



**Subject:** Grandview Community Church, West 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Irving Street



“Grandview Union Community Church,” circa 1920s-1930s, Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department.

According to Phil Goodstein in his *North Side Story* (pages 504-505): A Harkness Heights Methodist congregation formed to serve the neighborhood at the beginning of the twentieth century, initially with a small frame church at West 43rd Avenue and Federal Boulevard. It outgrew the space by 1905 and purchased land at the *southwest* corner of West 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Irving.” In 1907 the *Denver Post* reported the congregation of Harkness Heights Methodist Church at West 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Irving Street “has at last paid off the old building debt, so long outstanding against the edifice, and preparations are being made to build a larger church.” By 1910 the church was known as Harkness Heights Methodist-

Episcopal. In 1915 congregation sponsored a country fair at West 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Irving Street. The drive for funding a new church extended into the 1920s.

In June 1921 the *Rocky Mountain News* contained a drawing of a proposed Harkness Heights Church, which displayed a large U-shaped, Tudor Revival-style building with two wings projecting toward West 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The drawing noted that the building would be erected diagonally opposite the present church by the members of the congregation. The congregation planned to raise \$65,000 for the new community church building: "Its ground dimensions will be 104 X 107 feet and among its features will be a fully equipped gymnasium, rooms for a graded Sunday school, club rooms, ladies' rooms, kitchens and recreation halls." The church planned to contact the entire community to gather the needed amount in ten days. In reality, the effort took years longer and brought a new design for the building, but the concept of a building created for use by the community endured.

A *Denver Post* article in November 1923 reported:

A new Harkness Heights Community Church is to be built at once at West Forty-fourth avenue and Irving street, where the church recently purchased fifteen lots for \$10,000. The basement unit of the new church is now under construction. When the church is completed the auditorium will have a seating capacity of 800 persons. The community plant of the church will have a playhouse equipped in every way for musical, dramatic, and motion picture entertainments. For the Boy Scouts and the youngsters of the community a special club room is to be provided. The plant, exclusive of equipment, will cost \$45,000.

In December 1923 the Harkness Heights Community Church was meeting at West 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Lowell Boulevard, likely in the Lovell Building on the northeast corner. Online assessor records indicate the Grand View Memorial Methodist Church bought the current building site from the school district on 1 February 1924. On 27 February a building permit for "Grand View Methodist Church, brick building, 4400 Irving Street, \$37,000," was filed. The cornerstone for the church was laid that month. The church was known as Grand View Community Church by April 1924.

It appears that, like many other new churches, the building was utilized before the congregation had funds to complete the entire facility. In 1925 a variety of activities occurred in the church prior to its dedication, including basketball games in the gymnasium, a meeting of the North Side Chapter of the Republican Chapter of Colorado Women, free lunch and a picture show after a church-sponsored kite tournament, a meeting and luncheon of the North Side Woman's Club, and the annual luncheon of the Argyle Club. These reflected some of the uses of the building that would continue for many years.

An article in the *Denver Post* in August 1925 reported the building was dedicated as "Grandview Community Church." The cost of construction was reportedly \$70,000 for the 28,000-square-foot building, which was described as having a "Spanish Mission type exterior and Romanesque ecclesiastical interior." There were twenty-eight rooms, including the gymnasium, and the facility accommodated the serving of dinner to six-hundred people and seating for eight hundred at motion pictures.

Various community groups continued utilizing the church facilities as the congregation intended, including the Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, North Side Woman's Club, and Argyle Woman's Club. The

building hosted a variety of community activities, including basketball games, movies, and meetings. In the late 1920s the church was the site of a North Hi-Y Club dinner and meeting, Women's Christian Temperance Union rally, Colonial Citizens of America meeting, Knights and Ladies of the Golden Rule event (an organization seeking to cure people addicted to narcotics), and Women's Missionary Federation meetings.

According to Goodstein, the congregation encountered financial problems, and to help them the Methodists moved their Italian mission from West 35th Avenue and Kalamath Street to the Grand View church. The Italian Methodists merged into Grand View in 1930-31. During the Depression the congregation sponsored a soup kitchen and built a chicken coop in the yard of the church (much to the complaints of neighbors). The congregation folded in 1936. Goodstein reports that "the Congregationalists took over the building as Grandview Congregational, an outgrowth of the Steele Center's Union Congregational Church." The Steele Center is listed in the State Register. Emil Theodore Pietz of 4444 Irving Street led the congregation until 1958."

Messiah Baptist Church took over the building in 1978 and is apparently still using the building, based on its Facebook page.

#### Significance

The church is significant for its history of use as a community center for the people of Northwest Denver that provided a space for events of the Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls, women's clubs, basketball teams, political organizations, and others. The building was designed and utilized with this specific purpose in mind. The church is significant for its representation of Mission Revival-style architecture and the artistry of its stained glass windows (and possibly for its interior features) and its design is likely the work of a master architect. The church is also geographically significant as an established and orienting visual feature of the neighborhood that reflects ecclesiastical architecture in Denver during the 1920s.

4-8-2019, Laurie and Tom Simmons