

History, First Methodist Church West Plains, Missouri

Year 1881

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, first organized in West Plains in 1881.

A Frame church building was first erected in 1883, corner of Webster and Missouri Avenue.

December 6, 1888, a new church building committee was set up.

Rev. Wm. B. North preached the first sermon in the new church building, corner of Missouri Avenue and West Main, on April 12, 1891, and used Matthew 16:18, for a text.

1929

After about 40 years, in 1929, a second and larger new church was built at the corner of Missouri Avenue and West Main Street, the present building, at a cost of about \$65,000.00.

Open house was held in the new building, June 8, 1930.

New building was "Dedicated" September 18, 1928.

The unified church was given the name "First Methodist Church", West Plains, and placed under the ministerial appointment and leadership of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Presiding Elders had supervision of the Church until 1939, when the title was changed to District Superintendent.

Also in 1939, the conference united and the St. Louis Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, became the St. Louis Conference of the Methodist Church.

On November 11, 1966, at the special General Conference session held in Chicago, our delegates voted to merge with the Evangelical United Brethren Church and form "The United Methodist Church."

At the Missouri East Annual Conference in June 14-17, 1965 it was voted to merge the Central West Conference with the other Conferences to eliminate any racial discrimination. All of these mergers are to be completed by a date in 1968.

It was on Wednesday, June 8, 1966, that the Official Board of First United Methodist Church, at the regular meeting, set up a special "Church History Committee" to bring the history of the local church up to date, since this year, 1966, was the 200th anniversary of the beginning of Methodism in America, and the Annual conference was calling the attention of the membership to the growth and progress of the Methodist Church throughout the Nation.

The Official Board appointed C.C. Smith, a member of the Board, as chairman and a committee of one to compile this local church history.

After about ten months of searching and work on the project, we have come up with a fairly accurate compilation of First Methodist Church History.

I want to give all due credit to the several people who so willingly cooperated and to the various sources of information to make this compilation of history fairly complete.

To Mrs. John (Hazel) Allen, now living in West Plains, daughter of the late Rev. Hartwell L. Taylor, Methodist minister for 28 years in the St. Louis Conference, for the use of Conference Minutes in her possession for the years 1905 to and including 1960.

To Rev. L. L. Johnston, formerly pastor of First Methodist Church, 1949-1951, for information from the Conference Minutes from 1887 to 1904, and some information from the years of 1912, 1913, 1914 and 1918.

To Central College Librarian, Fayette, Mo., for some information for earlier years before 1887.

To the Church School records of First Methodist Church; the record of old Quarterly Conference minutes, years 1887 to 1891; some official Board minutes of the church, for information about preparation to build the present new church.

To the records of the Howell County Recorder's office for legal location of the ground for the two different church plots.

To Senator (M.S.) Hogan, City Engineer of West Plains, for a plat of the city that shows the various additions to the City of West Plains.

To Mr. J. R. Martin, Sunday School Superintendent for 25 years, and a member of the Official Board of First Methodist Church for 27 or 28 years.

To Frank Thornburg, Earl Woodrel, Arthur Howell, Mrs. Charles R. Bohrer, and others for bits of information and leads to more information.

To Rev. Allen L. Vancil, present pastor of First Methodist for use of 1961 and 1962 Conference Minutes, and general assistance in collecting together the over-all information.

To Mrs. Fritz Williams Dixon, for time searching the old West Plains Quill files (her father was first owner and operator of West Plains Quill), for a copy of information from the West Plains Quill, date April 4, 1891, concerning the early church buildings.

To Mrs. Aubrey Foster, for a copy of the West Plains Weekly Journal, dated October 12, 1905, to read and copy some information concerning the First Methodist Church building in West Plains.

It has been interesting and enlightening project. A few details of information not available at present will be added as it is found.

March 29, 1967. C. C. Smith, Historian

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South was first organized in West Plains in the year 1881, and a frame building was erected in 1883, on the corner where Webster Avenue enters Missouri Avenue, on south side of Webster.

"According to Frank Thornburg, as told to him by his mother, Mrs. A. H. Thornburg, wife of the long-time doctor in West Plains, the late Dr. A. H. Thornburg, the first church building of the Methodist Church, South was located at the present corner of Webster Avenue and Franklin Avenue (west border of Franklin and south border of Webster)".

However, a warantee deed, recorded in the Howell County records Book K, page 86, June 18, 1884, shows as of date August 3, 1893, that O.H.P. Catron and M. E. Catron, his wife, sold to M. E. Church, South, for consideration of \$1.00, church trustees, S. J. Langston, John T. Pool, David Brooks, James K. P. Burch, and J. D. Washington, to wit: Lot 1, in fractional block 16, in Foust's Addition to the City of West Plains, Missouri. (This Lot is the corner south side of Webster Avenue where Webster enters Missouri Avenue, west-one block northwest of the present brick church building-year 1967-(see plat-map of City of West Plains, with this History).

We have the following paper copied from 'West Plains Weekly Journal' a Special Historical Number, issued dated October 12, 1905. This copy of this issue of the Journal is in the possession of Mrs. Aubry A. Foster (Hattie) that she had handed down to her from her step-father, Hugh K. Chapin.

Methodist Episcopal Church, South

"Ministers of the M. E. Church, South, were preaching and organizing churches in this section in the early sixties. The West Plains Church was organized in 1881, and a frame building was put up where the present church stands. (The present church at that time-1905-was on the corner of West Main and Missouri Avenue, where the latest, present church building-1967-now stands).

"In 1889 the church as it now stands (1905) was built at a cost of \$7,000.00 and is one of the' neatest and most commodious church buildings in this entire section.

"At the same time the present parsonage (1905) was built, so that with the increase in value of town property the M. E. Church, South, in West Plains, church property is worth at least \$10,000.00.

"Since its organization the church has had a steady growth till today (1905) its membership is one of the strongest in this section.

"The pastors of the church have been Revs. Warren, Green, Truitt, Hamilton, North, Chew, Moore, Goldman, Whiteside, Russell, Dixon, King, Henry, Rice and Kennedy. The present pastor (1905) is the Rev. C. N. Clark, who has been here about a month, having been appointed the recent session of the St. Louis Conference. He is a young man not quite thirty and yet he is recognized as one of the leading preachers of the conference, of his age. Already this year the church has taken on new life and is planning greater things than heretofore."

Taken from West Plains Weekly Journal,
Dated October 12, 1905

Methodist Episcopal Church

It is quite difficult at this time to collect, in proper order, the essentials of a complete history of Methodism in West Plains. That grand old pioneer preacher, known throughout Howell County as "Uncle Jackie Collins", began his ministerial efforts in West Plains in 1867.

He was a Free Mason as well as an earnest preacher and enlisted the scattered members of the church and lodge in a united effort to secure a home for both under the same roof.

A two-story building was constructed on Washington Avenue, (where Cleveland intersects with Washington). The lower room was acknowledged as strictly church property while the upper room was controlled by the Masons.

The Methodist Church building, being the only house of worship in West Plains, was thrown open without restraint to all ministers of the gospel till the year 1884, when by consent of its joint ownership it was sold. The Masons invested their share of the proceeds in the third story of the court-house as a lodge room, while the Methodists appropriated their share toward the erection of a building on a lot joining the site of the old co-partnership structure which has lately been raised and moved away.

The Sunday School is in a prosperous condition under the superintendency of T. J. Langston. The Ladies' Auxiliary, with Mrs. Collins as president, the Ladies Aid Society with Mrs. T. J. Langston as president, and the Junior League, with Mrs. White the president, are all doing splendid work.

The nine o'clock prayer meeting, Sunday morning under the supervision of Charles Dressier, is in a prosperous condition.

Uncle Jackie Collins was succeeded by circuit riders and stationed preachers as follows: Glass, Smith, Bundy, Richardson, Tally, Morgan, Buck, Sappenfield, January, Simmons, Fulcher, Martin, Brewington, McDonald, Squires, and Harry White.

Rev, Harry White was born on November 25, 1867, in Bedford, N.J" a beautiful little Quaker town, of about 3,000 people, In the spring of 1893 he came to Missouri and joined the St, Louis Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church; was preacher three years at Senaca, two at DeSoto, pastor two years of St. Luke's Church in St, Louis, then came to West Plains and is now finishing up a term of five very successful years of ministerial service."

(Both churches, The Methodist Episcopal and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had nice looking church buildings, pictured in this West Plains Weekly Journal, dated October 12, 190&. This issue was listed as the SPECIAL HISTORICAL NUMBER) (Copied this 4th day of March, 1967, by C, C, Smith, 1002 Cass Avenue, West Plains, Missouri, who has been a member of First Methodist Church in West Plains, with his wife Ella F, Smith, since December 1944,)

Taken from an issue of
West Plains Weekly Quill
Dated April 4,1891 -under heading
OUR CHURCHES

"The new M. E. Church, South, The Finest in South Missouri."

