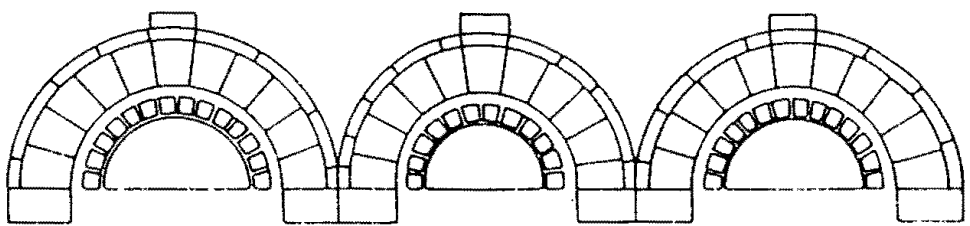
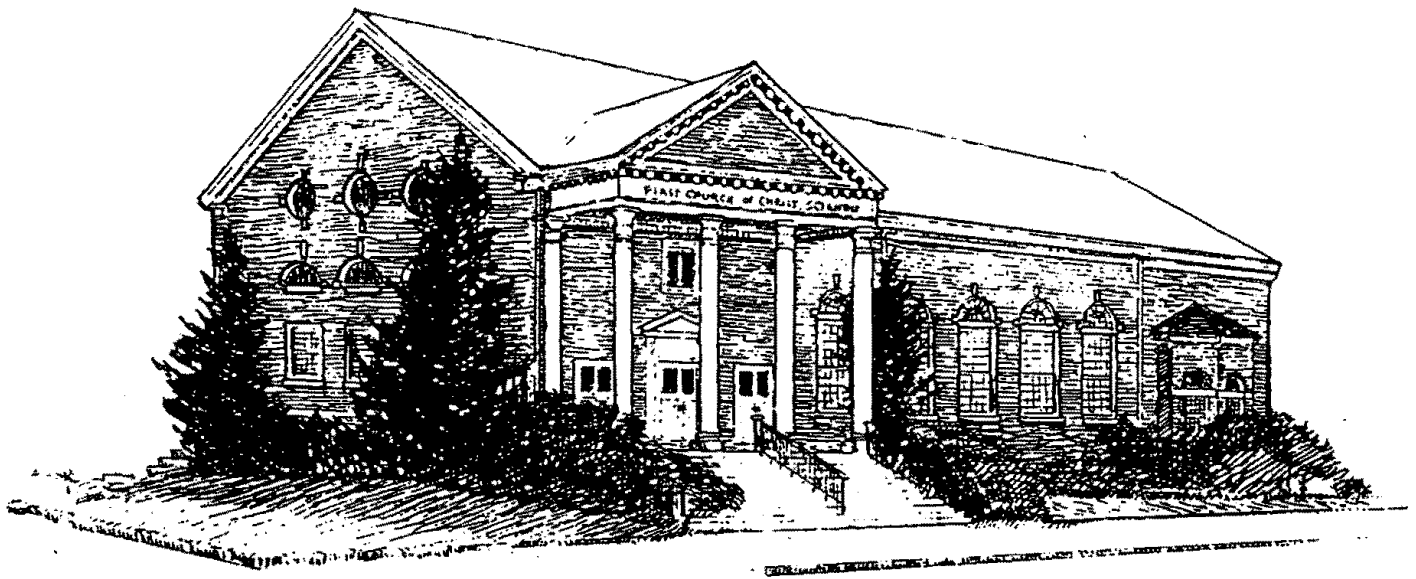


# PAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL REVIEW

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PAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XVIII

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## Contents

History of First Church of Christ, Scientist , with many pictures to mark the progress of the 100 years in Stillwater

The First Church of Christ, Scientist is located at the corner of Ridge Road and West Seventh Avenue. This is the third church edifice to be dedicated in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

## **History of First Church of Christ, Scientist**

### **Stillwater, Oklahoma**

A special thanks to: Rita Matthews, and Bill and Carolyn Simank for supplying the information for this article.

In 1892 five students of Christian Science left Nebraska in covered wagons and brought their families to Oklahoma territory where they homesteaded near Stillwater. These pioneers were united in their love of Christian Science, and considered their understanding of it their one precious possession. Their names were John Yarrington, Mrs. Nellie H. Yarrington, John Patterson Talbot, Mrs. Icadore Alice Talbot, and William F. Storm. The five had received class teaching from Alfred Farlow, C. S. D. who had gone to their home in Falls City, Nebraska to conduct the class.

As new settlers in Oklahoma they established homes, continued their study of Christian Science and were able to help and interest others in their religion. Mrs. Yarrington and Mrs. Talbot later became registered practitioners. They soon started holding church services on Sunday in the Yarrington home, and the children of Sunday School age were taught in the kitchen, where they sat on the wood box, the stove, and the kitchen table as there were not enough chairs.

