

The Historian

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Old Fallbrook pre-1912. Two church steeples dominate the West Fallbrook skyline. The Rev. Pittenger was pastor of the M.E. church in the 1890s. This picture was taken from the 2nd story of the old high school, where the Maie Ellis school is today on Mission & Elder. The exact date of the photo is unknown, but it was before 1912 when the Tomlins Hotel was torn down. *Fallbrook Historical Society photo*

HISTORIC CHURCHES OF FALLBROOK

In the first few years of the beginning of West Fallbrook, three churches of separate denominations were built within easy walking distance of one another. The Baptist Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church were part of the early West Fallbrook skyline. St. John's Episcopal sat humbly in a wooded hillside.



Albert Hayward, Union Army veteran. His homestead of 160 acres became West Fallbrook when F.W. Bartlett bought his land and subdivided it.

A few years earlier in 1884, a land speculator named Francis W. Bartlett had purchased Albert Hayward's homestead of 160 acres because he saw an opportunity to establish a new town closer to the recently arrived California Southern Railroad.

Bartlett had Hayward's acreage surveyed as "West Fallbrook" in accordance with the State Township law. A parcel of land was set aside for public education, as the Township law required. The Maie Ellis and Fallbrook Street schools still occupy this property.

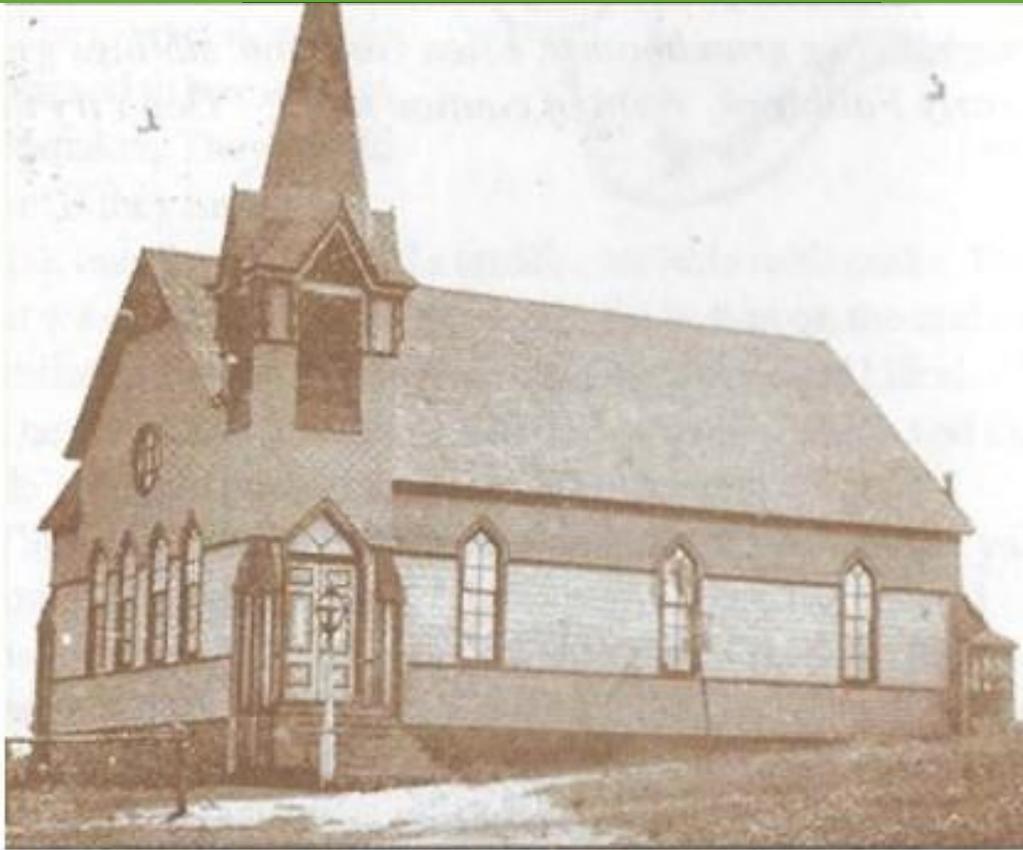
FIRST FALLBROOK BAPTIST CHURCH

Bartlett was a religious man. Before a church could be built, he and his wife Mary held Sunday services in their home. The Bartletts were two of the seven charter members of the First Fallbrook Baptist Church of Fallbrook in 1885. The Bartletts donated land that they owned for a Baptist church. On a hilltop at the NE corner of Hawthorne and Pico, the Baptist church would be completed in October 1888. By the end of the year, church membership had grown to 62. The Baptist church towered over the town, becoming a Fallbrook landmark.



The Baptist church sitting on the hilltop at Hawthorne and Pico streets towered over Fallbrook since 1888. It was visible from anywhere in town. In 1968 the old building had to be torn down and a new church rebuilt.

