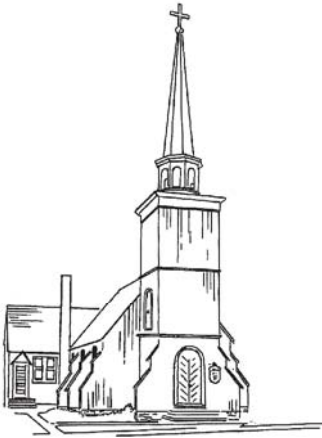
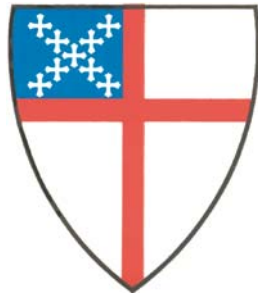


**HISTORY OF ST. JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WHITE BEAR LAKE, MINNESOTA
1861 - 2001**



First Church 1861 - 1925



New Church 1926 -

Auxiliary, with a membership of eighty-five, an Altar Guild, St. John's Men's Club and a Church Club. Mrs. Aubrey organized the first Sunday School of ten members about 1860, and the present membership in 1937 is about 125. The first congregation consisted of about 25, the present membership, 350."

"E.C.W." The Episcopal Church Women organization in the Minnesota Diocese started around 1881. All Episcopal church women were eligible to be members. At St. John's in the Wilderness, before World War II, it was called St. John's Guild and had two groups, the St. Agnes Circle and the St. Elizabeth Circle. Members of St. Agnes were generally the older women who put on rummage sales and related events, and the younger women in St. Elizabeth handled parish dinners. Sometime, around 1950, the two Circles were combined and the group became known as the Episcopal Church Women or E.C.W. In 1953, the Cornelia Whipple Award for the St. John's Church Woman of the Year was started by E.C.W. President, Mrs. Betty Slade. This was also the year of the first annual Christmas Bazaar. This organization has always been hard working and effective in handling the needs of the church. Meetings were held every Thursday morning right after a 10 a.m. Holy Communion service. Featured activities for the year included the Christmas Bazaar, the Lenten Study Program, Spring and Fall rummage sales, weekly Thursday luncheons, Deanery Luncheon and a Birthday Luncheon. The money raised by the E.C.W. over the years has provided a very large part our church's outreach programs.

Events from 1928 to 1946

In 1928, the Rev. Frank Davenport (see Plate 20) began a rectorship that lasted nearly sixteen years. There were severe drought conditions in the 1930's. An entry in a service book by Mr. Davenport on June 30, 1931:

"June and July very hot with hardly any rain... complete crop failures... grasshoppers doing great damage... corn

badly burned... Thank God for the joy of praising Him in adversity as well as in prosperity.”

At the vestry meeting of Jan. 15, 1933, Rev. Davenport brought up the question of religious service held for school children; stating they had attendance of 80 children each Friday afternoon. Motion passed by vestry giving its hearty approval of continuing the weekday school of religious instruction.

On Sunday, September 10, 1933, a special thanksgiving service was held in recognition of a gift that allowed the parish to pay off a second mortgage and notes held against church property. This substantial reduction of debt was made possible by a generous gift from the Fulton family, heirs to the estates of the late J. Cooper Fulton, Andrew Fulton and Mrs. Jane (Fulton) Murray. The old custom of burning a mortgage was performed by C. O. Bonham, junior warden of the parish. In the course of his sermon, the rector spoke of the deep gratitude of the parish for the very generous and gracious gift of over \$21,000. The vestry of the church voted unanimously as recognition of this gift to name the parish house, “The Fulton Memorial Hall” (see Plate 19)

The “Rector’s Aid.” In September 1934, a group of twenty business and professional women of White Bear and some young married women of this church met to organize a guild auxiliary, named the “Rector’s Aid,” to promote social activities during the fall and winter months. One month later, after getting 52 new members, they changed the name to “The Church Club.” This club was not sponsored by the church, but was strictly a social group that met in the church. Over the years, many community social functions took place in Fulton Memorial Hall. During World War II, the Church Club put on a show called the “Roaring 20’s Review.” It was a musical featuring many of the women of the church, including Alyce Farrar, Frances Goodwin, Burr Nash and a host of others. On the back of the program:

“In appreciation to all those who helped make this program possible – we, the members of the Church Club, offer our sincere gratitude – Buy Defense Stamps and Bonds.”

