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First Presbyterian Church

Blomington, Illinois

1833-1895



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**ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY**





















THE OLD FIRST CHURCH.

A Souvenir.

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BEING A HISTORY

OF THE

# First Presbyterian Church

BLOOMINGTON, ILL.

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1833-1895.

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PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION

OF THE

YOUNG WOMEN OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

OF MR. SAMUEL L. HAWKS.

## The Old First Church.

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BY MISS MARY L. KIMBALL.

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The hands that laid these time-worn walls  
 Have crumbled into clay;  
 And hearts that worshiped God within  
 Mouldered in dust away.  
 Here Sabbath folk for fifty years  
 Have come to praise and pray,  
 And some who came as children once  
 Are gray-haired men today.

Year after year beneath this roof  
 Christ's table hath been spread;  
 And shepherds to their changing flock  
 Dispensed His living bread.  
 Here youth hath come to consecrate  
 His service to the Lord;  
 Hath armed him in the mail of faith,  
 Girt on the Spirit's sword.

Joy hath been here, and grief hath heard  
 Of many mansions fair,  
 That Christ doth in His Father's house  
 For troubled hearts prepare.  
 Thus of the past; but there is work—  
 Our Master's work to do,  
 And we who cherish still the old,  
 Look forward to the new.

Tear down the walls that hem us in  
 To self and narrow aim,  
 And broad and firm a structure rear,  
 An honor to His name.  
 True, all the good the old hath known  
 Forgotten may not be,  
 And best to prove its work and worth  
 A new church let us see.

Then firm in faith give prayer and gold—  
 Give with an earnest will—  
 And when the strong new walls shall rise  
 We'll name the "Old First" still.



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REV. E. K. STRONG,  
Present Pastor. 1887.

# Historical Discourse

DELIVERED BY THE PASTOR

REV. EDWARD K. STRONG

*On the morning of May 12, 1895, being the last Lord's Day in the Old Church Building of the First Presbyterian Church.*

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**Psalm 44:1.**—We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

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**ONE** OF THE most noticeable features of sacred history is the recognition of God in human affairs. By word and by example the Bible points to the Almighty as intimately associated with the ways of men. The children of Israel acknowledged the Lord in their vicissitudes as well as in their triumphs, and whatever men might do to them as individuals, or as a nation, those men of God looked back beyond the immediate causes to the Lord as the great First Cause. Therefore they really meant it when they said: "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old."

Such a spirit possesses great moral power. It exalts the aims and purposes of a people. Indeed this consciousness of the Divine presence and of His deep and abiding interest in the affairs of men is the source and spring of the noblest human aspirations.

It was such faith in God that brought to this continent the heroic founders of this republic. They were men and women who could dare anything for the right to worship the Almighty



ROBERT R. CAMPBELL

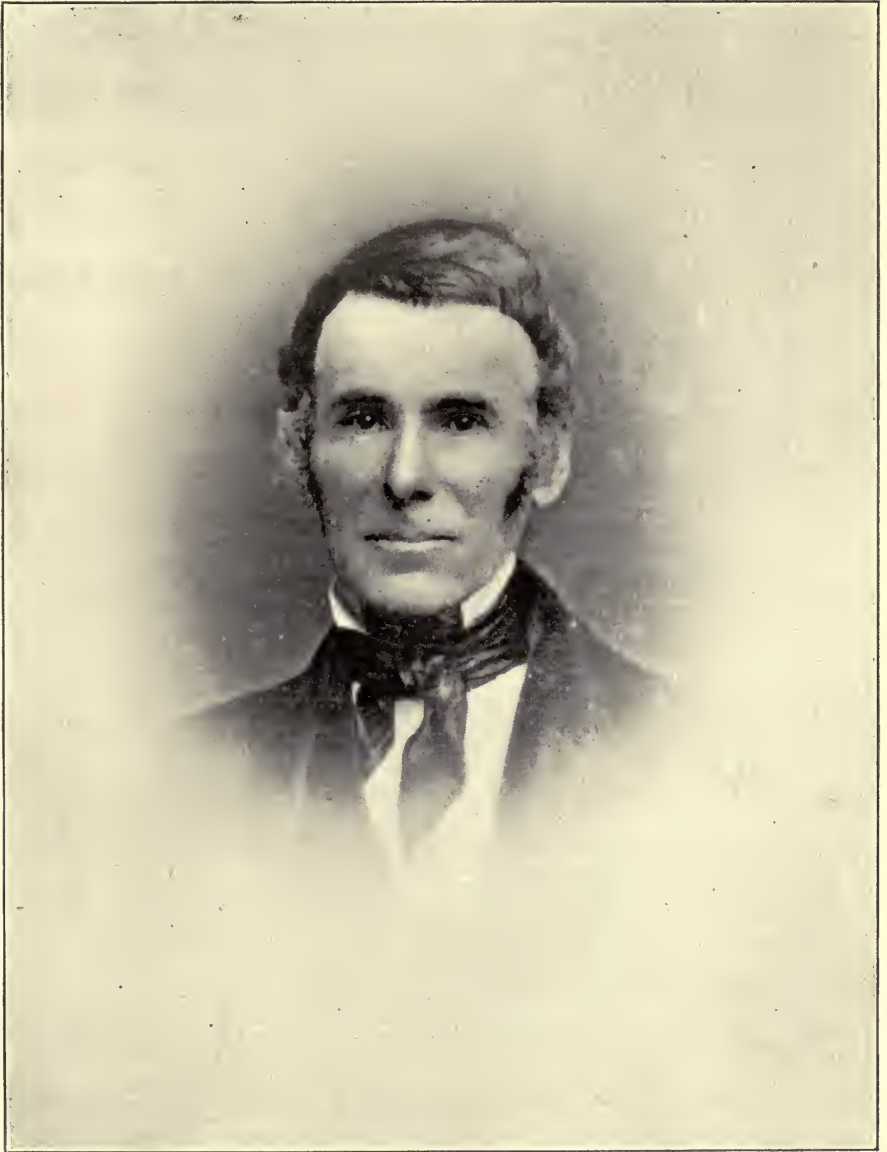
according to the dictates of their consciences. This belief in the nearness of the Lord in all that concerned them sustained our fathers in hours of sore trial and was their incentive to self-sacrificing deeds. From this sprang the high moral character of this nation. It gave to us our houses of worship, our Sabbath schools, and other means of grace and charity which so long have blessed this land.

As then we meet for the last services in this sanctuary, it is right that we should look back and mark the way along which this church of Christ has passed during the years of its existence. Verily, we have good reason to say with ancient Israel, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old."

From all the information I can obtain I learn this important fact: The first settlers of this region were God-fearing men and women. The history of McLean county tells of the settlement of John Hendrix in Blooming Grove in 1822. It calls him a "consistent, devoted Methodist," "the pioneer of Christianity in this locality." It further says: "The strict, almost Puritanic, ways of the religious Mr. Hendrix naturally had the effect of impressing new comers who were reckless and irreligious, with an aversion to his society, and would as naturally attract pious men—and the influence of all these early settlers was of lasting value."

You and I can never appreciate at its full value the blessing to all this region of the presence of such a man. It is as true of communities as of children that the first moral influences have very much to do in shaping the future life for good or ill. The moral bias, the religious tendency of this community, therefore, is largely due to him and to those of like character who immediately followed him.





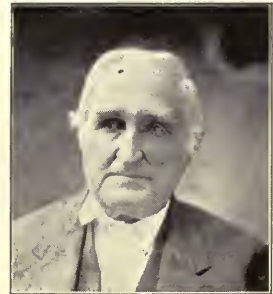
REV. B. B. DRAKE,  
Pastor 1840-1844.



From various sources, which I will not always stop to mention, I have gathered the following facts regarding the early religious history of this city, and particularly of the history of this church:

The first sermon preached in this region was delivered in the cabin of Mr. Hendrix by Rev. James Stringfield, in 1823. The following year (1824) the first Methodist class was organized in the same house. This class of ten members is believed to have been the nucleus from which in after years was formed the First Methodist Church of this city. In this same year Rev. Ebenezer Rhodes, a Separate Baptist, organized a Baptist Church of eight members at his house three miles east of this city. Rev. Dr. J. W. Dinsmore says this occurred previous to the organization of the Methodist class in the house of John Hendrix, and was probably "the first organization of Christian people in this region."

