

CHAPTER IX

EARLY CHURCHES

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First Church Building Erected In Van Buren

The first place of worship to be erected at Van Buren was known as the Union church. This building, which was frame, was erected on lot 8, block 12, or in other words on the corner of Washington and North streets, just across the ditch. The church faced Washington street. The lot adjoining towards the river, was owned by the Rev. Mr. Kellam, a Baptist minister and teacher.

The writer was fortunate to find in Judge Paschal's letter book copies of letters written to Rev. Cephas Washburne, a Congressional minister. Rev. S. A. Worcester, a Methodist minister; Rev. J. J. Handerson and Rev. D. R. Butricg, inviting them to come and assist in a meeting to commence September 11th and continue for three days, during which time the church would be dedicated.

To the Rev. Mr. Henderson, Judge Paschal says: "Our house the building of which we had in contemplation when you were here, we trust will have been completed within a few weeks. I think for durability and convenience the house is not surpassed in the state. We are desirous of having a three days meeting in the house, at as early a day as we may be able to procure efficient laborers."

To the Rev. Cephas Washburne, he has this to say: "The purpose of this communication is to let you know that the Republican church in this place is well night completed. Many of our citizens have manifested a liberality

in the matter rarely exceeded in a country possessing much more wealth and possessing more religion.

The committee is only \$600 in debt, upwards of \$1000 dollars having been subscribed. In addition to this, another subscription was raised, in my absence and a thundering bell has been sent for. So we are to have a bell that can be heard over the sounding hammer, the din of the grog-shop, the music of the ball room and the noise of the turf.

Whether the ringing of the bell is the only evidence of worship is a proposition extremely problematical. For some of our country preachers have become so political and trouble themselves so much more about "hard cider and log cabins" than about the Ark and Temple that to allow them to preach would be to desecrate the sacred cause; and the Rev. Mr. Kellam has given me notice that he is anxious that the town should select a minister of ability who could devote his entire time to his calling. His large school and pecuniary matters press too heavily upon him to allow him to preach on the Sabbath and while all esteem him as a man, it is pretty generally conceded he will not do as a preacher. But we are desirous of having the house dedicated.

After describing the town to the Rev. D. R. Butrick which was very much like all frontier towns, with the remark that it had been clandered, he says: "For the same people have built one of the best houses for public worship in the state, and they have sent for a bell which can be heard over everything else.

Now I will compare our subscription list to any ever gotten up on old sober New England, and will venture to predict all things considered none was ever half so liberal. I am not boasting of the righteousness of our place but I commenced writing this to solicit your attendance at the time appointed for the dedication of our meeting house.

It is proposed to hold a meeting to commence on Friday before the second Sabbath in September, which will be the 11th and we are desirous of having you attend. Having no church organization, the office of inviting the

ministers devolved on the committee, and as the committee, I am particularly anxious to have the attendance of Mr. Worcester, Mr. Washburne and yourself. I am of the opinion that were the Missionary preachers to come often among the white, the usual prejudices existing might be removed and much good done."

The Rev. C. A. Worcester was also written to and invited to attend the three days meeting.

The Rev. Mr. Washburne had come to Arkansas when the Cherokees had been removed west as one of their teachers and had gone with them to near Sallisaw. The Rev. Mr. Worcester had come from Tennessee as a missionary among them. Judge Paschal speaking of coming often to the whites that Mr. Butrick must have also been a missionary to the Indians. The following ministers must have held service at the Union church at specified times: Rev. Wm. Mussett, Rev. A. Mussett, Rev. Stiran, Rev. D. McManus, Episcopal minister, Rev. J. J. Roberts, Methodist; Rev. John Buchanan, Cumberland Presbyterian minister; Rev. John Harrell, Methodist minister; Rev. W. K. Marshall, Presbyterian; Rev. H. A. Suggs, who was stationed at Van Buren and Fort Smith during the latter part of the Forties; and Rev. Mr. Townsend an Episcopal minister. Without doubt there were other ministers who officiated there but their names are not known.

Episcopal Church

With the growth of Van Buren and members of the different church organizations coming here to make their home it was perfectly natural for them to desire their own church building.

In the early part of 1842 the Episcopalians who were living here organized themselves to work for a church building fund.

Bishop Leonidas Polk, who was the Missionary Bishop of all this southwestern country was very much interested in establishing churches in his large jurisdiction. Bishop Otey of Tennessee, who succeeded him had the same desire and among them was anxious to have one established at Van Buren. In his report to the board of missions made in

February 1842, he speaks of writing to the Rev. Mr. Scull to concentrate his efforts on Van Buren and Fayetteville. He further says: "From all that I can learn respecting Van Buren, it should be made a separate station as soon as a clergyman can be found to take it in charge. At such a place as Van Buren, a clergyman who can save a little from his hard earnings, may make such an investment of it in lands which are good and cheap, as will probably provide him with comforts against a rainy day."

In the latter part of 1842 Bishop Otey visited Van Buren and while here was the guest of Colonel Drennen. At the service which he held a Dr. Yeager who was traveling with him assisted in the service. Bishop Otey delivering the sermon to a good congregation.

In a letter to the Spirit of Missions in June 1843, Bishop Otey speaks of Van Buren being recognized as a station.

The Rev Daniel McManus must have arrived here about July 12th from Brooklyn, N. Y.. He left there in June. This notice appeared in the Arkansas Intelligencer of July 15th, 1843.

"Divine service will be held at the church in this place by the Rev. Mr. McManus at half past ten a.m." From notices found in the paper he must have held services here once a month.

A vestry had been elected, but unfortunately the only name preserved is that of Mr. Thomas Drennen, whose name as secretary is signed to a notice or a vestry meeting that appears in the Intelligencer of September 30th, 1843.

In September Mr. McManus opened a school, which he taught while in charge of the church here.

Different notices in the Arkansas Intelligencer tells of the ladies working for and collecting money towards a church building fund.

At last it seemed as if their hopes were to be realized. In his Journal Bishop Otey speaks of being at Fort Smith on the 4th of April and dining with General Jackson Taylor, then riding to Van Buren and holding service in the courthouse, Mr. McManus reading the service and Bishop

Otey preaching to a large and attentive congregation.

The next morning April 5th, 1844, which was Good Friday, the Bishop met with the Masons in lodge and walked with them to the site of the church, where with appropriate ceremonies he laid the corner stone for Trinity Episcopal church of Van Buren. The site which was a gift from Colonel Drennen was at the foot of the hill on North Third street. We can imagine with what joy and excitement the few Episcopalians were looking forward to the event.

A few years ago an effort was made to obtain a fuller account of the laying of the cornerstone but without success. All records of the Van Buren Masonic lodge prior to 1850 were destroyed by fire and later those of the grand lodge at Little Rock were burned.

This stone was removed by the Federal soldiers during the war between the states and any records that it may have contained were destroyed.

Soon after the laying of this cornerstone the most active members moved away including the only gentleman, so the church was not built.

In June 1845 the Rev. Mr. McManus left here and went to Fort Gibson as chaplain. He was succeeded by the Rev. C. C. Townsend as missionary here and at Fort Smith. Mr. Townsend was also a teacher, his first school being at Nowland Spring which is between here and Fort Smith. A number of Van Buren persons attended the school.

Sometime during the latter part of 1848 or the early part of 1849 two buildings were removed from over on the river and placed on the foundation for a church. A vestry room was added and the building otherwise transformed into a nice little church which was very dear to those early members.

In February 1848 Bishop Freeman visited his members here and held service in the white frame building at the foot of Main street as you turn towards the bridge.

A notice in the paper of Mr. Stout to take place in the church, which proves that between those dates the Episcopalians had their own place of worship.



Backward Glances In Van Buren . . . top photo, the Press-Argus (oldest weekly newspaper in Arkansas) enters a "float" in the Centennial parade of 1936.

Below—The Fort Smith—Van Buren free bridge as an artist conceived it on the opening date in 1912.

Mr. Townsend remained in charge of the church here until the early part of 1857 when he was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Hunt. The earliest church register in the possession of the vestry of Trinity church is the one begun by Mr. Binet. Whether there was a previous one is not known.

The first record in the book is that of the communications which is as follows: William O. Chilton, Phineas White, Mrs. Ellen Chilton, Mrs. Mary A. Walker, Mrs. Ada Henry, Miss Rebecca Wilcox, Mrs. Emily Dibrell, Miss Ellen Phinney, Mrs. Sarah P. Wilcox, Mrs. John Austin, Mrs. George Austin, Mrs. S. F. Wood, Mrs. Catherine Drennen, Mrs. Emily Moore, Mrs. Emily A. Pernot, George White, Mrs. Harriet Austin, Mrs. Estes, Mrs. Burrow, Miss Juliette Wilcox, Miss E. White and Mrs. Clemm.