The new M. E. Church, South, on West Main Street, is just completed and is a very massive structure. The main building is 68 feet square with two wings built on a modern plan of beautiful design. The walls are of very smooth bright brick, with massive pilasters, capped with marble. The interior is one of the most beautiful designs the skill of man could invent. The walls up to the cone are white hard finish. The ceiling is in cone shape and is a massive piece of frame and panel work in native yellow pine in hard oil finish, and is 32 feet high. It is divided into four departments, all of which can be thrown into one by folding doors. The seating capacity is 1,408 grown persons. On such occasions as a free lecture by Sam Jones, it would easily seat two thousand persons, counting children.

The bell which hangs in the tower weighs 970 pounds and can be heard ten miles on a still day. The bell has quite a history. It was made to order for the steamer-Emily, in 1851, by a Philadelphia foundry, and cost \$1,250.00.

It was used on that steamer during her life-time, and when Emily No.2, was built the bell came into use again. Some years after the steamer was driven ashore in a storm and her cabin blown off, she was then the property of F. Blackston. Mr. Blackston, after the

wreck settled in St. Joseph, Mo., where he loaned the bell to the city of St. Joseph where it was used as a fire bell for several years. When Mr. Blackston moved to this (Howell) county he brought the bell here. At his death the bell fell into the hands of Frank Blackston, who traded it to the church people for the bell on their old church and some money, making a liberal donation to the church in the trade, bringing the bell down to about three hundred dollars to the church.

The entire church property is now valued at \$8,000.00 and is beyond doubt the finest church edifice in South Missouri."

At the First Quarterly Conference held in West Plains, Nov. 4, 1891, a new pastor, Rev. R. F. Chew was in charge.

At the Fourth Quarterly Conference, August 11, 1892, Rev. R. F. Chew, P. C.- (Business):-The building committee was discharged. Appointed as Sunday School Superintendent: J. C. Kirby, at West Plains and W. R. Carson, at Valley -Church.

(The items of Quarterly Conference action on this page and the preceding page were taken from an old Quarterly Conference Minutes Record book in the church (November 1966)

(The above item taken from the Weekly West Plains Quill-the copy of the Quill is in the file in the possession of Mrs. Fritz Williams Dixon, who, along with her sisters and father owned and printed the Quill for many years, until about 1946.)

Taken from the Special Historical number of the West Plains Weekly Journal, published on October 12, 1905, and copied in the "100th Anniversary of West Plains" book, June 15-21, 1952 in part about churches:

"It seems ministers of the M. E. Church, South, were busy in this section in the early sixties. In another place in the same book, we read, "Uncle Jackie Collins" began his ministerial efforts in West Plains in 1867. He was a Free Mason as well as an earnest preacher and enlisted the scattered members of the churches and Lodge in a united effort to secure a home for both under the same roof. A two-story building was constructed on Washington Avenue. The lower room was acknowledged as strictly church property while the upper room was controlled by the Masons.-(this, evidently became the North Methodist Church). However, the local (South) church was organized in 1881, and a frame building was first erected. (Place not given). In 1889, one of the most commodious church buildings in this area was built at a cost of \$7,000 (place not given in the paper-but other records show the new building was built on the corner, West Main and Missouri Avenue, West Plains).

This was an imposing brick building with a very beautiful interior (see page 5 for description). However, in the late 20's when the two Methodists' congregations went together, it was necessary to build the present large modern edifice. (on same spot, corner of West Main and Missouri Avenue) Today, this church building is one of the outstanding buildings in the city of West Plains."

-By word of mouth, Frank Thornburgh, repeats, that his mother, Mrs. A. H. Thornburgh, wife of the long-time doctor in West Plains, said the first Methodist Church building was on the corner of Franklin and Webster, that a committee of three, -R.S. Hogan, Sam Langston and Sam H. Henry, were appointed to select a new lot on West Main at Missouri Avenue, where the church is now located. Frank also gave, that his mother said that a member of the church at the time, Mrs. Hattie Pitts, daughter of Judge John R. Woodside, and mother of Mrs. Vida Simons, tried to get the name of the church changed to "Woodside Memorial Methodist Church" in honor of her father, when it was moved to the new building. The rest of the congregation was not in favor of the change and it remained the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. (Mrs. Pitts did get a church named for her father, later, in the Methodist Church in Thayer, Mo.).

First Quarterly Conference-Copy of Record, Official Roll: West Plains Charge, Poplar Bluff District, St. Louis Conference, for the current year, 1887, was held in West Plains, Mo., December 6, 1887. Rev. J. L. Batten, presiding elder, Rev. H. S. Hamilton, P. C. Roll of Stewards: W. R. Carson, G. A. Oyler, S. H. Henry, D. H. Martin, S. J. Langston, and M. F. Jones. Class leader, W. H. Green.

Trustees-none listed.

Rev. J. L. Batten, P .E. in the chair. After religious services conducted by P .E. (this is for presiding elder) the roll was called and the following members were present: H. S. Hamilton, pastor in charge (P.C.), S. J. Langston and S. H. Henry, Mr. S. J. Langston was elected secretary.

The pastor made reports of number of and state of Sunday Schools and of pastoral instructions of children and general state of the Church.

First Quarterly Conference minutes continued:

Ques. 6-The Board of Stewards estimated the amount of \$300.00 for the support of the preacher in charge for the year.

Ques. 7-What amount has been apportioned to this charge by the District Stewards? For Presiding Elder, \$50., for Bishop, \$6.25, for Conference Claimants, \$19.15; for Foreign Missions, \$48.44; for Domestic Missions, \$18.75; for Church Extension, \$13.31; for Education, \$.00.

Ques. 8-What amount has been raised the present quarter for the support of the ministry, and how has it been applied? Ans.-\$92.50. Paid pastor, \$80.00, paid P .E. \$12.50.

Ques. 9-What has been raised this quarter for other subjects?

Ans. Incidental expenses, \$8.00; Sunday School supplies, \$7.00.

Ques. 25-Is there any miscellaneous business? Ans. None.

Ques 26-Where shall the next Quarterly Conference be held? Ans. At West Plains, Mo.

The minutes were read and approved, and the conference adjourned.

S/J. L. Batten, Presiding Elder,

S. J. Langston, Secretary

(per-M.F. Jones, Recording Steward.)

(For this record and the following three Quarterly Conference meeting minutes as copied were taken from the old Quarterly Conference Record book, of First Methodist Episcopal Church, South,-cardboard cover, and filed in the steel cabinet of the present church records. That is the 1967, records.) Copy, minutes of The Second Quarterly Conference for the year, current, 1887-88, West Plains Charge, Poplar Bluff District, St. Louis Conference, was held at West Plains, Mo., March 2, 1888; J. L. Batten, P .E. in the chair. Roll call after religious services by P.E., the following were present: H. S. Hamilton, P.C., D. F. Martin, S. J. Langston, S. H. Henry , G. A. Oyler, J. D. Washington and M. F. Jones.

M.F. Jones was elected Secretary.

Pastor made reports on the Sunday School and on the general state of the church. (Supplements were turned in-not shown in minutes).

Ques. 8-Amount raised this quarter for the support of the ministry? Ans. \$86.25;-to P.C. \$75.75 and to P.E. \$12.50; raised for incidentals-\$9.00, and for Sunday School supplies, \$5.00.

Ques. 13-What has been done for the cause of education? Ans. Nothing.

Ques. 25-Miscellaneous business: Elected S, J. Langston and M. F. Jones as delegates to the District Conference to be held at Williamsville, Mo.; April 26th. (J. C. Kirby and S. H. Henry were elected as alternates) Appointed a committee of two, consisting of S. J. Langston and S. H. Henry, to dispose of the church parsonage preparatory to securing better quarters for the parsonage.

Minutes were read and approved and the conference adjourned.

S/J. L. Batten, Presiding Elder

M.F. Jones, Secretary

Minutes of the Third Quarterly Conference for the current year, 1887.88, West Plains Charge, Poplar Bluff District, St. Louis Conference, held at West Plains, Mo., June 2, 1888, J. Lo Batten, P .E.

Third Quarterly Conference continued-

Roll call, present were: H. S. Hamilton, P. C., Stewards-S. J. Langston, S. H. Henry, D. F. Martin, M. F. Jones, G, A. Oyler, J" D. Washington and W. W. Green, L. C. were present.

Elected M. F. Jones, Secretary. Pastor made reports on Sunday School and the general state of the church.

Ques. 8-Raised the present quarter for support Qf the ministry: \$95.40. Paid to P.C. \$80.75; paid to p .E. \$14.65.

