

GROWTH OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

Louise B. Armstrong
Wednesday 4:00 P.M.
Miami Extension
Garfield High School

THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

COURT AND MONUMENTS STREETS

HAMILTON, OHIO

1816 - 1962

"THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH"

In 1733 a group of people, led by Ebenezer Erskine, formed an independent Church in Scotland known as the Associate Presbyterian Church and came to be known as the "Seceders". Erskine and his followers were opposed to the practice of the Established Church permitting the "laird", who was the patron and many times the principal support of the Church, naming the minister. Members of these small groups of "Seceders" came to America with other Colonists, established scattered congregations and organized their Presbyterian and Synods.

At the end of the American Revolutionary War and with the migration of the white people to the Northwest Territory, the missionaries of the Associate Reform Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh first settled in this part of the country.

The missionaries would form prayer circles among themselves and many times be joined by others. These meetings were held in homes. It was through these meetings that the need for a church was realized. This was in the year 1816.

A group of people from South Carolina, belonging to the same church from Pittsburgh, learning of the prohibiting

of slavery in Ohio and the North West came to Ohio . They, with their pastor, Reverend Alex Porter, helped the people in Hamilton. Mr. Porter established a congregation and built a church in Hopewell. He came to Hamilton and preached sometimes in the Old Fort and when the weather permitted in a grove at Dayton and Second Streets. Services were held in homes, but mostly in the grove or mess hall of the Fort which also, served as a Court House.

The first church building was erected by the First Presbyterian Church and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church during the year 1817 and 1818. The Churches contributed half of the necessary funds and each occupied the building one half of the time. The building was constructed on the east side of South Third Street, between High and Court Streets, at a cost of \$3,100.00. The lot on which they built was purchased for \$150.00. The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church trustees at the time were James Brown, William Caldwell, John Sutherland and Joseph Latta.

The first pastor of the Church was Reverend David McDill and, altho he had preached for two years, was installed October 6, 1818. The Congregation had 37 members.

The two churches continued to share the building on South Third Street until 1828. The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Congregation purchased the lot now occupied by the Church. The First Presbyterian Congregation purchased their present site the same year. The building constructed by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian was of brick, facing the river, with a cupola at the western gable in which was hung a bell. There were two front entrances and between these the pulpit was located. The pulpit was elevated with steps leading up to it on both sides. The building was 48 feet long, 44 feet wide and 16 feet high. The seating capacity was 500. There were 65 pews. The cost of this plain but neat building was \$1,050.00

Dr. McDill ministered to the Concord Congregation in Collinsville as well as in Hamilton for about ten years. He preached three times on Sunday, twice in his own Church and once in a school house. He edited a Church paper entitled, "The Christian Intelligencer", which later became the "United Presbyterian". Dr. McDill was among the earliest advocates of anti-slavery and temperance. His influence was felt, not only in his church, but throughout the emerging city and country.

Dr. McDill's pastorate covered a period of 30 years, ending in June 1847, at which time there were 84 members. The church service in the early days, began at 10 o'clock with no music from the organ or anthem by the choir. The pastor would read a line or two from a Psalm and the congregation would sing it, then two more lines and so on. The service was usually about an hour long. The first service ended at twelve o'clock, followed by a forty-five minute intermission. The people went out into the grove, which surrounded the Church and had lunch. During this lunch period questions from the catechism were asked by the pastor and both old and young were expected to answer. The afternoon service lasted for two hours. After the Sunday School was started it was very ordinary for members to spend from nine to five in Church. Those who lived far from the Church would have to leave at six in the morning and did not return until candle light.

The following is a reprint of Dr. McDill's "Twenty Fifth Anniversary Sermon" from the "News" in 1903. The manuscript has been preserved by Mrs. McMichael of Monmouth, Illinois, a granddaughter of Dr. McDill. The manuscript in 1903 is about 61 years old, having been written in 1842. It

bears the seams of time, having been sewed together along one side, and the edges frayed and finger marked. Dr. McDill wrote and preached, "In the fall of 1817, when I commenced my labors in this place, the congregation consisted of 17 families and 37 communicants." The following are extracts from the sermon: "During the first winter we met in the old Court House. There had for some years been a Presbyterian Congregation in Hamilton with a settled pastor. A small Episcopal Congregation was organized about the time I came here. These were all the religious societies in the place." "Hamilton had long been without a church building of any kind designed as a place of worship. The citizens of that day found this to be an objection to the place, that strangers coming here, with a view to locate themselves, inquired, 'Where is your Church?' and on learning there was none, often passed on to some other place. Some short time before I came here, there had been an arrangement made between the Presbyterian Church and the Associate Reformed Congregation to erect a meeting house in partnership. The American Bible Society was formed in New York in the year 1816. About twenty three years ago an auxilliary society was formed in this place." " When the shell of the Union Church was

completed, we still continued to worship in the Court House alternately with the Presbyterian Congregation. But there began to be other claimants and a motion was made to put temporary seats in the Church and we held our meetings there. Here, then, we worshipped, three, four or five years, at first sitting on seats made of slabs. But there began to be good attendance, especially in the summer, when we had fair weather. Seats had often to be placed in the aisles to accomadate all the audience."

