

First Presbyterian Church celebrates history

Dr. W.N. Page in a historical sermon published in The Leavenworth Times on May 8, 1906, said: *"The first Presbyterian sermon given in this city was preached by Rev. H.M. Hobson, in the summer of 1855, in a temple that had the heavens for its roof, the blue sky for its fresco, the earth for its floor; the bending trees and rustling leaves for its ornaments, dry goods box for its pulpit and rough slabs for its seats.*

Kansas has prospered. Churches have grown. This particular congregation has been blessed in leaders and wise pastors until the close of Dr. Page's ministry it was the strongest congregation in the state, and a spacious well appointed building was its meeting place. But still the town grew and the center of population moved southward and a new church was needed.

But all of that is past. The new church is realized. A grand structure of elegance, unmarred by ornateness beyond keeping with a house of worship, modern in all that blest, and pleasantly located. As the completion edifice now stands, near the city's center of population, classic in outline, modern in finish and adaptation to work, it is an addition to the beautiful buildings of which Leavenworth is proud."

Notes from the 1906 History of Leavenworth by H Miles Moore, one of the founders of the city, writes: *"The First Presbyterian Church was erected in the city- next west of the late Dr. J.W. Morris house, southwest corner of Sixth and Miami streets. The Rev. A.W. Pitzer, one of the brightest lights and ablest divines in the West, was the pastor from its erection in the fall of 1855 or spring of 1856 until the summer of 1861, when he returned to his native state of Virginia, to obey the call of a devoted mother upon her worthy sons in all lands, to sustain by their valor, the honor and glory of the grand old commonwealth. The new church building was erected a few years after on the north side of Delaware Street, near Seventh Street, the present location of the First Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Dr. Page, pastor."*

From the Leavenworth Times on Wednesday, Dec. 30, 1908, page four, and titled "The New Church Dedication Next Sunday Morning": *"The new First Presbyterian Church at Fourth and Walnut streets is to be dedicated next Sunday morning. The ceremony marks the consecration of the largest and most elegant modern structure in Leavenworth.*

The dedication will be celebrated according to the established customs of the church. A number of prominent church men will take part in the ceremonies.

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The article further gives a very complete coverage of the description of the building, describing the memorial windows, lighting system and states that *“the women had arranged the furniture in the parlor, and that the Endeavor society had raised a hundred dollars to furnish the kitchen.”*

Quoting further from the article: *“What most strikes the observer is the effect of the harmonious simplicity in the interior of the church, seemingly perfectly adapted to usefulness. The pastor’s study and choir room are to the right and left of the platform. The women’s parlor with bright open grate and the library room adjoins the main building. Downstairs are the primary department room, the Christian Endeavor room, the kitchen, pantry and the furnace rooms. The heating system is arranged for either hot water or steam.”*

The First Presbyterian congregation was first formed on Jan. 1, 1856.

The cornerstone of the new First Presbyterian Church at Fourth and Walnut was laid on Nov. 18, 1907, and the church was dedicated on Jan. 3, 1909.