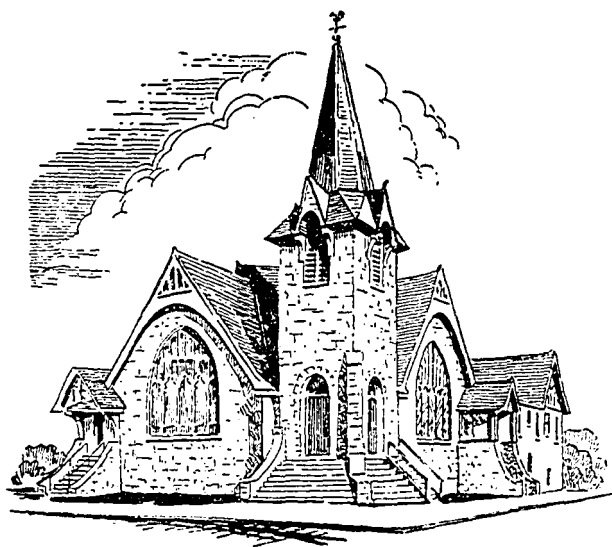


A HISTORY
of
THE FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY
1851---1951



By CHARLOTTE K. STEVENS

The First Presbyterian Church



CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY

And (God) hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.—Ephesians 1:22, 23

And (ye) are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.—Ephesians 2:20

And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.—Colossians 1:17

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH of CAPE MAY

1851-1951

By Charlotte K. Stevens

In the early days of Cape May there was no church on the Island and Presbyterians living there were members of the Cold Spring Presbyterian Church, three miles to the north. As early as 1832, there was a Presbyterian Sunday School under the care of the Cold Spring Church, and services were held on Sundays and week day evenings in the schoolhouse or sometimes in hotel dining rooms, especially during the summer. Rev. Moses Williamson, the pastor at Cold Spring, conducted these meetings.

In 1844, with generous support from summer visitors, the Presbyterians residing on Cape Island erected a church building costing \$4000 on Washington Street, the present site of the Cape May Methodist Church, which was called "The Visitors' Church." Mr. James Mccray was a moving spirit and generous contributor to the project. The title to the property was vested in the trustees of the Cold Spring Church with the distinct understanding that it should always be a Presbyterian church. The Reverend Mr. Williamson retained oversight of the pulpit, either preaching himself or inviting visiting ministers to preach.

THE FIRST QUARTER CENTURY

Six years later, on April 13, 1850, a meeting of members of the Cold Spring Presbyterian Church residing on Cape Island was held in the school house at which time a memorial was signed by 31 persons, asking the Presbytery of West Jersey to organize them into a Presbyterian congregation as they felt that such a church was greatly needed. Four days later the memorial was presented to the Presbytery and a committee was appointed to visit Cape Island and "if the way be clear" to organize a church. Because of the opposition of the mother church, it was not until May 21, 1851, that an adjourned meeting of Presbytery was held in the Visitors' Church, when the petition was granted. On June 25, 1851, the congregation was organized by a committee from Presbytery, with 23 members presenting certificates of dismissal from the mother church. These were approved and the following members were accepted: Mrs. Mary Hughes, (widow of Israel), Mrs. Judith E. Hughes, (widow of Richard), Mrs. Mary P. Hughes, William Stites and his wife Elizabeth; Joseph Church and his wife Mary; James Mccray and his wife Mary Ann; Lemuel Swain, Sr., and his wife Abigail; Mrs. Maria Swain, Mrs. Julia Swain, (wife of Lemuel Jr.), Mrs. Sarah Richardson, Aaron Schellenger and his wife Sophia; William Schellenger and his wife Mary Jane; Mrs. Mary Mccray, (wife of Jeremiah); Benjamin

Belanger and his wife Eliza; Mrs. Rebecca Merritt, and Mrs. Elizabeth Pierson. Nominated and elected as ruling elders at the meeting were Aaron Schellenger and Lemuel Swain, Sr.

The new congregation felt that the Visitors' Church should be transferred to them, but the Cold Spring trustees felt otherwise and rejected the offer of the young congregation to purchase it. In 1854 the building was sold to the Cape May Methodist Church for \$4000. After litigation, the new church received \$800 of the proceeds of the sale.