At this time the principal settlement was at Blooming Grove, about four miles southeast of this city. When the county of McLean was set off from Tazewell county, in the winter of 1830-31, Bloomington was designated as the county-seat, through the influence of Mr. James Allin, who, in the early part of 1830, had built a house and store, now a part of the residence of Mrs. Stipp, opposite this church. The first lots in the new village were sold in July, 1831, and within a year, or a year and a half, there were about one hundred persons in Bloomington. In this year (1831) the first sermon preached within the limits of this city is said to have been delivered in a schoolhouse on the corner of Main and Olive streets, and near the close of the year a Methodist class was formed which worshiped in this schoolhouse, and was served by the same minister who preached at Blooming Grove.



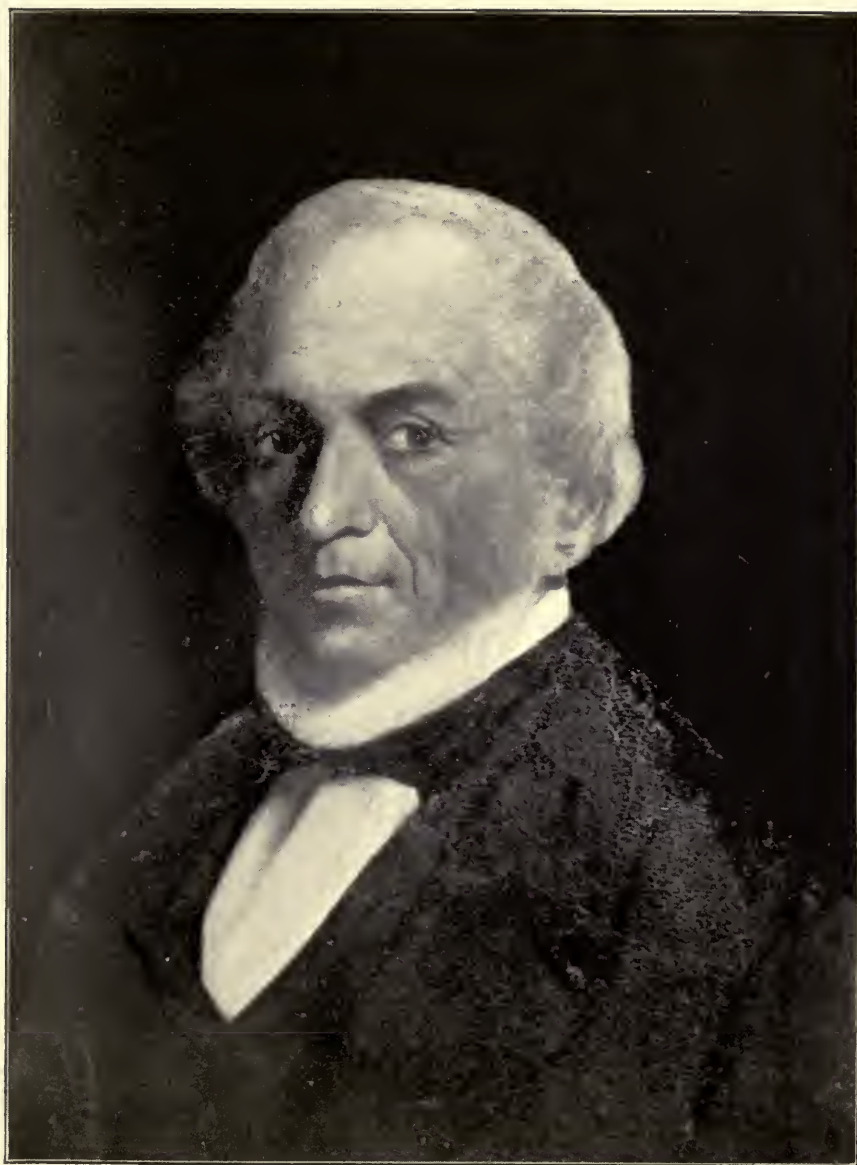
JUDGE JOHN M. RAYBURN

In December, 1831, Mr. A. C. Washburne, a young school teacher from Vermont, opened a school in Bloomington. Of these early days, and particularly of the early life of this church, we are greatly indebted to his diary for information, and I have availed myself of the quotations made by Dr. Dinsmore in his Historical Sketch. Mr. Washburne says that on the 9th of March, 1832, he organized a Sunday School. This was a union school, though largely managed by Presbyterians. The Methodists organized a denominational school in 1839, which, Mr. Washburne says, drew many from the other. "From this time forward the old organization took on a denominational character, and with slight interruptions has been continued to the present time, so that the Sunday School of the old First Presbyterian Church may rightly claim direct lineal descent from the first Sunday School organized in Bloomington." The claim made by our Sunday School of being the oldest in the city is further substantiated by the fact that Mr. Washburne organized the union school, was its first superintendent and chief supporter during its early years, and was one of the original members of this church, and for a time its first and only elder.

On the 27th, 28th, and 29th of July, 1832, three sermons were preached in the village by a Presbyterian minister whose name Mr. Washburne could not recall. "This, so far as I know," he writes, "was the first Presbyterian minister who visited Bloomington." On the first of December, 1832, "a gentleman called at my house and introduced himself as Calvin W. Babbitt. \* \* \* I had a pleasant and interesting conversation with him, from which I learned that he was sent out by the Home Missionary Society to look after feeble churches, and to organize new ones, where there was sufficient inducement."

Mr. Babbitt preached a number of times in private houses, in the schoolhouse, and in the court house. On the 26th of January, 1833, he preached in the school house, and after the service organized a church of eight members. The Sessional Records of our church begin as follows:





REV. DAVID I. PERRY,  
Pastor 1844-1850.



"BLOOMINGTON, MCLEAN COUNTY, Ill., Jan. 26, 1833.

"Assembled agreeably to previous appointment for the purpose of forming a church according to the rules and under the care of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America.

"Opened the meeting with prayer. The following individuals were received on certificate: Enoch Hunt, Amasa C. Washburne, Benjamin Depew, Margaret Depew, Robert Guthrie, Catharine Guthrie, Nancy Durlley, Isabelle Michaels. Amasa C. Washburne was elected elder.

"Closed with prayer. Calvin W. Babbitt, Minister."

The next entry is under date of Nov. 23, 1833:

"After sermon by the Rev. Mr. Foster. A. C. Washburne was ordained as an elder, which ordination had previously been neglected."

Thus the church was practically organized January 26, 1833, but according to the rules of the Presbyterian Church it was not legally organized until the ordination and installation of its elder, which took place on the 23d of November, 1833. At the meeting of the Presbytery of Sangamon, April 18, 1834, at Sand Prairie, four miles south of Pekin, the organization of this church was reported, and the church was enrolled as organized in November, 1833.

So far as I can learn, the First Presbyterian Church is the second in age in this city, the First Methodist Church having been organized as a class in 1831. On the 3d of March, 1833, Rev. James McGeoch was engaged to supply the church for a year. He was a young man of fine abilities, and was highly esteemed. He lived but a few months, dying in the following September of a violent fever, and his remains lie in an unknown grave in our cemetery.

Late in the same year Rev. Lemuel Foster came to Bloomington, and established a school, and erected a building on Olive street just west of the present residence of Dr. Hill. This school house was used for both school and church for many years, and Mr. Foster preached to this congregation about three years.

