

From the Norristown Daily Herald, Thursday Afternoon, July 19, 1906

Program Completed for the Important Ceremony

Activities by Norristown and Visiting Pastors—Special Music— The New Central Presbyterian Church and those in Charge of Its Congregation

The program to be observed at the laying of the corner-stone of the new Central Presbyterian Church edifice to be erected at the corner of Airy and Stanbridge streets has been completed. The ceremony will take place on next Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock.

It will be in charge of the Rev. J. Allan Crawford, pastor of the Central Presbyterian congregation, and will consist of responsive reading, singing, the rendering of a special selection by the choir, prayer and addresses. The latter will be delivered by visiting clergymen, among whom will be the Rev. Thomas R. Beeber, D.D., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Norristown, and the Revs. Richard Montgomery and John B. Laird, D.D. of Philadelphia. The formal service in connection with the laying of the stone will be in charge of Rev. Mr. Crawford.

The ground for the new church structure was broken a few weeks ago, and work on the cellar and foundations has been progressing rapidly since then.

It is expected that the building will be ready for occupancy in the fall. A leading contractor and builder claims that it will be the handsomest church edifice in the West End.

The church will be in size about 100 feet on Stanbridge Street by 80 feet on Airy. It is being constructed of Pennsylvania blue marble from the quarries of Schweyer & Leiss, at King-of-Prussia.

Its building committee, to which the congregation delegated the duty of general supervision, consists of Chairman, George W. Shearer; secretary, Elmer E. Beidman; A. Markley Harry, Walter R. Moyer, A. Landis Gable, Isaac C. Weber and Ellwood J. Wanner.

The architect is Edward T. Boggs, and the superintendent of construction is James A. Hurst. Frank L. Heavener has charge of the carpentering work, and Grater-Bodey Company will furnish the lumber and mill work.

From the Norristown Daily Herald, Saturday Afternoon, July 21, 1906



CORNER STONE LAYING. Central Presbyterian Congregation Will Perform Important Ceremony To-Morrow Afternoon

Services in connection with the laying of the corner-stone of the new Central Church will be held to-morrow afternoon at four o'clock. The public is cordially invited. Addresses will be made by Rev. Thomas R. Beeber, D.D., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of this borough, and Rev. Richard Montgomery and Rev. John B. Laird, D.D., of Philadelphia. The choir of the church will render a selection, and a special offering for the new church fund will be taken.

The exercises will be in charge of the pastor, the Rev. John Allen Crawford, who will also perform the formal ceremony of laying the stone.

The morning service will also be of a special character, and the Rev. Mr. Crawford will preach a sermon appropriate to the occasion on the theme: "The Church's One Foundation."

From the Norristown Daily, Monday Afternoon, July 23, 1906 . . .

CORNER- STONE LAID

Central Presbyterians Hold Important Ceremony

Impressive Exercises Took Place Yesterday Afternoon in Presence of a Large Concourse of People— The Program and Contents of Memorial Chest

The corner-stone of the new church edifice that is being erected at the corner of Airy and Stanbridge streets by the congregation of the Central Presbyterian Church, the Rev. J. Allen Crawford, pastor, was laid yesterday afternoon at four o'clock. The ceremony attracted hundreds of people besides the members of the church. The afternoon was ideal for an open air event. It was warm, but clouds obscured the sun, thus relieving the participants of its hot rays.

A platform had been erected for the accommodation of the pastor, visiting clergymen, choir, church officers and building committee. The pastor had charge of the services and performed the formal ceremony of laying the stone. Previous to performing this portion of the service he announced the contents of the memorial chest, which was placed within the stone, as follows:

From the corner-stone of the old church, situated on Main Street above Swede Street (laid August 7, 1856): The Holy Bible; the Westminster Standards; the Presbyterian Hymnal; copies of "The Herald and Free Press" and "The Norristown Register," dated August 5, 1856.

