

# *The First 90 Years*



## *Euza Bible Church*

*By: Lola Mack, Gloriane Lewis,  
and Kristin Bostrom*

We (Lola, Kristin and Gloriane) spent the first weekend in October attending the 90th Anniversary of the Euza Bible Church. Many past pastors and church members attended this monumental occasion. There were so many in attendance that the gathering was held outdoors in the fall sunshine. We were interested in the history of this long standing church and its parishoners.

The first minister arrived in Steamboat in 1887—actually as a medical doctor. Dr. John Campbell was ordained in 1854 and served this community for 30 years. His service led the community to take positive steps toward a permanent congregation with a building and minister.

In 1889, James Crawford presided as secretary at the first meeting held in the community to consider the organization of a Christian church. A covenant to form a congregational society (where mission funds were available) was signed by Edward W. Stees, J. Wallace Gunn, Della Brown, J.T. Woodson, Loava Franz, W. J.

Franz, George Suttle, H.S. Suttle, Cilinda Suttle, J.H. Suttle and Lucretia B. Groesbeck.

"The old part of the sanctuary was begun in August 1891 and completed in 1893. There is a picture of the town in 1903 and at that time the only building on the hill was the church and the parsonage. The parking was not a problem, like it is now.

"The fine Gothic structure was built upon an elevation with a good view from all points up and down the valley. The auditorium of the church was a spacious room with an arched ceiling. The dimensions of this room were 30 x 45 feet, and a classroom opening into the main room by folding doors was 15 x 24 feet. The pulpit was in an alcove at the side of the main room and the seating was semi-circular pews. The tower was fifty feet in height from the foundation to the vane."

"T. Wallace Gunn was the first pastor of the Euza Congregational Church. Being a Greek scholar he named the church Euza because in Greek 'eu' means a good sense of being, and 'zoa'



means life. Put together this name means a good life for those who belong.



### *Ken Sigley participating in the Anniversary Celebration*

We spoke with three ministers, past and present, who were in attendance for the 90th. We asked each of them about their first impressions of Steamboat. Rev. Arthur Goodrich, a former minister of the Euzoa Bible Church in the late fifties and early sixties, was one of the three people we interviewed. He told us about his arrival in Steamboat. "We arrived here by detouring in and out of a snowstorm around Easter time, 1957. When I saw this place I thought there was hope for this country. It is a beautiful town, and the people are so warm and loving."

Another person we interviewed was Rev. Richard Ogden, also a former minister of the Euzoa church in the late sixties. He told us his first impressions and emotions. "When I entered the valley the scenery was breathtaking. In August it was kind of cold, but perfect for the Rockies. My first winter here was a mild one which reflects the Lord's mercy on us flatlanders. I had mixed emotions when I first came up here, because my hobby was skiing. I had to consider being placed here to make sure that it wasn't my desires, but the Lord's."

We also visited with Rev. Ken Sigley several times. He is the present minister of the church. He told us, "In Kansas there is more wind, and the beauty here is much greater. I came in September of 1975. It's more beautiful that time of year than any, with the fall colors and all."

We spoke with these men more about their

recollections of this church during some of its ninety years of existence.

Ken Sigley, the present pastor, told us about the forming of the church in 1889. "The major desire of the group was to form some kind of Baptist church. I don't know why, but for some reason the Baptist wouldn't send a missionary pastor out here. I was told it was because of the Indians but I don't know if they thought the Indians weren't worth saving, or if they were afraid of them. I don't know exactly where you would substantiate that. At that time there was a Congregational church in Craig, one in Hayden and a little church up in Clark. So that helped with some finances. This is the oldest church in town. Since the beginning it has been a community-type church, and in the 60s a change was made in the name from Euzoa Congregational Church to Euzoa Bible Church. That reflected the change to a Bible-oriented community church."

