

Building

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was put down. The congregation sat on logs."

From 1851 when it was built, until 1889 when the congregation moved to its present building on Church Street, the building was often the center of revival meetings and rousing sleighing parties. Sleighing parties were said to have been attended by people who came from far and wide. It is recorded that on a quiet night, the noise of the meetings could be heard from a mile away.

"We were the first church of any kind in the Back Mountain; if anybody wanted to be baptized or married, we were the only game in town," said Rev. William Lewis current minister of the Dallas Methodist Church, originally called the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Dallas. "I wish I had a nickel for every time someone has said my grandparents used to go there, because everyone went here, we were the only church."

After large revivals, attendees would go to Christian Rice's mill pond to be baptized. It is recorded that they would immerse themselves "even in the coldest winter weather."

After the congregation moved into its new building, the old one was sold to what is termed in the Dallas history book as a "local group." On July 1889, the group organized the Dallas Broom Company which made and marketed several types of brooms.

The building, originally built to be two stories, was raised to its current height of three stories when it was converted to a factory. The two existing floors were elevated and a third floor was added to the bottom. At the time of the renovations, it is recorded that the factory was equipped with "new and modern equipment."

According to the History of Dallas, the factory was important to the area's economy because it provided employment. It was also important to local agriculture because it created a demand for broom corn.

In 1895, six years after it formed, several firms including the Dallas Broom Company joined together to form the American Broom and Brush Company. It was not long after the reorganization that the machinery and business were transferred to other plants and local workers lost their jobs.

Not a lot is known about the building's history between the period of the late 1890s and the time the Sisters of Mercy purchased the building in 1947. When the sisters purchased it, the building was part of the Morgan Wilcox estate.

There is some reference to the building having been a summer residence or rental. A notation in a date book at College Misericordia indicates the building was called Sunset Hall and was rented in the summer of 1916. When the building was purchased in 1947, it was referred to as a "private home." Shortly after the purchase, it was renovated and turned into a student residence and home economics department.

In the May, 1950 issue of the Miss Recordia, the College Misericordia newspaper, it was reported that the building had over the years gained the reputation of "a house of mystery." The reporter wrote: "Many times its desolate and mysterious appearance had

been the brunt of good-natured joking and speculation as to its origin and history."

In a July, 1949 Sunday Independent newspaper article, several reasons were cited for the college's purchase of the building including rapidly expanding enrollment and a growing home economics department. That year, the building underwent dramatic renovation. During the years the building was part of the Wilcox estate, there were two large porches on the bottom two floors of the front of the home. They were removed and the inside of the building changed to accommodate a live-in home economics department. The building was then named Rosary Hall.

All students majoring in home economics were mandated to reside at Rosary Hall for a period of six weeks either in their junior or senior year. There they would gain practical training in all the phases of "home management."

"Here these students will be put to use the theory which was taught to them in their freshman and sophomore years," stated the article. Every week students alternated hostess, assistant hostess, cook, assistant cook and waitress. It stated that the girls left the home as "experienced homemakers."

In the late 1960s, Sister Mary Sharon Gallagher (who still works at the college) would on occasion serve as substitute resident counselor for the home economics program. Gallagher related how different times were then for the girls living in the house compared to the present day.

"It was a different time, so you had some semblance of order," she said. Gallagher, who would cover the 9-12 p.m. shift on the weekends, said it was common for every floor to have a house mother. "We would keep it at a reasonable level of discipline, the girls were used to doing what sisters said."

The building has been in use for the College Misericordia Women and Children Program since 1999. The program offers six academically qualified single parents and their children room, board and other support.

In 1998, the building underwent minor renovations in preparation for the program, but according to college staff members, looks inside and out largely as it did when it served as the college's home economics department.



This photo is marked on the back as being taken in 1887. Two people are identified: James A. Franklin, fourth from right, and Robert Whitebread, third from right.

RING IN THE NEW... Don't Drink And Drive

Be Responsible, Be Safe This New Year's Eve

If you're attending a New Year's Eve celebration away from home, plan ahead so you don't risk your life and those of others. Celebrate with a designated driver, take a cab, or just plan to stay where you are if there's a risk you won't be able to drive safely.

If you're hosting, plan ahead to deal with guests who may need a ride home or a place to stay. Don't be reluctant to take away keys from anyone who is behaving as if they can't make it home safely. Better yet, collect all keys before the evening begins, and return them only if you are sure there won't be a problem.

It's great to have fun as you ring in 2003. It would be a tragedy to have the celebration end with injury or loss of life.

Be smart, Be Responsible, Be Safe



—James Hutter

Present structure near the College Misericordia campus which will soon become a practice house for the rapidly expanding home economics department of the educational institution.

Misericordia to Use Dallas Home for Home Economics Department Center

This photo appeared in the July 31, 1949 issue of the Sunday Independent. The caption read, "Present structure near College Misericordia campus which will soon become a practice house for the rapidly expanding home economics department of the educational facility."

summer camp

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