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and is recorded to the
name embossed on the cover.

A. Burtis Hallock Jr.

Rev. A. Burtis Hallock, Jr. 1940-1956

William A. Guenther

Rev. William A. Guenther 1956-1966

Richard B. Martin

Rev. Richard B. Martin 1966-

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1973

Yesterday Today Tomorrow

Not just a history, but the continuing story of
The First United Presbyterian Church of Pottstown
on its 125th Anniversary



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
425 Lombard Street
Philadelphia, PA 19147-1516

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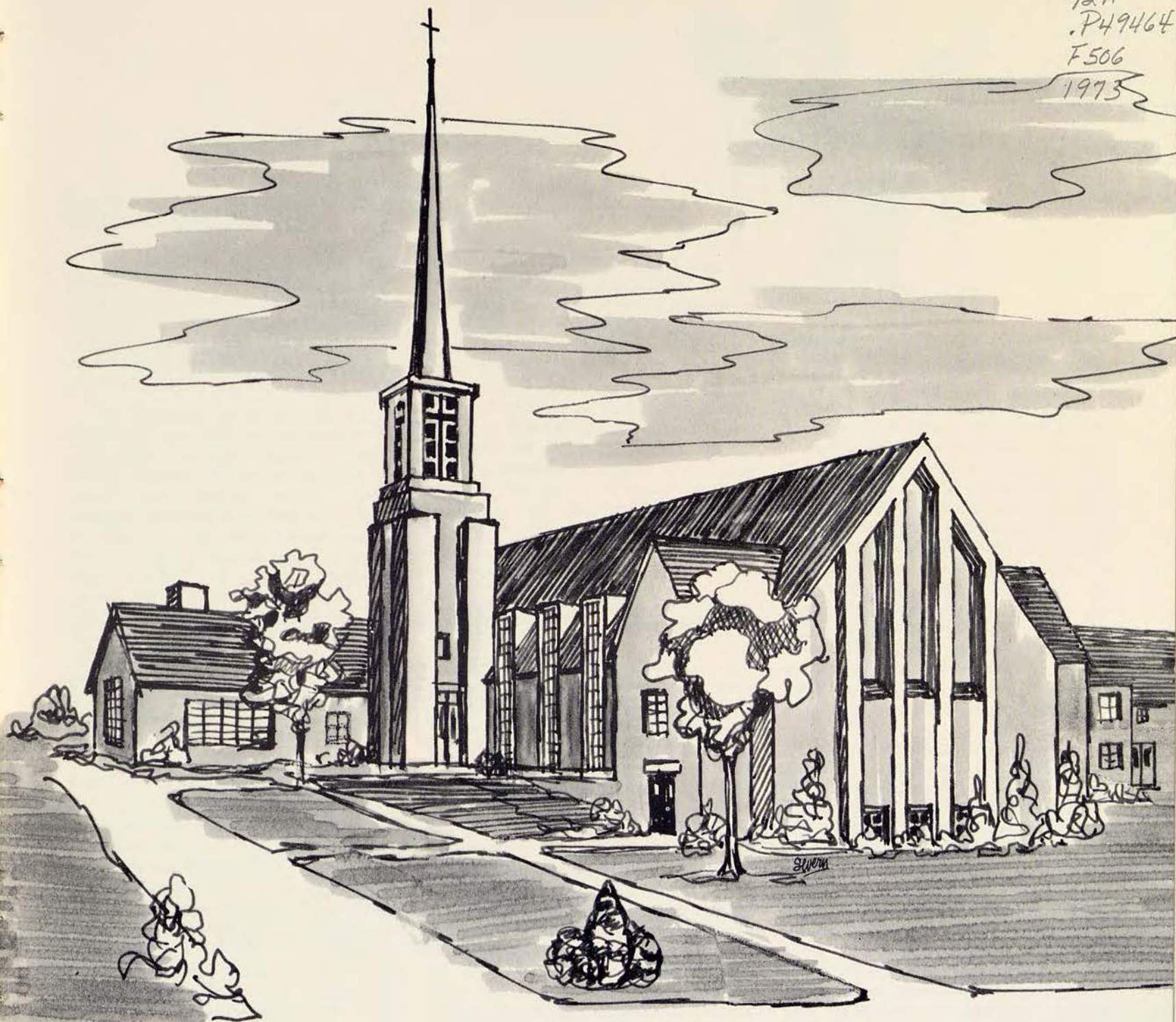
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This book is made possible
by generous gifts from
Mary N. and Martha D. Porter
and Col. Brooke M. Lessig
in memory of their families.

Introduction

On the ninth of May, 1848, two ministers of the Second Philadelphia Presbytery journeyed to Pottstown to preside over the organizing meeting of a new Presbyterian church. They were met by a group of ten local residents, the first members of this congregation.

The meeting, so far as can be determined, was held in a room at the Methodist Episcopal Church in Pottstown. Samuel Wells and his wife, Susannah, were present. Mrs. E. Gould attended with her daughter, Lilly. Mary Beecher, an attractive young woman who would be buried from the new church within two years, sat between her mother, Mrs. E. Beecher, and a Mrs. Elizabeth Middleton. Jacob Yost and his new bride, Mary Ann, escorted Mrs. William Work to the meeting; Mr. Work, our first pastor, had come early to confer with the visiting ministers who would preside over the organizing session.