Knowing the long history of the church we wanted to do some comparing of the church activities today with years gone by. Rev. Sigley told us of some of the church events today. "Our church is certainly family oriented and because of that we do special activities together. We have Halloween parties, Christmas caroling with friends and family, and summer camp. Vacation Bible School also for many years has been a community bible school stemming from this church. The youth groups have active parts by having car washes, rocking chair-a-thons as well as trips to other towns to understand and learn about other churches and beliefs."

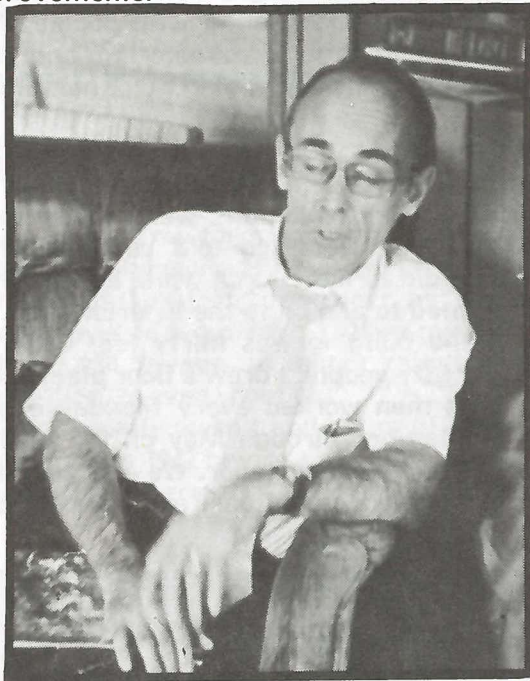
We asked him to tell us about one of these activities in detail. "The camp has a long history. Our camp conference is made up of people from five churches. The camp grounds were bought in the early 1950s by the churches, and the concept of camping by these groups extends back into the 1930s or even before that. They used to take the kids to a camp below Fish Creek Falls, then they went near Clark to Seed House in an area to camp before we had actual facilities. Now we have a facility called Mt. Elim



*Ken Sigley the present minister.*



which is eight cabins, plus a recreation hall, dining hall, chapel and another couple buildings. We just purchased forty acres for four or five thousand dollars, if you can believe that in this area, for extra camping space. The churches which belong to the camp are the Yampa Bible Church, First Baptist Church, here in Steamboat; then there is the South Routt County Baptist Church which is in Oak Creek, and the First Baptist Church in Craig. We cooperate together. The pastors in charge of the camps bring in outside speakers as hosts. We have sixty kids at a time, the Jr. high and the elementary camp for five days, Monday through Saturday, and the high school camp we found weekends work better. We have a young singles retreat, a family camp and rent the facilities out as well to other groups. What we try to have is a church subsidized camp program from these five churches. The rest is from the participants which is about \$22.00 for a five day camp, food and all. We do this cheaply so families and kids can go. We are now putting in an all new water system, re-wiring the camp along with other improvements."



*Richard Ogden, a past minister in the late sixties.*

Rev. Ogden told us more about social gatherings at the church while he was pastor there. "I always enjoyed the times the flock got together socially, like at dinners. We were kind of famous for pot lucks. The smorgasbord was one you'd never forget, a real special treat, the best. We had social gatherings at the church where we invited the whole community. We invited the community to our father-son banquets, and to the mother-daughter tea. Sometimes we had special men's programs, like

I remember the time we showed Tom Landry's Dallas Cowboys, 'A Man and His Man.' We thought the men in the community would enjoy that."

Rev. Goodrich told us about other social gatherings. "We had the women's fellowship, the mother-daughter tea, and there was hardly a place to park on that night because so many would come. We also had the sunrise service where Lorraine Workman put on a breakfast, which drew about 150 people on Easter morning. That was another big occasion along with Thanksgiving and Vacation Bible School. Christmas with the Cantatas were quite busy and at one time we had covered dish dinners every Wednesday night which many enjoyed.

