

A Short History of the Evans Chapel

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INTRODUCTION

"Neither do men put new wine into old bottles . . ." (Matthew ix, 17). But an old church on a new foundation is a different matter. The 82-year-old Evans Chapel, erected in 1878 at West 13th Avenue and Bannock Street, has been reerected, 1960, in the quadrangle west of the Mary Reed Library on the University Park Campus of the University of Denver. This little jewel of Gothic architecture, reputed to be the oldest Protestant church in Denver, has now become a place of meditation, devotional and memorial services and much coveted for college weddings.

Supplementing the spacious facilities of Buchtel Memorial Chapel, the Evans Chapel serves as a symbol of the religious and cultural heritage of the University of Denver as well as a place of quiet and inspiration for the University community.

THE OCCASION

Evans Mission Sunday School

Among the mission projects coming out of the Lawrence Street (at 14th Street) Methodist Episcopal Church was the **Evans Mission Sunday School**, called "Evans" because of its location in the Evans Addition, immediately west of Broadway and south of Colfax Avenue. This Addition consisted of 80 acres of land.

The Rev. Bethuel T. Vincent, pastor of the Lawrence Street Church, organized the school in May 1873, assisted by Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Mund, Mrs. C. A. Deane, Mrs. Luther Coggins and Robert Davis.

The school first met in an abandoned ice house, at what is now West 13th Avenue and Delaware Street, which had been fitted up as a house and was owned by C. A. Deane. He gave the larger

furnished upstairs room for the school. Later, a public school took over the upstairs room and the Sunday School met downstairs.

Because of various inconveniences in the meeting place of this early Sunday School, some of the people asked Ex-Governor John Evans if he would not help them erect a cheap and temporary building. About the same Rev. B. T. Vincent and Peter Winne seem to have approached Evans about a building. The outcome was that John Evans decided not to build a temporary building, but a permanent structure in memory of his daughter, Josephine Evans Elbert, who had died in 1868.

Josephine Evans Elbert

Josephine Evans Elbert was the daughter of Dr. John Evans and his first wife, Hannah Canby Evans. Josephine was the fourth and last child of this marriage and the only one to survive infancy. Mrs. Hannah Evans was of extremely delicate health and though she bore her affliction with sweet fortitude, her almost constant illness during their twelve years of married life was a source of great and constant anxiety to her husband, intensified no doubt, by the knowledge that his medical skill was of no avail to save the one dearest to him.

In Edgar C. McMechen's "Life of Governor Evans" (1924) is a brief sketch of Josephine Evans Elbert, including a tribute by Bishop Matthew Simpson.

Late in the year (1868), Josephine Evans Elbert, whose poor health had been so instrumental in bringing her father to Colorado, passed quietly away. He was devoted to her and her death shook his composure as no reverse of fortune could have done. She had married Secretary Samuel H. Elbert in 1865 in the old Evanston home where she had spent so many happy years of her childhood, Bishop Simpson performing the

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ceremony. It was her wish that the marriage take place there and, as the home had never been sold, the family repaired thither to attend the happy union. Practically everyone in the village knew and loved her, and the event of her wedding was one of great social importance. Her residence in Colorado had not improved her health, as hoped, and after the birth of a child in 1868, she sank rapidly toward the grave. One of the most delicate and eloquent passages from the pen of Bishop Simpson, printed in the Northwestern Christian Advocate, December 2nd, 1868, tells of these last golden hours, and illuminates the gentle nature that made her a favorite with all who knew her:

Blessed with abundance of earthly means, loved by her friends, respected by all who knew her, she entered upon the active scenes of life. But a feeble constitution, inherited from a departed mother, gave indications of approaching consumption. She sought the high plains of Colorado. Its mountain air invigorated her system. She loved to breathe its pure atmosphere and to look upon its towering mountains. She enjoyed the magnificent scenery, and for a time seemed to triumph over disease. Three years passed away and last June I saw her in her own home, gradually sinking away as a flower fades beneath the gentle skies. Her form was emaciated, but she had all the quickness of intellect and all the vivacity of her youthful hours. She held in her arms a little babe, her only boy, a few weeks old, and looked upon him with all the fondness of a mother's heart, doubtful whether she should be spared to guide his youthful steps. She clung to life for the sake of her husband and her child and her circle of friends, and yet she looked out into the future without darkness and without fear. A few weeks later her little boy closed his eyes in the slumbers of death, and another tie joined her to the invisible world to which she was hastening. A few days before her death, when her father informed her she must pass away, she said, "I have no pain and no fear." Early one morning she felt an unusual ringing in her ears and asked her father the cause. He informed her it was the sinking of her system. She replied: "It is the ringing from the other shore," and turning to her hus-

