



**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
GRAND PRAIRIE SIGNIFICANT LANDMARK
Site Medallion No. 9
122 North Center Street**

In 1880 Grand Prairie was a small rural community boasting two stores and a population of 200 people. Included in this number were several families who had been members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, who felt the need for an organized church in their midst. From this concern came the First United Methodist Church.

In 1880, with only twelve members the first services were conducted by a Methodist circuit rider, Rev. Franks. For the next ten years, services were scheduled once a month but were held whenever the preacher could make it, for the roads were often impassable due to mud.

A building was completed by the end of 1890. A portion of the land at the corner of Church and Center (the present site) was donated by the Texas & Pacific Railway and the rest of the plot was purchased by some of its members. The building was a one-story frame structure, very small and plain.

In the latter part of 1890 the Rev. J.R. Atchley, a local Methodist preacher, moved to Grand Prairie and began as preacher. Under his leadership interest in the church grew. Grand Prairie Circuit was formed consisting of Grand Prairie, Burke's Chapel and Hogwallow (later called Bethel). Rather than one service a month, the church was given two Sundays.

Rev. Atchley served eight years as pastor during which time the first Sunday School and the Ladies Aid Society were organized. In 1900 the Missionary Society was formed with eight charter members.

The Rev. M.H. Read came to the church in 1907 at which time the membership was 100, approximately one-fourth of the population of Grand Prairie. A new building was needed and through the Ladies Aid Society, much of the funds were raised. Mr. George Owens, a lumber dealer, offered the lumber at cost and the building was completed in 1910 at a cost of \$4,100.00.

Another building was constructed in 1925 at a cost of \$25,000.00. The latest First Methodist Church sanctuary, a colonial style building, was built in 1957-58. The building cost \$275,000 and seats 1,200.

Forty-two pastors have served this church during the 123 years it has been a part of Grand Prairie. The current pastor is Rev. Jim Brown.

Documentation from Centennial Edition 1880-1980 History Pictorial Edition.

Recap: Ruthe Jackson