



Reflections of Yesterday

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Historian

Heritage Sunday (May
15) provided an

opportunity to look back in time to an earlier era when we worshipped in another setting. The original pulpit and communion table were brought to our present location in 1928 when we vacated the downtown church. Originally our church was located on the northeast corner of West Michigan Avenue and McCamly Street. The building consisted of a Chapel, which was built in 1884, and the main church itself, which was built to fill the downtown corner in 1895-96.

It was just 110 years ago this June 20th, that the cornerstone of this earlier church building was laid. The following are excerpts from an article in the Battle Creek Daily Journal of June 20, 1896,

"The first copy of this evening's issue of the Journal will be placed in the copper box that is to be under the corner stone of the Presbyterian church. The laying of the corner stone occurs at 4 o'clock this afternoon. The pastor, Rev. W. S. Potter, will preside and the Rev. Dr. Hunting of Marshall will make the address. The First Presbyterian society of our city are to be congratulated upon their successful work done by them and by their energetic and capable pastor, Rev. W. S. Potter.

During the seven years that Rev. W. S. Potter has had charge of this church and society, there has been a steady and healthy growth, there now being about 325 members. . . .

The building committee are Dr. George A. Robertson, chairman; Edgar French, Dr. Rorabacher, E. L. North and John Munroe. This committee have been untiring in their work for the erection of the new church. The new structure will cost \$10,000 exclusive of the foundation which was about \$2,000; this with the furnishing and heating will make \$15,000, and with the chapel already built and the grounds the entire value will be when the edifice is completed from twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars."

The next day, the Daily Journal told of the program:

"The ceremony of laying the corner stone took place, conducted by the Rev. W. S. Potter, assisted by Morgan M. Lewis, the contractor, and Dr. Geo. A. Robertson, chairman of the Building Committee. The contents placed in the copper box deposited under the corner stone were as follows: Program of the exercises, Westminster Confession of Faith, Longer and shorter Catechisms, Form of Government and discipline of the Presbyterian church, all church manuals ever published by the church since its organization, names of all members of the church since its organization, names of present membership, Holy Bible, copy of the Battle Creek Presbyterian of December 1895, copy of the Battle Creek Daily Journal and of the Battle Creek Daily Moon of June 20, 1895, the City Government of Battle Creek, history of the church to date, a program of the General Assembly 1888-9, and a

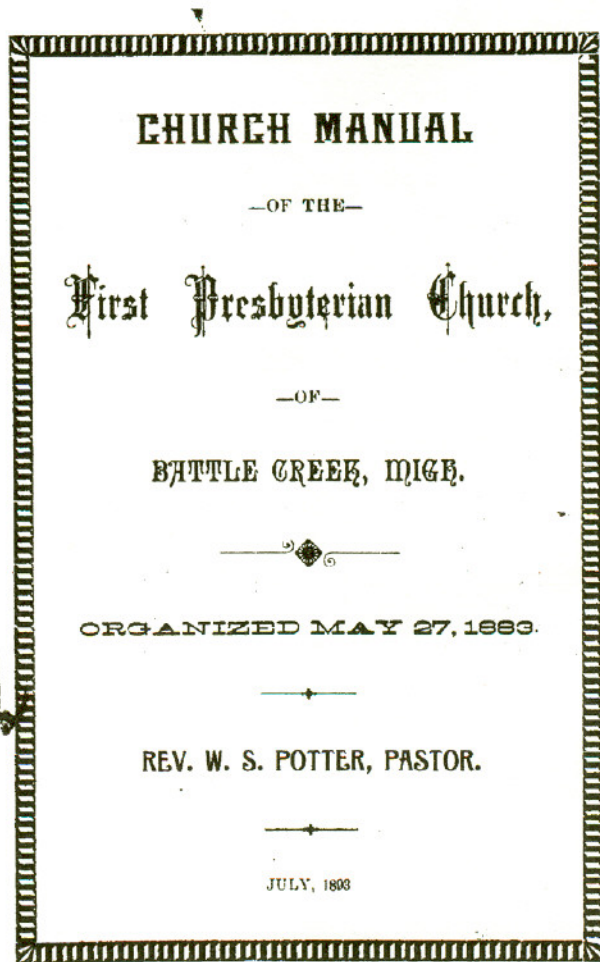
cabinet photo of the pastor, which an official of the church insisted should go in against the protests of the reverend gentlemen.

The stone which was a block of fine grayish blue oolite from the Bedford quarry, Indiana, and with the words "First Presbyterian Church, 1895," handsomely cut thereon, was then lowered into place by the contractor, M. M. Lewis, and an appropriate prayer by the Rev. Ralph Newman, Upton Avenue M. E. church, and the announcement of a hymn by the Rev. Jos. Reinicke of St. Paul's Evangelical church, rendered by the choir and congregation, and the benediction by the pastor of the church, closed the proceedings of a most interesting occasion."

When the old church was razed in 1928 to make way for a new J. C. Penney store, the old cornerstone and its accompanying copper box were brought to the new church.

The cornerstone was placed in the wall of the front ramp leading to the Tower addition entrance on the Farley side in 1985. The copper box which was opened in 1928, along with its contents are now safely stored in the Church archives.

(Note: A list of First Church 50+ year members is printed on page 9 of this issue.)



One of the Church Manuals found in the copper box of the Cornerstone. From the Church Archives