band she smiled and said: "I shall see the sun rise in Heaven." After this she lingered for some time, and then, sweetly and softly, her pure spirit passed away to greet the loved ones on that "other shore."

THE EVANS CHAPEL 1874-1878 John Evans Builds the Chapel

Ground was broken for the Memorial Chapel in the Spring of 1874 but construction was delayed because of the financial problems growing out of the Panic of 1873. In the year 1875 F. C. Millington, while minister of St. James Methodist Church—on West Colfax Ave.—helped raise some of the funds for the Chapel by selling some lots belonging to Evans and applying the money to furnishing the building. The Evans Chapel was completed at a cost of \$13,000.

The Colorado Conference of the Methodist Church, in session at Golden, received on August 7, 1878 from John Evans the following letter addressed to Reverend F. C. Millington, Secretary:

Dear Brother:

I desire to present my thanks for the timely and efficient assistance you have given in disposing of property to raise the means of furnishing my little church in Evans Addition to Denver. Also, in behalf of the society that may hereafter worship there. I would return thanks for the efforts you have made in providing the furniture for the church, when I have completed the edifice. Please inform the Bishop (Matthew Simpson) and brethren of the Colorado Annual Conference that the little church, with the four lots on the corner of South Fourteenth and Olive streets (West 13th Avenue and Bannock street) where it stands, are at the service of the M. E. Church. Also that the edifice, fully completed, will be ready for dedication and use in a few weeks. Also that I propose then to deed it, free from encumbrance, to trustees, to be held by them as church property, according to the regulations of the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. However, I propose to impose as a condition of the donation that the property shall never be made liable for any debts, nor be alienated from the purpose of teaching and of religious worship. Please ask the Conference to accept it and to make such provision for its use as may seem best.

Dedication of the Evans Chapel October 10, 1878

The Evans Chapel was dedicated by Bishop Matthew Simpson on October 10, 1878.

In the Iliff School of Theology Archives is the invitation card to the dedication ceremony addressed to Mrs. John Wesley Iliff. It reads:

Mrs. Iliff:

You are invited to the dedication services at the chapel, Evans Addition, Corner 14th and Olive Street, October 10th at 3 P. M.

(Signed) John Evans

An account of the Dedication Ceremony appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, Friday morning, October 11, 1878. It follows:

Governor Evans' Gift

The Handsome Memorial Erected to the Memory of his Dead Daughter

The dedication of Evans Chapel, on the corner of South 14th and Olive streets was an event which had been anticipated with a great deal of pleasure by many of the friends of Governor John Evans, and when the hour for the ceremonies to take place arrived yesterday afternoon, the handsome little edifice was well crowded, nearly every seat being taken. The chapel is commodious, well lighted, comfortable and presents a cheerful, bright appearance. The roof is arched and is finished in Gothic style, the carved wood work being most tastefully arranged. The church fronts on Olive street, with the entrance on the left.

A Description of the Chapel

The wall in the rear of the altar and facing the audience, is decorated with a large white cross, over which is inscribed the words:

Erected by John Evans, A. D. 1878.
In Memory of his daughter,
Josephine Elbert

At the foot of the cross is another memorial line giving the age and date of the death of the daughter. The cere-

mony of dedication had been deferred until the chapel was completed entire. The seats were all in place and the main body of the audience room and aisles were neatly carpeted. On the minister's desk some fair hand had placed two handsome bouquets of fresh flowers, while the low soft notes of the organ at which Mrs. Albert Dyer presided pealed forth a welcome to the congregation as they entered and were shown seats by ushers. On the platform the venerable Bishop Simpson was seated, while around the desk were grouped Rev. Earl Cranston of the Lawrence Street church, Dr. F. M. Ellis of the First Baptist, Dr. T. E. Bliss of St. Paul's, Rev. H. S. Hilton of St. James, Rev. J. H. Millington of the California Street church, Rev. Mr. McClelland of New York, and the trustees of the chapel, to whom it was about to be deeded by Governor Evans.

