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EARLY CHURCHES OF PENSACOLA

by LELIA ABERCROMBIE

THE CHURCH is certainly among the most important factors in the building of any city. Neither wealth nor a large population of themselves make a community a pleasant place in which to live; more important is an atmosphere of goodwill and kindness. To develop such an atmosphere the fundamental religious principles of the Church are needed.

For over two hundred years, from 1559, when Tristan de Luna landed on the shores of Pensacola Bay, until 1763 when the English took possession, the Pensacola community was wholly Catholic. England's possession was short, lasting only twenty years. Protestantism quickly disappeared under renewed Spanish control, not to reappear until 1821 when the flag of Spain was replaced by that of the United States.

Soon after 1821 Protestants of various denominations began moving into Pensacola. A Methodist Mission was established on December 7, 1821; Christ Episcopal Church was organized May 4, 1827; the Presbyterian Church was organized in April, 1837, and the "Pensacola Baptist Church of Christ" was established May 2, 1847. The Seaman's Church, Temple Beth-El and the Immanuels Evangelical Lutheran Church came later, during the last half of the century.

From 1821 on, a spirit of cooperation and goodwill existed among the people of the various faiths. The Protestants and Catholics joined together in song services of praise and thanksgiving. Several of the churches united for revivals and church meetings. When one group felt a need, be it for a place to worship or a pastor, another congregation was willing and eager to help.

The churches suffered together and shared together during the yellow fever epidemics, just as they did during the trying period of the War for Southern Independence when only seventy-two white people and ten colored were left in Pensacola.

CATHOLIC

The history of the Catholic Church in Pensacola dates back to 1558, when in Mexico City the Church and the governor-general completed arrangements for an expedition, dedicated to God and Philip of Spain. These explorers were commissioned to evangelize the natives they found there; they were especially instructed to use gentleness and kindness in their treatment of the natives.

The fleet was composed of thirteen sea worthy ships under the command of Tristan de Luna (the nephew of a Pope) who was chosen for this momentous expedition because of his "reputation for christian chivalry, prudence, experience and fear of God." Among the fifteen hundred members of this company there were six Dominican Friars, a group of Spanish missionaries, five hundred soldiers, besides other men, women and children.

Before the expedition set sail from Veracruz on June 11, 1559, a dedicatory mass was said in the Cathedral in Mexico City.

The fleet arrived in Pensacola Bay on August 14, the eve of the Feast of the Assumption. The bay was named Santa Maria Filipina for the Blessed Virgin Mary and for King Phillip II of Spain. Upon disembarking after the long journey the voyagers immediately erected an altar and celebrated the Holy Mass. Shortly after this, a crude chapel was built and dedicated to St. Michael, the Archangel. Pensacolians may well be proud that their lovely city was constructed on firm religious principles from the day that white settlers first set foot on her soil.

A hurricane soon struck the community. The ravaging winds destroyed five of the explorers' vessels. Most of the provisions were lost; however, some wheat flour and wine were rescued which were, "religiously preserved for the holy sacrifice of the Mass; missals, chalices, altar linen and other things necessary for the sacred function were saved". But the colony was a complete failure.

In 1698 Andres de Arriola, with three hundred soldiers and colonizers, reached the site of the future Pensacola. According to the universal custom of the Spanish, a church was built immediately.

During 1719, the French and Spanish captured and re-captured Pensacola several times, and the French, realizing they could not hold the town, set fire to everything. When the Spanish recovered Pensacola in 1723, they rebuilt it on Santa Rosa Island, and an octagonal shaped church was constructed on a site overlooking the bay.

After a hurricane and tidal wave hit this community in 1752, the island was abandoned; the few survivors moved to the mainland, and chose the present site of Pensacola for their future home. They built a stockade of pine posts. A church was erected.

In 1763, by the Treaty of Paris, Pensacola came into the possession of England. The British decreed that freedom of religion should exist in her colony. It is recorded that every Spanish subject upon request was granted permission to leave.

Twenty years later when the Spanish were again in possession of Pensacola, they decreed that all who remained in the community must embrace the Catholic faith. Those who did not wish to do so were given eighteen months to dispose of their property. The English made as complete an exodus as the Spanish had done a few years earlier.

