

Baptist congregation was a downtown fixture in '01

At the northwest corner of Fourth and Washington streets are a bus stop and parking lot. It was not always so.

Early in 1901 the Baptist congregation of Bloomington announced that they would build a new church near the square. The Fourth and Washington site was not new to the Baptists, since their parsonage was already located there and would have to be moved.

The Feb. 22, 1901, article described the plans. "The building will be of Old English Cathedral style with gables on the east and west and a massive tower in the center, giving the effect of a cross. An old style English porch will also give the church the appearance so noticeable in such buildings in England."

The Bloomington *Daily Telephone* article gave additional details about the building —



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

that it was to be made of Ashlar Oolitic stone with a slate roof.

How large was it to be? According to the newspaper, the dimensions were 104 by 66 feet with a street level and a basement. Furthermore, the building was to be "modern in every detail."

Two entrances would provide access from the east and south.

The reader of the article gets a hint of the size of the congregation. "The main auditorium will seat 350 people and have circular

seats with raised floor."

As for the pulpit in the "auditorium," it would face north, and the choir loft was to be elevated a foot behind the minister. The baptistery was concealed behind a sliding door.

There were, of course, Sunday school rooms adjacent to the main auditorium. The architect gave the church some additional flexibility. "The main room (of the Sunday school area) will seat 250 and is so connected that a raising partition will make it one room with the auditorium, seating 600 in all."

There was a 13- by 16-foot library room with its own outside entrance for the convenience of visitors. A ladies' parlor had a folding partition to divide it into two rooms, if needed, and it was next door to the kitchen "with range and all cooking and serving equipments."

Other important details were mentioned in the article. There was to be a full basement with two furnaces. "There will also be check rooms, dressing apartments and storage rooms."

Was the building an ambitious project? Not so, according to the *Telephone*. There was an estimate of \$10,000 "... although it may be necessary to make some changes in the plans now considered." The congregation of some 270 was debt-free and had the "determination that means success." The *Telephone* credits the minister, the Rev. C.E. Clough, with the congregation's enthusiasm for the project.

Concluded the newspaper, "The congregation is united, active and harmonious, and the community joins in the hope that the splendid undertaking as outlined above will be carried out in every detail."

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