The services were opened by a long and fervent prayer offered up by Rev. Mr. McClelland of New York. This was followed by the rendition of the hymn, "Consider the Lilies," rendered in excellent style, and with a great deal of expression, by the well-known quintette of the Lawrence Street church. Rev. Earl Cranston then read the lesson of the day from the book of Proverbs, and this was followed by another hymn. Another chapter of the Scriptures was read by Rev. J. H. Millington, and, after a hymn by the entire congregation, and a further reading of the Scriptures by Rev. H. S. Hilton, Bishop Simpson arose to deliver the dedicatory sermon.

Bishop Simpson's Address

Bishop Simpson took for his text a portion of the Sixtieth chapter of Isaiah: He said the opening of a new sanctuary always calls for songs of praise and thanksgiving. It is always an occasion for rejoicing, because it is a convincing evidence of the growth of Christianity. Long before the coming of Christ the prophet foresaw that there would be a multitude of churches. In Israel there was but one temple—remarkable for its beauty and

elegance—and a multitude of synagogues. Our churches have taken more the place of the synagogues, because that is where the multitude assembled, and that is why there is glory and praise when another edifice is to be dedicated to the glory of God. In the book of Revelations God points out how He walks out in the churches and He will dwell with them forever. We see the gradual growth that God has given to the spirit of religion. There are always to be seen invisible manifestations of His presence and watchful care. At one time he was present in the pillar of fire, at another (in the time of Moses) in the burning bush, but as time passed on, these visible manifestations gave way and people did not continue to look for them. When Christ came to us He came as the babe in the manger and the Man of Sorrows. He walked among us as a man among men. We have all felt the longing to see Him—to have Him lay His hands upon us—to hear Him speak to us. But we cannot have Him save in an invisible form. He is in this church today—omnipotent in the glory of His power. This is the chief glory of the Christian church, that God is always among us. But if we look at it, we will see that God has fulfilled His promise to make 'the place of His feet glorious.' We plead for no gorgeousness in the church. It should be plain, commodious and ample. God's house should always be, in its arrangement and design, more beautiful than those where we dwell ourselves. Go where you will in the world you will find Christian churches. It is often said that in this western country Christianity, in the respect of erecting churches, is comparatively a failure. But they seem to forget the fact that we have left our churches behind us. We brought our families but left our churches in our old homes. We have come away from our birthplaces, leaving the churches where our fathers and mothers worshipped, and coming out to this new country, are building new ones, and by this multiplication God is making His church glorious. Another significant fact. These

churches will stand amid the crash and wreck that prevails in commercial and mercantile circles. You seldom hear of a church closing. Its doors are wide open for the multitude to afford shelter for all who seek it. God has made His house glorious, because it is one of joy. The Christian church is a house of joy. It is a house of universal joy. There is no such music as that of the Christian church. The sounds that swell out from the portals of our sanctuary—out of our Sunday schools—linger on the lips of the worldly, on the sick and the dying, bringing hope and comfort to all. The home of education is in the bosom of the Christian church. You cannot civilize the people by building colleges and schools. You civilize them by telling them of the coming of Christ. I need only appeal to what you know, that progress everywhere is where the church is . . . I wish God-speed to every house of worship, and I rejoice at this erection. It gives me joy to think that God put it in the heart of our brother to build this church. Long after all his other enterprises have been carried out, and long after his busy life will have ended, the children will congregate under this roof, and there will be songs of praise and songs of joy for years to come. The bishop then paid a very eloquent and glowing tribute to the memory of Josephine Evans Elbert, in whose memory the chapel has been erected. The allusions to the dead daughter of the founder of the chapel were very touching, and there were few dry eyes in the large congregation when Bishop Simpson had closed one of the ablest, most eloquent and touching addresses in this city.

