.

The following morning an inspection was made of the ruins. It was found that the league room was not seriously damaged. There was a cabinet in this room in which the choir kept its material and other books. Most of these things were undamaged. Although the fire started in the basement, from an over heated pipe leading from the furnace to the flue at the rear of the main auditorium, most of the damage was caused by water. As for the main auditorium, it was practically ruined. The pulpit, piano, and other furniture were charred beyond redemption, except for a few pews that were not in the main draft of the fire. The roof was gone, except for a few charred rafters. The belfry was still standing, but the bell had dropped part way down. The spire was gone because it was too tall to be reached with water. The stone walls remained, apparently, undamaged, and most of the imported stained glass windows were damaged; but not beyond repair. The windows had been ordered from Europe, some of them having cost \$1,000 per window.

The parsonage was located only about twenty feet from the church. The fire was so well controlled that only about \$36 in damage was done to the doors and windows of the parsonage.



Rev. Warren had resigned as pastor and had accepted an appointment in another conference before the fire. No other minister had been appointed. The church was without a pastor. The services were conducted by laymen. The church had an outstanding musical program and on Sunday evenings the choir, usually, had charge of the services. The choir had planned a sacred concert. of Thanksgiving Music, for the evening of the fire. A rehearsal had been held in the church that afternoon from 4:15 until 5:20. When the rehearsal was over Mr. T.M. Howells, whose wife was director of music, went to the basement and checked the condition of the furnace, which had been heated since early that morning. He found the fire in what appeared to be good condition, and remarked as he left the building that the heat in the building would be about right for the concert. But in just forty minutes fire was raging to such an extent that the interior of the building was burned out before it could be brought under control.

The Methodist people, who could never seem to afford to repair their church were now faced with rebuilding. The \$7,000 in insurance would help, but it would not do the job of rebuilding. They applied for \$2,500 from the Board of Church Extension, but even then some money would have to be borrowed.

On Tuesday, November 28, 1922, Dr. Henderson, the District Superintendent, met with the Official Board and helped to make plans to rebuild. Mr A.I. Hadley was elected Chairman and Dr. Hutton was elected secretary of the Board of



Trustees, which were to have charge of rebuilding.

It seems that a Rev. John had been scheduled to come to Florence as pastor when the church burned. The board requested that he wait until January before he come. But Rev. John did not come to Florence. The next minister listed as pastor of this church was Rev M.C. Dorsett.

Rev. M.C. Dorsett, 1923-1925: The church services were dispensed of for a few months, but Sunday school was carried on in the parsonage. There were several buildings offered to the Methodist people as available for services. The Elk's club was chosen, and the Methodist Church held its services there for several months.

The rebuilding program was underway before Rev. Dorsett arrived, but it was under his direction that the job was completed. But before the work was finished Sand Creek, which runs through town within one block of the Methodist Church, flooded and filled the already damaged basement of the church with water. This delayed progress and added to the cost of repair.

In spite of all the difficulties which presented themselves to the Methodist people, the church was rebuilt and ready for dedication in just ten months and four days. On Sunday evening, September 30, 1923, "Mr. A.I. Hadley, in behalf of the Board of Trustees, presented the church building for dedication." <sup>30</sup> There was still \$3,000 needed. This was subscribed by the people that night.

Bishop Charles L. Mead dedicated the Frazer Methodist Church, of Florence, assisted by the pastor, Rev. M.C. Dorsett.



Others who took part in the service were "Mrs. T.M. Howells, Kent Hutton, Miss Amy Deibert, W.G. Banks, Miss Ruby Payton, Miss Bertelle Brownlee, Miss Ena Hawkins, and Miss Thelma Gribble."31

Before Rev. Dorsett retired as pastor here the parsonage was repaired. A new roof and a new porch were included in the project.

Rev. J.E. Robinson, 1925-1927: Rev. Robinson was pastor for two years. In 1927, he transferred to Kansas.

Rev. J.E. Bula, 1927-: Rev. Bula did not remain a full year.

