First Christian Church and Its Members Excerpts

Norman Rozeff

2/9/13  The First Christian Church is organized by 31 members. They meet in the Central Ward School auditorium. Their leader was the principal of the high school. Among its charter members is 29 year old Miss Paul Hill, who would teach Sunday School. Others are her sister Annie Rooney Hill, Mr. & Mrs. John Myrick, Mr. & Mrs. L.K. Shipp, Mr. & Mrs. C.H. Finnegan, Mr. & Mrs. S.A. Thompson, Mr. & Mrs. W.G. Stewart, Mrs. C.L. Ogan and daughter Lois, Miss Lucille Shipp, Mrs. T.L. Phillipps, and Mrs. E.H. Adams. It uses the old Seventh Day Adventist building at 4th and Main Street as its sanctuary around 1913-14. This was purchased for $400. J.W. Rhone, S.A. Thompson, and John Myrick are later to gift the lot at 710 E. Jackson and loan $1,800 for the erection of a parsonage. In the future this five-room house is sold to Mrs. Mildred Griffeth for $2,250.

1915 is the year John C. Myrick becomes Harlingen's first practicing attorney. In 1923 the firm becomes Myrick and Coursey. An Alabama native of Irish descent, b. Gadsden 2/12/79, his first degree was from Emporia State Normal College, and he received his LL.B from UT in 1915. On 6/1/10 he married Mary Davidson of Indiana in Kansas City, Missouri. When first in Harlingen the Myricks will reside in the Verser House before finding other accommodations. They have two daughters, Mary Josephine and Avis Elizabeth (later Mrs. Jack Garrett), who will later help them celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. He helps to found the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Harlingen and is active in the early years in promoting it across the Valley. In WWI he was chairman of the Questionnaire Board. By 1930 he will have his office in the Myrick Building 113-115 S. Commerce.

7/22/17  The organization meeting for a Red Cross Chapter here is held in the Methodist Church. Seventy three members are enrolled. President is Mrs. C.D. (Sally) Pendleton; Miss Paul Hill, secretary; Mrs. H.H. Burchard, treasurer; Mrs. Otto Weller, sewing chairman; and Mrs. E.W. Patterson, finance chairman.

It is also in the year 1918 that Myra Deeder and Fred Crawford Doane arrive to take up farming in Stuart Place. He will farm citrus and other crops here and around Combes. With them is daughter Margaret Louise (born 7/13/06 in Pikes County, IL) and perhaps sister Wilma and brothers Kitchel Fred and Kermit Carl. Margaret will attend Stuart Place School then go on to obtain a teaching degree from South Texas State Teachers College in Kingsville where she will meet and marry Gustav E. Miller. He will die in 1974, and she, an active member of the First Christian Church, at age 99 on 5/21/06. Surviving are her daughter Annelle Doane Clausen and son Bruce. Annelle is well known for her genealogy and history activities including a weekly column in the Valley Morning Star. Annelle "Grannie" Clausen will pass away at age 80 on January 3, 2010.
1918-22  S.A. Thompson was Mayor 4/2/18 to 4/4/22 and again 4/2/24 to 4/6/26. He was also City Commissioner 1916-21. In 1915 he served on the committee of fifteen to draw up a new city charter. He was the owner of the Planters State Bank 1919 until 1923. He joined with James W. Rhone and John Myrick to purchase the first parsonage for the Christian Church of which he was a charter member. Rhone's children were Walter and Marvel.

11/15/26  The First Christian Church occupies its new and impressive sanctuary at the corner of 3rd and Van Buren. The $135,000 structure was dedicated 9/3 by the Rev. D. Grant Wagner, pastor.

In 1925 Emery Polk Hornaday II comes to Harlingen. This Valley native was born near Clarksville, TX 12/9/88. He attended UT, North Texas Normal College, and the University of Montpellier France. In the years 1906-1911 he was a school teacher and principal. His WWI service was two years, four months in the army. He married Lucille Caswell 9/1/23. A partner of Hornaday and Mayfield in 1928, he is Cameron County representative in the state legislature as well as president of the Lions Club, American Legion member, and in the Optimist Club. In 1933 he is city attorney. He maintains a law practice until January 1981. This First Christian Church member is to die 7/12/81 at age 92 leaving his second wife, Eustolia.

8/27/21  Ku Klux Klansman, 104 strong, march down Main Street after citizens celebrate electric street lighting inauguration with a block party. Masked and in full regalia they carry sign warning bootleggers to go and promoting "White Supremacy." On 8/31 John Myrick, J.F. Seago, and T. Kingston lead an ad hoc meeting of 150 individuals in Lozano Hall. In two resolutions the body condemns the KKK as well as vice, and, importantly, supports the constituted form of government in enforcing the laws.

1930  G.W. and Isola Hay come to the city. He is minister of the Christian Church, 1934-48. He dies in 1949 and she 7/1/60.

4/20/58  The Christian Church sanctuary at 13th and Tyler and designed by Fort Worth architect William C. Bugance, Jr. is dedicated. By 1973 this, an educational unit, parsonage, and youth center whose construction started in March 1969 are valued at $500,000.

3/29/68  The former First Christian Church on Van Buren erected in 1926 by Andrew Goldammer and now owned by L. R. Baker is being demolished.