The Ceremony of Dedication

At the close of the sermon, Bishop Simpson stated that as a part of the dedication ceremony he would like to extend the invitation to church membership, and a lady went forward and was received into the church. The trustees of the chapel were then asked to step to the front and the ceremony of dedication was continued. The trustees include Ex-

Governor Samuel H. Elbert, Robert Morris, S. A. Rice, W. B. Mills, Frank Church, A. R. Dyer and the donor, Governor Evans. To these Governor Evans handed the deed of the chapel, for the uses specified. The deed, in turn, was handed by Ex-Gov. Elbert to Bishop Simpson who received it, and in a few solemn words dedicated the chapel to the service of God. Then followed a fervent prayer, in which the entire audience joined, and after the singing of the doxology, and the benediction, the audience dispersed. The chapel is in St. James Methodist Episcopal church parish, and as such will be under the supervision of Rev. H. S. Hilton. There will be regular Sunday services and Sunday School meetings, and in time the chapel will have its regular pastor. The ceremony of dedication was quite impressive throughout, and will be long remembered by those who were fortunate enough to be present.

Governor John Evans and Bishop Matthew Simpson

The friendship of Governor Evans and Bishop Simpson had grown continuously warmer and more vital since their first meeting in Attica, Indiana. While practicing medicine in Attica in the early 1840's, Dr. Evans formed one of the strongest friendships of his life. At the time of their first meeting, 1841, Matthew Simpson was president of Asbury College, now De Pauw University, in Greencastle, Indiana. To get financial aid, and students for his struggling college, President Simpson, the evangel of education, rode from one end of Indiana to the other. His great lecture on "Education" captured Dr. Evans and thrilled him.

"Man is the creature of education,"

Dr. Evans heard him say. "He is perpetually receiving an education . . . Our only power is to choose in what the youth shall be educated . . . We may not attempt to stay the current, but we may prepare the channel. . . .

"Colleges," Simpson declared, "are necessary for the prosperity of any community . . . The proper time to

found literary institutions is in the infancy of a community."

Evans went to hear Simpson on other occasions, and it was largely the Simpson influence that persuaded Evans to join the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1842, and in the years that followed produced two great universities.

In 1865 Bishop Simpson officiated at the marriage of Josephine Evans and Samuel H. Elbert in Evanston, Illinois. And, as noted above, in 1878, it was Bishop Simpson who gave the dedication address for the Evans Chapel, and a brilliant address it was. Again, the two men were together on the same platform, October 4, 1880, with the formal opening of the new University of Denver. Bishop Simpson was in Denver on his return from the Pacific coast, and made the address of the occasion. These formal occasions were only a few of the many meetings of these two men of God, who labored during their lives for the advancement of religion and education.

EVANS CHAPEL 1878-1889

The Evans Chapel 1878-1884

The Evans Chapel became the fourth appointment in the city of Denver proper, being preceded by the Lawrence Street, the California Street and the St. James (West Colfax) Methodist Churches.

Governor Evans had asked the Methodist Conference to supply the Chapel with a minister which they did in the person of Rev. H. S. Hilton. For two years Hilton served St. James and Evans Chapel as one charge.

J. F. McClelland, an invalid seeking health, was appointed to Evans Chapel in 1880, at a time when there were only five members on the roll. However, at the end of the first year he registered forty-three members and a Sunday School of 136. Perhaps a part of the explanation of his \$3,000 salary for his first year is the rental of the pews. It is recorded that John Evans' pew cost him \$1,400 that year. After a year and a half, McClelland's health continued to fail, and the year was filled out by Dr.

David H. Moore, then Chancellor of the University of Denver.

At the Conference of 1882, C. W. Buoy was appointed to fill the vacancy, himself a son-in-law of Bishop Simpson. The altitude did not agree with Buoy however, and after one and one-half years, he returned East where he recovered. When he first came to Evans Chapel, the membership stood at 90, with the Sunday School at 263, reflecting substantial gain. The remaining half-year was completed again by Chancellor David H. Moore. The statistics of this rather hectic year show a decrease in salary from \$3,500 to \$2,288, a decrease in Sunday School from 263 to 170, but an increase in church membership to 127.

At the Conference of 1884, E. T. Curnick was appointed to the Chapel, but he stayed only a portion of the year, returning East for his wife's health. Regardless of the difficulties he faced his records for the year 1884-5 show a membership increase to 157 and the Sunday School enrollment to 209.