As an investor, Bartlett was anxious to see a hotel established. One of the first lots he sold was to Charles Ely who quickly built the Fallbrook (later the Tomlins) Hotel in 1884 on the NW corner of Alvarado and Main. Bartlett reserved a nearby larger parcel for himself and his investors, on Alvarado St and Pico Ave, to build an even bigger hotel. Because Bartlett, and his wife Mary, were strong supporters of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), they named this grand hotel after the national president of the WCTU, Francis E. Willard. In later years, the hotel would be renamed the Naples, then the Ellis, by subsequent owners.



The old Methodist Episcopal Church on Fig St. Today this building is the home of the First Christian Church.

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Bartlett's Town & Country real estate company sold a choice lot to the Methodist Episcopal Church which had incorporated in May of 1887. Bartlett gave the Methodists a cash donation of \$700 towards the construction of their church building. The Methodist Episcopal Church on Fig Street was completed in February of 1888. T.B Palmer, the original manager of the Fallbrook Hardware Store, was the first Methodist minister. By the end of the year, the church had 70 members. The Rev. William Pittenger, the Civil War hero, became the pastor from 1893 to 1896 and again from 1898 to 1899.

In 1974, the Methodist church moved to Winterhaven Road into larger and newer facilities. The First Christian Church took over the Fig Street location and preserves the history of the old church. Today the exterior of the First Christian Church building still looks strikingly similar to the 1887 M.E. church. This building is listed on the Fallbrook Historic Registry. The inside of the building has many historical displays recognizing Pittenger's old church.



St. John's Episcopal Church was built in 1890. It once stood on the hill south of E. Alvarado Street, not far from the Reader's Mercantile store.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

St. John's Episcopal Church was built in 1890 on the steep hillside south of Alvarado St., about two blocks east of Main Ave. The Rev. William Edmund Jacob, a member of an English colony in the area was St. John's first missionary. Reverend Jacob also served the congregations in Escondido, San Luis Rey, and Oceanside. Henry Camp was the St. John's missionary from 1896 to 1899. Camp later became the first postmaster of the DeLuz post office. Henry Camp is buried in the Fallbrook Odd Fellows cemetery. Rex Reader of the Fallbrook Mercantile had come to California from England in 1896. Rex, his wife Josephine, plus their daughter Babs and her husband Geno Somocal were lifelong dedicated members of St. John's church.

The last service was held in the old hillside St. John's church in April 1954, before moving to its present location on Iowa St. in 1955. By 1968, the congregation of the landmark Baptist Church on Hawthorne needed a larger

place and knew that their 80-year-old sagging building had to be rebuilt. They tried to save the historic steeple, but it had been damaged by termites and collapsed when the crane set it on the ground. The new Baptist Church was rebuilt in the same spot.

By Tom Frew
Historian
Fallbrook Historical Society

References:

Much of the forgoing was taken from Fallbrook Historical Society publications:
Methodist Episcopal Church, Fallbrook in Review vol. 3 chapter 4.
Fallbrook First Baptist Church, Fallbrook in Review vol. 4 chapter 9.
St. John's Episcopal Church, Fallbrook in Review vol. 5 chapter 7.

Thank You!

The Fallbrook Historical Society gratefully accepts and acknowledges the generous donation from Laurette Beeson of her \$100 gift in memory of Dwayne Wright, Don McLean, Sr., and Russ Vatnsdal. This donation will help us continue to bring history to life for the community we serve.

We gratefully accept and acknowledge the generous donation from Necyne Wright for her \$600 gift in memory of Dwayne "Red" Wright, Marian and Don McLean, Sr., and Russ Vatnsdal to be used toward projects at the historic Reche School House.

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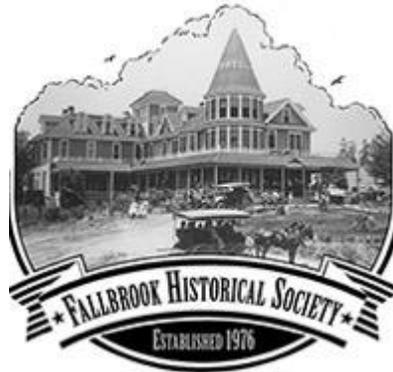


Members of the Cultural Arts Program Class on historical basketweaving with Instructor Pat Saunders at the Reche Schoolhouse on August 20th. Nine kids ages 6 – 11 participated in the basketweaving, an acrylic painting and a watercolor painting class



Docent Jeff Duhachek gives a tour of the Historical Society Museum to the Fallbrook High School Homecoming Court on August 13th.

The Fallbrook Historical Society's mission is to bring history to life by educating the community and others about Fallbrook's rich heritage



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