



EAGLE ROCK VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Winter, 2025

Eagle Rock's Earliest Churches: One Church Becomes Three

Why study the past? These events happened over one hundred years ago.

As is often the case, these inquiries began with a request from a someone asking for help researching our history. In this case she was asking what we had on file regarding the Eagle Rock Presbyterian Church, which is closing soon. Examining the previous histories written by church members we found a concentration on the curious and rocky origin story of this church; one of the three earliest churches in the valley, all outgrowths in various ways of the Union Church established by the pioneer Anglo settlers. They felt that a Protestant Christian Church as well as a school were necessities in a growing town, but the small population would only support one nondenominational church.

So why?

Maybe simple curiosity and perhaps a desire for a distraction from the tragic fires and the political turmoil of today.

Perhaps also to gain insight into how people have coped with change in the past. Times were changing rapidly in our valley. A small isolated community of farmers and rural landowners was connected to the city by the trolley in 1906, spurring rapid population growth and the need for institutions to accommodate a more diverse population. The birth and consolidation of specific protestant denominations in the nineteen teens presaged the larger religious diversification in the nineteen twenties.

We had previously explored this question but this inquiry stimulated us to go deeper.

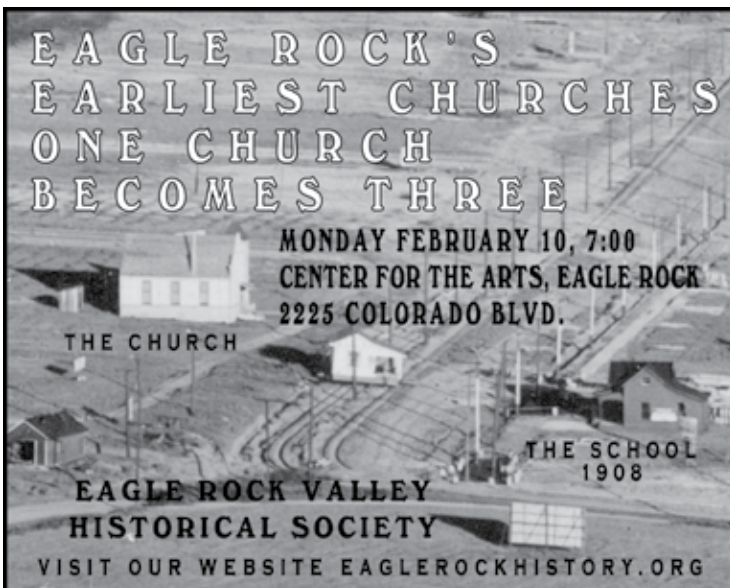
A power point presentation will allow us to see the valley as it was, the look of the built environment, the changing style of building, the rapid growth of these institutions in the twenties, the travails of the depression, and the inspirational and forceful people who brought about these changes.

The demise of the Eagle Rock Presbyterian Church marks the end of the last of these early churches. Perhaps this might lead us to think about the changes in religious observance which we see today; the general decline of church membership and the rise of evangelical churches preaching an old gospel in a new way.

As we have no expertise in the particular theologies involved, we can only observe what happened and try to understand the changing role that churches have played in our town's history.

JOIN US on Monday, February 10th @ 7pm when we explore our history with Eric Warren, local historian, at the Center for the Arts Eagle Rock, 2225 Colorado Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90041,

Our meetings are free and open to all. Refreshments are provided and parking is street only. SEE YOU ON THE 10Th!



Hello, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society member!

Fires

The recent fires in Pacific Palisades and the much closer-to-home Altadena remind us all that we live in an area where fires can reach us, even if the nearest hillside is miles away. With the climate changing, the chance of fierce weather is only increasing. There was much destruction and personal loss. I know several who lost everything. You probably do too. Help them however you can. The loss is of course much more than the immeasurable personal loss. We know houses and other buildings will be rebuilt, but can they recreate the same feeling? Fires of this magnitude can erase the very history of entire neighborhoods in a matter of hours. Historical Societies play an integral part in archiving and preserving a record of what is and what was. Historical Societies cannot put things back the way they were, but their records serve as a time capsule and can help others try to replicate certain aspects.

While the fires made changes in just a few hours, there are other forces that are constantly making changes without us really noticing or noticing while the changes

are happening. While Eagle Rock is probably similar in a lot of ways to when you first saw it, no matter when that happened for you, there are constant changes that make it a different place. Change is often good, so I'm certainly not saying that we should stop change. The role of a Historical Society is to archive snapshots of the changes that are occurring in our area, preserving the past and the present for tomorrow. Your continued support helps us toward that goal.