At a distance of one-hundred twenty-five years, attention fastens upon Mary Ann Yost more than upon others in the room, because it was Mary Ann's remark — "I don't see how I can live in a town that lacks a Presbyterian church" — that led to the events of that afternoon in May and the establishment of the First United Presbyterian Church of Pottstown. It is not difficult to imagine how Mary Ann must have felt, newly married after a period of widowhood, as she left her native Troy, New York, to follow her new husband to a community where many spoke German and

the prevailing religious ethos was Lutheran. Understandable, too, is the compassion of Mary Ann's husband and his friends, who sought to accommodate the newcomer to town. Though a bride's loneliness will seem to some a poor reason for establishing a church, the members of the First Presbyterian Church derive a special style with strangers from the recollection of their origins: we are a people who realize how important is the grace obtained through friendship and familiar ways, and we seek to provide these things to all who come among us in search of assurance and love.

Within a short time after organization, the First Presbyterian Church of Pottstown and its small corps of members had thrust deep roots into the surrounding community. The times were up-beat; a most unpopular war (the Mexican war) had just been successfully concluded, bringing to the United States a vast tract of southwestern territory. Around Pottstown the construction of railroads was getting underway, while the canals along the Schuylkill (they had been built twenty years earlier) were a conduit by which barge-loads of anthracite coal moved in ever-increasing quantities to forges down the valley. In Pottstown, newcomers were numerous, and new enterprises plentiful. To serve the burgeoning population, our first stated-supply pastor, William Work, established a school for young ladies, while Matthias Meigs, another Presbyterian minister in town,



began the Select School for Young Men that would later become The Hill School.

At first the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church grew slowly, however. In its initial twelve years of life, the period from 1848 to 1860, a net gain of only seven members was recorded. Thereafter the pace picked up, with net gains of twenty members recorded within the four years between 1860 and 1864, of 111 members in the period 1864 through 1876, and of 163 members between 1890 and 1905. Thereafter the size of the church held steady at approximately 325 members with only minor fluctuations until 1940, when totals abruptly soared to 443. Today, 1973, the First Presbyterian Church of Pottstown has 836 communicants.

In the beginning financing for the church in Pottstown proved hard to obtain. A starting gift of \$200 from the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia did not obviate the necessity for Jacob Yost, the first elder, to write for assistance to his friends, including President James S. Buchanan, nor did it take the place of the \$920 that Yost, with Mr. Work, contributed to purchase the site of the first building. Today the annual budget of the First Presbyterian Church averages between \$66,000 and \$70,000, and additional thousands of dollars are given for special causes by the membership.



Nostalgia

Preoccupation with our own time and concerns causes us, on occasion, to forget how full and varied were the lives of our predecessors. Yet, a brief consideration of newspaper files for the 1860s and 1870s reveals that Christians of one hundred years ago led lives that were quite as busy as our own. Presbyterians of Pottstown hurried from their homes, one evening, to join their neighbors of other churches in a prayer service. They prayed for the American Union, endangered that week by an attack upon Fort Sumter in far away South Carolina. Perhaps a side effect of tension arising from the weeks and months of war that followed was noted the following year when Pottstown's

newspaper reported that revival had continued "for some weeks" in the Presbyterian Church. The religious excitement was not permitted to interfere, however, with a strawberry festival held by the ladies of the church. The women featured ice cream and turtle soup at the affair, as well as red berries from the fields.

Church members complained in the late 1860s about a disgraceful rise in prices at the market. Beef was being sold at the sky-high rate of seven cents a pound, and apples — in season, mind you — fetched a dollar a bushel. It was not that people were not prosperous. Indeed, sixty-four people among the town population of 2,500 were earning



more than a thousand dollars a year, and no less than seven had topped three thousand. It was the principle of the thing. One could visualize this sort of inflation going on and on until — it actually happened twenty years later, in 1887 — a Presbyterian minister might demand a salary of as much as \$1,500 a year.

Equally troubling in the 1870s were the evidences of decline noted in the moral fibre of the people. Young men had taken to racing their horses in a dangerous fashion along East High Street. Increasing numbers of youth began smoking, and one of them, in a town tragedy, set his best girl's gown afire with ash from his pipe. In addi-

tion, the pursuit of wasp waists had led to increasing use of whalebone stays by fashionable young ladies. The town editor felt sure the practice was endangering the race, and asserted to his readers that sunshine and plenty of exercise are better beauty aids than whalebone. He was ignored, quite predictably.

Still, there were exciting events, amusing happenings, and entertaining meetings to attend. Somebody set the outhouse on fire at the church. A horse, becoming frightened, jumped wagon and all into the front yard of the Presbyterian manse. "No one was at home," the newspaper reported, "to

welcome the visitor." On long evenings there was always one or another of those church activities that serve, now as then, to reinforce ties of community. Rally days, musical programs, dinners, Sunday School class meetings, and lectures (Dr. Meigs of the Hill School spoke frequently, and once an onlooker at the Battle of Gettysburg came to give a report), provided an excuse for people to get together.

History

Poets and playwrights rarely become secretaries of committee; perhaps that is why drama in the affairs of the church is reduced, when records are read, to a sound like the cutting of lumber. In documents that reveal the activities of the First Presbyterian Church of Pottstown, an effort by the church to help famine-stricken farmers of India is likely to read, "The session authorized the sending of \$500 to the Board of Foreign Missions to help meet its deficit."