In 1894, because other individuals had become interested and healed by Christian Science, the number of attendants at the Sunday services had increased until the home was too small to accommodate those who wished to attend. Stillwater was a small new town where there were no available rooms, halls, or buildings which might be rented or purchased for use by a church group. And so was born the desire to build a church.

Members of sixteen families were now interested in Christian Science; they met and plans for building were made. At this meeting a paper was passed around to find out how much each could contribute. The final count indicated a total of \$332.50 besides donations of labor. A committee was appointed to see whether lumber could be purchased at Perry, a nearby town, as Stillwater had neither a lumber yard nor a railroad. When the committee made the trip to Perry, they found that the price of lumber would soon advance. They immediately

contracted to purchase needed materials to the extent of the amount that had been subscribed. This purchase took care of the outside clapboards and ceiling but had to be hauled the 23 miles from Perry by horse and wagon.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Mitchell, who had become students of Christian Science because of many healings, lived in the strip up on Black Bear creek where grew many large native trees. Some of the men among the Scientists went with their horses and wagons up to the strip where they cut down the trees and hauled them to a saw mill where they were sawed into 1700 feet of rough timber, enough to build the entire frame work of the church. Obtaining the lumber demanded the next step. They must have a building site, and in a few days a lot 25 by 150 feet was purchased for \$50.00. The lot was deeded to Mr. Storm, who agreed to take most of the responsibility of managing the building of the church structure.

It is interesting to note here that this group of Christian Scientists were working as a family. They had not thought of organizing. The building of the church was truly a labor of love. Each one offered and gave what he had, whether it was materials, money, or labor. They were very unselfish for only three families had a finished house. One donated stone for the foundation, and another, who had been healed of cancer, laid the foundation. Most of the carpentry work was done by the members. One family raised turkeys, sold all fifty in Perry for fifty cents apiece, and put all the money into the church fund.

In her account of the early church, Mrs. Myrtle Talbot Little writes: "In moving to our homestead in Oklahoma we had used all our finances in equipping the farm with the necessities; three cows, four horses, and plows and machinery with which to plant our crops. At that time no stores sold groceries or food on time or charge accounts; it was cash or nothing. So, it seemed that even one dollar given toward building the church would be almost unwise, if not impossible. Mother's faith and hope were helpful and in her prayers this quotation from Matthew 7:7 was always held to: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

One evening father returned from a trip to town and brought a letter from the post office (which was quite unusual). I remember we all gathered around our coal oil lamp as Mother lighted it and opened the letter. In it she found a check for \$136.00. The letter explained that this was a check in payment of a debt long overdue, which the man had refused to pay, saying that he had sold the cows



*LABOR OF LOVE – Organization, construction and dedication of the third Christian Science church in the world was described as truly a labor of love.*

on which father held the mortgage because he needed the money to help feed his children. Father had believed that he would never receive payment of the debt. The letter explained that the man “had recently gotten religion and joined a church and had determined that no sin should stand between him and his God.” Mother stood holding the check for a minute and then said, “This is our answered prayer and shall all go toward the building of God’s church.”

In the spring of 1895 the little edifice was completed and ready for use. It was first lighted by coal oil lamps and heated by a large base burner stove in the middle of the room. The members had made the pews, and the women and children had taken turns in sand papering the rough wood to a smooth finish. The seating capacity was about 100. The demonstration of God’s supply was so complete that all was finished free of debt. The first service was one of rejoicing.

Mr. Farlow, who was then serving as first reader in First Church in Kansas City, Missouri, was invited to dedicate the church; but he wrote that he would be unable to come on a Sunday, but could come for a Wednesday service. On Wednesday, June 25, 1895, the edifice was dedicated—the first Christian Science church to be dedicated in Oklahoma Territory and the third in the world. According to Mrs. Little’s account, “Mr. Farlow came by train to Perry and was brought to Stillwater in a spring wagon by one of our members. I recall that we

had been having a drouth, and at that time our corn was so wilted it looked as if we would not have a crop, but the next day after dedication services we had a heavy rain and our corn was saved. The streams overflowed and the little ponds filled with water and we all gave thanks.”