January 27, 1848, at a Congressional meeting, a motion was made and carried to purchase a book for the purpose of recording the minutes of the Congressional meetings, therefore the first recorded minutes is of that meeting in January 27, 1848 - in the year 1916 that same book was still in use. The records of the early meetings are short, they were held in the afternoon and usually consisted of the treasury report. To quote a report, "All in, all out, and all debts paid." The pastor's salary was in the hands of a Pastor's Salary Committee. If there was not sufficient money in this fund at the end of the year, additional members were appointed to wait on the delinquents. The tuning of the church bell was also an item for which funds had to

appropriated.

Reverend William Davidson became the second pastor of the Church. He was born the same year Dr. McDill began his pastorate in Hamilton, October 1817. Reverend Davidson, at one time, had charge of four congregations, one at Vienna, Indiana; College Corner; Carthage and Piqua covering these distances on horse back and stopping between churches to hold services in any small village where the people had gathered. Though weakened from his long rides to his various congregations he worked diligently and the Church prospered under his guidance. The popular subject of the day was slavery and Dr. Davidson did not hesitate to speak his beliefs on the question.

An additional lot purchased from R. B. Bowler and Susan L. Bowler, E. H. Pendleton and Emma Pendleton on January 27, 1853 at a cost of \$200.00 enabled the construction of a new church. The deed describes the lot as being "12 poles long and 6 poles wide," or 198 feet long and 90 feet wide. The trustees purchasing the lot were John McDaniel, Robert Beckett, and John Woods.

The committee in charge of construction of the new church was Robert Beckett, James Giffen, John McDaniel, M. C. McMacken,

R. C. Stewart, John Traber, William Beckett, and John Millikin. The building cost \$7,500.00 and consisted of one large room fronting on Court Street and was used for fifty years.

In February, 1848, a committee was appointed to investigate Sabbath Schools. A month later the first session was held. The main objection to the Sabbath School was the belief that the parents should have sole charge of the religious instruction of their children.

The first Sabbath School report a year later at the Congressional meeting showed a collection of \$51.50 raised by the teachers and attendance of 17 teachers and 80 pupils. The success of this Sabbath School encouraged others to be established in surrounding territories. There was one in Mr. Beckett's school house, one known as the school east of town, one in Linden Hall south of Hamilton, one on Mr. Beatty's farm, one at Pleasant Ridge, and Woodsdale. One Sabbath School was conducted for the colored children of Hamilton.

The attendance at Sunday School became so large they could no longer be held in the Church room so the Church was raised and a basement room constructed for its use. While this was being undertaken the Sunday School sessions were

held in the U. B. Church in the First Ward, where the Colonial Flats were located. This building was sold so the Sunday School was discontinued for several months until the repairs were completed. In 1867 extra rooms were added in the rear of the Church. The parsonage was also built at this time.

July 17, 1857 a group of ladies of the Church who had been meeting together to sew passed a resolution to continue meeting, but to form a missionary society, meeting once every two weeks, each member, whether present or not, pay 10 cents per meeting. At the next meeting a constitution was drafted and Mrs. Erma Davidson became the first President of what was to be known as the Ladies' Missionary Society.

The Ladies Aid Society was organized sometime between 1850 and 1858 by Mary C. Moore and has always been the Church's "first aid".

Reverend Davidson having been stricken with paralysis in 1873, turned in his resignation February 2, 1874. Provisions were made for his care for the rest of his life. The close of Dr. Davidson's pastorate marked the 56th anniversary of the Church, two pastors in 56 years.

Dr. Davidson was succeeded by Reverend J. W. Clokey in 1874, who served for two years, resigning in June 17, 1876. The Church envelope system of raising money for Church expenses was adopted at this time. Previous to this money had been raised by subscription and paid when convenient for the contributors.

Reverend J. W. Bain followed Reverend Clokey in 1877 and remained as pastor until January 7, 1882. Reverend E. C. Simpson became pastor in 1882. Reverend Simpson was pastor for eleven years. In 1885 a new society, organized by Mrs. Sarah McKee, of about twenty five young girls was formed and named the "Gleaners".

