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BOISE METHODIST CHURCH (Advertiser Article By Judith Austin)

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The building that preceded the hotel [now an office building] on the corner of Eighth and Bannock streets housed the first Methodist church in Boise. It was built in 1874 and 1875, and sold in 1902--so that the congregation could build a larger church at Tenth and State.

The first Methodist--or Methodist Episcopal, as it was then known--minister to come to Boise arrived in 1865. Although he had some success in setting up "Sunday Schools" for adults, and although the newspaper reported in 1867 a rumor that a Methodist church might soon be built, no formal church organization took place until February of 1873. At the close of an extremely successful series of revival meetings, the Rev. R. M. Gwinn guided the organization of a church congregation. Many distinguished citizens of Boise joined the new church--including C. W. Moore and Orlando (Rube) Robbins. Fund-raising drives were begun immediately so that the congregation might have its own home instead of meeting in the Templars Hall, but the construction of the \$8,000 church put the group heavily in debt for many years. Part of the problem may have been that the Rev. Mr. Gwinn was called away from the church in the midst of the campaign, but before he left he got almost \$2,000 from the Church Extension Society to help with the building. The cornerstone was laid on October 3, 1874, with great ceremony and a speech by Governor Bennett. Just six months later, the building was dedicated.

Over the next few years, many activities of the congregation

were designed to help with the money-raising process: church "sociables" held in the homes of members provided an opportunity to visit with ones friends and pay a bit toward the building; "literary and musical entertainments" by church members were held in public buildings with good audiences and excellent reviews. One marvelous young lady, concerned lest the spire of the church not be completed, began a brick-donation drive that was highly successful. And for years afterward she joked that she had been tall enough to build the spire herself!

Still, in 1879, the church decided that it simply had to do something to eliminate the embarrassment of a substantial debt with huge interest rates. After a good old-fashioned revival had been completed, the minister announced that the congregation would participate in a "financial revival." Members were called upon to come to the alter and publicly pledge sums; one hundred days later, they were called upon again to come forward and pay up. The public-pressure campaign did not do the whole job, but it enabled the First Methodist Church to put more of its energies into new programs.

And obviously new programs and the growing city meant a growing congregation. One activity--the annual "Children's Sunday"--featured for several years, canaries in their cages hung in the church to join in the celebration. The children and their parents eventually needed a larger church, so they sold the old one and built the ornate State Street Building. Three years after it was dedicated, in 1905, the church established a mission at Twelfth and Eastman. This soon became a separate body and built its church--Immanuel at Fourteenth and Eastman in 1907. Before too many years had passed, other Methodist congregations were established in more outlying areas of the city; and in 1960, the original congregation dedicated its "Cathedral of the Rockies" at Twelfth and Franklin streets.

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