Mr. Farlow realized the love and sacrifice which these early workers had given to so great a cause. He then brought it to the attention of the group that they should organize a church board and then obtain a charter. Immediately there after First Church of Christ, Scientists, Stillwater, Oklahoma Territory, was organized and recognized as a branch of The Mother Church with the following membership: W. D. Bishop, Mrs. E. A. Bishop, T. C. Brixey, Mrs. Tish Brixey, Mrs. Hattie Harland, T. J. Lester, Mrs. Jemima Lester, Mrs. Caroline McLean, Mrs. Sarah McLarah, R. J. Mitchell, Mrs. Angie Mitchell, Miss Angie Mitchell, J. D. Nauslar, Mrs. Edith Nauslar, Joseph Howard Smart, William F. Storm, John Patterson Talbot, Mrs. Icadore Alice Talbot, W. H. Woodring, John Yarrington, and Mrs. Nellie Yarrington. Since the church was being established in a new territory, it took some time to get the charter, but it was finally granted August 19, 1896, and a new deed to the property was legally made out to the organization. The charter, which is presently displayed in the executive board room, was signed by Thomas J. Lowe, Secretary of the Territory.

During the years following its dedication this church became active in the community according to the guidelines set forth in the Manual of The Mother Church by Mary Baker Eddy. A downtown reading room was maintained and kept open daily, first on Ninth Avenue. In 1914 it was relocated in upstairs rooms in the Miller building on Main street. The records for one year taken at random show 1800 pieces of literature distributed, 25 copies of Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures by Mary Baker Eddy sold, and 15 copies loaned.

On June 19, 1899, the first Christian Science lecture to be given in Stillwater was delivered by Judge Clarkson of Omaha, Nebraska. The lecture was given in the First Christian Church, and the minister, Reverend Mr. Williams, introduced the speaker with a few very kindly remarks. A local newspaper printed the lecture in full. Lectures were sponsored frequently, and several well known and loved early workers in Boston came to Stillwater to lecture. Among these were Edward Kimball, Bicknell Young, Prof. Herman S. Herring, Judge Clifford P. Smith, and Bliss Knapp. An interesting feature of the lecture preparations of the members one year was the announcement that all members were

requested to meet at four p.m. at the reading room every day during the week before the lecture in order to work for the success of the lecture.

Books and literature were early placed in the college library. Contributions were sent to Boston to help with the building of the first Christian Science Publishing House. And at a business meeting in February, 1910, a committee was appointed to write a letter of greeting to the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy.

Among the members of the church at this time was the wife of a prominent local physician. She had been sent home to die by physicians in Oklahoma City, who diagnosed her sickness as incurable cancer. A neighbor offered Christian Science help and she was healed. After her healing she joined the church and became an active member.

By 1915 the church membership had increased; so two corner lots of land adjoining the first and twice its size were purchased. This seemed a right step regardless of the fact that the membership was carrying on its share of the War Relief Program. The growth of the membership was gradual, there were more advertised practitioners, a larger congregation, and an attendance at Sunday School too large to be accommodated in the little church.

When The Mother Church Relief Fund was discontinued, a local building fund was established. Next a building committee began studying plans and worked with the church board in selecting plans and contracts for the new church edifice. The first little church building was moved to one side to be used until the new one could be erected. In November, 1927, a contract was signed and the work on a \$40,000.00 structure of colonial design was started. The concrete for the sloping floor of the auditorium was poured on Christmas Eve, and the ladies of the church served the working men with a midnight lunch.

The work progressed nicely, but there were difficulties occasionally which held up the activities for short periods. On February 8, 1928, at 6:30 in the morning the members gathered to take part in the service for the laying of the cornerstone. The First Reader read appropriate selections from the textbooks, and all repeated the Lord's Prayer. In the corner stone were sealed, within a copper box, a Bible, a copy of Science and Health, copies of the authorized periodicals, and current copies of the local newspapers. The edifice is constructed of rough-

surfaced brick of buff and honeysuckle blended color, with columns and trim of Indian Bedford stone; it has outer walls 48 by 91 feet, and includes an auditorium and balcony, a large foyer, readers' rooms, store rooms, and a large lower floor. The first service held in this new church was on the Wednesday evening preceding Thanksgiving Day, November, 1928. That Thanksgiving season was a time of unusually deep and heartfelt praise and gratitude for the progress of the church and the many completed demonstrations of the truth.

The members would have been doubly grateful for Christian Science had they known that in only a few months from the time of the first service in the new church the United States and subsequently most of the world would enter the period labeled by historians as the Great Depression. During this time when large payments had to be raised to meet the indebtedness incurred by the building of the church, the first reader often included in the reading of the announcement of the building fund this verse from Malachi 3:10 "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Through faithful prayer and courageous expectancy of good the money for the current payment would always be there on time. Sometimes the treasurer would have to telephone the members asking for their special prayerful efforts, and at times there was need of courage and spiritual knowing right up to the last minute before a payment was due.


Throughout these years the members continued to prove the truth of Jesus' statement "Give, and it shall be given unto you." During this time of seeming depression a committee was appointed to minister to the needs of members of the congregation who might have temporary need of assistance. Contributions were also sent to The Mother Church to help in the building of the new Publishing House. The giving of two lectures each year was continued. At this time some were given in the College Auditorium.

