



BICENTENNIAL MOMENT

THE VINE STREET CHURCH William D. Baird, Elder and Trustee, appeared on the transfer of property for the church building April 2, 1820 [Rutherford Co. Deed Book M, page 445]. It appears the church building had already been erected on the property before the deed was actually made.

First Presbyterian Church was located on the northwest corner of what is now the Old City Cemetery in the third block on East Vine Street [then known as Church Street]. Later the cemetery surrounded the church on the east and south. The lot, approximately 150 by 165 feet, was deeded to the congregation by a member, Captain William Lytle, “. . . to promote the cause of religion. . . Society of Christians called Presbyterian. . .” for \$1.00. The brick building was approximately 40 X 60 feet with a cupola or belfry which broke the severe lines of the roof. There were 3 large doors facing Vine St., approximately 4 X 12 feet 3 inches thick not paneled but with outside planks vertical and inside on bias. A vestibule of about 8 feet had two doors [heavily painted probably of poplar] facing the two 4-foot wide aisles. From the vestibule stairs led up on either side to the gallery which surrounded the east, north, and west walls of the sanctuary. One of the galleries was for slaves and the north part was the choir loft and organ which faced the pulpit. In the sanctuary there were 84 pews on the east and west sides with 12-foot pews in the center, probably containing 12-14 rows, since the capacity was estimated at 250-300. The pews, made of poplar, all had numbered doors, with their backs painted and the seats unpainted. The pulpit was approximately 5 X 10 feet and 2 or 3 steps above the floor, with three stands: one for the Bible and one on each side for lamps. The work of the whole building was undertaken by Benjamin Goldson, at a cost of about \$4,000. John C. Spence in his Annals of Rutherford Co. states in April 1820: “[The area] had been a common camping place. . . the people that time looked on this church as very [sic] fine, large and elegant.” The bell was not purchased until 1831, weighed 560 pounds, and cost \$220. From October 1865 until 1899 the Session petitioned Congress for reparations of the destruction of this their church. Many testimonies were taken, in which the original church was described in some detail. It was estimated that the cupola was 15 to 20 feet above the base, one door entered it, and the shape became octagonal and was enclosed with blinds or shutters; the overhead ceiled and the area under the gallery plastered. The walls were judged to be 18 inches thick. There was a paling fence in the front, a plank fence on the west, and no fence on the east cemetery side. There was a brick walk tapering from the church to the gate. The Court of Claims simply estimated the value of the building and left to Congress the decision as to payment for the materials used. The 55th Congress, passed an Act for payment in the amount of \$6,500.00 of the claim on March 3, 1899 under the Bowman Act. The church was probably valued at about \$10,000. [Information researched by Susan Daniel & the late Ernest Hooper].



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