

~ A Short History of Our Church ~

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When I was first asked to do a short history of our church for our new Pictorial Directory, I said I would be delighted to do so. I was on the Book Publication Committee in 1976 to formulate a booklet on the history of the Presbyterian Church of Pine Plains. This was in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of our church building. It was so well thought out and written by member Jordan Pulver that I used it as my main resource reference. I am eternally grateful to Jordan for his hard and diligent work

First, the Presbyterian Church of Pine Plains is a small rural and suburban church, nestled in the northeastern part of the Mid-Hudson Valley of New York. It can be said that our church dates back to 1810. A Rev. Barnum conducted irregular services in many different places, such as the Ball Room of the Ketterer Hotel and the Stissing House. In 1816, a Union Meeting house was built and several denominations, such as Presbyterians, Dutch Reform, Lutheran and Episcopalians, had worship services there.

Yet one notes that it is really people - members of the congregation that make the church and the continuity of the Church. Husted, from whom the site of the first church was purchased, was an ancestor of Julia Slingerland Jordan. Isabel Jorden and Betty Jordan Klare from Israel and Jame Harris of the Harris Scythe Works were proud of their forbearers. These and other ancestors of members gave support to the First Presbyterian Church. The Church is like a small segment of American History - a small village Protestant Church whose earliest parishioners were tilling the land, felling trees, clearing the fields, and with a religious faith in God to show them the way. History shows parishioners, the children, their children's children and so down the line supporting the Church, along with new people in the area accepting the hand proffered to them to join the church.

The official start of the Church in 1834 had Rev. William N. Sayre as its minister with seven members. Rev. Sayre remained as minister for 50 years until 1883. In 1848 a Pipe Organ was purchased for \$400, along with a new bell. A 100 foot horse and wagon shed was built. The church building was enlarged, remodeled and a lecture room was added in Dec. 1877. Congregational singing was adopted at that time. In 1883 the house and cottage adjoining the church was purchased for the Parsonage. Rev. James Wychcoff was given the call that year and stayed until 1896.

In 1894 a small addition was built as a kitchen and the next year, membership was 151. Rev. James McGowan became the Pastor on Feb. 25, 1897 until 1904. The Martha Society was organized in 1902. Rev. Clarence Doane received his call in 1905. Records show his salary to be \$800 per year, along with the use of the house and barn without rent; also, a vacation of four Sundays during the year. Rev. Doane left in 1910 and was replaced by Rev Dr. Charles W. Dane as stated supply for one year. He stayed until 1914. It is interesting to note that in 1913, an organ committee was formed to raise \$100 to match a similar gift from Andrew Carnegie.

Rev. Wesley R. Hemphill was installed as our Pastor on June 30, 1916. In April of 1918, Rev. Hemphill was granted a leave to engage in YMCA work among our soldiers in France. Mrs. Hemphill received her husband's full salary while he was gone. The Church was closed and the congregation attended the Methodist Church Services. In 1919, Ancramdale began sharing our Pastor. Rev. Hemphill left in 1921. Rev. Charles Moser accepted the call and was installed on June 16, 1921. He remained our Pastor for 42 years. On August 1, 1922, the church building was struck by lightning and destroyed. The Cornerstone for the new church was laid on Oct. 24, 1925 and the new church was dedicated on Sept. 12, 1926. The cost of the new church was \$43,212.

Many things happened during Rev. Moser's tenure - evening services were discontinued in 1930, assembly room was used by the public school for Kindergarten in 1933, gowns were purchased for the choir and new hymnals for the Sunday school in 1935, By-Laws were adopted in 1936. In 1943 the Missionary Society and Martha Society were combined to our present Women's Association. We had 23 members in the Armed Services. Our membership was at 240. A 25th Anniversary Service was conducted in 1951 and a Nursery School was established by Paula Roberts and Marge Chase. Membership in 1954 was 421 and the organ was reconditioned at that time. In 1959 our Church celebrated its 125th Anniversary. Membership was at 293.

Records show that our membership was at 307 when Rev. Moser passed away in 1963. Rev. Paul R. Carlson accepted the call in 1964 and remained until 1969. In 1967 Scottish Minister Rev. Bolster was here in exchange with Rev. Carlson at his church in Scotland. 1970 saw Rev. Harry Robinson accepting the call to our church. That year the Manse was repaired and remodeled along with extensive repairs to the Church. From 1970 to 1979, the Church formed the Northeast Area Ministry with Ancramdale and Millerton Presbyterian Church. In 1972 the Unicameral Board of 12 Elders was installed in our church. 1975 saw the purchase of new Hymnals (Red Hymnals). There was a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the church building in 1976. Rev. Robinson left in 1978 and was replaced by Rev. Lee Gartell as interim. He stayed for about 18 months when Rev. Robert D. Braby accepted our call in 1980. The organ was restored and electrified that year. We celebrated our 150th anniversary of the church in 1984.