

THE PHOENIX RISES

The Development, Construction and Early Life of the Third and Present House of Worship for First Congregational Church of Walla Walla

Stephen Wilen, Co-Chair
First Congregational Church Sesquicentennial Committee
November 2014

Just 22 years after the January 2, 1900 dedication of the third First Congregational Church building at Palouse and Alder Streets, that building was consumed by fire that began during the evening worship service on Sunday, January 8, 1922. Although the loss of the church would again cast the congregation into a pit of financial fire, not to mention that a beautiful church had been destroyed, considering it from a more providential perspective, it forced the church to deal with the fact that within just a few short years of its dedication the building had proven too small for the growing congregation. An addition in 1909 to the building, designed by noted local architect and member of the Trustees of First Congregational Church Henry Osterman, had only partially relieved the overcrowding problem. As early as 1912, the Trustees had selected the noted Seattle architectural firm of Beezer Brothers (who also designed the Baker Boyer National Bank, the First National Bank [now Banner Bank] and the Jensen Department Store [now Macy's]) to draw up plans, in collaboration with Henry Osterman, for a new church building in the range of \$70,000. That plan was scuttled by the church's decision in May 1912 to turn over in excess of \$60,000 from the building fund to Whitman College in order to prevent that then-closely related institution's financial collapse.

At a meeting of the church on January 26, 1922, recommendations of the Joint Boards included the following:

1. "Recommended that all possible movable property be salvaged and that the building - except for brick and stone - be sold for as much as possible.
2. That a new church building be erected on the present property, the cost to be approximately \$60,000 (as a working basis), and that the type of building be such as to include the auditorium, Sunday School rooms and other departments under one roof.
3. That it be the policy of the church that the building be erected without incurring indebtedness, except possible money secured from the Congregational Church Building Society."

The Board of Trustees, on January 24, 1922, noted, " \$310 had been offered by Mr. Bauman for the old building, including the brick from the chimney, but that the pews were so heavily damaged as to possibly not be usable."

On November 5, 1924, the Trustees, "Moved and seconded to donate the old pulpit and chairs to the Colored Church."

Plans had been finalized on May 30, 1922 by Henry Osterman and Victor Siebert, with whom Osterman was at the time in partnership, for a new Parish House and church building. Both buildings were described as being in the "New England meeting house" style. While the Parish House was constructed and dedicated on December 9, 1923, the church did not come to fruition. Osterman went on to be elected, on February 2, 1927, President of the Board of Trustees, but he retired from practicing architecture that year and moved to Seattle, where he died in 1936.

For several years, until 1931, the Parish House would do double duty as the church sanctuary. On January 1, 1928, the Trustees minutes recorded that, "A discussion relative to change the name on marble slab from 'First Congregational Church' to 'First Congregational Parish House' was had and

the proposition was brought up that the name had been so selected in order to legally use some subscriptions that were especially designated for First Congregational Church.”



The Parish House shortly after completion in 1923. Whitman Archives photo.

Undated, but most likely written in 1928, is a three-page report on 8½ x 14 paper, from which the following points are extracted.

PROPOSED REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHURCH BUILDING

Your committee, after consideration of the questions asked and suggestions made, submits to the church the following definite recommendations, with reasons for the same:

- A. GENERAL PLAN It recommends the adoption of the complete two unit plan, including seating capacity of 850 in auditorium, steeple, and other features as included in plans submitted for bids to contractors.
1. A complete church plant should provide for worship, educational and social needs of the church.
 2. We should plan a church plant adequate for needs of next 20 or 30 years. Facts bearing on this probable need are:
 - (a) Present resident membership is 450.
 - (b) Growth of church has been about twice as fast as growth of city in past 30 years.
 - (c) Average net growth in resident membership for last 30 years is 13 per year. Same growth would give membership of 710 in 20 years, 840 in 30.
 - (d) Average net growth in last 6 years is 21 per year. Same growth would give 870 in 20 years, 1080 in 30.
 - (e) Growths mentioned in “c” and “d” have taken place with admittedly inadequate plant and facilities.
 3. The plan for two buildings, connected by arcade, is more feasible than a single building on account of the peculiar size and shape of the lot. The plans committee tried to work out plan for a building similar to Presbyterian church but it proved impossible on our lot.
 4. The plan for two buildings connected by arcade is actually cheaper than to provide same facilities under one roof, due to lighter type of construction planned for Sunday

School unit, (frequently called parish house), and similar considerations.

5. This plan leaves the Marcus street lots and houses available for sale to increase building fund.

11. The plan in its entirety forms an artistic, churchly, satisfying unity unique in the city, and a credit to the city as well as to the church, when completed.

At the next meeting of the Trustees on February 16, 1928, a "Discussion was had relative to placing a sign on the lot where church is to be build (sic.). On motion said matter was laid on the table until next meeting."

During the meeting of the Trustees on January 30, 1930, it was recorded that, "At this period the meeting was turned over to the building committee for the purpose of discussing the new church proposition. Mr. Elliott, Chairman taking charge of the meeting. Mr. Elliott called on Mr. Woodruff (sic.)* to explain the new plans of the church, after which Mr. Cookerly, Secretary of the building committee, read a resolution that had been adopted by the building committee to be recommended to the church; reading as follows: 'Resolved that the building committee of First Congregational Church of Walla Walla, Washington at a meeting in the home of Wm. Struthers, approve the preliminary plans prepared by architects Crawford and Woodruffe (sic.) for a complete church building at a cost not to exceed \$55,000; and do hereby recommend to the members of the church that they adopt these plans and proceed at once with the necessary steps for the erection of the church building, provided that the solicitors appointed to canvas the members and friends of the church raise the subscriptions so as to make a total amount pledged of not less than \$40,000.' Motion seconded and carried."

The *Walla Walla Daily Bulletin* reported on this meeting in an article entitled:

Report on New Church to Feature Annual Congregational Meeting

"...At a meeting of the building committee last night at the home of William Struthers, preliminary plans for the new church were presented by architects Crawford and Woodroof (sic.). The new church building is to be located on the lot adjacent to the present parish house, at Alder and Palouse."