Great foresight, and perhaps some lucky "hunches," had preceded the establishment of the new church in the outskirts of Denver in the 1870's. Before 1880, the shift of population was already noticed and the area around the little church became one where many of the mansions were built. From the homes located on what is now the Civic Center and lower Capitol Hill, much of the wealth of the city became concentrated soon in Evans Chapel. In 1884 the *News* described the church as "one of the most popular and wealthy churches in the city."

Thus we see that in these few short years, from a mission of the Lawrence Street Church, the beautiful Evans Chapel was built, dedicated, and became a church with a significant future ahead of it.

Evans Chapel and the Erection of Grace M. E. Church 1884-1889

During the ministry of E. T. Curnick, it is noted that the Official Board had

decided to complete the church building by construction the the larger sanctuary immediately east of, and joining the little Evans Chapel to seat approximately one thousand persons. However, there was also a movement to consolidate the Evans Chapel membership with the Lawrence Street Church, to make a more adequate organization and building for both. The final outcome was the Evans Chapel developed into Grace Church and the Lawrence Street built their own church, naming it Trinity.

The successor to Curnick was Dr. Henry Augustus Buchtel who was destined to have a long career in Colorado Methodism. Dr. Buchtel stayed at Evans Chapel only one year however, for the next year, 1886, he was appointed to the Lawrence Street Church. Buchtel showed a membership increase of 26 and a Sunday School enrollment increase of only one person.

Evans Chapel came into its own with the ministry of Gilbert de LaMatyr. This minister, formerly a Civil War Chaplain and a Congressman, sparked the enthusiasm which was needed to continue the building program, and place the permanent name of Grace Church on the edifice. When de LaMatyr came to Evans Chapel the membership stood at 183 and the Sunday School at 210. During his three years (1886-1889) the membership climbed to 234, for a net increase of 51, while his Sunday School dropped drastically from 210 to 129.

Buchtel received the highest salary in Denver for his year at Evans Chapel (1885-6) when he received \$4,000. At the same time the Lawrence Street Church was paying Gilbert de LaMatyr only \$3,500. Then the interesting switch came in 1886 when the men exchanged churches.

The crowning achievement of de LaMatyr was his carrying through of the plans to increase the size of the church edifice by building the much needed sanctuary, Grace M. E. Church, adjoining the Evans Chapel. The same style of architecture, pure Gothic, and the same build-

ing material, red sandstone, the whole surmounted by a graceful and delicate spire. Both Governor and Mrs. Margaret Gray Evans, his second wife, took keen interest in the structural designs. Mrs. Evans was highly gifted with artistic sense, and she and her husband spent several weeks in consultation with Fred Sternes, the architect who designed the church, as to the correct proportions for the spire, until both were satisfied with the result. The Governor's initial contribution toward the erection of this church was \$20,000, not including the lots or Chapel building. This was one of the few occasions when he devoted personal attention to a subject that was purely artistic in its nature. He was not especially interested in the fine arts. Nevertheless, he valued the arts for the joy that they bring into life, and he had an instinctive appreciation of the beautiful.

The completed Grace Church was dedicated Sunday, January 27, 1889, free of debt. Bishop Henry White Warren preached the dedicatory sermon. The total cost of the church building was \$85,000, with some special gifts in addition, the main one being the beautiful stained glass window given by the Iliffs, William S. Iliff, Edna Iliff Briggs and Louise Iliff. The Evans Chapel formed a part of the total structure of Grace Methodist Episcopal Church.

GRACE M. E. CHURCH WITH THE EVANS CHAPEL 1889-1953

The Heyday 1889-1900

The Grace Church between 1890 and 1900 was one of the wealthiest in the city, and was situated at the heart of the most prosperous sections of the town as well. Though the church paid high salaries, it did not appeal to the large population directly around the church. Hence, when the wealth began to shift east and south of the State Capitol, the church found itself unable to get many new members which it needed for adequate support.