A Capuchin Father, Father Velez, was sent from New Orleans in 1781 to take over St. Michael's parish. Finding no church, he converted an old warehouse, which was on the beach at the foot of Jefferson Street into a church; "It is large enough for present use; but very inconvenient, and ill calculated for the purpose to which it is now appropriated."

The first English speaking priest arrived in Pensacola in 1793. Father Francis Lennon was from Ireland. He was replaced the following year by Father James Coleman, also from Ireland, who remained until the Spaniards withdrew and Florida became territory of the United States.

While in Pensacola Father Coleman built a church where the present City Hall stands. The six hundred inhabitants at that time were made up of Irish, French, Spaniards, Scotch and Negroes. Forty per cent were negroes. St. Michael's Church has never been without a resident priest since Bishop Portier was named in charge of the Vicariate of Alabama and Florida in 1826.

During the pastorate of Father Bergrath, 1868-1873, a simple wooden church was constructed on East Government

Street. Unfortunately a fire destroyed this building and again the records of the church were burned, leaving us in semi-darkness as to the history of the Catholic Church in Pensacola from 1872 to 1882. The congregation used the "Old Cotton Press", at the corner of Gregory and Tarragona Streets, for services until 1886.

More than three centuries passed between the erection of the crude chapel by De Luna and his evangelists and the construction of the handsome St. Michael's Church in 1885, which still stands at the corner of Palafox and Chase Streets. Father Bassen, who was Priest in Charge, was one of the great pioneer priests of his time; he later became the first Monsignor of the Diocese.

In 1877, the Sisters of Mercy came to Pensacola to establish a school. Also they were untiring in their unselfish and consecrated work among the sick and needy; they visited the prisoners, the bereaved and the aged, as well as establishing a parochial school which was located on the east side of Palafox Street between Garden and Romana, where the Keyser building now stands.

St. Michael's is the oldest organized church in Pensacola; it has served the community with few interruptions since the first settlement.

It is unfortunate that so many of the records of the Catholic Church in Pensacola have been destroyed by fire and storms. Were they available they would be rich with facts which both the heart and mind would relish.

EPISCOPAL

The history of the Episcopal Church in Pensacola naturally falls into two periods; first, the years following the Treaty of Paris in 1763 when Pensacola passed from Spanish to British rule and the Church of England supplanted the Church of Rome. In 1781 Florida was returned to Spain and the Church of England was withdrawn, so the second period of the Episcopal Church began when Old Glory replaced the Spanish flag in 1821.

On July 2, 1764, the Bishop of London commissioned The Rev. William Dawson to come to Pensacola as a missionary and

to administer the rites of the Church to the British subjects living in this vicinity; but it was not until the following year that the Rev. Mr. Dawson arrived in his new home. A hearty welcome awaited this missionary and his assistant, whose name is not available, but who continued to serve the growing population until his death in 1767, the older clergyman having been transferred to South Carolina.

The second of the three ministers to be sent to this community to administer to the subjects of the crown was the Rev. Nathaniel Cotton. Still preserved in the archives of Fulham Palace, the residence of the Bishop of London, is the following interesting letter, which gives us great insight into the colonial church:

Pensacola June 10, 1770

My Lord:

I received a box of books containing Bibles, Prayer Books, Testaments and many useful Tracts on Religion, which I conclude was sent by order of Your Lordship, and they merit the thanks of all my parishioners, which they desire me to transmit to Your Lordship

In this infant Colony, I have the pleasure to acquaint Your Lordship that the Births exceed the burials by many. From the 26th June 1768 to the 10th of June 1770, I have buried 64 men, women & children, and christened 82 children

I pay constant attention to the education of the rising generation and beg leave to recommend in the future the appointment of school masters in these distant colonies, that he should be in Orders, to supply the place of the Rector in case of death or illness, as they must be long destitute, and there is only two clergymen in the Provinceand the Government at home might allow him about 75 pounds per ann. whh. with the School master's stipend would make it worthy acceptance

You will pardon this freedom & believe me to be with highest Esteem and Respect,

Your Lordship's
most obedient
most devoted servant
Nath. Cotton

The Right Reverend
The Lord Bishop
Of London

The third clergyman which the Church of England licensed to carry on her work in the new world was the Rev. George Chapman, who received his commission on May 3rd, 1773. Little is known of his work; the presumption is that he continued to serve in this community until the Spanish were again in possession of the city and all the Protestants had moved out.

