

In former years a vacant pulpit at the First Presbyterian Church in Mt. Pleasant usually reflected a want of ready resources. By 1905, however, the church appeared to have weathered a long siege of "growing pains" and could look to a robust future. Although for months it had been deprived of the spiritual leadership and guidance that only a regular pastor could provide, the congregation retained confidence in its ruling elders—Henry Bouton, Charles Slater, Wilkinson Doughty, George Snyder, Alexander Burke, and Charles Grawn—and in a competent Board of Trustees. No longer need the church look to the Board of Home Missions for assistance. From its own resources it could now offer an adequate salary and expect to engage a capable and thoroughly experienced pastor.

During the fall and winter following the departure of the Reverend Grigsby, a number of "candidating" ministers supplied the Presbyterian pulpit. Not until late in March, however, did the Reverend J. Adair McGreaham, pastor of the Grace Presbyterian Church in Saginaw, accept an invitation to preach in Mt. Pleasant. Six years before when he was pastor of the Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Michigan, he had declined a call to First Presbyterian. Now he had come with the intention of accepting an offer if it were forthcoming. A warm and friendly man with a reputation as a scholar and with twenty-five years' experience as a pastor, he could do much for First Presbyterian. After hearing him preach on two successive Sabbaths, the congregation voted unanimously to offer him the pulpit. In May, the minister agreed to terms submitted by the Board of Trustees and began his four-year pastorate in Mt. Pleasant in June, 1905.

In the meantime, significant changes were taking place in Mt. Pleasant, now a city of 4,500 people. Many new homes were rising, especially in the neighborhood of the Normal School. In the business district much of the old was giving way to the new. During the past year, for example, the city had torn up the old wooden footpaths and laid down seven miles of concrete sidewalks.

The Presbyterians were not unresponsive to the spirit of progress which seemed to pervade the town. Their church was too small for their needs, but they had not yet located a site to which it could be moved, enlarged, and remodeled. Even as they searched, they continued adding to their building fund. At the annual meeting in April, 1906, however, the congregation agreed to move the building to a large site at the northeast corner of Main and Wisconsin Streets. Professor Charles T. Grawn, an elder and trustee, owned the lot and agreed to sell it to the church for \$650. Within a week's time the City Council had granted permission for the removal, and expectations were that the work would begin at once and be completed by summer's end.

The plan to move and improve the building had evolved several years before at a time when there appeared to be no alternative. Members of the congregation had established a building fund, but until the arrival of the Reverend McGreaham, none had considered it a "new building" fund. The pastor undoubtedly convinced the building committee that the congregation would be better served if it sold the present structure, added the proceeds to the building fund, and erected a new church on the Main Street site. With the added resources now at its command, the congregation could well afford a larger, better equipped, and more easily maintained church. By June the building committee had agreed to postpone operations in order, as it explained, "to help the projected Y.M.C.A. building." During the summer months support for a new church continued to mount. To promote the project, the Ladies' Aid Society intensified its money-raising activities and by

October had paid in full for the new building site. About this time, too, the congregation learned that the local chapter of the I.O.O.F. was interested in purchasing the present church for use as a lodge hall. This development ended all thought of moving the building to the new site. The Presbyterians would erect a new structure on their Main Street lot.

In the early fall church members pledged generously to a building fund and, at a meeting of the congregation, authorized an expenditure of \$8,000 for the new church. Thereupon, the Reverend McGreaham wrote to the Radford Architectural Company of Chicago to seek assistance in planning the building. A few days later he received a reply from G. W. Ashby, a Chicago architect, who agreed to design the church to the satisfaction of the building committee and to forward complete plans and specifications "for the very low price of \$60.00." McGreaham turned over the architect's letter to the building committee and within a week's time all organizations within the church were busily involved in preliminary planning for their new home. By the first of November the building committee could forward to the architect the basic information which he needed in order to proceed with his plans. At the time, the committee consisted of F. B. Whitehead, Charles Slater, Charles T. Grawn, and Daniel Anderson. In the negotiations which followed, however, Ralph O. Doughty, treasurer of the building fund, served as spokesman for the committee.