Still, the reading of any dry-as-dust record gives an indication, at least, of the preoccupations of the organization under scrutiny, and congregational records of the First Presbyterian Church are far from dry. It is clear that the struggle to end slavery, and to provide advantages for former slaves after the Civil War had been concluded, became a recurring interest of the 19th and early 20th century Presbyterians. There were lectures on the evils of slavery. There were prayer meetings, already mentioned, throughout the Civil War. And there were visits, notably on June 1, 1873, of former slaves to town. On that fine evening in early summer, a chorus of former slaves from a Presbyterian school in South Carolina gave a concert under the auspices of the church, realizing \$100 for their school and chapel. For black people closer to home, a Japanese on the faculty of the Hill School led the 19th century church briefly into mission among the town's less than 100 black citizens. Tozo Ohno, concerning whom little is known, joined George Q. Shepard and Peter William of our church in forming a board of directors to operate Bethany Union Chapel, which survives as the present-day community

192,000 Building Construction FUND-UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
 G.D. ROBINS, Gen. Chm. Vice-Chm. D.C. BROWN, G.S. STOUFFER

PREVIOUS	TODAY	TO-DATE	PREVIOUS	TODAY	TO-DATE
19,975	13,185	33,160	C. Div. (Cor)	124	70
2,160	1,500	3,660	Pierce	118	33
11,815	6,685	18,500	TOTAL	118	33
1,982	5,534	7,516	D. Div. (M)	118	33
14,06	10,474	24,534	Heim	118	33
3,383	1,774	5,157	Ma	118	33
14,93	5,335	20,265	So	118	33
663	3,075	3,738	TO	118	33
437	3,129	3,566	ED	118	33
1,216	1,216	2,432	M	118	33
1,216	1,216	2,432	M	118	33
1,216	1,216	2,432	M	118	33
1,216	1,216	2,432	T	118	33

RETIREMENT FUND
FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

	PREVIOUS	TODAY	TO DATE		PREVIOUS
A. DIVISION				D. DIVISION	
ROBERT S.		16,000	2,200	W. G. SEVITT	5,723
B. DIVISION					
BOWER	3,200	3,150	4,250	CLARK	2,820
W. G. GLENNY	4,425	4,450		FLETCHER	3,350
HENDERS CHED	1,125	1,144	2,444	W. G. GLENNY	4,008
HAMERSCHD	4,870	4,700	3,560	D. TOTALS	11,511
B. TO	4,700			E. DIVISION	4,150
C. DIV.		5,044		MRS. BROWN	304
D. C. B.		1,500		EBERT	207
		1,500		HANCHER	425
		1,500		SEVITT	4,250
		1,500			1,100



center on Beech Street. Two hundred dollars was appropriated by the session for the work on September 30, 1894. After a short time the session withdrew its official oversight of Beech Street chapel, but the church's concern for Blacks continued through the decades, as evidenced by fifty years of offerings every March 1st for "Freedman's Work," and a persistent concern of the church's women of the Home Mission Society and its successors for black schools of the South.

One current that is strong in national Presbyterian history does not appear formidable in accounts of the first 125 years of the First Presbyterian Church. The excitement bred elsewhere by the foreign missions movement, and by the call early in our century to "evangelize the world in one generation," is muted in minutes of our church boards. The records reveal, to be sure, visits by missionary speakers to the congregation, and steady, though very modest, contributions to overseas missionary work. Women's groups held fairs and parties in this century and earlier for world mission causes. But the anecdotes are missing that might have lent color to these accounts, and a curious sense of a lack of passion — doubtless the lives of some individual Presbyterians give the lie to the statement — arises from the record. Nevertheless, it must be said on this 125th anniversary that the contribution of the First Presbyterian Church to the world missionary movement, a movement that gave birth to churches now numbering more than 100 million adherents in Asia and Africa, was excessively small. Today, too, the percent of our church's budget that finds its way to world missions is smaller than in many churches elsewhere of our size.

The proclamation of gospel truth and mercy in the United States, on the other hand, has clearly been held to be an especial responsibility of Pottstown's Presbyterians in every decade. Pioneer preachers of the West, communities of Indian converts, victims of natural catastrophes, immigrants gathered in neighborhood houses in the nation's large cities — all have been the subjects of interest and the recipients of assistance from the United Presbyterians of our city.

At home, in Pottstown, data on the Christian outreach of the First Presbyterian Church is difficult to obtain, and for good reason. Activities of the church's deacons in ministering to persons struck by tragedy or misfortune, and expenditures to individuals from the session's private funds, are not public information. The many families and persons, in the church and out, who have received money for fuel, food, rent, medical assistance, and other emergency purposes through our twelve and one-half decades of congregational life will not discover their names here or in any history of this church to be written in the future. Contributions to organizations are another matter, of course. Hospitals in Pottstown received recurrent aid and contributed services from the church, especially in their early years. The congregation's purse has opened again and again to many community service enterprises that have sprung up in Pottstown, rendered help to those in need, and died away with the passage of time. In addition, personal mission efforts by individual United Presbyterians dot newspaper columns of the town in every decade. The free clinic established by Dr. John Porter

in June of 1887 is one of the first in a series of community service projects by Presbyterians that continued, for example, in the organization of Pottstown Neighborhood House by laymen from our church, together with other interested Christians, in the 1960s.

Finally, there is another kind of mission that receives mention much too infrequently. Regular meetings of Christians for worship, and a consistent provision of education in the faith for children; frequent opportunities for celebration and fellowship, and times for the sharing of grief; the hundreds of mornings and evenings in the history of our congregation when we were brought together for special prayer, communion, baptisms, and marriages: these services to us by our church call us again and again out of ourselves and into a collective consciousness that remembers its creator, gives dignity to life, and lends a sense of destiny to our individual passages down the years.

A single illustration, meaningful to many of us on this anniversary, recalls the sacramental function of the church in the lives of its people. An account in a Pottstown newspaper on May 10, 1917, records the marriage conducted by the Reverend A. H. Simpson, "in a quiet home ceremony" of a "Miss Florence H. Nichols" and one Barton K. Thomas.