During the 1930's new hymnals, the edition now in use, were published. The church bought only a limited number at first, and the members who had bought copies for their own use were asked to bring them to the services. Hymn practice was held for a time every week after the Wednesday evening service in order that the congregation might learn the many new tunes contained in the new hymnal.



**PATENT**

**TERRITORY OF OKLAHOMA.**



To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Whereas, William H. Williams, John P. Jones, Joseph T. Smith, Thomas J. Smith, and Edward J. Williams

Have filed in the office of the Secretary of the Territory of Oklahoma certain articles of organization with a view of forming a corporation to be known as First Baptist Church of Stillwater, Oklahoma Territory

And with a capital of \_\_\_\_\_

For the purpose to provide for the support and maintenance of the said church and to exercise the powers and privileges of a corporation, for the purpose above stated and in accordance with their said articles of organization and the laws of this Territory

The following certificate, bearing the seal of the Territory of Oklahoma, is hereby confirmed by the Secretary of the Territory.

And having complied with the provisions of the Statutes in such cases made and provided.

Therefore, the Territory of Oklahoma hereby grants unto the above named persons and their associates, successors and assigns full authority, by and under the said name of First Baptist Church of Stillwater, Oklahoma Territory

to exercise the powers and privileges of a corporation, for the purpose above stated and in accordance with their said articles of organization and the laws of this Territory

In witness Whereof, these presents have been attested with the Great Seal, and signed by the Secretary of the Territory of Oklahoma, at Guthrie, the

19<sup>th</sup> day of August

in the year One thousand Eight Hundred and Ninetysix

Thomas J. Smith  
Secretary of the Territory.

Charter granted to church in 1896 when Stillwater was still in Indian Territory.

During World War II years, the members looked for ways to help both metaphysically and humanly those who were suffering in the war-torn countries. Every Monday night the members were invited to an hour long meeting held in the church where articles from the periodicals were read on the subjects related to the needs of the world. Selections from the Bible and our Leader's Writings were also read at each meeting. Chairmanship of the meetings passed informally from one to the other and the chairman selected the topic and informed the members so they might bring helpful citations or articles.

Contributions were sent to the War Relief Fund administered by The Mother Church, and a local War Relief Committee was appointed. This committee organized meetings held one day each week where clothing donated by members and friends was repaired and boxed for shipment overseas. Several business firms donated slightly shopworn clothing, and the College Cleaners dry cleaned, free of charge, all garments in need of cleaning. Quilts or comforts were made of scrap materials, and the yarn was collected for knitting into garments. Later, during the war, food boxes were assembled from the commodities purchased by the membership and shipped overseas. Letters expressing the gratitude of the recipients were received by members who had included their names in the parcels.

In 1944 the thoughts of the members had turned more to the need of dedication, and the annual meeting in December of that year the need was discussed. Following this meeting the executive board appointed a special committee of four members to work prayerfully for dedication. At their first meeting in January, 1945, the committee decided to turn to their Leader's Writings for guidance, to read forty pages each week, and to meet every Wednesday afternoon to share the helpful thoughts gleaned from their reading. According to this plan they would complete the study of all of Mrs. Eddy's Writings in a year's time, but before the year had passed the members were called to a special meeting at which the chairman of the board presented a plan whereby the debt could be paid and the church dedicated immediately. Owing to a technicality in notifying the finance company, the time of paying off the loan had to be delayed for three months. At the beginning of the year, to all material appearances, dedication day had seemed far off in the future. The quick working out of the problem, when they turned to our Leader's Writings, will forever remain an inspiration to the members.

Sunday, February 3, 1946, was dedication day for First Church of Christ, Scientist, Stillwater, Oklahoma, approximately fifty years after the dedication of

the original little edifice. Two services were held—at 11 a.m.. and at 5 p.m.—where the Lesson Sermon on “Love” was read. This joyous dedication service was the announcement to the world that all indebtedness had been paid and that the building was being publicly consecrated to God. The members were grateful for the assistance received from the Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker Eddy in canceling the final indebtedness.

At the time of dedication a resolution was sent to the Board of Directors of the Mother Church by the local executive board, which read in part: “In the happy hour of the dedication of our branch church edifice, we as a church, and individually as Christian Scientists, express the fidelity of the ‘branch’ to the ‘vine’, and it is our earnest desire that this same loyalty prevail on a nationwide and world wide scale.”

