

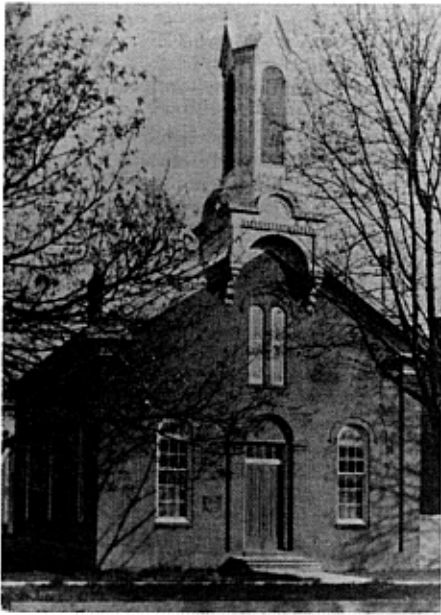
HERITAGE

A Preacher in the Governor's Mansion

by Jerry Rushford

In June 1866 George Lemuel Woods, the Republican candidate, won a closely contested election to become the third governor of Oregon. This was welcome news to the Christians living in the capital city. The 33-year-old lawyer was not only an active Christian, he was well-known to Oregon Christians as a preacher of the gospel.

As a teenager living in Yamhill County, Woods had studied under a gospel preacher named William Lysander Adams. Adams was a distinguished graduate of Alexander Campbell's Bethany College in Virginia. Moving to neighboring Polk County, Woods enrolled in Bethel College, a school founded by Oregon Christians. It was during these years that he first tested his skills as a public proclaimer of the gospel of Christ.



The Church of Christ in Salem dedicated the "Little Brick Church" on Sept. 22, 1867.



George Woods was governor of Oregon from 1866 to 1870

Among his mentors, the most influential was his own grandfather.

The maternal grandfather of George Woods, Thomas Crawford McBride, had been a pioneer preacher for the Restoration Movement in the state of Missouri for more than 30 years. The 70-year-old preacher was nearly blind when he traveled overland to Oregon in 1847, but he preached powerfully for a decade in Oregon Territory prior to his death in 1857. His influence on his talented grandson was enormous.

When George Woods arrived in Salem to begin his four-year term in September 1866, he discovered that

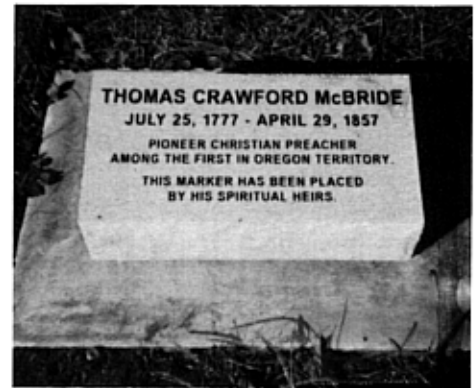
the Church of Christ in Salem was discouraged and rarely assembled for worship. Governor Woods not only encouraged the small and struggling congregation to begin meeting regularly, he challenged them to erect a \$7,500 brick church building on the corner of Center and North Streets and to call Peter Rogers Burnett from Northern California to be their preacher. The congregation rose to the challenge, and the 25-year-old Burnett answered the call.

In the summer of 1867 there were 75 active members in the group that Peter Burnett called "The Church of Christ in Salem," and they appointed elders and deacons for the first time. In addition to being selected as one of the four elders, Governor Woods agreed to provide some leadership for the Sunday School program. He also served as clerk of the church for a time. The Church of Christ in Salem enjoyed a mountaintop experience on September 22, 1867, when it dedicated the building that became fondly known as the "Little Brick Church." Although Burnett was the regular preacher for the congregation, Governor Woods often filled the pulpit when the preacher was away in meetings.

In September 1868, halfway through

the term of Governor Woods, Peter Burnett wrote a letter to a church periodical in Indiana in which he reported:

The Church of Christ in Salem was organized in the summer of 1867, a little over one year ago...we have kept up our meetings from that time to the present, and we now number nearly one hundred members...About two years ago the brethren determined to erect a meeting house, where they could worship God according to the Primitive manner. After many delays and disappointments, the house was built, and the brethren thanked the Lord and took courage.



The original grave marker of Thomas Crawford McBride (grandfather of Governor George Woods) was broken and defaced. In the fall of 1998, Oregon Christians donated money for a new marker (above) in McBride Family Cemetery in Yamhill County.

