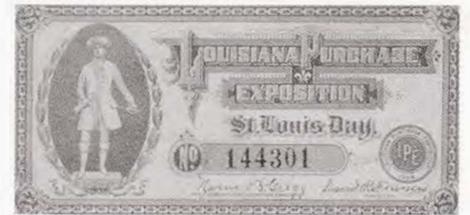
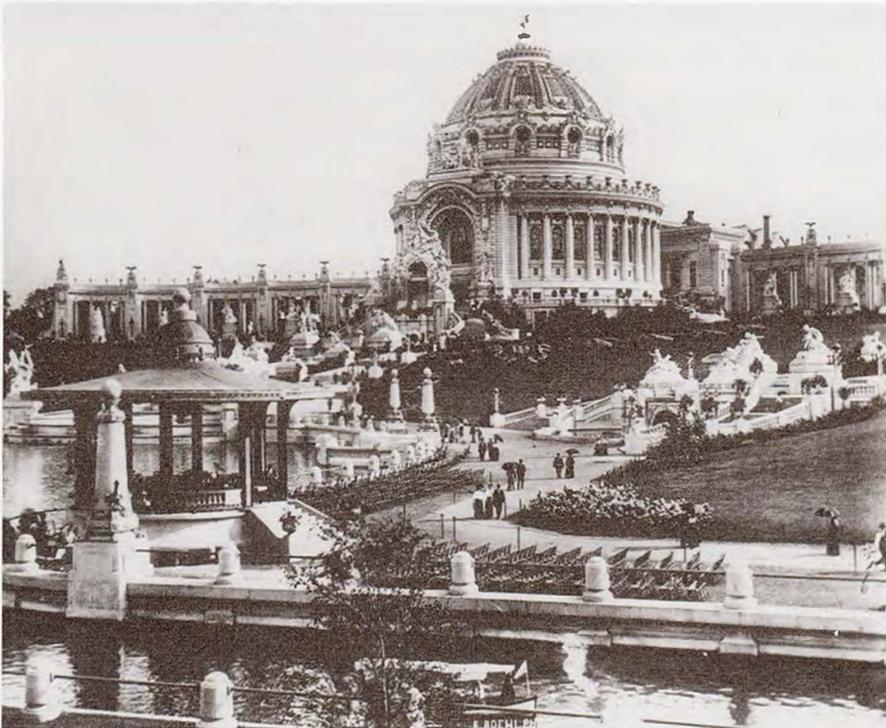


“About my Father’s business”

J. Layton Mauzé

Efforts to secure a new pastor were not detailed in the official church records beyond the appointment of a three-man search committee in March, 1901. Sometime in the winter of 1901—1902, J. Layton Mauzé of Virginia was called and on January 19, 1902, the Session recommended that the deacons contribute \$100 toward his moving expenses. On March 2, 1902, Dr. Mauzé was installed as Central’s sixth pastor. His fifteen year ministry would be characterized by harmony and growth within the church.

Joseph Layton Mauzé was born in Montevideo, Virginia, in 1873 and graduated from Hampden-Sydney College and Union Theological Seminary. He received his Doctor of Divinity degree from Westminster College during his years at Central.



A photo (left) of the 1904 World’s Fair and a ticket (above) for the day’s events. During the Fair, a request by the Ladies’ Aid Society to open the church for sleeping quarters for fair goers was soundly defeated by the Session. (“Festival Hall and the Cascades”, photo by Emil Boehl, Missouri Historical Society)



Rolla Wells, Mayor of St. Louis, 1901-1908, and pew holder at Central. Well's wife, Jennie Howard Wells, donated a stained glass window to the new church on Clara and Delmar. The window was one of four removed from the building and reinstalled in the new church when Central relocated to Hanley Road.

(Missouri Historical Society)

One of the challenges facing Dr. Mauzé and the congregation in the early years of his pastorate was whether the church should relocate. Consistent with patterns established before the Civil War, well-to-do St. Louisans (including Central members) continued to move farther west through a central corridor as commercial and industrial concerns expanded into once fashionable neighborhoods. In 1903, for example, only three of twenty eight sample Central families still lived at the same address as in 1883. The Board of Trustees made a candid assessment of the situation in January, 1903:

The district surrounding [Central] has greatly changed in the character of its residents during the past ten years. The people who now live in this vicinity are, as a rule, not so well able to contribute to the financial support of the church as those who formerly resided there. This condition will probably grow worse as time goes on, and those who may in the future be expected to unite with the church will, as a rule, be unable to contribute as much to its financial support as its present members.

The Trustees were reluctant to abandon the church at Lucas and Garrison. Central was the only Presbyterian church remaining east of Garrison Avenue “except those situated in the extreme northern and southern sections of the city, and it now has the best opportunity for reaching the masses of the people of any Presbyterian church in St. Louis.” An endowment fund was proposed to secure the church’s financial future. The proposal was accepted by the congregation, but contributions to the fund were apparently not adequate: on May 26, 1905, a committee was appointed to negotiate the sale of the church property for no less than \$40,000.

Within a month, the committee found a buyer, the Memorial Union Methodist Episcopal Church. Before the congregation could vote on the sale, however, it had to deal with a petition from four neighboring churches. The churches entreated Central members not to ratify the contract with Memorial Union (presumably because it was a black church). The congregation rejected the petition and voted overwhelmingly to sell their building and move. Nevertheless, it was the neighboring churches who had the last word. One of them paid the purchasers \$2,500 to repudiate the contract. Faced with the prospect of suing another church, Central let the matter drop.