Determined to build a new church, the congregation bought for \$900 a lot on Lafayette Street between Jackson and Banks Streets. The church, built by Philip Hand at a cost of \$7000, was dedicated on July 17, 1853. The speaker at the evening service was Rev. Henry Van Dyke. It is now occupied by the Episcopal Church of the Advent.

For the first 25 years, the congregation was served by stated supplies and by four ministers whose pastorates lasted only a year or less, primarily because the young church could afford to pay only a very small salary helped out by the Home Missions Committee of the Presbytery until 1868, when it became self supporting.

Rev. Charles H. Ewing served as the first resident stated supply from September, 1853, to April, 1855. During 1854 a revival took place and 45 new members were added to the church roll.

Rev. Howard Nixon supplied the pulpit for four months from June 1 to October 1, 1855.

Rev. Peter A. McMartin served as a stated supply from October 15, 1855, to December 3, 1856 when he was installed as pastor. He requested dissolution of the pastoral relationship in October, 1857. Twenty-one members were added to the church roll during his ministry.

From December, 1857, to March, 1858, Rev. Robert Julian was the supply, and from June to September, 1858, Rev. W. F. P. Noble filled the pulpit.

On March 17, 1859, Rev. Loring Brewster accepted the pastorate. His sudden death on April 30, 1860, brought to a close a relationship which had promised to be one of great usefulness.

Rev. Jared Dewing next filled the pulpit from December, 1860, to April, 1863. He was followed by Rev. John P. Conkey from June 1, 1863, to March 1, 1865. During the latter pastorate the trustees were instructed to buy for a manse the house and lot on Lafayette Street formerly owned by James Ware (the present Mottet House at 1017 Lafayette). The purchase price was \$1300 and another \$1173.91 was spent on repairs.

The Reverend Mr. Conkey was regarded as an unusually good preacher but was much discouraged because he was unable to bring many of those who worshipped at the church into the membership. However under his immediate successor,

Rev. Joseph Hubbard, who served as a supply for one year and as pastor for a year and a half more, a great religious upsurge took place with 60 persons joining the church, 49 of them by examination.

Theodore Leggett served as stated supply from June, 1868, to May, 1869, when he was installed as pastor, the relationship lasting only until April, 1870.

On January 1, 1871, began a happy church relationship between congregation and pastor which lasted for 13 years. Rev. Edward P. Shields was installed February 1, 1871, and served until March 1, 1884.

In 1876, during his early pastorate, the church celebrated its silver anniversary. Mr. Shields compiled a concise and well written history of the first twenty-five years of its existence.

Up until June 25, 1876, a total of 243 members (84 males and 159 females) had united with the church. Of these, 144 were received on confession of faith and 99 by letter. Removal to other churches and death diminished the total by 100, leaving 143 as the membership at the close of the first quarter century, when seven of the original 23 members were still on the communion list.

During Mr. Shields' thirteen years as minister, 128 persons joined the church, 46 of whom were received during a revival in 1873.

Men elected as ruling elders during this first quarter century, in addition to Aaron Schellenger and Lemuel Swain, Sr., were John K. F. Stites, Jr. ordained March 7, 1854; James Mecray, Sr., and James S. Kennedy, M. D., February 29, 1857; Joseph Q. Williams, March 29, 1861, and Samuel M. Schellenger, J. Stratton Ware, Swain S. Reeves, and Isaac H. Smith on December 30, 1866.

Twenty-five Trustees elected in that first 25 years were James Mecray, Sr., Edwin Hubbard, Joseph Q. Williams, William Stites, Thomas Williamson, Joseph Church, Henry Hand, Thomas H. Hughes, William Schellenger, Christopher Leaming, Samuel Swain, Joseph Schellenger, Lemuel Swain, Jr., Isaac Whilldin, Joseph Johnson, James E. Kennedy, Eldredge Johnson, J. Stratton Ware, Samuel R. Stites, Daniel Eldredge, Col. Henry W. Sawyer, Jonathan Stevens, Samuel K. Ludlam, James S. Crowell, L. C. Edmunds, William F. Cassedy, and John Johnson.