Revival

A Wonderful Season in 1873

The record of session,
February 11, 1873:

"During the week of Prayer beginning January 5th it was noticed that the Holy Spirit was present moving the hearts of the people. The week following, the Rev. R. H. Allen of Philadelphia preached each evening and a precious work of grace was carried on. The church members were all revived, and many unpenitent persons were brought to Christ. The meeting was continued for three weeks. At its close a special communion season was appointed, and some twenty-four persons presented themselves to the session and were received into the church...The session examined (them)...All received the right hand of fellowship and sat down with us at the Lord's table on Tuesday evening, February 11th. It was a glorious day for our little church. To God be all the glory.

Geo. C. Thompson
"Moderator of Session"



Pottstown Feb 11th 1873.

During the week of Prayer beginning Jan 5th it was noticed that the Holy Spirit was present moving the hearts of the people. The week following the Rev. R. H. Allen D.D. of Philadelphia preached each evening and a precious work of grace was carried on. The church members were all revived and many unpenitent persons were brought to Christ. The meeting was continued for three weeks. At its close a special communion season was appointed. And some twenty four persons presented themselves to the session and were received into the fellowship of the church. The session examined and received the following persons.

Ministers

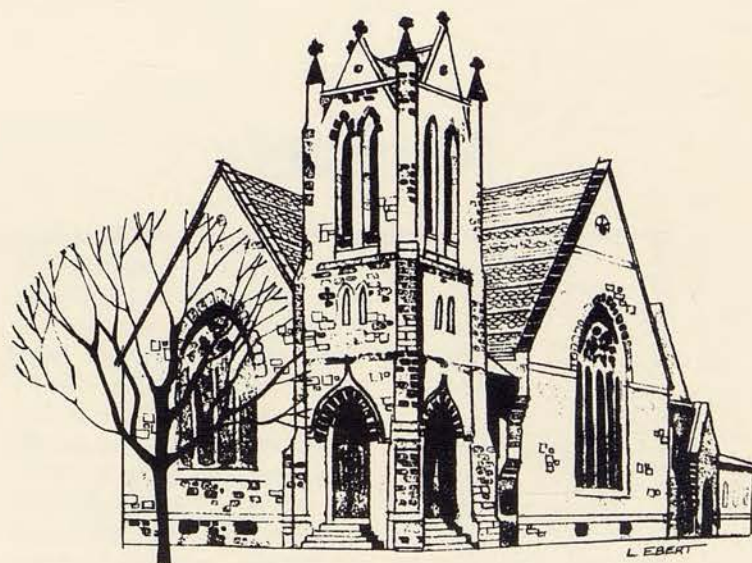
Sometimes Pottstown Presbyterians have appeared to be a disputatious lot, given to harsh judgements and recrimination. Whenever such a spirit has lifted its head, the church has been rendered gentle again by the quality of teaching it has received from a procession of eminent and learned ministers. That the men who have come to teach us have stayed on to become our friends is revealed by the average length of their pastorates (nine and three-quarters years) and by the response of six of our sons to the call to the gospel ministry heard from their lips.

The tradition of an erudite ministry, always illumined by warm and active faith, continues to distinguish the occupants of the First Church pulpit in the last half of the 20th century. Our image of the ministry, drawn from those who have been our leaders, bears no resemblance to the harmless curate of popular literature or the theater. God has sent us strong men in every generation, able to bear misfortune and courageous enough to thrust the judgements of God before us as well as the assurances of his love. The men of this church who have entered the ministry — Paul Morris, Frank Ladner, James M. Creswell, Douglas Ibach Keith Jones and David Morris — had good models to follow indeed.

We salute with calculated brevity the clergy of our church. The account of the performance of this church in mission, carried elsewhere in these pages, is the record of their faithfulness and abilities.

Rev. W. R. Work, Stated Supply	1848-1856
Rev. Robert Cruikshank, D.D.	1857-1860
Rev. Wm. B. Stewart, D.D.	1860-1864
Rev. John C. Thompson, D.D.	1864-1873
Rev. Henry F. Lee	1873-1880
Rev. Halsey B. Stevenson	1881-1887
Rev. Henry M. Dyckman	1888-1906
Rev. W. J. Wilkinson	1907-1910
Rev. Melville B. Gurley	1911-1914
Rev. Arthur H. Simpson	1915-1939
Rev. A. Burtis Hallock, Jr.	1940-1956
Rev. William A. Guenther	1956-1966
Rev. Richard B. Martin	1966-





The Buildings of our Church

Pottstown's ten charter Presbyterians began to construct a church building in the summer of 1848 on a High Street lot purchased by elder Jacob Yost and William Work, the first pastor. Since money was short, two years were required before sufficient progress had been made to permit the holding of services in the structure. Three years later, in 1853, all work had been completed and dedicatory observances took place. Total cost of the building: \$6,000.

By 1887 a need for a larger structure became clear. On June 19, 1888, the members, numbering about 160, subscribed \$10,015 toward erection of a new church. A contractor, Matthew Geist, was employed and a design chosen.

At this point a small mystery takes shape. Contractor Geist appointed one Thomas Beekly, a demolition man, to tear down the first building. Among the sidewalk superintendents observing the efforts of Beekly and his crew stood the editor of the Pottstown Daily Ledger, who rendered daily reports of progress to his readers. On August 14, 1888, when the last walls of the initial church building had tumbled, the Daily Ledger's editor assured townspeople that no damage had been done to "the chapel" during demolition of the church, though a workman had been injured on the job. No Presbyterian asked by the congregation's 125th anniversary historian can give any information about a "chapel" on Presbyterian ground, though one member recalls having seen a photograph of a small building not otherwise accounted for in church records.

Two questions are therefore passed on to the church's next historian: Did the original members of the church erect a small building adjacent to the first sanctuary at some time between 1853 and 1887; and was that smaller structure, "the chapel," incorporated into the second church edifice?