On February 27, 1930, Trustees meeting minutes recorded that, "Mr. Baker [D. Frank Baker, Church Treasurer] moved that the Building Committee recommend to the Church Thursday evening Feb. 27th that in case pledges amounted to \$37,000.00 that the Church authorize the Architect to proceed with the plans... Mr. Baker stated that the amount of the approved pledges was \$36,872.00 and that the amount would appear to cover without including the organ. Mr. Penrose [Stephen B. L. Penrose, President of Whitman College] offered to underwrite the shortage of about \$118.00 to make the sum \$37,000.00. Mr. Penrose made a motion to that (sic.) the trustees be instructed to proceed at once and have architect complete plans. Mr. Baker moved to amend Mr. Penroses' (sic.) motion to read that we authorize completion of plans. Motion carried."

Minutes of April 7, 1930 include the following: "To the Trustees of the First Congregational Church: It is time that either something or nothing be done with the church building program which is now about as follows: The church has accumulated pledges on a 2 and 3 year basis of \$36821 against which a committee has estimated a normal shrinkage of 1351 leaving a net of \$35470. The lot on Locust Street (donated by Malcolm McLean) has been sold for \$600. The lots on Howard or Park Street (donated by Mr. Bauman) are offered for \$350 but no sale yet; estimated value (cash) 300. One of the houses on Marcus Street is under prospective sale at \$1550 and for the other there is no buyer, value \$2500. The Church Building Society has tentatively agreed to GRANT 5000 and on 10

*A multiplicity of spellings for "Woodroofe" were observed over the years of Trustees meetings minutes.

year annual repayment at annual repayment of 3% interest to LOAN 10000. Total available assets at present time are therefore \$51370. Considering that the church must borrow against its subscriptions to meet building contracts as due, the wise suggestion has been made that the Marcus Street lots be retained until nearer their real value can be obtained, to assist the credit of the church in such borrowing and pay for pipe organ. The plans and specifications are ready for use of contractors in making up of bids and the rough estimate of the architect is that the building complete as planned, can be erected for (without organ) \$51,500 and the first units of a substantial pipe organ for 3,500 making a total to be paid out for building in 1930 \$55,000..." s/ T. C. Elliott, Chairman of the Church Building Committee.

On April 17, 1930, "Mr. Kelly reported the sale of the Bauman lots for \$450. On a contract for purchased. (sic.) Also reported a standing offer of \$1550. on the Dorothy house, also that Mr. Woodruffe (sic.) is interested in the property at \$1750.00. Motion by Mr. Baker and seconded by Mr. Kelly that we authorize the architect to call for bids on the new church, excluding the items agreed upon at the meeting of the Church Building Comm. and reserving the right to accept or reject any and all bids. Carried."

On May 14, 1930, "The meeting was held for the purpose of considering the different alternate bids for the construction of the new church. Also to have the architects give a report upon the bids as received. The architects reported that the bids had been tabulated as follows: -

O. D. Keen	\$37,410
Taylor & Gross	\$41,644
Conrad Frank	\$43,497
Colonial Co.	\$39,884

Mr. Baker moved and the motion carried that we not have the steel spire. Mr. Struthers moved that we use steel sash. Motion Carried. Mr. Kelly moved that we use the additional insulation in the ceiling. Motion Carried. Mr. Reynolds moved that we accept the basic plans as regard to the floor, with the understanding that any alternate or tile-tex or other surfacing may be substituted and price agreed upon. Also that the matter of floors be referred to the architect for further investigation. Motion carried. Mr. Baker moved that we use steel columns (sic.). Motion carried. The architect recommended that we leave the coping and urns as in basic bid. Motion carried that we accept the recommendation of the architect. Motion made and carried that fireplace be built in pastors study. Moved and carried that toilet fixtures be left as bid upon. Moved and carried that ventilators be left as bid upon. Mr. Reynolds moved that glass in windows at rear of church be the same as in the rest of the church. Motion carried. Mr. Penrose moved that we accept the basic bid as regards to brick, and that samples be set up and decision be made later. Motion carried."

On May 24, 1930, Building Permit #5736 was issued to O. D. Keen, contractor, for the construction of a new church for First Congregational Church. It was noted the building was to cost \$39,000; the permit fee was \$10.

At the Trustees meeting on May 26, 1930, "Mr Baker made the following motions, all of which were passed:

1. To use "Granger Face brick", a few used brick for arches, Reinforced Concrete in Tower & hollow tile in Walls. An addition of \$1375. was noted and a saving of \$1495. by this use of such materials.
2. To omit the basements in the Church because of sewer complications, at a saving of \$334.00.
3. To use "Tile Tex" on the floor of the Auditorium of the Church.

Mr. Keen was instructed to determine when steel sash would be available for windows for the Church."

Minutes from June 2, 1930 record that, "Mr. Greenway of the Washington Brick and Lime Company of Spokane spoke concerning the use of a tile roof for the church. He was asked to submit his figures to

contractor O. D. Keen. The matter of the selection of church pews and furniture was discussed and Mr. Baker moved that Mr. Woodrooffe be requested to visit the Benton Company Mill at Corvallis to ascertain their ability to comply with their bid and also that he be requested to visit churches where this company has made installations. Motion carried. Mr. Struthers moved that wood sash be selected for the church windows. Motion carried.”

Five days later, June 7th, it was recorded that, “Mr. Harold Crawford presented a proposal from Contractor Keen, as follows:

‘I propose to substitute 6x6 red quarry tile for encaustic tile in the Foyer; while floor tile in toilets; wood base in Foyer and toilets for a deduction from the basic bid of \$265,00.

s/O. D. Keen’ and

“I propose to put on a tile roof, as manufactured by the Washington Brick, Lime and S. P. Co; for an additional sum of \$522,00.*

s/O. D. Keen’

Mr. Crawford also presented a colored drawing of a memorial window; but, the matter was referred to future consideration; as the money for such memorial window had been placed in the general funds for the new church for windows in general.”