The first baptisms recorded Ichabad Sargent Pernot, Emily Anstes Pernot, Henry Charles Stephen Pernot, July 1857.

The first confirmation recorded is that of Mrs. Emily Moore, Miss Ellen Phinney, Mrs. Emily Pernot, Mrs. Emily Dibrell and Mrs. George Austin in 1857.

The first marriage was that of Albert Lasater and Miss Sarah Cunningham April 1st, 1856.

There is no record of Mr. Binet's vestry. In 1858 a movement for a new church building was begun. Dr. Pernot was appointed temporary secretary and Mrs. George White temporary treasurer until such a time as a building could be appointed.

Two lots on the southeast corner of Fourth and Webster streets owned by Mrs. Sarah Gibson were purchased the same on which the present church stands, but another lot and a half have been added.

A pastoral letter was sent to the church members to assist in raising funds for the new church building. A foundation was laid, material bought for the building, windows some of which were of stained glass and the chancel furniture were bought. The Communion set of solid silver was donated by C. H. Slocomb & Co., of New Orleans.

In April 1861 Mr. Binet resigned without seeing his desire fulfilled but the work was carried on for a while as

a financial report by Mr. John Austin as treasurer shows. The war between the states had begun, consequently everything was at a standstill.

It is a great regret that none of the records kept by the different secretaries are in existence. Besides those gentlemen mentioned. Mr. Henry Wilcox took an active part in the work of the church.

The fate of Trinity church during the war between the states is given below.

The writer could not take an oath that the following did occur, but it was the common talk among the Episcopalians when she returned to Van Buren in 1873.

Some time during the occupancy of Van Buren by the Federal troops a detachment of Federal cavalry was quartered in the Episcopal church building at the foot of the Scott hill. They destroyed all the furniture remaining and used the front in which to feed their horses. The Bishop and priest chairs had previously been sent to Christ Church, Little Rock, for safe keeping. The windows which had been bought for the new church some of which were stained glass had been stored in one of the store buildings until the church was ready for them. These were destroyed by the soldiers, the glass being scattered over the streets.

Those who were children at that time have told of picking up some of the bright colored pieces to put in their play houses.

The large Bible was kept, I think, by the Masons. The solid silver communion set consisting of ewer, paten and two goblets was stolen by the soldiers, whether from the church or private resident is not known. In 1866 it was found by the Rev. Mr. Franklin of Morris, western New York in the possession of a discharged soldier and bought at the price of old silver by Mr. Franklin and some of his friends. It being marked "Presented to Trinity Church, Van Buren, Ark., by C. H. Slocomb & Co., New Orleans." Mr. Franklin returned it to Bishop Lay of Arkansas, who returned it to the church at Van Buren. One of the large goblets was missing. This same set is still in use. The first rector after the war was the Rev. Saudee who arrived in

July 1866, but only remaining a few months. The church building was not in a condition to be used and the few remaining Episcopalians had not recovered from the effects of the war, and were not financially able to repair it or build a new one.

When the schools were re-opened this building was used for the primary department until 1874.

On November 13th, 1873, a call was issued for a meeting of all the Episcopalians in Van Buren to meet the next day. At the meeting it was decided to organize a Sunday school and a committee was appointed to notify the school board they would like possession of the building at the close of the school in June 1874.

In February 1874 the ladies organized a guild and began raising a fund with which to repair the building and to place in it Chancel furniture and seats. The Bishop and Priest's chairs were returned from Christ Church in Little Rock, besides they also sent other things needed for the church.

On Sunday, November 15th, 1874, the Episcopalians met in their own church building for the first time since the war between the states. The Rev. McManus holding the service. It was rather a coincident that the same spiritual adviser who was in charge of the church when the cornerstone was laid should be with them at their re-organization thirty years afterwards. Mr. McManus held service here whenever he could.

In April 1875 Mr. Smale, a lay reader took charge of the service and a vestry was elected consisting of Mr. Edgar, Senior Warden, Mr. Hillyer, Junior Warden and Mr. William Whitfield, Dr. Henri Pernot, Mr. George White, Mr. Granville Wilcox and Mr. Alexander Lacy.

During the time Mr. Smale was in church much interest was manifested in the growth of the church and Sunday school. He remained until some time in July 1876.

In the summer of 1877 the Rev. W. B. Littlejohn took charge of the church but resigned in a the fall, going to Yazoo City, Mississippi, where he died of yellow fever in 1878.

A short time after the resignation of Mr. Littlejohn

the Rev. H. N. Strong became rector but remained only a short time leaving in May 1878.

For several months the church was without a rector but in February of 1879 Rev. J. A. Anderson accepted a call to the parish. At first he divided his time between Van Buren and Dardanelle. He resigned in 1883. The Episcopalians had always felt as soon as they could they would build a new church. During Mr. Matthews rectorship the congregation began collecting funds for a church building. This was begun in 1882 being built on the same foundation that was placed on the lots purchased before the War between the States, it was completed in 1887. The Sunday school children were organized into a guild and made the money with which to buy the front and gave towards the front door, both representing the entrance into the church.

On the resignation of Mr. Matthews, Mr. McManus again had charge of the parish, coming over from his home at Fort Smith every Sunday. He resigned the latter part of 1886 and was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. McDonald who held service once a month for a short time.

In the fall of 1887 the furniture was removed from the old church building to the new, the Sunday school meeting was held there.

The first rector to hold service in the new church was the Rev. L. F. Guerry of South Carolina who held his first service on Easter Day 1888. He remained until November 22nd, 1891.

The church people were without a rector until the the summer of 1893 when the Rev. G. W. Flowers arrived to take charge.

On May 1st, 1894, Trinity church being out of debt was consecrated by the Right Reverend Henry Niles Pierce. A number of visiting clergymen were present for the ceremony. Thus the long desire of the Episcopalians was fulfilled. Mr. Flowers resigned in March 1899.

That fall Rev. J. B. Whaling accepted a call to the parish and held his first service the first Sunday in October 1899. During his rectorship the present rectory was

bought. He resigned in June 1903.

The fall of that year the Rev. C. C. Lemon was extended a call by the vestry which he accepted and held his first service the third Sunday in December 1903.

On the 5th of April 1904, the congregation of Trinity church celebrated the 60th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone at the first church building.

On the evening of December 25th, 1904, the Right Reverend William Montgomery Brown blessed the Eno Memorial Parish room. This room was the gift of Miss Clara B. Eno in memory of her mother and father.

Mr. Lemon resigned during the summer of 1905.

In the fall of 1905 the Rev. Charles W. DuBois took charge of the parish and remained its spiritual adviser until January 16th, 1907 when he resigned and went to Colorado.

In April 1907 the Rev. J. W. Thompson became rector and remained until September 1917. During his rectorship the basement under the Parish room was completed and opened for the use of the congregation.

The following spring the Rev. A. E. Woodward of Poplar Bluff, Missouri was extended a call which he accepted and took charge of the parish April 3rd, 1918; he remained for three years, his resignation taking effect April 1921.

In September of the same year, Rev. John T. Foster became the rector and is still with Trinity church. In the spring of 1924 the congregation of Trinity church had an addition to the Eno Memorial built which is a great assistance to carrying forward the work of Trinity Parish.

Rev. David Jones served as Rector from July 8, 1928—January, 1932. Rev. Paul Newell came to Trinity Parish January 1, 1932—September, 1933. Rev. Louis Hardin became Rector on January 1, 1935—May 17, 1936. Rev. J. Dean Maurer served as Rector March 26, 1937—April 1, 1941. Rev. Harry Wintermeyer became Rector in 1942—1945. Mr. Otis A. Bilderback served as Lay-Reader until 1948 when Rev. John Winslow became rector.

Methodist Episcopal Church South

The following was written by the Rev. H. R. Withers, presiding elder of Van Buren district of the Western Methodist published at Memphis, Tennessee and republished in the Van Buren Press of April 30th, 1872, tells something of the early Methodist church here.

"Methodism is the power of Van Buren and is handsomely sustained by the Rev. S. H. Babcock, who has this charge for the third year. He is a young man of promise, already with a reputation beyond his age.

We would thank bishop Pierce for other favors of this kind, but as Van Buren has at some indistinct period of the past fed her preachers on "horseflesh" and this is historic 'tis well to consult the records.

The Rev. John Harrell, superintendent of the Indian Mission Conference came here long before the town came, preaching under the trees to trappers, stragglers, the few settlers and the "Wildmen," preaching the word and organizing Methodism.