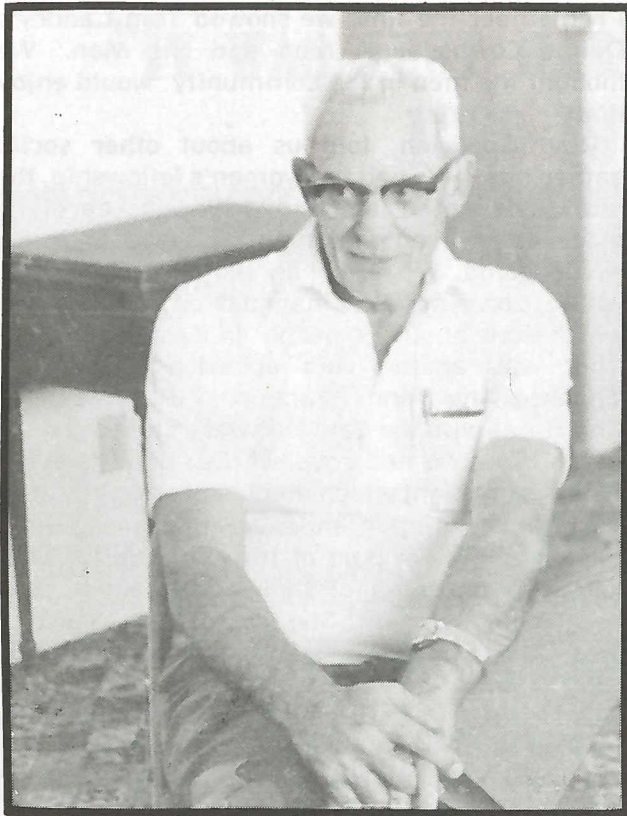
The ministers have endeavored to make their church an active part of the community. They reflected on some of their ideas about community involvement. One idea of Rev. Goodrich was "Our community has lots of service clubs like Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary and Toast Mistresses. The cattlemen and the ranchers also had clubs. The community feeling was one of everyone knowing everyone else." Rev. Sigley felt that the church "really needs to be a part of the community. "Anytime the church loses contact or communication with the community they're no longer a constructive influence." Rev. Ogden commented, "The standards of the church are not the same as the standards of the community. For example, at 11:00 on Sunday morning we have church services, and it's been that way for a long time, and everybody knows it. Suppose the community plans something at that hour, we don't change our service to blend in with the community. Of course, anytime a community grows it's going to have growing pains and there is no exception here."

We asked Rev. Ogden about drug and alcohol problems, if any. "When I first came to Steamboat Springs it was probably 25 years behind the times. The sophistication and problems of big cities were just beginning to come on the scene then."

Rev. Goodrich spoke about this too. "There was a little alcohol, but it didn't particularly touch the school. It started around '65 with the college kids experimenting. Also the community felt safe. We would go away for days and not lock the doors. Hardly anybody had a key to their house or knew where one was. I hate to say this but there's a different group of people now."

We went on to find out how much Steamboat has changed over the years. We talked to Rev. Goodrich about the size of the town in the sixties. "When we were here the town reached from Spring Creek to Soda Creek, that's about all there was! I believe then there were eighteen hundred people. The ski area was just really





*Arthur Goodrich, a past minister  
in the late fifties.*

getting started. No one drove because there was no place in Steamboat Springs that we couldn't walk. There was a feeling of fellowship in families then too. Everybody knew everybody, we could not go anywhere without seeing a WZ license plate or someone we knew from Routt County. Many times people were snowed in and had to entertain themselves."

After talking about the growth of the town, we were interested in finding out about the growth of the church. Rev. Goodrich commented about the congregation. "The Sunday School averaged 80. After a couple years the Sunday School was larger than the morning service because kids could walk from all over town. Our highest average attendance was 155 for Sunday School. I suppose at that time morning service ran around 100 people. Of course, Easter we were packed, and our youth group always had at least 30 kids."