Trustees meeting minutes from June 11, 1930 record, “Report of the Architect Mr. Woodruff (sic.) relative to Benton Planing Mills Co., with reference to the Pughs (sic.) for the new church was read. Motion by Dr. Lodmell duly seconded that the work be let to the Benton Planing Mills on the basis of the architects report and recommendation. Carried. Motion that the first payment of \$850 be allowed to Mr. Woodruff (sic.) as architect of the new building. Carried.”

On September 18, 1930, the Trustees meeting minutes recorded, “Proposition of globes or candles on lighting fixtures was discussed and on motion was left to a committee to be appointed consisting of Mrs. Kern, Mrs. Penrose, Mrs. Struther, Miss Ayers and Mrs. Johannesson. Proposition of Bronze Plate for Anderson memorial was discussed and on motion was left to Mr. Woodruff (sic.) to decide after consultation with Mr. Anderson.”

That latter discussion was followed up in the Trustees meeting of September 25, 1930 when it was noted that, “Proposition of bronze plate was discussed and Mr. Woodrooffe related his conversation with Mr. Anderson relative to same and a bronze plate was ordered.”

An agenda-filled meeting of the Trustees was held on November 13, 1930, where it was noted that, “Mr. Sherman being present explained the difference between the use of Duco and Enamel finish on the woodwork, favoring the use of Duco for a more durable finish. The Contract calls for a duco finish but a motion was made that arrangements be made to hear Mr. Ramsbeck on the subject before decision was made. Mr. Woodrooffe explained the Kimball Co contract, relative to extra expense involved in cutting holes for the organ which was discussed. Motion made that any necessary expense in this connection be authorized. Question of heater in organ chamber discussed and Mr Woodrooffe was asked to secure figures relative to maintenance cost of said heater.”

On November 20, 1930, Trustees meeting minutes noted that, “Proposition of heater for the organ was brought up for discussion Mr. Woodrooffe stating that the cost would be pretty high and Mr. Baker stating that he had found out definitely that no damage could be done to the organ by cold. Motion was made that we get along without a heater at this time. Carried. Proposition of additional fee of Mr. Woodrooffe for additional work done on church fee was discussed. Mr. Baker stated that Mr. Woodrooffe was willing to allow this extra fee balance the amount due as a balance on his pledge. (Arnott Woodrooffe and his wife Alice joined First Congregational Church on November 2, 1930. No listing for the Woodrooffes in the Members Removed book could be found; presumably they remained

*The tile roof has since been replaced with what appears to be composition roofing.

church members until they moved to Spokane around 1937, ed.) Motion that we cancel the balance of Mr. Woodroofs (sic.) pledge as a fee for this extra work was made duly seconded and carried.”

At the meeting on December 4, 1930, “Mr. Keen was called upon to outline progress on the new church and advise approximate date of its completion which he stated could best be determined from the time the floor was finished by the Portland people, after which it would take approximately one month to complete. Motion was made and seconded that the date of Dedication be not determined until the floor was lain. Extra cost of cross and copper on spire was discussed and on motion was turned over to Mr. Struthers and Woodroofe for attention.”

At December 18, 1930’s meeting, “Woodruff (sic.) suggested that church be closed January 25, before the church is opened. He also mentioned velour for balconies. Discussion of gowns; invitations for the Dedication are to cost about \$7.00 and \$20.00 for programs.”

At a general meeting on January 29, 1931, it was noted: “The following resolution expressed our thanks and appreciation of the services of the Architect of the Church Arnott Woodruff (sic.) and the Builder O. D. Keen were read and on motion adopted by the church...”

In the years leading up to the hiring of architect Woodroofe, continuing through the years 1929 and 1930, Church Treasurer D. Frank Baker was aggressive in his attempts to keep the church building fund coffers filled. He mailed so many letters to church members who were arrears in their pledges that one must ponder how he was able to devote any time to gainful employment. Many of these letters were sent on stationery marked, “Estate of Dorsey S. Baker” – intimidating in itself – and went to addressees who lived in other states. Frequently the delinquent amounts were small, even for the times – \$5, \$10 or \$15. There are many notes from these “scofflaws” accompanying their remittances, happy to make good on their pledges. Perhaps most nefarious of Mr. Baker’s attempts to collect were his filing on a January 31, 1924 Superior Court Probate of the will of Walter T. Ginn, deceased, to collect \$515 in pledged amount from his estate; and another such filing in June 1928 to collect a trifling \$35 from the estate of Bessie T. Gross, deceased.

Exactly when Arnott Woodroofe was hired as church architect is not recorded. He and his wife, Alice B. Woodroofe, are first listed as Walla Walla residents in the City Directory for 1929-30. Also listed was Jean Woodroofe, who may have been an adult daughter (in 1929, Woodroofe would have been 50 years old; Jean’s occupation was listed as “teacher”). Had he not retired and moved to Seattle, the contract for the design of the church most likely would have been granted to Henry Osterman, who had already designed a proposed building concurrent with his 1922 design for the Parish House. The façades of the structure designed and submitted to the Trustees by Woodroofe bears a close resemblance to Osterman’s earlier design; the variations in the exteriors of the two designs are negligible. It is in the interior where dramatic differences exist. Osterman had called for a grand interior, noteworthy for being in conflict with the so-called simple New England colonial style. His proposal featured a three-sided balcony with grand staircases on both sides near the chancel. The chancel itself was filled with a spectacular pipe organ case where the current Palladian window exists. 1929 was a nervous time financially, and, of course, the bottom fell out on October 29th of that year. No doubt Woodroofe was advised by the Trustees that a scaled-down interior would be required, while maintaining as much of the resplendent street façade as finances could bear. The serendipitous result of this was an interior far more in keeping with the simple New England colonial style than Osterman’s plan called for.

On Saturday, January 31, 1931, the *Walla Walla Daily Bulletin* ran the following article about the dedication of the new edifice:

“First Congregational Church, Alder and Palouse Streets, Theodore K. Vogler, pastor...
Dedication of new church building at 11 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. Arnott Woodroofe,

superintendent.* Invocation by Rev. J. B. Hunley, Sermon by Dr. L. O Baird, Dedicatory prayer by Dr. S. B. L. Penrose. Music in charge of Donald C. Sellew.** Evening service, 7:30 o'clock. Sermon by Rev. W. A. Sprague. History of church by T. C. Elliott."



