Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church

2101 Prytania Street

Built by the Prytania Street Presbyterian Church, this solid-looking building dated to 1901. Its cornerstone was laid on March 2, and the dedication took place December 1, followed two days later by a reception arranged by the Womens Auxiliary.

But the Presbyterian parish dated back to 1846, when a twelve founders met at this location in a simple structure. Three years later, a more permanent brick building was erected at the site, but in 1896 the decision was made to build a new and finer home for their church. The old building was demolished in 1900, and only thirteen months later the imposing structure was ready for use. Like Salem and Central St. Matthew United Churches of Christ, both historically German parishes, this had a broad *Kirchenhalle* design rather than a long narrow nave.

Congregants there included Paul Tulane, Sophie B. Wright, John McDonough, and George Washington Cable.

Diboll and Owen were the architects, and the costs were considerable. The fieldstone was not available locally and had to be imported, and the beautiful Art Nouveau windows were shipped from an unknown studio and installed during construction. It was reported that $700.00 was raised by the Ladies for art glass. Most unusual was the glass dome framed by lights in the center ceiling.

Similar windows can be found at Salem United Church of Christ. Here, the focus of each window was a central medallion containing a religious symbol and framed by delicate tracery of pastel glass. Although most of the former members reportedly recalled that the windows were made in Germany, the inclusion of glass beads and mottled or streaky opalescent glass argues for an American origin. Opalescent glass was popularized by Louis Comfort Tiffany and John LaFarge but was not incorporated into glass made in Europe or glass made in the European tradition.

The window designs were non-figural, and the use of the lily, palm frond, primrose, and fleur-de-lis in stylized and repetitive patterns reflects Christian symbolism. The small jewel-like rounds of faceted glass, along with the imposing architecture and restrained decorations, signify that this church was built by a prosperous congregation.

A Pilcher organ may have provided the music, but it was removed in the 1950s.

In 1956 the Prytania Street church merged with the Napoleon Avenue Presbyterian Church (now the Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries Church). The Prytania Street church then had a series of owners, until the Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church purchased it, along with the neighboring 1871 house, in 1985. Contentious issues relating to the house continued for years, as the parish leaders wanted to replace it with a parking lot, and the Historic District Landmarks Commission cited it several times for Demolition by Neglect. (Since the church and the house are on the same lot, a permit for demolition of just the house could not be issued even if the neighbors had relented in their campaign to save the house.) Hurricane Katrina caused further damage to the church, and the congregation moved out, building a new campus on General Taylor Street. It put the church and house up for sale at $1.8 million (appraised value was $1 million). By then, the church was in bad repair from differential sinking, cracked concrete, inadequate maintenance, and termite damage. In 2010 a film production company tried to buy the property but could not meet the church deadline for obtaining financing.

On January 7, 2011, the church and house were totally destroyed by a fire of unknown origin.

*Visited*

*September 17, 1989*

*April 5, 1997*

When citing information from this document, please acknowledge the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans, 2021.