According to the church records, fourteen ministers have for longer or shorter periods served this congregation. The

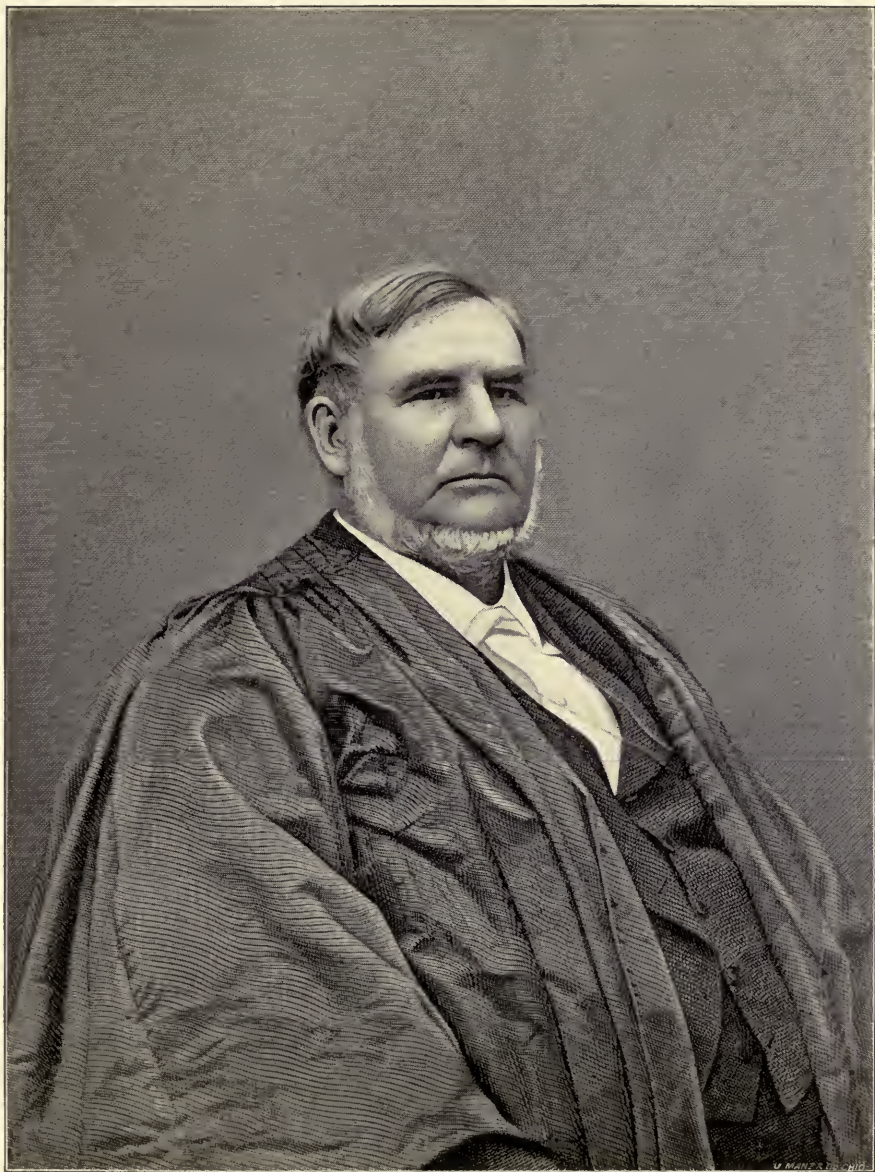
names of these men will be of interest to you, and are as follows in the order of their service: Calvin W. Babbitt, James McGeoch, Lemuel Foster, C. L. Watson, B. B. Drake (father of Mrs. Jas. H. Robinson), David I. Perry (father of Mrs. J. M. Scott and Mrs. Adelaide Perry), Fielding N. Ewing, Hugh R. Price, John McLean, S. B. Taggart, H. B. Thayer, F. S. Brush, Chas. M. Moss, and myself. The terms of service of these men range from a few months to several years. The longest is eight years and seven months, the term of service of both Mr. Ewing and Mr. McLean. Four of these ministers have been regularly installed as pastors: Messrs. Price, McLean, Brush, and myself. Mr. Ewing and Dr. Thayer were both called to the pastorate, but were not installed.

At this time, when we are on the eve of erecting a new sanctuary, it will be of interest to note the places where this church has worshipped. Our church was organized in the school house which stood on the corner of Main and Olive streets. For a number of years the congregation met in the schoolhouse afterwards erected by Rev. Lemuel Foster on Olive street, just west of Dr. Hill's residence. The next place of worship was the old court house which stood where the present one stands.

Those who were members of that early congregation and still residing in our midst, such as Mrs. James H. Robinson, Mrs. J. N. Ward, and Mr. Abram Brokaw, speak with much pleasure of the Christian fellowship which then prevailed. The late Mr. William Gillespie once told me how each Saturday he sawed and wheeled to the court house the wood necessary for the church services on the succeeding Lord's Day.

This church had no home of its own before 1846. There were then four church buildings in Bloomington. In 1837 the Methodist charges of Blooming Grove and Bloomington were united, and built the first church edifice in this city. This was "a plain wooden building," still standing on the southwest corner of Main and Olive streets. Soon after this the Baptists built, and were followed, in 1841, by the Christian or Dis-





DAVID DAVIS.





ciple Church. In 1843 a building was erected by the African M. E. church. About this time the Presbyterian congregation began the agitation for a sanctuary of their own. Mr. Abram Brokaw tells me that Mr. John T. Stuart, the personal friend of the lamented Abraham Lincoln, owned a lot near the present Pantagraph building for which he wanted \$25. Being a larger price than our people were willing to pay he finally agreed to give them the lot on which this church now stands, since the land was quite low and wet, and there were a number of stumps upon it. The title deed to this lot which conveys the property to the First Presbyterian Church in fee simple bears the date of April 27, 1846. Thus this congregation came into possession of this the most beautiful church location in the city. The lot next east is the gift of the Hon. David Davis, James H. Robinson, Abram Brokaw, Oliver Elsworth, and perhaps one or two others.



ABRAM BROKAW

I have found it very difficult to learn the exact time of the building of this church edifice. Mrs. J. M. Scott, whose father, Rev. David I. Perry, was the pastor at the time, says it was probably begun in 1846, but was not finished until the winter of 1848 and 1849. Mr. Brokaw says, "The walls were raised the first summer. It then stood until the following summer when the timbers for the roof were laid. The work then ceased for a time, and was again renewed." The people were poor and found great difficulty in completing the building. Mrs. Scott tells me that her father tried hard to induce the congregation to build a less pretentious structure of wood. But their minds were set on having a brick building, and thus the first brick church in Bloomington was erected.

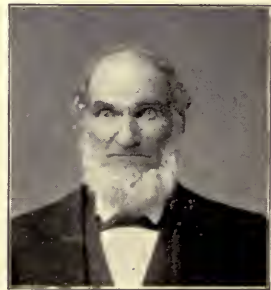
I am informed that Mr. James H. Robinson circulated the subscription paper for the new church, Mr. Abram Brokaw bought the brick, Mr. John W. Ewing hauled the brick to the

lot, Mr. Wm. F. Flagg drew the plans, and, with Mr. Brokaw, superintended the construction, while Mr. John Magoun laid the brick. Thus the people had a mind to work. But not the men only. There was at that time as efficient a corps of women as now, and these "elect ladies" met and sewed and did other work by which they obtained money for the building so dear to their hearts. After the congregation took possession of the building these same women for a time swept the church, and cleaned and filled the lamps. The building cost about \$4,000.00.