In 1821 when Florida became a possession of the United States the second period of the Church began.

Rachel Jackson came to Pensacola with her famous husband, General Andrew Jackson, and was disturbed over the religious situation which she found in the new territory. She "prayed and prayed that a minister of the Gospel would come over to help the Lord". Her prayers were answered, for by the end of the year a missionary arrived.

In 1827 the General Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States sent the Rev. Mr. Williston to West Florida to survey the field. His report to the Missionary Board stated that he found in Pensacola, "twelve communicants of our church, ten Methodists, two Presbyterians and two Baptists in a population of 2000." He further stated: "My mission has been crowned with success in the organization of an Episcopal Church in the City of Pensacola; I passed three Sundays in that city. On the first I performed divine service and preached in the old theatre, and on the other two Sundays I officiated in the Court House. The whole American population attended divine service on every Sunday, and those Americans who had prayer books devoutly joined in the service. All were serious and attentive."

On May 4, 1827, a mass meeting of the citizens of Pensacola was held in the Court House and a "Protestant Episcopal Church" was organized; it was incorporated by Act of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida on October 11, 1829. In December of that same year the General Missionary Society sent the Rev. Addison Searle to be the first clergyman of the parish. He remained only a short time and was replaced by the Rev. Benjamin Hutchins of Philadelphia.

In 1830 the church building was begun on land that the Wardens and Vestry of the church had purchased from Joseph M. White for \$400.00, on Seville Square between Church and Zarragossa Streets. This land, of great historic importance, had been used by the English as the center of community life; by the Spanish as their parade grounds. The church was completed in 1832 and consecrated by Bishop Jackson Kemper, the first Missionary Bishop of the American Church, on March 4, 1838.

Mr. Hutchins' enthusiasm over building a new church was so contagious that the Domestic Missionary Society sent him \$500.00 for the building and his friends "back home" contributed \$400.00. Christ Church, Philadelphia, was known to have

made many gifts and given friendly encouragement to the new parish in Florida, and in recognition of this kindness the beautiful little church was named Christ Church. Tradition says that the building follows that of the Old North Church in Boston, which had been built a century earlier according to a design by Sir Christopher Wren. Pictures show a similarity of the building to that of Christ Church, Philadelphia. In 1833 Rev. Ashbel Steele became rector. He did excellent work and frequently visited the Navy Yard, where he preached to groups of a hundred or more men. He was also interested in having services for the colored people of the community. He was followed in 1836, by Rev. Joseph H. Saunders, of North Carolina, who died in 1839 leaving the parish without a rector for three years until the Rev. Frederick F. Peake of Missouri accepted the call to become rector. When he died in 1846, his brother, Rev. Charles F. Peake, succeeded him.

In 1848, the Rev. John Jackson Scott accepted the rectorship of Christ Church and in 1851 took a prominent part in the organization of the Diocese of Florida. He resigned in 1852 to become Chaplain of the U. S. Army at Fort Barrancas, but in 1855 he returned to the parish. A Parochial school, known as Christ Church School, was established by him in 1856; it made rapid progress in numbers as well as in importance.

In 1861, Dr. Scott offered his services to the Confederate Army; they were accepted by General Braxton Bragg who was stationed in Pensacola. During the War for Southern Independence most of the families of the parishioners of Christ Church refugeeed to Alabama. Dr. Scott and they returned at the close of the war to find the church and the community needing reconstruction. They accepted the challenge with strong courage and determination.

In 1889 Dr. Scott sent in his resignation after having served the parish lovingly and conscientiously for forty years; his resignation was accepted with regret, and he was made Rector Emeritus. He died in 1895 and is buried in St. John's Cemetery.

The Rev. Percival H. Whaley, of Charleston, S. C., accepted the rectorship of Christ Church in 1890. Dr. Whaley was a scholar. He had an educated heart as well as an educated mind, and his abounding faith in God and his fellowman was an inspiration to all who knew him. This man of God never tired of

servicing all who had a need of any kind, regardless of race or creed. During his rectorship Christ Church, at the corner of Palafox and Wright Streets, the church now in use, was constructed.

Old Christ Church still stands as the oldest Protestant church in West Florida. It was used as the Pensacola Public Library for twenty years and is now used by the city of Pensacola as a historical shrine.

