

FPC Times

Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Organization of First Presbyterian Church

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The Rev. Timothy Hill finished his course of study at the Ipswich, New Hampshire, Academy in 1838. He was graduated from Dartmouth in 1842 and from Union Theological Seminary in 1845. Union Seminary was at that time a seminary of the New School Branch of the Presbyterian Church in the USA. Hill taught school for several years, but his goal was to go to India as a foreign missionary. He was recruited by Dr. Artemus Ballard to go to Missouri as a home missionary, along with nine other young men. Presbyterian Church history knows this group of ten home missionaries as the Missouri Ten.



Hill went first to Monroe County, Missouri; a short time later he settled in St. Charles, then a bustling Missouri River town and now almost a suburb of St. Louis. When he moved to St. Louis in 1851, he organized the Fairmount Presbyterian Church and served there until the outbreak of the Civil War. As a Whig and a Republican in politics and as a dedicated antislavery man, he found himself in a very uncomfortable position in St. Louis so he moved to Illinois. At the close of the Civil War, he returned to Missouri and settled in Kansas City where he organized Second Presbyterian Church in 1865.

Hill's heart was still in home missions. In 1868 the Board of Home Missions assigned him the responsibility for finding the locations and establishing and nurturing churches in Kansas, Indian Territory and Texas. He traveled an average of 15,000 miles a year, some on trains but mostly by stage, horse and buggy, horse and wagon, and, and where there were no roads, on horseback.

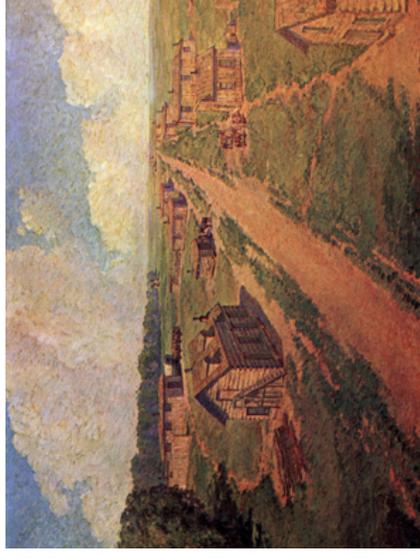
It is not known exactly when Hill first came to the little settlement that would be known as Wichita, but is known that he was in Wichita in the late summer or early fall of 1869. He knew that the land

was Osage Indian land and could not be officially settled. He also knew that Congressional action that would open the land to official legal settlement would soon be taken. He was impressed with what he saw and realized the potential for growth in the immediate future.

After leaving Wichita, he went to Emporia where a Rev. Wilberforce Boggs, a Presbyterian church organizing minister, was then in residence. He told Boggs of what he had seen in Wichita and suggested that Boggs go to Wichita, investigate, and, if need be there, establish a Presbyterian church.

Timothy Hill helped Boggs along the way. No one knows exactly how many times Hill visited in Wichita, but in August of 1870 he wrote "Sabbath Came: I preached in the upper part of an unfinished store, the carpenters had not completed their work, and the shavings were not swept out; the seats were boards supported on nail kegs, boxes, etc. In that room was an attentive congregation of 80 persons, of whom but seven were women. Indeed there were few women in town, its inhabitants were young men whose families were still East, for whom they were preparing homes."

In a letter to Dr. Field of *The Evangelist* on January 2, 1873, Hill wrote that in October of 1869, the town was far beyond the settlements and was little more than an Indian trading post, consisting of about a dozen buildings of the most nondescript materials and description.



Wichita 1869 - painting by C. A. Seward

Hill assisted in acquiring funds to build the Frame Church and later supported the building of the Red Brick Church. Wichita always held a special place in Hill's heart.

Text on Hill from *This is Who We Are*, 1995.