The second United Presbyterian church to stand on High Street was a handsome, square-towered stone structure completed in 1889 at a cost of \$18,442, of which \$5,266 was borrowed. Various additions to the building were made at irregular intervals, including provision for church school classrooms on a second floor installed in 1929 under the original roof. In 1936 the auditorium underwent remodeling.

Until 1913, pews in the church were rented, with proceeds used to pay the



pastor's salary. Thereafter the trustees of the church, always the stewards of the church's physical plant and guardians of its fiduciary responsibilities, recommended establishment of a common fund from which all expenses were to be paid. Interestingly, trustees of 1898 celebrated the congregation's fiftieth anniversary by burning evidences of the debt that had been incurred to pay for a new building, trustees of 1948 burned a mortgage on the 100th anniversary to celebrate the congregation's freedom from a debt incurred in the 1936 remodelling effort, and, as we've seen, the similarly responsible trustees of 1973 have cast to the flames a mortgage incurred to construct the third and present church building.

Today's church home grew out of a study of congregational facilities made

by the trustees of 1954. The church built in 1888, despite renovation, no longer appeared adequate. An offer to give land, made by Dr. J. Elmer Porter, drew congregational attention to a four-acre plot in the north end of our city. After study, the gift was accepted, and, in April, 1963, the Porter family added to it an additional lot.

The first building fund campaign for the 20th century church building was led by Victor J. Roberts and a committee. Pledges totaled \$178,000. A second campaign, led by George D. Robins, yielded 122,000, and a third, under the chairmanship of Thomas S. Webber, finished the funding task by raising approximately \$100,000. Eventually, on September 23, 1962, a cornerstone was laid, and on June 2, 1963, a service of dedication implored

the Lord's blessing upon the completed work. The total cost: \$413,000, with more to be expended when and if expansion plans for a Christian education unit and other features are carried forward.

We are proud of our church. Just as Mary Ann Yost, in her later years, gave memorial windows to the 1888 structure, so we have added to our building and its interior many memorials to those whom we have loved. Nevertheless, we shall be like our predecessors; when this tool that is a church building wears out, and when it no longer attracts others to the preaching of the Word, it will be discarded in favor of another. The real church, we know, is in our hearts.

Presbyterian Elders in Pottstown

To Christians outside the Reformed tradition the Presbyterian practice that entrusts the rule of a congregation to quite ordinary people, elected members of a body called a session, has always appeared to be a chancy business. Yet, one hundred twenty-five years of experience in Pottstown indicate that such a form of church government makes for both congregational peace and spiritual progress.

Listed at right by date of ordination are the names of all individuals who have served as elders of the First Presbyterian Church since its beginning. Session records provide details of their stewardship: how the elders met, sometimes weekly and almost always at least once a month, across twelve and one-half decades; how they sought to deal with misfortune, error, and evil among the membership and in the wider community; how they dealt with one another, sometimes in anger but more usually in concord and love.

A style of understatement that prevails in session records causes the elders' failures to stand out rather baldly. A watch thief in the congregation elected to leave town rather than face the elders in the 1860s, a member rebuked in the 1880s about his predilection for a strong drink did not reform after all, a young woman barred from communion in the 1890s for unchastity

never again darkened the door of the church, a faltering marriage that concerned the session in 1906 did not survive despite counseling and prayer. There is no evidence, in addition, that local newspapers heeded the session's admonition to omit publishing salacious details of divorce proceedings, or that *The Police Gazette* — Esquire of the era, — ceased to be sold in Pottstown after a session complaint.

Nevertheless the church grew; nevertheless the record discloses spiritual triumphs and occasions of grace that repeatedly brought into the minutes such phrases as, "The session offered thanks to Almighty God," and "To God be the glory." Often in the decades from the church's founding until the First World War, applicants for membership with behavioral difficulties were asked to meet repeatedly with the session for purposes of instruction and examination. Those who persevered through these doubtless uncomfortable meetings were eventually saluted in entries by the clerk of session that record with joy how so-and-so, "after examination, was extended the right hand of fellowship and sat down with us at the Lord's Table."

After the World War of 1914-1918, sessions tended to become less rigorous in enforcing Puritan-style behavioral patterns and more involved with helping people in trouble, furthering worthy

works in the community, and ensuring the effective teaching of religion to youth and children. Nevertheless, scattered entries in the record of session up to the present day underscore the Presbyterian understanding: to belong to a church is to exist under a spiritual government, and a man or woman's entire life becomes, in time of trouble, the business of the congregation's elders.

The names of the elders of the First Presbyterian Church mark the closing of the section of this book that deals with the past. It is fitting that their names be used in this way. Elders are the custodians of the spiritual community that is a Presbyterian church. They are our link, through the laying-on of hands involved in their ordination, with our founders; their spiritual guidance is our bridge to the future.