Churches

While fires can change a community in an instant, other changes can appear over decades. The changes in churches are slower, but often can reflect how demographics are changing in a neighborhood. This month's newsletter and program deal with some of the changes we have seen with churches in Eagle Rock.

-David Dellinger

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Damage to the Presbyterian Church Tower after the February 1971 earthquake. (ERVHS)



The restored Presbyterian Church campus. The congregation has diminished and it was decided this year to close the church. The final services will be held on Saturday, March 8th at

The objectives of the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society

- to preserve, clarify through research and to perpetuate the history of Eagle Rock Valley
- to make this history available to students, researchers, libraries and all interested persons
- to preserve and protect our local landmarks, especially the Eagle Rock

Membership is open to all who would further these objectives

Public Archive Hours 10 to 12 every Saturday at the Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock 2225 Colorado Blvd. Eagle Rock CA 90041 for information call 323-257-1357

This journal is published quarterly by The Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society
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Layout, David Mc Nutt
Contributors, Katie Taylor, David Dellinger

Visit our website at:
eaglerockhistory.org

If your mailing label dates before 2025, it's time to renew your membership. Please take a moment and mail your check now. A dues form and envelope are included with this newsletter.

Thanks, We depend on you

Eagle Rock's First "Union" Church

United Church historian, Medora Swinnerton recounts:

In 1884 there being no church within driving distance, and feeling the need of Christian Education for the children, Mrs. P. W. Parker started a Sunday School in her home. In 1886 when the first school was built, the Sunday School moved into the school house, and there the first church services were held. The congregation, being of all denominations, named it Union Church.

Hearing of a minister who lived in Hollywood, and served a church there in the morning, Mr. Parker asked him to come to Eagle Rock in the afternoon. So Reverend Elijah Cash, a Congregational minister, became the first pastor of Union Church. Mrs. Cash was State President of the W.C.T.U. and organized a chapter in Eagle Rock. Mr. Parker was the first Deacon and Sunday School Superintendent. In 1887 the Church was chartered as "The Church of Christ, Congregational."

Because roads were poor, and horse and buggy driving was slow, the time of arrival of Rev. Cash was very uncertain. The church members came with picnic baskets for lunch. A row of tall eucalyptus trees along Eagle Rock Road, now Colorado St., made good hitching posts for the horses. Tables were set up using saw horses and planks, and all shared in the first Church Dinners, the Church service started when the minister arrived. If he happened to be late or the sermon long, and darkness came, the people lighted their lanterns and the bobbing lights, like fire flies, could be seen going across the fields to their homes. Rev. Cash always stayed overnight with a member of the church. There was considerable rivalry among the women as to whose turn it was to entertain. Mrs. Cash

always accompanied her husband. In those days money was scarce and the minister was often paid in produce from the hillside farms and orchards.

By 1898 the congregation had outgrown the school building, and plans were made for building the first little church near Castle and Eagle Rock Road, now between Caspar and Maywood on Colorado. By gifts of material, labor and money, the "Little Brown Church in the Vale" was erected. For many years this was the social center of the valley.

In 1911 the "Bungalow Church", on the Southeast corner of Colorado and Maywood, was built by the Eagle Rock Church of Christ Congregational led by pastor Alfred W. Hare and services were moved there.



The Reverend Elijah Cash. (Murdock collection-ERVHS)



The first church in Eagle Rock. (Murdock collection-ERVHS)



The "Bungalow Church". (Murdock collection-ERVHS)

The Methodist Church is Added, then Federated with the Congregationalists to form the United Church

Swinnerton recounts:

When the Rev. J. M. Spengler returned from his Missionary duties in South America, not wanting to remain idle, he moved to the Eagle Rock Valley, rented a hall and started divine services under the name of "Eagle Rock Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church". Spengler preached just five Sundays before being stricken with fever and rheumatism. His work was continued during his illness by the Rev. Mr. Todd, then the Rev. Homer Scott, student of theology at USC. Rev. Scott would ride the Annandale car out Pasadena Ave. to Eagle Rock Park and then walk the rest of the way to the church. The congregation watched up County Road for the minister as he came down the hill from the East.

In September of 1910, Rev. Spengler was again sent to Eagle Rock. By then the first little valley Congregational Church was empty so Rev. Spengler bought it for \$1300. With a church in which to meet, the congregation grew and soon became a Methodist Episcopal Church in full standing.