A photograph in the *Walla Walla Daily Bulletin* of the new church and Parish House, February 1, 1931.

The dedication of the new First Congregational Church building took place on February 1, 1931. The *Walla Walla Daily Bulletin*, in a front page article, trumpeted:

DEDICATION TAKES PLACE TODAY

The First Congregational Church building, Palouse street near East Alder, will be dedicated this morning as a house of worship. A consecration service, culminating the work of the church membership, trustees, minister and officers, as well as months of labor by workmen, will take place at 11 o'clock.

The building, erected and equipped at a cost of approximately \$56,000, is declared one of the most beautiful, not only in the state or the Northwest, but in the entire nation. Built on the old New England Congregational church type of architecture, its tall spire pointing heavenward, there can be no doubt regarding the purpose of the building, while the glistening whiteness of the interior, relieved through the brass electric fixtures, the carpets and drapes, is entirely appropriate for religious worship.

Great care has been taken in preparation of the dedicatory program of today's service. To Dr. S. B. L. Penrose, president of Whitman college and a member of the church here during his 31 years residence in the city, has been given the honor of offering the church to God in a dedicatory prayer.

Dr. Lucius O. Baird, state superintendent of Congregational churches, will deliver the dedication sermon, his subject being "The Power of Vision." Dr. Baird, a classmate of Dr. Penrose, like the latter was a member of the Yale band, coming to the far west as a pioneer minister of his denomination.

The Rev. James K. Lyman, Congregational missionary who is on furlough

*This is the only reference found referencing Arnott Woodroffe as Sunday School Superintendent.

**Donald Edgar Sellew was an instructor in music theory at Whitman Conservatory.

from Marash, Turkey, and who is a member of a pioneer family in the valley, will lead the responsive service of dedication which will precede Dr. Penrose's prayer. Dr. J. B. Hunley, pastor of Central Christian Church, which is located just across Palouse street from the new building, will offer the invocation, and the Rev. Fred Grey, superintendent of religious education for the denomination in the state, will read the scripture lesson.



Another newspaper photo of the new church building, February 1, 1931.

And on Page 8 of *The Walla Walla Union* that Sunday ran this even longer story:

The first official services to be held in the new Congregational church, recently completed on the corner of Palouse and Alder streets, will be the dedication ceremonies this morning at 11:00 o'clock, according to plans completed last week by Rev. Theodore K. Vogler.

Dr. Lucius O. Baird, superintendent of Congregational churches in the state of Washington, will deliver the sermon, while the dedicatory prayer will be offered by Dr. S. B. L. Penrose, president of Whitman college.

In the evening the services will be of such a nature as to be complimentary to all those who helped in the construction from the laying of the foundations to the placing of the cross, which can be seen the full length of lower Alder street. At this service Rev. Sprague of the First Congregational church of Pasco will give the sermon and at that service also T. C. Elliott will give a brief historical sketch of the church which is the oldest Congregational church in the state of Washington, being organized in 1865.

Immediately preceding the evening's services the young people of the church will have a banquet and all Congregational young people of the city as well as those attending Whitman College are cordially invited to attend. At the banquet Rev. Fred Grey, state superintendent of religious education, will speak briefly.

The new church itself is of New England colonial architecture and is situated on the Palouse street side of the Parish House which was erected about three (sic.) years ago a short time after the former church was destroyed by fire.

The new structure was constructed from brick the same color as those used in the erection of the Parish House, and both are trimmed in the cream shade. Four stately Ionic columns form the entrance which also conforms to the general color combination evident in the outside finish of both buildings. The total cost was approximately \$65,000 (sic.) and the two buildings compliment each other perfectly.

The pastor of the newly erected Congregational church which will be dedicated this morning is one of the youngest ministers in his profession and is undoubtedly the youngest in the city.

Rev. Vogler was ordained in Tacoma, Washington and after a few years on church work along the coast came to Walla Walla in August of 1927.

Progressiveness is one of his chief characteristics and he is always in demand as a public speaker.

The tall spire, topped with a Latin cross, is also of the New England church type, and is visible from many points throughout the city. It is copper covered and is very impressive when reflecting the rays of the sun.

The nave is flanked on either side by four monumental windows, of steel (sic.) construction, while the rear is lighted by a palladian window. All other windows are glazed with Scotch imported glass.

There is no basement under the new structure but room for most activities, by various church organizations, is provided for in the Parish House. The ground floor measures 104 feet by 56 feet, and the entire church rests on a foundation of 36 inch piers, 13 inch curtain walls with the piers supporting steel trusses, all carried on heavy footings. Beneath the church the entire site is covered with a thick slab of concrete.

The interior which is entirely white, brown and blue, has one central aisle and two side aisles, with a total seating capacity on the main floor of 635. Additional seating for 75 is provided in the balcony and for 48 in the choir. The pastor is provided with an office and the choir has special accommodations; there is also ample room above the balcony and in the tower to provide rooms for church groups.

The roof is arched and is supported by three steel trusses. The interior walls are treated with pilasters in the Doric order, which support the frieze and cornice on all four sides of the nave.

The pulpit and reading desk are placed one on each side of the choir and these, too, are of the New England type. The chancel is paneled on three sides.

The floor is of tile with aisles and approaches carpeted in dark blue, to match the drapes, that hang in graceful folds from the apex of each window to catch on the side frames. The pews are of the New England box type and are of white enamel trimmed with Philippine mahogany top rails. The hand rails of the stairs leading to the pulpit are also trimmed in Philippine mahogany and the fittings are early colonial polished brass, thus completing the New England idea.

The spire is the only portion of the building proper that is not of brick. The tower rests on a reinforced concrete foundation and is of brick to the cornice line.

Two unit heaters provide the heating arrangement for the building. These heaters provide a flow of warm air automatically controlled, with enough radiation to maintain an even temperature when the blowers are shut off.