New articles—The book of common worship; brief statement of the Reformed faith; the Shorter Catechism; historical sketch of Central Church, in "Norristown Daily Herald" of November 28, 1905; the Y.P.S.C.E. topic card for July 1906; church calendars from January to July, 1906, containing a list of the organizations and the officers of the church; the names of the Building Committee, architect and superintendent of construction; Presbyterian Handbook for the year 1906; copy of "The Westminster" (July 21; the "Norristown Daily Herald," the "Norristown Daily Times," of July 21, 1906; photograph of the present chapel building; program of the exercises held yesterday afternoon; the new Presbyterian hymnal; 50th anniversary calendar; copy of "The Presbyterian" of May 2, 1906; a complete copy of the Roll of Communicants from the period of organization to the present time.

The service was opened with singing, followed by a responsive reading in which all joined. Rev. Richard Montgomery, stated clerk of the Presbytery of Philadelphia North and pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Ashbourne, who was present as a special guest, offered prayer. After another hymn and the reciting of the Apostles Creed, the church choir, led by Miss Ida Rynick, sang the "Jubilate Deo,"

Then the purpose for which the assemblage was gathered was performed. Advancing with a trowel in his hand the Rev. Mr. Crawford read from the ritual passages for such an occasion. Following this he tapped the stone with the trowel and the formality of laying the corner-stone was completed.

The address followed. It was delivered by Rev. Mr. Montgomery who on behalf of the sixty Presbyterian Churches comprising the Presbytery of Philadelphia North, tendered their congratulations to the Central Presbyterian congregation on the important epoch in the latter's history. He spoke of the significance of Christ's words in reference to "destroying the temple and rebuilding it again." He asserted that if the building just being commenced shall be of value the congregation worshipping there must themselves by "Living temples." He spoke of the location of the church in the residential section of the town and predicted for it a rapid growth in membership.

Rev. Thomas R. Beeber, D.D., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, who was to have been present, was detained at home on account of illness. Through Mr. Crawford he expressed to the congregation his regret at not being able to be present and sent his best wishes and congratulations.

Rev. A.C. Thompson, pastor of the Trinity Reformed Church, and Rev Benoni Bates, pastor of Christ

Reformed Church, occupied seats on the platform, the former pronouncing the benediction.

Dr. John W. Loch, who has been an elder for many years, but has been an invalid for some time, witnessed the ceremony from a carriage drawn up on Airy Street close to the site. This incident was a pleasing one to the many who knew him.

Abraham Gerhart, another elder, and one who witnessed the laying of the corner-stone of the first Central Church building, occupied a seat on the platform. Mr. Gerhart also took part in the ground breaking ceremony for this church edifice.

From the 1907 Norristown Daily Herald. . . .

THE NEW CENTRAL

This Presbyterian Edifice Nearly Completed.

An Illustration and a Description of the Building, Fixtures, Etc.— Brief History of the Church—When Founded, Etc.

The Central Presbyterian Church, now approaching completion at the corner of Stanbridge and Airy streets, will be a splendid addition to that part of the town, architecturally, for even now, in its unfinished condition, it shows that it will mark a different style in the work of the architect from the other handsome and massive edifices for public worship already in that section.

The building, with tower incomplete, rears its head above the surrounding edifices, and when that is complete, the finials are set and the spire constructed, it will be seen from a long distance, and be a landmark for miles around.

Ground was broken for it May 8th, 1906, with appropriate ceremonies, and the corner-stone laid on Sunday, July 22nd.

The design of the building is taken from the early period of the English perpendicular Gothic and is planned with transepts, nave and choir. On account of the lack of depth on the lot the nave is shortened so that the plan forms a Greek instead of a Latin cross, as is usual in buildings of this style. The corner tower is surmounted by a spire which rises to the height of 130 feet.

The church proper is 48 feet in height, 76 feet in depth, 80 feet across the transepts, and seats 600 people comfortably.

The auditorium is entered by two doors leading to the tower vestibule, a porch vestibule on Stanbridge street nearest Main street, also from the pastor's study in the rear, and from the Sunday School. Besides the pastor's study there is a room for the choir.

The basement is reached by two spacious staircases, and is large and roomy.

