“Department of History”

“University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire”

Profile of Eau Claire Churches at the Turn of the Century

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“For Dr. Robert Gough”

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ABSTRACT

The Eau Claire area had a number of churches in the community around 1900. These churches served as a meeting place for many of the town’s residents and shaped the community into what it is today. This paper serves to look at the records that were kept between 1890 and 1900. The church denominations that I have decided to look at are Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptists, Catholics, and Methodists. All these churches have different messages that drew different groups of people to their pulpits. The records show that there were different ethnic and social backgrounds that are associated with the denominations. The different denominations also had differences in keeping their records. Some records are more complete than others, and others provide additional information that gives insight to how the churches were run. These churches were an important part of the Eau Claire community, a fact that is often overlooked.
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Churches are described as places to meet with God, and places to meet with other people. For a long time in American history, the church was the center of the community. Members would go to hear church news as well as community news. Congregations were more than people sitting together, they were large families. People knew each other’s business and made sure that their friends and relatives were there in the pews each and every Sunday.

Church history often gets overlooked when talking about a community. This can be said for the early history of the Eau Claire community. The city of Eau Claire was established in 1872 by combining the towns of Eau Claire, West Eau Claire, and North Eau Claire.\(^1\) In the 1890’s, Eau Claire was a city that had a stagnant population. The lumber industry had left and this change hurt the town economically.\(^2\) Even though the once booming town had seemed to be fading, Eau Claire still had about a population of seventeen thousand people.\(^3\) Many of these people were of German, Irish, or Scandinavian decent. While not a huge town, Eau Claire featured many churches for people to select from. Many factors would influence the decision on which church to choose. Some of them have to do with cultural heritage and social standing.


\(^3\) Carlson, Andrew Karl. *Social Stratification of Church Denominations in Eau Claire, 1860-1900.* Thesis (M.A.–History)—(University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, 1990, 1990), 165
The purpose of this paper is to examine five of Eau Claire’s churches during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The churches offered different viewpoints and messages to their congregations, and in turn attracted different groups of people based on ethnic heritage and social background. In order to show this, I have profiled the First Presbyterian Church, Christ Church Cathedral, First Baptist Church, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, and the United Methodist Church. While they are all Christian churches, many of them have quite different outlooks, traditions, and doctrines.

Using their records from throughout the 1890’s, I attempt to look into the ethnic and economic makeup of each church congregation. The records offer some insight to the doctrine and messages of the churches also. Each record is different from church to church, but many offer some of the same details. Using the information in the details, you can see what the different jobs that each member had were. Also, many of the records provide ethnic background. Using all this, you can trace patterns in the congregation and get a feel of why some people might have picked their church.

There has been research done on the churches in Eau Claire. Many churches assemble a history of their church to mark a special anniversary or celebration. There have been histories done on the First Baptist Church in Eau Claire⁴ as well as some of the Methodist churches in the area.⁵ The latest Eau Claire church history that has been done was in 1990. Andrew Karl Carlson’s *Social Stratification of Church Denominations in Eau Claire, 1860-1900*, is a Master’s

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⁴ Annie Mayo. *One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the First Baptist Church, 1861-1986*. (Augusta, Wis: First Baptist Church, 1986).

⁵ Lake Street United Methodist Church (Eau Claire, Wis.). *A Journey Through the Years: 100 Years of Methodism in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, 1857-1957*. (Eau Claire, Wis: Lake Street Methodist Church, 1957).
Thesis completed in 1990 for the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. His thesis covers three churches in the area. The point of his paper is to record the changes in three early Eau Claire congregations during the time period of 1860 to 1900. The only church that we share is the First Baptist Church in Eau Claire. He looks at the entirety of the church congregation, while I focus on the ethnicity and social components of them. In his conclusion he finds that the churches grew over the time period. Some of my findings support his conclusions. Both of our findings show that there were a growing number of members from the working class. There were also a number of churches that supported an aging congregation. He does focus on other churches that I do not cover and time periods that I chose not to look into. Other than that, Eau Claire area churches have not had their story told yet. There is much information that these records offer and many ways to write about them. I believe it is an important part of the local history of the city of Eau Claire. These churches help shape the city into what we have today.