Among the steps taken to increase their means of blessing the people of the community were the following: A second church service was begun in 1948, the first at 5 p.m. Later it was changed to 8 p.m., and in 1957 it was set at 9:30 a.m.. A rebuilt pipe organ was purchased in 1948 and installed after necessary remodeling of the attic. In 1947 the lower floor of the church was finished up and wired so that it could be used as the Sunday School auditorium. All of the wiring and part of the other work was done by one member who donated his services. In 1948 the hour of the Sunday School was changed to coincide with the 10:45 a.m.. church service so that the church could better serve the parents of young children who could be in Sunday School or in the nursery while their parents were in church.

At this time the two northeast rooms of the basement were redecorated to serve as a nursery for babies and children under Sunday School age. Further improvements in the nursery and the Sunday School auditorium were made in 1950.

In the early 1940’s the membership voted to sponsor the broadcasting of the fifteen minute devotional program provided by The Mother Church, on station K.S.P.I. at 8:15 on Saturday mornings. Later the radio programs were changed to 9 a.m. on Sunday mornings, and under the title “The Bible Speaks to You.” Reports indicated that those programs were listened to by people in several nearby towns.

After the building of the new edifice the reading room was maintained in the northwest corner of the building for many years and was open in the afternoons.

Throughout the ten years following dedication, numerous suggestions for the improvement of the appearance of the church auditorium had been made and some investigation of procedures and costs had been made. In October, 1956, at a special meeting of members it was decided that the work of improvement should be carried out immediately and in this order: (1) grill work to cover the opening into the organ chamber; (2) new platform chairs; (3) tile flooring; (4) carpeted aisles; (5) rearrangement of seats in the auditorium, and (6) painting of the interior. The work proceeded very harmoniously and by the end of the year was completed. Besides carpeting the center aisles, the committee had the two outside aisles and the space at the rear of the auditorium carpeted at the request of a member, who wished to give this additional carpet to the church.

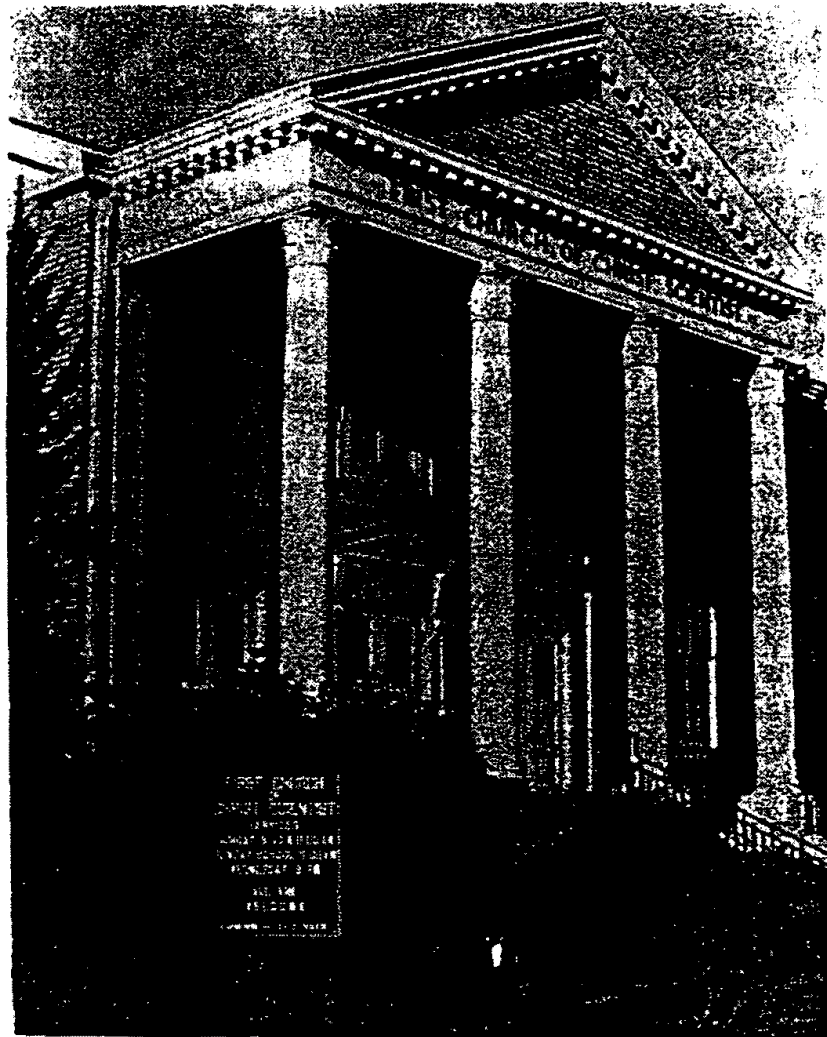
Other additions to the physical equipment of the edifice have been a ten-ton air conditioner; a third rest room, which was added in the west end of the lower floor, and a cloakroom near the entrance of the foyer.