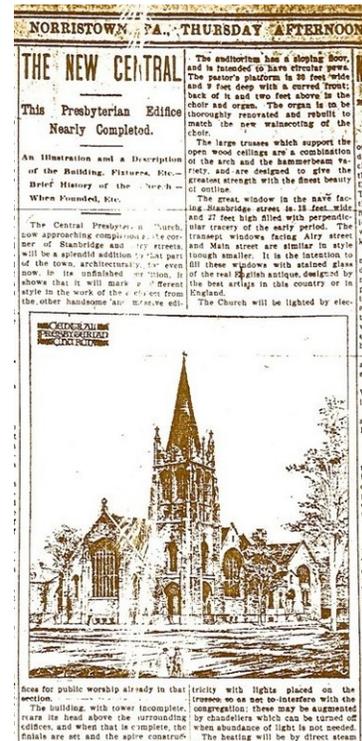
The auditorium has a sloping roof and is intended to have circular pews. The pastor's platform is 30 feet wide and 9 feet deep with a curved front; back of it, and two feet above is the choir and organ. The organ is to be thoroughly renovated and rebuilt to match the new wainscoting of the choir.

The large trusses which support the open wood ceilings are a combination of the arch and the hammer beam variety, and are designed to give the greatest strength with the finest beauty of outline.

The great window in the nave facing Stanbridge street is 18 feet wide and 27 feet high filled with perpendicular tracery of the early period. The transept windows facing Airy street and Main street are similar in style though small. It is the intention to fill these windows with stained glass of the real English antique, designed by the best artists in this country or in England.

The church will be lighted by electricity with lights placed on the trusses, so as not to interfere with the congregation; these may be augmented by chandeliers which can be turned off when abundance of light is not needed.

The heating will be by direct steam from a boiler placed in the Sunday school building.



It is hoped soon to be able to rebuild the Sunday school to harmonize with the church, enlarged and improved so as to accommodate many more class rooms.

The new structure will afford a place of worship for a congregation that celebrated its fiftieth anniversary during the week beginning Sunday, November 26, 1905, having severed its connection with the congregation now worshipping in the First Church building on August 19, 1855. The first recorded meeting of the congregation for the purpose of electing elders is November 28, 1855.

After meeting in Hill's Hall, on Airy street, for a time a lot was purchased from the Pawling estate, on Main street, between Swede and Cherry, for \$5750 and on August 9, 1856, the corner-stone of structure that cost about \$16,000 was laid, and the large and handsome brick plastered building was dedicated February 23, 1858, improved in 1869 and 1887, and occupied by the congregation until November 16, 1902, when they removed to the present site.

Article on the Dedication Service -- October 7, 1907

At 10:30 the services opened with an organ prelude by Miss Hannah Schultz, the organist, after which the congregation sang "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!" and read responsively the 24th Psalm. Hymn 100, "All People that on Earth Do Dwell," was sung, the Apostles' Creed was repeated by all, the choir and the congregation sang Gloria in Excelsis. After the invocation and the Lord's Prayer by all, the large choir, led by Miss Ida Rynick, sang the Te Deum in G., by Southwick, Miss Rynick, soprano; Mr. Thos. R. Middleton, tenor, and Mr. Howard A. Simpson singing the solo parts.

The dedication service followed. The pastor, J. Allen Crawford, sent up the prayer of consecration, a hymn was sung, and after the usual Sunday announcements, the pastor, in a few words, told of the movement to erect the splendid edifice the congregation worshipped in to-day for the first time, a movement he gave the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor and the Women's League the credit for, but for which he should have the honor.

The thank offering of the morning amounted to over \$2700.

The beautiful offertory "Salome" was rendered by Miss Hanna Schultz.

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At the Sunday school rally in the afternoon, the auditorium was again filled, many friends of the church from other churches being present. The exercises were interesting, and the address by Rev. John B. Laird, D.D., of Frankford, Philadelphia; was listened to attentively, and while humorous was full of instruction for scholar, teacher and church member.

William J. Clark sang a beautiful tenor solo and Prof. Walter S. Geller gave a splendid trombone solo, "Dream On, Dear Heart, Dream On."

The edifice, architecturally, is different from any other in our town, and looms up, with its spire, the beautiful lines of which carry the eye up over the massive cut stone work, to its apex, and is a landmark for miles around.