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The first church that I looked at was the First Presbyterian Church. The original church building is no longer standing today. This church claims it has been around since the 1870’s. Like many other types of denominations, Presbyterianism can trace its roots to the Reformation in the 1500’s. It is closely related to many other Protestant denominations, but would come along a bit later. Presbyterianism would not become an official denomination until the 1600’s. Presbyterians at the time would have been Calvinist in their beliefs. Calvinism is close to Lutheranism in belief, except that Calvinism stresses a stronger conviction to some of their practices. Scottish immigrants are mostly responsible for spreading the religion to the United States. Presbyterians would be split into two groups during the Civil War. While mostly having the same beliefs, they were split by the North and South. Presbyterian Churches could be found in most cities and towns by 1900.

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First Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church in Eau Claire was a very typical Presbyterian church in 1895. The church had a members list of about one hundred and twenty people. The Eau Claire First Presbyterian Church records were the most incomplete records that I looked at. The most information it gave was a history of the pastors who presided over the church. During the 1890’s the Reverend L.F. Grant would serve the Eau Claire congregation. The records offered a non-alphabetical members registry that was difficult to navigate. In addition, it gives wedding, death, and baptism dates.

The First Presbyterian congregation in Eau Claire shows records that were mostly made up of men that identified as laborers or farm workers. Wives of the male members were mentioned in the members list, but not much information is given. According to the records in most years in the 1890’s people who identified themselves as laborers or farm hands. Take for example a man named Andrew Gilbert; the church records give the year of his birth as 1867. This made him twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old in 1895. His birthplace is listed as Eau Claire, Wisconsin. This is typical of many men of the congregation. The ages of official member

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8 First Presbyterian Church, “Records, 1857-1899,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

9 First Presbyterian Church, “Records, 1857-1899,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

10 First Presbyterian Church, “Records, 1857-1899,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
ranged anywhere from nineteen years old, up until seventy-two years old.\textsuperscript{11} Gilbert is a last name that can be found in a number of church members. It is typically a German name, but in the records he does not claim any heritage.

As I have mentioned before, Eau Claire was a mixture of German, Irish, and Scandinavian people. Presbyterian churches usually drew a more Scottish and English congregation. This fits in with the records, as they show that a majority of the congregation identified as Scots-Irish. There were also a number of Scottish members, as well as German. Like all the congregations there is somewhat of a mixture of peoples. Of the one hundred and twenty-one members, forty-three claimed Scots-Irish heritage. The other eighty were a mix of the German and Scottish people I mentioned before. Some of the names did not identify an ethnicity and others I was unable to locate.\textsuperscript{12}

The records that the First Presbyterian Church offer a glimpse into the church itself. As I have mentioned before, Presbyterianism is closely related to other Protestant religions. The record keeping is comparable to that of the Protestant records. However, as I will discuss later, they do differ from that of the Methodists. The records keep track of Baptisms, weddings, and deaths.\textsuperscript{13} Unlike some of the records, there is no birth numbers and family trees. Another

\textsuperscript{11} First Presbyterian Church, “Records, 1857-1899,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

\textsuperscript{12} First Presbyterian Church, “Records, 1857-1899,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

\textsuperscript{13} First Presbyterian Church, “Records, 1857-1899,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
interesting thing about the First Presbyterian records was the change in its record keeping during the years. In the years before Reverend Sloane, records are even more incomplete. In the decade before he took over, the only record keeping was that of official church members. I can only speculate that it was a difference in church leadership that account for the discrepancy in records. However, there is no change in the decades after.