In the 1950's a special committee was appointed to make a study of the by-laws of the organization leading to revision so that democracy, rotation in office, and other ideals set forth in the Magna Charta of Christian Science might be more fully expressed in the activities of the church.

After much consideration and a year of testing, the new by-laws were formally adopted and printed copies given to the members.

The stately, pillared structure standing in a prime downtown location—the church built by dedicated members during the period labeled by historians as the Great Depression—has now become the home of the Stillwater Arts and Humanities Council. For the appraised value of \$80,000.00 the former church building was purchased in February of 1973 by the Council, and is now known as the Sheerar Cultural and Heritage Center.

Following the sale of the property, plans were made for the construction of the new third church edifice. Local architect Glen A. Summers, A.I.A., was selected to design a church with a friendly atmosphere which would fit comfortably into a residential neighborhood. After the plans were finalized, construction



*STANDING as a pillar in the community the First Church of Christ, Scientist, Stillwater, has experienced 75 years of growth, and joins with all branch churches throughout the world in elevating the race as we enter into the second century of Christian Science.*

Photo of Church on  
75th Anniversary, June 25, 1970

began by the Stillwater Development Company according to the contract signed September 25, 1974 , with Aufleger-Garrett, Inc., contractor.

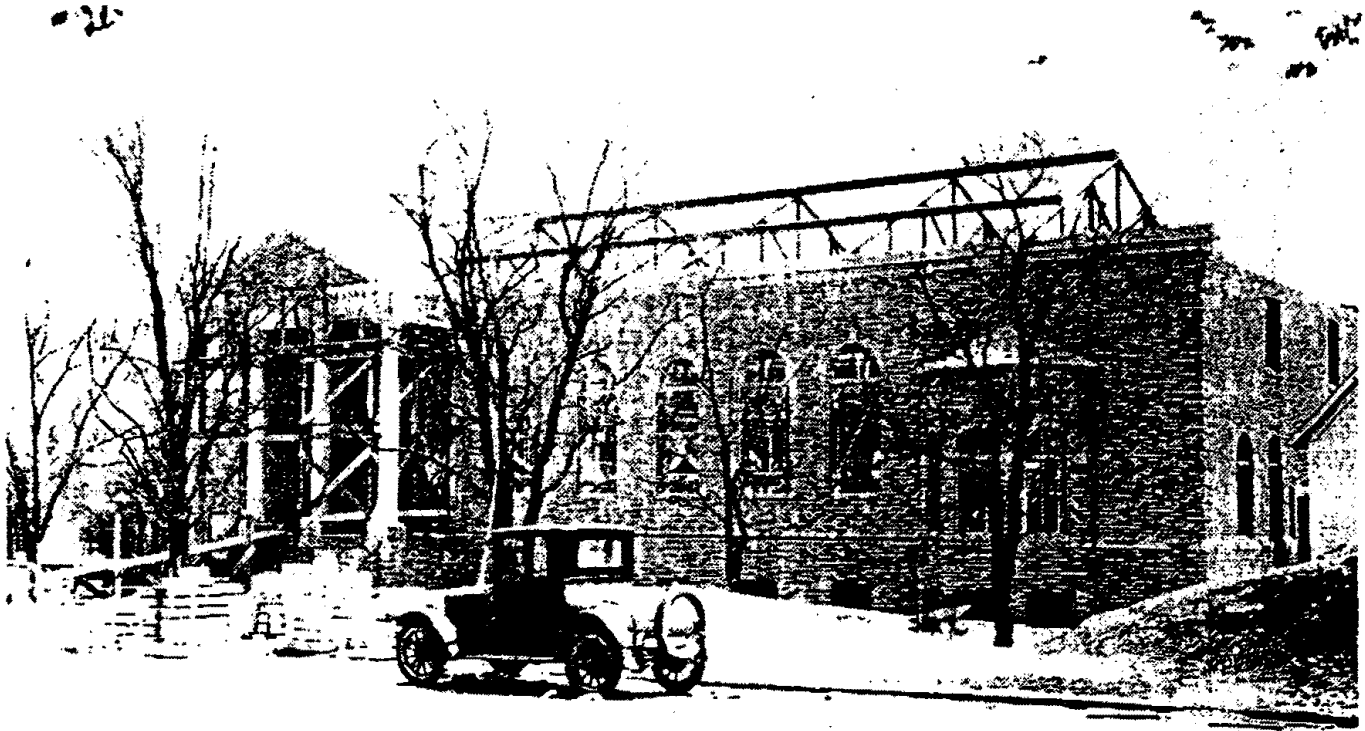
The exterior of the building is of standard face brick and rough cedar trim which complements the surrounding neighborhood. The Auditorium features a cathedral ceiling with rough cedar beams and interior wood trim of ash. The contemporary pews are upholstered in a rusty red. A new Rogers Scarborough 110 church organ with external speakers was purchased for the auditorium.