At the vestry meeting of Dec. 3, 1934, there was a discussion by Rev. Davenport on making the parish house a Community Center for White Bear. The resolution:

“Resolved that it is the opinion of this vestry, that St. John’s parish house, which is exempt from taxation, should be used to a far greater extent for community projects. With this in mind, we heartily concur in the rector making outside appeals for the cost of fuel and electricity for this winter season.”

At the January 18, 1935 meeting, the Rector reported on the success of having leisure time activities in the St. John’s parish house, and that he had been successful in securing donations of twenty ton of coal and seventy-five dollars toward the cost of electricity. He also said that services were being held in the auditorium temporarily, thus saving considerable coal.

Frank Davenport’s daughter, Lois, in 2003 described activities taking place at the Fulton Memorial Hall (see Plate 19):

“Fulton Hall was used by the Masons and the Eastern Star. Also during the depression years, some of the Arts groups funded by the WPA did stuff there. My Aunt Mildred (Bob Davenport’s wife – brother to Frank) taught Drama there and did dramatic presentations to the Women’s Club. Also Florence Freeman taught dancing classes there and I was one of her pupils. The stage had a curtain and footlights, but not spotlights that I can remember. The auditorium seated about 150-200 and they used these huge long velvet covered benches – which belonged to the Masons, I think, and we used folding chairs from the downstairs dining room in the parish house to augment. We had young people’s dances there also. Daddy believed in young people, and he and a couple other adults from the church always chaperoned.”

On Wednesday, June 24, 1936, the Episcopal people of this parish celebrated the **75th Anniversary** of the founding of St. John's in the Wilderness Church. The celebration was held in the auditorium of the parish house. Mrs. Nellie Freeman Fulton presided and introduced Rev. F. H. Davenport, rector, who offered an address of welcome. Several people gave talks describing the events related to the founding of this church in 1861. At the end of the program, Mrs. Fulton presented to Rev. Davenport an enlarged and beautifully framed picture of Mrs. Aubrey, with the compliments of Mayor and Mrs. Buckbee.

The Rev. Frank Davenport (see Plate 20) was a man of good humor and enthusiasm. His passions were to develop a great Sunday School for the children and wonderful music with a large choir. When Dorothy Haas was eleven years old, she attended a service at St. John's and immediately decided to become a member here. She said:

“Rev. Davenport was not a minister of gloom and doom, but generated happiness. He said, ‘A Christian is a person the sun shines through!’ Mr. Davenport came from out east and liked services with a lot of ceremony, but this parish generally opposed a ‘high church’ type of service, so he tried to gradually ease in some of the high church practices such as a procession following a cross. He gave a sermon about a church parish that had a processional cross, but most members were opposed to using it, too much like the Roman Catholics, they said. The cross was placed in a closet behind a closed door. Then one Sunday the choir came up the aisle singing, ‘Onward Christian Soldiers marching as to war with the cross of Jesus – *behind the door.*’ After that, the congregation allowed the cross to lead the procession.”

Frank Davenport's daughter Lois (in 2003) described their experiences living in White Bear Lake from 1928 to 1944:

“We were a large family, four daughters and two sons – poor as church mice – but my Mother canned everything and could manage on a shoestring. My Dad had a big garden in the vacant lot across the street next to the church. We didn't know we were poor because my Dad

and Mother gave us so much more than material things. Besides that, many of the parishioners, farmers, paid their tithes with bushels of potatoes, corn, apples, etc. Besides his pastoral duties, Dad was involved in town activities such as being the secretary of the town welfare board during the depression.”