This early photograph of the sanctuary illustrates how inappropriate window draperies were for a New England colonial meeting house interior. Author's photo.

The *Congregational Way* for March 1931, published in Seattle, covered the dedication on its first page.

“Beautiful for situation” – so sang the ancient Hebrews of their temple, and so may the citizens of Walla Walla say of their new Congregational Church. Walking up Alder St., one of the main avenues of the city, one sees at what appears to be the end of the street, this stately edifice with its four white columns, which contrast with the red brick of the building. Above is an imposing copper covered spire, topped with a cross. The colored tile roof adds beauty, with a sense of permanency. The building carries out the ideas brought down from the early New England meeting house, and the modern handling of these makes both an attractive and highly effective house of worship.

The architect incorporated in the interior a combination of coloring and of furnishing which likewise is in keeping with colonial ideas. White, blue, mahogany brown and colonial old brass are used to give the correct interior effects. Many of the furnishings were memorial gifts. Prof. Louis F. Anderson presented the mahogany altar and pulpit and brass lectern. A two manual Kimball organ is installed behind the grill work on either side of the chancel. All things blend to call men to worship “in the beauty of holiness and in the holiness of beauty”.

The dedication services were held on February first. “Denominational ties were cut asunder as members of other valley congregations swelled the crowd that overflowed the capacity of the expansive auditorium”, reports a local paper. “To the congregation that heard Dr. Stephen B. L. Penrose offer the shrine to the Father in dedicatory prayer and Rev. Lucius O. Baird, superintendent of the Washington Congregational Conference, preach the initial sermon, it seemed appropriate that the cradle from which Congregationalism has spread throughout the state should be moving into one of the most striking temples of the denomination in the nation. The congregation whose dreams and plans were fulfilled yesterday, is the outgrowth of the little pioneer group that organized the territory’s first Congregational church in Walla Walla on January 1, 1865.”

In the evening, an interesting paper on the history of the church was read by Mr. T. C. Elliott, chairman of the building committee, and an authority on the history of the Northwest. The evening sermon was preached by Rev. W. A. Sprague, of Pasco, in whose church in Tacoma, ten years before, the pastor Rev. Theodore K. Vogler was ordained to the Congregational ministry. Mr. Vogler had preached in the Moravian Church in which his father and grandfather had served before him. Mrs. Vogler’s father was a well known minister in the German Reformed Church.

The new church cost \$56,000, including the organ. It was entirely paid for before the day of the dedication, with the exception of the usual loan from the Church Building Society. With the parish house adjoining it, the plant is fitted for the large and varied services of the church to Whitman College and the community and the world.

A discomfiting, but nonetheless poignant, account of a minor event during the dedication service was reported in an unidentified newspaper account entitled:

Church Dedicated As Powerhouse.

...Just as the service was about to begin a huge black man entered to take his place among the builders. Told that his name was not listed among them, he maintained that he was one of that group, and on questioning, showed how he, as blacksmith, had been the essential man in the construction of the iron framework on which the entire building had been constructed...

and

...A feature of equipment in the new church drawing favorable comment from music lovers at the first day’s services was the new Kimball organ, an instrument of unusually rich and mellow tone.

The *Walla Walla Daily Bulletin* reported that the

Music will include...postlude, “Tocatto” (sic.) (From Symphony 5) – Widor.

This barnburner piece from the organ repertoire was performed by Prof. Donald Edgar Sellew of Whitman College, a graduate of the New England Conservatory, with advanced study in Paris; it was played again as the prelude for the sesquicentennial service of the church on October 5, 2014.

* * *

The dedication of the church over, the Trustees returned to business, considerable of which seemed to deal with fine-tuning items that arise when occupying a new building. For their February 19, 1931 meeting, the following was recorded: "Mr. J. G. Kelly's letter about Mr. LongMore's suggestions for the care of the New Organ was read and discussed. (A Padlock on the trap door to the Organ Loft, Bradley allen Switch, and Permanent ladder to the loft were Suggested.) Suggestions were referred to Mr. Woodruffe (sic). Mr. Baker stated that there was 1500.00 in the Treasury and there were to (sic.) large bills due for \$9000.00 to O. D. Keen and \$4300.00 to Whitehouse Crawford. The Committee decided to split it between them." (That would translate to a miniscule offering of \$750.00 per creditor.)

Minutes for the Trustees meeting on March 12, 1931 recorded, "Mr. Woodruffe (sic.) reports that the final contracts had been signed and bills are ready to be paid to Whitehouse Crawford and O. D. Keen. Mr. Baker reports that the money has arrived from the Church Building Society. The Committee then Authorized Mr. Baker to pay the afore mentioned Bills."

In March 1931, Mill Creek flooded, resulting in severe damage throughout the city. Minutes from the Trustees meeting on May 21, 1931 noted, "Flood Expenses

Paid	\$273.05
<u>Unpaid</u>	<u>\$136.50</u>
Total	\$409.55



A view of First Congregational Church showing the aftermath of the March 1931 flooding of Mill Creek. Author's photo.

It was decided that the Hymn boards were unnecessary with our calendars, so the matter was laid on the table. It was decided that Mr. Woodrooffe (sic.) should design kneeling benches for any families who desired to purchase for their own pews."

The Trustees meeting minutes for September 17, 1931 recorded, "It was stated that the Hymn Boards had been received. It was stated that Mrs. Rosella Woodward was on trial as organist during the month of September. The Board of Commissioners recommended that she continue if satisfactory, The Board of Trustees recommended to the Commissioner of Worship that Dorothy Wentsch Brunton be asked to be organist and Mrs. Woodward Director of the Choir within the Budget. It was Stated that we had been offered 3 Multi Fuel Burners for \$50.00 instead of the usual \$75.00. It was moved and passed that Mr. Baker be given the authority to try these burners during October and buy them if they prove satisfactory."

For October 15, 1931, the Trustees minutes recorded that, "Mr. Woodrooffe reported on his landscaping plan. It will not cost more than \$75.00 with the shrubs which Mrs. Casey has offered... Mr. Portch moved that the architect be given charge of the plans to see to the planting etc. according to his plan."