Ques. 9-Raised for incidental expenses, \$12.00; for Sunday School supply \$3.00; for repair or furnishings of church, \$28.00; for other expenses, \$32.00 (difference in rent between parsonage and larger house rented for the pastor)

Ques. 10-Are there any applicants for license to preach or exort? Ans. Yes, Wm. W. Green, Thos. M. Hyder and Monroe M. Rochester, were granted licenses.

Ques. 14-Is there a Church Register and a Record of Church Conferences, and have they been kept faithfully? Ans. Yes.

Ques. 15-Have the General Rules been read? Ans. Yes.

Minutes were read and approved and conference adjourned.

S/J. L. Batten, Presiding Elder

M.F. Jones, Secretary

Copy of Minutes of Fourth Quarterly Conference for the current year-1887-88, West Plains Charge, Poplar Bluff District, St. Louis Conference, was held at West Plains, Mo., September 4, 1888) P.E., J. L. Batten in the chair. Roll call of officials-present were: H. S. Hamilton, P.C., D. F. Martin, S. H. Henry, W. R. Carson, M. F. Jones, S. J. Langston, J. D. Washington and W. W. Green, L. C. and Rev. W. F. Young of West Plains Circuit was present.

M. F. Jones was elected secretary .The preacher in charge made reports on the number of and state of the Sunday School on the general state of the church-(no record left of the written reports-says see supplement)

Ques. 5-Estimated claims and amount paid in this charge the past year? Ans. For P.C. \$300.00, for P.E. \$50.00, for Bishop, \$6.25; for Conference Claimants \$17.50, for Foreign Missions, \$20.25; for Domestic Missions, \$18.75; for Church Extension, \$13.31.

Ques. 8-Amount raised the present quarter and how applied? Ans. \$75.85; to P.C. \$65.50, and P.E. \$10.35.

Ques. 9-Raised for other objects this quarter. Ans. Incidental expenses \$10.00, Sunday School supply \$5.00, Foreign Missions, \$28.19.

Ques. 16-Have the local preachers and exorters passed an. examination of character, and have their licenses been renewed? Ans. Yes, for M. M. Rochester, Thos. M. Hyder, W. W. Green, characters passed on and licenses renewed.

Ques, 17-Are there any applications for recommendation to the Annual Conference to be admitted on trial into the traveling connection, or for readmission? Ans. Yes, Thos. M. Hyder, for admission on trial.

Ques. 19-Who are elected Stewards for the ensuing year-Conference year? Ans. M. F. Jones, S. J. Langston, S. H. Henry, W. R. Green, D. F. Martin, G. A. Oyler and J. C. Kirby.

Ques. 20-Who is elected Recording Steward? Ans. M. F. Jones.

Ques. 21-Who is elected District Steward? Ans. S. J. Langston.

Ques. 22-Who is elected Sunday School Superintendent? G. A. Oyler.

Ques. 24-What are the statistics to be reported to the Annual Conference? Ans. Members and Baptisms- Local preachers 3; white members 120; adults baptised 7; infants baptised 6; additions by certificate 17; additions by profession 10; net increase or decrease 25. Collections-Foreign Missions, \$20.25; Dqmestic Missions, \$18.75; Conference Claimants, \$17.50; for Bishop's fund, \$6.25; for Sunday School expenses, \$30.00; for Church Extension, \$13.31; Sunday Schools, one; officers and teachers, 8, scholars, 90.

Church property-No. of churches, 1; No. of sittings 300; value of churches, \$1,500.00; No. of parsonages, 1; value of parsonage, \$300.00; value of other church property, \$1,500.00; repairs of church property, \$50.00.Ques. 26-Where shall the next Quarterly Conference be held? Ans. In West Plains, Mo.

The minutes read and approved and conference adjourned.
S/J. L. Batten, Presiding Elder
M. F. Jones, Secretary

At the Third Quarterly Conference, June 9, 1890, West Plains Charge, Salem District, St. Louis Conference:

Ques. 25-Is there any miscellaneous business? Yes, Building Committee made a report. Some old subscriptions uncollected. On motion the Building Committee was authorized to assist the treasurer (not named) in collecting the same.

At this June 9, 1890 Conference only one Sunday School (in West Plains) reported.

At this same Quarterly Conference the pastor, R. M. Taylor, in his report on the state of the church, reported: "We have held a protracted meeting, lasting four weeks. Three

weeks of the time the Rev. J. J. Watts of St. Louis, was with us, and did faithful preaching. I trust a harvest may yet be reaped from that sowing. Five or six persons professed conversion."

Also in R. M. Taylor's report on the state of the church at the 3rd Quarterly Conference- "No work has been done on the new church house since the last report. The old church building has not yet been sold." The Board of Church Extension at Louisville, donated \$600.00 to this Church at its last meeting. An additional subscription of \$625.00 has been raised here. We hope to so shape the business as to begin work again soon."

-At the Fourth Quarterly Conference, held August 19, 1889, the pastor, Rev. J. A. Hyder, in his report on the number and state of Sunday Schools: "We have two Sunday Schools under our care, one at Adams, Superintendent, Br. Martin (D.F.) small school, but doing good work-4 officers, 4 teachers, 20 scholars, and one Sunday School in West Plains, with Bro. Oyler Superintendent; 4 officers, 6 teachers, 50 scholars." Five dollars raised the present quarter for literature.

Pastoral instructions of children only in a general way".

Respectfully submitted S/J.A. Taylor, P .C.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION OF PRESENT CHURCH PROPERTY (1967)

In Warantee Deed Book T, page 500, Howell County records in the Howell County Court House, deed dated, December 19, 1889, and recorded December 24, 1889 and reads as follows: S. J. Langston and Bersha A. Lansgton, wife, sold to M. E. Church, South, in West Plains, all of Lot 1 and West half of Lot 2, in Block 2, in the Johnson and Catron Addition to the City of West Plains, such lots being 83 feet, 3 inches by 167 feet, 3 inches, for \$700.00.

Trustees of the church: D. F. Martin, S. H. Hurz, D. A. Oyler, F. M. Jones, and J. D. Washington."

-(This property is located on the corner of Missouri Avenue and West Main Street-the present Methodist Church building-1967)

Building Committee Appointed-December 6,1888:

The First Quarterly Conference, West Plains Charge, Salem District held December 6, 1888-Rev. J. L. Batten, P.E. and Rev. H. S. Hamilton, P.C., a building committee of three-Rev. H. S. Hamilton, S. H. Henry and S. J. Langston, was appointed to see about building a new church. J. S. Kirby was Secretary of the Quarterly Conference.No mention of any work begun on a new church building after the appointment of this committee, until in the Fourth Quarterly Conference report of the (new) pastor, Rev. J. A. Hyder, on August 19, 1889, where he simply states, "With the return of the work on the church house will add largely to the improvement of the Church in West Plains."

-Quarterly Conference roll of members for the year 1890 (1889-90) West Plains Charge, Salem District, St. Louis Conference: Rev. J. L. Batten, Presiding Elder (P .E.), Rev. R. M. Taylor (new) pastor (P .C.:) S. J. Langston, S. H. Henry, D. F. Martin, G. A. Oyler, Alonzo Simms, W. W. Green, C. W. Orvis, J. C. Kerby and W. R. Carson.

In his report to the First Quarterly Conference, December 16, 1889, the pastor, R. M. Taylor, reported, "The work on the new church building is complete, the roof has been begun, and soon we hope to have it covered." (see page 9, above, for description location of the building.)

" A parsonage on church lot has been begun and almost completed this quarter. It is a gem of a house and will be ready for occupancy in a few days."

In his report to Second Quarterly Conference, March 17, 1890, the pastor, R. M. Taylor, reported: "The new church building has been covered and the work has ceased for want of means".

In his report to the Third Quarterly Conference, June 9, 1890, the pastor, R. M. Taylor, reported, "No work has been done on the new church house since the last report. The old church building has not yet been sold."

In his report to the Fourth Quarterly Conference, Sept. 1, 1890, the pastor, R. M. Taylor, reported, "Willow Springs has been added as a regular preaching place. So that we now have four places to preach, viz. West Plains, Renfro's, Howell Valley, and Willow Springs.

"Our new church building is to be completed in October. The contract for its completion has been let. I do not think the cost will exceed \$500.00."

In his report to the First Quarterly Conference, November 24, 1890, the new pastor, Rev. Wm. B. North, reported, "We are negotiating a sale of the old church edifice to the Congregational Methodist for \$700.00 and are still at work on the new church edifice."

In his report to the Third Quarterly Conference, May 7, 1891, the pastor, Wm. B. North, reported, "The pastor preached the first sermon in the new church edifice in this station (West Plains) at 11 o'clock a.m., April 12, 1891, using St. Matt. Ch. 16; Verse 18, for a text".