The Eau Claire First Presbyterian Church was similar to most Presbyterian churches during this era. The church had comparable members and records to that of other Presbyterian churches in the area. The emphasis on laborers and other similar trades is goes hand in hand to the message of Presbyterianism. It roots are in Scotland and England and therefore a majority of the congregation would be Irish and Scottish. The records are not as complete as others I have described. However, like all the church records, they offer a glimpse in how the church was run.
Christ Church Cathedral

Background

The Christ Church Cathedral in Eau Claire, as it stands right now, was built in 1916. The original church building was built in 1874 to house Eau Claire’s Episcopalian community. The Episcopalian Church is mostly found in the United States. It is an Anglican religion, meaning it has its roots in the Church of England. Prior to the American Revolution, the Church of England was the official church for six of the colonies. The clergy and leaders of the church were expected to take an oath of loyalty to the British monarch. The American Revolution would chase out all symbols of English power. Most of the clergy would leave for England, and the Church of England in the United States would transform itself into the Episcopalian denomination. Episcopalians take a middle path between Catholicism and the reformed denominations. Episcopalian Churches use a mixture of the two denominations. In the United States the Episcopalian Church is usually thought of a church with a congregation of people who hold higher statuses in communities and people with wealth.\textsuperscript{14}

Christ Church Cathedral

The Episcopalian Christ Church Cathedral has very different records from all the other churches that I looked at. The record starts with a storybook beginning of the Episcopalian Christian faith. They mention that fact that the church was formed by the patriots of the American Revolution. It claims that “America’s first leaders were members of the original Episcopalian Brotherhood.”\(^\text{15}\) The introduction is very boastful of some of the churches accomplishments. It outlines the struggle to get a church in the area. I am not sure how much of this part is fabricated or exaggerated. From there the records give a brief introduction of the church in the Eau Claire community. It starts with the original church in 1874, and while acknowledging other churches in the community, states that having a branch in Eau Claire was a necessity for the community. Much like the First Presbyterian church, it gives information on the priests who presided over the church, as well as the clergy that assisted them.

Unlike the Presbyterian records, the Episcopalian records offer a church directory organized alphabetically by family. During the decade of the 1890’s, the church was at its highest member count in 1896.\(^\text{16}\) That year it counted almost two hundred official members to

\(^{15}\) Christ Church Cathedral, “Records, 1886-1914,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 4-5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

\(^{16}\) Christ Church Cathedral, “Records, 1886-1914,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 4-5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
its name. However, unlike some of the other denominations, this Episcopalian church counted children as official members. This added almost thirty additional members.

As I mentioned before, the members list was sorted alphabetically by family. This made it easy to find different dates of different events for a family. Take for an example the Carson family. Originally members in 1892, the Carson family had five members. The parents, Allen and Catherine, must have been married before becoming church members, as there is no record of their marriage. They had two sons, Bruce and Craig. Both were already born when the family joined the church. Their daughter, Jamie, was born in 1894 and baptized the same year. The oldest son, Bruce, was married in 1896 and started his own family. Through this registry you can trace a family’s line through the entirety of the family’s church membership.¹⁷

The Episcopalian denomination is usually connected to people with higher social and economic standings. The Carson family I identified before claims that the father, Allen, was a businessman.¹⁸ This would be the same for most of the congregation’s members. While it does not give the specific business names, it does stand in contrast to the economic standings of other congregations. Almost half of the male members have the title of “businessmen” or “business” attributed to their names. In most cases for the female members, the records do not...

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¹⁷ Christ Church Cathedral, “Records, 1886-1914,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 4-5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

¹⁸ Christ Church Cathedral, “Records, 1886-1914,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 4-5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
offer an occupation.\textsuperscript{19} There are a number of male members that are bankers and lawyers. Less than twenty members are identifies as “laborers” or “farm workers.”\textsuperscript{20} Compared to the other Eau Claire churches, Christ Church Cathedral was the most financially-secure congregation. As one can probably imagine, this Episcopalian church was one of the wealthiest of the Eau Claire community. This is usually typical in communities with an Episcopalian Church.