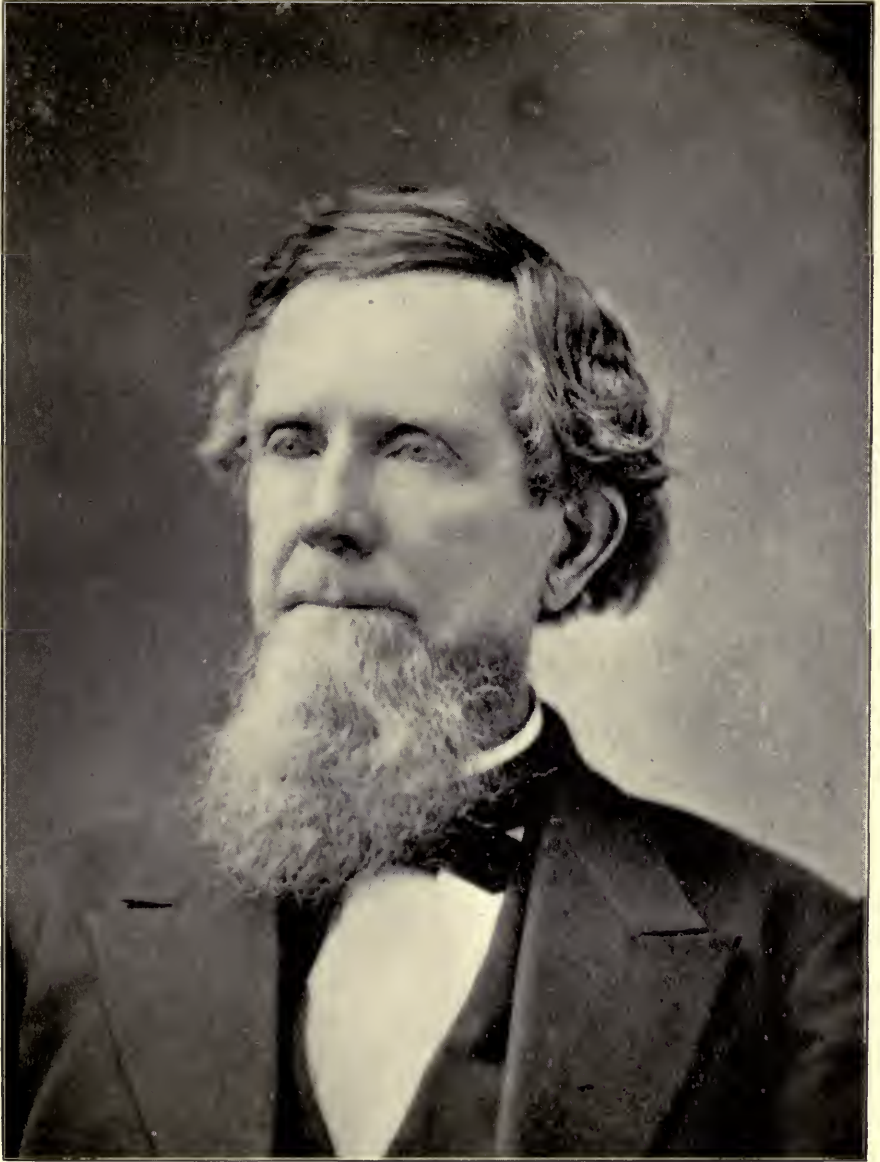
How did the building appear when first completed? It was about 60 feet long, 36 feet wide, and 35 feet to the ridge of the roof, fashioned after an old Greek temple with entablature, and in front four columns after the Grecian Doric style. The cross section at this north end of the building was not then erected; the pillars, unlike the present time, were free, and the vestibule ran across the south end of the church, over which was a gallery. The stairs to that gallery were in the east end of the vestibule. At the other end was a stove whose pipe ran up through the gallery floor, and then to the north end of the building. The keeping of this pipe clean was the cause of great annoyance, says Mr. Gillespie. Some years after, the gallery was extended along the east and west sides of the church.

When first used the church was not plastered. There were no pews, the congregation sitting upon planks laid on blocks of wood. The church was struggling with a debt and were in consequence unable to finish their sanctuary.

In the records of the church Session is the following, under the date of Feb. 27, 1850: "Application to the Committee on Church Extension for the sum of \$150.00 to aid in finishing our church was ordered to be sent to the Commit-



WILLIAM GILLESPIE



REV. FIELDING N. EWING,  
Pastor 1850-1858.

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tee of Presbytery on this subject for their sanctuary." This action was taken at the suggestion of Rev. F. N. Ewing, then pastor of the church, and with the assistance thus obtained the pews and other necessary furniture were purchased. The younger members of the present congregation will be interested in knowing that each pew had a little door, according to the fashion of that day. Some time after, there having been a good crop in this region, the people sent to the Committee on Church Extension a contribution amounting to more than \$100.00, thus nearly paying their obligation to that body.

The same day on which the Session resolved to ask aid for the church building they passed the following resolution: 'Resolved, that we ask aid of the Assembly's Board of Missions to the amount of \$175.00.'

Please notice the indebtedness of this church to two of the great Boards of the Presbyterian Church. It was the Home Missionary Society who sent out and supported the missionary, Rev. Calvin W. Babbitt, who organized this church. It was the same Board to whom the church looked for assistance in paying the salary of their pastor. The money furnished by the Board of Church Erection enabled the church to complete their sanctuary. Surely here is a strong argument in favor of these Boards, and they should ever be held in grateful remembrance, and should be liberally supported year by year by this congregation in order that other churches may be similarly blessed.

Rev. Robert Conover tells me that the young ladies' seminary of which for so many years he had the charge, was organized in the gallery of the church, and its sessions were held there until the seminary building was completed. In September, 1849, the Old School Presbytery of Peoria met here, and in the following autumn the Conference of the Methodist Church was held in this building. Here, also, the Rev. Alfred Eddy preached the Sunday afternoon preceding the organization of the Second Presbyterian Church of our city.



Like most churches, our church began in a very small way. Like others, it has grown, and has passed through serious trials, some of which even threatening the very life of the church. Soon after the organization, the slavery question came into prominence. Bloomington lay on the border between the two great sections which favored and opposed slavery. In this church were gathered these two elements, and more than once the struggle became intense. It was the anti-slavery sentiment which led to the formation of the Congregational Church, which, according to the protest against such organization in the records of the Session, occurred in 1844. Our church, however, continued to grow and thrive, until the congregation became too large for the home, and in 1855 fourteen drew out, and with twelve from the Congregational Church, and some others, organized the Second Presbyterian Church. This was a perfectly peaceful separation, and yet I have been informed that opposition to slavery had considerable influence in determining these persons to leave the parent church. Again, in 1867, troubles which had their foundation in this same question, split the church in twain, and caused the organization of a third Presbyterian church, and after an unfortunate lawsuit, the division of the church property. Thus this church has been the mother of three churches, only one of which is now living.

Despite these serious drawbacks and the still more serious bitterness engendered by the slavery question, which so greatly disturbed our American churches, the old First Church held on its way. There was that in the make-up of this church which is manifest to the present time, namely, a dogged persistence, a determination to overcome and to conquer, which under God is due to the fidelity and godliness of so many in its membership. This church has been a power for good in this community during all the long period of its history. It has ever stood firmly for the Bible as the Word of God. Its pulpit has uttered no uncertain sound concerning the Divinity of the Lord Jesus and the necessity of His gracious atonement. If



REV. HUGH R. PRICE,  
Pastor 1858-1865.





CAPT. JOHN MCLEAN

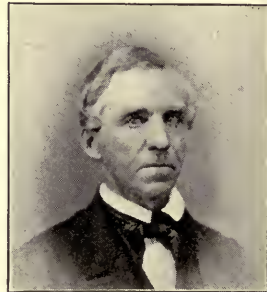
this church has not increased in its membership, as have others in the city, it has nevertheless trained a multitude for faithful work in the churches in this city and land. Here in our Sunday School, in our prayer meetings, in our Endeavor Society, and in other departments of Christian effort, many have caught their first inspiration to do service for Christ, and today are in other fields doing much for the glory of God and the good of their fellowmen.

It was during the ministry of Rev. Hugh R. Price that this building was enlarged by the addition of the cross section at the north end. I learn from Mr. Conover this was done in the year 1859, and that the money was raised by the sale of the pews. He himself paid \$30 for a pew. Mr. Conover also says that there was a decided opposition to this addition, a large number in the congregation desiring to erect a new edifice. The plan for an addition, however, prevailed, and Mr. S. W. Wilson, who built these walls, informs me that the intention was eventually to tear down the old part of the building and make the entire structure as wide as this cross section. About four years later the maple trees which have given us such grateful shade and added so much to the beauty of this location were set out. It is gratifying to know that the plan adopted for the new building will not require their destruction. In 1868, during the pastorate of Rev. John McLean, the pipe organ was purchased.