In the report of the Fourth Quarterly Conference, held July 15, 1891, Wm. B. North, p .C., "The trustees of the church were instructed to sell the Howell Valley church if thought expedient."

West Plains was part of a Circuit until 1887, and was in the Poplar Bluff District- (On January 27, 1967, Rev. L.L. Johnston, pastor at Trinity Methodist Church in Moberly, Missouri, supplied the following information on this page, which he selected from St.

Louis Annual Conference Minutes. Rev. Johnston, a former pastor in West Plains, 1949-1951, has the Minutes from 1887, to present).

"At Fredericktown, Missouri, September 14-19, 1887, the Annual Conference appointments- West Plains to be supplied, but the next Conference Rev. H.S. Hamilton made the report. So he would be the first minister assigned to West Plains as an appointment, year 1887-1888. West Plains Circuit, 1887-88, W.F. Young; Presiding Elder was Rev. J.L. Batten.

"At Bonne Terre, Missouri, September 19-24, 1888, Annual Conference appointments: West Plains Circuit supplied by J.A. Taylor; West Plains, Rev. H.S. Hamilton, and P.E. Rev. J.L. Batten.

"At the Conference West Plains reports, local preachers 3, Sunday School enrollment 125, white members 103. Paid Presiding Elder \$50.00 and paid pastor \$300.00.

"The year 1888 Minutes gives this as a part of the Board of Missions report that deals with West Plains- the church has been greatly strengthened and brought forward to a position of commanding influence in the community; in the progress a new parsonage has been built."

S/T.M. Finney, President.

"Conference met at Salem, Missouri, September 18-23, 1889, and West Plains was shown as being in the Salem District. Rev. J.L. Batten as Presiding Elder. Appointments that year, West Plains Circuit, H.M. Eure; West Plains, R.M. Taylor. West Plains paid to P .E. \$71.00, and paid pastor \$500.00.

Conference met in Fredericktown, September 26-October 1, 1894, now a West Plains District, appointments for 1894-95, Rev. J.F. Goldman, salary \$1000.00.

Conference at Charleston, Missouri, 1918- Poplar Bluff District, Appointments, West Plains Charge, 1918- 1919, Rev. E.C. Atkins." -(The following lines were not supplied by Rev. Johnston):

Minutes of the St. Louis Conference- three in West Plains:

No.	Place	Date	Bishop	Secretary
46	West Plains	1893	W.W. Duncan	H. Hainesworth
60	West Plains	1907	J.S. Key	Marvin T. Haw
84	West Plains	1931	A. Frank Smith	J.C. Montgomery, Sr.

First Annual Conference of Methodism held in Missouri was held in Boonville, Missouri, in 1846.

St. Louis Annual Conference Statistics

-1905, Conference held at Caruthersville, Missouri, September 20-25 Bishop E.R. Hendrix; T.E. Jackson, P.E.; pastor at West Plains, 1904-1905, R.D. Kennedy. Appointment to West Plains for 1905-06, C.N. Clark, supply. Members in church 138; 2 Epworth Leagues, 40 members; Sunday Schools, one; 9 officers and teachers, 107 scholars enrolled. Pastor paid \$551.00.

Statistics for 1906 and 1907 not available

-1908, 61st session of St. Louis Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at Charleston, Missouri, September 16-21, 1908. Bishop Charles B. Galloway, P .E. West Plains District, J.J. Lovett (3) Pastor West Plains for 1907-08, C.N. Clark. Pastor appointed for 1908-09, G.M. Hull. Paid pastor \$1200.00. Membership reported for 1907, 215; for 1908, 225; officers and teachers 16, and 265 enrolled in Sunday School.

-1909, 62nd Conference at Fredericktown, September 15-20, 1909. Bishop Warren A. Candler, P .E. Was W .A. Humphreys. (J.J. Lovett died during the year) Pastor appointed to West Plains, W .A. Tetley. Membership reported, 243. Pastor paid \$1030.00; assessed \$1200.00.

-1910, 63rd Conference at Cape Girardeau, Mo., September 28-Oct., 3, 1910. Bishop Collins Denny; Secretary, Marvin T. Haw. (Marvin T. Haw had been Secretary since 1900) P .E., Wm. A. Humphreys, pastor appointed to West Plains charge, Roy P. Basler (W .A. Tetley sent to Poplar Bluff). For West Plains Circuit, S.J. Starkey, supply. Lay delegates, West Plains District, J.C. Kerby and F .M. Copeland. Membership 274.

-1911, 64th Annual Conference held at Kirkwood, Mo., September 27 -October 2, 1911. Bishop Collins Denny, Secretary Marvin T. Haw; P.E., Wm. A. Humphreys, West Plains District; pastor appointed to West Plains Charge, Roy P . Basler; to West Plains Circuit, J.T. Winstead. Lay delegates, J.N. Holmes, J.D. Eudaley, R.A. Sparks, and B.S. McCarm; alternates,. F .M. Copeland and S.J. Starkey. Members reported 263; 1 Sunday School, 16 officers and teachers, 260 enrolled in Sunday School. Pastor's salary paid \$1000.00.

-Statistics for 1912, 1913, and 1914 not available (Conference 1912, held in Dexter, Mo., Bishop Collins Denny, Secretary, Marvin T. Haw. Conference 1913 held in Jackson, Mo., Bishop E.E. Hoss, Secretary Marvin T. Haw. Conference 1914, held in Caruthersville, Mo., Bishop E.R. Hendrix, Secretary , Marvin T. Haw).

-1915, 68th Annual Conference held in Sikeston, Mo., Sept. 29-Oct. 4, 1915. Bishop E.R. Hendrix, Secretary, Marvin T. Haw, (West Plains District discontinued) moved into Poplar Bluff earlier, P .E. J.E. Martin, pastor appointed to West Plains Charge, G.J. Evans. (Pastor for West Plains 1914.15, E.F . McDaniel.) Membership 163; Sunday School enrollment, 150, pastor's salary \$1000.00.

-1916, 69th St. Louis Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at Cape Girardeau, Mo., Sept. 27-Oct. 2, 1916. Bishop E.R. Hendrix, Sec. Marvin T. Haw; P .E. Poplar Bluff District, J.E. Martin; pastor appointed to West Plains, T.M. Finley. (R.S. Warren, to Van Buren; W.J. Velvick, to Bonne Terre, H.L. Taylor to Thayer-Koshkonong ..H.L. Taylor first admitted on trial 1907); A.W. Hill appointed to West Plains Circuit. (Rev. J.T. Winstead, superannuated-1916, in West Plains, where he had been on West Plains Circuit, 1911-1916).

Conference Lay Leader, R.M. McCombs; Poplar Bluff District, J.D. Brooks; Lay delegates Poplar Bluff District, R.A. Sparks, J.M. Carnahan, Fred Spell and J.D. Eudaley; alternates, H.A. Clark and J.E. Gilmer. Membership West Plains Charge, 236; Sunday School 204.

-1917, 70th St. Louis Annual Conference, at Fredericktown, Mo., September 26-October 1, 1917. Bishop E.R. Hendrix; Secretary , Marvin T. Haw; P .E. of Poplar Bluff District. R.P. Basler, pastor appointed to West Plains, E.C. Atkins (1) -(H.L. Taylor to Thayer-Koshkonong (3), (RoS. Warren to Cold Water-DesArc (1)). Conference Lay Leader-W.H. Stubblefield, Poplar Bluff District Lay Leader, J.D. Brooks; Lay delegates, Poplar Bluff District-D.B. Young, P.A. Price, A. McKenzie, M.T. Smotherman, (J.D. Brooks Alton, Mo.). Sunday School Superintendents, October 1, 1917-Poplar Bluff District, West Plains Charge, E.C. Bohrer. (part of minutes gone, no membership statistics shown).

-1918, Conference at Charleston, Mo., Bishop W.B. Murrah, Sec. Marvin T. Haw - no other statistics available.

-1919, Conference at St. Louis, Mo., Bishop W.B. Murrah, Sec. Marvin T. Haw-no other statistics available.

-1920, Conference held in Poplar Bluff, September 29-Oct. 3, 1920. Bishop W.B. Murrah, Secretary, Marvin T. Haw; P .E. Poplar Bluff District, W .J. Velvick; pastor to West Plains, Loyd Marlin, (J.A. Brown was pastor, October 1919-September 1920). Membership 223; Sunday School enrollment, 186; paid pastor, \$1200.00.

Conference Lay Leader, W.H. Stubblefield, Jr., Poplar Bluff District J.D. Brooks. Lay delegates Poplar Bluff District, J.N. Starkey, Mrs. A.D. Rankin, Mrs. J.C. Woodside, Mrs. Emma Bess, Miss M.E. Durst, p .A. Price, A.R. Sanders, D.B. Young. Alternates, Alec McKenzie, Mrs. Mat tie Young, A.M. Mead and J.D. Brooks. (Appointments-R.S. Warren. Cold Water-DesArc (2), A.R. Sanders, Couch Circuit, H.L. Taylor, Doniphan Charge).