He was the presiding elder when the Van Buren circuit entered its appearance on the Conference Journal in 1840 and the Rev. Benjamine F. Harris was the preacher. W. A. Cobb was here in 1841 and in 1842 Van Buren and Fort Smith became a station with H. Boyer as pastor.

Brother Boyer at the following conference reported 45 white and 92 colored members. L. M. Mooreland occupied the station here in 1844 though the appointment for that year did not appear in the Journal.

I have been thus particular in setting out the above dates and names chiefly to correct an error into which our highly esteemed Bishop McTyeire was led last fall by some brother in the matter of planting Methodism in Van Buren. The Rev. J. J. Roberts is entitled to the gratitude of all Methodists for his moral heroism on this as well as on many other hard fought battlefields. And this correction can not injure him, while it does justice to the grandest name in Methodism west of the river—John Harrell. This veteran planted Methodism here. He first threw our banner to the breeze in North Arkansas at a time when the Missouri conference extended to the mouth

of the Red River."

Van Buren's population was of a steady growth and among those who came to make their home in this new town during its early days must have been some who were members of the Methodist Episcopal church, South. In conjunction with the other church denominations, had their regular Sunday for worship at the Union church.

The following notice appeared in the Arkansas Intelligencer of October 26th, 1846: "The Annual Conference of the Methodist church South will convene at this place on November 25th next. Bishop Payne with a great number of preachers is expected to be in attendance."

Unfortunately the remainder of the year is missing from the file. How we would like to know who were in attendance, what they did and who was the minister at that time.

The above notice shows that there must have been a number of members at that time, or they could not have entertained the conference.

As the Methodist church grew in membership their thoughts were turned towards a church building of their own. While no other record has been found telling of their activities, they were without a doubt busy collecting a fund, which was eventually used for their church building.

Another notice of December 4th, 1847 speaks of the Rev. H. A. Suggs being sent to Van Buren and Fort Smith by the annual conference held at Washington, Arkansas.

On January 31st, 1848, Mr. John Drennen executed a deed to Messrs. Samuel Daugherty, John Harrell, E. B. Bishop, John Boyer and George Matlock as trustees of the Methodist Episcopal church, South, for lots 12 and 16 and one foot of lot 11 in block 35, facing Jefferson street in the town of Van Buren for the sum of five dollars on which lots they shall have erected a house of worship.

The main part of the present church covers those two lots, the remaining lots were obtained from the heirs of the Drennen estate much later when their parsonage was erected on them. The deed covers two and a half closely written pages of the old style letter paper and goes into

many details in regard to the conduct of the financial part of the church. This deed was filed for record February 3rd, 1848, by A. M. McLean and recorded in record book "H," pages 503, 504, 505; that record was destroyed when the courthouse was burned, but the original deed was found recently among the papers of the late Judge Jesse Turner, Sr.

Under the date of February 26, 1848, we find this notice in the Arkansas Intelligencer: "Funds have been subscribed to build Presbyterian and Methodist churches, and it is expected that the erection of both will commence soon." Diligent search has not revealed any advertisement for bids to build the Methodist church or when the church building was begun.

The Arkansas Intelligencer of September 29th, 1849, has an article entitled "The City of Van Buren and its Prospects" in which is the following. There are two new brick churches and several large brick houses for business and private residences in progress of erection, which when completed will add greatly to its appearance."

Mr. Sugg was the pastor while the church was being built but must have left shortly before its completion, as under date of October 20th, 1849 is this, "The Rev. Mr. Suggs will preach at the frame church on Tuesday evening next, when he will deliver his farewell address to the citizens of Van Buren."

Under date of November 8th, 1849, it says: "The Fourth quarterly meeting of the Methodist Episcopal church South will commence at the church in this city on Friday evening the 12th instant, which will close the ministerial labors of the Rev. Mr. Suggs at this station. He intends leaving soon for the annual conference to be held at Batesville."

From the first notice it seems as if the church building was not ready to be occupied at that time.

No record of who preached the first sermon in the church or when has been found. The building must have been completed the very last of 1849 or the first part of 1850.

The only other notice the writer has been able to

find is one that appeared in 1858 when the ladies of the Methodist church thanked Captain William Nowland of the Lady Walton, for bringing the blinds for the church from Cincinnati free of charge.

It is to be hoped that some record of the church from 1850 to 1861 will be found; those who could give the information desired have all passed away.

The early records of the Methodist Episcopal church South at Van Buren were undoubtedly destroyed during the war between the states. The following ministers are said to have served the church here from 1849 to 1861. Under date of November 19th, 1851 of the Washington, Arkansas, Telegraph was given the name of William McAlester, presiding elder and Walter L. Thornberg at Van Buren station. We have been told that the Rev. Jesse McAlester, Rev. Stanford, Rev. Lively, Dr. Colburn and in 1860 Rev. J. L. Denton served this charge as ministers; but these names should be verified and the years that they served, also Rev. Lee.

Whether service was held during the entire year of 1861 at the Methodist church here is not definitely known but the writer feels certain there was some part of the year as she attended Sunday school there.

In the early part of 1862 it was taken by the Confederates for a hospital as the cemetery records show that one George W. Davis, a member of the Missouri State Guards, was taken on March 25th, 1862, from the Methodist church hospital to the cemetery for burial. When Blount made his raid into Van Buren on December 28th, 1862, a number of patients were in that hospital, those who were convalescent made their escape but the remainder were taken prisoners.

The writer has been told that after the Federals occupied the town that some of the gentlemen who had been made prisoners, among them Mr. William Miller were taken to the church and required to carry the seats to the courthouse. They were not young men either; also that the church building was used for a stable by the Federals.

It does seem if any buildings would have been unmolested it would have been the churches, but the soldiers

of that war as well as of any war seem to have no respect for sacred objects.

At the close of the war between the states the people of Van Buren had lost nearly everything they had, consequently the different denominations were not financially able to repair their church buildings.

The Presbyterian church being the least damaged it was decided that the citizens unite and repair that first, to be used as a Union church.

From the Rev. S. S. Key we learn that the first Methodist minister to be stationed at Van Buren after the war was the Rev. C. H. Gregory. How long he was here is not known; he was followed by the Rev. S. S. Key, who came in the fall of 1867 and remained until the fall of 1869. These two gentlemen held their services in the Presbyterian church. For several years the Presbyterians furnished the church building and the Methodist the regular minister.

Rev. S. H. Babcock succeeded Rev. Mr. Key and was stationed here from the fall of 1869 to that of 1872.

In the fall of 1866 Mr. W. L. Alexander and his sister Mrs. Barbour, (afterwards Mrs. Decherd) opened a subscription school in the Methodist church, it is not known how long they taught there; a number of the older citizens say they attended the school but can not give the dates.

In the spring of 1869 the Primary Department of the public school was taught in the Methodist church and presumably until repairs were begun on the building.

In the Van Buren Press of January 25th, 1870 is this notice.

"I would say to the kind friends who so liberally subscribed for the repairs of the Methodist Episcopal church, South, of this place, that the board of trustees have made contracts as far as their means would allow, and would request that at your earliest convenience you pay the amount of your subscription. This list is at my store where settlement can be made.

C. F. Harvey, Treasurer of the Board.

Many entertainments were given towards the fund for this repair work among them being tableaux with Mr. Sam Martin and Mrs. A. J. Ward in charge. Diligent

research has failed to learn the date when the first service was held in the church after it was repaired.

Two notices in August 1871 speak of the church being used, one when the Sunday school was asked to meet there to attend a picnic, the other Bishop Pierce of the Episcopal church holding service there.

When the annual conference met at Van Buren October 18, 19, 20, 21, 1871 their meetings were held in the Presbyterian church. It must have been because it was the larger of the two churches.

The Rev. S. H. Hancock was the first stationed minister to hold service in the church and happy must the members have been to be once more in their own church building.

The Annual Conference met again in Van Buren in the fall of 1884, Bishop R. R. Hargrove presiding and Rev. George Hill minister in charge.

At this conference the Rev. D. J. Weems was assigned to the Van Buren church. During 1885 a movement was begun to collect a fund with which to build a new church. The work of demolishing the old church was begun either in the spring or summer of 1886 in order that the new church could be erected on the same lots.

The building committee was composed of the following gentlemen: Messrs. J. M. Weaver, president; J. D. Hawkins, vice-president; Charles F. Harvey, secretary; F. R. McKibben, treasurer; A. Hays, J. P. Hattaway and J. G. Ferguson. Mr. M. W. Drewery had the contract for the brick work.