The Sunday School and child care areas decorated in warm, bright colors, are designed for flexibility. The interior decor done by Michael Aubrey utilizes the brick walls to carry out the rustic-contemporary look.

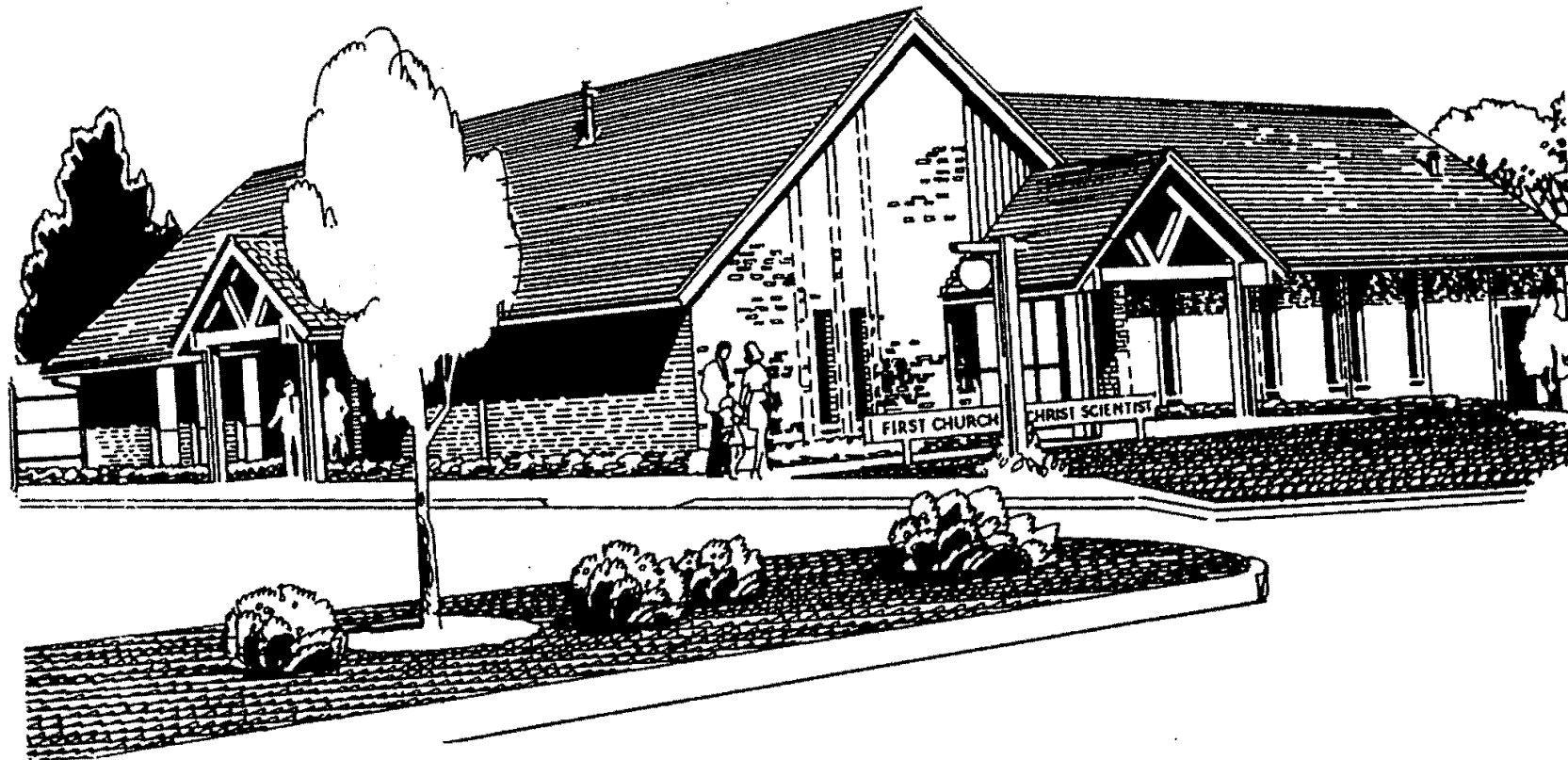
Interior appointments and landscaping completed the new building project, and the church opened its doors for the first service in August 1975. Open house for the public was held on a Sunday afternoon, November 7, 1976, to share the church with the community. The dedication of the new edifice represents 83 years of continuous support and devotion on behalf of the membership.