In writing the history of any organization, and especially of a church, it is impossible to do it justice. There are so many elements that enter into its successes or failures which cannot be detailed that one is sure to give at best a partial account. The history of a church is the history of personal character. It is the story of self-sacrifice, of struggles and hardships, of personal discipline, in which Christ is fitting His loved ones for greater usefulness in the kingdom above.

Call to mind that goodly list of elders who have so loyally served this church. A. C. Washburne ordained the first elder. Benjamin Depew, Henry Richardson, and Joseph N. Barber, who were probably ordained to their office in Mr. Foster's schoolhouse. After recording the election of these men our Sessional minutes quaintly add "Adjourned to meet at candle light." Then that evening, "after sermon and other religious exercises by the pastor the elders elect were set apart and solemnly ordained in the usual manner to the office of ruling elder." Samuel T. Molton, John W. Ewing, William Gillespie, and John Beaty, according to Mr. Brokaw, who well remembers the scene, were inducted into office in the old court house. Then the following were chosen in this building to do the Lord's service: T. F. Worrell, Samuel Pollock, James Rayburn, Jacob Smith, J. C. Wilson, M. L. Moore, W. P. Boyd, Hamilton Spencer, Oramel Rugg, William K. Davison, John McLean, John M. Rayburn, S. L. Hawks, Hugh Wallace, J. C. Scoville, R. M. Caldwell, John Y. Chisholm, Elias Daggy, M. L. Christian, Walter H. Bell, R. S. McIlvaine, B. M. Herr, R. R. Campbell, J. R. Tankersley, and Calvin Rayburn. Beside our present elders only five of these gentlemen are now living. Two, Messrs. Moore and Caldwell, reside in Bloomington; the other three, Messrs. Scoville, Bell, and Tankersley, live in other cities.

But when these names are mentioned let us not forget others who were deeply interested in the church's welfare. Such men were Abram Brokaw, the Hon. David Davis, James H. Robinson, Abel Harwood, and George Bruner, who were among its trustees, and gave liberally to its support. Nor should the present Board of Trustees be passed by: George P. Davis, S. W. Wilson, H. M. Senseney, John D. Robinson, and Calvin Rayburn.



JAMES H. ROBINSON





JOHN Y. CHISHOLM,  
Supt. Sunday School.





Now there comes to mind that goodly number of "elect women" who have given to this church their heart's affection, their earnest prayers, and their self-denying labors. It is impossible to mention their names, for they are a host. With us now are many like faithful, gentle souls, true descendants of those gone before, whose unselfish, Christlike lives are a constant incentive to the other sex to greater loyalty to the church and to our Master and Head, Jesus the Christ.

One of the foremost agencies for good in the church has been our Sunday School. We cannot speak too highly of the efficient work done by its teachers and officers in the more than half a century of its life. It has been a true nursery of the church, and for years has been the largest school in the city as compared with the membership of the church. It numbers now two hundred names. It would be interesting to call the roll of those who have taught in this school. But this is impossible. I can only give you this incomplete list of its superintendents: A. C. Washburne, J. N. Barber, E. H. Coleman, Abel Harwood, Hamilton Spencer, Oramel Rugg, S. L. Hawks, J. Y. Chisholm, Geo. P. Davis, John Hull, Frank A. Fiske, Walter H. Bell, R. S. McIlvane, and B. M. Herr.

The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor had its origin in my house on the evening of February 2, 1888. As its name indicates, its work lies among the youth of our congregation. It has been a most valuable aid to the church and pastor, and has been a means of bringing nearly one hundred young persons into the membership of our church, besides training many to become efficient Christian workers.

While a full and complete idea of what a church has accomplished cannot be gained from its written or printed records, because its unconscious influence can never be expressed in words or figures, nevertheless some conception of what this church has been to this community and to the world can be obtained from a careful study of those records. During the sixty-two years of its existence this church has had a total

membership of 1246. Of this number 780 were received by certificate from other churches, and 456 on confession of their faith in Christ. During the present pastorate of seven and one-half years there has been added to the church 227 members, 138 of whom have here first acknowledged their faith in Jesus. This is a larger addition to the church by thirty than in any other like period in the history of the church.

In the past thirty years (I have but little information earlier than 1866), this church has contributed for congregational expenses the sum of \$90,399.00, and for the Boards of the church and other benevolent causes, \$12,180.00, or a total amount for all purposes of \$102,579.00.

During my pastorate we have given for congregational expenses \$22,839.00, or very nearly one-fourth of the amount contributed for this purpose in the past thirty years. To benevolences we have given in the past eight years \$7,317.00, or considerably more than one-half of the amount contributed to the same objects since 1866. In other words, the church has raised during this pastorate for all purposes more than one-third of the amount given by the church in thirty years.

While, then, we have been struggling against serious difficulties, and have frequently been discouraged, we have just cause for praising God. We have reason to believe that our church is steadily moving forward, and as we have come to this



ELIAS DAGGY.

important time when we are to abandon the old church home in order to erect another and more convenient one, let us rejoice before the Lord. Let us acknowledge His hand in these evidences of our prosperity. Surely we can say with the saints of old, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old."



REV. JOHN McLEAN.  
Pastor 1865-1874.



Today we meet in this house for the last time. Even those of us who have most earnestly desired a new building cannot turn from this one without feelings of sadness. It is a place hallowed by many tender associations. To many, this has been the church home from childhood. Here fathers and mothers, long since passed to the other shore, were wont to worship. Here some of you were consecrated to God by your parents in the sacred rite of infant baptism. Here you first confessed your faith in Jesus, and at the sacramental table first partook of the emblems of the death of a Savior mighty to save. This room has been the center of your religious life. In it you first learned to speak and pray in public, and in the various departments of church work were trained in the service of Christ. These walls have witnessed the last ministrations of affection rendered to dearly loved ones, and out of this door their mortal remains have been borne to their last resting place. Words have here been spoken whose silent influence has reached down along the years, and to many has been an inspiration and an incentive to a life of honesty and purity and love.

Is the Lord now calling this church to enter a wider sphere of usefulness? If so, there come to us larger opportunities for Christian service, louder calls to self-sacrifice for the glory of His name. What the future of this church shall be in large measure depends on us. Not only must we labor and deny ourselves in the erection of this new building, but if it is to be a place of spiritual power, we must also be living examples of the truths we profess. If from it shall flow streams of holy influence to bless coming generations, you and I must "walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." For power, divine power, the *only* power, is from God, and is given to those alone who obey Him. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit the sanctuary, however ornate and beautiful, is but an empty, worthless pile, and the work of pastor and of people is without effect. But with the spirit of God that church, pastor and people, *must* be a blessing and a joy to men. As



we leave this building with all its blessed memories, let us carry with us a deep, abiding conviction of the truth of the Word of God: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

"Lord, are there any stones upon the way,  
That tear Thy bleeding feet?  
If our weak hands can move them from Thy path,  
Give us that duty sweet.

Is there, O patient and pathetic Face!  
One thorn upon Thy brow  
That we can pluck from out Thy cruel crown?  
For we would do it now.

Is there a deed so difficult for us  
That none but Thou canst ask?  
Thine asking be our answering. Lo! swift  
Be ours that happy task.

Lord, hast Thou left Thy hungry in the world  
For us to find, to feed?  
Sharper the hungers of the soul. Give us  
Nutrition for that need.

And hast Thou prisoners unvisited,  
Whose woes our care should tell?  
There is a deeper prison of the heart;  
Help us to find that cell.