We also talked to the present minister, Rev. Sigley, about how much the church has grown since he has been here. "The church has basically doubled since 1975. There really aren't any records, but as near as I've been able to tell, the average was 100-110. We now average about 220.

We have to run double services now. Some people like the earlier services, others wait and come later.

"Along with the growth, the church has had to meet the needs of a changing world. I believe personally that we as a church have adjusted to new lifestyles. We have desires to operate within our principles, yet adjust to modern life today. We have Three Wire Winter people who have been here 50-60 years, plus we have the new influx of people. The church is unique in that nobody is required to join and no one has to stay.

"The two major decisions that the church has made since I've been here are to have a Youth pastor and to invest in property in the name of the church. Last November we purchased land behind the high school football field, 3.2 acres. As a longrange plan, maybe in 5-10 years from now, we can relocate and build a larger building with complete parking."

Rev. Ogden talked about finances and some of the other problems. "This church has always operated on a pay as you go basis so we never had any problem with finances."

We wanted to know about some of the problems of the church. Ken Sigley told us about some he has had. "I'd say a problem is solving the dilemma of keeping a balanced concept of administration and dealing with people. If we spend all our time administering and doing nothing about the people, then we're not fulfilling our job.

Besides finding out the church history, we were interested in finding out what improvements and additions were made to the building. Rev. Goodrich told us some of the things he did to the church while he was there. "We wanted to add on to the exterior shell. The size of the building was thirty feet wide with room for fifty people. I drew a floor plan, and for ten years men worked every Monday evening from September through May on the addition. This was all volunteer labor. We also worked on the Christian education part and remodeled the



*The church as it was before.*



back section. We put a classroom above that space. This back room was storage till we rebuilt it into a classroom. We added 800 square feet by taking out the attic, and remodeling it into a room. We use this additional space for the youth group, the junior high and senior high Sunday School class."

We decided we would work until we used up the material and then take some time off until we could raise some more money. Only the Lord



*The church has seen many changes and fads.*

never gave us any time off. We found by the time we used the materials, we'd have more money in the building fund."

The church organization has different structures depending on the minister and the congregational influence. Ken Sigley talked about the present church structure. "There are four major boards: the deacons, the deaconesses, the trustees and the Christian education board. The deacon board has the spiritual oversight of the church. Its functions, include being watchguard on the pastor. The trustee board deals with finances. These two boards overlap in terms of meetings and financial matters. The deaconess board on which ladies serve is becoming more important because of responsibilities and services they provide. The Christian education board oversees Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and other youth oriented matters. With special training we have special quality on our boards."

A normal work week for a minister is a tedious one. Ken Sigley told us about his normal work week by beginning with a humorous anecdote. "There's a story about a little kid who was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up. He said well, I'd like to be a minister because they only work one hour a week and there is nothing on television at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday. In actuality a family oriented church takes a lot of time because we deal with the whole family. I personally prepare and study for messages, Wednesday meetings, one men's group, and double services on Sunday morning and evening. At

times we might have a speaker or a film on Sunday evening. My preparation takes about twenty hours in the study, then there is a great deal of administration that must be done. There is also visitation and crisis times with those who might have a very immediate problem, in a hospital or just seeking some kind of counsel. There are over 200 people in this church, and it's becoming frustratingly difficult to have any kind of regular visitation with all members of the church.

An excerpt of the memories of Euza Congregational Church written by Marcellus Merrill said, "My first recollections of this historic old church are from a boy's (a janitor, at that) point of view. The first Merrills were supposed to be Baptist, but even Grandfather Merrill, who started the First National Bank in this community, was unable to put across to the people the necessity of a Baptist church. After my grandfather's failure, my father and mother decided that we should attend some church. So it was decided that the three Merrill boys would attend Sunday School at the Congregational Church. We could do more or less what we pleased during the week, but at 9:30 Sunday morning we had to be at Sunday School.