Rev. J.C. Watson, 1927-1929: Rev. Watson succeeded Rev. Bula and remained until 1929.\*

Rev. E.O. Harbour, 1929-1931: Rev. Harbour was pastor for two years.

Rev. Alexander Bryans, 1931-1932: Rev. Bryans, who is now pastor of University Park Methodist Church, Denver, Colorado, served the church for one year.

Rev. W.T. Gatley, 1932-1934: Rev. Gatley served the church for two years. He was loved and respected by the congregation. He did good work among the young people. It is said of him that he was a great help to them.

Rev. J.T. Bainbridge, 1934-1937: Rev. Bainbridge was appointed to the Florence church in 1934, and remained as pastor for three years.

Rev. B.R. Lawton 1937-1938: Rev. Lawton was pastor for only one year.

Rev. Coulter, 1938-1941: Rev. Coulter served the church



for three years.

Rev. E.H. Hoffman, 1941-1943: Rev. Hoffman was pastor at the outbreak of World War II. There was an increase in both church membership and Sunday school enrollment. The peak was reached during his last year. The church membership increased from 173, in 1941, to 240, in 1943.

It was during Rev. Hoffman's last year, 1943, that the first repairs on the church was undertaken since it was rebuilt after the fire, 1923. A new roof was put on the church and ceiling for the overhead was put in both the north and south rooms. These rooms were petitioned off after the fire and had never been completed. Before the fire the two rooms were included in the main auditorium. When the church was rebuilt the auditorium was only about its original size. There was a new furnace installed, one that heats the building with steam. For this project the church was forced to borrow \$3,000, but it was paid in full when the note came due.

Rev. Thomas Franks, 1943-1945: Rev. Franks was appointed to succeed Rev. Hoffman. He remained two years. He was well liked by the congregation and the town.

Rev. F.H. Napier, 1945-1949: Rev. Napier was pastor of the church for four years. During his ministry the parsonage kitchen was greatly improved and modernized.

Rev. J.R. Jones, 1949-1952: Rev. Jones was appointed in 1949 and remained for three years. The church continued to improve its property. On New Year's Day, 1951, a group of the men of the church met and completely redecorated the



interior of the main auditorium of the church. This same group of men continued to meet and work. Almost every week they would give at least one evening of work. They were successful in completing several small jobs. A few of the men decided that the church needed rest-rooms. This was a major undertaking because so much was to be done and so few of the men could give their time until it was completed. However, one or two of the fellows stayed at it until the job was completed, just before conference, 1952. Most of the credit for the completion of this job goes to Chauncy Ferguson, who spent many evenings working after he had walked his city mail route.

Rev. J. Marlin Barker, 1952-1954: Rev. Jones reached the retirement age in 1952. The church felt that it could not meet the minimum salary for a conference member, so agreed to accept a student pastor. Rev. Barker, from Florida, was appointed as pastor. Since the pastor was a student, at The Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado, he was on the field only on week-ends.

Not much, in the way of physical improvements, was done the first year, except for a new hardwood floor in the living-room and dinning-room of the parsonage.

When the building committee, in 1897, chose sandstone as a building material, it was believed that the church walls and foundation would endure for centuries. But it was later learned that this type of sandstone would deteriorate, slowly, when exposed to both water and air. The foundation, which had withstood the fire and two floods, was gradually



giving way. It was decided, before the end of the, 1952-1953, conference year that repairs must be done. A program for raising funds was completed, and soon after the beginning of the, 1953-1954, conference year a drive was begun for \$4,000. The Board of Church Extension granted a gift of \$750. This left \$3,250 for the church to raise. The drive fell short by about \$400. Nevertheless, work was begun and completed before Christmas, 1953. Some money will have to be borrowed to pay the contractor, but it is not known, at the present time, just how much.

The church building had had no repairs, of this nature, since its construction 1898; and the building was not completely repaired following the fire. A complete repair job would, probably, exceed \$10,000, but the church does not have that much money to spend. The most important repairs are now completed. The rest will have to wait until the church can afford another project.