The first meeting of the trustees of the Cape Island Church to be recorded was that of April 23, 1855, when the Board was organized with Joseph Q. Williams as chairman and Thomas H. Hughes as clerk. The task of raising money for the church's running expenses and for financing the building program was theirs. Chief source of revenue was the pew rental. Originally members bid for them, the highest bidder to have the choice of pews; six dollars per annum was the highest fee paid. Later pew rents were raised to ten, twelve, fifteen, and twenty-

five dollars a year, depending upon their location in the church. Each year a committee of trustees was appointed to solicit subscriptions from the members for the pastor's salary and for the collection of the pew rents.

Several times during the early years, women were appointed by the trustees to make the collections. At the congregational meeting in 1874, Mrs. Ann Leaming and Mrs. Sarah Williams were commended for their services and asked to continue as the committee.

The salary during the earliest years was only \$400. In 1863, it was raised to \$600 per annum, and in 1868, to \$800 with free use of the manse. Reverend Mr. Shields was paid a salary of \$1000 and manse.

The ladies of the church actively aided the trustees in raising money. In the years between 1860 and 1875, harvest homes held by the ladies netted two or three hundred dollars a year; fairs, Christmas festivals, turkey dinners, and strawberry festivals added two or three hundred more.

A mite society headed by Mrs. Williams and another by Ellen Hale added various sums of money to the treasury to be used for salary, and contributions were received from summer visitors.

THE SECOND TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

At the annual meeting in 1877, marking the beginning of the second quarter century of the Cape May Church, a set of rules of order for the government of the congregation was presented and adopted.

Following Mr. Shields' resignation in 1884 the pulpit was filled by Rev. George H. Cleveland for five months.

Rev. C. A. Brewster was called to the pastorate on January 1, 1885 and served for six and one half years. During his pastorate in 1885 the trustees passed a resolution which authorized exchange of the manse located on Lafayette Street for the Gilmour property, (the Hickey House at 812 Washington Street), paying an additional \$500 in cash and giving to Hugh McCosker a mortgage for \$1000.

In December, 1891, Rev. James M. Cockins was installed as pastor and served until October 28, 1900 at a salary of \$1400 annually, resigning as the golden anniversary of the church was approaching.

On September 13, 1893, the trustees voted to change the name of the church from the Cape Island Presbyterian Church to the First Presbyterian Church of the City of Cape May.

During the decade from 1890 to 1900 an important step was decided upon; plans were formulated for the building of a new church. In 1892 at a congregational meeting the trustees were empowered by resolution to purchase the Holland lot at the corner of Decatur and Hughes Streets as a site for the new church. The purchase price was \$6500. The Young Peoples Society of Christian Endeavor was most active in soliciting funds and in 1893 and 1894 raised more than \$2000 toward payment for the lot, the indebtedness being cancelled by January, 1895.

On March 23, 1897, a resolution was passed that the trustees "procure plans and specifications for a new church building, cost of same not to exceed \$12,000." Twice were bids advertised for and twice rejected because of the excessive cost. The building committee was composed of Elder Isaac Smith, Rev. James M. Cockins, William F. Cassedy, and Stillwell Hand.

Following negotiations with George W. West of Philadelphia, whose bid of \$13,141 was the lowest submitted the second time, some slight alterations and deductions were made, bringing it down to \$12,829. Though this figure did not include the cost of the heating apparatus, art glass, electric wiring, gas piping, or furnishings, the bid was accepted, and work began on the building. Actual cost of the present church, including the lot, was \$28,000, more than twice the amount originally planned to be spent. Compared to present day prices, the cost of the work was reasonable: steam heating \$775; approximate cost of pews, \$700; wiring the church \$85; glass for windows \$500; gas and electric fixtures \$400.

The beautiful stained glass center panels of the windows

on the west and north sides of the church were given as memorials, one in memory of the Mecrays and one in memory of Mr. Robert E. Hughes. Later, William G. Essen gave windows in memory of his parents and of his son Willis, and in 1917, by the will of Mrs. Charlotte Bridenthal, the two remaining windows were given in memory of her sister, Evaline Hughes, and herself. The pulpit furniture was the very generous gift of Mrs. Robert H. Beattie.

