The Gilded Years

With a new church building, the prospects of the First Presbyterian Church in Alton began to change. The new church was as lovely as the former ones had been sparse and unattractive. But it was, as always, the spiritual renewal of the congregation that made the biggest improvement. In Norton's history, the event which he singles out for recording as the most important thing that happened in the history of the church between 1937 and 1880 was a revival.

> There have been many revivals in the history of this congregation; but the one most notable, for the character and standing of its converts, was that of the winter and spring of 1849. Value is not to be estimated by numbers, but by weight. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus was worth more to the Church and the world, than that of the whole three thousand on the day of Pentecost. The population of all our Western cities and villages is extremely fluctuating. That of Alton has ever been pre-eminently so. Hence the small permanent growth of this church notwithstanding the constant and large increase of members.[28]

Norton gave no clue as to whom he was remembering as being of character and standing, and it would be hard to tell from the session records which record several pages of new members being received in 1849 and many being baptized.

At any rate, the congregation increased until in 1853 it was necessary to enlarge the seven year-old church building. The only practical way to do that was to extend the audience room toward the front, taking over the steps and portico, to gain an additional 25 feet. The pleasing corinthian columns were lost. The change cost $2,500. In 1858 a new organ was purchased and its size made another change in the interior of the church necessary. The gallery was cut down and railed in and the barrel-shaped pulpit was replaced by a more roomy one which necessitated taking out the two front pews. Clearly the church was growing.

A. T. Norton resigned as of May 24, 1857, but served as supply preacher through June 1858. He was remembered for the next fifty years as the pastor who saved the Presbyterian Church in Alton by serving during its darkest hours. His own biography in his history book is too modest, but Charlotte Stetson tells more about Dr. Norton.

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[28]Norton, p. 174. That is, a total of 1066 members had joined by 1879 when his history was written.

> The Reverend Doctor Augustus T. Norton, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church from 1839 until 1859, is known as the "Father of Presbyterianism in Illinois." He founded more churches in Illinois, Kansas, and Missouri than any other individual of his time. His leadership and strong faith were renowned throughout the state. He published the state-wide Presbyterian Reporter for twenty three years and was involved in mission activities of the church. Born in Connecticut in 1808 he was an honors graduate from Yale. A friend of Benjamin Godfrey he served as a Monticello College trustee, Norton was a cousin of Theron Baldwin, first headmaster of Monticello. He died in Alton in 1884. At the age of 80, Norton wrote the two-volume History of the Presbyterian Church in Illinois.[29]

If A.T. Norton served the First Presbyterian Church through some of the darkest times in the history of Alton, his successor served during the darkest times in the history of the nation. The Rev. Cornelius Hector Taylor make his trial appearance in Alton on Sunday, February 7, 1858 and was later installed on Thursday evening, July 1. He was 37 years old at the time.

"In June, 1859, the first year in Dr. Taylor's ministry, a mission work was undertaken in the eastern portion of our city, familiarly called from a well known citizen, "Hunter's Town." Then, as now, this region was almost exclusively German. this work was inaugurated as a union work, under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association, now extinct, and was opened in the old Methodist Church, and after several moves, was held in Weigler's Hall, on Second street, east of Henry. Largely at first, and more as the work progressed, the labor and expense were drawn from this church. The enterprise grew, till after ten years it is said to have numbered 400 persons in attendance and it appeared to its leaders that a large and permanent building was required. Accordingly, about 1868, a site was purchased on Henry street, and a large and commodious building was erected, at a cost of some $4000, which was further enlarged in 1869. When, in 1870, the Congregational Church was organized, they acquired the proprietorship of this building and made it the nucleus of their enterprise."[30]

The most traumatic events that took place during Taylor's ministry were related to the war of 1860 to 1865. Alton was a point of activity and no doubt of tension. The Mississippi River was not wide enough to keep raiders from crossing in both directions. Men were being recruited to march to war. The underground railroad was ferrying

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[29]Stetson, p. 43.

[30]From a sermon by Dr. C. S. Armstrong during the Semi-Centennial, in the Proceedings, pp. 105-106.



This is presumed to be a contemporary photograph of Dr. Cornelius Taylor after he left Alton for Cincinnati. Taylor was pastor during the turbulent years of the Civil War, and ministered in the infested Confederate Prison in Alton.

freed slaves away as fast as possible and then recruiting some of them once they got to Illinois for the army of the Union. The pastor's life must have been severely impacted by this.