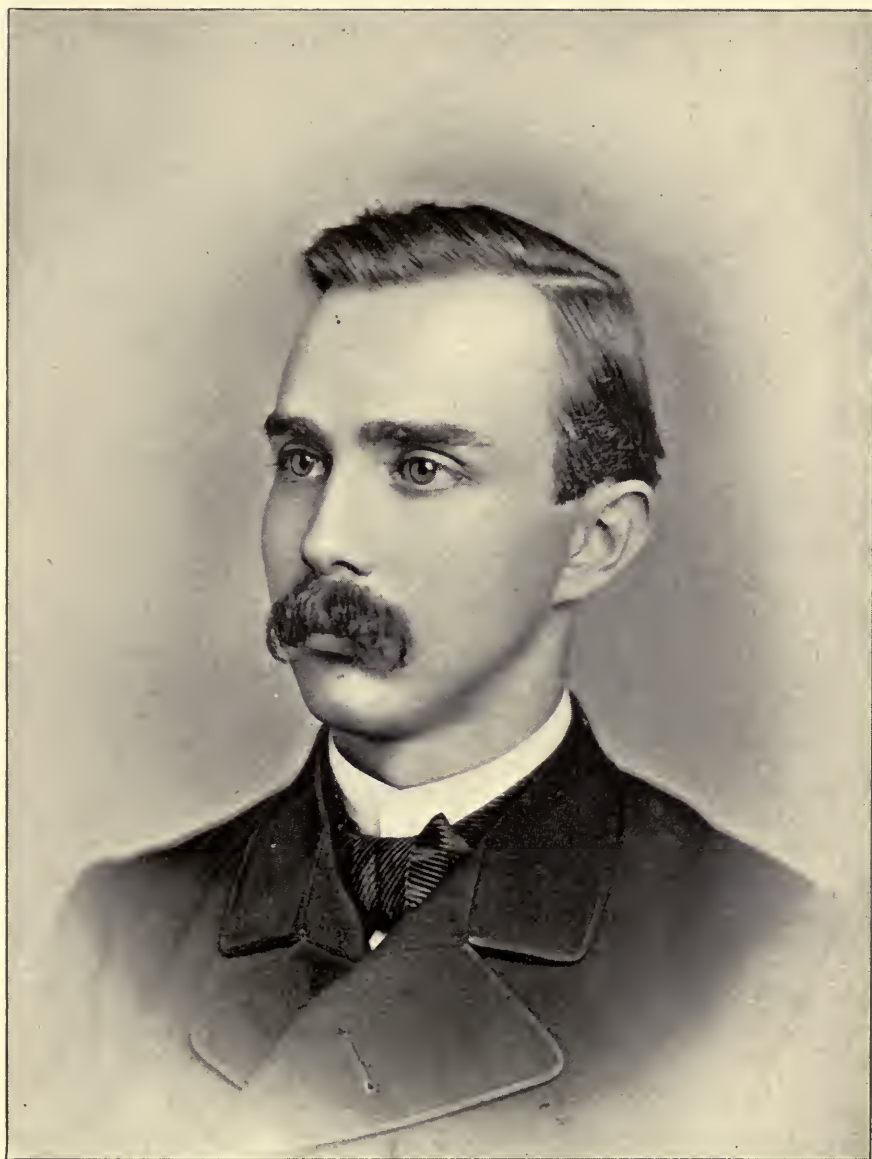
Is there a mourner dear to Thee, whom we  
Have left un comforted?  
Yet still through lonelier loneliness, the heart  
Bereft of Thee, is led.

O world of common, human cries! And calls  
Of souls in direst need!  
To meet ye, mighty were the love that sought  
To take the Master's speed.

Give us that love, dear God, who gave to us,  
To bear His loving name.  
Give us that sacred speed to keep the step  
That strikes with His the same.

Waves of one tide, this people be! And flow  
Straight shoreward to Thy will.  
White as a dove, upon them, now descend  
Thy Spirit, strong and still.

Thy blessings on their future rest and brood—  
The brightest, lip can tell,  
In home and heart, in faith and fact, O best  
Of daily mercy, dwell."



REV. FRANK S. BRUSH,  
Pastor 1881-1886.



## Other Farewell Services.

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At noon of the same day, May 12, 1895, the Sunday School met and held appropriate farewell exercises. Addresses were made by former Superintendents and others, giving most interesting reminiscences of the school in former days.

At half past three that afternoon the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was observed. By invitation of the Session the officers and members of the Second Presbyterian Church of this city were present, and the pastors and elders of the two churches united in the administration of the sacrament.

A final service of farewell, in which the Second Church also united, was held in the evening. The house was crowded with an interested audience, very many of whom were extremely reluctant to leave a room hallowed with many blessed memories. Addresses were made by Messrs. M. L. Moore, Geo. P. Davis, S. L. Hawks, and the Hon. J. M. Scott. These gentlemen related many interesting incidents in the history of the church and of its old time members. Rev. Dr. W. P. Kane spoke of the fraternal feeling existing between the First and Second Churches, and wished the movement for a new building God-speed. The pastor exhibited the trowel which was used in the laying of the brick of the old church nearly fifty years ago, and said:

A few days ago I called on Mrs. J. N. Ward to make some inquiries about the former history of this church. In the course of the conversation Mrs. Ward told me that on completing the brick work of the original part of this building Mr. John Magoun presented his trowel to her husband. The trowel had continued in the possession of the family ever since, and through the courtesy of Mrs. Ward it is before you

this evening. I have obtained permission to use it in the laying of the corner stone of our new building.

Please notice this trowel. Listen, young men, while it preaches a sermon to you. There are many here tonight who knew Mr. Magoun. I have often heard him spoken of as a man of the strictest integrity. Some have said, "When you come to pull down these walls you will have a difficult task. John Magoun laid these brick, and he did good, honest work."

I am informed that Mr. Magoun lost his property before his death and died a poor man. But he did not lose his character for honest, reliable work. That lives on to this day. There is nothing enduring on earth but character. That never dies. Whether good or bad, it lives on throughout eternity. What a glorious thing then is a noble character! This trowel tells how a man died poor, and yet was rich—rich in the estimation of his fellowmen. To you and me he is unknown, yet this trowel, long since forgotten, comes to us tonight and speaks of the power and nobility of an honest and trustworthy life. This trowel calls to every artisan, every tradesman, every professional man, young and old, "Do honest, reliable work. Strive for a character of uprightness in all your dealings with others." Such reputation lives on forever. That you may have this, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." As John Magoun did, take the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Guide.







PRESENT ELDERS.



## The Ministers of the Church.

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Calvin W. Babbitt, 1833,	Organized Church.
James McGeoch, 1833,	Stated Supply.
Lemuel Foster, 1833,	Stated Supply.
C. L. Watson, 1837,	Stated Supply.
B. B. Drake, 1840,	Stated Supply.
David I. Perry, 1844,	Stated Supply.
Fielding N. Ewing, 1850,	Pastor-elect.
Hugh R. Price, 1858,	Pastor.
John McLean, 1865,	Pastor.
Samuel B. Taggart, 1874,	Stated Supply.
Henry B. Thayer, D.D., 1877,	Pastor-elect.
Frank S. Brush, 1881,	Pastor.
Charles M. Moss, 1886,	Temporary Supply.
Edward K. Strong, 1887,	Pastor.

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## The Elders of the Church.

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INSTALLED.		INSTALLED.	
A. C. Washburne, .	Nov. 23, 1833	John M. Rayburn, .	April 2, 1865
Benjamin Depew, .	Oct. 2, 1837	Samuel L. Hawks, .	Jan. 9, 1870
Henry Richardson, .	Oct. 2, 1837	Hugh Wallace, .	Jan. 9, 1870
Joseph N. Barber, .	Oct. 2, 1837	J. C. Scoville, .	Jan. 11, 1874
Samuel T. Molton, .	Nov. 6, 1842	R. M. Caldwell, .	Jan. 11, 1874
John W. Ewing, .	April 12, 1845	John Y. Chisholm, .	Jan. 11, 1874
William Gillespie, .	April 12, 1845	Samuel L. Hawks, .	Sept. 20, 1876
John Beaty, .	April 12, 1845	Elias Daggy, .	Sept. 20, 1876
T. F. Worrell, .	Jan. 11, 1851	Matthew L. Christian, .	Oct. 7, 1877
Samuel Pollock, .	Jan. 11, 1851.	Walter H. Bell, .	Oct. 7, 1877
James Rayburn, .	Dec. 21, 1851	John McLean, .	Oct. 7, 1877
Jacob Smith, .	Dec. 21, 1851	R. S. McIlvaine, .	March 7, 1880
James C. Wilson, .	Oct. 19, 1856	Samuel L. Hawks, .	March 7, 1880
M. L. Moore, .	Oct. 19, 1856	Elias Daggy, .	March 7, 1880
W. P. Boyd, .	Nov. 6, 1859	Benjamin M. Herr, .	March 30, 1884
Hamilton Spencer, .	Nov. 6, 1859	Robert R. Campbell, .	March 30, 1884
Oramel Rugg, .	Nov. 6, 1859	John Y. Chisholm, .	March 30, 1884
William K. Davison, .	June 14, 1857	J. R. Tankersly, .	March 30, 1884
John McLean, .	June 14, 1857	Calvin Rayburn, .	March 29, 1891

## The Builders of the New Church.

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### COMMITTEE ON PLANS.