Unlike the other community churches, Christ Church Cathedral did not have a majority ethnic group in the congregation. The records do not give an ethnic background for all the members. I am not sure why some members’ ethnicity is listed and others are not. For the ones that are listed there is not a pattern. While the Episcopalian denomination has its roots in England, there are no members that identify themselves as English. However, there are a number of Scottish members. Their numbers are comparable to Irish and German members. There are even some members that have Norwegian heritage.\textsuperscript{21}

Episcopalian Churches were created and rose in popularity after the American Revolution. Christ Church Cathedral in Eau Claire exhibits a lot of the attributes of many Episcopalian Churches in the United States. The Christ Church Cathedral was one of the more interesting records and congregations that I looked at. It starts off with a storybook-type

\textsuperscript{19} Christ Church Cathedral, “Records, 1886-1914,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 4-5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

\textsuperscript{20} Christ Church Cathedral, “Records, 1886-1914,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 4-5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

\textsuperscript{21} Christ Church Cathedral, “Records, 1886-1914,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 4-5, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
opening, describing the plight of the denomination, as well as the Eau Claire branch. Their records are put together very well in order to keep track of families that were members of the church. As an example, I took a look at the Carson family, and how the Episcopalian records trace the development and changes of this particular family. These records kept track of specific dates of events for the families in the church. These records also show that the congregation was unlike many of the other churches in the community. Many of the members had higher social standings and money than their counterparts in other congregations. In this congregation, you can find many businessman and bankers. This is standard in many Episcopalian churches. The ethnic makeup of this church also sets it apart from others. While some of the other congregation have a dominant ethnic group in the pulpits, Christ Church Cathedral had a mix of many of the ethnic groups that made up the Eau Claire community itself.
Sacred Heart Catholic Church

**Background**

By the end of the nineteenth-century, Catholicism had already become one of the dominant denominations in the United States. Early in American history, Catholics would be demonized and attempts were made to keep them out of the United States. During the middle part of the century, Irish and German immigrants increased the number of Catholics and Catholic churches inside the United States.\(^{22}\) Traditional Catholicism at the turn of the twentieth-century would be Latin-based. Writings and records would be written or communicated in Latin. Catholicism adheres to many traditions that have been practiced for hundreds of years that deal with marriages, communion and baptism. Catholicism and the Protestant denominations are in contrast to each other. The Reformation in Europe was created to combat what many people saw as Catholicism’s oppressive slant. Catholicism around 1900 had let go of some of its traditional customs. By the turn of the twentieth-century in America, most towns would have their own Catholic Church, or one would be located somewhere nearby.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{23}\) Ibid., 22
Sacred Heart Catholic Church

The original Sacred Heart Catholic church was formed out of the Saint Patrick’s Parish in 1875. At that time, the congregation consisted of many German immigrants. The current church building was built in 1895 and can be seen from anywhere in the Eau Claire community. The records from the church give a sense of how the church was ran. Like most traditional Catholic churches, Sacred Heart followed the tradition of carrying out church business in the Latin language. This is true for the church records. Every word in the records from Sacred Heart is written in Latin. This made it incredibly difficult for those, other than the clergy, to read the records. However, the labeling of the sections of the records is easily identifiable as communions, births, marriages, etc. The records mainly give information on the male members of the church. Besides being labeled as “wife” or “mother”, women are kept out of the church members list.

Like the Presbyterian Church, Sacred Heart’s congregation was made up of many workers and laborers. Sacred Heart was the church with the biggest members list of any of the records that I looked at. Among them, laborers and workers made up of over half of the official members. Of the five hundred members of the church, almost three hundred men identified as laborers. The other half was made up of many other occupations. One of the more interesting things of this record was the fact that some men labeled themselves as unemployed. This is the

24 Sacred Heart Catholic Church, “Records, 1880-1908,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 3, item 8, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

25 Sacred Heart Catholic Church, “Records, 1880-1908,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 3, item 8, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
only record of the Eau Claire Churches that this was present. This implies that there was more of an emphasis on keeping track of the men’s economic standing.