A Sunday School library was donated to the new church by Nelson Z. Graves, to be known as the Lottie K. Graves Memorial Library, together with \$3000 in dedicated funds, the interest from which should go to maintenance and the purchase of new books. The library was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies on August 13, 1899.

The last sermon in the church on Lafayette Street was preached by Mr. Cockins on May 14, 1899; and the first service in the new stone church was held on May 21, 1899. The formal dedication of the church to divine worship was conducted by the pastor on Sunday morning, August 20, 1899, in the presence of a very large assembly filling all parts of the auditorium and lecture room. Rev. J. A. Worden, D. D., L.L.D., of Philadelphia preached the dedicatory sermon and the collection amounted to \$700.

The first wedding to be held in the new church was that of Millicent Hughes and Frank B. Mecray on April 18, 1900.

During Mr. Cockins' ministry, 137 members joined the church, including many young people. In the month of March 1895 alone, 46 united with the church, 37 of them on profession of faith.

Only four new ruling elders were elected during the second quarter century. They were Joseph E. Hughes and Henry Hand on April 25, 1877, and Daniel C. Stevens and John W. Mecray on October 28, 1900.

Special mention should be made of two elders who gave a life-time of service to the church.

Joseph Q. Williams joined the church on March 6, 1854, and was first elected a trustee on January 23, 1854 and annually thereafter for five years. He was elected clerk at the annual congregational meeting on January 27, 1859 and every year thereafter until 1902 with the exception of 1867, when he served as moderator. He was ordained as an elder on March 29, 1861. His service was terminated by his death in April 1902 after 41 years as an elder and clerk of the session. Mr. Williams was elected superintendent of the Sabbath School in 1858 and served in that capacity for at least 20 years.

Isaac H. Smith united with the church on February 24, 1866 and was ordained a ruling elder on December 30 of that year. He died October 6, 1913 at the age of 83, having served as an elder for 47 years.

Eleven men who had not previously served as trustees

were elected to that office between 1876 and 1901. They were Joseph E. Hughes, A. L. Haynes, I. Harry Smith, Francis Eldredge, James M. E. Hildreth, Robert E. Hughes, Walter S. Ware, Clarence Brooks, Stillwell Hand, John W. Mecray, and Charles P. Eldredge.

After Mr. Cockins' resignation on October 28, 1900, the church pulpit was vacant until Rev. Edwin F. Gallagher came to serve as stated supply from June 2 to November 21, 1901, at which time he was installed as pastor, serving until his death in August, 1903.

The Golden Jubilee of the church was celebrated on Sunday afternoon, August 18, 1901, with the Reverend Mr. Gallagher taking as his subject "Our Golden Needs." "Our Half-Century of Golden Deeds" was described in four brief talks by Elder Joseph Q. Williams, Layman G. Bolton Eldredge, Miss Gertrude Tolbert for the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor and Helen Moore for the Sunday School. The Golden Jubilee offering amounted to \$600 which was applied toward the reduction of the \$10,000 mortgage on the church.

The Reverend Mr. Gallagher's ministry was a fruitful one in winning souls to Christ. During the year 1902, 36 persons united with the church, 27 of them on confession of faith. Many were young people drawn from the membership of the very active Christian Endeavor Society.

In September 1901, Ottier Howard was appointed sexton of the church, completing a half century of faithful service in 1951.

THE SECOND HALF CENTURY

Rev. Curtis Long supplied the pulpit from September 1903 until January 1, 1904.

Rev. Arthur Willis Spooner came to the church as stated supply on January 1, 1904 and was elected pastor on April 5, 1904 at a salary of \$1200 with free use of the manse.

On February 25, 1904, the trustees were authorized to purchase the cottage next door to the church at 510 Hughes Street from the estate of Isaac M. Downs for use as a manse, as the old manse on Washington Street had been sold in October, 1898, to George Douglass for \$2500. The purchase price of the Downs house was \$4000.

On September 18, 1904, occurred a momentous event, the burning of the mortgage on the new church. Over \$9000 had been raised in four years with the help of the Christian Endeavor Society. Maturity of building and loan shares held by both the Y.P.S.C.E. and the trustees was a contributing factor in bringing about this happy event. At the ceremony, the oldest elder, Mr. Isaac H. Smith, held the salver on which the mortgage was placed, and Mrs. Mary Jane Schellenger, only active charter member of the two living at the time, applied the match which was lighted for her by Theodore Reeves, president of the Christian Endeavor Society. The pastor's choir of 25 children sang "I Love Thy Church, O God" as the smoke ascended. The adult choir composed of 13 members of the church sang two anthems.