The laying of the corner-stone took place about the middle of September 1886, which event was witnessed by a large concourse of people. At 10:30 a. m. the Masons formed at their hall and headed by the band marched to the Presbyterian church where they were joined by the Sunday school children then to the courthouse where the city officials, fell into line. They then marched to the church lots corner of Jefferson and South Fifth streets where the ceremonies were to be held. As the Sunday school children marched past the corner stone each deposited in the box a card bearing their name.

The assembly was called to order with a song by the church choir, Rev. J. D. Weems then read an appropriate Psalm, a hymn was read by Rev. J. J. Tarlton, Dr. Godbey offered a prayer which was followed by music by the band after which Dr. Godbey of St. Louis delivered a very fine address. At the close of the address the Grand Master of the State, T. C. Humphries took charge of the ceremonies for the Masons and proceeded with the laying of the corner stone; Grand Treasurer H. F. Thompson named the following relics as he placed them in the box:

Masonic Program of Exercises.

Copy of the Van Buren Argus.

Copy of the Van Buren Graphic.

Copy of the Van Buren Press.

Prospective view of the building.

Copy of the Alma Democrat.

Copy of Southwestern Methodist.

Copy of the Arkansas Methodist.

Copy of Wesleyan Christian Advocate.

Bible, Hymn Book and Discipline of the Methodist church.

History of the Methodist church of Van Buren.

List of members of the Methodist church.

List of contributors to the building fund.

The stone was then sealed by the Architect M. W. Drewery as the assembly sang "Jesus Lover of My Soul." Others taking part in the ceremonies were Worthy Master A. H. Colgrove; Senior Warden James A. Dibrell, Junior Warden, W. T. England.

During the exercises nearly all the stores were closed, the public school was dismissed and the circuit court adjourned.

The Weekly Argus of September, 1887 says: "The new Methodist church of this city was dedicated on Sunday last by Rev. John Matthews, D. D., of Centenary church, St. Louis. At the morning service and in the afternoon 495 dollars was subscribed to pay for a balance on the edifice and at night the church was presented to Dr. Matthews for dedication by Mr. C. E. Harvey, free of debt."

No sketch of the Methodist Episcopal church South of

Van Buren would be complete without a sketch of Mr. Charles F. Harvey who was superintendent of the Sunday school for a number of years. He was superintendent before the war between the states and up to within a few years of his death which occurred in 1904. He was a member of the official board of the church up to the time of his death, also one of the trustees of the Wallace Institute fund.

Mr. Weems had the pleasure of holding service, in the church which he had labored so hard to have built for over a year.

The membership grew until it became necessary to enlarge the building which was done in 1910 during the pastorate of Rev. J. F. E. Bates by adding the Sunday-school annex, it being built adjoining the church on the lot formerly occupied by the parsonage, a new one having been built on Broad street.

In 1922 while Rev. S. L. Lark was pastor the church was remodeled. Mr. McBride having the contract for the work.

A sketch of the bell would be interesting but very little is known in regard to it. Charley Ward said it was brought here some time before the war, that it was stored for several months in the tinshop of Mr. R. S. Roberts until a place could be arranged for it, that a number of persons went to see it as it was the largest bell that had ever been brought to Van Buren, that it was tolled for funerals and rung for fires.

This sketch is not as complete as the writer would like, but it is best she can do with the material obtainable.

The following are the ministers known to have served this church:

Rev. Benjamine F. Harris—1840.

Rev. W. A. Cobb—1841.

Rev. H. Boyer—1842.

Rev. L. M. Mooreland—1843.

Rev. J. J. Roberts—1844.

Not known—1845 and 1846.

Rev. H. A. Suggs—1847 to 1849 here and Fort Smith.

Not known from—1849 through 1865.

Rev. C. H. Gregory—1866 or 1867.

Rev. S. S. Key—1867 to fall of 1869.

Rev. S. H. Babcock, 1869 to fall of 1872.

Rev. W. T. Bolling, 1872 to about April 1874.

Rev. R. S. Hunter, May 1874 to fall of 1876.

Revs. Greathouse and B. L. Ferguson were stationed here from 1876 to 1879, it is the opinion that Mr. Greathouse succeeded Mr. Hunter and Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Greathouse, as Mr. Ferguson served Van Buren only half-time, dividing with Ozark.

Rev. J. W. Kaigler, fall of 1879 to fall of 1880.

Rev. James A. Anderson, fall of 1880 to fall of 1881, he dividing time with Alma.

Rev. F. S. H. Johnson—1883, full time.

Rev. George W. Hill—1883 to 1884.

Rev. D. J. Weems—1884 to 1888.

Rev. R. M. Taylor—1888 to 1890.

Rev. W. H. W. Burns.

Rev. T. J. Reynolds.

Rev. A. H. Williams.

J. B. Stevenson.

Rev. S. F. Goddard.

Rev. Wm. Sherman.

Rev. F. M. Tolleson—1905 to 1909.

Rev. J. F. E. Bates.

Rev. Wm. Sherman.

Rev. W. T. Martin.

Rev. W. L. Oliver—1914 to 1918.

Rev. B. F. Williford.

Rev. F. A. Lark—1921 to 1923.

Rev. E. G. Downes—November, 1923-1926.

Rev. Guy Murphy—November, 1926-1927.

Rev. A. L. Cline—November, 1927-1931.

Rev. J. A. Womack, November, 1931-1935.

Rev. W. P. Whaley—November, 1935-1937.

Rev. J. F. Byrd—November, 1937-1944.

Rev. J. T. Wilcoxin—November, 1944-1946.

Rev. Ralph Hillis—June, 1948-1950.

Rev. J. H. Hoggard—June, 1950—.

Presbyterian (Old School)

After the Union church was built and opened for service, there was more inducement for those having affiliation with the different church organizations to settle at Van Buren, among those settlers were some who were members of the Old School Presbyterian church.

Although they had their regular time for the service of their church it was not long until they desired a church building of their own.

A writer in Northwest Arkansas says the church was organized here during 1844; as several of those who were living here when the church was organized were still living in Van Buren when the gentlemen wrote the article the date must be correct. He mentions Dr. James A. Dibrell.

Among the original members were Elder Calvin Phelps and wife; Mrs. Charles Stewart; Mrs. L. Gross, Mary Hinkle, Dorothy Davis, Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham, Mrs. Mary Gross, Mrs. J. B. Ogden, Mrs. Abbott, Mrs. Pryor and Mrs. George W. Paschal.

Whether they had a resident minister prior to 1847 is not definitely known. In May 1847 the name of Rev. W. K. Marshall appears when he performed the marriage ceremony of Mr. Joseph Clemm and Mrs. Harriet Thurston on May 3rd.

Mr. Marshall must have held services at the Union church at regular intervals but the first notice found in the paper is when he give notice that he will preach at the church on the next Sabbath, August 1st, at ten and half o'clock and in the evening.

A number of issues are missing from the files of the Arkansas Intelligencer, so notices may have appeared previous to this one.

We next find where Mrs. Marshall will open a school on September 1st, 1847. Later Mr. Marshall was connected with the school.

The issue of February 26th, 1848, speaks of funds being raised to build Presbyterian and Methodist churches in this place, the erection of both will commence soon.

In the same issue and continuing until the last of

April the following advertisement appears:

PROPOSALS

"Will be received by the undersigned, building committee, for building a Presbyterian church in the town of Van Buren, Arkansas, of the following dimensions, viz: 62 feet long, 40 feet wide and 20 feet high. The foundation of said house to be three feet broad underground and one foot high, two feet thick above ground and eighteen inches high. The foundation to be of stone laid in good lime mortar. The wall of the house to be of brick 62 feet long, 40 feet wide, 20 feet high and 16 inches thick.

"ALSC—Proposals for the following materials and carpenter work: 122 girders 59 feet long 8 by 10 inches; 144 sleepers 10 feet long 4 by 10 inches; 1 girder 40 feet long, 10 by 12 inches; 31 joist 13 feet long 3 by 8 inches; flooring gallery and ground floor of building. Eight windows with 36 lights in each window, glass 11 by 16 inches with plain casings on inside, windows to be hung with weights. One double panel door 8 feet wide made of 2 and one-fourth inch plank, one stud partition to support gallery in which are to be two doors 3 and one-half feet each forming vestibule to church with stairway on each side leading to gallery. Roof to be a suspension roof covered with good shingles not more than four and a half inches to the weather, with cupalo 27 feet above the cone of the roof. All to be finished in a neat and workman-like manner.