-1921, 74th Session of St. Louis Annual Conference, held in Kennett, Mo., September 28-October 2, 1921: Bishop W .B. Murrah, Sec. Marvin T. Haw (Sec. since 1900) a minister. P.E., Poplar Bluff District, W.J. Velvick (4), pastor to West Plains Lloyd Marlin (2)-membership 255, Sunday School enrollment 236. Conference Lay Leader, W .H. Stubblefield, Jr., Lay Leader of Poplar Bluff District, J.D. Brooks; Lay delegates of

Poplar District-O.A. Johnson, Miss Grace Taylor, Mrs. A.W. Bedell, R.J. Stamp, Mrs. D.R. Thomas, Mrs. E.W. Cook, J.L. Batten. Alternates, M.M. Bryer, George Massey and P.A. Price.

-1922, 75th Session of St. Louis Conference held in Flat River, Mo., September 27-October 1, 1922: Bishop Wm. F. McMurry , Sec. Marvin T. Haw; P .E., West Plains District, W.E. Brown (1), pastor to West Plains, Ola A. Bowers (1) church membership 269, Sunday School enrollment 157, paid pastor \$1800.00. Conference Lay Leader, C.F. Meentemeyer, Gideon, Mo., Lay delegates, Fred Spell, Mrs. J.W. Price, Mrs. D.R. Thomas, Mrs. A.W. Bedell, Alec McKenzie, R.L. Smotherman and R.I. Stamp- Lloyd Marlin to Conference Evangelist.

-1923, 76th St. Louis Annual Conference held in Sikeston, Mo., October 3-7, 1923: Bishop Wm. F. McMurry, Sec. Rev. Clarence Burton; P .E. Poplar Bluff District, W.E. Brown (2), pastor appointed to West Plains, J.C. Montgomery, Sr. (1), church membership 233, Sunday School enrollment 213, Av. attendance 113. Paid pastor \$1800.00.

Conference Lay Leader, J. Will Pierce, Cape Girardeau; Conference Sunday School Superintendent, Rev. R.L. Duckworth, Cape Girardeau. West Plains District Lay Leader, G.A. Ruggles, St. James, Mo., Lay delegates, West Plains District, W.A. Ruggles, J.E. Hull, Walter Webb, Mrs. T.E. King, C.W. Hewett, Mrs. L.A. Evans and Mrs. G.C. Plummer.

-1924, 77th Annual Conference held in St. John's Church, St. Louis, October 1-5, 1924: Bishop Wm. F. McMurry , Sec. Clarence Burton, Kennett, Mo., P .E. Poplar Bluff District, W.E. Brown (3), pastor appointed to West Plains, J.C. Montgomery, Sr. (2), church membership 219, Sunday School enrollment 216, average attendance 95. Paid pastor \$1800.00. (budget, \$4,901.00).

Conference Lay Leader, J. Will Pierce, Cape Girardeau, Conference Sunday School Superintendent, Rev. R.L. Duckworth, Cape Girardeau. Lay delegates, West Plains District, W.T. Webb, R.H. Long, Mrs. D.C. Bryan, A.M. McKenzie, M.P. Smotherman, W .A. Ruggles, A.C. Donnan and H.A. Frank.

-1925, 78th Annual Conference held at Centenary, Bonne Terre, Mo., October 7-11, 1925: Bishop Wm. F. McMurry, Sec. Clarence Burton, P.E. West Plains District, Rev. H.E. Ryan; pastor to West Plains J.C. Montgomery, Sr. (3), church membership 236, Sunday School enrollment 232, average attendance 93, paid pastor \$1800.00. Total budget, \$5,574.00.

Conference Lay Leader, J. Will Pierce, Cape Girardeau, Conference Sunday School Superintendent, Rev. R.L. Duckworth, Cape Girardeau Lay delegates, West Plains District, W.A. Ruggles, Mrs. W.E. Brown, Rev. M.P. Smotherman, J.W. Hughes, Miss Cora Patterson, A.L. Frank, Mrs. E.L. Kappleman. West Plains District Women's Missionary Society Secretary, Mrs. Gus Hon, Thayer, Mo.

-1926, 79th Session, Annual Conference held at Centenary Church, Cape Girardeau, October 6-10, 1926: Bishop Wm. F. McMurry , Fayette, Mo., Sec. Rev. J.C. Montgomery, Sr., Kennett, Mo., P.E. West Plains District, Rev. H.E. Ryan (2), pastor to West Plains, Rev. J.F .E. Bates (1), church membership 262, Sunday School enrollment 189, average attendance 87. Paid pastor \$2000.00. Budget, \$4,750.

Conference Lay Leader, J. Will Pierce, Conference Sunday School Superintendent, Rev. R.L. Duckworth, both of Cape Girardeau, Mo. Lay delegates, West Plains District, Noah L. Brown, W .A. Ruggles, R.L. Smotherman, Mrs. H.E. Ryan, Mrs. W .H. Faris. Women 's Missionary Society Secretary, Mrs. Gus Hon, Thayer, Mo.

-1927, 80th Session, St. Louis Annual Conference, at Centenary Church, St. Louis, October 5-9,1927: Bishop Wm. F. McMurry, Fayette, Mo., Sec. Rev. J.C. Montgomery , Sr., Cape Girardeau, Statistical secretary , Rev. J.H. Jones, Bloomfield, Mo., Conference Lay Leader, F .E. Williams, St. Louis, Mo., Conference Sunday School Superintendent, Rev. R.L. Duckworth, Cape Girardeau, Mo., P .E. West Plains District, Rev. H.E. Ryan, pastor appointed to West Plains, Rev. J.F.E. Bates (2), West Plains District Lay Leader, W.A. Ruggles, St. James, Mo., Secretary of Women's Missionary Society, Mrs. Gus Hon, Thayer, Mo. Lay delegates of West Plains District, Mrs. I.C. Bradsher, A.C. Donnan, Mrs. A.L. Kappleman, K.K. Lyles, W.R. Peck, W.A. Ruggles, Mrs. H.E. Ryan (West Plains) and H.G. Stewart.

Among those who received honor roll certificates for having paid their assessments in full: J.F .E. Bates, West Plains, \$2718.00, church membership 279, Sunday School enrollment 186, paid pastor \$2000.00. Total budget raised, \$5,230.00.

-1928, 81st Annual Conference, held at Maiden, Mo., Oct. 10-14, 1928-(The following taken from the minutes of the 81st Session of the St. Louis Annual Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, held at Malden, Missouri, October 10-14, 1928):

"The Commission on Exchange of Territory with the Methodist Episcopal Church submitted the following report which the Conference adopted, thereby ratifying the action of the Commission:

Report of the Commission on Exchange of Church Territory The Commission appointed by the St. Louis Anaual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South at its last session, held in Centenary Church, St. Louis, Missouri, October 5-9, 1927, to confer and act with a like Commission appointed by the Methodist Episcopal Church (in the territory in which the respective Commissions had jurisdiction) concerning exchange of territory in which the two Churches were in conflict, met at the Missouri Athletic Association, St. Louis, Missouri, November 12, 1927.

The members present were, Rev. R.B Kimbrell, Rev. W.E. Brown, Rev. C. Wesley Webdell and Rev. John F. Caskey.

Rev. John F. Caskey was elected Chairman, and Rev. C. Wesley Webdell was elected Secretary.

A joint petition from the Quarterly Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in West Plains, Missouri, asking that the Commission take jurisdiction, was presented.

The Chairman notified the Commission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and asked for a joint meeting of the Commissions.

The Commissions met in joint session December 21, 1927, at the Missouri Athletic Association, St. Louis, Mo., with the following members present: For the Methodist Episcopal Church: Bishop E.L. Waldorf, ex-officio, Rev. R.H. Schuett, Rev. D.W. Britton, and Rev. S.B. Campbell. Rev. I.D. Harris being absent, Rev. W. Riley Nelson was appointed to act in his stead.

For the Methodist Episcopal Church, South: Bishop Wm. F. McMurry, ex-officio, Rev. John F. Caskey, Rev. C. Wesley Webdell, Rev. W.E. Brown and Rev. R.B. Kimbrell.

The meeting was organized by electing Rev. John F. Caskey Chairman, Rev. S.B. Campbell secretary for the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Rev. R.B. Kimbrell for the Methodist Episcopal, South.

The credentials of each Commission were presented and accepted.

For the conduct of the Commission the following principles were discussed, interpreted, and adopted:

First, That it is to be the function of the joint Commission to aid in the union of churches in communities where there has been an expressed desire (the Quarterly Conferences of the interested churches by formal action, asking the Commission to take jurisdiction.)