The General Assembly met in 1886 in the local Church and this occasion marked the first time the pipe organ was used. There was a great deal of opposition to an organ being played in the Church and when the organist, Professor F. C. Mayer began to play many of the visiting ministers left the Church. Mrs. Cathrine Snider, known as Aunty Snider, left a legacy from which the fund for the pipe organ was started.

In the fall of 1888 Mr. Simpson organized a society for the young men and women of the Church. Miss Mary McKee and Ambrose Strang were appointed to make the first plans.

The first meeting was held November 7, 1888 with 22 charter members and Mr. J. L. Blair as president. The society was known as the C. E. Society, the next year named "Our Young People's Christian Union."

Sabbath, September 20, 1891, saw the celebration of the United Presbyterian Church, of Hamilton Ohio's Diamond Anniversary (1816-1891). Reverend E. C. Simpson was pastor. The formal program was as follows:

Morning Service

Organ Voluntary
 Invocation
 Praise and Prayer
 Scripture Lesson
 Anniversary Sermon
 By the Rev. F. W. Bain
 Prayer
 Benediction

Evening Service

Organ Voluntary
 Praise and Prayer
 Addresses
 "Reminiscences of Early Days"
 Dr. Cyrus Falconer
 "The Days of Dr. David McDill"
 Thomas Millikin
 "The Life and Work of Dr. Wm. Davidson"
 By F. Y. Scullen
 "Our Church in These Days"
 Rev. A. W. Clokey and Wm. E. Brown
 Closing Psalm
 Benediction

Reverend M. W. Pressley succeeded Reverend Simpson after his resignation April 1, 1893. Reverend M. W. Pressley

served the Church from 1894 until 1896. The Young Men's Lyceum was organized during Reverend Pressley's pastorate. They had a membership of 30 members and had their own meeting rooms in the back of the Church. The rooms had been especially furnished for them.

Reverend Pressley's pastorate also saw the establishing of the Fortnightly Bible Club. Miss Louise Jacobs served as its first president. This organization was active for many years.

In 1897 Reverend G. W. Robinson came to the church as its pastor. He served two years, resigning April 3, 1899. In December 1899 Reverend E. M. McFadden came to the Hamilton Church.

A growing awareness that the Church's physical plant was in great need of repair after fifty years of constant use resulted in a plan for remodeling. At a meeting of the consistory in January 1901, a building committee was appointed to draw up plans for remodeling the Church building. Plans were made and approved. Sunday, April 13, 1902 saw the last worship service held in the Church built in 1828. Two days later the work of tearing down the Church began.

September 24, 1902, saw the laying of the Corner Stone of the new Church. The oldest male member of the Church,

Mr. Wm. E. Brown conducted the impressive services. Rev. E. M. McFadden delivered the sermon.

Mr. J. L. Blair reported the list of items placed in the wooden box deposited in the corner stone. The box contained the following items: Copy of "Our Church Item for January 1898; historical sketch of the Congregation with statistical report and present enrollment; present enrollment of the Sabbath School, officers, teachers, pupils, classes, etc.; report from the Choir together with several anthems; reports from all the societies of the Church - those submitting reports were the Young Peoples Society, Bible Club, Young Men's Lyceum -; copies of the daily paper and Church papers.

During the period of remodeling the services of the Church were held in the Assembly Room of the Court House.

Dedication services were held June 28, 1903 with Rev. E. M. McFadden D.D. as Pastor. The calendar of Services

were:	Sabbath School	9:00 A.M.	Charles Holdefer Superintendent
	Divine Worship	10:30 A.M.	Rev. Joseph Kyle D.D.
	Fellowship Meeting	3:00 P.M.	Miss Clara Aten
	O.Y.P.C.W.	6:00 P.M.	Miss Clara Aten
	Divine Worship	7:30 P.M.	Rev. J. Kyle

The description of the new Church as reported in the "United Presbyterian Church, July 1903" is as follows: "It is a handsome and imposing structure of the Romanesque style of architecture, built on the site of the old church, the rear part of which is used partly in connection with the new, as lecture room and class rooms. The Auditorium is entirely a new structure. The building is of cream colored pressed brick stone trimmings, and red tile roof. The architect, W. H. Miller of Ithaca, New York, has succeeded in securing for the congregation something new in church architecture, a building that is "Churchly" in appearance, and combining strength and beauty.