"ALSO—Proposals will be received for building a church of the above dimensions with a basement nine feet high, walls eighteen inches thick. Proposals for the basement to be a separate bid. Proposals will be received for the brick wall separate from the carpenter work or all together. These proposals to be handed to the building committee by the first of April when the work will be let.

"J. B. Ogden, A. Wallace, John Henry, W. K. Marshall, Building Committee."

From the appearance of the church after the war the writer does not think any gallery was ever built.

The lots for this church was also given by Mr. Drennen. The original deed has not been found but the following given in 1854 shows an exchange of lots and that the

church was not built on lots first given. The deed is as follows: "Wm. K. Marshall, Trustee vs. Deed, John Drennen. Lots 7 and 8, block 16. Filed for record March 7th, 1854. A. M. McLean, clerk. Recorded in Record Book 1, Pages 389 and 390. March 7th, A. D., 1854, State of Arkansas. County of Crawford.

"This indenture made this second day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-four, between W. K. Marshall for and in behalf of the Presbyterian church, by order of the Board of Trustees of said church of the county of Crawford and State of Arkansas of the first part, and John Drennen of the County of Crawford and State of Arkansas of the second part, Witnesseth: That the said party of the first part, for and in consideration of the lots number seven (7) and eight (8) block number seventeen (17) conveyed by the said party of the second part to John Henry, John B. Ogden, George W. Clark, Charles G. Scott and William Houser, trustees of the Presbyterian church and their successors in office by deed of warrantee for the use and benefit of the said Presbyterian church which is hereby acknowledged, hath granted, bargained, sold and conveyed, and by these present doth grant, bargain, sell and convey unto the said party of the second part, his heirs, and assigns the following described tract, lot or parcel of land situated lying and being in the County of Crawford and State of Arkansas, better known in the plan of survey of the town of Van Buren as lots number seven (7) and eight (8) block number sixteen (16) fronting each thirty-three (33) feet in Jefferson street, running back one hundred and twenty-seven feet (127) to alley, be the same more or less to have and hold the said bargained premises, together with all and singular, the rights, members and appurtenances thereunto or otherwise belonging appertaining to the said party of the second part, his executors and administrators, to his and their own proper use, benefit and behoof, forever, in fee simple.

"And the said party of the first part for himself, his heirs, executors and assigns the said bargained premises to the said party of the second part, his heirs, executors,

administrators and assigns will forever warrant and defend against the claim of himself, his heirs, executors, administrators, and against the claim of all and every person whomsoever, the said party of the first part covenanting with the party of the second part, that at the time of this conveyance, he the party of the first part was seized of an indefeasible fee simple estate in and to the said bargained premises as aforesaid.

"In testimony whereof, the said William K. Marshall, for and in behalf of the Presbyterian church by the direction of the said Board of Trustees, hereunto sets his hand and official seal, the day and year above written.

"Signed, Sealed and Delivered in the Presence of A. M. McLean, G. W. Bearden. (Seal) W. K. Marshall."

Then follows the usual form by the clerk of the circuit court.

Presumable while the church was being built, the ladies, as now, were working to raise a fund for the church, as we find a little later in 1848 where the ladies of the Presbyterian church would hold a fair on the Fourth of July in the Music Saloon and they will also serve a dinner in the room adjoining for 75 cents a plate.

In the Arkansas Intelligencer of September 29th, 1849 it speaks of two brick churches being in course of erection, so this church as well as the Methodist must have been completed the latter part of 1849 or the early part of 1850.

It would be interesting to know who had the contract and who did the brick work and who the carpenter work, also if the church was dedicated, by whom and when.

Mr. Marshall was the stationed minister when the church was built and for several years after, but so far it has not been learned when he resigned. The Rev. Elizur Butler, a missionary to the Indians, made his home at Van Buren during the latter part of his life and often filled the pulpit at the Presbyterian church, but it is not thought that he was even regularly stationed here. Sometime during 1859 Rev. Mr. Urmston became the minister in charge of the church, he remained here until about May 1869 when he resigned and went I think to New Orleans.

From then until after the war there was no stationed minister.

From records it is learned that the Presbyterian church was also used by the Confederates for a hospital. The different troops passing through here often remained several days and some of the wounded from Pea Ridge or Elk Horn were brought here. We find the first death occurring there the early part of March 1862. The writer has not been able to learn that it was used for a hospital after the Confederates left Van Buren; but has been told that a Rev. Mr. Gardener, who belonged to the 13th Kansas, frequently held service there.

When Van Buren was cannonaded at the time Blunt made his raid on December 28th, 1862 this was one of the buildings hit by a cannon ball passing through one of the rafters. When the old building was torn down Mr. W. H. H. Shibley secured that part of the rafter and a few years ago six gavels were made from part of the rafter and the remainder given to the Mary Lee Chapter U. D. C.

After the war between the states the building being less damaged than the other two, which shows that it was not used by the Federal Troops the citizens decided to repair it first, as it would be less expensive. The money with which to do it was obtained by subscription and entertainments. At that time one of the most popular forms of entertainments was the tableaux. Mrs. A. J. Ward and Mr. Samuel Martin generally had charge of them. And they were beautiful.

After the building was put in repair a Union Sunday school was organized with Mr. C. F. Harvey as Superintendent and the children of the town attending.

The different churches held their services in this church until theirs were repaired. It is said that for several years the Presbyterians furnished the church and the Methodist the minister. All the citizens of Van Buren attending the same church.

The first record of a minister after the war between the states is June 4th, 1871 when the name of Rev. J. C. Kennedy appears as moderator at one of their session meetings. Dr. J. A. Dibrell and Mr. C. M. Stewart or Stew-

ard were Ruling Elders in 1871.

The Van Buren Press of December 24th, 1872 contains the following acknowledgement:

"We the members and Session of Van Buren Presbyterian church, do hereby acknowledge the receipt of a beautiful Communion Service, through the kindness of Mrs. Ada L. Decherd and friends in Saint Louis. Therefore

Be it Resolved, That we tender our appreciation of the valuable donation together with our heartfelt thanks to those kind friends who have provided us with this valuable "Service."

And do pray the giver of every good and perfect gift to fill their hearts with the goodness of His love and ever smile upon them in His Providence.

J. C. Kennedy, Pastor

J. A. Dibrell, Elder.

On October 8th, 1873, the following were elected trustees of the church: Dr. L. C. White, Messrs, N. F. Cornelius, John Hinkle, C. C. Colburn, Robert Rankin and Ben Deckard, but the latter declined.

During the Spring of 1876 the Presbyterian Sunday school met at the Methodist church while their church building was being repaired.

The only names of Sunday school superintendents so far found were those of Mr. Ben Deckerd, Dr. Dibrell and Dr. Hynes, Mr. Albert Shibley being the last one.

The last time the name of Rev. J. C. Kennedy appears on the Session was at a meeting of the Session on March 6th, 1876. The Press of March 14th speaks of his leaving for Batesville to attend the Synod, but no mention of his resignation.

The church seems to have been without a minister from 1876 until January 1st, 1880 when Rev. George L. Wolf became pastor. The trustees of the church under Rev. G. L. Wolf were Dr. J. A. Dibrell, Messrs. F. R. McKibben and R. S. Hynes. Mr. R. S. Hynes was also elected ruling elder, succeeding Mr. C. M. Steward who had passed away. Dr. Dibrell was appointed to be superintendent of the Sunday school.

We find these resolutions passed by the Session of

March 9th, 1880. Resolved: That the Session in behalf of the church, tender their thanks to Mrs. Mary E. England, Mr. F. R. McKibben and Honorable Benjamine Deckerd for their services in procuring funds for a new bell.

Resolved: That Mr. Samuel Martin is authorized and requested to sell the old bell and superintend the purchase and erection of a new one. The Van Buren Press of April 24th, 1880 says: "The new bell weighing 400 pounds for the Presbyterian church has been received." Mr. Wolf's resignation took effect March 23rd, 1881.

Whenever possible the Rev. Mr. Sample of Fort Smith filled the pulpit until the first Sunday in September 1882 when Licentiate S. B. Erwin became the acting minister in charge of the church. He remained until the 17th of August 1884.

Was W. L. Kimmons who is given as Moderator May 29th and June 12th 1887 a supply or a layman?

The church was several years without a pastor until October 1892 when the Rev. A. S. Venable accepted a call and was installed as pastor December 1892. Rev. Mr. Price and Rev. Mr. McKay officiating. Mr. Venable divided his time with Alma Presbyterian church. He resigned October 1895. From then until the summer of 1898 the church was without a minister. The pulpit was occasionally filled by the Rev. Mr. Tucker of the Northern Presbyterian church.