EDWARD K. STRONG, Chairman.

George P. Davis.	Daniel Holder.	S. W. Wilson.
John D. Robinson.	Calvin Rayburn.	Porter T. Wakefield.
John Y. Chisholm.	Robert R. Johnson.	George H. Cox.
	H. M. Sensency.	

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### BUILDING COMMITTEE.

ROBERT R. JOHNSON, Chairman.

George P. Davis.	George H. Cox.	John D. Robinson.
John Y. Chisholm.	Daniel Holder.	Edward K. Strong.

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### SUBSCRIPTION COMMITTEE.

HENRY M. MEANS, Chairman.	Wm. H. Johnson.
Porter T. Wakefield, Treas.	

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### ARCHITECTS.

MILLER & FISHER, Bloomington, Ill.

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### GENERAL CONTRACTORS.

THE JOHN W. EVANS SONS CO., Bloomington, Ill.

Contractor for Brick,	Smith W. Wilson, Bloomington, Ill.
Contractors for Stone,	The Peoria Steam Marble Works, Peoria, Ill.
Contractors for Metal,	The Meyer Bros. Co., Peoria, Ill.
Contractors for Plastering,	Kuhn Bros., Bloomington, Ill.
Contractors for Heating,	MaGirl & Diedrich, Bloomington, Ill.



JOHN W. ROBINSON,  
Trustee.



SMITH WILSON,  
Trustee.





## The Present Officers of the Church.

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*Pastor*, EDWARD K. STRONG.

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### ELDERS.

Hugh Wallace.	Matthew L. Christian.	Benjamin M. Herr.
Samuel L. Hawks.	Robert S. McIlvaine.	Calvin Rayburn, Clerk.

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### TRUSTEES.

George P. Davis.	Smith W. Wilson.	H. M. Senseney.
Calvin Rayburn.	John D. Robinson.	

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Treasurer, CALVIN RAYBURN.      Asst. Treasurer, GEORGE A. BOOSER.

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## Of the Sunday School.

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Superintendent, JOHN Y. CHISHOLM.

Assistant Superintendent, Joseph K. P. Hawks.  
 Assistant Superintendent, George A. Booser.  
 Secretary and Treasurer, Arthur C. Best.  
 Assistant Secretary and Treasurer, Joseph L. Means.  
 Librarian, Thomas H. Ramage.  
 Assistant Librarian, Harry B. Gilmore.  
 Assistant Librarian, David S. Ramage.  
 Organist, Miss Clara B. Wilson.

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### TEACHERS.

Mr. B. M. Herr,	Mr. S. L. Hawks,
Mrs. C. F. Kimball,	Mr. R. S. McIlvaine,
Mrs. J. Y. Chisholm,	Miss May Christian,
Miss Alice Reed,	Mr. Porter T. Wakefield,
Mrs. Henry Harrington,	Mr. George A. Booser,
Miss Frances A. Greenlee,	Miss Mabel M. Chisholm,
Mr. William H. Johnson,	Mrs. M. L. Christian,

Rev. E. K. Strong,  
Mr. Joseph F. Gregg,  
Mrs. Anna B. Wakefield,

Mrs. Laura J. Booser,  
Miss Elizabeth FitzHenry,  
Miss Mary L. Kimball, Infant Class.

**Of the Ladies' Mite Society.**

President, Mrs. S. W. Wilson. Vice-President, Miss Mattie A. Crothers.  
Secretary and Treasurer, Mrs. George P. Davis.

**Of the Ladies' Home and Foreign Missionary Society.**

President, Mrs. M. L. CHRISTIAN.  
Vice-President (Foreign), Mrs. B. M. Herr.  
Vice-President (Home), Mrs. J. A. Beck.  
Secretary and Treasurer (Foreign), Miss Mattie A. Crothers.  
Secretary and Treasurer (Home), Mrs. P. T. Wakefield.

**Of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor.**

President, GEORGE A. BOOSER.  
Vice-President, Frances A. Greenlee.  
Corresponding Secretary, Ada E. Maxwell.  
Recording Secretary, Frank H. Chisholm.  
Treasurer, Joseph F. Gregg.  
Chairman Lookout Committee, Daisy F. Hopkins.  
Chairman Prayer Meeting Committee, Alice Reed.  
Chairman Social Committee, Frank H. Chisholm.  
Chairman Missionary Committee, Edward K. Strong.

**Of the Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip.**

President, Frank H. Chisholm. Vice-President, Joseph K. P. Hawks.  
Secretary, Joseph F. Gregg. Treasurer, George T. Heritage, Jr.



GEO. P. DAVIS,  
President Board of Trustees.





## Ferdinand Downs.

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FERDINAND DOWNS.

Ferdinand Downs, the faithful janitor of the First Presbyterian Church, was born in St. Clair county, this state, in 1832, was reared in Montgomery county, later lived in Carlinville, and came to Bloomington nearly thirty years ago. His first Sunday as janitor was the day the Rev. H. R. Price preached his fare-well sermon about twenty-eight years ago, since then his service has been continuous and faithful to every trust. He has held the position longer than any other person has held any similar place in the city.

He was twice married, the last time to Mrs. Mary Cowan, in this city, she having been married once before. He has one child, a married daughter, living, six children having died. He is a consistent member of the Union Baptist church, and also is an honored member of Odd Fellows and Masonic societies of this city.

Mr. Downs is a stone cutter by trade and always has employment, and by his industry and the economy of his wife, has a comfortable home, where they enjoy the results of their industry in the good esteem of all their neighbors.

## Laying of the Corner=Stone.

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On Tuesday, July 23, 1895, at 5:30 p. m., were held the services in connection with the laying of the corner-stone of the new church edifice. The evening was a perfect one, and a large assemblage of people were present.

The services opened with a chorus, "It is a Good Thing to Give Thanks." Then followed the invocation by Rev. Robert Conover. The congregation then sang "Come Thou Almighty King." As the strains of this grand old hymn died away, Mr. Calvin Rayburn, clerk of the session, proceeded to read a history of the First Presbyterian Church. Following this, Rev. Frost Craft, pastor of the First Methodist Church, read the Scripture lesson, taking passages from Ezra III, 10-13; Isaiah XXVIII, 16, and First Peter II, 4-8.

Following the reading a quartet rendered, "O, Father Almighty."

### THE PASTOR'S ADDRESS.

Text: "Jesus Christ, the Chief Corner-Stone." I Peter 2-6.

The practice of laying a corner-stone is not a mere form. To the devout Christian and Bible student it is full of precious meaning.

Where the custom originated no one knows. Evidence of it is in the ruins of Nineveh, Babylon, and even in that ancient city Ur of the Chaldees whence Abraham came.

Little is said in the Bible of this practice, but sufficient to show that it was known and observed in Israelitish times. No reference, however, is made to the laying of the corner-stone in any building, not even in the temple built by Solomon. Practice is mentioned in Job, in the 118th Psalm, and in Isaiah. These references, with those in the New Testament, show that



SAMUEL L. HAWKS,  
Longest Continuous Member of the Sunday School,



whatever the custom may seem in the case of other buildings, it has a deep spiritual significance to the disciple of Christ. From these passages we learn that believers in Christ are likened to a house which has

#### I.

Its architect the Lord God.

Ye are God's building. Household of God. A spiritual house. Thus is the church definitely declared to be planned and built by God, building of holy character drawn on fairest and most beautiful lines.