Another interesting thing about Sacred Heart’s records was a running tally of tithes. In many Christian denominations, members of a church are supposed to give tithes and other offerings to their church. However, it is not forced upon them. I did not find any record of tithes for the other churches. These tithing records help support the view of Catholicism as pay-for-religion type denomination. For example, the Boehm family gave seventeen dollars worth of tithes in March of 1897. The next month, the family paid in a little less, sixteen dollars. How the church used this information is up for debate. They could have used this for keeping families accountable and checking that they were helping the church out. It may have also served to check if families that made more money were offering more tithes. The Boehm family was on the low end of tithing. Some families and members would pay almost a hundred dollars a month in tithes.

Like most churches, Sacred Heart kept pretty good marriage records. These records kept track of the people who were getting married, the date, as well as the priest that presided over the ceremony. However, for some of the marriage ceremonies at Sacred Heart, there are different priests that carried them out. In most churches, it is the head priest that carries out ceremonies. During the late 1890’s, it seems that Sacred Heart did not have a central leadership

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26 Sacred Heart Catholic Church, “Records, 1880-1908,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 1, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

27 Sacred Heart Catholic Church, “Records, 1880-1908,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 3, item 8, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
within the church. In any case, they later years of the decade there is an increase in church membership. In 1897, there are almost one hundred additional members than the second highest year of membership in 1892.28

I think that it is important to include a discussion on the marriage sign-off forms. These were forms that non-members, in order to be married in the church, would have to fill out. The form states that the person has to renounce their membership to another denomination and be baptized and partake of communion in the Catholic Church. In addition to this, the new member would have to promise that any children they had or future children would be raised Catholic.29 In many cases it was a male that would have to fill this out in order to marry a woman in the Catholic Church. This is the only instance in any of the church records where this type of form and practice is found. This strict adherence to keeping everything with tradition is a very strong trait of the Catholic Church. It also shows how the church felt that their denomination was above outside denominations and the people that practiced them.

As I mentioned before, Sacred Heart was founded by mostly German immigrants. This made the congregation in the late 1890’s a mostly German majority. More than half of the members in 1897 are described as having German heritage.30 Many of them even claim

28 Sacred Heart Catholic Church, “Records, 1880-1908,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 3, item 8, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

29 Sacred Heart Catholic Church, “Records, 1880-1908,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 3, item 8, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

30 Sacred Heart Catholic Church, “Records, 1896-1907,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 4, item 1, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
Germany as their place of birth. There were a number of Irish members also. Also, there was more than one Catholic Church in the area at the time. Saint Patrick’s Catholic Church was nearby at the time, and could have been an alternative to the German-heavy congregation. Sacred Heart falls in line with the fact that there was an influx of Catholic immigrants in the middle to late nineteenth century. Many were German and Irish and Sacred Heart’s congregation consisted heavily of these two ethnic groups.

Catholicism would pick up in the United States in the nineteenth century. It relied heavily on historical traditions and ceremonies. In the city of Eau Claire, Sacred Heart Catholic Church would serve many of the communities Catholic residents. Like many of the churches in the area, Sacred Heart’s pews would be filled by many hardworking laborers. The church kept track of its member’s economic status by keeping a tab on their tithes. It also kept extensive records of new members marrying into the church. This made sure that the congregation kept to its traditions within the church. While the church served a variety of people from different backgrounds, the majority of members were of German heritage. With a mostly German congregation, and the Latin-based records, Sacred Heart is one of the more interesting churches in the Eau Claire community in the late 1890’s.
First Baptist Church

Background

The Baptist denomination has roots in the Puritans that would come out of England after the Protestant Reformation. The first Baptist Churches in America were erected along the north east coast in the middle of the seventeenth century. The first was built in Rhode Island, and from there would spread. At one point, after the Great Awakenings, the Baptist church would have the most members of any church in the southern United States. The Civil War split the church up. Conflicts over slavery divided the church between Southern Baptists and the Northern Baptists. The Northern Baptists would become the American Baptist Church. The Southern Baptists would form the Southern Baptist Convention. After the Civil War, the southern Baptist church further split apart. Former slaves wanted their own church, separate from white members.