"It was a beautiful day for the Methodist Church last Sunday, Oct. 18. For several weeks many faithful members of the church had been assisting mechanics in the work of remodeling and enlarging the old building. And now it was announced that the work was done, and the place ready for the holding of opening exercises to celebrate the event. An inspection of the work revealed a remarkable change – almost undreamed-of effects; new windows and doors were put in; the old tower was changed and the front entrance leads through its ground floor from a fine cement porch surrounded by cobblestone. The outside of the building has been shingled and stained dark brown. On the inside the change was as pronounced. The



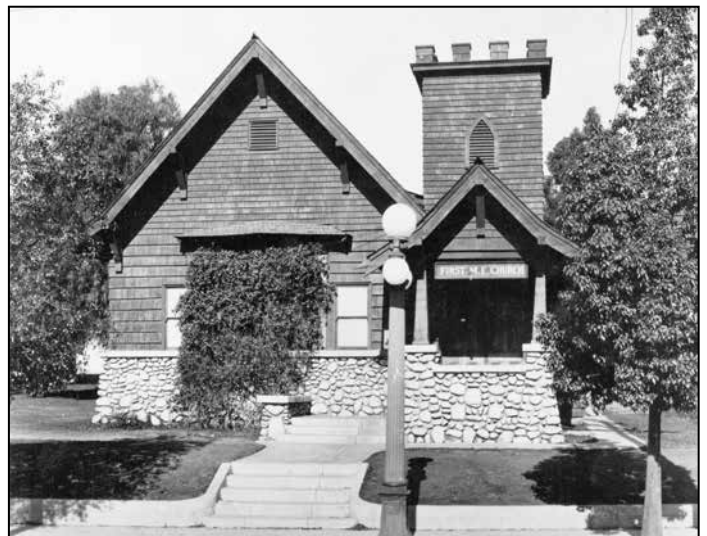
pulpit and choir loft are on a raised platform back of a neat railing. The walls and ceiling were newly plastered and prettily tinted

The remodel of the first church by the Methodists in the fashionable Craftsman style. (Murdock collection-ERVHS)

and decorated. (Eagle Rock Sentinel 10/22/1914)"

The congregation continued to expand, purchasing various properties with plans to construct a larger church. By this time the depression had hit. As the Congregationalists had replaced the "Bungalow Church" in 1926, earlier discussions of a union with the Congregationalists were revived and a federation was agreed upon. This arrangement would survive until declining membership necessitated the end of the parish in the late 1980's.

The building is currently utilized by the First Filipino American United Church of Christ.



The completed church in the 1920's. (ERVHS)



The 1924 United Church which replaced the "Bungalow Church". (ERVHS)

The Presbyterian Split

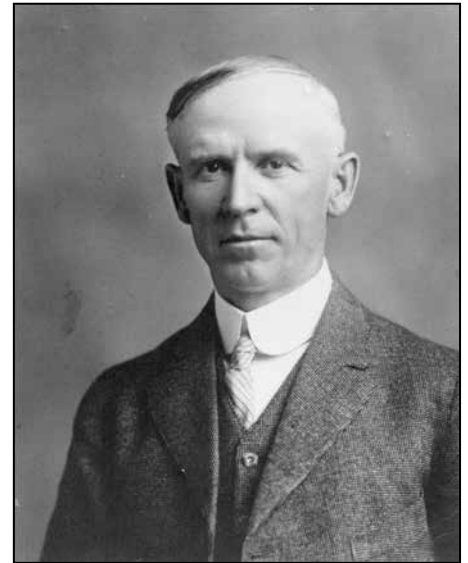
With the coming of Occidental College, then a Presbyterian affiliated institution, the Eagle Rock Church of Christ Congregational decided to become affiliated with that denomination in order to serve and grow with the college. Seventy three members and their pastor, Rev Hiram L. Hoyt, voted to reorganize as the first Presbyterian Church of Eagle Rock. The first congregational meeting as a Presbyterian Church was held April 12, 1914 in the “Bungalow Church” with an increased membership amounting to a total of 88.

When it was discovered that there would be difficulty in securing the Presbytery’s approval of Rev. Hoyt, a majority of the congregation and the board of trustees decided to abandon the plan. A peaceful agreement was reached. Those who wished to withdraw would retain the property and existing indebtedness. With their pastor, Rev. Hoyt, they reorganized and were newly incorporated as the First Congregational Church of Eagle Rock.

