

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

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An Eyewitness Account of the Fire  
of 1914 and the Dedication of the  
New Building on October 20, 1915:  
First Christian Church,  
Owenton, Kentucky

Prepared by

Lula Brad Kemper

October 21, 1990

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AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE FIRE OF 1914  
AND THE DEDICATION OF THE NEW BUILDING ON  
Oct. 20, 1915: FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
OWENTON, KENTUCKY

ON MAY 12, 1914:

Everyone on Seminary Street, were sleeping soundly when there was a loud knock on the front doors, a loud familiar voice of John Thomas called out, "OUR CHURCH IS BURNING." The first were Mr. & Mrs. Z. H. Roberts, they soon were dressed and with the small kerosene lantern they were on the way to the fire. On both sides of the street people were on the way, when they got near the jail corner, the sky was red with dark smoke all over the sky. They went on to Perry Street and on to the corner of Perry and Main, then they were met by a large crowd of people, the fire was out of control. The Alexander house was falling in, the Gray family, living on the second floor were being brought down by ladder with only their night clothes. They were taken to a boarding home across the street. The men worked through the night to keep the fire from spreading.

I shall never forget when they called for everyone to move back, then the front of the church came tumbling down, fire went all over the street, at that time everyone broke into a sob, women and men were crying, they would say, "WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?"

Soon after the fire they were having Sunday School and Church in the Court Hall.

One Sunday morning, Mr. John Herndon called a special meeting of all members, at this time he announced that, "They must have a church, we are going to build a church, THAT TIME IS NOW". Committees were organized, now we are going all the way.

First thing the lot was to be cleaned, men with picks and shovels, horses and wagons went to work. Alexander lot was also cleaned, things were looking better.

Each Sunday reports were being made, so until late in the summer, plans were final, Mr. Herndon gave all final plans, everyone must have a part if we get a new church.

Mrs. Ann R. Yancey had a Sunday School Class of teenage girls and a few younger ones. She found the price of one brick, she gave each of the class an opportunity to be a part, they were to save pennies, we worked bringing some each Sunday for the building fund, they all felt a challenge, Louise Doty gave the most, all the girls were proud to be a part. I do not remember exactly when the building started.

In midsummer of 1915, plans for a dedication were being considered. At a meeting, that date was set for October 20, 1915. All the worrying, work and prayers were to be a reality. Time was drawing near, women were taking food, final plans were being completed.

I would not feel good if I have not recognized a few of the faithful workers:

Mr. John Herndon	Mr. Harry Threlkeld
Mr. J. B. Martin	Mr. Emmitt Haines
Mr. O. H. Curtis	Mr. Hiram Dunavent
Mr. John Thomas	Mr. Will Procter & son
Mr. John Hill	Mr. George Procter & son
Mr. Rearden Garnett	Mr. Pete Hutchinson
Mr. George Mills	Mr. Sib Ransdell
Mr. Albert Bourne	Mr. Luther Ransdell
Mr. Will King	Mr. Simon Ransdell

Last but not least, our devoted minister, Rev. W. B. Taylor & Mrs. Taylor

Hope I have not missed anyone. Bless those who have carried on the work during all the years...both men and women.

The dinner was being held in a large building belonging to Mr. Isaac Wolf. It had been cleaned, table had been built, chairs had been brought in from different places.

The weather was perfect, after everyone had eaten, would soon be time to go to the church. It was estimated about 1200 were present. The church was full, music and the message were all well delivered. We had a new church, new interest was shared. So, goes the Owenton Christian Church to better days.

A little story for everyone to think about:

A family of Dunavents came to the church, 12 in all, they seldom missed. One day they were not there. A small boy named Nelson Yarbrough went home his mother asked him if there was a nice crowd at church? "Not so many", he said, "The Dunavents were not there." (One of that family was our beloved Cobb Dunavent). Thought of the little boy.

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