Second, That the property interests involved shall be handled by this joint Commission after full consultation with the churches petitioning for union, and that the approval of each of the Annual Conferences in which the churches involved are situated must be secured to make the action binding. Furthermore, it is held that the property accounts shall be kept as an open account until ultimately adjusted by the two Annual Conferences concerned.

Third, That when one church withdraws from a community in favor of the other, the members of the church withdrawing shall be given church letters (the word "letter" is to be construed by each church so as to avoid Disciplinary entanglements), with the recommendation that these be deposited with the church remaining in the field; that the roll of members of the church which withdraws shall be turned over to the pastor of the church which remains; and that the District Superintendent or Presiding Elder in whose District the withdrawing church is located shall do all within his power to see that the uniting of the churches is carried out in spirit as well as in letter.

These guiding principles having been adopted, a joint petition from the West Plains churches was presented, asking the Commission to take jurisdiction.

After statements by the District Superintendent and the Presiding Elder and the pastors of the two churches with reference to the relative strength of membership, value of property, and relation of the local church to the work of the denomination in the District, Bishop E.L. Waldorf of the Methodist Episcopal Church, moved, and it was seconded by Rev. W .R. Nelson, District Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that the Methodist Episcopal Church of West Plains, Missouri, unite its property and membership with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, of West Plains, Missouri, according to the principles laid down for guidance of the Commission in its work.

It was further agreed that the pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church in West Plains shall be supported by the united Methodist Churches of West Plains to the extent that there shall be no loss to him in the matter of salary caused b:y this union of the churches, for the Conference year.

It was further agreed that the Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church should provide at his earliest convenience another appointment for the retiring pastor of the above mentioned Methodist Episcopal Church. This merger to become effective January 1, 1928.

Rev. W. Riley Nelson, Rev. H.E. Ryan, Rev. R.H. Schuett, and Rev. John F. Caskey were appointed a committee to determine the value of all properties involved in the foregoing adjustment. They were empowered to name a fifth member if desired.

The foregoing action has been accepted by the two churches involved which are now united in one church, known as the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, of West Plains, Missouri, with one pastor, and the action of the respective Annual Conferences only is lacking to make the merger binding.

Rev. W. Riley Nelson, District Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, presented the case of Lebanon, Missouri, but Lebanon not being in the bounds of the St. Louis Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the Chairman ruled that this Commission had no jurisdiction in that case, and the matter was referred to the Commission of the Conference in which Lebanon is situated.

After expressions of good will and satisfaction with the outcome of the Commission by Bishop Waldorf and McMurry, and Rev. W. Riley Nelson, District Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the minutes of the meeting were approved and the Commission adjourned." John F. Caskey, Chairman e.w. Webdell, Secretary

-The Commission was continued by vote of the Conference. -

Dated January 3, 1927, and signed by Roy L. Brown, P .C. (pastor in charge) a list (partial here) of the 261 members and two local preachers-total 263, of First Methodist

Episcopal Church, on Washington Ave. (where Mullins Tabacco Store is now. Jan. 1967) later added in with the 275 members of First Methodist Church, South, 1928, located on corner of Missouri Avenue and West Main, West Plains, making a total of 538 members in the two congregations.

Partial list from the Washington Ave., church: A.F. and Ruth Day; Walter and Ethel Doke, Wilber and Harry Robertson (children of Mrs. Walter Doke).

Mrs. Rose Dressler, Misses Kate, Ruth and Phyllis Dressler; Clair and Cora Freeman; Hilda, Charles E Ora Page; O.P .A. Heinrich, wife Martha, daughters, Nellie and Virginia; Arthur Howell; George Humphrey, wife Maggie, and Jennie, mother; Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Hays and daughters, Lovie and Eloise; Charles and Cora Jones, son Joe; Ira Kunkle, wife Annie Laura;

Thomas Jeff Langston, wife Sallie; daughter Clara Cochran, and grandson, Bradford Cochran, Ralph Jefferson, Jr., grandson, and Ralph Langston, son of Thomas Jefferson; Joseph M. Martin and wife Marie, daughters, Henryetta and Mildred, and George W. Martin, brother of Joe, and Mrs. Parthena Martin, mother of Joe and George Martin; Jake M. Palmer, wife Ida Nettie, sons Carl D., Lester R. and Sanford M., daughters Hazel and Geneva A.

Fred E. and Laura Pease, Langston Pease; Mrs. Sidney Pease, (step-mother of Fred and Charles), daughters Geneva and Victoria Pease Stryker, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pease; Georgia Smith, daughter Pauline; Mrs. W .O. Talbert, daughters Iris and Mabel, son John; Mrs. Maude Wakefield, daughters Harriet and Mary; Frank Watts, wife Effie, sons Jimmie and Merl and daughter Margaret; Mrs. M.E., wife of Bill Watts; Mrs. C.E. Wright and daughters, Lorraine, Mildred, Florence, Jessie M. and Francis.

On March 27, 1929, held a Board of Stewards' meeting with M.M. Freeman secretary , and J.E. Norton, president in the chair. Pastor present was Rev. Homer T. Fort.

Primary business of the meeting was to appoint a soliciting committee and get plans started for a new church building. (committee names were not listed).

Conference Bishop at this time was W .F .McMurry .The meeting was held in the church annex. Prof. J.R. Martin (Supt. of West Plains Public Schools) was present.

Other meetings were held-on April 3, (Sunday), April 7, 1929, May24, 1929, building committee meeting held in the West Plains Bank, with twelve members present, also the pastor, Rev. Homer T. Fort, and Presiding Elder, H.H. Brower.

Motion to sell the Washington Avenue (Church) property for \$5,000 lost by 7 to 5 vote. At this time about \$36,500.00 had been subscribed for the new church building.

Meeting of the Board of Stewards (on Sunday, May 26, 1929, for purpose of giving Rev. Homer T. Fort approval to hold a ten day meeting in June. Approval was voted and also agreed to go 50-50 with the District Conference to buy a tent to hold 750 people for the meeting.

At a Board of Stewards' meeting on June 6, 1929, Arthur Howell was appointed as a real collector to collect funds to pay the present indebtedness, \$1375.00. (Above items taken from old minutes of Board of Stewards' meetings).

CORNER STONE LAID

"An event of great interest in the history of the Methodist Church of West Plains, Missouri, was the laying of the corner stone of the new church building at the intersection of West Main Street and Missouri Avenue, Sunday afternoon. (The date was not shown in the newspaper clipping from the West Plains Daily Quill, but evidently from other statistics, it was early in 1929).

The program exercises opened at 2:30 o'clock with prayer by Rev. O.L. Byrns, pastor of the First Presbyterian church, followed by scripture readings by Rev. J.T. Wilson, Pentecostal, Rev. O.C. Wilcoxon, pastor First Baptist church, and Rev. Roy Ho Fairchild, Rector, All Saints Episcopal church. There were short talks by Fred E. Pease, chairman building committee, Prof. J. Ro Martin, Superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School, E.E. Thornburgh, chairman of Board of Stewards, Mrs. E.M. Reeves, President of Woman's Missionary Society, and Rev. Homer T. Fort, pastor First Methodist church, and benediction by Rev. Floyd John Evans, pastor of First Christian Church."

Rev. H.H. Brower, presiding elder of the West Plains District, M.E. Church, South, was master of ceremonies and led in the singing of the opening and closing hymns.

In the forenoon Rev. Homer T. Fort, pastor of First Methodist church, preached a thrilling sermon, "The Church's One Foundation", to a large congregation at the old Washington Avenue M.E. church, now used as the temporary County Court House.

The laying of the corner stone, a block of granite weighing 1000 pounds, was in charge of R.S. Hogan, who has been a member of the Methodist church in Howell County for more than half century. Mr. Hogan was present when the corner stone of the old church was laid in 1889. (This new church is on the same spot as the old one). Among others who took part in the laying of the corner stone Sunday was A.D. Hyder, who worked with his brother, the late Thomas Hyder, the contractor, in building the old church forty years ago.

All of the books, newspapers and trinkets found in the old corner stone of the church opened last August, were placed in the hollowed receptacle in the corner stone of the new church together with copies of recent issues of the local newspapers and Methodist denominational papers.

In the corner stone also was placed sketches of the lives of R.S. Hogan and the late T .J. Langston, leaders in the Methodism in this community, who labored hard for uniting of the two branches of the Methodist churches in West Plains, which was accomplished in 1828.

The corner stone also contains a list of the members of the Methodist church and Sunday School and a brief history of world events of the past year prepared by the pastor.