METHODIST

When the territory of Florida was acquired by the United States from Spain in 1821, there was not a Protestant church in Pensacola. It was not until December 7, 1821, that the Pensacola Mission was established by the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Church, which at that time was in session at Washington, Mississippi. The Rev. Alexander Talley was appointed to serve this mission, which later became the First Methodist Church.

From *The Gazette*, a Pensacola newspaper, of March 20, 1824, we learn that a friendly spirit existed among the people of the community: "I am gratified to perceive that a number of ladies and gentlemen have formed a choir for performing vocal and instrumental music in our church. This circumstance is rendered still more gratifying by the total absence of sectarian divisions. We hear Catholics and Protestants uniting their voices in praising the Almighty; this is peculiarly pleasing."

A letter from the Rev. Henry P. Cook published in the Methodist Magazine in March, 1825, tells us: "The pious of different Protestant denominations are much united and appear to be exerting themselves to promote the sacred cause of religion . . . Testaments are introduced into one or two of the public schools. We have, also, lately commenced Sunday School, particularly for the instruction of the colored population."

The Rev. Charles Hardy was assigned to the church on January 11, 1827, and on May 26 of the same year the lot on the northeast corner of Intendencia and Tarragona Streets was bought.

It was during the Rev. Mr. Hardy's pastorate that services started at the Navy Yard, where he preached weekly. He also

visited the "cantonment" for soldiers. Among the first funds given for the new Methodist church was \$173.00 contributed by the men on board of the war ship *Constellation*.

The early services of the church were held in the Court House, so it was a happy group of people who moved into their own house of worship on June 2, 1828. This was the first Protestant church building to be erected in Pensacola.

On January 28, 1829, the Rev. Adam Wyrick became pastor. He was not happy with the situation he found in the city and wrote in the *New York Christian Advocate*, "Can see little evidence of any good being accomplished." Little progress seemed to be made during the next two decades.

In December, 1853, Joseph B. Cottrell was assigned to Pensacola. The *Pensacola Gazette* of April 15, 1854, reported, "A great revival of religion has been going on in the Methodist church in this city."

During the pastorate of Rev. Theophilus Moody the first Methodist camp meeting was held Sept., 1857, at a location twelve miles north of the city, between Ferry Pass and Roberts. "Near the camp ground were some beautiful springs. The land was high and undulating and covered with beautiful, tall pine trees. Amid these pines were the tent-houses and the large tabernacle. It was covered with boards rived by hand from the pine timber near by, and the ground was covered with straw. The seats were long boards without backs." Later the camp was known as the Williams Camp Ground and moved to McDavid.

In 1858 the church was damaged by fire; it was repaired in 1859. In 1860, the first parsonage was built; Rev. W. K. Norton was pastor at this time, and he used his own funds to finance the construction of the building.

In 1862 the church and the parsonage were completely destroyed by fire. At this time the church was not being used, for most of the population had moved from town, which was in possession of the Federal troops.

After having weathered a long period of discouragement and distress the Methodist Church seemed to start a second growth, in the year 1870, when the Rev. John Pace was appointed pastor. For the first time the church became self supporting. The church was rebuilt; it was a neat frame building, the construc-

tion of which seemed to solidify the scattered congregation into a strong organization once more. It was dedicated in May, 1870.

For the next several years there were many changes in the pastors. The Rev. Chas. B. DuBose was appointed to the church in 1879, and served until 1882 - the longest term a pastor had served the church up until that time.

In the fall of 1881, the property on Tarragona Street was sold and the site on the northwest corner of Palafox and Garden Streets was purchased. [Site of the San Carlos Hotel] From Methodism in Pensacola we learn: "While without a church we worshiped in the Baptist church until we moved into Pou's Hall, [This was on the west side of the second block down, on South Palafox St.] We worshipped there for two years, paying \$25.00 a month rent. In the spring we moved into the basement of the new church. Rev. W. A. Rice, pastor at Warrington, preached the first sermon."