Baptists are like most other denominations in many ways, but they do differ on a number of things. The American Baptist churches are Protestant religions, but add an emphasis on evangelism. Unlike many of the other denominations I have looked at, most Baptist churches did not require baptism or a communion in the church to become members. Baptists did

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practice adult baptism rather than infant baptism. This made it easier for people to become members, but harder to keep track of whom was actually attending church services.

First Baptist Church

The First Baptist church in Eau Claire was a branch of the American Baptist Church. The branch was founded in the Eau Claire community in the 1860’s. By the end of the century, First Baptist had one of the larger member’s lists of any churches in the area. As I mentioned before, Baptist churches were not as strict as to who could be members. This makes it difficult to actually know how many people were actually in the congregation in any given Sunday. However, the height of membership in the church in the decade of the 1890’s was about three hundred male and female members in 1899.32

While the congregation did have more male members than female members, the church kept equal information for both groups. This is in contrast to some of the other churches that focused more on the male records. The thing that sets this church apart is the fact that in the members list, children as young as twelve or thirteen years old can be counted as members. However, there is not as precise of information given for members that are under eighteen. This can be seen within the Harris family. The father, David Harris, has his birthday, previous home, date of membership, and current residence written down in the records. The same records are kept for his wife, Mary Harris. However Matthew Harris, the son of David, only has

32 First Baptist Church, “Records, 1894-1936,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 2, item 6, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
his age (fifteen) next to his name. This is a pattern in many of the members that are under the age of sixteen. This may have to do with the fact that most of the younger members are the sons and daughters of older members. It may also be tied to tithing and money that could be given to the church. It could also mean that they seen the younger members as not as an important part of the church, who could possibly leave the church in the future.

Unlike the other churches in the area, there is not an ethnic pattern to First Baptist. While many of the other records ask for a nationality or heritage, the Baptist records only ask for former locales. By the late 1890’s, most members of the church had been born in the Eau Claire area. Many of the names that are in the record suggest that the congregation was made up of a mixture of Germans, Irish, and Norwegian heritage. There is something that stands out in these records: the number of people and families that come from the state of Maine. In the year 1899, there are about thirteen people that put their former residence in Maine. While some might be from the same family, this group does stand out from the rest. I can only attribute to the fact that First Baptist Church is an American Baptist church, which is prominent on the East Coast of the United States. If a group of people were new to an area, they would try to find things that they were accustomed to.

33 First Baptist Church, “Records, 1894-1936,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 2, item 6, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

34 First Baptist Church, “Records, 1894-1936,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 2, item 6, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

35 First Baptist Church, “Records, 1894-1936,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 2, item 6, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
The Baptist records do not offer any evidence on the economic standing of its congregation. Unlike many of the other churches, First Baptist members did not have to state their occupation. Compared to churches like the Catholic Church, it seems that the Baptist church did not put as much emphasis on means of making money, as well as tithing. However, this does not seem to hurt or enhance the size of the congregation during the 1890’s. The congregation had only minimal gains throughout the decade.

The American Baptist church was founded in response to differences in the Baptist denomination in the years before the Civil War. The Eau Claire branch would be founded around this time. The church grew to have one of the larger congregations in the Eau Claire area. By the records, we can see that the church kept equal records of men and women. The church also allowed children to be members. Unlike, other Eau Claire churches, there is no pattern to the ethnicity of the members. Where many of the churches had a German or Irish majority, First Baptist did not ask for details of members’ heritage. Also, the church did not ask to disclose financial information. Many of these differences between the churches portray what each church valued in the congregation.
United Methodist Church

Background

The Methodist Church originated out of the English Anglican Church in the eighteenth century. Methodists are much like the Episcopalians in style and substance. In the United States, Methodism would see an increase in membership in the middle part of the nineteenth century. This would be due to a revival of faith in America known as the “Third Great Awakening.” Like many of the churches I have discussed, the Methodist Church was split by the Civil War. The issue of slavery would pull the church in different directions, and out of it would come the Northern and Southern Methodist Church.