"During the winter we would ski over to church, stick our skis in the snow bank during the service. Immediately afterwards we would head for Howelsen Hill, where all the kids congregated to try their luck at ski jumping.

"Then in 1916, while I was going to high school, I was more or less forced by my folks to take the janitor's job at the church for \$8.00 per month, for pocket money. As money had a great value in those days I took the job, to date girls I needed at least 25 to 50 cents to buy them an ice cream soda. I couldn't enjoy skiing anymore on Saturday because of my job. Then one Saturday, lo and behold, I found a big can of ice cream, 3/4 full in a Sunday School room. I immediately thought they had decided to leave me some ice cream for the harsh treatment I had endured. I hot-footed it out and got all the kids I could find,



*The church as it stands now.*



saying, 'Come on up to the church, they left me a big can of ice cream.' A bunch of kids showed up, and we ate it all. Then I began to get suspicious that maybe my first assumption might be wrong, that maybe it was sent up here for a party and not for me! So when I heard someone stamping on the doorstep, I told the fellows, 'Jiggers, I think we had better go down the trap door into the cellar.' So we went down there and hid in all the soot and dirt behind the furnace.

"My second assumption was right. Some ladies dropped in and exclaimed immediately when they opened the can, 'Where's our ice cream?' and immediately they went over to see Rev. Wright, thinking maybe he could help them out. He came over there and without any evidence whatsoever, he started to yell, 'Marcellus.' I just kept quiet as I could, but one of the other fellows kicked a can or something, and pretty soon Rev. Wright was down in the cellar yelling some more. We all kept still this time, and finally he went upstairs and told the ladies something. As long as I was there, he never mentioned it to me. I guess maybe he had swiped some ice cream, too, when he was a kid.

"Also, I remember when Jim Norvell preached. His may not have been the most intellectual sermon there was, but there was sure a lot of noise. I think even the kids enjoyed his gymnastics, his loud pounding, yelling and jumping type of sermon. He carried excitement so high that nobody went to sleep. Of course, they tell about the time he fell from the pulpit platform in the courthouse at Hahn's Peak. I missed that, and to me he was always in perfect balance in our little white church on the hill. I do think the Steamboat Springs Town Board should re-name the street Jim Norvell lived on 'Hell Fire Avenue', as it was called in the early days.

After completing our coverage of the 90th anniversary we found our research had just begun. As we interviewed these pastors we knew that they were proud of the Euzoa Bible Church history and of the part they played in it. This old church will grandly stand on the hilltop to display its heritage for many years to come.

A poem written by Mr. Bob Swinehart reflects the congregation's love and pride of the church.



## THE CHURCH ON THE HILL

She was built by loving, willing hands  
Some ninety years ago.  
She has sheltered us from summer's rains  
And winter's winds and drifting snow.

She stands on the hilltop  
Like a beacon of light,  
Brightly lighting life's pathway  
By day and by night.

Come worship with us,  
To watch and to pray,  
To learn God's plan of salvation,  
There is no other way.

The choir will sing songs  
To the Father above,  
And hymns to the Son  
Of undying worship and love.

You will hear of God's love,  
And His wondrous grace,  
How some day we shall  
See Him face to face.

You will learn of Christ, the Saviour,  
Blest be His Name,  
Born of the Virgin Mary  
To sorrow and shame.

You will hear in the prayers,  
The songs and the hymns,  
How He suffered on Calvary's cross,  
And there died for our sins.

He was laid in the tomb,  
Like any mortal, beneath the sod,  
But He arose from the grave  
And now sits on the right hand of God.

Come and Rejoice, all who believe,  
Rejoice, give thanks and pray.  
Although we know not when,  
He will be back someday.

Let us watch the dark nights through  
And from dawn till setting sun,  
Praising God and giving thanks  
For the day when He shall come.

Here you will always find a welcome,  
So come if you will  
To praise God and our Saviour,  
To the Church on the Hill.

**Robert L. Swinehart**