

Reminiscences of Ye Old Towne

BY C.W. LATTIN 2-3-11
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The above title was used on a series of weekly columns written by a correspondent to the editor of the Medina Tribune in 1914. The following excerpt is taken from one of these reminiscences going back to the mid-19th Century in Medina.

"The Presbyterian Church was located where the present church stands and was built of stone, the entrance being several steps extending across the front up to a portico thence through three separate doorways to an entrance hall, with doors at each side to aisles in the nave.

"The pulpit was a raised platform with stationary desk and three chairs. The gallery extended across the east end, and the choir nearly filled it.

"The first musical instrument was something like a large accordion, from that to melodeon, later an organ.

"The minister was Dominic Furman. A very dignified gentleman, without much energy or talent — at least that was my boyhood impression, from having to sit through two sessions every Sunday, listening to his extortions; and between these sessions attending Sunday School, of which the superintendent for years was John Parsons, a most thorough practical Christian gentleman. The only thing we scholars had against him was any mischief committed during the week was commented on before the school.

"The basement was divided into two rooms, the front one fitted and used for prayer and other religious meetings, the rear room for a select school. In those days the churches were not used for social entertainment.

"This church was burned in 1870 and the present edifice built."

Our photo from the 1850s shows a man playing one of the first musical instruments used in local church services. It was known as a lap organ and was indeed like a large accordion, as noted in the article.

Other points of interest from the correspondent are



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three front doors, which were common. This goes back to when women and men sat separately in church. Women went in their door (left) and men went to their door (right). But following worship they all filed out the center door.

Another point is noted that the gallery was on the

east end, which meant that the choir was in the back of the congregation — also typical of the time. This arrangement was done so that the singers did not distract from the preacher, who was up front at the "desk." This desk term was often used years ago to describe the pulpit or lectern from which scripture was read during worship.

C. W. Lattin is the Orleans county historian. His column appears every Thursday in The Journal-Register and The Albion-Advertiser.