Methodists find a middle ground between Catholicism and Protestantism. They have strict practices and tradition that most churches follow. However, their doctrine and teachings are rooted in the Reformation. Baptism and Holy Communion are two of the most important ceremonies in the Church. They also place a strong emphasis on mission work, and around the turn of the twentieth century, many churches had Evangelical messages.

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United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church had the most in-depth records of any church that I looked at. In the decade of the 1890’s, the church kept track of official members each year. They kept this in alphabetical order by family. They did not have children registered as members, but same information was present for everyone listed. The records kept track of important events within the church: Baptisms, marriages, communions, etc.) It also has listed birthdates, ethnic background, jobs, and addresses.\(^{37}\) As I mentioned before, the Civil War split the Methodist Church. The Eau Claire branch was part of the Northern Methodist Church.

United Methodist enjoyed a steady rise in membership throughout the 1890’s. It would peak in 1898, with almost three hundred members. It would stay around that number for the next two years. The congregation had a majority of Scottish and English members. Along with this, there were a number of people who identified themselves as Canadian.\(^{38}\) Along with all the churches that I have looked at, there are a certain number of German and Norwegian members. This makes sense, seeing that Methodism came out of the Anglican Church. Both churches that have roots in the Anglican Church had higher number of members that have heritage stemming from Great Britain.

The economic makeup of the congregation of United Methodist was that of a higher class. At least half of the members identified themselves as merchants, teachers, and even

\(^{37}\) United Methodist Church, “Records, 1887-1902,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 8, item 2-3, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.

\(^{38}\) United Methodist Church, “Records, 1887-1902,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 8, item 2-3, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
There was even a number of police men counted as members. This is the first time in these records where policemen were identified. This is a more white-collar congregation compared to some of the other denominations.

Much like other denominations, Methodism would come out of the Reformation. It would see an increase in activity during the 1800’s. The Civil War would split the church over the practice of slavery. United Methodist was a branch of the Northern Methodist Church. The church would have a mix of people in its congregation. More than half of the congregation would identify themselves as Scottish or English. However, it would have a mix of Germans and Norwegian peoples. United Methodist would also feature a number of white collar workers.

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39 United Methodist Church, “Records, 1887-1902,” Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982, microfilm, reel 8, item 2-3, Special Collections and Archives, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI.
Eau Claire had a number of churches to serve the community. The churches are a reflection of the makeup of the city. Each church offered a different experience for the people in attendance. The records that I have looked at shows that different group of people preferred different denominations to others. Whether it was groups based on economic status or ethnic heritage, Eau Claire residents would sit in the church pews listening to messages that pertained to their lot in life.

Of all the churches that I have discussed, Sacred Heart Catholic Church contained the most members. Sacred Heart was the most distinctive church that I discussed. While most of the other denominations were formed out of the Reformation, the Catholic Church had practices and traditions that are very different from the rest. The thing that stood out the most was the tithing record. No other church kept such in depth record of member’s economic status.

The Episcopalian Christ Church Cathedral featured one of the more upper class congregations. While similar to United Methodist, Christ Church Cathedral had some of the more financially secure members. The biggest differences between the two churches, was the way the two churches kept records. The Methodist Church kept the most extensive records. They were written much like many census records, with about the same information present on them. Christ Church Cathedral offered some of the same information, but not as in-depth as the
Methodist. The beginning of the records also gives a brief history of the Episcopalian denomination. It has a boastful tone and gives reasons as to why and how the church came to Eau Claire. Both these churches are based in Anglicanism, but have distinct differences.