In October, 1882, Rev. Mr. DuBose contracted a fatal case of yellow fever; he was buried by the Rev. John S. Park, pastor of the Presbyterian church, in St. Michael's Cemetery. The following tribute was paid Dr. DuBose by the editor of the Pensacola *Commercial*: "DuBose was possessed to a rare degree, of those noble qualities of head and heart which link man to man, and his brave, self-sacrificing devotion to a sorrow-stricken people has embalmed his memory in the hearts of all. We feel our inability to write a fitting tribute to one so deserving."

As the Annual Conference had been invited to meet in Pensacola in December, 1890, a great effort was made to complete the church building before that date. The congregation worked hard and was richly rewarded, for the Conference was able to meet in the impressive new brick building as scheduled.

Under the leadership of the Rev. W. M. Cox, who was pastor at this time, the church grew rapidly. Mr. Cox wrote pertaining to his pastorate: "There was only one Methodist church in the city, but I had a number of preaching places in various parts of the town.

"We organized a Woman's Missionary Society in Palafox [church] in 1890, and the minutes show they raised that year fifteen dollars and fifty five cents.

"The work at Palafox was very heavy. It extended considerably beyond the corporation, and most of the pastoral work had

to be done by trudging through deep sand, but I never had a more pleasant charge, nor better friends than I had at Palafox.”

In the decade following the erection of the handsome church the Methodists of Pensacola made great strides. The consecrated work of many faithful and noble souls bore a rich harvest. The Epworth League was formed as well as the Pensacola City Mission, composed of the Malaga Square Mission, Muscogee Wharf Mission, Reed's Chapel, and Warrington.

PRESBYTERIAN

The First Presbyterian Church in Pensacola was organized in August, 1845, and was listed in the Synod of Alabama as an organized church in October of the same year.

Following the installation of Rev. Peter Donan as the first pastor, the building for the new church was started. It was finished in 1848. This church, which was constructed of heart lumber, still stands at 234 East Intendencia Street and is occupied by the Industrial Electrical Co. The bell which is still in use at the present time by the Presbyterian Church was brought from the old church; it is inscribed, “Presented to the Presbyterian Church of Pensacola, Florida, by E. E. Simpson, Esq; 1848.”

A few years after the church building was erected, financial difficulties arose. The churches of the South Alabama Presbytery contributed generously to pay off the mortgage. The individual members made heroic sacrifices to assist; one lady is reported to have sold her wedding ring to meet this obligation. Miss Leah R. Simpson and her sister, Mrs. Rebecca Simpson Bright, were prominently connected with the church at this time and gave generously from their own funds.

During 1856 the Rev. P. J. Sparrow, D.D. came as a missionary to preach at this church; he remained in this capacity until Pensacola was evacuated in 1862. There was no record of the Session having met between December 22, 1861, and November 12, 1866.

At the November, 1866, meeting of the congregation, Rev. W. A. Carter was elected pastor. He was installed in December of that year; the membership was only thirty. The number in-

creased to one hundred twenty-six by November, 1874, with ninety-three in the Sabbath School.

In 1875 the First Board of Deacons was elected. It was composed of John G. White, John H. Caro, and John F. Pfeiffer, Jr. In November, 1880, the South Alabama Presbytery and the Synod of Alabama met in Pensacola with Rev. Peter Gowan as moderator.

Dr. Carter, who was greatly beloved by his congregation, resigned in January, 1881, after fourteen years of service. He thought that a change would be good for both pastor and people.

The Rev. H. W. Whaling served the church from February until July, 1881. Rev. John S. Parks was installed as pastor on December 4, 1881.

On December 9, 1885, Rev. H. S. Yerger became pastor. Shortly before his coming, the manse on Church Street was burned. The lot was sold for \$700 and the new manse was built at 112 West Gregory Street at a cost of \$3,500.00. Dr. Yerger, with his congregation, now one hundred and seventy two, then took steps to obtain a new church building. The property at 10 East Chase St. was deeded to the Presbyterian Church by Mrs. Susan A. Simpson and Miss Leah R. Simpson on May 5, 1886.

The new church, one of the beautiful churches of present day Pensacola, was completed in October, 1888, and was dedicated early in 1889. Dr. Yerger enjoyed serving the church for five more years. Rev. W. T. Matthews was pastor from April, 1894, to May, 1896. He was followed by Dr. W. E. McIlwain, who was a man of great influence in the Southern Church. McIlwain Memorial Presbyterian Church, on East Blount St., was named in his honor.