By the fall of 1869 the membership had increased to 103, and the church was continuing to grow. The "Little Brick Church" did not have a baptistry in the early years, so the congregation made use of the mill stream near the South Commercial Street bridge. When Burnett concluded his ministry in 1869 and moved to a new location, some of the responsibility for preaching at the "Little Brick Church" fell on the shoulders of George Woods. In a letter written on December 27, 1869, one of the deacons noted:

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NEWS

Pepperdine People On The Move

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James Smythe, special assistant to the provost, preached for the Hollywood Church of Christ on January 24.

Tim Spivey, graduate student in religion, preached on Sunday, January 10 for the Atascadero Church of Christ, and for the Frazier Park Church of Christ on January 17.

Larry Sullivan, assistant director for the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution, preached in January for Churches of Christ in Bakersfield (Westside), Hesperia and Hermosa Beach.

Keith Whitney, associate professor of business administration, preached for the Van Nuys Church of Christ on January 17 and for the Upland Church of Christ on January 31.

Tim Willis, associate professor of religion, preached for the Temecula Church of Christ on January 10.

Morris Womack, professor of communication, preached on January 10 for the San Fernando Church of Christ.

Helen Young, assistant director of Church Relations, traveled to Michigan to give lectures on Esther and Ruth at the Rochester College Bible Lectureship in October. She was the featured speaker for a Ladies Day program at Monte Vista Church of Christ in El Paso, Texas, in October, and spoke at Lubbock Christian University in November. Recently, Helen was honored with a Christian Service Award by Los Angeles Bible College. In February she will speak at the 21st Century Christian breakfast program during the ACU Lectureship. In March she will participate in a leadership conference at Southwest Church of Christ in Tigard, Oregon, March 5-7, and then speak for a Ladies Day Program at Roseville Church of Christ in Roseville, California, March 20. The title of her message in Roseville is "Discovering Joy Through Life's Pains and Disappointments." In April she will teach a class during the Pepperdine Bible Lectures.

Seminar for College-Age Held in Bakersfield

Over one-hundred college-age students attended the third annual College-Age Seminar at the Westside Church of Christ in Bakersfield, December 5 & 6. Former Pepperdine staff Randy and LaJuana Gill from Nashville, Tennessee were among the guest presenters and Randy preached Sunday morning and offered the final class of the weekend.

Other speakers included Doug Baker, Fresno State Campus Minister; Howard Jones, Boise State Campus Minister; Scott Lambert and Linda Truschke, Pepperdine Campus Ministers; and Ron Smith, Campus Minister at UC Santa Barbara and minister for the Turnpike Church of Christ in Santa Barbara.

For information about the fourth annual College-Age Seminar set for the fall of this year, contact Rick Rowland, College-Age Ministry Leader, Westside Church of Christ, 7300 Stockdale Highway, Bakersfield, CA 93309 or call (805) 831-4460 or you can e-mail him at RnLRowland@aol.com.

Pepperdine's Center for the Family Hosts 6th Annual Conference

"Building Stronger Families Through the Church" is the theme for this year's annual Family Ministry Conference set for Saturday, May 1, 1999. Mike Cope will offer the opening address titled "The Role of the Community of Faith in Strengthening Families." Luncheon speakers Tom and Sandy Milholland will speak on "Seasons of Love: Family Relationships Over the Life Cycle."

Morning and afternoon classes offer a variety of topics including: how to talk with your children about sex, survival skills for step-families, raising responsible children and creating a resilient marriage, to name a few.

There is no conference registration fee, however, the luncheon ticket is \$5. Please register by sending your name, address, phone number, and check for lunch payable to Center for the Family, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA 90263-4771. For more information on this seminar, please call Sara Jackson at (310) 456-4771.

Governor George Woods

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We have many good and able brethren in the church here, who labor in the word and doctrine from time to time. Of that number is the talented Governor of the State, Brother G. L. Woods. If he could devote his time to the ministry, he would have but few equals; but he is a politician, and has too many duties to perform to do much preaching at present.

In the spring of 1870 Salem church leaders announced that the \$7,500 "Little Brick Church" was completely debt-free. The same announcement carried the news that the church had added twenty-two members in the past three months. Excitement had returned to the once-beleaguered congregation.

George Woods was just 38-years-old in the fall of 1870 when his term as governor came to a close and he eagerly looked forward to new challenges. A decision on his future was not long in coming. President Ulysses S. Grant tapped him to be the Governor of Utah Territory, and Woods departed from Salem and never returned.

When Woods boarded the train for Portland he left behind a debt-free meetinghouse and a healthy and growing church with a promising future. No doubt there were several reasons for the renewal of the Church of Christ in Salem, but the most significant was surely the spiritual example, vital leadership, and powerful preaching of the grandson of Thomas Crawford McBride.