

From Arts & Architecture: Charles Kountze Memorial Plaque

During this time when it's not possible for us to go within the walls of our beloved cathedral, the Arts and Architecture Commission members would like to make it possible for you to have some visual reminders of the beauty and history of this special place.

We would like to begin with some objects that reflect the long history of the building, and the lives of some of its devoted worshippers—the plaques on the walls of the nave that most of us pass by without noticing. To start, as you enter the great north doors of the cathedral, on a wall to the left, a large bronze plaque helps us remember Charles B. Kountze, a man who was instrumental in providing funds and support not only during the early days of the church in Denver but on through the short years of the first cathedral and the construction of the second cathedral.



“In memory of Charles B. Kountze.

March 3, 1844-November 18, 1911 who for 47 years was a mainstay of this parish and without

whose counsel and assistance this Cathedral would not have been erected.

This tablet is placed here by Horace B. Hitchings, Rector of this parish 1862-1869 and H. Martyn Hart DD LLD, Dean of this cathedral to whom he was ever a true and loving friend.”



Charles Brewer Kountze

Charles Kountze came to Colorado in 1862 at the age of twenty to join his banker brother Luther who had come from the east to open a bank in Central City. In July of that same year, after having held services in several different locations since establishment in 1861, the members of the Church of Saint John's in the Wilderness were finally able to purchase a small church at the corner of 14th and Arapahoe. Soon after, the Rev. Horace B. Hitchings was called to Denver from his parish in Connecticut by Missionary Bishop Talbot to

become the second Episcopal priest to minister to the growing church.

The Kountze brothers moved their bank from Central City to Denver, and changed its name to Colorado National Bank. Soon after his arrival in Denver, Charles became a friend of the new priest, and a member of Saint John's Church. He continued to serve the church, as Jr. Warden and then Sr. Warden from 1871-1877. Under his leadership during this time, the little church was enlarged twice, including the erection of a bell tower with "the first iron bell in Denver". As the years went on, Kountze, now president of the bank, was a socially prominent figure in Denver with a large home on the corner of 16th and Grant Street. Following the arrival of the new Dean, H. Martyn Hart in 1879, he continued his support of the church and Dean Hart's vibrant ministry, through the planning and construction of a new cathedral, its ten years of existence, and destructive fire in 1903. Then, according to the words in the plaque, he continued to provide "counsel and assistance" during the construction of our present cathedral, from the purchase of land in 1904 to the completion of the building in 1911. The first service in the new cathedral was held that year on November 5. Thirteen days later, after forty-seven years of faithful service, Charles Kountze died of pneumonia on November 18 and was buried at Fairmount Cemetery.

The Charles Kountze bronze plaque is hard to read and easily overlooked, but we have a much more visible reminder of his service. The magnificent stained glass Last Judgment window glowing above the balcony was given in his loving memory by his son Harold.