Two other stones of historic value are placed near the front entrance to the West wing of the church. These are a stone tablet from the foundation of the Washington Avenue M.E. Church and one from the foundation of M.E. Church, South, which was demolished to make room for the new church. Each stone is appropriately lettered and set between them is another stone with the words, "Merged in 1928". (The stone from Washington Avenue shows date of 1884, and the one from the demolished church shows date, 1889).

"Open house and Opening Sunday was held at the new church, Sunday, June 8,1930. For the opening service a guest minister, Dr. John F. Caskey, pastor of the University City Methodist church, St. Louis, was the featured speaker.

The First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, West Main Street at Missouri Avenue, West Plains, Mo., opening Sunday, June 8, 1930:

Officials listed on the front of the official church bulletin at that time were: A. Frank Smith, D.D. Bishop, Herbert H. Brower, Presiding Elder, Homer T. Fort, pastor; E.E. Thornburgh, chairman of the Board, Ed. C. Bohrer, church treasurer, Fred E. Pease, chairman of building committee; Miss Floella Farley, organist, Charles R. Bohrer, choirmaster; J.R. Martin, Sunday School Superintendent; Mrs. Ed Reeves, president of Missionary Society; Mrs. Lida Wood, president of Symphonians; Miss Mildred Wright, president of Epworth League; M.M. Freeman, church secretary, and Joseph Woods, Sexton.

Listed on the back of the official bulletin: The building committee-Fred E. Pease, J. Ewd.Norton, E. V. Holt, M.M. Freeman, J.E. Hull. H.C. Allen. J.M. Fry, Ed. C. Bohrer, B.F. Wood, J.R. Martin, George Halstead, and Rev. Homer T. Fort. The official Board: E.E. Thornburgh, chairman, George. Halstead, J. Edw. Norton, Mrs. C.E. Martin, R.S. Hogan, E. V. Holt, Langston Pease, Fred E. Pease, M.M. Freeman, Ed. C. Bohrer, Charles R. Bohrer, J .E. H ull, H.C. Allen, B.F. Wood, J.M. Fry, Mrs. R.S. Hogan, Mrs. Mayme Cassell, Arthur Howell, J.M. Palmer, J.R. Martin, Ed. M. Reeves, and Carey Williams.

The morning sermon was preached by Rev. John F. Caskey , of University City , Methodist Church, St. Louis, Mo.

The First Methodist Church bulletin for June 4, 1939, shows the Ministry as: W.T. Watkins, Bishop, Atlanta, Georgia; Roy F. LeGrand, Presiding Elder, 320 East Main, West Plains; Hubert A. Gibbs, pastor, 302 Broadway, West Plains, Mo.

Church officers for 1938-39, Board of Stewards: Finance committee, Charles Bohrer, chairman of Board and committee, J.R. Martin, Vice chairman, Langston Pease, secretary, L.R. Hess, treasurer, Miss Phylis Dressler, assistant treasurer.

Ushers: Walter Doke, head usher, John Dold, Alvin Squires, Ronald Clark; J.L. McKinney, head usher, J.C. Flett, Matt Vernon.

Fellowship committee: Ralph Benningfield, chairman, J.E. Hull, P .S. Kreigh.

House committee: J.M. Palmer, chairman, John Julien, B.F. Engleman. Council to the Board: Summersfield Jones, chairman, representing the trustees, Mrs. Ed Reeves, representing the Missionary Society, Mrs. Joe Decell, representing Symphonians, J.W. Welsh, representing Board of Education, and Miss Ruth Dressier, the choir."

Board of Trustees: Charles Bohrer, George Halstead, H.C. Allen, J.E. Hull, Fred E. Pease, Paul Johnson, Summersfield Jones, M.M. Freeman, and B. Frank Wood.

Board of Education: J.R. Martin, Mrs. Allan Salmon, Miss Mayre Davis, J.W. Welsh, E.J. Cook, A.F. Day, Mrs. Ralph Benningfield, and Miss Marie Calloway.

Woman's Missionary Society: Mrs. Ed Reeves, president, Mrs; Walter Doke, vice president, Mrs. J. W. Welsh, recording secretary, Mrs. Ray Holt, local treasurer, Mrs. A.F. Day, Conference treasurer, Mrs. L.H. Sullens, chairman local work.

The Symphonian Society: Mrs. Joe Decell, president, Mrs. Ned Wood, vice president, Mrs. Leonard Farrar, secretary, and Mrs. Ira Kunkle, treasurer .

Taken from "Souvenir Program of Dedication " bulletin of the First Methodist Church, West Plains, Missouri, (dated) September 18, 1938.

The Ministry-W.T. Watkins, Bishop, R.F. LeGrand, Presiding Elder, B. V. Powell, minister.

History-"The First Methodist Episcopal Church was first organized in West Plains in 1884. The place of worship was located on Washington Avenue (corner of Washington Ave. and West Cleveland, where the Kenneth Mullins Tobacco Store is now located- Feb. 21, 1967). The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in West Plains five years later, 1889, and its place of worship erected on West Main Street St Missouri Avenue. (There is another story about the date when South church was first organized in West Plains-see page.6: this history).

"The two Methodisms in West Plains were united in 1928. This union was perfected by the laymen of the two churches under the leadership of Bishop E.L. Waldorf, Rev. W.R. Nelson, District Superintendent, and the Rev. Roy L. Brown, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Bishop W.F. McMurry, Rev. H.E. Ryan, Presiding Elder, and Rev. J.F.E. Bates, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

"The unified church was given the name First Methodist Church, West Plains, Missouri. It was placed under the ministerial appointment and leadership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

"The erection of a new modern house of worship was the first task of the unified church. The new church building, which we dedicate this day (September 18, 1838) was erected in 1929 at a cost of \$65,000.00, on which there was an indebtedness of \$27,000.00.

"Because of the depression and other general economic conditions there was very little paid on the indebtedness the first six years. In the fall of 1935, under the leadership of the present pastor, Rev. B.V. Powell, the church began a plan to pay the balance, \$23,000, of the indebtedness. With fine cooperation and wonderful sacrificial giving the debt was paid in thirty months.

"This day of dedication, with Bishop W.T. Watkins pronouncing the blessings of God upon our church, is the glorious culmination of years of dreaming, planning, praying, building and sacrificial sharing on the part of the people to bring this beautiful house of worship unto the Lord and the use of His Church. "

(The picture of this new church, which is the present house of worship, February 21, 1967), was placed on the front of this official Souvenir Program of Dedication).

Also listed in this Souvenir Program of Dedication a list of ministers who had served the First Methodist Church from time of uniting: Pastors, J.F.E. Bates, Homer T. Fort, H.H. Brower, C.C. Barnhart, W.A. Tetley, W.L. Myers, and B.V. Powell. Presiding Elders, H.E. Ryan, H.H. Brower, J.T. Ricketts, J.N. Broahead, H.S. Anglin, and R.F. LeGrand Bishops, W .F. McMurry, John M. Moore, A. Frank Smith, and W.T. Watkins.

The union of the two churches was made effective January 1, 1928. The Methodist Episcopal Church officially withdrew, and its 284 members became a part of the South church, and the union of members announced they would build a new church large enough to take care of the increased membership. (A paper dated Jan. 3, 1927, and signed, Roy L. Brown, P.C., listed 261 members and 2 local preachers, total 263, in the Methodist Episcopal Church; and the number of M.E. Church, South, as 275-added together making 538 in the two congregations.)-Sunday School Superintendent at the time of the merger and at the dedication services was Prof. J.R. Martin, also Superintendent of the West Plains Public Schools.

In 1928 one of the Conference Districts was West Plains, Mo., with the Presiding Elder, as they were known then, H.H. Brower, living in West Plains; and the pastor of West Plains Charge, Homer T. Fort.

In 1927, the pastor was J.F. E. Bates, and Presiding Elder of the West Plains District was H.E. Ryan and Bishop of the St. Louis Conference from 1922 to 1929 Wm. F. McMurry; 1930 to 1933, Bishop A. Frank Smith; 1934 to 1937 Bishop John M. Moore; 1938 Bishop W.T. Watkins; 1939 Bishop Charles C. Selecman; 1940 to 1943 Bishop John Calvin Broomfield; 1944 to 1956 Bishop Ivan Lee Holt; 1957 to the present, 1967, Bishop Eugene M. Frank.

HONOR ROLL CERTIFICATES -

The following charges received honor roll certificates for having paid their Conference assessments in full- included, West Plains, pastor J.F. E. Bates, noted in 1927, Conference Minutes, held at Centenary Church, St. Louis, Mo., October 5.9, 1927,-paid the Presiding Elder \$300, pastor \$2,000, District work \$25, Conference work \$199, General work \$194, total \$2,718.00 for the Conference assessments to earn the honor roll certificate.

Total membership reported at Conference, October 1927, 279; had two Epworth Leagues, with 40 members; one Sunday School-17 officers and teachers, 14 on cradle roll, in all Departments 155, total enrollment in all Departments 186.