#### II.

The materials which compose this building are the holy lives of the disciples of Christ.

Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, writes St. Peter. So St. Paul also speaks. This edifice is built of a multitude of brick and stone and pieces of wood and iron, all to be fitly framed together.

The building of God is composed of a multitude of believers. The church of Christ is the aggregate of the holy character of the redeemed.

#### III.

The foundation of this building is the apostles and prophets.

Not these men as individuals but the truth which they uttered and exemplified in daily life. It is the doctrines of salvation through a living and eternal Savior which these men proclaimed which are here meant. These spring from God, and thus Christ is the great foundation underlying all. The conception of St. Paul is that of a great rock on which rests the building, but which reaches up and forms a part of the very corner, the side walls meeting in it and being united in it as the corner-stone.

Thus like earthly buildings which demand a safe and immovable foundation, so has the church been founded on the rock of Jesus Christ.



## IV.

Its corner stone is the Lord Jesus Christ.

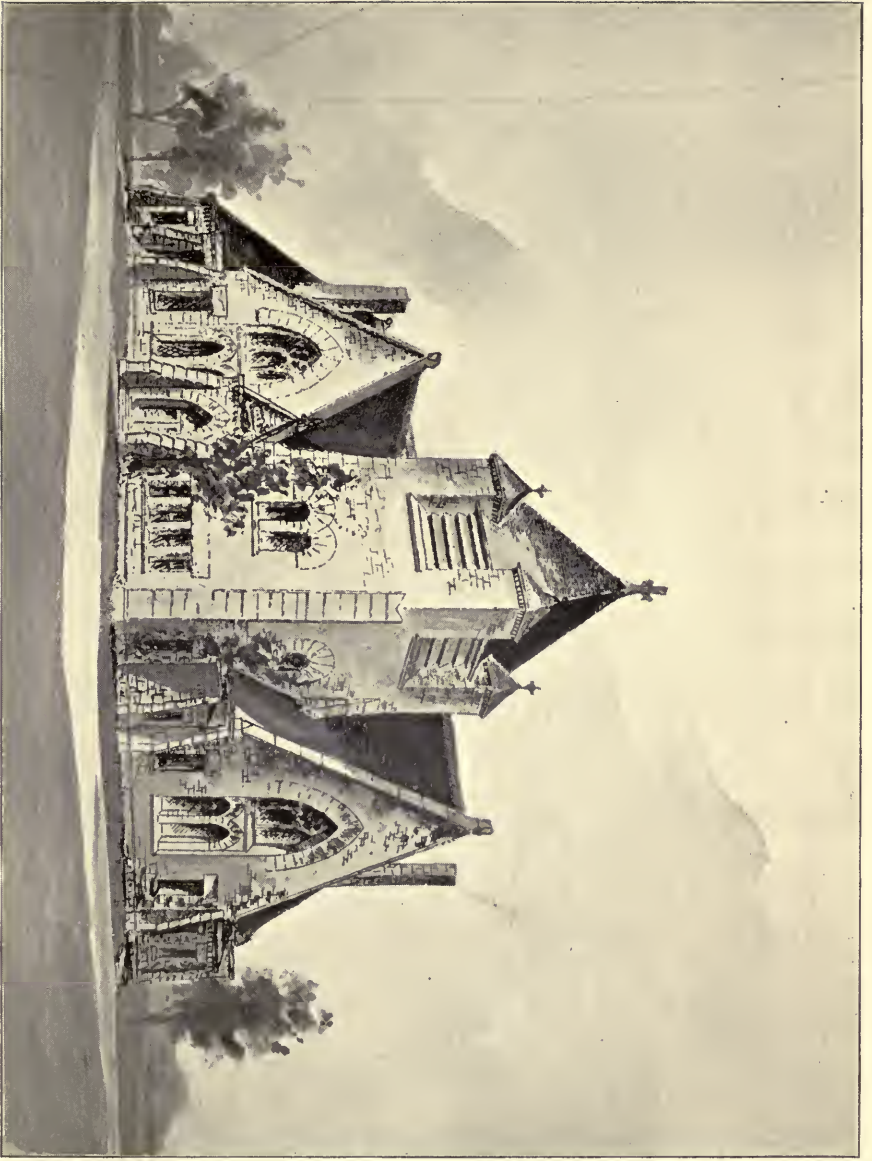
1. A building must have a corner. As we cannot conceive of a good building without corners in which the lines of the building meet, so the walls of the spiritual house must meet and be bound together in that one character of all others pure and true, Jesus Christ.

2. The corner supports and gives strength to the building.

The corner sustains heaviest weight and binds walls together. Leave out side walls and corner will stand firm and solid. But take away the corner and the walls become at once insecure.

Christ gives solidity to the church. Take Him away and nothing remains firm and enduring. His presence in the life gives moral character. The church always lacks in vital force in proportion as it loses sight of Christ and fails to depend on Him.

3. The corner gives character to the building. It requires the best materials, the best workmen, most careful work. It must be laid plumb and true, for the sidewalks get their lines from it. Poor materials here make a weak building, for the greatest height is concentrated here. The building gets its character for strength and durability from its corner. The character of the church of Christ should come from its corner, Jesus. But men will persist in judging of it from the make of its walls. Look at its chief corner stone. He is the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, the righteous. His character is matchless and must ever endure. He is the Elect, the Chosen of God, a picked stone from the quarry of the Almighty to support the temple of His grace and love. He is precious. No stone is more costly. He gained His place through sore discipline and there remains without spot or blemish of character. He rose from the dead and was thus declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead; power and strength divine to bear up and carry a whole world of needy sinners. There is no flaw in Him. The church is not



THE NEW CHURCH.



what its human membership is, but what its corner stone is. It is true and righteous not because of those mortals professing faith in Him, but because founded on the rock of Jesus Christ. With him the church is eternal; because He lives, the church must endure.

The work of laying the stone was performed by Mr. Robert R. Johnson, chairman of the building committee. The stone was placed at the southwest corner of the building and has three exposed sides. On two of these are engraved the names of the streets which they face, respectively, "Grove" and "East," while on the other face are the dates of the founding of the church and the erection of the new building, respectively, "1833" and "1895." Following are the contents of the stone:

A Bible.

The history of the First Presbyterian Church.

A list of the officers of the church.

A list of the officers and teachers of the Sunday School.

A list of the officers of various societies of the church.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Brief history of the Presbyterian Church and its teachings.

The minutes of the Presbyterian Synod of Illinois of 1894.

Catalogue of Auburn Theological Seminary for 1895.

Copies of the following Presbyterian publications: *The Interior*, of Chicago; *Evangelist*, of New York; *Mid-Continent*, of St. Louis; *Assembly Herald*, of Syracuse.

Copies of the *Pantagraph* of July 23, *Leader* of July 22, *Bulletin* of July 22, and *Trades Review* of July 19.

A list of members of committees on plans, on subscriptions, and on building.

The names of the architects.

The names of the contractors and sub-contractors.

A number of coins of the United States and a souvenir of the World's Fair of 1893.

After the stone had been placed in position Rev. R. E. Anderson, of Heyworth, led in a prayer of dedication, followed by the hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy," by the assembled people, after which the benediction was pronounced by Rev. N. T.

Edwards, of the Congregational Church, and the impressive services were closed.

At the close of Rev. Strong's address the following appropriate hymn was sung by the congregation:

An earthly temple here we raise,  
 Lord God, our Savior! to thy praise;  
 Oh, make thy gracious presence known  
 While now we lay its corner-stone.

Within the house thy servants rear  
 Deign by thy spirit to appear  
 On all its walls salvation write,  
 From corner-stone to topmost height.

And when this temple, "made with hands,"  
 Upon its firm foundation stands,  
 Oh, may we all with loving heart  
 In nobler building bear a part.

Where every polished stone shall be  
 A human soul won back to thee;  
 All resting upon Christ alone,  
 The chief and precious corner-stone.

So when our toil is o'er at last,  
 All labor in both temples past,  
 Oh, may it then by works be shown  
 That faith hath laid this corner-stone.























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