In December 1897, Elder George Reese resigned as Clerk of the session, having served as Clerk for twenty five years; W. B. Ferriss succeeded him.

"The church membership at this time numbered two hundred and eighty-two members with seven elders and seven deacons. The elders were George Reese, C. V. Thompson, H. C. Cushman, E. H. Pittman, W. V. Kirk, Wm. Fisher and W. B. Ferriss. The deacons were: John Eagan, R. M. Bushnell, C. F. Zeek, R. Pope Reese, J. R. Keller, Horace Simpson and C. F. Giles."

The work of the Presbyterian church in the early history of Pensacola would not be complete without mentioning the noteworthy service which Dr. H. C. Cushman, an ordained Presbyterian minister, rendered to the men along the water front during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Each Sunday afternoon and Thursday evenings Dr. Cushman held services in a sailor's boarding house on Baylen Street wharf. Mrs. Cushman played the organ, and the seamen would sing many familiar hymns. Often light refreshments, consisting of cake and coffee, would be served. Everyone was invited to join the group and many an interesting tale of life at sea was exchanged.

Dr. Cushman was often seen on the wharfs distributing Bibles and tracts to the fishermen. He was one of the most beloved men in the community and was almost worshiped by those he had helped.

BAPTIST

The First Baptist Church in Pensacola was organized as the "Pensacola Baptist Church of Christ" on Sunday, May 2, 1847. Elder Alexander Travis, who was one of the organizers along with Elder Joseph Mitchell, was a South Alabama and Florida Missionary.

It was necessary for Elder Travis to travel by foot or on horseback to reach Pensacola, and often he had to sleep out of doors and go without food. On his arrival in Pensacola he met with the Baptists of the community and organized the church. The meetings were likely held in the home of Aaron Hendrix. The first congregation was composed of fifty white men and seventy-three white women as well as one hundred and twenty-four Negro men and ninety-eight Negro women. The colored people bore the names of many of the prominent families; they were allowed to choose the church in which they desired to worship. The minister who held services for the white congregation in the morning preached in the afternoon to the Negroes.

As there were a number of Baptists living in the vicinity of the Navy Yard, which was established in 1825, a branch church was formed there in 1850. The first missionary offering recorded was made in 1856 and was fifty dollars.

The Pensacola church was incorporated under the name of "The Pensacola Baptist Church" in 1852; this was done to comply with the Florida laws. This same year the first church building, constructed of wood, was erected on East Government Street at the head of Adams. As the baptistry was not built until 1880, it is thought that the members were likely baptized in Pensacola Bay which was only two blocks south of the church. The parsonage, which was built in the late fifties, still stands at 224 East Government Street.

From the minutes of the church we learn that the salary of the minister in 1855 was one hundred dollars a year, but three years later it had been increased to twelve hundred annually.

In the eighteen-sixties the church was at a low ebb. In 1867 the Federal troops turned the church building over to the Negro members in the community. It was returned to the original owners in 1873.

In 1870, under the leadership of Rev. John Beck, the church was reorganized and the name changed to "First Baptist Church of Pensacola;" there were no Negroes in its membership. The same year a Sabbath School was started; it was composed of "eight scholars and three teachers."

In the early eighteen-nineties, many families began moving away from the Seville Square section of the town, where the church was located; Rev. J. H. Curry, who at that time was serving as the tenth pastor of the church, called a special session of the church members to discuss the subject of selecting a more suitable location for the growing congregation. The building on Government Street was sold in 1892. In 1894, Mr. & Mrs. W. D. Chipley, who were generous contributors, deeded the property on the northeast corner of Palafox and LaRua Streets to the church. A building committee composed of Messrs. J. W. Lurton, W. D. Chipley, T. V. Kessler, A. V. Clubbs and the Rev. F. C. Waite was appointed and work on the church began immediately.

The first service was held in the new brick church on April 20, 1894. There was a membership of one hundred thirty-five. The Rev. A. P. Pugh was minister. J. W. Lurton was organist for the church and was an enthusiastic worker in obtaining the noteworthy organ which was built especially for this church and considered one of the best in the South.

THE SEAMAN'S CHURCH

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Pensacola harbor always had many ships from the Scandinavian countries loading pine timber. Norway maintained a Missionary Society which looked after her citizens in foreign lands and which built a Seaman's Mission on the southeast corner of Pine and Palafox Streets constructed of pitch pine lumber. It was consecrated December 15, 1878.