> "The presence of a garrison, military prison, hospitals, and the suffering and sorrow incidental to a condition of active and prolonged hostilities, made continuous demands on time, means and sympathies. Under such circumstances, what must have been the expansion of mind and heart!" So remembered Edward P. Wade in his speech at the Semi-centennial of the church.[31]

Taylor was especially remembered for his help during a fire at the Baptist Church one Sunday morning.

After the awful war between the states, it seemed, the Church could get back to the agenda that had galvanized their efforts before. There was immense rebuilding to be accomplished in the southern states, but even more rebuilding of programs that had been allowed to lapse dangerously.

All across the country churches picked up the challenges they had let slide in "saving the union." In North and South alike the issues of temperance and Sabbath remained. But it now seemed to many Protestants that there was a new danger to the project of building a Christian civilization as a light in the world.

"Of the well over thirteen million immigrants who came into the country from the end of the Civil War to the beginning of the twentieth century, it was the Catholic element that especially troubled the Protestants. Particularly as the tide swept increasingly from southern and eastern Europe after 1880, bringing in some two and a half million Catholics in two decades, did the threat to the Protestant character of America stimulate sharp anxieties in many evangelical leaders."[32] Some of the rhetoric of the times sounded plainly racist. For instance, to a vast gathering of church leaders called by the Evangelical Alliance in 1887, H. H. Boyesen ranted, "I have, during the past year, again and again seen the Battery Park black with these creatures (in fact, preternaturally black), and the odors which surrounded them turned the milk of human kindness within me, and made me marvel at the heedless hospitality of the American nation, which was willing to mingle this coarse and brutal strain in their own fresh and vigorous blood."[33] Boyesen was protesting the immigration of people from Italy and

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[31]Printed in the Proceedings of the of Semi-Centennial, p. 26.

[32]Handy, p. 65.

[33]H. H. Boyesen, "Immigration," National Perils and Opportunities: The Discussions of the General Conference, held in Washington, D.C.,...1887, under the Auspices and direction of the Evangelical Alliance (New York, 1887), p. 60.

Sicily. Probably not less racist, but more positive, was the program of the Presbyterian Church in response to its fear of the influx of Chinese on the Pacific Coast. The Church asked that "mission work among them be prosecuted with unceasing vigor, so that their coming among us may not occasion harm to American society, morals, and civil institutions, and that their conversion, by the blessing of God, to the Christian faith may be followed by their consecration to the work of evangelizing their native land."[34] The idea was to swiftly convert the Chinese to the Protestant agenda so that civilization -- meaning such moral values as temperance, love of education, respect for law and order, keeping the Sabbath, and the ten commandments -- might be accomplished. It was not apparent that the battle for civilization and Christianity would be fought largely overseas and in American cities. America was pictured as having a time not far distant, when the nation would have a population of one hundred million, "without an adulterer, or a swearer, or a Sabbath-breaker, or an ingrate, or an apostate, or a backslider, or a slanderer; hundreds of thousands of homes without a prodigal, a quarrel, or a heart-burn, or a bitter tear."[35]

During the second half of the nineteenth century the strategies developed in the first half of the century were refined and expanded. Principally, the device of united societies across denominational lines was employed.

> The earliest societies were local and regional missionary societies devoted to establishing churches. [Such a society established the churches in Alton]. Other societies serviced the mission enterprise -- Bible and tract societies furnished necessary literature, Sunday school societies provided religious instruction for children, and education societies established colleges and seminaries to supply trained missionary personnel and pastors. Societies became so numerous and varied that Orestes Brownson complained that "matters have come to such a pass that a peaceable man can hardly venture to eat or drink, to go to bed or get up, to correct his children or kiss his wife" without the guidance and sanction of some society. The voluntary society...was an instrument for quick and concerted action by concerned individuals with no need to wait until some official body could be persuaded to act. [Furthermore,] Members of a society might be divided on other issues but on this single issue they could unite. [Before the war] the whole voluntary society apparatus launched a great "saturation" campaign to save the Mississippi valley and thus save the nation. The goal was a Bible for every family, a Sunday school in every neighborhood, a pastor in every locality, and tracts in abundance.[36]

[34]Minutes of the General Assembly, 1876, pp. 58-59.

[35]Handy, p. 70.