Transient Population in the Area and its Effects upon the Church Program

During the ministry of the Rev. Christian F. Reisner, 1903-1910, it was decided that if Grace Church ever would have a future, it would have to change its approach radically. Trinity M. E. Church was only seven blocks away, with more facilities, a large staff, and more prestige. Grace could not compete with them. The old members of Grace had moved to Capitol Hill, Park Hill or other outskirts and were no longer interested in coming downtown for their church activities. Reisner began an extensive campaign of advertisement of all kinds, of special programs, and other popular appeals. Seemingly the high point of Reisner's ministry was his variety and ingenious ways of appealing to the people who would not otherwise be interested in the church. The people of the area had become a transient population, with roots in no church, and with no loyalties in Denver. The stranger could feel welcome at his church, and the curious were usually surprised. The membership climbed from 315 in 1903 to a high of 900 in 1909, and back down to 712 during his last year. The Sunday School does not reflect quite such rapid growth, climbing from 275 in 1903 to 478 in 1909.

The Denver Labor College and a Denver Open Forum

The same problem remained with Grace Church through the years, and was met in different ways at different times. For example, in 1919, the Grace Community Center was built with the express purpose of getting youth off the streets into some type of wholesome, planned recreation. During the ministry of the Rev. George S. Lackland, during the early 1920's, the church became known as the church for the working man, the laboring people. They formed within the church a Denver Labor College and a Denver Open Forum to appeal to the people living in that particular area. The Social Service motif was also present in all phases of the Center's activity.

In the 1930's and early 1940's the minister was Edgar M. Wahlberg who continued to emphasize the recreation, social action, labor and social service functions.

Rev. Edgar M. Wahlberg's Time and Attention in Preserving the Evans Chapel

Rev. Wahlberg, now of the Mount Olivet Community Methodist Church of Dearborn, Michigan, in a letter, dated March 1, 1960, to Dr. Martin Rist, of the Iliff School of Theology, tells of the time and attention given to preserving the Evans Chapel while he was at Grace Church. The letter follows:

Dear Martin:

Yes, I am aware that the Evans Chapel has been removed to the University of Denver campus. I made quite a study of the original appointments of the Chapel when I was minister of Grace Church. I collaborated with Ann Evans, of the Evans family. She took a deep interest in restoring the Chapel.

When I went there, there was a large stage to serve a dramatic group. We took the stage out of the Chapel and replaced it with a circular platform which was about a normal step high. We discovered the original chancel rail which was circular to conform to the platform. We were fortunate to discover the original pews which had been given to a Methodist Church somewhere west of Denver. They had been given to this church during the pastorate of George Lackland. We recovered them and placed them in the Chapel. All this was there when I left Grace Church in 1945. We were never able to recover the pulpit chair or the pulpit itself. It would seem that no one knows what happened to them. However we received from the city of Denver a judge's desk which was an original piece of furniture in the old City Hall. It fitted rather nicely as a pulpit in Evans Chapel. This, too, was there when I left in 1945. When I first went to Grace Church, in 1930, there was an old ragged carpet which covered the entire chapel floor except for the unsightly stage. We removed the carpet and painted the floor temporarily. We covered the circular platform with a rather fine carpet which, I am sure, has disintegrated with time. Later the original pine floor was covered with a hardwood flooring. This was done in

one of the remodeling programs which was initiated during my pastorate.

The enclosed picture will show that the Evans Chapel originally had a stone cross at the very top and a stone cross over the entrance to the Chapel. The stonework was in bad shape and in need of repair, so what remained of these stone crosses and other decorating stones was removed in the interest of safety and the preservation of the rest of the Chapel. I have the specifications for these crosses in my files somewhere, and if you want them I shall make an effort to find them. I am sure that I have preserved quite a number of papers going back into the history of Evans Chapel and Grace Church.

Among the things we did to the Chapel was to remove the art window from the street side and place it on the chancel side,—that is, from the north to the south side. I think it should be known that this window was originally on the street side of the Chapel. As you can see, we gave a lot of time and attention to preserving this historical building.

I had a great reverence for the Chapel. During my ministry the Evans family supported a school children's lunch which was held in the Chapel. Both Ann and Katherine Evans gave a lot of time to the activities revolving around the Chapel.

In one of the remodeling programs we excavated under the Chapel to provide for extra space for our program.

I trust this information will be of help.