Membership reported at Conference, October 10-14, 1928, held at Malden, Missouri, 592-314 added by certificate and otherwise, by faith 46, loss by death and other, 47; two Epworth Leagues, 50 members; one Sunday School-30 officers and teachers, 31 on cradle roll, 322 in other Departments, total enrollment in all Departments 383. Bishop W.F. McMurry, Presiding Elder H.H. Brower and Pastor, Homer T. Fort.

Lay delegates, West Plains District, Noah L. Brown, W.A. Ruggles, A. McKenzie, T.J. Langston, J.W. Hughes, H.G. Stewart, Mrs. A.T. Kappleman, Mrs. Edith Kirkendoll. Conference Lay Leader, Will A. Ruggles, St. Louis, Mo., Conference Sunday School Superintendent, Rev. M.G. Joyce, Cape Girardeau, Mo., District Secretary of Women's Missionary Society, Mrs. Gus Hon, Thayer, Mo. (Rev. Sam W. Pulliam, serving as supply, Oxly, Mo., Circuit, first year assigned was 1928).

-1929, 82nd Annual Conference, Caruthersville, Mo., Oct. 16-20, 1929, Bishop Wm. F. McMurry. St. Louis, Secretary, J.C. Montgomery. Cape Girardeau, Mo., Conference Lay Leader, Will A. Ruggles, SL Louis, Conference Sunday School Superintendent, Rev. M.G. Joyce, Cape Girardeau, Mo., Women', Society Secretary , West Plains; District, Mrs. Gus Hon, Thayer, Mo.

West Plains District, P.E. H.H. Browe" pastor to West Plains, Homer T. Fort, church membership reported for 1928, 592, for 1929, 653, Sunday School enrollment, 435,

officers and teachers 32, on cradle roll 31, pastor salary \$3,300 paid, total budget, \$36,342.

Lay delegates, West Plains District, W.A. Ruggles, Rev. H.P. Smotherman, Mrs. Gus Hon, Noah Brown, E.C. Bohrer, Mrs. A.L. Kappleman, and J.W. Hughes. (Bishop William Fletcher McMurry, D.D., LL.D., president of Central College, Fayette, Mo.)

-1930, 83rd Annual Conference, at University City, St. L er 15-19, 1930. Bishop A. Frank Smith, Secretary Rev. J.C. Mo Sr., Cape Girardeau, Mo., Conference Lay Leader, Will A. Ruggles, Mo., Secretary Women's Society, West Plains District, Mrs. Gus H Mo.

Lay delegates, West Plains District, M.M. Freeman, West. Daniels, J.W. Hughes, Wm. E. Shoemaker, W.A. Ruggles, Mrs. A.L. Mrs. Gus Hon, and Mrs. R. V. Bardot.

P.E., West Plains, District, H.H. Brower, pastor appointed to West Plains, Rev. C.C. Barnhart, membership report, 563, Sunday School enrollment 325, officers and teachers 33, assessed for pastor, \$3,300, pa \$2805.00; raised for church and parsonage, \$30,000; other budget, \$7,174.00. Organ Committee. (for new pipe organ) J.E. Hull, Charles Bohrer Ila Farley, Mrs. Joe Martin, and Miss Alberta Thornburgh. On February 7, 1930, the Building committee accepted the recommendation of the committee's choice of an organ from the Wicks Organ Company, represented by A.R. Payne-the organ to cost \$5,000,-payments: \$1000 when installed and \$1000 each year with 6% interest on deferred payments from date of acceptance of the organ.

The organ was installed sometime between February 7, 1930 and May 8, 1930. (did not find the exact date given any place). (For the next few years, it being depression years, and the church had a hard time making collection, they almost lost the organ-but after the company had moved some of the organ out front, Arthur Howell went down in town and collected \$300.00 or more to make a payment, and the company put the organ back in and it was finally paid out).

82nd St. Louis Annual Conference Minutes, page 76, gives this from West Plains District report by Presiding Elder, H.H. Brower, concerning the West Plains church: "The merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in West Plains which was accomplished last year (this date of Minutes, Oct. 16-20, 1929) is proving a decided success. A beautiful church building is now under construction which will cost when completed and furnished approximately \$50,000 and will be adequate for a progressive church program."

-1931, 84th Session of Annual Conference, held in West Plains, Mo., October 7-11, 1931-Bishop A. Frank Smith, Secretary Rev. J.C. Montgomery , Sr., Scruggs Memorial Church, St. Louis, Mo., Statistical secretary , Rev. Joe H. Jones, Greenville, Mo., Conference Teller, Rev. R.E. Foard, Dexter, Mo., Conference Lay Leader, Will A. Ruggles, St. James, Mo., Executive Secretary , Board of Christian Education, Rev. J.D. Tussey, St. Louis, Mo. 20

Board of Church Extension, Chairman, Rev. John F. Caskey, University City St. Louis, Mo, Lay members, among others included M.M. Freeman, West Plains Lay delegates to Annual Conference, West Plains District, included E.C. Bohrer, Mrs. Tom Carter, M.M. Freeman, Mrs. Gus Hon, Mrs. Maude Phillips, M.F. Roberts, W.A. Ruggles and M.F. Smotherman.

West Plains District: Presiding Elder, Rev. J.T. Ricke, pastor to West Plains First Methodist, Rev. E.H. Orear, appointed for year 1931-32. Budget raised, \$11,211, paid pastor \$3,300.

There were these churches on the West Plains Circuit: Dripping Springs, Moody, Siloam Springs, South Fork, Valley Union and Valley View-pastor of West Plains Circuit, the Rev. Sam Bohenkamp. Membership West Plains charge-(reported for 1930-563) for 1931, 546. Membership West Plains Circuit: Dripping Springs, 51; Siloam Springs, 12; Moody, 39; South Fork 31; Valley Union,33; Valley View, 0.

Sunday school membership, West Plains Charge-officers and teachers 43, cradle roll, 26, home dept. 12, in other Departments, 29 total enrollment 371.

85th Session of Annual Conference, held at Dexter, Mo., 1932, did not have any Minutes available.

1933, 86th Session Annual Conference, held at Sikeston, Mo., October 18-22, 1933: Bishop A. Frank Smith, Houston, Texas, Secretary, Rev. J.C. Montgomery, Sr., Statistical Secretary, Rev. J. H. Jones, New Haven, Conference Teller, Rev. R.E. Foard, Dexter, Conference Lay Leader, Will A. Ruggles, Missionary Secretary, Rev. E.H. Orear, Sikeston; Executive Secretary, Board of Education, Rev. J.D. Tussey, St. Louis. Board of Church Extension, chairman, Rev. John F. Caskey.

Lay members, among others included M.M. Freeman, West Plains. Lay members to Annual Conference, Poplar Bluff District (West Plains District dissolved and combined with Poplar Bluff District), H. Sam Jones, K.W. Blomeyer, Mrs. Elmer Peck, Mrs. Ethel Womack, Mrs. R. E. Foard, Mrs. M.S. Anderson, Mrs. George Allison, Mrs. W.T. Holley, Mrs. G.R. Ellis, Orville Zimmerman and Mrs. H.E. Ryan.

Presiding Elder, Poplar Bluff District, Rev. J.N. Broadhead, pastor to West Plains Charge, Rev. W.L. Meyer, to West Plains Circuit, Rev. A.R. Sanders (s). Membership reported for 1932, 574, for 1933, 624; West Plains Circuit membership, 242, with Bennett's Chapel added and South Fork and Mtn. Zion combined. Paid pastor only \$2000.00, total budget only \$5327. Sunday School enrollment, 272, officers and teachers 22, cradle roll 20, home dept. 0.

-1934, 87th Session of Annual Conference, held at New McKendree Chapel, Jackson, Mo., Oct. 18-21,1934 and called the Sesquicentennial Year.

Bishop John M. Moore, Dallas, Texas, Secretary, Rev. J.C. Montgomery, Sr., Jackson, Mo., Statistical Secretary, Rev. Joe H. Jones, assistant, Rev. Harold L. Nance, Teller, Rev. R.E. Foard, Dexter; Lay Leader, Will A. Ruggles, SL James, Mo.

Commission on Budget: President, John F. Caskey, Secretary, A. C. Johnson, Clerical, H.H. Brower, E.H. Orear and L.M. Starkey.

Lay delegates, Poplar Bluff District: Mrs. Elmer Peck, Mrs. M.S. Anderson, H. Sam Jones, Mrs. Harold Nance, Mrs. J.N. Broadhead, Mrs. J.W. Miller, K.W. Blowmeyer, O. Zimmerman, Mrs. G.R. Ellis, C.A. Howell, and Mrs. Gus Hon.