Doughty outlined for the architect the basic requirements for the new church:

Main auditorium to seat 250 to 300 persons. This room and at least two auxiliary class rooms adjoining to take care of from 150 to 200 S.S. scholars. These auxiliary rooms to be arranged so that they could be used in connection with the main room or thrown together in one room to hold combined 100 anyway.

A small library section or room to hold 500 volumes. A pastor's study with auxiliary stove or fireplace heat for emergency use. A choir room. These two preferable near the platform. The platform large enough to hold a pipe organ and a chorus choir.

Floor to be inclined. Steel ceilings all over. Cathedral windows. Steam heat with ability to drain boiler and arrange to heat basement floor or main floor as wanted and independently from the boiler room in the basement. All plumbing arranged to be non-freezing.

Basement to be under entire building, cement floors, well-lighted and airy. To be used for fuel and boiler rooms, one closet for men and one for women. Kitchen with gas range and proper pantry facilities. Balance for combined dining and small assembly room and from two to four small rooms for use as classrooms (sunday school) committee rooms & etc. with ability to throw two together for larger use if wanted.

Provision for good ventilation main floor anyway and perhaps in basement. Street on west is a main street, that on south not quite so important. Want main entrances on S.W. and N.W. corners with a connecting lobby between 10 to 12 feet wide. Hooded and protected steps from storm and weather. Tower of low style on S.W. corner.

Do not want a fancy or irregular or curving arrangement of seating. Want a thoroughly up to date and pleasing style and arrangements in every part. Simple lines rather than an attempt to make the money spread over too much ground.

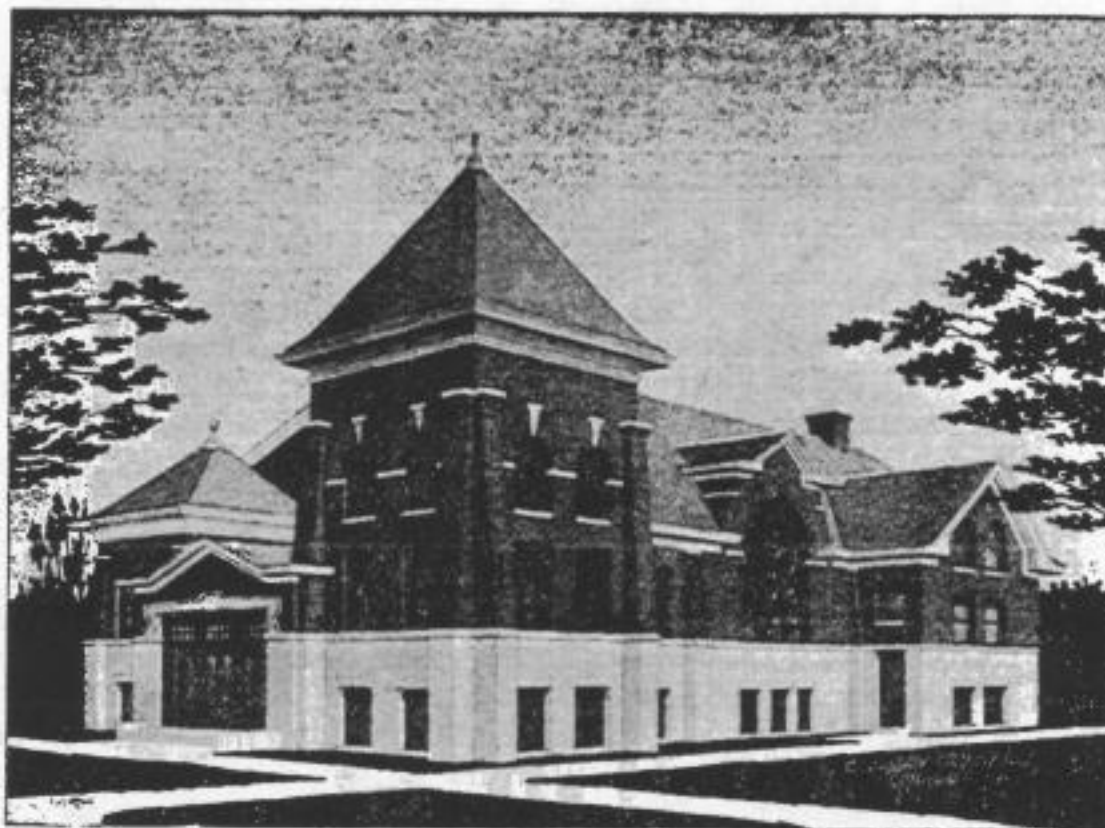
Building complete, including heat, plumbing, windows, furnishings & etc. not to exceed \$8,000.