During the summer of 1898 the Rev. F. D. Bascomb became the minister and served until May 1899 when he was succeeded by Rev. J. L. Green who served from November 1899 until April 21st 1901.

The congregation was again without a minister for a year, when on the first Sunday in April 1902 the Rev. E. P. Pillans took charge of the church.

The church building showing the effects of the years and being very much in need of repairs, it was decided to demolish it and erect a new one. The old building was larger than the one built; across the entire front was an open brick porch with about five steps running the entire length of the porch, there were two front entrances.

The building committee was composed of Mr. J. A. Barrett, chairman and treasurer, Miss Nannie Rea and

Mrs. W. A. Bostick. The Rev. Mr. Finney of the Baptist church was the architect and Messrs. Pope and Blevins the contractors, they also doing the carpentering work; the brick work was done by Messrs. Kelton and Sherd Hunter.

The Presbyterians held service at the Cumberland Presbyterian church on Sunday evenings from October 20th, 1902 to May 15, 1903, while the old church was being demolished and the new one being erected. The first service in the new church was on Sunday morning May 17th, 1903.

The church was dedicated on September 8, 1903 according to the Van Buren Press of September 13th, 1903.

A large choir composed of the musical talent of the city furnished the music for the service which was largely attended by the citizens. Rev. E. P. Pillans had charge of the dedicatory services which were very impressive. He was assisted by the Rev. William Sherman, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal church South.

Mr. Pillans thanked the congregation and others for their support and encouragement which made it possible for the church to erect the handsome and commodious building in which the congregation could worship in the "fear and admonition of the Lord" free of debt.

The Rev. Mr. Pillans remained a year after the church was dedicated, resigning September 18th, 1904.

On October, 1904 the following board of trustees were elected: Messrs. A. B. Shibley, Wilshire Hynes, E. D. Cochran, J. A. Barrett, L. H. Southmayd; retaining Mr. N. E. Cornelius, the only surviving member of the old board.

About December 1904 Rev. A. E. Miller became pastor of the church. He was installed on the evening of the 9th of April 1905. Rev. M. McKay of Fort Smith preached the sermon and delivered the charge to the new pastor. He was followed by the Rev. W. J. Ross who delivered the charge to the congregation. The entire service was very impressive.

Mr. Miller remained until November 1906.

There had been some discussion in regard to this

church uniting with the Central Presbyterian U. S. A. and at the Session of November 11th, 1906 the church voted to unite with the Central Presbyterian church U. S. A. By this action the Van Buren Presbyterian church U. S., after an existence of 62 years in Van Buren passed out of existence.

The Cumberland Presbyterian

We can well imagine that the members of the Cumberland Presbyterian church living at Van Buren very much desired a church organization of their own belief. After consulting among themselves and with members of the Presbytery, the Rev. J. D. Boone came to Van Buren for that purpose, as the following taken from the Session Minute book will show.

"On the 31st day of December, 1882 Rev. J. D. Boone organized in the town of Van Buren, a Cumberland Presbyterian church with the following members: Benjamine Deckerd, A. J. Moore, J. F. Harrison, M. M. Harrison, J. L. Webb, T. J. McCurdy, Mr. Guthrie, H. C. Miller, M. C. Miller, E. L. Eubanks, Dudley Bourne, Sarah Miller, M. A. Hardee, M. E. Fowler, Fannie Williams, L. A. Miller, M. S. Collins, Delphia Harshaw, B. M. Hammock, L. A. Hammock, M. L. Highbee, Moseeta Bourne.

"Brothers Dudley Bourne, T. J. McCurdy and J. L. Webb were chosen and ordained elders of this congregation. Brother B. F. Hammock was chosen and ordained deacon. Regular services to be held on the second and fourth Sundays in each month at the Presbyterian church."

This organization became a member of the Arkansas Presbytery the first of March, 1883.

The Rev. Mr. Boone's connection with the church as pastor was severed sometime between the thirteenth of August 1883 and April first 1884; as the minutes of the latter date speaks of the Presbytery selecting Rev. Mr. Morris to preach once a month for this church. How long he remained is not known, as there are no minutes until December 28th, 1885 when arrangements were made with the Rev. Mr. Henderson to give half of his time to this church.

We find Rev. J. T. Buchanan was in charge of the

church November 3, 1887, his name appearing then as Moderator; when he came is not definitely known, a note speaks of some of the records being lost.

The members of the church being desirous of having a church building of their own and having accumulated a fund towards the erection of one it was decided to have one built. At the Session meeting of October 31, 1888, the following building committee was appointed: Rev. J. T. Buchanan, Messrs. W. C. Lea, R. B. Allen, S. Mitchell, A. A. Colgrove and L. H. Southmayd. The finance committee was composed of Messrs. W. H. H. Shibley, Ben Deckard, R. J. Miller and Dr. O. M. Bourland.

Unfortunately nothing is to be found in regard to the building of the church. It had been learned that Mr. Lea had the contract for the erection of the building. The building was a frame one and stood on Jefferson street near its conjunction with Tenth street and faced towards Main street.

The writer hasn't been able to learn when it was begun or completed. The first mention of the completed church is in the Session minutes of February 16th, 1890 when it speaks of the Session meeting at the church. But in some church notes copied from either the Van Buren Press or the Argus some time ago by the writer it says "Initial services to be held in the new Cumberland Presbyterian church (on Jefferson street) near the school house on Sunday, February 17th, 1889." According to that notice the building must have been erected very quickly.

The Rev. Mr. Buchanan remained a year after the completion of the church, as he resigned March 1st, 1890.

The name of the Rev. Mr. Humphreys as Moderator is given for the session meeting of April 13th, 1891. On account of ill health he was obliged to resign very soon.

Rev. J. B. Gentry came to the church in June 1891 and served as its pastor two years, resigning in June 1893.

The church was not long without a pastor as the Rev. F. T. Charlton came to them in October 1893 and remained until the first of August 1894.

A call was extended to Rev. G. N. Wall December 8th, 1895 to become the pastor of the Cumberland Pres-

byterian church, just when he arrived is not given but his name first appears as Moderator April 12th, 1896. Installation services were held for him on the 29th of November, 1896. The services were in charge of Revs. F. T. Charlton and Kelly who officiated. Mr. Wall remained until August 1900.

The Rev. Mr. Lile's name appears as Moderator at the Sessions of December 29th, 1901, and January 28th, 1902. Was he stationed here?

Rev. C. S. Bass became pastor of the church in September or October, 1902, and remained until February of 1906.

Mr. Cline H. Whitman was a supply minister in July 1904 and for several months following, also that Mr. Elbert L. Orr was a supply in July 1905. The information was obtained from the church notices published in the paper during those years.

Rev. M. A. Prather accepted a call to the church on April 18th, 1906. During his pastorate at a session meeting on August 3rd, 1906, the name of the church was changed by vote from the Cumberland Presbyterian to Central Presbyterian, U. S. A.

It was also during his pastorate that the Presbyterian church, U. S., (Old School) and Central Presbyterian church U. S. A., became one on the 12th day of November 1906.

The Ruling Elders were: Messrs. Dudley Bourne, J. T. McCurdy, J. L. Webb, W. H. H. Shibley, R. J. Miller, Ben Deckerd, L. F. Sherwood, H. P. King and Dr. J. E. Blakemore.

The deacons were: Messrs. J. L. Hammock, T. D. Bourland, R. B. Allen, R. P. Allen, Arthur Cottrell, John Catron, Bert Easley and Othniel Miller.

First Presbyterian Church

As has previously been stated, two Presbyterian churches were united in 1906. After all arrangements were made, the next step was the recognition of J. A. Barrett, A. B. Shibley, and Deacon W. A. Bostick of the Presbyterian church U. S. on November 25, 1906 as elders and

deacons of the Central Presbyterian church, they holding the same position in the United Church as in the Presbyterian Church O. S. The elders now being Messrs. Dudley Bourne, J. A. Barrett, J. E. Blakemore, H. P. King, R. J. Miller, L. F. Sherwood, W. H. H. Shibley, A. B. Shibley and John Weaver.

It would naturally take time for the two church memberships to adopt themselves to the new conditions and to combine those of the same organization in each church. The two Sunday schools met as one on the first Sunday in December 1906. John Catron, superintendent of the Central Sunday school, continued in charge of the United school until March 11, 1907 when he resigned and Albert Shibley was elected to fill the vacancy. He had been superintendent of the Presbyterian O. S. He served until June of the same year.

The church services continued to be held in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church building until September 15, 1907 when it was unanimously voted to use the brick church formerly the property of the Presbyterian church U. S. Before this time this piece of church property had been transferred to the Central Church U. S. A. A board of trustees were elected on January 12, consisting of W. H. H. Shibley, S. W. Stewart, Edgar Covey, J. A. Barrett and O. M. Bourland.