The church may not have plenty of money, but it does have some men who are willing to work. Such men as Chauncy Ferguson, Warren Monett, Charles (Chuck) Watkins, Harrold Watkins, Ernest Hall, William Bleitz, Phillip Lobach, Henry Alley, Wesley Weber, and a long list of others, spend at least one evening each week working in an effort to improve the church. The most important accomplishment of this group has been the installation of a stoker for the furnace. This, however, is only one of many jobs which have been done by this group. They will continue to improve their church until they are sure the building is in good repair.



The church was incorporated as the First Methodist Church of Florence, Colorado, early in the month of November, 1953. The name of the church was changed from Frazer Methodist Church to The First Methodist Church in the incorporation.

In connection with this history it should be remembered that by the time of the fire, 1922, the oil industry was not as important as it had been in earlier times, neither was the coal industry contributing as it had a few years before. These factors had been felt by the church as well as by business. The Methodist Church was by no means a big church, but rather, it was a small church holding forth in a big building.

There is another factor that should be mentioned. The population of the town is, and has been for several years, predominate ~~X~~ Catholic. Yet, in spite of this fact there are, at least, thirteen Protestant Churches in Florence, and none of them can be considered to be strong. The Protestant Church people are too much divided among denominations to be considered strong. The one strong church in Florence is the Roman Catholic Church. It is united.



- <sup>1</sup>Binckley and Hartwell, Southern Colorado: Historical and Descriptive of Fremont and Custer Counties, Canon City, Binckley & Hartwell, 1879, p. 82.
- <sup>2</sup>Taylor, Jackson, From "The Florence Citizen," a news paper, published weekly at Florence, Colorado. This history was first printed in January 1931. It was found in files of the Chamber of Commerce after the death of Mr. Taylor, who was secretary of the Chamber of Commerce at Florence. As far as is known the history covers the years 1835-1927.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup>Dyer, John L., The Snow-Shoe Itinerant, An Autobiography, Cincinnati, Cranston & Stowe, 1891, p. 197.
- <sup>5</sup>The Memoirs of the Reverend George Murray may be found in the vault at the First Methodist Church, Canon City, Colorado.
- <sup>6</sup>From a two page fragment, without author's name, which may be found in the vault in the First Methodist Church, Canon City, Colorado.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup>From a history written of the Florence Methodist Church. At present it is in A.I. Hadley's personal vault, Florence, Colorado.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup>From the Florence Methodist Church "Roll of Membership". These are to be found at the Parsonage of the Methodist Church, Florence, Colorado.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup>History of Florence Methodist Church, Op. Cit.
- <sup>13</sup>Fragment, Op. Cit.
- <sup>14</sup>History of Florence Methodist Church, Op. Cit.
- <sup>15</sup>Fremont and Custer Counties, Op. Cit., p. 57.
- <sup>16</sup>Baker, James H. and Hafen, LeRoy R., History of Colorado, Denver, Linderman Co., Inc., 1927, p. 551.



\*This information came from a new item, The Oil Refiner,  
June 6, 1894.

<sup>17</sup>Florence Citizen, September 7, 1899, A local News Paper.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

\*<sup>1</sup>The Citizen-Democrat, November 30, 1922. This was a re-print. We could not find the original. It seems to have been lost from the files.

<sup>19</sup>Conference Journal, 1903, p. 397.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 398.

<sup>21</sup>Conference Journal, 1905, p. 219.

<sup>22</sup>Conference Journal, 1906, p. 374.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

\*<sup>2</sup>This story was told to me by Mr. A.I. Hadley, who was with Rev. Thomas at the time.

<sup>24</sup>Minutes of Official Board meeting of the Frazer Methodist Church, Florence, Colorado. August 25, 1917.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Minutes of Quarterly Conference, Frazer Methodist Church, Florence, Colorado, December 16, 1917.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., March 3, 1918.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., January 26, 1919.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., May 23, 1919.

<sup>30</sup>Florence Citizen, September 30, 1923, A local News Paper.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.