

WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.

Centenary United Methodist Church

Terre Haute's Centenary United Methodist Church dedicated its first house of worship at 301 N. Seventh Street in December of 1866, during the Centennial of American Methodism. It was named to commemorate the anniversary. Since its genesis, disastrous fires in 1883 and 1916 have intervened. The attractive limestone edifice there today was completed in 1917.

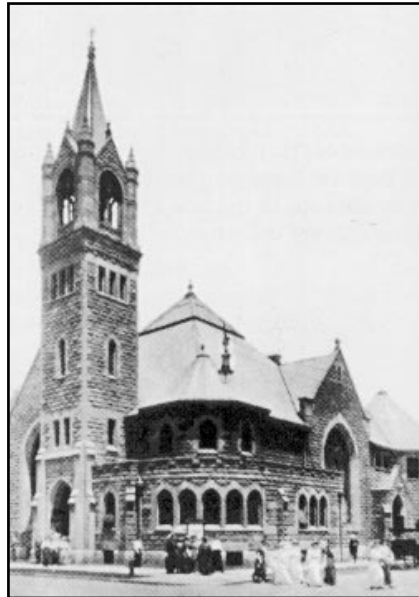
Methodism in the Wabash Valley predates the settlement of Terre Haute. Rev. Jonathan Stamper, a chaplain in the Kentucky Volunteers, braved the wilderness to minister to soldiers at Fort Harrison during the War of 1812. Circuit riders followed. The denomination may be Terre Haute's earliest established Protestant sect. A parish in Honey Creek Township was active before 1820. By 1826 the Methodist Society met regularly in the first Vigo County Courthouse.

In 1834 the society occupied the northwest corner of Fourth and Poplar streets on the lot designated by the village plat "for church purposes." The small wood structure cost \$800. In 1841 the Greek Revival Asbury Chapel, a distinctive landmark later known as "Old Asbury," replaced it, serving as a house of worship through 1894.

Old Asbury's swelling congregation compelled separation. In 1848 a branch was founded at "Sibleytown," an area north of the point where the Wabash & Erie Canal crossed North Third Street. The Sibleytown Church disbanded in 1866 and proceeds from the sale of its property helped build Centenary United Methodist Church, the inspiration of Rev. William Graham. It was dedicated by the Rev. Thomas M. Eddy. Between 1890 and 1896, the congregation established four missions in the community: Mattox Chapel, Maple Avenue, Montrose and Trinity. Each eventually became a self-supported church.

Meanwhile, other Methodist churches sprouted throughout the city. Among the earliest was the German Methodist Church — later Calvary Methodist Church — organized in 1850 on the north side of Mulberry Street between Fourth and Fifth. In 1882 a larger structure was built at the southwest corner of Fifth and Mulberry streets.

When First Methodist Church was completed in 1895 for \$45,000 at the northwest corner of Seventh and Poplar streets during Rev. Isaac Dale's pastorate, Asbury Chapel was abandoned. Renamed United Methodist Temple, the exquisite building was vacated in 1969 and the congregation relocated to 5301 Dixie Bee Road. The Vigo County Public Library now occupies the former site.



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