Although Rev. L. Wormdahl, the first minister, worked in Quebec, Canada, during the summer and the doors of the church always were unlocked, no harm was ever done; for the people of Pensacola and the Scandinavian sailors looked upon the church as a consecrated place.

When in 1893 the Norwegian Seaman's Church at Quebec and the Seaman's Mission at Pensacola ceased to be associated, the mission secured its own minister.

On August 10, 1885, a fire broke out in the shop of a ship-chandler nearby. The little church, along with eleven other buildings, was destroyed.

A new church was built of stone, along similar lines to its predecessor, and was consecrated December 15, 1886. Four thousand dollars was collected from Scandinavian sailors during a period of three years for this building.

The church was always supplied by capable ministers who spoke in the native tongue; services were held two or three times a week and captains and crews attended in great numbers.

Many recall the unusual Christmas celebrations held at the Seaman's Church. These began with a short service by the minister. Then followed the singing of hymns and Christmas carols in the native tongue as children and grown people marched around the tree. At one of these gatherings the following foreign consuls were present: Alex Zelius, consul for Sweden; Fannin Chipley, consul for Russia; C. F. Boysen, consul for The Netherlands; Albert Cafiro, consul for Italy; O. C. Howe, consul for Great Britain; Porfiro Diaz, consul for Mexico; John L. Borrás, consul for Spain. These consuls were interpreters for the men.

JEWISH

Congregation Beth-El (House of God) was founded in 1878, and is said to be the oldest Jewish congregation in Florida. Gerson Forcheimer was the organizer and the first president of this small group that met in his home on East Intendencia Street. Since no rabbi was called for some time, lay readers were used.

The first Temple, a wooden structure, was built at 37 East Chase Street.; it was destroyed by fire in 1895. During the building of a new brick Temple, the Beth-El congregation worshipped in the Universalist church at 46 East Chase St.

Above the door of the new building there were tablets engraved with the date of the founding of the Temple, the date of the fire and the time of the construction of the new Temple building. Upon its completion Dr. Max Heller, of New Orleans, dedicated it. Rabbi Sam Lasky was the first to be called to the Temple; he was followed by Rabbi A. Posman and Rabbi M. Gugenheim who served short terms.

By 1897, the congregation had increased to seventy-five families, and in that year Rabbi Isaac E. Wagenheim was called to serve the congregation. He was from Huntsville, Alabama. On September 15, 1897, a large congregation attended the initiatory service of Rabbi Wagenheim, "a close student, a conscientious scholar, and above all a consistent good man." The congregation felt very happy in the choice they had made.

During Rabbi Wagenheim's term of service, a Sunday School was organized, Sunday School rooms constructed, and minarets were placed on either side of the building.

From the beginning, the Congregation of Temple Beth-El accepted the principles of American Reformed Judaism and this became the basis of the services and ceremonialism.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Immanuels Evangelical Lutheran Church, Pensacola's first Lutheran Church, was established March 1, 1885.

When in October, 1884, John Pfeiffer, a successful ship-chandler, went to Mobile, Alabama, to be married to Emma Louise Bohlman, he discussed with the Rev. Leopold Wahl, pastor of the Lutheran Church in Mobile, the organization of a

Lutheran Church in Pensacola. The Rev. Mr. Wahl came to Pensacola in March, 1885, and organized the church at a meeting held in the Germania Fire Hall, corner of Zarragossa and Jefferson Streets. There were thirty-six charter members, thirteen men and twenty-three women. The Presbyterian and Seaman's churches offered their facilities to the newly organized Lutheran group.

On October 4, 1885, the congregation moved into their new frame building, which was at the northeast corner of Garden and Baylen Streets. The same day the Rev. Arthur Michael was ordained and installed as the first pastor of the church. He served until 1891 and was followed by the Rev. F. W. Reinhardt, who was pastor for thirty years.

Immediately upon the organization of the church, an elementary school, which was a small building of wood located next door to the church, was started. The teachers served without pay and no tuition was charged. The school flourished for many years under the principalship of Mr. E. Reidel.

The church at its present location, 24 West Wright Street, was built in 1912. Rev. William C. Schrader has served this congregation since June, 1921.