RULING ELDERS

James S. Yost	1848	George P. Rowland	1949	Dr. Alice E. Sheppard	1964
Rev. W. R. Gould	1856	Dr. Arthur F. Mann	1951	Harry W. Hess	1965
Rev. J. R. Moore	1868	Saylor L. Creswell	1952	Mrs. Charles L. Weaver	1965
W. M. Gordon	1868	Dr. George A. McCormick	1952	Joseph E. Fritsch, Jr.	1965
D. K. Hatfield	1868	David M. Morris	1953	John F. Griffith	1965
W. C. Beecher	1868	John M. Fraser	1953	Heber T. Meyers	1965
Isaac Swinehart	1880	Morris R. Gavin	1954	Elmer T. Heimbach	1966
John Meigs	1890	George D. Robins	1954	G. Harold Glenney	1967
Henry G. Tinkler	1890	Christian S. Stouffer	1954	Bernard W. Downs	1967
Henry P. Leaf	1896	Martin C. Jones	1955	Mrs. Robert I. Bower	1967
George Q. Sheppard	1896	Edward F. Schumacher, Jr.	1955	Thomas S. Webber	1968
Joseph Kelso	1898	John E. Haslett	1955	Horace Fletcher, III	1968
Joseph McK. Potts	1899	Edward S. Weimer	1956	Duncan M. Hunsberger	1969
George N. Leister	1901	Clarence B. Welch	1956	Robert B. McBeth	1969
Edgar H. Kurtz	1909	Henry A. Bell	1957	Mrs. John B. Ziegler	1969
Frank W. Pine	1909	Robert I. Bower	1957	Walter G. DePrefontaine	1970
John D. Warnock	1909	David K. Cooper	1957	Mrs. George Musser	1970
Leonard Leaf	1917	Glenn L. Turner	1958	Dr. Fred Winter	1970
Herbert T. Rights	1919	Donald C. Brown	1959	Thomas Elder	1971
Paul L. Morris	1922	S. Frederick Jenkins	1959	James Gittings	1971
Ed. H. Williams	1922	Earl A. Owens	1959	Dr. John Whitaker	1971
Dr. Geo. M. Glenney	1924	T. Elbert Nicholson	1959	James Chaplin	1972
Russell D. Wells	1927	Miss Lois S. Creswell	1960	Mrs. Walter May, Jr.	1972
Geo. D. Robins	1930	Mrs. Arthur F. Mann	1960	Herbert C. Bradley	1973
Christian S. Stouffer	1930	Robert H. McDevitt	1960	Mrs. Bernard W. Downs	1973
H. Clifford Creswell	1937	Dr. Joseph T. Zukoski	1960	Mrs. William S. Ebert, Jr.	1973
Henry A. Bell	1937	Mrs. C. LeRoy DePrefontaine	1961	Mrs. Richard H. Fulmer	1973
Raymond W. Hoxworth	1937	Ronald T. Skean	1961	Alexander Revell	1973
Everett Haslett	1942	Mrs. Frank G. Ladner	1962	Mrs. Albert B. Wrigley	1973
Irwin B. Swede	1945	Lloyd M. Kingsley	1962		
Jacob S. Gabel	1945	William D. Glenney	1963		
John R. Haslett	1946	Mrs. S. Frederick Jenkins	1963		
C. Edgar Donahower	1946	Mrs. Harry C. Shope	1963		
Clyde S. Jackson	1946	H. Clifford Creswell	1963		
Raymond M. Garvine	1947	Thomas E. Buckwalter	1964		
Walter B. McClennen	1949	Richard G. Clark	1964		

Today

Today's First United Presbyterian Church

The first United Presbyterian Christians in Pottstown would overhear a few familiar comments in everyday conversation if they were to return to town this year. On the occasion of our congregation's one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary, as on the day of the church's founding, people are celebrating the end, or at least a long pause, of an unpopular war. We're grumbling about high prices too, and about young people racing on High Street.

There's no point in pretending that our founders would find much that is familiar at church, however. Our worship services are less formal than in the past, and the language of the Bible we use comes closer to our common speech than that of the King James to the language of 1848. Sunday forums at church, with their rousing debate, would seem out of place to the founders, perhaps, and no 1848 Christian could be expected to appreciate a squad of boys, a scout troop, playing games in the church basement.

Of course, we modern United Presbyterians could make a point or two in rebuttal. Though our services are shorter

than those of 1848, the church of 1973 opens every Sunday — and our fathers failed to hold services on many Sundays. Our elders, guilty as some of them may be of playing a rubber or two of bridge, meet more often, and for longer hours, than did Jacob Yost and his 19th-century successors. Above all, we could hand to the early elders of this church a schedule of present-day congregational activities that would astonish them, both in its variety of events and its evident breadth of vision for mission.

The plain fact is that almost everything about the United Presbyterian Church is up-beat in 1973. The Sunday school is better organized than has been the case for years. Enrollment is increasing, and a corps of teachers willing to spend five and six hours a week in preparation for the classroom has been recruited. Much of our educational success is due to the professional guidance the church receives from Theodore Taylor, the minister of education whom the congregation shares with two other churches of Pottstown.

Membership continues to grow. At 836 members, the First Presbyterian

Church has passed the point at which most churches add a second full-time minister. Nevertheless, our over-worked pastor presents a class of newcomers for admission to membership four times each year.

In many ways, 1973 has been the Year of the Woman in the Church. Long since admitted theoretically to membership on all boards of the congregation, the women of the church have continued to operate their traditional and vigorous associations, circles, and service units at the same time that they have now actually won places on churchwide committees. The result, for the first time in the history of the church, is a share in leadership for women that begins to compare with their contribution to the work of the congregation.



Deacons of the congregation are busier than ever in abetting ministry to the community. The deacons' promotion and organization of a local Self-Development of People committee resulted in a grant of \$5,000 from Philadelphia Presbytery to aid in establishing a self-help program in Penn Village, a black area. Individual deacons have been assigned to work with Pottstown interfaith groups in furthering housing, the provision of crisis facilities, the creation of telephone hotlines for use in emergencies, the distribution of flood relief, and so on. Within the congregation, deacons continue their visible work — functioning as stewards at worship — and their more confidential calling — aiding members and others who are in trouble.

Trustees of the church in 1973 have wrestled with an inflation that outstrips increases in income resulting from the rise in membership. As always, the task of the trustees is difficult: to demand financial responsibility without damping down dreams of the members for expansion of the church's witness. The satisfaction of the congregation's mortgage indicates the trustees have been successful.