One year later, a new buyer was found. The Jewish Congregation B’nai Amoona bought the property for the reduced price of \$30,000. In Septem-

ber, 1906, possession of the property was transferred and Central immediately began looking for a new location. The lot on the southeast corner of Clara and Delmar Avenues was selected and purchased for \$10,000.

In an all too familiar story, monies from the sale of the old church and pledges from the congregation were insufficient to cover construction costs. There were those on the committee who doubted the project could be successfully financed, but in the words of its chairman, John F. Green, "more courageous counsels prevailed." The church was built, but the incurred debt would be Central's constant companion for the next twenty years.

The sanctuary was first used for worship on March 15, 1908. The basement remained unfinished... due in part to lack of funds.

Central prospered at the new location. Membership had fluctuated for years, but the church now entered a period of consistent and sustained growth. The uneasiness of the past generation of elders, concerned that program expansion came at the expense of spiritual growth, was replaced with a new sense of optimism.

To be sure, the programs and societies and clubs continued. The Brotherhood (a men's social group), the Miriam Society (for young girls), the Dorcas Guild (for younger women) and Westminster League



Central's building at Delmar and Clara. It is the current home of Grace and Peace Fellowship (PCA).

(for youth) all took their places along side the older, established missionary and prayer groups. A Boy Scout Troop (#57) was organized. A Special War Work Committee and Red Cross Auxiliary began in response to the First World War. Central had operated a mission Sabbath School since 1886 and in 1916 began a settlement house on South Jefferson Avenue. In addition to an afternoon Sunday School, the mission included a program for boys (complete with a baseball team and a pool table), girls' clubs, a mothers' club, a supervised playground, general medical clinic and a "Baby Welfare Clinic." The baby clinic was especially successful. The 1917 church year book noted that the mission workers had been able "to do quite a good deal of social service in families, using the baby as an entrance into the home, to alleviate other conditions."



Dedicated on May 24, 1908, the Hodgman Memorial Organ was "given by the family in memory of their mother, Mrs. E. W. Hodgman, and their brother, Mr. Charles Hodgman. It is a magnificent instrument...(and) a pledge of the purpose of Central Church to maintain its music to the highest standard and to emphasize the place of praise in the service of worship."

During Dr. Mauzé's tenure, Central seemed to achieve a workable balance between meeting spiritual and material needs, both within and outside of the church. Members were aware of the danger of becoming too focused on themselves. In 1916, the church historian, Joseph G. Holliday, wrote:

The occupation of new territory and the establishment of new centers for the spread of the Gospel is peculiarly the duty of large city churches, lest they become self-centered and absorbed in their own private interests.

The underlying evangelistic purpose of church programs was clearly articulated by Daisy Pettigrew Manning, president of the Ruth Brank Missionary Society:

Until every woman in the church is interested in doing something to tell the story of salvation thru the blood of Christ from the one next to the uttermost parts of the earth, our society falls short..."

Evangelism had been part of the fabric of church life since the early days; from the revivals of Rev. Van Court's time and Dr. Anderson's work with church extension to Central's support of Dwight L. Moody's St. Louis campaign in 1879/1880. Ernest Trice Thompson, author of a detailed study of Southern Presbyterians, observed that in "the opening decades of the twentieth century, the Southern Presbyterian Church became more evangelistic-minded than ever before, and evangelism, the

'winning of souls,' came to be widely accepted as the primary, and sometimes it almost seemed, the sole mission of the church." So it was at Central, especially during the years of 1914 through 1917.

In addition to occasional speakers who came for one or two services, longer evangelistic campaigns were also mounted. The motto for the 1914 campaign was "One Hundred Members Before Easter." Two weeks before the deadline, the bulletin announced: "So far as returns have come in, the record shows that SIXTY FOUR of the one hundred have been won." The announcement then went on to list the number of souls won by specific church members. Sixteen more were added the following week.

The 1915 campaign, also conducted just prior to Easter, focused on winning men. Among Dr. Mauzé's sermons were ones entitled "Sold to Satan," "Chickens Come Home to Roost," and "The Meanest Man in St. Louis." (Dr. Mauzé's sermons were not the only ones with intriguing titles. In the 1917 spring campaign, guest evangelist Trigg Thomas named one of his sermons "The Man Who Ran Ninety-five Miles Without Stopping to Get Away From a Woman.") By 1916, the Sunday evening service was given over entirely to evangelism and outreach.

Printed boldly in every bulletin during this period were the words of Luke 2:49, "I must be about my Father's business." Central members had a clear understanding of what that meant for them. In 1915, the Session expressed its hope for the congregation:

Churches, as well as individuals, have character. Each church has an individuality peculiar to itself. The membership of each congregation must determine what the outstanding characteristic of their church shall be. We urge upon our people making evangelism the distinctive characteristic of the Central Church.

On January 28, 1917, Dr. Mauzé celebrated fifteen years of service at Central. In his sermon, he looked back on those years of fruitful ministry. During his tenure, membership had trebled (to 745 by the end of the church year ending in April, 1917), giving had increased by a similar percentage and five sons of the church had entered the ministry. So it was with a sense of poignancy the following May that Dr. Mauzé announced his resignation to accept a call to the pastorate of the First

Presbyterian Church in Huntington, West Virginia. In an open letter to the congregation, he expressed his feelings:

This is not the time for me to speak of what it has cost me and mine to leave you. I only ask that you help make the separation and departure as easy as possible. It will be hard enough, at best, and already I have suffered much...

At another time I shall speak at length of the years we have labored together for the Lord; but now I can only say, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all..."

The congregation regretfully accepted Dr. Mauzé's resignation, noting "the wonderful blessing which God has graciously given us through his ministry."