After the war, with more than 800 Presbyterian and Congregational churches in Illinois alone, the strategy was turned on the new frontiers. Home mission societies were organized nationally, especially by women. "More attention was given in the records of the national conventions of the evangelical denominations to missions than to any other single topic. This was also the period of the rapid organization and spread of the women's boards of foreign missions. By 1880 women constituted fifty-seven per cent of the active missionary force, many of them serving under the direct administration of the women's boards, which proved to be highly effective in publicizing the missionary cause and raising money for it."[37] In every church, including First Presbyterian Church, missionary societies were organized. Circles sewed, cooked, saved and sent boxes and money to support mission enterprises. During the period of the later 1800's the particular field of interest for First Church was Home Missions.

Similarly, women renewed the temperance crusade, which was marked by the organization of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1874. The northern Presbyterians found in 1875 that there was "unusual" interest in the cause throughout the church. Two years later the Assembly recorded, "With profound gratitude and joy to God, we record the increased interest and activity everywhere apparent in the cause of Temperance; we hail the revival of interest in this subject as only another manifestation of the quickened concern in all things, religious and moral, with which God is baptizing our land. Already hundreds of thousands have taken the pledge of total abstinence."

These, then, were the big movements of the late nineteenth century: the Sunday School movement, the temperance movement, the home missions movement, and the foreign missions movement. Almost every Protestant church had societies, classes, and special days devoted to these movements.

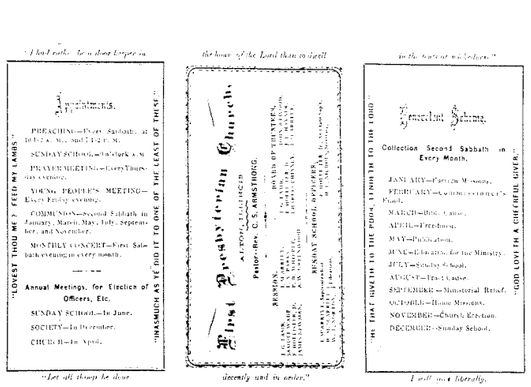
C. Solomon Armstrong was elected April 16, 1869 to succeed Cornelius Taylor who had resigned March 1868 to become pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati. The church membership stood at 242 at the close of Rev. Taylor's pastorate.

[36]Winthrop S. Hudson, Religion in America, Fourth Ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), pp. 143, 146.

[37]Handy, p. 72.

One of the relics in the archives of the church from the time of Rev. Armstrong is a folder, obviously to publicize the work of the church. A list of "Monthly Concerts" is included which lists:

January, Foreign Missions, Arba Nelson, Chairman.
February, Temperance, John A. Cousley, Chairman.
March, Bible Cause, E. P. Wade, Chairman.
April, Freedmen, James Newman, Chairman.
May, Publication, J. G. Lamb, Chairman.
June, Education of Ministry, H. L. Nichols, Chairman.
July, Foreign Missions.
August, Tract Cause, P. B. Whipple, Chairman.
September, Ministerial Relief, Samuel Wade, Chairman.
October, Home Missions, L. A. Parks, Chairman.
November, Church Erection, E. Hollister, Jr., Chairman.
December, Sunday Schools, Isaac Scarritt, Chairman.


"I had rather be a door keeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Appointments.

PREACHING—Every Sabbath, at 10:30 A. M., and 7:30 P. M.

SUNDAY SCHOOL—at 9 o'clock A. M.

PRAYER MEETING—Every Thursday evening.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MEETING—Every Friday evening.

COMMUNION—Second Sabbath in January, March, May, July, September, and November.

MONTHLY CONCERT—First Sabbath evening in every month.

Annual Meetings, for Election of Officers, Etc.

SUNDAY SCHOOL—In June.

SOCIETY—In December.

CHURCH—In April.

"LOVEST THOU ME? FEED MY LAMBS."

"INASMUCH AS YE DID IT TO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE."

First Presbyterian Church.

ALTON, ILLINOIS.

Pastor—Rev. C. S. ARMSTRONG.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

DEACONS.

"Let all things be done decently and in order."

"I will run the way of thy commandments."

Concert Scheme.

Collection Second Sabbath in Every Month.

JANUARY—Foreign Missions.

FEBRUARY—Temperance.

MARCH—Bible Cause.

APRIL—Freedmen.

MAY—Publication.

JUNE—Education for the Ministry.

JULY—Sunday Schools.

AUGUST—Tract Cause.

SEPTEMBER—Ministerial Relief.

OCTOBER—Home Missions.

NOVEMBER—Church Erection.

DECEMBER—Sunday School.

"GOD LOVETH A CHEERFUL GIVER."