Another important addition to the church during Dr. Spooner's pastorate was the pipe organ purchased from the Estey Organ Company and installed early in July, 1905. This was made possible by a gift of \$1000 from Mr. Andrew Carnegie, contingent upon the church's raising a like amount. A "Grand Organ Opening" was held in the church on July 20, 1905, with cards of admission at 50 cents each. They bore the inscription, "Only 400 tickets. You will be one of Cape May's 400." An organist, a soprano, and a tenor soloist, and a cornetist from Philadelphia were the featured attractions of the opening.

In 1905 under Dr. Spooner, 21 were received into the church on confession of faith and 13 by letter; in 1906, 30 on confession and eight by letter, bringing the total membership to 256.

In 1906 the constitution and by-laws previously adopted by the congregation were repealed and a new set adopted in conformity with a recent act of the Legislature. By this, the number of trustees was changed from five to six, and a system set up so that terms of the trustees should be for three years, two to be elected each year.

Dr. Spooner severed the pastoral relationship with the church on September 12, 1906, as he felt that he had received a call from the Lord to enter the field of evangelism.

Rev. James McLeod was elected on February 6, 1907, to become pastor of the church and was installed on June 26. A man of great learning, he was an eloquent preacher.

A new manse was built for him during his first year as pastor. The old manse structure next door to the church was sold to William G. Essen for \$810, and on September 3 the trustees were authorized to sign a contract with York Brothers for construction of the new building. Built at a cost of \$12,000, it was financed by an \$8000 mortgage. The building committee was composed of William F. Cassedy, George O. Cummings, William G. Essen, Gilbert C. Hughes, Frank B. Mecray, and I. Harry Smith.

The high mark of membership reported during the third 25 years occurred in 1909 under Dr. McLeod; 263.

Dr. McLeod resigned in August, 1913, and was followed by Rev. Samuel S. Aikman, who came in March, 1914, as pastor-elect, but was never installed, leaving on January 1, 1915. Under Mr. Aikman, 32 were received into the church fellowship on confession of faith, and 6 by letter.

Rev. Curtis Bosserman was installed as pastor on May 13, 1915, and concluded his long and faithful ministry to the congregation on April 30, 1940, the longest pastorate in the history of the church. During the early years of his ministry the long-standing mortgage on the manse was cancelled and the interior of the church was renovated and recarpeted in 1923.

Through the efforts of Trustee Jay E. Mecray, chairman of the property committee, who solicited gifts from summer cottagers and others interested in the church, the organ was rebuilt and chimes installed in it early in 1929. Following the completion of the work, on April 14, 1929, a dedicatory service was held. The chimes were given in memory of Gustavus W. Knowles by his four children. Mr. Knowles for more than thirty years had been a regular summer worshipper at the Cape May church and a generous contributor to it until his death on September 13, 1928. The expense of the remodeling of the organ was defrayed by Miss Frances Ferguson in memory of her father, Mr. Charles Ferguson, who was an ardent friend of Presbyterianism during his summer residence in Cape May, and a generous supporter until his death in 1906.

New lights were installed in the chapel and the social room and changes made in the wiring and electric switches through an Easter offering of \$735 that same year. In 1937, again through the efforts of Mr. Mecray, new lights for the auditorium were made possible through memorial gifts from Charles Church, Lottie Rutherford Lengert and her brother, Clinton; Ralph T. Stevens, James Stites, Harriet Stites Hughes, Laura Stites Eldredge, Ella Stites Paul, Sallie William Cox, and the family of L. E. Miller, Sr. Renovations to the basement were also accomplished by gifts solicited by Mr. Mecray.