The architect began work on the plans immediately, but advised Doughty that in his opinion the proposed church could not be constructed and equipped as specified for \$8,000. Undiscouraged, the committee made preparation for the start of construction. To cut costs it contracted for the delivery of building stone during the winter months when local farmers had time to gather it and sledge it to the building site. By February, 125 loads of field stone were on hand even though a contract had not yet been let.

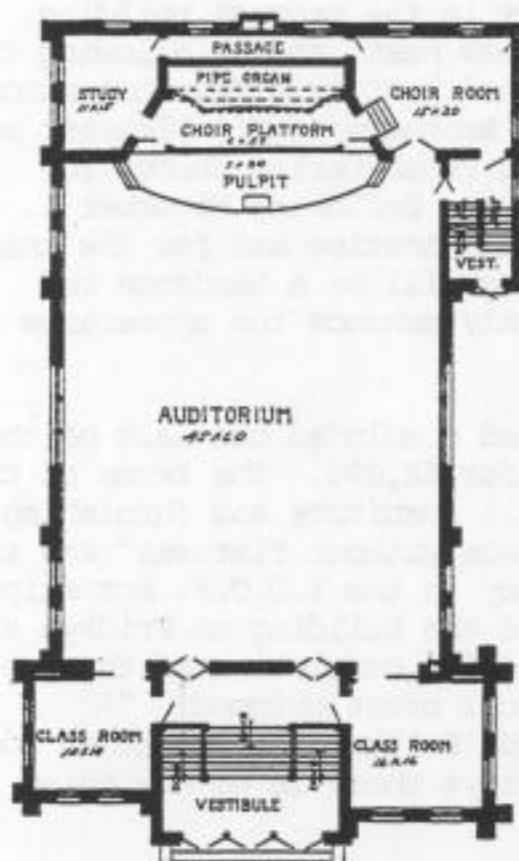
The congregation was pleased with the preliminary plans which the architect forwarded late in January. Pleasure soon turned to dismay, however, for a local contractor advised that the building could not be constructed as planned for less than \$12,800. Ashby offered to modify the plans in an attempt to stay within the \$8,000 limit, but the congregation saved him the added effort. It wanted the building without major change. After careful examination of the plans, the building committee cut five feet off the width of the proposed church and twelve feet off its length. It planned to cut costs further by using the pews in the present building, by substituting furnaces and hot air heat for steam heat, and by allowing the basement level for the time to remain unfinished. After a few more minor changes in the plans and specifications, Cole Brothers of Mt. Pleasant and Shepherd contracted to construct the new First Presbyterian Church for \$7,975, and to have it ready for occupancy on the following November 1. Separate contracts would be let for plumbing and heating and for the installation of stained glass windows. "The building will be a handsome red brick," said a local reporter, "and will greatly enhance the appearance of Main Street."

In the meantime, the Board of Trustees had concluded the sale of the present church to Lodge #217 of the I.O.O.F. for \$2,000. The terms of the sale provided that the church should remove all furniture and furnishings including the organ, pews, stoves, the "furnace without fixtures" and the bell. The trustees granted immediate occupancy to the I.O.O.F. but stipulated that the congregation was to have use of the building on Fridays and Sundays until November 1, the date established for completion of the new church. Learning of this arrangement, the local press quipped: "A Presbyterian may for the present attend the Odd Fellow's hall, and an Odd Fellow the Presbyterian church. Yet Solomon says there is no new thing under the sun."