Sincerely yours,
Edgar M. Wahlberg

In 1949 the Robert W. Speer Club of Denver presented a plaque to Grace Community Church to commemorate the 135th birthday of the late Governor John Evans who had helped or organize the church and had donated the original building known as "Evans Chapel."

The Last Service Held by the Methodists at Grace Church

December 27, 1953 marked the last service held by the Methodists at Grace Church. It had been decided by the Methodist officials that the church should be abandoned and relocated. The name of Grace Church was consequently taken to University Hills, a new addition to the southwest corner of Denver, where at the

present time, 1960, one may see a new and modern Grace Church carrying on the same tradition of the former location,

THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER ACQUIRES THE GRACE CHURCH AND EVANS CHAPEL

Denver University Acquires the Grace Church Property

The Assembly of God purchased the Grace Church property in December of 1952 and services were held there for a few years. But with the erection of their new church at East Alameda and South University Avenues, the property was up for sale.

In the meantime the University of Denver was planning the erection of a Law Center at West 14th Avenue and Bannock Street, facing the Civic Center. Ample off-street parking space was needed and in September 1958 the University of Denver purchased the former Grace Church property.

The Movement to Preserve the Evans Chapel

When the news was out that the University planned to demolish the church buildings, Dr. Martin Rist, President of the Rocky Mountain Methodist Historical Society, called the attention of Chancellor Chester M. Alter to the importance of preserving the Evans Chapel as being the oldest Protestant church in Denver.

A movement was at once started with Dr. Alter as the leader. He asserted, "Few landmarks which reflect the precious past of a region are held in greater esteem by its people than an historic place of worship." The Chancellor voiced a "growing and understandable concern over the destruction of the homes and churches and other places where Americans before us lived and worked, structures in which are mirrored their way of life, their ideals and character, which are our greatest heritage."

Endorsing the Chancellor's sentiment the **Rocky Mountain News** urged editorially "Let's Save the Chapel." In seeking a reprieve for "this little jewel of a church," the **News** declared, "We feel—

as the University officials feel—that the Chapel should be preserved, not only as a source of inspiration and a place for prayer for students and faculty, but as an historical piece to be treasured."

Harvey Willson, University of Denver vice chancellor and treasurer, added his voice. "We're losing many of our Denver landmarks," he said. "I'd hate to put a bulldozer to the Chapel."

"The preservation urged on so many fronts was made possible when the Evans family, led by Mr. John Evans, grandson of Governor Evans, contributed the necessary funds to move the Chapel to the University Park campus. His son, the present chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Denver, is the fourth consecutive member of the Evans family to serve in this capacity, a unique record in the annals of higher education.

Before the delicate work of removal got under way a campus site was selected and a foundation laid, on a direct axis between Mary Reed Library and Mount Evans, named in honor of the great western pioneer.

The Problem of Transporting the Entire Structure to University Park

Two plans for preserving the historic Evans Chapel were proposed. One for transporting the entire structure, the other for moving it stone by stone.

As to the plan for transporting the entire structure, City Traffic Engineer Jack Brue said "the city agrees it is a fine thing to preserve old landmarks, but moving a structure which weights 427 tons, and is forty feet wide, forty feet high and fifty feet long, seems to be beyond the realm of feasibility." He said it would take days to move, would require the closing of some streets, the reinforcement of the Logan Street bridge over Cherry Creek and the removal of traffic signals. "If anything went wrong the Logan Street bridge could be closed for over three months and streets for a week or more," Bruce pointed out.

From meetings of University officials, architect Carl F. Beiler and represent-

atives of the Gerald H. Phipps construction company, came the decision to dismantle stone by stone, timber by timber, and window by window, the 81-year-old house of early Methodist worship for removal of the University Park Campus.

Before the dismantling was done by hand, hundreds of separate stones and construction pieces were carefully numbered and the photographed for exact restoration. A photograph by Dick Davis of the **Rocky Mountain News**, in the issue of November 26, 1959, shows a portion of the Chapel before it was completely dismantled with the white numbers on the stones and the following comment underneath the picture:

BY THE NUMBERS, MEN

Keep your fingers crossed that no one loses the key to this stone puzzle. Evans Memorial Chapel at West 13th Avenue and Bannock Street was ready to be moved after workmen painstakingly numbered each stone. Each row of stones has a letter followed by a number on the individual stones. When the stones are moved to D. U. Campus they will be put together again, the reassembled chapel refurbished and set in a garden surrounding. Grace Community Church, which stood on the corner east of the Chapel, has been torn down.

