

The History of Central SDA Church

In a nutshell, SF Central Church started in July, 1871, in a tent near Market Street in San Francisco. It progressed to a storefront on Market Street, and the members later built a church on Laguna Street. In 1927 the group relocated to our present building, originally a Methodist-Episcopal Church that was built in 1892. That's it.

What! You want more details? Oh, all right.

It all began in 1859 when Merritt G. Kellogg (no, he wasn't the cereal guy . . . that was his brother, Will K. Kellogg!) traveled to the bustling city of San Francisco in a small wagon train. As a Sabbath-keeping Adventist, Kellogg organized a small group of thirteen people in his living room for weekly services. Unfortunately, the Civil War years were hard on the group. The members became discouraged and some moved away.

Undaunted, Kellogg raised \$133 to hire a minister for them. Alas! No one responded until J.N. Loughborough and D.T. Bourdeau answered the call in 1867. Although Bourdeau left within a year, Loughborough ended up working in California for nearly 50 years; and might be considered, along with Kellogg, a founder of Central Church. (That's why we named our Fellowship Hall the Loughborough Center, even though most people can't pronounce "Loughborough" correctly. Kellogg Center would have been so much easier!)

Moving on . . . It was too expensive to pitch a tent to hold meetings in San Francisco, so they said, "Hey, let's go north to Sonoma County (aka Wine Country today) to hold our meetings." Well, their hard work paid off as they were able to establish half a dozen congregations in the area over the next two years, with Petaluma becoming the first organized Seventh-day Adventist church in California.

In the winter of 1872 James and Ellen White (Adventist Church pioneers) visited the small group. They were so impressed with their needs that they sold their house in Battle Creek, Michigan, and advanced \$6,000 to help build a church at 914 Laguna Street. Eventually, the congregation outgrew the Laguna Street Church and on March 15, 1927, they voted to purchase the Methodist-Episcopal church at the corner of California and Broderick Streets.

This church was built in 1892 by ship builders who worked on it in the "off season," and was solid enough to withstand the 1906 earthquake. Although part of the church tower was toppled by the lesser quake of 1957, Central Church came through the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake largely unscathed.

Many people who are impressed with the beauty of our church aren't aware that Central Church has such a grand history to go with it and that there's a piece of that history in our sanctuary.

Our sanctuary pulpit is a hand-carved walnut lectern that was used by J.N. Loughborough, Ellen White, D.M. Canright, and other Adventist pioneers that preached in San Francisco.

For many years it was relegated to holding the guest book for visitors in the foyer, when its significance was discovered by Pastor John Duge. He placed it back in service as our main sanctuary pulpit in 1999 where we still use it today.