"HE THAT GIVETH TO THE POOR, LENDETH TO THE LORD."

A "Benevolent Scheme" also announced a "Collection Second Sabbath in Every Month" which listed these same causes, except that in July the collection was for Sunday Schools (as it was also in December) rather than a second collection in the year for Foreign Missions.

The church program was also busy. There was preaching every sabbath at 10:30 A.M., and 7:30 P.M. Sunday School at 9 o'clock A.M. Prayer Meeting every Thursday evening. Young People's Meeting every Friday evening. Monthly Concert first Sabbath evening in every month. And two societies, the Mission and the Aid Society.

In 1869 the Old School-New School split was healed. A special offering was taken to celebrate the great reunion, which included such things as building new churches and buying manses. A goal of five million dollars was set, but ten million were raised. The chairman of the national committee was Winthrop S. Gilman, who had left Alton in the dark days of the depression following Lovejoy's death. The Alton church contributed a manse at the cost of $4000 to the memorial drive.

In 1870 three things happened that were of great significance. First of all the Congregational Church on Henry Street, called at the time "the Church of the Redeemer" was formed. It was made up of members who had chosen to withdraw from First Presbyterian Church, as the Congregationalist movement began to attract people throughout the Mid-west who had been in churches that formerly had been Plan of Union churches, in which both Presbyterians and Congregationalists participated. Forty-eight members were dismissed, which included, Norton reports, half the financial ability of the church.

> Though never rich, the benevolence of this congregation has been so sedulously cultivated and so largely developed that during the whole of Mr. Nortons and Mr. Taylors administrations, its offerings for benevolence causes, outside of itself, were larger than any other Presbyterian Church in the State, except one or two in Chicago. Content with a modest inexpensive house of worship, it supported its pastors well, and gave largely to all benevolent causes, especially Home Missions.[38]

It was this legacy, it seems, that Norton regretted losing. As for the incumbent pastor, Rev. Armstrong, he was "grieved," he said, "not bitter." Nevertheless, as a result of the fact that the Congregational Church was organized, teachers and workers connected with the Hunter's Town mission were freed to find another field. They settled on the northwest part of the city called in those days Sempletown to start a State Street Mission. Subsequently, a site was selected and a chapel was erected. The $2000 that was expended was added to the Memorial offering, along with the $4000 for the manse. A revival in the year 1870 was a signal of greater revivals to come.

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[38]Norton, p. 174.

The Presbyterian.

PUBLISHED BY THE ALTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

Vol. 1. Alton, Ill., June, 1887. No. 1.

Church Services.

Public Preaching—Every Sabbath at 10:45 a m, and 7:30 p m.
Sabbath School—At 9:10 a m.
Young People's Meeting—Every Sabbath at 6:45 p m.
Prayer Meeting—Every Thursday evening at 7:30.
Teachers' Meeting—Every Friday at 7:30 p m.
The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be administered at 3:30 p m of the second Sabbath of January, March, May, July, September and November.
Baptism of Adults—At communion.
Baptism of Infants—The Sabbath after communion.

Church Officers.

Pastor—Rev. A. T. Wolff, D. D., residence, corner of State and Bond streets.
Elders—P. B. Whipple, E Hollister, J. A. Cousley, O. S. Stowell, T. L. Fansler, S. R. McClure.
Board of Trustees—Samuel Pitts, J. K. Butler, Joseph Hamill, O. S. Stowell, T. L. Fansler, S. R. McClure, C. A. Schlenter, George H. Smiley, C. S. Leech.

Sabbath School.

Superintendent—John A Cousley.
Assistant Superintendent—O S Stowell.
Secretary—John Duncan.
Treasurer—Frank Taylor.
Librarian—Fred Johnston.
Ass't. Librarian—James Montgomery.
Teachers—Rev. A. T. Wolff Mrs. E P. Wade, Miss M Rutherford, Ed Hollister, Mrs O S Stowell, S R McClure, Mrs P B Whipple, Miss Anna Nisbett, Mrs. J K Butler, Mrs S J Duncan, T L Fansler, Mrs H G Williams, Miss Florence Whipple, C B Stanton, Miss L Juesting, Percy L Betts, Mrs Cousley, Robert C Cousley, C H W Beecher, J Z S Haywood, O S Stowell Mrs E B Clarkson, Miss Alice Quigley. Primary teacher, Miss Mary McClure.
Officers and teachers, 29.
Scholars enrolled, 225.
Scholars in primary department, 125.
Total scholars, 350.

