

First United Methodist Church

175th Celebration

February History

Having determined that a new church building was needed, Reverend J.B. Carnes, (1878 - 1880) devoted himself earnestly to the work of procuring the means for the construction. His tireless efforts resulted in \$7,000 being raised before the end of the Conference year of 1880. The church membership at this time was 180 full members and 27 probationers.

In the fall of 1880, Joseph and Elizabeth Crabb's, husband and wife, of Wabash, In., sold a part of Out Lot No. 93 in Decatur to the Methodist church as a new building site for \$1,000. Benjamin D. Price, an architect from Philadelphia, Pa. was hired to prepare the plans for the new church. The contract for the construction of the new church was given to Moon & Christen for \$8,873.00; however that price did not cover the entire cost of the 1881 church. The Decatur Democrat of June 9, 1982, listed the complete financial statement as follows:

<i>Lot</i>	<i>\$1000.00</i>
<i>Contract price</i>	<i>8873.00</i>
<i>Seats, pulpit & chairs</i>	<i>696.00</i>
<i>Gas machine, piping, fixtures</i>	<i>576.00</i>
<i>Heater for lecture room</i>	<i>75.00</i>
<i>Frescoing</i>	<i>300.00</i>
<i>Carpets & matting</i>	<i>115.00</i>
<i>Misc. expenses</i>	<i>311.00</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$11,976.00</i>
<i>Subscriptions collected</i>	<i>8,474.00</i>
<i>Subsc. due & bal on acct of old church</i>	<i>900.00</i>
<i>Subscriptions on day of dedication</i>	<i>\$12,459.96</i>
<i>Surplus of</i>	<i>\$ 483.96</i>

Some \$300 was still needed for a heater and \$500 for the purchase of a bell. Thus the surplus turned into a small deficit when all was completed.

In 1965, the Decatur Daily Democrat gave a report of the laying of the cornerstone of the church in 1881. It reads as follows:

"The cornerstone of the present church was laid on July 04, 1881 and was the main event of the holiday. The procession formed uptown at 10:00 am, and led by the Decatur Brass Band, moved to the church and the cornerstone was laid at 11:00 am during the services of Rev. V. D. Meredith, P. E. Some 25 organizations of Masons, Knights of Pythias and firemen, besides churches, and Sabbath schools, were invited to participate in the celebration. In the afternoon there was a fireman's parade, a reading of the "Declaration of Independence" and orations. The day closed with gigantic fireworks display."

Lowell Smith, in his History of the First United Methodist Church, states

"Praises for the interior beauty and the exterior grandeur of this new church edifice have, over the years, been frequently and eloquently expressed."

In 1889, the west 45 feet of lot No. 93 was purchased as a site for the second parsonage. This building was constructed in 1890-1891 and stood on the corner of Monroe and Sixth Street.

Thirteen years after the original construction of the church building, in 1894, the Methodist Episcopal Church numbered over 500. They talked of building an addition to the magnificent church home they already had, it being too small to accommodate the vast numbers that attended the services. The contract for this addition and remodeling program was awarded to J. W. Merriman on his bid of \$6,998.00. This addition added five classrooms on the first floor and five on the second floor, and a nice dining room in the basement. Among other changes to the sanctuary, a raised choir loft was built and behind the choir loft a small room was added for a "gorgeous" new pipe organ. Theater seats were installed, replacing the old style long pews. The contract price did not include \$3,500 needed for the pipe organ and the new seating.