“One day I came home from school and there was this whole family of strangers sitting on our front porch – grandparents, parents, a couple of small children and a baby. They were on their way somewhere, and somehow they knew who to come to when they got as far as White Bear. It was said at the time, somehow the word got passed along, that the rectory was the place to go when you were stranded. Well, my Dad put them up in the parish hall across the street. Mrs. Dean, the town nurse, brought them blankets, and they put benches together to make beds. They got to use the church kitchen and some supplies were made available to them. Then, one day – maybe 2 or 3 days later – when my Dad went over to see how things were going, they were gone. They didn’t take much of what was given them, but they had broken into the safe in my Dad’s office and made off with the Sunday School monies!!! My Dad never lost faith in the goodness of mankind even then.”

At the vestry meeting of January 5, 1939, the motion passed that the Sr. Warden contact Mrs. Lowe, offering her twenty-five dollars a month to play the organ and direct the choir starting February 1st.

Rev. Davenport developed an illness that forced him to retire from the active ministry in February, 1944. He had been the Rector at St. John’s for almost sixteen years. He then moved to St. Paul where he assisted the Rector of St. Paul’s-on-the-Hill. He passed away Tuesday morning, July 31, 1945.

In 1939, a three-rank pipe organ was given by Thomas L. Daniels in memory of his parents. It replaced the original pump organ which was then moved to the Fillebrown House, where it is today.

During World War II, the church records noted the names of the parishioners who were in the Armed Forces and those who died in the war.

1943:

Apr 21 – Twelve names added to the Honor Roll of those serving in the Armed Forces making a total of seventy-four.

1944:

Jan. 26 – James B. Blaine, husband of Olive Davenport Blaine, killed in action.

June 7 – 96 names on Honor Roll of those serving in the Armed Forces.

Nov. 15 – Kenneth Becker, a member of this parish, killed in action in France.

1945:

Feb. 21 – William Reed, a member of this parish, killed in action.

Mar. 15 – Robert Mattlin, killed in action.

Apr. 13 – Allen Niederkorn, killed in action.

1946:

Nov. 10 – At a “Memorial Homecoming and Memorial Service”, it was noted that 108 men and women in the Armed Services were from this parish during the war.

After World War II

The Masonic Lodge, Garnet Lodge, Number 166, had been meeting in the auditorium in the parish hall since 1936. The Masons had a long association with our church, from 1866, when this Lodge was organized. The corner stone of our church was laid on Nov. 14, 1925 by the Masonic Fraternity. From the minutes of some Vestry Meetings after World War II:

Nov. 3, 1947: Notice was given to the Masonic Lodge of an increase of contribution from fifty to seventy-five dollars per month.

Sept. 7, 1948: Committee appointed to discuss with the Masonic Lodge means of making up the arrears in this year’s pledge and to set up a pledge for next year.

Feb. 5, 1952: Carl Mattlin authorized to contact the Masonic Lodge, relative to their finding new quarters as



Plate 20. The 1940 Church Choir and Rev. Frank Davenport

Back Row (*left to right*): 1. Victor Lowe, 2. Dorothy Long, 3. Edward Harding, 4. Frances Keep, 5. Charlie Elmquist, 6. Donald Alexander Jr., 7. Donald Bullard, 8. Gayle Simmons, 9. Earl Brenner, 10. Donald Alexander Sr., 11. Oscar Hough, 12. Jim Maultby, 13. Edward Manship

Middle Row: 1. Mable Scott, 2. Evelyn DeEvelyn, 3., 4. Helen Harding, 5. Jessie Singleton, 6. Etta Simmons, 7. Betty Singleton, 8. Winefred Waltersdorf, 9. Mary Uppgren, 10. Mrs. Werner Schultz, 11. Marion Davenport, 12. Gloria Hanson McLean, 13. Jean Challoner

Front Row: 1. Bob Sayer, 2. Doris Maynard Thein, 3., 4., 5., 6. Carol Hacking, 7. Nancy Warner, 8. Rev. Frank Davenport, 9. Lillian Lowe, 10. Lois Davenport, 11. Louise Tuttle, 12. Barbara Buckbee, 13. Gere Hanson Letourneau, 14. Sally Butler Coldwell, 15. David Daniels