North Alton Sabbath School,

Superintendent—T L Fansler.
Ass't Superintendent—O S Stowell.
Secretary and Treasurer—Miss Sarah Davis.
Teachers—E P Wade, J L Long J A Cousley, Mrs J L Long, S R McClure, Mrs Soloman, Edgar Hollister, Miss Carrie Mather, O S Stowell.

This school occupies the neat Mission property of the Presbyterian church. About 150 scholars are enrolled, the school has a fine organ, and is self-supporting, is well supplied with books and papers, and doing excellent work. The session of the Presbyterian church has procured the services of Mr. James D McCaughtry, of Wooster University, a most excellent and devoted christian young man, who will preach in the Mission this summer. The people will find him wide awake and able, as well as a most genial gentleman, and we bespeak for him a warm welcome. Mr. McCaughtry will begin his work the second Sabbath in June, and will preach until the first of October.

Choir.

Chorister—F L Taylor.
Organist—Miss Minnie Wade.
Soprano—Miss Jessie Topping.
Alto—Miss Anna Nisbett.
Tenor—Frank L Taylor.
Basso—E M Smart.

Young Ladies' Missionary Society.

President—Miss Mary J McClure.
Vice President—Miss Mary Rutherford.
Secretary—Miss Maggie Ferguson.
Treasurer—Miss Lizzie Duncan.
Collectors—Misses Sadie Rutherford, Nellie Houston.
The society meets once a month, the first Tuesday, at 2 p m. The society also works for the church, co-operating with Ladies' Sewing Society.

The Woman's Missionary Society.

President—Mrs P B Whipple.
Vice President—Mrs S A Duncan.
Secretary—Mrs J K Butler.
Treasurer—Mrs H Williams.
The society contributes to Home and Foreign Missions, and meets the third Friday each month at 2 p m. Annual meeting is the third Friday in March. The annual Praise meeting will be held the fourth Sabbath in May of each year.

Report of Our Church.

The following is the report of Alton Presbyterian church for the year ending April 1, 1887:
Elders—Six.
Members—Added on examination, 16; by certificate, 4; total number communicants, 233.
Baptisms—Adults, 9; infants, 1.
Sabbath school membership, 514.
Finances—Contributed for home missions, $193; for foreign missions, $214; for education, $18; for publication, $12; for ministerial relief, $20; for church erection, $18; for freedmen, $17; aid for colleges, $20; general assembly, $25.05; congregational expenses, $3,293; miscellaneous, $50. Total contributions for the year, $3,880.05.

The Ladies' Sewing Society.

The officers last year were:
President—Mrs Matthews.
Vice President—Mrs McKinney.
Secretary—Mrs Wright.
Treasurer—Mrs Carey.
There have been some new officers elected, but we failed to get their names. This is a real working society, which meets every two weeks for work, and the proceeds of sales amount to a large sum of money, which is devoted to church purposes.

Childrens' Hymn—To-Day.

S. L. CUTHBERT.

TUNE—"Christmas," or "Coronation."

Within thy temple gates to day,
Oh Lord, our Savior, King;
We come to praise Thee and to pray,
And joyfully to sing.

We thank Thee for Thy love to-day,
That makes salvation free;
So that each one of us may say,—
"The Savior died for me."

What can we do, dear Lord, to-day,
To show our love for Thee?
The debt so great, we cannot pay,
Thy servants let us be.

Yes, we will serve Thee from to-day,
Until Thy face we see;
And then, what joy to hear Thee say,—
"Come home, dear child, to me."

With harps of gold on that glad day,
Within the holy place;
Our songs of love and praise we'll pay,
And see Thee, face to face.

PITTSBURG, PA., April 18, 1887.

Do you honor God in your homes? If you have no family altar erect one immediately.

THERE are several members of this church who do not attend Sabbath school. Better start in next Sabbath.

A sign of the church's prosperity is indicated in the first edition of the newspaper the church published in 1887.

In the fall and winter of 1873-4 there was a revival more general and widespread, perhaps, than any other in the whole period. It has often been designated as "the Hammond work," and it is believed more than 1000 souls in Alton and its suburbs were converted. Eighty-one were received at one communion at the Presbyterian Church, and other churches also received large numbers. Predictably there was some agitation to build a new church. But that was prevented by a yet another national economic depression. Instead, the brick building was remodeled.