One aspect of the volunteer service being rendered by members of the church testifies, above all else, to the intensity of their Christian commitment: Today's volunteers demand that whatever is done be done correctly and with profit to the Kingdom. Thus, the elders this year scheduled a course for themselves on problem-solving and the handling of substantive discussion; and church school teachers, far from resorting to the old, individual, Bible and hour-in-a-corner method of lesson preparation, attended lengthy courses in how to teach, returning after many nights of instruction to layout lesson plans extending for months ahead. In such matters as home visitation, the every-family canvas, and similar undertakings, a typical volunteer at First Church this year has demanded, and received instruction in how to accomplish his or her task.

A number of results are visible as a result of such seriousness. A few volunteers of earlier years have dropped away, unwilling to make so substantial an investment of time. Greater numbers have stepped in to take their places. Meanwhile, the number of individuals actively involved in church work, and their total per capita expendi-

ture in time and effort, appears to have increased.

Finally, the degree to which our church building is utilized has increased sharply. Through the week a pre-school for small children occupies some of the rooms, while others are given over to rehearsals for church activities, concerts, recitals, scout meetings, and mission work-parties. On Sunday, all classrooms are occupied, and small groups meet in corners and the hospital.

Despite the confidence engendered by such a recital of activity, the First Presbyterian Church of Pottstown suffers from severe disabilities on the occasion of its anniversary. Among them are the failure of the congregation leadership to bring as much as a third of the membership into a full and contributing relationship with the church, an inability or refusal of the membership to attract non-caucasians to its fellowship, and the resistance of contributors to make increases in giving to the benevolence budget. The budget apportionment for world missions remains low.

Still, we find ourselves both joyful

and optimistic. Ownership of the church building is no longer shared with a bank. We have passed through a season of celebration in which, it seemed, all age groups and sectors of the membership had drawn together. As the anniversary report goes to press, one couple in the church is preparing to leave on a mission assignment in Japan, a portion of the membership is undergoing special training in evangelism, a health fair team will soon depart for the backlands of America, and the church's young people scurry about making a motion picture on a Christian theme. When the 125th anniversary historian delivered final copy to the church he heard the congregation's excellent choir, downstairs, practicing "Amen's" for the Easter worship. The sound was round, warm, and reassuring in its forthright link to tradition. Suddenly the church's historian understood a little of what Mary Ann Yost must have hoped to find in a church; suddenly he was confident that she, and Jacob Yost, and the rest of the original ten, would have found ground for understanding the Presbyterian Christians of Pottstown in their 1973 edition.



Pastor

Richard B. Martin

Shared Minister of Education

Theodore D. Taylor, II

Ministers of Music

Edward F. O'Neill

Ferdinand Malenke

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Richard Fulmer

Thomas Grant, Jr.

Richard Hagmann

George M. Musser

George C. Musser

Dale Persing

James Silar

Class of 1974

Mrs. Richard G. Clark

Shirley A. Clinton

Arnold M. Hatfield

Burton L. Kifer

Mrs. Victor Rosso

Donald M. Thompson

James D. Williamson, Jr.

Miss Mary Jo Zukoski

Class of 1975

Moreland Bollinger

George Carlisle, III

Mrs. C. LeRoy DePrefontaine, Jr.

Thomas Hanson

C. Ray Langdon

Mrs. Edward F. Schumacher

Lowell Stephens

Thomas Zeigler

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Class of 1973

John J. Marshall

Charles W. Pitchford

Class of 1974

Richard E. Ludwick

Harry C. Shope

Class of 1975

Virginia F. Creswell

William C. Waltman

SESSION

Class of 1973

Walter G. DePrefontaine

Horace Fletcher, III

James A. Gittings

Mrs. Frederick Jenkins

Thomas S. Webber

Dr. John R. Whitaker

Class of 1974

James J. Chaplin

Mrs. C. L. DePrefontaine

Mrs. Walter May, Jr.

Robert B. McBeth

Mrs. A. B. Wrigley

Mrs. John B. Ziegler

Class of 1975

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Mrs. Bernard W. Downs

Mrs. William S. Ebert, Jr.

Mrs. Richard H. Fulmer

Elmer T. Heimbach

Alexander H. Revell

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 Miss Janice A. Allen
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 Mr. & Mrs. E. Barnard
 Mrs. William R. Barr
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 Mr. & Mrs. John B. Ziegler
 Dr. & Mrs. Joseph T. Zukoski
 Mary Jo Zukoski

Salute to the Membership

Twenty-two individuals in the First United Presbyterian Church of 1973 have worshipped as members of the congregation for fifty years or more. The names of these bred-in-the-bone Presbyterians are:

Phillips, Mrs. Christian (Estella)	1910
Lord, Mrs. Earle A. (Hazel)	1910
Barr, Mrs. Wm. R. (Mary)	1912
Ladner, Mrs. Frank G. (Tillie)	1913
Graves, Mrs. Earle B. (Lucy)	1913
Thomas, Mrs. Barton K. (Florence)	1913
Glenney, Miss Lucille F.	1915
Glenney, Mr. Wm. D.	1915
Creswell, Mr. H. Clifford	1916
Berkey, Mrs. George W. (Edith)	1916
Donahower, Mrs. C. Edgar (Verna)	1916
Ibach, Mrs. Hiram C. (Esther)	1916
Linton, Mrs. Daniel J. (Ruth)	1916
Nester, Mrs. Ralph (Verna)	1916
Gailey, Miss Helen J.	1917
Jones, Mrs. Wm. S. (Eleanor)	1917
Glenney, Mr. Harold G.	1920
Robins, Mrs. George D. (Elizabeth)	1921
Buridan, Mrs. Harry W. (Louise)	1921
Jenkins, Mr. Frederick, Jr.	1922
Yohn, Mrs. Wm. J.	1922
Dannelly, Mrs. Cyrus A. (Mary)	1923
Longaker, Mrs. George M. (Anna)	1923