On June 21, 1932 it was noted in the Trustees meeting minutes that, "Anna Louise Elliott was chosen choir director due to Mrs. Woodward's resignation. Mrs. Dorothy Wentsch Brunton was chosen as organist at \$20.00 a month. It was suggested that we procure the quartet for \$40.00 a month this year."

But a week later, it was recorded that, "No matter how good the music is if we haven't money we can't afford it. A motion was made to have Mrs. Brunton or someone else next year not to exceed \$2.50 a Sunday and a volunteer choir."

For January 11, 1934, Trustees meeting minutes noted, "That since Architect Woodrooffe has reduced the insurable value of the Parish House, the policy now due of \$7500 be reduced to \$3000. This will allow 70% co-insurance."

At the March 5, 1934 Trustees meeting, "Mr. Elliott was appointed by President to see Architect Woodrooffe regarding the improvement of heating arrangement of the Church building and bring in a report at next meeting."

On February 14, 1935, "Treasurer reported receipt of... \$75.00 from Plymouth Club to pay part of interest on building debt... President brought up question of using the Church building for an organ recital by The Plymouth Club on ticket basis. Taken under advisement."

And at the October 4, 1936 meeting, "Miss Elliott requested a back be placed on the organ bench in the church. This was authorized upon motion. Motion carried that \$15.00 per month be authorized for organist from Sept. 1st."

At the Trustees meeting on January 9, 1938, it was recorded that the "Total value of church, Parish House and parsonage, including contents: \$106542.00 and Total indebtedness (including Church Building Society mortgage): \$27610.00."

Financial difficulties have plagued churches for probably as long as there have been churches. First Congregational Church of Walla Walla was no exception, and was having difficulty making required payments to the Church Building Society against its mortgage, and also making promised interest payments to some members who had taken out interest-bearing loans as subscriptions to the church building fund. On January 4, 1938, Rev. Clay Palmer had a meeting with Rev. Clayton S. Rice, D.D., of Plymouth Congregational Church in Seattle, relative to securing financial assistance once again from the Church Building Society. Dr. Rice was a member of the Commission on Ministry and the Business

Committee of the Congregational Church Building Society. On January 8th, Rev. Palmer submitted a letter to Dr. Rice, in which some of the church's history was enumerated in six points.

1. In 1912 the First Congregational Church of Walla Walla had plans all made for the erection of a fine church building that at that time would have cost approximately \$150,000. The erection of such a building in part grew out of the recognition that the Church was vitally related to Whitman College.
2. In the spring of 1912 Whitman College was passing through a financial crisis. Dr. R. C. Brooks, pastor of the Church, announced from his pulpit the postponement of the building program of the Church in order to give all of his support to raising \$200,000 for Whitman College. It is recognized that the action of Dr. Brooks and the Congregational Church at that time was chiefly responsible for the success of that campaign.
3. A few years later the church building was burned. After the war the building costs were greatly increased and several generous, wealthy members of the Church had died. As soon as possible, however, the Church met the demands of its educational program by building its modern parish house at a cost of \$40,000. This building was paid for. A few years later, under the leadership of the Reverend Theodore K. Vogler, the Church secured subscriptions for a new church building that amounted to several thousand dollars more than the estimated cost of the building. On this basis, with the assistance of the Church Building Society, the Church proceeded to build a church.
4. Then suddenly the depression hit this community and made it impossible for several of those who had made the larger subscriptions toward the church building, to meet their pledges. Moreover, the incomes of most of the church members were so reduced that the contributions necessary to maintain the benevolence and the current expense budgets took every cent they could possibly give. So their pledges to the church building have not yet been fully met. The meeting of their building fund pledges by many families would mean the material decrease in their support of the program of the Church and its benevolence responsibility.
5. Again Whitman College has come into the picture. During the last months a quiet campaign has been progressing to raise \$122,000 in the city of Walla Walla to meet the obligation of Whitman College incurred during the depression. It happens that several members of the Congregational Church are among the largest givers toward this fund. So at present, several of the generous well-to-do members of the Church are unable to make contributions to remove the church building indebtedness that under other circumstances they could make.
6. At present, several friends of the Church are paying interest on money that they borrowed to help build the church. The Church has given them notes but interest has not been paid to them on these notes. These friends have been patient; there is no bad spirit involved. But the Board of Trustees is facing seriously the securing of funds to pay all of the local indebtedness. We have just gone through our "Every Member Canvass" for our benevolence and current expense funds for the year 1938. We know that it is simply impossible for us to secure in addition to the sums involved in both of these budgets, the several thousand dollars necessary to meet the local building indebtedness. However, you recognized perhaps the other night, that every member of the financial committee did think that we could fairly expect to meet the amount of this local indebtedness less the \$2,000 which we might secure from the Church Building Society. We understand that \$1,000 of this would be a loan and \$1,000 a grant.

I earnestly hope that it may be possible for the Church to secure this assistance at this time. This statement has been read to the Board of Trustees and has been approved by them.

Despite larger problems looming, the Trustees continued to address fine-tuning subjects at their meetings. For February 9, 1939, it was recorded, "Mr. Cookerly spoke about an electric heater to be installed in the organ at the church. This was recommended by the party that sold the organ to the church."*

In minutes for the Trustees meeting on August 29, 1939, "Mr. Curry reported that curtains for the church could be purchased for \$22 and a motion was made that he be authorized to purchase these curtains. Carried."

* * *

*An electric heater of 1930s vintage was found in the pipe chamber, still plugged in. It was disconnected.

The purpose of this report has been to reference the landmark developments that led to the design construction and dedication of the new church building in 1931. That having been discharged to the extent intended, a leap to the year 1945 is taken, when, on January 25th of that year at the annual meeting of the congregation, Rev. Kenneth Claypool burned the mortgage. The once seemingly insurmountable task of constructing this magnificent place of worship had not only been accomplished, but had at last been paid for in full. In the 70 years since that jubilant congregational meeting, First Congregational Church of Walla Walla has continued its commitment of faith and service to the greater Walla Walla valley community.