> The pulpit was removed to the west end directly before and in line of the singers platform. Some ornamental work was introduced on either side of the organ for effect. New seats displaced the old pews and gave a center aisle and two side aisles. A door at the northeast corner was introduced for the benefit of modest and late comers [since the main entrance was now at the front of the church] Pointed windows of ground and colored glass took the place of the original square sash, and new carpets were purchased and the walls repapered. This made the interior presentable, but no amount of twisting and squirming could mitigate the increasing noise of the neighborhood or the fixed ugliness of the front of the building....[39]

Norton reports that the renovation resulted in a debt which caused no little aggravation to the congregation until it was finally retired in 1879. The First Presbyterian Church has never been glad to be in any debt, and has sometimes avoided it to its own detriment. Mr. Armstrong was sorry to have missed the critical meetings when the decision was made to renovate rather than relocate, but he was away at the Assembly. The renovation cost $4000, and the church was rededicated October 17, 1875. Dr. Armstrong stayed five more years as pastor. He resigned in 1881 after the Semi-Centennial celebration.

The Rev. Thomas Gordon was called from Bellaire, Ohio to be the next pastor. Rev. Gordon was installed by the presbytery October 25. The State Street Mission school was reopened after being abandoned for lack of laborers for about a year. In 1884 a building was purchased in North Alton for a Sabbath School. Rev. Gordon was remembered for his having retired the debt of $1700 (which Norton says was retired the year before). He was also remembered for his remarkable descriptive powers, which included his ability at pen sketches. On January 2, 1886 Rev. Thomas Gordon resigned to move to the First Presbyterian Church of Middletown, New York.

During the interim two matters were brought to the session. First, a request was entertained that unfermented grape juice be used in place of wine (which must have been the practice for communion up to that time). Second, disgust was recorded that the church "...met with hindrances in the shape of certain amusements of a

[39]From the corner stone laying History, p. 17.

questionable nature, which have so engrossed the young as to diminish their interest in religious matters."

On September 8 a congregational meeting called the Rev. A. T. Wolff, D.D. by a unanimous vote. Dr. Wolff was the pastor at Paris, Illinois. He began his pastoral duties on December 1, 1886. He was remembered at the time of the corner stone laying as "an able preacher, popular in the pulpit, and attracted large audiences, especially to the evening service. He was a man of decided individuality and outspoken in his convictions, caring little who was hurt, if, in his judgment, the whole truth was needed to be spoken." Session notes include an entry of April 28, 1887 that the WCTU had first asked to take a collection, and that the clerk "was instructed to inform Miss Lewis that a collection will be taken in the month of May and that we desire a knowledge of what the society are doing and propose to do." In 1889 the matter of cards and dancing produced a letter to the congregation. Then on December 22, 1890 a note was sent by the session "expressing willingness to close whenever the Board of Health requests." The reasons were not listed, whether the cause might be an epidemic (which is most likely), or the condition of the building (which is not likely). Dr. Wolff resigned on May 31, 1891 and a resolution was passed which included a prayer of thanks for his fearless denunciations of sin.

In August, 1891 Rev. George W. Smith of Dubuque, Iowa, was tendered and accepted a call to the pastorate of the church and began his duties on October 1, 1891, the corner-stone History records. Actually, the election was held on September 3. During the next five years the membership rose from 282 to 396 and the Sunday School expanded from 321 in 1892 to 404 in 1895. The degree of Ph.D. was conferred on him by Shurtleff College. And Dr. Smith was called the best "sermonizer, whether breadth of thought, scholastic attainments and a thorough knowledge of the scriptures are considered, ever to fill the pulpit of the Presbyterian church, and the church has had a very high average along these lines." But, citing bad health and the unhealthy climate in Alton which exacerbated his condition, Dr. Smith resigned on December 1, 1896 to move to Princeton, Illinois.

At last the noise and commotion in downtown Alton got to be intolerable, along with the overcrowding in the auditorium. Trains and trollies ran down both sides of the church. A main street and major intersection added to the confusion. Not surprisingly for First Presbyterian Church, it was the women who first took action. Gilson Brown reminded the congregation of this in 1947.

> Let me remind you that as far back as 1885 the women of the Church began to lay plans for the erection of a building which they thought would be in keeping with the dignity of the congregation, and with the growth of the city. Under the direction of Mrs. Lucinda Matthews, who for fifty years was the President of the Aid Society, these women raised the first $600. In the early 90's the fund began to grow.[40]

At last the church was strong enough financially and the need was so pressing as to be undeniable. Plans were made for laying a cornerstone.