The Presbyterian remnant survived in spite of the severe shock of this dissension and separation. In the summer of 1914 there was nominally a membership of thirty-three, but only ten of these were active and willing to go ahead with a venture of faith. They were burdened with a church tax obligation based on a membership of 88, they had no property, no meeting place, no regular pastor, no board of trustees and only two elders who had remained loyal. Throughout the summer they continued to meet in prayer meetings in members’ homes.

The congregation met August 19 and decided to resume meetings for public worship, to organize a Sunday school, to set up a building committee and to purchase

Dr. Creswell, inspirational first pastor of the rebuilding Presbyterian Church. (ERVHS)



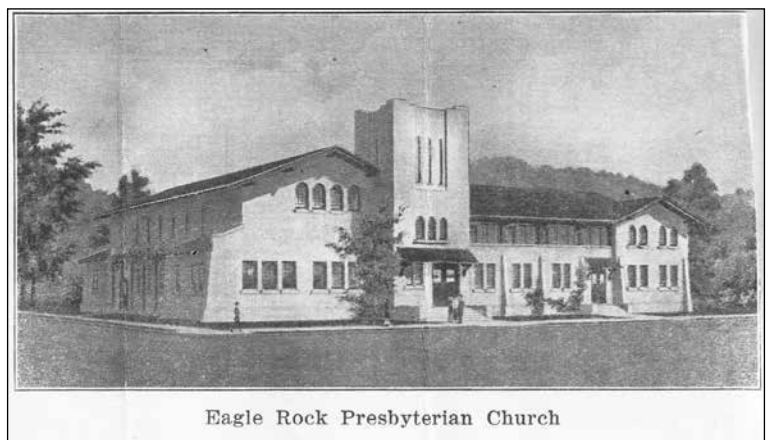
property on which a church building might be erected. Their first service was held on October 4 in Symphony Hall. By the end of 1914, there were forty-five members, evidence of success. The

Presbytery and others helped the members to buy a lot which fronted on La Verna near Eagle Rock Boulevard. A meeting hall was built there by volunteers and paid labor.

Additional property fronting on Eagle Rock and Addison Way was acquired and a beautiful brick church dedicated there in 1920. In February of 1971 an earthquake severely damaged this building necessitating its demolition. The church carried on, moving services to a remodeled area in an existing building and constructing a themed garden area where the brick building stood. The congregation has continued to diminish and it was decided this year to close the church. The final services will be held on Saturday, March 8th at 3:00 PM.



The first Presbyterian church building. (ERVHS)



Eagle Rock Presbyterian Church

Architects rendering of the brick church. (Christian Endeavor Journal, March 1920. Stargel collection)



at the Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock
2225 Colorado Blvd. Eagle Rock CA, 90041

**EAGLE ROCK'S EARLIEST CHURCHES
ONE CHURCH BECOMES THREE**

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WHY PARROTS IN L. A.?

WITH OXY'S BRENDA RAMIREZ

MONDAY, APRIL 21, 7:00

**ICE CREAM SOCIAL
MUSIC, MUSIC, MUSIC
MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 1:00**



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Membership Category:

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Clip and mail to : **ERVHS**
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Eagle Rock, CA 90041

Date _____

Member's Corner



Robin Robinson

Robin is a 3rd generation Angelino and more specifically a 3rd generation "Glassell Park-ian"! Her Italian grandmother immigrated there, where she and her father were born and raised. In the 1960's while she was attending ERHS, her family received a letter requiring them to move from their two-story Midcentury Modern home because the construction for the 2 freeway had begun! Their home and the entire street, Derby Place, was razed and is now a memory. The family relocated to Eagle Rock Blvd. to a smaller home with income properties on site. That property remained in the family until 2013.

Thirty-nine years ago, after meeting her then-husband Paul in college, they moved to her current residence on Hermosa Ave. She raised her son and daughter there and they both attended Eagle Rock schools. She loves her craftsman style home, and is especially fond of her neighborhood's creative landscaping.

In 2010, after 39 years working for various community colleges in different capacities, Robin retired. Since then, she has been very active in the Neighborhood Church's choir, traveled to Tahoe frequently, and volunteers at the Kuruvungna Village Springs, where the Tongva tribe once had a thriving settlement. She began volunteering there after being exposed to the issues facing the Tongva through guest speakers at her church. If you are interested to know more, please check out <https://gabrielinosprings.com>.

Robin told me "Knowing the past prepares you to make the future better," and we all know that the ERVHS concurs!

-Katie Taylor