



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Garland — a favorite

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Our photo from around 1900 is taken from a post card showing the interior of Christ Church, Albion, at Christmas time.

It's noted in a column of reminiscences from the 1920s that the women of Christ Church back in the 19th century spent several days each December making evergreen garland. They worked on this project in the church basement and literally hand made yards and yards of garland as this picture indicates.

This was how garland was made before the quick and easy artificial stuff you can buy today.

The women of Christ Church used cedar evergreen which someone harvested from the swamp in Barre at the time. Cedar was not prickly and did not have needles which would fall once the greens dried out.

Once the women completed

the many yards of garland then an evening work bee was held in the form of a party to hang the garland. Here young men climbed the ladders to fasten the greens to beamwork in the ceiling. Charles St. Clair, who lived just west of Albion, notes in his diary from the 1870s that he and a young lady friend attended such an occasion for decorating the church.

Our picture shows that not only was garland strung up but that the women also made evergreen gothic arches over the center aisle.

Looking more closely at the picture we see garland outlining a memorial tablet to the left. A lone wreath hangs over a gas fixture which balances the hymn number board on the other side of the church. This is decorated at the top with evergreen boughs.

The reredos behind the altar is also decorated with greens and a few poinsettias.

There are no ribbon bows, no tinsel ornaments and no Christmas trees, just yards and yards of plain green garland.

Some churches would certainly have decorated for Christmas years ago but others of a more strict Protestant inclination would have refrained from the amount seen here.

I tend to think that Christ Church was an exception in that so much garland was made. Here, however, it had become a tradition over many years, which was probably added to annually.

By the second decade of the 20th century, the Victorian influence was gone and Christ Church was decorated at Christmas in a much more subdued manner.