As early as 1891 the women had purchased a lot for $1,100 on the north west corner of Fourth and Alby for a church, and the lot next door was secured for a manse. Previously, when the First Presbyterian Church had needed a home it was the women who had raised the first funds to get the land to get the project started. This coincidence was remembered. Ben Vine writes, "By 1895-96 a firm decision had been reached to build a new church and it was agreed it should be built of local Ashler stone with Bedford, Indiana stone to be used for trim. Mr. Theodore Link of St. Louis had designed many prominent buildings including the St. Louis Union Station and the main building on Monticello campus. Mr. Link was invited to serve as architect for the new building. Mr. Henry Watson, an active member of the church, was named chairman of the building committee. Mr. Watson was a quarryman and he took great care to see that only stone of the very finest quality was selected and then diligently and critically supervised its laying and the final result was the most beautiful example of stone masonry the community has ever seen."[41] Plans were well underway for construction when Rev. Henry K. Sandborne of North Tonawanda, New York was called on February 4, 1897. He was installed on April 22. On June 15 plans for the cornerstone laying were agreed upon. The cornerstone was laid on Monday, July 5 at 8:30 A.M.

"The cost of the building was $26,000. The church at Broadway and Market had been sold for $8,500. Gifts and pledges received from 80 members brought the total funds available to $20,000 It is noteworthy that the first name on the pledge list was the Ladies' Aid Society for $1,000 and no other pledge equalled that amount. The day of dedication was Wednesday, December 8, 1897. A service was held at 2:30 p.m. on December 8, and Rev. W. H. Penhallegon of Decatur, was invited to conduct the

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[40]Gilson Brown, "The Gray Stone Church" on the night of the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Dedication of First Presbyterian Church, in the Minutes of the Session, Vol. 1944-1954, p. 94.

[41]Stetson reports that Henry Watson, originally a stonemason, owned several quarries. Watson's home was located near the quarry, although he later built a fine victorian style home on Alby Street. He did a hugh contracting business with the railroads, did the stone work on the St. Louis Union Depot, and built the Alton Water works in 1875. [A safe guess in 1989 is that it was Watson who nominated Theodore Link as the architect, having had much to do with him earlier].

Farewell Service

In the Old Church Building, Second and Market Sts., of the First Presbyterian Church, Alton, Ill., the Congregational Church uniting,

SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 1896, at 3 P.M.

1846 — 1896

ORDER OF SERVICE:

Organ Prelude.

Doxology and Invocation.

Hymn 575:

I love thy kingdom, Lord!
The house of thine abode,
The church our blest Redeemer saved
With his own precious blood.

I love thy church, O God!
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall;
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given
Till toils and cares shall end.

Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise.

Scripture Lesson.

Prayer.

Hymn 688:

Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend,
Life and health and peace possessing
From the sinner's dying Friend.

Here I'll sit for ever viewing
Mercy's streams in streams of blood;
Precious drops, my soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God.

Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the Lamb I gaze;
Love I much? I'm much forgiven;
I'm a miracle of grace.

Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears his feet I bathe;
Constant still in faith abiding,
Life deriving from his death.

Sermon, Rev. G. W. Smith, Ph.D., Pastor.

COMMUNION SERVICE:

Hymn 690:

O Bread to pilgrims given!
Richer than angels eat,
O Manna sent from heaven!
For heaven-born natures meet,
Give us, for thee long pining,
To eat till richly filled;
Till, earth's delights resigning,
Our every wish is stilled.

Jesus! this feast receiving,
We thee unseen adore;
Thy faithful word believing,
We take and doubt no more;
Give us, thou true and loving!
On earth to live in thee,
Then, death the veil removing,
Thy glorious face to see.

At the Table: { Rev. G. W. Smith, Ph.D. / Rev. J. H. J. Rice.

Elders and Deacons Distributing Elements:

Elder JOHN A. COUSLEY.
Elder O. S. STOWELL.
Elder JOSEPH HAMILL.
Deacon E. A. SMITH.
Elder SAMUEL R. McCLURE.
Elder J. K. BUTLER.
Elder A. M. JACKSON.
Deacon WILLIAM FLYNN.

Communicants' Offering.