The auditorium is finished in white wood and oak. The cornice, together with the massive pillars which support the roof, is of white wood, lemon-tinted while the wainscoting is of oak, stained dark. The platform is large and open, giving an air of space that the usual style of rostrum fails to convey. The background is formed of a large lemon-tinted panel, above which appears a beautiful stained glass window, with opalescent cross the central figure. The window is flanked on either side by handsomely carved pillars.

To the north of the pulpit is the pastor's study, which

is reached by a door opening directly on the pulpit platform. To the south is the organ and choir-loft platform, at the front of which is a brass rail with rich hangings of plush drapery. The floor is covered with a rich dark red velvet tile, done in a mosaic pattern. The floor of the side vestibule is of polished hard wood. Large windows of cathedral glass separate the auditorium from lecture rooms. These windows are arranged to lower into the basement, so that the auditorium and lecture room may be thrown into one to accommodate large audiences.

The pews are of dark finished quarter-sawed oak. The design was furnished by the architect. The beautiful windows were also finished from drawings furnished by Mr. Miller. There are four memorial windows, two in memory of our first pastors of the Congregation, Drs. David McDill and William Davidson, whose pastorates covered a period of forty three years. The large window in the west was donated by Dr. W. C. Miller, while that in the north was presented by Mr. W. B. Carr. The latter is a handsome figure of "Hope" after Bourne-Jones.

The Lecture room, with its adjoining class rooms and primary department, is finished in lemon-colored white wood.

The walls are frescoed in light tints, making the room a most cheerful one. The three large windows in the east wall were presented by the Sabbath School, Baraca Bible Class and the Y.P.C.U. They bear the monograms of these organizations in their centers.

The large parlors in the second story of the rear building are furnished for the Young Men's Lyceum and the Baraca Bible Class, of which the minister is the teacher.

The new Church is the third building erected upon the present site - a historic spot - forming as it does, a part of the ground once occupied by Fort Hamilton. Of the \$15,000 subscribed by the congregation, \$10,000 was donated by Col. R. C. McKinney of New York City, who, while no longer residing in Hamilton, still retains his membership in the congregation, and is also one of the ruling elders. Only through his generous donation was it possible for the church to secure one of the most beautiful buildings in the city. His liberality acted as a spur to the people, and they heartely raised their share of the amount called for.

The Reverend Dr. Joseph Kyle was the peacher of the day, Sabbath, June 28th when the Church was dedicated. He was greeted by immense audiences both morning and evening.

In the afternoon a fellowship meeting was held, presided over by Col. R. C. McKinney. Addresses were made by the ministers of the city, and fraternal greetings sent by those who were unable to be present. The music of the choir, under the able direction of the organist, Professor F. C. Mayer, contributed largely to the success of the services of the day. The congregation will not soon forget the helpful and inspiring sermon of Dr. Kyle. This Congregation was organized in 1816. The present pastor began his work in January 1900."

Mr. McFadden left the Church in 1904, handing in his resignation April 20. He was followed by Reverend J. H. Moorehead who became pastor June 29, 1904. The building debt was of great concern of Reverend Moorehead and his congregation. With the great contribution of Col. McKinney and the concentrated effort of the people sufficient money was raised and the burning of the mortgage took place April 7, 1911.

Reverend Moorehead, whose daughter Agnes went on to great accomplishment in the American theater and movies, left the Church in 1912.

Reverend G. W. Bovard replaced Reverend Moorehead September 1912.

Disaster was to strike in the form of the flood which struck the city on March 25, 1913. When entrance was gained to the Church over all the debris it was a horrible sight to behold.

Services of all Churches were abandoned for several weeks because the city was under martial law. Eighty five years after the First Presbyterian Church and First United Presbyterian Church separated to hold services in their respective houses of worship they were again sharing the same building.

The chaos that surrounded the Church also surrounded the homes of many of its members. The minister appealed to various parts of the country for help, telling of the deplorable conditions - through his efforts the Church received financial aid and was able to re-establish itself.

In the Fall of 1913 services were held in the re-dedicated Church.

November 19, 1916 to November 26, 1916 saw the Centennial Celebration of the United Presbyterian Church.

"The modern furnishing, organ and choir disappeared and left the congregation worshipping in the plain little "Meeting House" of a hundred years ago with pulpit high in the air,

high backed pews, shut in from the world with latched doors and one little wood-fired stove - supplemented in winter by the foot-warmers of individual members," writes Miss Ellen McKee in November 1916.

Miss McKee further writes on that November, 1916, "In the pulpit stood a kindly old man of the Dicken's type, preaching a two-hour sermon full of meat and sound theology, to his reverent audience of farmers, many of whom had left their homes at "early candle light on horse back"; their women folk were also there in hoop-skirts and flowered bonnets, waving prodigious turkey-feather fans over their numerous progeny to keep them awake and in good humor."