Rev. M. A. Porter, who was the pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church at the time the churches united, continued to serve the church until April 1, 1908 when he resigned. The church then extended a call to the Rev. W. B. Miller of Texarkana to become their pastor on April 15, 1908. Mr. Miller accepted the call and arrived soon and took charge of the work. The church notified the Presbytery of his acceptance. At their next meeting they confirmed the call and he was installed as their regular minister the early part of February 1909.

In this church the acceptance of a minister to take charge of a church must be confirmed by the Presbytery before he can be installed as a pastor of the church.

The church members realizing the necessity of having a home for their minister voted to purchase the Dr.

Weems property corner of Jefferson and Tenth street adjoining the property of the former Cumberland Presbyterian Church for that purpose. This was done in October 1910. The residence was removed to the rear of the lot facing on Tenth street and remodeled it for a Manse. It was ready for occupancy in March 1911. This left the front of the lot on which to build a church building if they ever so desired.

At the meeting of the session on March 11, the Central Presbyterian church voted to change its name to the First Presbyterian Church and it was incorporated under this name.

Needing more room a committee was appointed to investigate the possibility of enlarging the church building they were using. After a thorough investigation it was decided that the building could not be satisfactorily enlarged.

The congregation then decided to make plans for the erection of a new church building on their lot on the corner of Jefferson and Tenth streets. A building committee was appointed consisting of R. J. Miller, W. H. H. Shibley, Othniel Miller, W. A. Bostick, J. N. Weaver, Edgar Covey, Dr. J. E. Blakemore and Rev. W. B. Miller.

After securing suitable plans and specifications the building committee on April 21, 1916 awarded the contract for the erection of their new church building to G. E. Pope and L. H. Johnson as superintendent of construction. The cornerstone was laid with the following ceremonies on July 13, 1916 at 6 p.m.

Opening sentences.

Hymn—"I Love Thy Kingdom Lord."

Invocation—W. L. Pliver.

Male Quartette.

Scripture Reading—Rev. J. W. Thompson.

Presentation of Articles for deposit in the stone.

Holy Bible—W. H. H. Shibley.

Confessions of Faith—Judge McKinney.

Hymn Book—John M. Weaver.

Religious Periodicals—daily papers and so forth—
L. F. Sherwood.

Local Church History—J. A. Barrett.

Sketches of Van Buren History—Dr. J. E. Blakemore.

Roster of Church Membership—G. W. Dobbins.

Membership list of Various Church Organizations—
By their presiding officers.

Formal laying of the cornerstone by Rev. W. B. Miller,
pastor, assisted by G. W. Pope and John G. Blevins, con-
tractors.

Prayer—by Rev. Jesse Heins.

Song.

Benediction—Rev. Joseph Cornel.

The first service which was both the formal opening
and the dedicatory service was held in the new church
February 11, 1917 at 11 o'clock. The ministers of the dif-
ferent churches were present with members of their con-
gregation.

The program of the morning service was as follows:
Organ and violin prelude.

Doxology (congregation standing).

Invocation—Rev. J. W. Thompson, rector of Trinity
Episcopal Church.

Response—Choir.

Hymn 325.

Responsive Reading—Rev. A. R. Anderson, pastor of
the Christian Church.

Anthem—"Singing to the Lord."

Scripture Lesson—Rev. Wilbur L. Oliver, pastor First
Methodist Church.

Prayer—Rev. J. Kirkpatrick, D. D., Central Presby-
terian Church, Fort Smith.

Announcements.

Anthem—"Unto Thee, Our God."

Sermon—Rev. Charles D. Hayes, D. D., Hot Springs.

Prayer—Rev. H. A. Tucker.

Hymn 312—"Bless Be the Tie that Binds."

Benediction—Rev. E. Rawlings, pastor of the First
Baptist Church.

The church at the time of its erection was the largest
and most modern of any in the city. After a time the con-
gregation began the collection of a fund for a pipe organ.

The organ was installed in June 1920 and formally dedicated the first Sunday in July 1920.

The next important work was the remodeling of the Manse, now occupied by the minister. This was done during the summer of 1922. Rev. W. B. Miller is still pastor of the church.

After the congregation moved from the brick church to the new church building it was sold to Mr. Tom Wallace who later sold it to the Womans Literary Club for a library building.

First Baptist Church

Old records of First Baptist church, Van Buren, state that on June 2nd, 1883—"We, as Citizens of Van Buren, Arkansas, and Trenchant members of the Baptist Church, met at the Seminary in Van Buren, Arkansas, at 3 p. m. for the purpose of organizing ourselves into a Church Body."

On motion Rev. T. R. Willhoite was chosen moderator, and S. D. Taylor, clerk pro tem. Reading of articles of faith and practice, as adopted by the Missionary Baptist Church, and enrollment of members followed.

At the next meeting, June 17th, 1883, Rev. Willhoite was chosen Pastor for ensuing year. The Church voted to hold their meetings at First Methodist Church, on First Sunday in each month. The names of W. D. Pryor, J. M. Lawrence, O. M. Lucas, S. D. Taylor and William Campbell are mentioned very prominently. On October 4th, 1883 the Church moved to their meeting place, the "Brick School House," thanking Methodists for use of their building.

On January 4th, 1884, Rev. O. M. Lucas became Pastor, after Rev. Willhoite resigned. May 2nd 1884, Rev. Hall of Mississippi held revival, during which Bro. James Lloyd, wife and daughter was received into the Church. This seems to be the last record of any meeting of this early organization.

In October 1885, we find this record:

"We, J. C. Clark, Pleasant Bolton, and **** Moore, being desirous of building up the cause of Christ, in Van

Buren, Ark., met at Presbyterian Church, and determined to organize ourselves into a Missionary Baptist Church, and in order to properly enter into the organization, invited Bro. J. B. Wise, pastor of Fort Smith Baptist Church, to come over and assist us.

"Rev. Wise came, and after preaching an earnest sermon, invited all, who wished to unite with the Church to come forward. There were nine women and three men who made up the Charter. Miss Addie Garner was among the charter members. Others are not known.

In November 1885, Bro. Wise, assisted by Bro. Martin Hall, Pastor of Fayetteville Baptist Church, and Bro. John Mays held a revival in which thirteen members joined, one of whom was Mrs. W. M. Boatright.

On Nov. 18th, 1887, Miss Mary Boatright (Mrs. Chas. Ayres), Miss Lizzie Lane, and Park Crutcher joined by baptism, and were baptised in the Arkansas river near the Frisco railroad bridge. Rev. Enoch Winds served as pastor from Nov. 18th, 1887 to Sept. 21st, 1888. Rev. D. C. Hardin served from Feb. 1889 to March 1890. Rev. T. C. Wright served from 1890 to 1891. Rev. Harvey Beauchamp served from Nov. 25th, 1891 to October 1894. He was an outstanding young preacher and the Church made great progress during his stay. He remodeled the old church building, (which was formerly an old store building owned by Divenbliss) and built an indoor baptistry, which was an innovation in those days, and put in folding chairs to add to the beauty and comfort of the church. He had the church adopt the envelope system of collection, organized the first B. Y. P. U. (as it was called then), organized a choir and preached fearlessly against the evils of the day. In 1894 he was succeeded by Rev. D. C. Yeargin who served until 1896. Rev. R. C. Medaris served from 1896 to 1897. He was succeeded by M. O. Keller who also served one year. The church was without a pastor for several months until Rev. Grammer came Feb. 22, 1899 and served until 1901. Rev. I. E. Finney served from 1901 to 1904. Rev. Cornelius served from 1904 to 1906. Rev. J. O. Hill came in November, 1906 and served until October 1909. The present church building was erected during his administration.

Dr. W. L. Parchman, W. H. Dunlap, and W. V. Boatright were building committee and trustees. Rev. Connell succeeded Bro. Hill serving from 1909 to 1914, and was followed by Rev. Lusk who served one year.

In 1916 Rev. Everett Rawlings and wife served very efficiently for six years, during which time the church made great advancement, both spiritually and materially. Rev. C. C. Coleman a scholarly man, followed serving two years, succeeded by Rev. Warren who served only one year. Rev. C. L. Bullard followed and remained until 1933. He remodeled the choir platform and baptistry, making it necessary to have new painting for same, which Mrs. Alice Covey painted, and presented to the church as a memorial to their son, Bernard, who passed away Jan. 26, 1932. Rev. Bullard was succeeded by Rev. O. J. Chastain who served as pastor six years. Rev. Paul Fox and his bride came Jan. 7th, 1942 and served until 1945. The membership now is approximately eight hundred. Sunday school enrollment is five hundred. The W. M. S. organized in 1888 as a Ladies Aid Society, has grown in numbers in proportion to the church membership, and sponsors young people's societies.