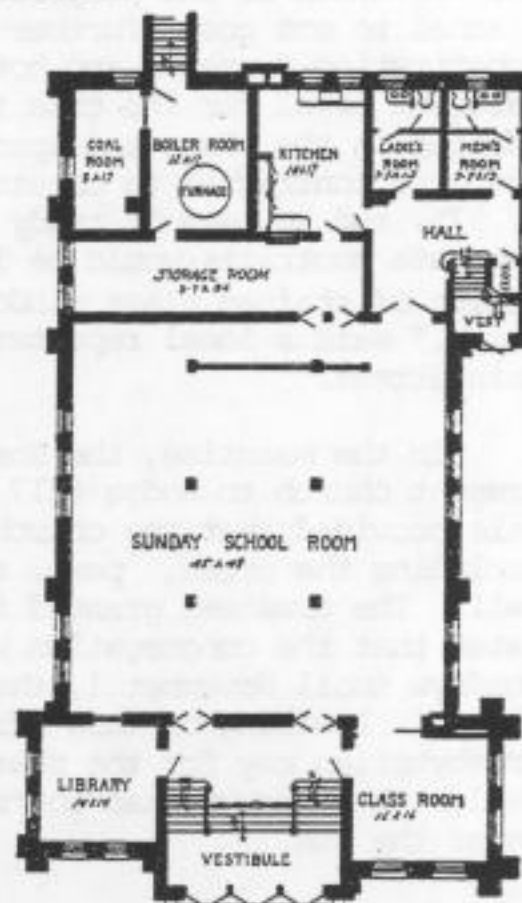
The contractor began work on the new church in mid-April and pushed construction steadily throughout the summer and fall. The F. B. Clark Company of Mt. Pleasant installed the heating equipment, some interior fixtures, and the common glass. The Flanagan & Biedenweg Company of Chicago contracted to manufacture and install the stained glass windows for \$500. In late summer, workmen began removing the pews and other furnishings from the old church for installation in the new building. No longer able to use the old sanctuary, the Presbyterians thereafter conducted worship services and Sunday School in the nearby County Courthouse. Apparently the young people of the Christian Endeavor Society were better able to adjust to hard floor seating, for until November 1 they continued to meet in the now barren old church.



THE NEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



BASMENT PLAN

A study of the Architects designs above reveals the conveniences and accomodations that will be afforded by the New Presbyterian church that is building on the corner of Main and Wisconsin streets.

The new structure will cost when completed and furnished approximately \$15,000. It will be a model of conveniences and the pride of its builders. At the same time it will be a substantial ornament and addition to our beautiful city.

The construction is in the hands of Cole Brothers which is a guarantee that the workmanship will be right. They have the foundation well under way.

The Cole Brothers had completed their contract work by November 1, and with the stained glass windows all in place, the building was completely closed in and ready for occupancy. Unforeseen developments, however, prevented the trustees from taking possession on the appointed date. To pay the contractor at specified stages of construction, the building committee had depended upon short term bank loans which it retired at maturity with pledged income. Anticipating a need for funds to make the final payment to the contractor, the committee had previously arranged with the bank for a loan of \$3000. In October, however, the bank informed the committee that "owing to present uncertain financial conditions now prevailing generally," it had "temporarily discontinued" all discounts and loans. Until bank funds were again forthcoming, the Presbyterians would be unable to make a final payment to the contractor and thus gain possession of their new church.

Earlier in the fall, confident that November would find the congregation established in its new home, the trustees had selected Sunday, December 1 for dedication of the new church. On that joyous Sabbath, they hoped, the members of First Presbyterian would subscribe additional sums to liquidate the small amount of construction cost remaining unpaid and to provide for the completion of the lower level. By mid-November, however, there was fear that the building committee might not have funds at hand to pay the contractor and gain possession of the church by Dedication Day. Indeed, not until the end of November did the bank consent to lend the trustees the \$2,000 needed to pay the contractor and open the building.

On December 1, 1907, the Presbyterians of Mt. Pleasant formally dedicated their new church home. The Reverend Willis G. Craig, Professor of Systematic Theology at the McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, delivered the dedicatory sermon at the morning service and preached again in the evening. Those who assembled for the afternoon session listened to brief congratulatory messages offered by city and county officials and by



Ralph O. Doughty, the treasurer of the building fund committee of the Board of Trustees. Mr. Doughty was largely responsible for the construction and completion of the Main Street church.

the pastors of other churches, among the latter, the Reverends H. Van Ormeren and William H. Simmons, former pastors of First Presbyterian. "The new church building," read the newspaper account of the dedication exercises, "is a delightfully cozy, convenient place of assemblage. The acoustic properties are excellent and the finish inside and out [is] of most pleasing design."