Dedication. The earnest, sincere, unselfish and untiring efforts toward a purpose. The purpose—a structure of truth and love—a church. The church—First Church of Christ, Scientist, Stillwater, Oklahoma—was dedicated April 16, 1978. Christian Science churches are dedicated only when they are completely free of debt.

These three dedication days will always remain very special days in the history of this church, and great gratitude is paid to those many, many dedicated members who have made it all possible.



Construction of the second church building as it appeared on April 17, 1928. Part of the original church building, a small frame structure, may be seen on the extreme right. This building was moved to the back of the lot and used for services until the new structure was completed.



The First Church of Christ, Scientist is located at the corner of Ridge Road and West Seventh Avenue. This is the third church edifice to be dedicated in Stillwater, Oklahoma.



Payne County Historical Society is organized in order to bring together people interested in history and especially the history of Payne County, Oklahoma. The Society's major function is to discover and collect any materials that may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area.

Membership in the Payne County Historical Society is open to anyone interested in the collection and preservation of Payne County history. Membership dues are:

\$12.00 for Individual Membership

\$17.00 for Family Membership

\$20.00 for Institutional Membership

\$100.00 for Life Membership

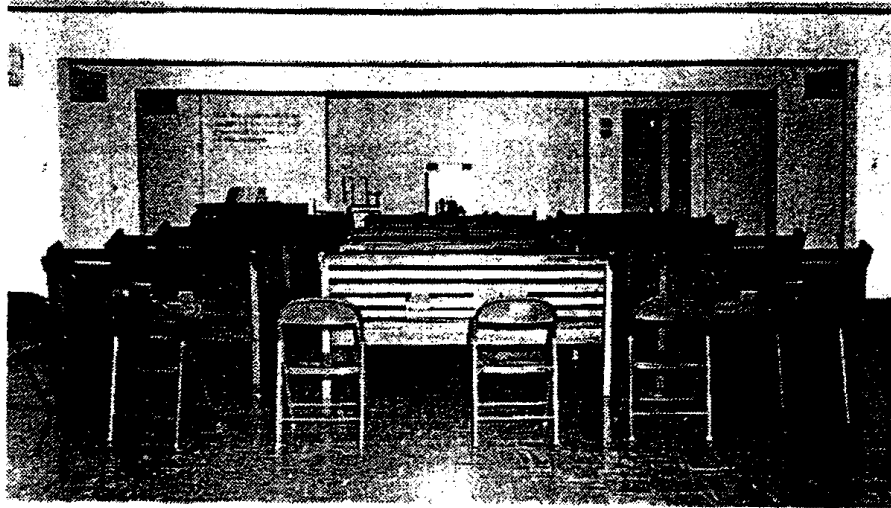
Membership dues should be sent to the Treasurer, P. O. Box 2262, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74076

#### Editorial Policy

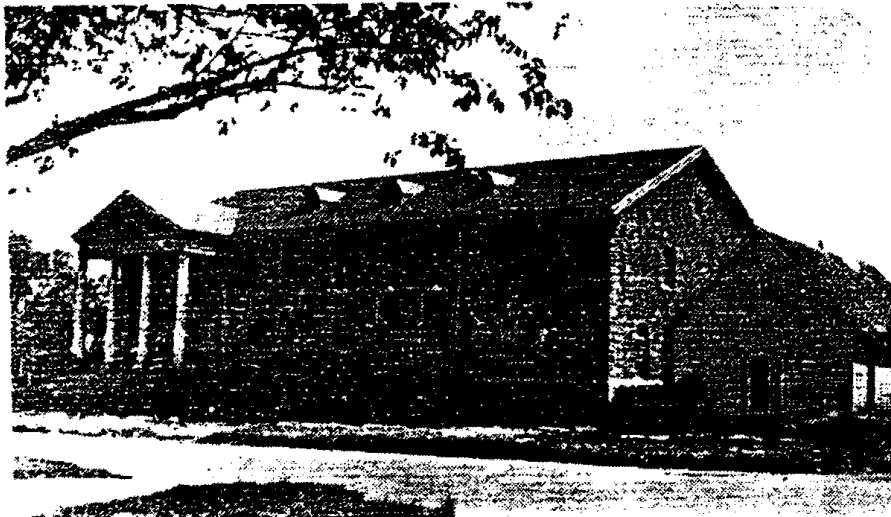
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The PAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL REVIEW welcomes reader's comments, news, or requests for information from readers. Family histories, photographs, or maps are also welcome. No payment is made for articles published in the REVIEW.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.



*SUNDAY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM – Classrooms and nursery were completed for use in 1948 when the Sunday School hour was changed to coincide with the church service.*



*SIGNS OF PROGRESS – The first little church building was moved to one side to be used until a new one could be erected. In November, 1927, the contract was signed and work began on the new \$40,000.00 colonial designed building.*

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