Rev. T. H. Jordan was called as pastor in 1945.

Wood Memorial Christian Church

The Broadway Christian Church, a small brick structure was erected in 1893. The cornerstone was laid in 1890. Before the erection of this building, the congregation met in the homes of members. The first meeting was held in the home of Mrs. J. M. Wood, March 7, 1848.

The present Wood Memorial Christian church building was erected on lots formerly occupied by both Broadway Christian Church and the parsonage. The parsonage having been moved to the present lot on Broadway. The cornerstone was laid December 30, 1924, with the ritualistic ceremonies of the Masonic Grand Lodge. Storm M. Whaley, State Grand Master, Sulphur Springs, in charge.

Articles placed in the cornerstone included a box which had been placed in the little brick building in 1890, a small Bible covered in Scotch plaid, brought from the

birth place of Robert Burns, Scotland, by a member of the Wood family, a Masonic charm worn by Mr. J. M. Wood, an Eastern Star emblem by Mrs. J. M. Wood, a memoriam to Mr. George R. Wood, historical papers by Miss Clara B. Eno, a history of the church, a list of names of the membership of the church, Sunday School, and other organized groups of the church.

"The House The Lord Builds" was the subject which was used by Dr. Samuel G. Buckner, pastor of the First Christian Church, Fort Smith, in making the principal address at the dedication ceremonies for the new building, May 17, 1925.

Misses Margaret and Norma Wood were presented to the congregation by Dr. Buckner. Miss Margaret Wood responded with a gracious expression of the privilege which had been theirs in erecting the building "to the honor and glory of God, the Father and His Son Jesus Christ" and in memory of their beloved family.

The pipe organ was presented by Miss Margaret Wood in memory of her sister, Miss Norma Wood who was talented in music.

Dedication services were held on February 19, 1928. The chimes were also given by Miss Margaret Wood, and were dedicated on March 31, 1929.

The following ministers have served the Christian Church from the time of its organization:

John T. Johnson, March 7, 1848, first pastor; Jesse Gresham, J. T. Tatum, James Stevenson, D. T. Stanley, Percy G. Cross, Marshall Higgenbotham, Gilliam C. Yoes, J. L. Crane, G. G. Alexander, O. B. Sears, J. M. McCarroll, A. H. Anderson, R. H. Lampkin, J. T. Purvis, Harney McGehee, B. F. Elmore, Wm. A. Sessions, Jr., James R. Keeling, Sherman Kirkpatrick, Frank M. Wright and C. A. Pruett.

Catholic Church

During 1847 Mr. Michael Lynch, who had come to Van Buren in 1851 moved his family into a two-story brick building located between No. 6th and 7th on Main street. The front of the building was used as a store by Mr. Lynch

while the rear and upstairs was used as the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Lynch.

One of the rooms upstairs was converted into a chapel, containing an altar and other church furniture. Whenever a priest visited Van Buren services were held there.

Mrs. Margaret Lynch Brodie says "the chapel was used as such until 1861 when her father removed from the building to the home on the corner of Cane Hill and Clay streets."

A number of families of the Catholic faith resided at or near Van Buren prior to 1861, after that period most of them removed to Fort Smith probably on account of a church being there.

From 1861 until the church was built, services were held at the home of some member whenever a priest visited his church members.

The War between the States beginning at this time no efforts were made to build a church until conditions became more settled. During the latter part of the sixties or the early seventies, the thoughts of the church members began to turn towards a church building. A lot on the corner of Broad and South Sixth streets had been given by Mrs. Bate Drennen or the Drennen heirs some time previous. Through the efforts of Mr. Michael Lynch and Mr. Pat May enough funds were secured to begin the erection of a frame building on their lot on Broad street. A notice in the Van Buren Press says that Mr. Lynch gave nearly three-fourths of the amount.

No records or newspaper articles have been found telling of the commencement of the building, but it must have been about December 1871. The name of the contractor and other workmen are unknown. Because Saint Michael was Mr. Lynch's Patron Saint and because he had given so much of his means and time the church was named Saint Michael in his honor.

In the Van Buren Press of May 14th, 1872 a notice speaks of the building nearing completion and that it compared favorably with any Catholic church in the state.

The writer has not been able to find an account of the dedication of the church.

Quoting from the Van Buren Press of May 14th, 1872: "The Right Reverend Edward Fitzgerald D. D. bishop of Little Rock is expected to be in Van Buren and dedicate the new Catholic church on Trinity Sunday the 26th inst. The priests and many of the congregation of Fort Smith will be present on the occasion. The Bishop, it is expected will preach the Dedication sermon on Sunday morning at ten and a half o'clock. To aid in the liquidating the debt that has accrued for the completion of the church a collection will be taken up at the High Mass. The choir of the Fort Smith church will play and sing. All are invited to attend."

Another notice of May 21st speaks of the Bishop passing up on the Steamer Gibson to Fort Smith and that he will be over on Sunday to Dedicate the church, so without a doubt it was dedicated on May 26th, 1872.

The Bishop was assisted by the Reverend Michael Smythe. On July 7th, 1872 he held the first service in the church after its consecration. The priests from Fort Smith held services as often as possible. As far as learned Reverend J. P. Murrell was the first resident priest, he served approximately from 1880 to 1890.

The next resident priest was Reverend Patrick Enright, who came to Van Buren in 1892, shortly after he was ordained priest. He remained here until 1897 dividing his time between Van Buren and Fayetteville.

The writer has not been able to learn whether there was any other resident priest until Reverend H. Frommen, the date of his arrival is not known but he was here in 1907.

On Friday night February 8th, 1907 the church was destroyed by fire. The origin of which was not definitely known, except that it started in the sacristy. When the fire was discovered it was too much under headway to save anything from the building. The priest's home adjoining which was occupied by Rev. H. Frommen was slightly damaged.

Thus in a few hours was destroyed the church building that seemed a memorial to the memory of those who had taken such an active part in its erection and with

which so many associations of the past were connected.

Several years passed before another church building could be erected. The Catholic membership desired to erect the church on another lot, but they could not give a good title to the old lot, as it was given them with the understanding that it could only be used for a church building. After a time the Drennen heirs gave them a quit claim deed. The lot was then sold, others in the eastern part of Van Buren facing on North 13th street were bought from Mr. Frank Lincke.

Arrangements were then begun to erect a church on the corner lot, and Messrs John Khone and John O'Kane were appointed a building committee. Mr. Khone had the supervision of the erection of the building. Mr. Blevins was awarded the contract for the brick work. Different carpenters were employed by Mr. Khone as they were needed, but Mr. T. N. Stewart did the principal part of the work.

The building was begun sometime during 1912, the cornerstone being laid in 1912. The building was completed the early part of 1913 and was dedicated May 4th, 1913 by Right Reverend Bishop J. B. Morris of Little Rock, assisted by his secretary Rev. Father Aretz and Rev. Father Boniface of Subiaco monastery.

The music was furnished by the choir of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Smith. The services were solemnly impressive. Mass being conducted by Bishop Morris at the ten o'clock service.

When there was no resident priest, the church was cared for by priests from Fort Smith and the monastery at Subiaco.

Mrs. Margaret Brodie has furnished the names of the following priests as she remembered them and they may not be in the order in which they served:

Rev. P. W. Walsh was here and at Fort Smith as early as 1851.

Rev. Shannon, and Rev. Patrick O'Reilley.

Rev. Monihan was here some time during the fifties.

Rev. Lawrence Smythe.

Rev. Donavan who in 1865 accepted a parish in Eng-

land in 1865.

Rev. Patrick O'Reilley was again here in 1869.

Rev. Michael Smythe was in charge when the church was built.

Rev. J. P. Murrell from 1880 to 1890.

Rev. Patrick Enright from 1892 to 1897.

Rev. Michael Enright, Rev. Thomas Carroll, Rev. Aloysius Doyle.

Rev. Glinski, a Polish priest.

Rev. H. Frommen in 1907.

Rev. Garrity, Rev. Heagney, Rev. Tinin.

Rev. Treumper was here in 1912.

Rev. McCallion, Rev. Flaherty.

In October, 1924, Rev. P. F. Horan, D. D., had the supervision of the church, the priests from Fort Smith coming over for the services.

Rev. Joseph Doyle is the present full time priest of the church, having come to Van Buren from Wynne, Ark., in 1947.