

Arenzville Presbyterian Church

By Molly Daniel



The Presbyterian Church stood in the southwest corner of the village park. Built in 1860¹, the church started as a Union church, used by all denominations. The congregation of Cumberland Presbyterians acquired the church in 1870 by assuming the remaining (\$500) debt on the building.

They continued to offer use of the building to the Methodists, who had not yet built their own church. During this time period, the building was often referred to as the "Methodist-Presbyterian" or "M.P. Church."

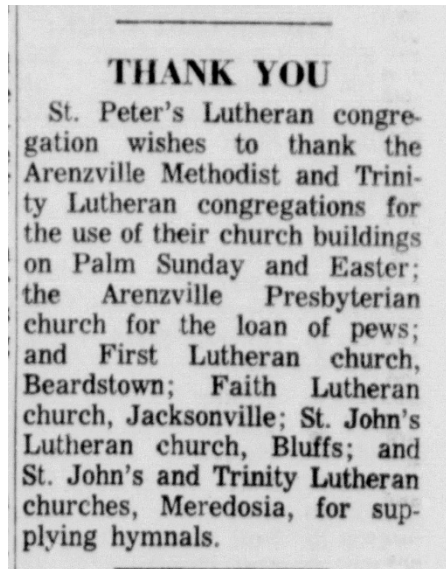


In 1905, the Methodists built their own church on the east end of Frederick Street, and in 1907 the church in the park became known as the Presbyterian Church. In 1950, the church was refurbished and rededicated. Over the years, as congregation members aged and attendance declined, they were unable to afford the upkeep on the building.



¹ Sources disagree regarding the year it was built. Most state it was built in 1860, but some put its date of construction as early as 1854, which would make it the oldest church building in the county at the time of its demolition.

By 1970, it had fallen into disrepair, though it was occasionally used for the funeral service of a former church member. In 1971, the Presbyterians loaned their church pews to St. Peter's Lutheran church, whose building had been destroyed in a fire only a few days before their Palm Sunday service. The St. Peter's services for Palm Sunday and Easter were held instead at Trinity Lutheran and the Methodist Churches in Arenzville, with the assistance of churches from Arenzville, Beardstown, Jacksonville, Bluffs and Meredosia.



In 1972, with considerable sadness, a few remaining church members and several volunteers gathered to assist with the razing of the Presbyterian Church building. Its stained glass windows were carefully removed and preserved. The church bell was placed on permanent display in the village park with a plaque that recalls the building's history.