First Baptist had the most mixed congregation. Unlike the other churches in the area, First Baptist did not have a majority ethnic group among the members. Also, there was no pattern of higher class or lower class citizens that were members. First Baptist was most similar to the Presbyterian Church. While the Presbyterian Church did have a majority social class, it also did not offer a dominant ethnic group. Also, First Baptist was the only church to allow very young members.

There are a number of other denominations that can still be looked out. The city had a number of Lutheran churches that were different from each other, as well as the ones that I have outlined. There is also a Congregationalist Church that did not have as well kept records as the others. Eau Claire would also build a lot of other churches in the coming decades. I imagine that many of the patterns I found in the 1890’s could still be found in later decades of church records.

At the turn of the century, churches were the center of the community. In many congregations, the members knew everyone in the church. They would take care of each other and keep each other accountable according to the traditions and doctrine of their faith. The churches in Eau Claire would have been no different. There were many factors that brought people to these particular churches. Some might have been other forces that I have not discussed. It seems that race and status almost always had something to do in choosing a
particular faith. Many of the people in these churches played a role in the community of Eau Claire, and the churches they attended had a factor in shaping that.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

“Church and Cemetery Records: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 1857-1982.” Microfilm. Special Collections and Archives, McIntrye Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI

- The Church and Cemetery Records outline the record-keeping for Eau Claire area churches for over a hundred years. The records are on microfilm and are found at the University Archives. These records form the basis of my paper. Most of the information is pulled from the individual church records that are found within the collection. Many of the individual churches kept records in different ways.

Secondary Sources


- I pulled an exact figure out of this book for the Baptist Church. It also was used as background information for a lot of the denominations. It follows the growth and spread of different churches throughout American history. It also covers some of the rhetoric and doctrine of the church.


- This is the standard book for Eau Claire history up until 1900. The book mainly covers the rise and decline of the lumber industry. I used this book mainly for some background information on the early years of the city. It does not cover churches and congregations of the area in great detail.


- The information in this book covered doctrine and history for many churches. In this paper, it was mainly used for the Catholic Church section. However, it did give better understanding of some of the other churches.


- I found this book too late to use it in great detail. It does cover some of the things that I cover. However, he focuses on three churches that are closely related. I also used it to pull out a population figure in the introduction of my paper.

This paper was used for background information on the introduction of this paper. It covers what were the social effects of the lumber company leaving the community. It covers heavily on the 1890’s which is the decade that I have focused my research on.


Dr. Hibbard’s book covers a hundred year history of the First Presbyterian Church in Eau Claire. I found this book too late to use it as I would like. However, I did use for background on that particular church. It also supported some of my arguments that I made for the First Presbyterian Church.

Lake Street United Methodist Church (Eau Claire, Wis.). *A Journey Through the Years: 100 Years of Methodism in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, 1857-1957.* Eau Claire, Wis: Lake Street Methodist Church, 1957.

Used in the introduction of the paper. Served to point out the fact that there have been histories of Eau Claire Churches that have been done in the past. This was written and put out by the church more than fifty years ago.

Mayo, Annie. *One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the First Baptist Church, 1861-1986.* Augusta, Wis: First Baptist Church, 1986.

Also used in the introduction. This is an example of another church history that was compiled in the area. This particular church is from Augusta, Wisconsin. It is not the same First Baptist that I looked at from the city of Eau Claire.


Julius Melton has written more than one book on religion. This one focuses on the Presbyterian Church in America. It does give the original history of the church in Europe. It does mention somewhat about the Baptist Church. I also used this book on background information on the Reformation.


This book was used for the background information on the history of the Methodist Church. It describes Methodism from early days within the United States. It also covers a bit about the Episcopal Church.


Dr. Pederson’s book covers many things that have talked about in my paper. While I do not quote her, this book was used as background to better understand the community. She also covers religion and how communities and families were involved in them.

This was more of a paper than an actual book. It was used exclusively for the historical context of the Episcopal Church section. It mostly deals with the nineteenth-century. It has a somewhat negative slant towards the church and how it is run.