The Reverend McGreaham officiated at the first communion service in the new church in January, 1908. On this solemn occasion with a winter sun giving added glow to the beautiful cathedral windows, all present in the sanctuary could reflect on God's goodness and be grateful for the labor and sacrifice of His many servants who had erected this temple to His glory.

The reports of church activities presented at the annual meeting in April provided further evidence that God had particularly blessed the First Presbyterian Church. For example, the Session disclosed that church membership in the past year had increased by twelve per cent. Pledge payments to the building fund had enabled the trustees to meet the short term bank loans when due, and all were expected to be retired by the end of the year. Thereafter the church would have no indebtedness other than a \$1,500 mortgage negotiated earlier in the year. A slight falling off in income for benevolence during the year could be attributed to the erection of the new church and was not expected to occur again. After naming M. F. Brown to serve as a ruling elder, the congregation elected its first deacons and deaconesses.

The ensuing year was indeed memorable for the congregation. In their new surroundings church programs and church activities seemed to take on new life. Much as they loved their new building, the members were hopeful that the lower level would soon be completed. At the time, some Sunday School classes were forced to meet in rented quarters. The Ladies' Aid Society which could now be counted upon to provide between \$500 and \$1,000 yearly, for the church, still lacked needed kitchen facilities and serving space. At the suggestion of the Reverend McGreaham, the men of the church had formed a Goodfellowship Club, which soon boasted fifty-two members. The first annual banquet of the club in January, 1909, however, had to be held in the Odd Fellows Hall, because the Presbyterian facilities were yet to be completed.

The trustees had earlier announced that they would make no plans for finishing the lower level until the church had retired all bank indebtedness. For a second winter, therefore, the congregation alternately roasted or froze as the two wood-burning hot air furnaces blazed furiously one moment and died out the next. When the bank loans were paid, therefore, at the insistence of the congregation, workmen began installation of the boiler, piping, and fixtures needed to provide steam heat. The trustees did not let a contract for completion of the basement level. As money became available, Ralph O. Doughty, the building fund treasurer, purchased the necessary materials and Charles E. Hagan, one of the trustees, hired skilled workmen on a day to day basis and supervised construction of interior walls and partitions. Work continued throughout the spring and early summer until the social hall and other lower level rooms were finished. With this done the church could provide space for all Sunday School classes.

To obtain ready funds for the completion of the basement and for other needed improvements, the trustees in May, 1909, mortgaged the building for an additional \$1500 to make the total church indebtedness \$3000. According to the terms of the mortgage, the church might pay \$200 every six months on the principal with full payment due in five years time.

Work on the lower level had not yet been completed by the time of the annual meeting in 1909. Members of the church strolled through the unfinished basement to inspect the progress of the work before convening in the auditorium. There they again heard the "very flattering" reports of the Session, the trustees, the building committee, the Ladies' Aid Society, the Men's Goodfellowship Club, the Sunday School, and the several youth organizations. Benevolence contributions were larger than during the previous year, but in the belief that the total was less than it should be, the congregation authorized a special Easter offering to increase it. It also re-elected elders George W. Snyder and Charles Slater and named F. C. Crego to the vacancy in the Session resulting from the recent death of Wilkinson Doughty, who had served as an elder for many years. At the close of the meeting the Reverend McGreaham submitted his resignation as pastor, effective April 25, 1909. He had accepted a call to the Presbyterian Church in Shawano, Wisconsin and had agreed to begin his pastorate there on the first of the following month. The congregation reluctantly accepted his resignation and thereupon adopted a resolution assuring him that his years at First Presbyterian constituted "the most successful pastorate in the last twenty years history of the church."

The community also expressed its dismay that the Presbyterian pastor would soon leave the city. The Mt. Pleasant Ministers Association, which McGreaham had helped to organize, stated its feelings quite formally:

Be it resolved, . . . that we record our appreciation of the splendid work that Brother McGreaham has rendered in our midst; of his scholarly attainments; of his fidelity to every interest of the church; of his deep interest in every moral issue; of his splendid Christian character. And may the blessings and presence of the Lord God Almighty be with him in his new field of labor.

The First Presbyterian Church of Mt. Pleasant would be fortunate indeed to engage a pastor with qualities of leadership, resourcefulness, and dedication to match those of the Reverend McGreaham.