

WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

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

Central Presbyterian Church



Central Presbyterian Church at Seventh and Mulberry streets is the successor to Terre Haute's first organized religious congregation.

In late 1827, a dozen pioneers solicited the Rev. David Monfort, minister at the Bethel Church of Cincinnati, to form a new Protestant church in the 11-year-old Wabash River village. An organizational meeting was conducted May 17, 1828, at the first Vigo County courthouse.

Besides Rev. Monfort and his wife Phoebe, founders of the First Presbyterian Church included Samuel and Margaret Young, Samuel

and Mary Ewing, James and Jane Beard, John and Margaret McCollough, Orval Dibble, William C. Linton, John Britton and Capt. James Wasson. The congregation erected a frame building at the northwest corner of Fifth and Poplar streets which was utilized until 1863.

A Princeton Theological Seminary alumnus, the gregarious Monfort returned to Ohio in late 1829 following the death of his wife and daughter, but eventually achieved national ecclesiastic prominence. For three years, the Terre Haute parish relied upon visiting and temporary pastors.

After the Rev. Michael Hummer began his pastorship at the church in 1833, several of the founders withdrew to help the Rev. Merrick Augustus Jewett establish the First Congregational Church here. Hummer eventually resigned when most other parishioners defected to meet at the "Old Brick School House" at Fifth and Walnut streets with Rev. Matthew Wallace.

In late December 1848, Rev. William M. Cheever spearheaded the organization of the Baldwin Presbyterian Church, a rival parish which built a structure at the northeast corner of Fifth and Ohio streets. It was renamed the Second Presbyterian Church in 1868.

In 1863 First Presbyterian Church members erected a handsome building at 125 North Seventh St. Under the guidance of Rev. Edward W. Abbey and Rev. Blackford Condit, the congregations united as the Central Presbyterian Church of Terre Haute on Dec. 3, 1879. Rev. Thomas Parry was chosen pastor. Four years later, an impressive expansion and remodeling project was financed. The old Baldwin Presbyterian Church became Temperance Hall, headquarters for local groups advocating abstinence from alcohol, until it was razed in 1882.

The original wooden manse behind the Central Presbyterian Church was demolished in 1954 and replaced with an education wing.

In 1883 Parry founded Moffatt Street Presbyterian Church on South Third Street. Moffatt Street was renamed Washington Avenue before the turn of the century and in 1894 the congregation built a new edifice three blocks east—now known as Washington Avenue Presbyterian Church.

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