Ground was broken for it May 8, 1906, with appropriate ceremonies, and the corner-stone laid on Sunday, July 22nd, the same year.

The design of the building is taken from the early period of the English perpendicular Gothic, and is planned with transepts, nave and choir. On account of the lack of depth on the lot the nave is shortened so that the plan forms a Greek instead of a Latin cross, as is usual in building of this style. The corner tower is surmounted by a spire which rises to the height of 130 feet.

The church proper is 48 feet in height, 76 feet in depth, 80 feet across the transepts, and seats 600 people comfortably.

The auditorium is entered by two doors leading to the tower vestibule, a porch vestibule on Stanbridge street nearest Main street, also from the pastor's study in the rear, and from the Sunday School. Besides the pastor's study there is a room for the choir.

The basement is reached by two spacious staircases, and is large and roomy and cemented all over and is well calculated for entertainment.

The auditorium has a sloping floor, and semi-circular pews. The pastor's platform is 30 feet wide and 9 feet deep with a curved front; back of it and two feet above are the choir and organ. The organ, the Grand Hook & Hastings that did such splendid service in the old church has been thoroughly renovated and rebuilt to match the new wainscoting of the choir.

The large trusses which support the open wood ceilings are a combination of the arch and the hammer beam variety, and are designed to give the greatest strength with the finest beauty of outline.

The great window in the nave facing Stanbridge street is 18 feet wide and 17 feet high filled with perpendicular tracery of the early period. The transept windows facing Airy street and Main street are similar in style though smaller. These windows are filled with beautiful and appropriate designs in stained glass of the real English antique, designed by Nicholas D'Ascenzo, and are fully described below.

The church is lighted by electricity with lights placed on the trusses, so as not to interfere with the congregation.

The heating is by direct steam from a boiler placed in the Sunday school Building.

The building cost a trifle over \$43,000, while the windows and other leaded glass caused an expenditure of close to \$5000 more.

The rock faced blue marble from the Schweyer quarries near King-of-Prussia, laid in long lines, range work, it is called; with the embellishment of cut stone work by Sullivan, laid by Joseph Evans, carried out the plans of Architect Edward T. Boggs in a manner that makes a massive edifice.

The mill work, and there was much of it out of the ordinary, from the tracery in the beautiful cathedral glass emblematic windows, through to the open rafters with their hammer beam effects, was furnished by the Grater-Bodey Company and erected by Frank R. Heavner, under the supervision of James A. Hurst, who looked after the details. The painting and glazing outside the stained glass is the work of Joseph T. Lawless, while the slating of the wide expanse of roof and the spire is the handiwork of Alfred Smith; the tinning, leading and copper work being in the hands of Neiman & Frey, who also furnished the unique hardware.

The organ was rebuilt by its makers, Hook & Hastings, and outside the windows is the most striking feature of the church. George M. Detwiler did the difficult plastering and the little ornamenting there is in the edifice, while the effective heating is the work of the J. Frank Boyer P. & H. Co. The symmetrical finials that top the tower are from the Quaker City Terra Cotta Co., and the iron work from Gehret Bros., of Bridgeport. The floor was carpeted by John Wanamaker, a rich shaded brown that harmonizes with the interior, and the pews were furnished by D.Y. Mowday, a member of the church for nearly 50 years. Crisman & Quillman had the electrical contract and their work is effective and beautiful. While seemingly a little item this excavating was necessary before the work could be started, and Jonathan Grisdale did this well and he also put the finishing touches outside by doing the sodding.

The building committee who have had charge of the erection of the edifice are: George W. Shearer, chairman; Elmer E. Beideman, secretary; Walter R. Moyer, A Markley Harry, B. Landis Gabel, Isaac C. Weber, Ellwood J. Wanner.

The officers of the church are: Rev. John Allen Crawford, pastor; elders Abraham Gearhart, Montgomery Evans, Esq., John W. Loch, Ph. D., John E. Finley, Howard Wonsettler; trustees, Issac C. Weber, president; Geo. W. Shearer, secretary; Walter R. Moyer, treasurer; Montgomery Evans, Ellwood J. Warner, A. Markley Harry, Johnson B. Strine, M. Landis Gabel, Charles I. Christman.