"Again, it was a tall man in a butter-nut coat who stood in the pulpit with eyes of fire and 'the dictionary at his tongue's end,' swaying his audience from a vision of the "New Jerusalem" to the lowest depth of perdition.

"Laughter and tears followed each other in quick succession as the old days were made to live before them and a tenderness, a loyalty, a relationship to the past, unrealized before welled up in their hearts. To the children of the Church, and adopted children as well, the

door has been opened on a heritage so vast, so sacred and so real, they uncovered their heads, and stepped with muffled foot-steps into the presents of the "Church not made with hand eternal in the Heavens."

The Church rolls in the year of its One Hundred Celebration included seven of the original families. There were McCleary (the Egberts), McMakin, Caldwell, Crawford, Becketts, Lytle and Blair. William and Robert Blair represent the fifth generation of Becketts, Crawfords, Becketts, Lytle and the fourth generation of Blair. Eleanor Caldwell is the fifth generation of Caldwells.

The United Presbyterian Church continued to serve its members and the city of Hamilton through the pastorates of Reverend J. B. Cavitt (1919-1927) and Reverend J. P. Sturgeon (1927-1937).

It was during Reverend Sturgeon's pastorate that disaster was to strike once more. March 12, 1934 fire was discovered at 9:00 o'clock which resulted in damage of \$100,000.00. Scarcely had the smoke cleared than plans were being made for a new building. Work started at once and on November 25, 1934 the corner stone was laid under the Auspices of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Mason of Ohio.

- June 23, 1935 the "Service of Dedication" of the new edifice was held, inaugurating a week of services which included the organ dedication on Monday evening June 24. Mr. William E. Pilcher played the new organ.

On Sabbath June 30, the Communion Service was held and the congregation of the Hamilton United Presbyterian Church once again was in a splendid new home.

Mr. Sturgeon ended a pastorate of nine years in 1937, when Dr. J. Hoy McElhinny began his pastorate. Dr. McElhinny reorganized the young people's work into two groups, the Builder's Fellowship and the Pioneers.

The One Hundred Twenty Fifth Anniversay of the Church was celebrated with "Anniversary Night" Friday evening, December 5, 1941, inaugurating a week of commemoration.

Reverend J. Hoy McElhinny was succeeded in 1947 by Reverend Robert E. Douglas. The Christian work of the Church grew in statue under the guidance of these capable ministers. During Reverend Douglas' pastorate the unification of the Presbyterian Churches became an accomplished status. It was during Dr. Douglas' pastorate that women were appointed as Deacons. After the Union of Churches and under the new

government new organizations were formed in the Church. The Missionary Societies became the Women's Association and three circles were formed from this group. The Morning Circle (#1), the Afternoon Circle (#2) and the Evening Circle (#3).

Reverend Robert Douglas resigned in 1960 and Reverend W. A. Bowen accepted the call to the Church.

The members of The First United Presbyterian Church, Court Street and Monument Avenue, Hamilton, Ohio, many who are descendants of those members meeting in 1816, are in 1961, as in 1816, praying, thinking, and planning together the directions in which they will go in the years to come.

SOURCE of RESEARCH MATERIAL

This is Our Church - by Frank J. Irvin, Geo U. Martin
Samuel C. Weir; Published by
Board of Christian Education
of the United Presbyterian Church
of North America

The Republican News - Clipping Saturday, December 2, 1916
written by Miss Addie Brunning

The Christian Union Herald - clipping Saturday April 13, 1940

Diamond Anniversary Program - September 20, 1891 - possession
of Miss Ellen McKee

Program of Corner Stone Laying - Wednesday, September 24, 1902

Hand written copy of Reverend J. L. Aten's report of the
contents of the Corner Stone laid in 1902 and of events
and business procedures involving the building of the
new Church

Copy of Dedication Service, June 28, 1903

Description of New Building from United Presbyterian Church
Paper - July 1903

Copy of Centennial Program, November 19-26, 1916

One Hundred Years of Service - by Ellen McKee, Hamilton, Ohio

Newspaper Clipping, March 1935

Copy Dedication Service Program, June 23, 1935

One Hundred Twenty Fifth Anniversary 1816-1941

Melting Pot - Ellen McKee

Deepest gratitude to Miss Clara Aten, 104 N.
Fifth Street, Hamilton, Ohio for her dedicated
life and interest to the welfare of her Church
that these papers have been preserved