

VI. Church in Search of a Home

By Kit Watts

There was no church building. Adventist services were first held in a building called Takoma Hall and the group which met there numbered no more than 40.²⁵

As construction began on the Thornton Estate--the one and seven-eighths acre plot just inside the District of Columbia where the General Conference and Review buildings would be located²⁶--the church began to cluster and grow. But not until 1912 did the stucco building named the Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist Church appear on the corner of Carroll and Willow (now a public parking lot).

Meanwhile, sanitarium construction had taken place in 1905-1906, and with it the first power lines to that part of the city were installed, attended by street lights at 50 strategic points.²⁷

As that end of the axis of Adventist institutions developed, students at the new college and employees of the San worshipped together. At a 1907 General Conference council in Gland, Switzerland, the college was renamed The Washington Foreign Mission Seminary and its objectives were focused upon quick one-year preparation of candidates for mission service.²⁸

October 12, 1907, with a membership of 54, the Seminary and Sanitarium Church was organized. It was to be a church in search of a permanent home for the next 37 years.

To begin with, it met in the Sanitarium gymnasium--after the dumbbells and calisthenics equipment were put out of sight. The board of officers listed in the Review report included Dr. D. H. Kress and Professor H. R. Salisbury as elders; C. H. Hayton and A. O. Kalstrom as deacons; Mrs. W. E. Hancock, clerk; O. F. Butcher, treasurer; and Mrs. Dr. Ruble, librarian.²⁹ Having gained ten more members by the end of the year, the church was admitted into the District of Columbia Conference.

When College Hall (now the Science Building) was erected in 1908 the church moved in. The chapel on the second floor gave ample seating room for the group although it had none of the usual facilities such as a baptismal font. After the Takoma Park Church was built, baptisms, college commencement exercises, and other important religious meetings were held there.³⁰

In 1914 the college began offering a four-year liberal arts program and was renamed Washington Missionary College.

With the college's name change and a general consensus that "Seminary and Sanitarium Church" was a rather cumbersome title anyhow, the church looked about for an appropriate name of its own. The creek, still a focal point of community life, offered an option, and Sligo Church it became.³¹

The college began to grow and College Hall became overcrowded. The administration soon laid plans for Columbia Hall. Sligo Church had 185 members who each took a definite interest in the plans, for the new chapel would double as the church's home.

Times were hard. World War I was in progress. But in spite of difficulties the church expanded its missionary work and in 1917 was the only one of the large churches to reach its Ingathering goal.

As for building Columbia Hall, Sligo divided itself into three groups--the sanitarium, the college, and the remaining members. This third group was to raise \$1500. Some said it could not be done--not during the war. But Benjamin G. Wilkinson, president of the Columbia Union Conference, had a short preaching service, and 150 persons raised the sum of \$1515.³²

Columbia Hall was dedicated on February 20, 1919.

Footnotes:

25. Notes for the Opening Services of Takoma Park Church, by L. E. Froom, souvenir Bulletin, October 17, 1953.

26. The SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1081.

27. Takoma Park, p. 26.

28. The SDA Encyclopedia, p. 295.

29. Review & Herald, October 17, 1907, p. 24.

30. "History of Sligo Church," unpublished manuscript by Myrle Tabler, (1963), p. a2.

31. Sligonian, vol. 1, No. 1, April, 1916.

32. Tabler, p. 2.