In the evening the electrical lighting scheme showed the church to great advantage, none shining in the eyes of the congregation. The edifice was soon filled and by 7:30 the aisles were filled with chairs.

Rev. W.H. Roberts, D. D. Ph.D., moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, preached a powerful sermon, taking as his text "The Presbyterian Church and Our Country."

After acknowledging gracefully, the compliment paid him by the pastor, expressing his pleasure at having the honor to assist in the events of the great day of the church, congratulating the pastor and congregation on the beautiful building, he began his address.

He referred to the Presbyterian Church as a strong church, a church of the pews, of the people, a church in which the laity have an equal voice with the clergy in the guidance and welfare. He called attention to the strength of the Scotch Church from which many came to this country in the years past.

Both the church and the nation had strong influence on the welfare of the people, and both stand for more in our country than any other.

He gave many historical facts in the life of the church that stood for strength and progress and told how the Presbyterian Church was always in the forefront in mission work, and was the pioneer in revival work as well, and stood out strongly for spirituality, and has always been first in its fidelity to truth.

He closed in a fervent and impressive manner that showed his strength as an orator and savior of souls for the kingdom of Christ.

The musical service was again very fine, the choir rendering, "Sing and Rejoice," the tenor solo being sung by Mr. Boord, Thos. R. Middleton sang sweetly the tenor solo "Abide with Me," Miss Ida Rynick taking the soprano, Mr. Howard A. Simpson the basso and Mr. Benj. F. Evans the baritone parts.

After the sermon the choir rendered "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," with violin obbligato by Prof. Walter S. Geller, Miss Rynick soprano singing the solo.

The services will continue every night this week excepting Saturday, to-night being given over to greetings from the Presbytery of Philadelphia North and a splendid musical program will be rendered.

The beautiful English Cathedral glass windows were much admired. There are three very large ones, the one on the Stanbridge street front having seven panels while those on the Airy and Main street sides each have five.

The central figure of the main window is Jesus, a beautiful study, and is in memory of Sarah S. Derr. Mark is in the immediate left and is a memorial to Allen and Ann Evans; Matthew is to the left of Mark and is to commemorate the memory of the church and is contributed by J. Evans and Ann Matilda Isett; Paul adjoins and in memory of Charles P. and Rebeca Harry, than whom there were no more ardent workers for the Central Presbyterian Church, was contributed by their sons and daughters, two of whom are just as deeply interested in the welfare of the church as were their parents. To the right of Jesus, come Luke, a memorial to Franklin Derr by his daughter Mrs. Holmes, another lover of the church. John next is the donation of a friend, while Peter is in memory of Ann Evans.

On each side of this main window are two small and beautiful ones, Jude to the memory of Catherine Watt and James the Blessed, to William Watt, a contribution from their son George.

The Main street window is embellished with one central figure, Isaiah, that being to the memory of William McDermott, who did so much in the life for the Central Church, a memorial from his devoted wife. The panel to the extreme left is to the memory of Virginia Catherine Gable, by her parents Mr. and Mrs. B. Landis Gabel. Mrs. Ellen S. Derr, who was a leader of the women for many years is remembered by her children. David Watt, a devoted and conscientious member during life has a memorial from his sister and the remaining one is still to be taken.

The Airy street window like the one on the Main street side has a central figure, Moses, and is a testimonial to the late pastor, recently deceased Rev. James D. Hunter. In this window is also a memorial to Rev. J. Lincoln Litch, who organized the Y.P.S.C.E., that body being the donors. The Sabbath School, and the late William W. Shelve who was preceptor of the school for 50 years, was gracefully remembered by the scholars before whom he stood for so long. One panel is still to be taken.

Class 13 of Mrs. Walter R. Moyer, several little girls, raised \$80 to place two pretty windows in the Main Street tower windows, while there are three pretty ones in the pastor's study. The ladies parlor also has three pretty windows, while the main tower is also beautifully embellished with the stained glass and the angel window over the organ excited much favorable comment.

The light diffused through the glass is mellow and pleasing and every one has a complimentary word for the beautiful work of art.