The salute tendered to the twenty-two golden-age members is not given only in recognition of their faithful service, though each has contributed much to the life of the church. Rather, we look at the fifty-year members of the church and discern, behind them in that "Cloud of Witnesses" of which the Scripture speaks, the faces that welcomed them to church when they were young, the hands that helped them long ago with mittens and cloaks, the voices that exclaimed over their childhood accomplishments in Sunday school, and their performances at church functions. Suddenly, through the fifty-year members, we are in touch with the past; suddenly we are acquainted with the women who packed boxes for missionaries the church sent to the developing West of our nation, and with the elders who gathered for especial prayer at the outbreak of half-forgotten wars and local emergencies.

In this one hundred twenty-fifth year of our congregation, we hold the senior members of the church in especial tenderness and affection. They are living links with our past. Yet they are not museum pieces, these wonderful men and women, but contributing members of the congregation. Turn to the inside cover to discover how one of them, representative of all, continues to have a ministry among us.

Rev. Richard B. Martin



Where are we going in the future? What shape will the ministry of our church take in the next one hundred twenty-five years?

Chances are that as many answers exist to such questions as there are members in our church. But we have a good and a wise man in our midst. He is able, we think, to stand apart a little way to answer the questions more dispassionately than the membership. Richard B. Martin, our pastor, has been teaching us for the past seven years. We love him, and acclaim him to be one of the great pastors to come to Pottstown's First Presbyterian Church in one hundred and twenty-five years of history.

Tomorrow

Where are We Going?

You have read the story of our church's past and present. What about our future? Hanging above the fireplace in my home, is a painting which depicts a foggy New England sea coast. Emanating from the fog you can make out the vague outline of some pilings, a boat, and some other undefined objects. The painting is reminiscent of how the future appears as we look toward it. It is shrouded in mist and fog, and as we look ahead we can only discern faint images in the distance that appear illusory and unreal. And so it is natural that we move ahead into the unknown with caution and hesitation, but also with a sense of hope and expectancy. If memory serves us right, we have always approached the future this way, dragging our feet on the one hand, possessed of some courage and determination and faith on the other.

What are some of the images whose shadowy outlines peer at us through the fog that hides our future? I think I can see the outline of a building. The most notable thing about it is not a change in outward appearance, but a change of activity. And perhaps that

is what the image is all about — change. If we are to add to, and deepen our life together in the midst of what one man has called the "constant prevalence of newness," we must look for more alternatives in our worship and study and fellowship. This will demand more openness, more willingness to innovate, and a greater readiness on the part of each of us to become involved.

I think I can also make out the image of a family, huddled together as though experiencing great strain and pressure. The church has always had before it the symbol of the family of God. In many ways we have tried to be faithful to that symbol. In our future, I think I can see a need for us to direct a greater priority of our time and resources toward the health and well being of our families.

Then, I think I can see the outline of small clusters of persons, and the faces of those persons express a sense of new-found power and self-esteem and honesty. These persons are gathered together in support groups, where they can share themselves with each other in intimate and meaningful ways.

I see these persons being affirmed and strengthened as human beings, and experiencing together a genuine community of love and trust and caring.

These are but a few of the many and scattered images that I can make out through the foggy mist that leads to tomorrow. They remind us that speculating about the unknown is always predictive and tenuous, and that the future always belongs more to God than it does to us. Having said that, however, does not excuse us from taking tomorrow seriously, or from striving to be better persons, working for a more wholesome community, a more just society, a new world. It's too hard to go it alone, so let us join hands and hearts as God's family in this place, that we may together put our hands "in the hand of the Man from Galilee," who goes before us, and whose grace is promised for whatever the future may bring.

Richard B. Martin



The talent and time of many people have gone into the research and writing of this book. John Ziegler spent winter afternoons combing 19th-century newspapers in the stacks of the Pottstown Library, while Marion Jenkins dusted off ancient records of the boards of trustees and deacons for review. Burtis Hallock contributed important items from his personal files, as did Verna Donahower from her family records. Richard Fulmer offered suggestions for theme and treatment of content, and Russell Adams gave great help in locating valuable documents. Helen Webber searched indefatigably for pictorial illustrations; Don Thompson handled design, art, and layout; Jim Gittings wrote the text.

All who assisted in the effort find themselves in agreement, however, concerning the part in production filled by Mrs. George Robins. At a moment when a sense of seriousness had deserted the committee, Mrs. Robins drew herself erect to deliver some advice. "Make of the anniversary book whatever you please," she said, "but remember that the church to which you belong is the church of God."

Mrs. Robins' remark is the best possible counsel for the congregation of the First United Presbyterian Church in Pottstown as it enters its 126th year of life. In the future we shall doubtless attempt many things as a church; we shall doubtless be many things. But only as we remember God's sovereignty over us, and listen for the prompting of his Holy Spirit, will a living church continue to worship beneath a Celtic Cross on Evans Street in Pottstown.

We, the members of
the First United Presbyterian Church
of Pottstown,
confess that we are sinners
afflicted with the sins of pride and excessive self-interest.
Nonetheless, we belong to Christ,
and pledge to serve Him as diligently in the future
as our fathers served Him long ago.

On the occasion of the one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary
of the congregation, we invite our friends
and our children to join hands with us in the
glorious work that lies ahead.