THE EVANS MEMORIAL CHAPEL ON THE UNIVERSITY PARK CAMPUS

A Description of the Chapel

And so the work of moving the Evans Chapel proceeded truckload by truckload to the University Park campus and the rebuilding was performed by the patient and efficient hands of skilled workmen.

Faithful reconstruction followed every detail of the original structure's exterior from the buttress ornaments to the cast iron crests on the ridge roof. The gable cross is from the old Grace Church, and stone from that building has been retained for parapets, walls, steps and pools to comprise a landscaped garden surrounding the chapel.

The interior provides seating for sixty-four and a choir of twelve. The chancel is simple in design, appropriate to the

heritage of the building and its contemporary role in campus religious life. The pink color carries through the exterior tone within the edifice while the carpeting of the aisles harmonizes with the color and character of the flagstone floor. When appropriate antique chandeliers could not be found, they were molded from castings located in Central City. Lamp and bulb covers are the glass globes which served in the state capitol building before the advent of electricity and bear the state seal. A pipe organ suitable in style to the historic place of worship is planned for the future.

One piece of the furniture in the interior to come from the early days of the Chapel is one of the benches on the chancel. And this piece was duplicated for the other of the two benches. The original bench is on the side with the pulpit. As to the story of how this bench came to the present reconstructed Evans Chapel we have a note, dated December 27, 1960 from Dr. Rist.

It reads:

I had known that an original bench of the Evans Chapel had been acquired by Rev. Preston Childress, then at Lakewood, Colorado, later at La Junta, Colorado, and more recently at Ogden Utah. When I learned that the Evans Chapel was to be moved to the University of Denver Campus in University Park I wrote Mr. Childress at Ogden asking him if he still had this bench, and if so, would he return it. He replied that he no longer had the bench, that he had left it at the parsonage in La Junta. My student assistant, Emery Percell, called on the present pastor at La Junta, found that the bench was in the basement of the parsonage, received the pastor's permission to have it returned to Denver, and then brought it to Denver in his car. He and I then carried it over to Chancellor Alter's office.

(Signed) Martin Rist.

A Service of Thanksgiving and Blessing

The reerection of the Evans Memorial Chapel on the University Park Campus was completed in April, 1960, in time for an Act of Thanksgiving and Blessing in which more than 60 bishops

of the Methodist Episcopal Church participated on April 22, 1960. The Methodist leaders, members of the Council of Bishops, were in Denver in connection with the denomination's 11-day quadrennial General Conference.

On June 10, 1960, the Baccalaureate services for the 1960 graduating class were concluded with a rededication of the Evans Memorial Chapel.

Following the choir, faculty and distinguished guests, in procession, the seniors marched from the Buchtel Memorial Chapel to the Evans Memorial Chapel, where an outdoor ceremony of rededication took place.

Rev. Harvey W. Hollis, Executive Secretary, Denver Area Council of the Churches of Christ, delivered the invocation, Chancellor Chester M. Alter made the dedicatory statement and Bishop Glenn R. Phillips of the Denver Area of the Methodist Church gave the special prayer of dedication, followed by a litany of dedication led by Chaplain Rhodes.

Selected students, faculty, trustees and distinguished guests then entered the Chapel for a brief act of rededication. The University Choir sang the dedicatory anthem "God of all Wisdom," composed by Norman Lockwood with words by Professor R. Russell Porter, from the University of Denver 1960 presentation, "The Land of Promise." Dale Wright, General Chairman, The Student Chapel Committee, read the Dedicatory Scripture, which was followed by a unison prayer of rededication. The Rev. Walter Sikes, Professor of Sociology, pronounced

the benediction. Mr. Edward Horsky, graduating senior, served as organist.

CONCLUSION

By its very location on the University Park campus of the University of Denver, the Evans Memorial Chapel is central to the daily round of most students. It may be used for individual private meditations or for a number of small group events, such as weddings, baptisms, or memorial services. Established religious bodies at the University may use it for worship services or the presentation of religious drama.

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