Hymn 32:

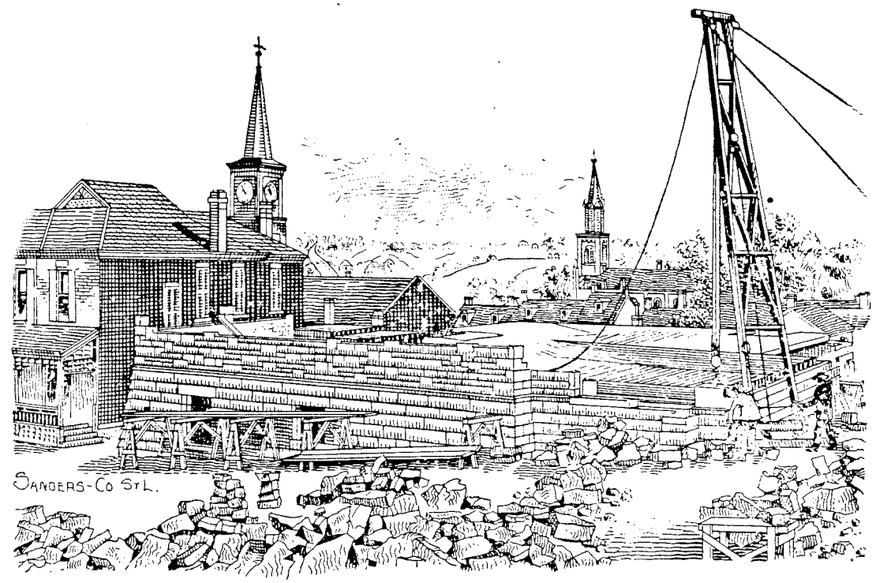
All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him—Lord of all.

Sinners! whose love can ne'er forget
The wormwood and the gall,
Go, spread your trophies at his feet,
And crown him—Lord of all.

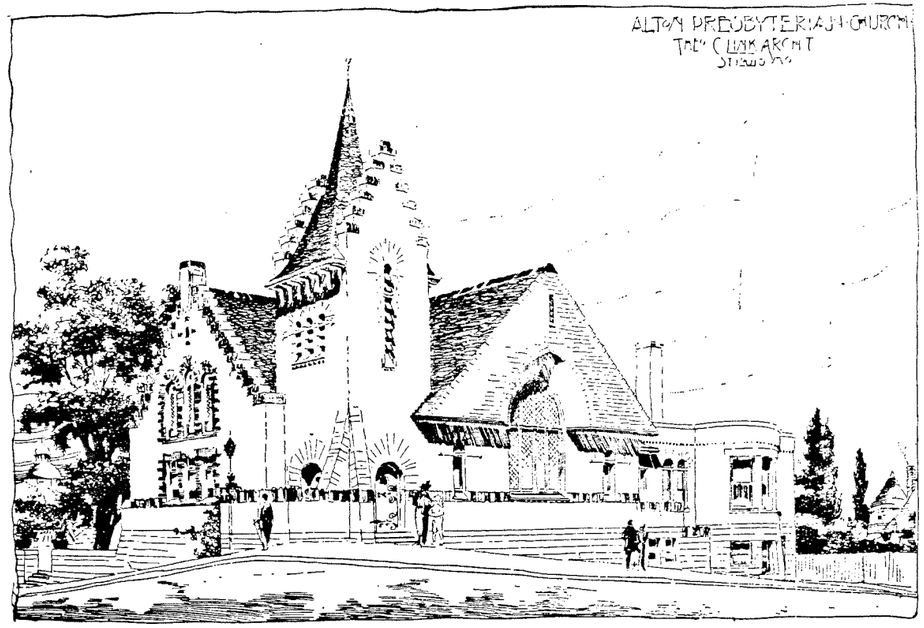
Let every kindred, every tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To him all majesty ascribe,
And crown him—Lord of all.

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng,
We at his feet may fall;
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown him—Lord of all.

Benediction.



Laying of the Corner Stone of the New Church, July 5, 1897.



evening service."[42] Rev. Penhallegon was remembered fifty years after the fact in Gilson Brown's address on the 50th anniversary of the occasion.

> Mr. E. G. Youngck tells us that Dr. Penhallegon had pulling powers which would make a modern tractor envious. He could lean over the pulpit and fairly extract money from peoples' pockets, and when the service was over, more than $6000 had been raised and the church was dedicated, free of debt.

Mr. Watson came forward and turned over the key to the debt-free edifice to Mr. Samuel Pitts, President of the Board of Trustees."[43]

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[42]From Ben C. Vine, "Historical Highlights," a speech presented at the 75th Anniversary of the Dedication of the present church building; the manuscript is in the church archives.

[43]From Ben C. Vine, "Historical Highlights."