Arnott Woodroofe, Architect of First Congregational Church



This is the only known photograph of Arnott Woodroofe.
Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation photo.

Arnott Woodroofe was born in Liverpool, England on February 19, 1879. Beginning at the age of 15 he apprenticed as a talented delineator in the office of Richard Lloyd Williams, a civil engineer, from 1894 until 1898. In 1898 he began work for Ralph Nevill, a noted British Arts & Crafts architect. That year he also began courses at the Architectural Association and the Regent Street Polytechnical School.

Woodroofe emigrated to Montreal, Canada in 1899, and in 1900 located to Vancouver, B. C., where he became an assistant to Andrew T. Taylor in that city. He was elected to the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1903. He was active in Vancouver, submitting a gothic design in a competition for a Methodist church, and in 1903 entered the competition for a design for a Presbyterian church. (No documented works of Woodroofe in Vancouver exist.)

In 1904, Woodroofe moved to Tacoma and began what proved to be a 50-year career that spanned the state, from Tacoma to Spokane. In Tacoma, he first became head draftsman for the well-known architecture firm of Russell & Babcock; however, in 1906 he left their employ to form his own architecture practice with Rollin Tuttle. The firm of Tuttle & Woodroofe was known primarily for their craftsman style bungalows, and advertised their specialty "Artistic Cottages" throughout parts of western Washington (the 1907 Polk Directory for Aberdeen, Washington features a Tuttle & Woodroofe advertisement).

Woodroofe bought out Tuttle in 1908 and formed a partnership with his draftsman, Arnold Constable. Both were advocates of the æsthetics of John Ruskin, and were familiar with the architecture of the Scot, Charles Rennie Macintosh. Together they produced designs for over 60 dwellings in Tacoma, and they designed the craftsman-style Park Universalist Church in 1909.

In 1913, Constable left the firm and took a job with Beezer Brothers in Seattle. As has been earlier cited, Beezer Brothers had been hired by First Congregational Church in 1912 to design a grand church building that did not come to be realized, primarily due to the church's granting of much of its building fund in that year to Whitman College to prevent that institution's financial collapse. Louis and Michael Beezer were twins, and devout Roman Catholics, who had moved to Seattle from

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as young men. They had considerable success in Seattle, but, curiously, designed a number of structures in Walla Walla, including the Baker Boyer National Bank, the First National Bank (now Banner Bank), and the Jensen Department Store (now Macy's).

Although Woodrooffe took on two new partners in Tacoma, after just two years he left the firm and moved to Spokane and set up a practice there. However, the *Walla Walla Daily Bulletin* on February 6, 1930, in an article entitled, "Architects Join In Association," reported that Woodrooffe arrived in Walla Walla from Florida, where he had had a successful architecture practice for several years. It further stated that he had designed churches in several cities in both Florida and Washington, including Universalist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian and Congregational. No mention was made of how many years he had spent in Florida.

It is not known what brought about Woodrooffe's move to Walla Walla, which appears to have occurred in either late 1928 or early 1929. His name was first listed, along with his wife Alice B. Woodrooffe, and Jean Woodrooffe (who most likely was a daughter) in the City Directory for 1929-30. His vocation was listed as architect, with an office at 216 Drumheller Building. Whether by design or coincidence, Woodrooffe set up his practice in the office formerly occupied by Henry Osterman until the latter's retirement in 1927. The Woodrooffes first resided at 555 Juniper, a house that is no longer there. Their next address was a small bungalow extant at 215 North Madison. In the 1931-32 City Directory, Jean Woodrooffe was listed as a teacher, residing at the house on Madison.

All three Woodrooffes joined First Congregational Church on November 2, 1930. Although no documentation of any services to the church other than as architect could be found in church records or the First Congregational Church material archived at Whitman College, he was listed as Sunday School Superintendent in the article on the dedication of the church that appeared in the *Walla Walla Daily Bulletin* on January 31, 1931. Also no documentation could be found to date the Woodrooffes' removal from membership, but it is likely they remained members until they left Walla Walla.

On August 29, 1931, Alice B. Woodrooffe was issued a permit to construct a new house at 922 North College, to cost \$2,000. She paid \$1.50 for the permit. Ed Buboltz was listed as the contractor; the architect was not specified, but surely must have been her husband. (North College is now Penrose Street; the former South College has been absorbed by Whitman campus expansion.) At the time the permit was issued, the lot was vacant and had not been assigned a street number; 922 was evidently chosen arbitrarily. In fact, the house, when finished, was assigned the number 926 North College (Penrose) and can still be seen at that address, although substantially altered.

No other buildings in Walla Walla have been documented to the designs of Woodrooffe, but he did design alterations to a school in Umapine, Oregon, including a new gymnasium, despite the fact he had not yet been licensed to practice architecture in that state.

Woodrooffe formed a partnership with Walla Walla architect Harold E. Crawford in 1929; the 1929 City Directory lists them as Crawford & Woodrooffe. Crawford additionally had a listing in the Directory as "secy-archt Tum-A-Lum Lumber Co." In the 1932 City Directory, Crawford did not have a listing under Architects, but retained the Tum-A-Lum listing, and was also listed as "Treas. Walla Walla Chamber of Commerce." Crawford's name does not appear on any of the extant architectural blueprints for First Congregational Church, and he was referenced in only two of the recorded minutes of the Trustees meetings. Thus, the extent of his involvement in the design of First Congregational Church, if any, is not known. The only place his name appears on blueprints in the church's archives is on the $\frac{3}{4}$ perspective drawing of the church and Parish House, bearing the name "Crawford & Woodrooffe, Architects."

By 1933, all three Woodrooffes were listed as residing at 926 North College, where they remained until leaving Walla Walla and relocating back to Spokane, presumably in 1936; there were no Woodrooffes listed in the 1937 City Directory.

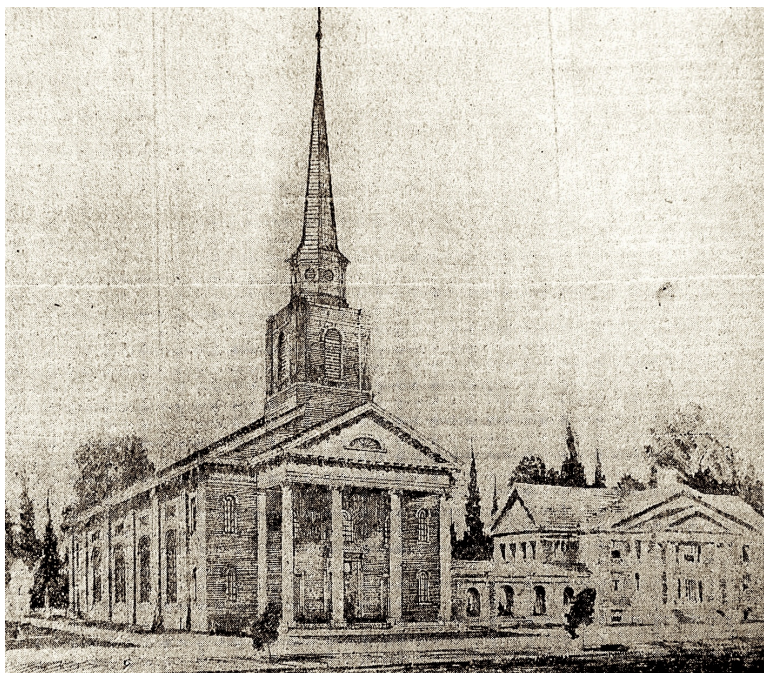
Considering the number of years he lived in Spokane, little appears to have been documented of his works in that city. Woodrooffe died there on June 8, 1976 at the age of 97.

* * *

In one of the 41 boxes of documents of First Congregational Church in the Whitman Archives is a business envelope with a much-folded and yellowed newspaper clipping inside. It is a page from the *Walla Walla Daily Bulletin* of February 6, 1930. The headline article on that page grabs the reader's eye: "Congregational Church Building Is Planned," but two other articles also stand out: "Architects Join In Association: Arnott Woodrooffe and H. E. Crawford Are Working Together;" and "Umapine Has New School Building; Old Vincent Structure Is Modernized With Four-Room Addition." The two smaller articles catch the reader's eye not because of their headlines, but because they are covered with hand-printed inked comments. In fact, the entire page is covered with these editorial comments, arrows pointing to larger comments in the margins of the page, and some sentences circled. It would appear that this page had been saved by Arnott Woodrooffe for 34 years, and at the time of the church's centennial in 1964 he had penned his comments and mailed it to the church.

Woodrooffe would have been 85 years old that year, but his comments reveal a man seemingly still self-assured, and with a quirky sense of humor. Some of what he wrote is well worth including in closing this account of his life.

Near a $\frac{3}{4}$ perspective drawing of the proposed church building, Woodrooffe wrote, "The material I have is complete and of historical value. The church should have complete copy of positives which means expense more or less," and, "A pencil rendering in excellent condition." (The pencil perspective resembles almost faithfully what was built except for a gently tapering steeple.) Under that article's headline, he penned, "I have the original plans a fine piece of draftsmanship. Also specifications and complete Letter & Bid file."



Arnott Woodrooffe's 1930 pencil delineation of his proposal for the new First Congregational Church. Note the unbuilt features: a breezeway between the two buildings; and a graceful tapering of the spire near its base.

The article about the Woodrooffe-Crawford partnership mentioned that churches are his hobby; he circled that and wrote, "Ha! Ha! Very True." Further, that he was an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and he wrote, "Still is." He also wrote that he "was honored with Emeritus

standing by A.R.A. in 1962” and with an arrow to the margin wrote, “Arnott Woodroofe, F.A.R.A. Emeritus.”

Under the Umapine school article headline, he wrote, “Still have these plans.” At the bottom of the page, he penned, “Would like several copies of the centennial. PROVIDED THE CREDIT PROFESSIONALLY (sic.) IS CHANGED TO H. E. CRAWFORD. (While it is uncertain to what he refers regarding “several copies of the centennial,” likely it was the booklet that was written at that time on the church’s first 100 years, where, on Page 14 of that history, Crawford is omitted as co-architect of the church. However, in that Crawford’s name, as already mentioned, only appears on one drawing that the church has in its archives, this again calls into question just what his role was in the design of the church.)

At the top of the page Woodroofe penned, “Thanks for Centenial (sic.). Could use some copies but Alice B. says the groceries come first. The original [of the pencil drawing] is a pencil rendering very good in perfect condition. Signed Arnott Woodroof (sic.) Delineator.” Was his misspelling of his own surname intentional? A poke, perhaps, at the church that had contrived a dozen different ways of spelling Woodroofe over the years? And while the reference to Alice B.’s [his wife] stating that grocery expenses take priority over costs for extra copies of the centennial booklet is jocose, it also might well speak to the condition of the Woodroofes’ finances at this late stage of their lives.

A note written on the envelope containing the newspaper article reads:

Emrys:*

Enclosed newspaper clippings might be of historical interest. Read Woodroofe’s personal comments. He is angling to sell the original renderings of church and also plans, I think. If you think church might be interested you might make a proposal, modest. At any rate we are not sure whether he wants enclosed back but I think so. Any questions – call me.

Craig Esary **

Mr. Esary’s comments are fairly dismissive of the then-85-year-old architect, and it is regrettable that Woodroofe’s presumed offer to sell the original copies of the church plans appears not to have been looked into any further. One must wonder whatever happened to this material. It is also sad to see that after noting that Woodroofe probably wanted the newspaper page returned, Mr. Esary did not see that it was mailed back to him.

* * *

References:

Archived material at First Congregational Church of Walla Walla
Whitman Archives

Michael Houser, State Architectural Historian, Washington State Dept. of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950

Historic Tacoma: Tacoma Architects and Their Buildings

The Words of Arnold Constable, Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, Berkeley, CA, 2010

*Emrys Thomas was pastor of First Congregational Church at the time.

**Craig Esary was a former Trustee (1956-1960) and vice-president of Whitehouse-Crawford Lumber Co.