On the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the church,

in 1931, the Reverend Mr. Bosserman conducted anniversary ceremonies, preaching a sermon in which he traced the growth and history of the church during its first 80 years. He had painstakingly compiled figures on membership, contributions to various church boards, and general expenses over the years. Total membership received on confession and by letter was 864, with more than half of these members received in 12 revival years. In the first 80 years of its existence the church gave, as reported to the General Assembly, the sum of \$250,508 for local church expenses; and for benevolences, a total of \$60,357. The average gift per capita of the General Assembly for the work of the Boards from 1915 to 1931 was \$4.32, while The Cape May congregation gave \$8.25 per capita, standing fifth of the churches in West Jersey Presbytery.

Rev. Floris Ferwerda succeeded Mr. Bosserman as pastor of the church, serving from 1940 to March 1942, and resigning to become an assistant to Rev. Howard Moody Morgan in Philadelphia.

Mr. Ferwerda inaugurated family nights with covered dish suppers which were very popular. He gave a series of lectures in church history which were climaxed by a contest among the young people of the church. Succeeding Mr. Ferwerda, Rev. Albert Lenz filled the pastorate from March, 1942, to 1948, when he was called to minister to the church in Gap, Pennsylvania.

Since there was much to be done in renovating both church and parsonage, a special appeal was made to the members of the church in the late fall of 1944, asking for personal contributions toward the repair fund. In response to this appeal, \$1266 was received. Ninety gallons of outside white seashore paint was given to the church by the late Robert F. Jaegle of the Jaegle Paint and Varnish Company, which greatly enhanced the appearance of the church and manse. A new boiler for the church was also purchased.

Following Mr. Lenz's departure, Rev. James B. Reid supplied the pulpit during the summer of 1948 and remained as stated supply for six months. Mr. Reid was an eloquent preacher, and the summer and subsequent winter attendance at services was larger than for many years. Mr. Reid, being unmarried, did not occupy the manse. The pastor's study in the church was renovated and redecorated for his use. Mr. Reid was greatly interested in the young people of the congregation and held meetings for them at his apartment during the year. Regular Sunday evening services were discontinued.

A Board of Deacons was formed during his pastorate, to assist with renovations in the church and serve as ushers at Sunday services.

The Reverend Mr. Reid accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia in the spring of 1949, much to the regret of the church fellowship. Guest preachers conduct-

ed the Sunday services during the summer months, and in October, 1949, Rev. Melvin H. Dillin was called from Bloomsbury, New Jersey, to become minister of the Cape May church. During his pastorate, family night has been revived. The spiritual values of the church ministry have been stressed, and members have been urged to support the church by larger subscriptions, so that money making projects may not be necessary in order to meet the increased budget. The manse has been redecorated, and an oil burner and modern kitchen installed.

During the month of July, 1951, Sunday evening services have been planned with outstanding young preachers from the Philadelphia area filling the pulpit. For a number of years during the month of August, the Presbyterian Church has united with the other Protestant churches of the city in evening community services on the city pier with noted clerics as speakers.

The Wednesday evening prayer meetings under Mr. Dillin have become of increasing interest to the congregation because of his scholarly and interesting exposition of the Scriptures. During his pastorate 31 members have joined the church, the membership roll for the centennial year including 183 names.

In 1949 a new Pulpit Bible was presented in memory of Judge William Gray Knowles by his brother Frank C. Knowles, M. D. and his sister Miss Florence C. Knowles.

CHURCH MUSIC

Music has always been an important feature of services in the Cape May Presbyterian church. In the early days, before there was an organ in the church, William Stites led the singing, using a tuning fork to set the pitch. Another singer who assisted with the music was Aaron Schellenger. Later a melodeon was purchased by the trustees with the help of the women of the congregation, and still later, a cabinet organ was placed in the organ loft in the church on Lafayette Street. This was transferred to the new church, being used until the pipe organ was installed in 1905.

Among the church members who officiated at the organ were Mrs. Sallie Eastwick, a Mrs. Gass, Samuel Stites, and two of his daughters, Mrs. William Porter, and Mrs. Gilbert Hughes. Others who took their turns at the organ were Ethel Farrow, Eleanor Thompson, and Mrs. Theodore Reeves. Mr. Francis Hines was the first organist after the pipe organ was installed. Miss Helen Porter, great granddaughter of William Stites, granddaughter of Samuel Stites, and daughter of Mrs. William Porter, began her ministry of music as early as 1906, and was organist of the church for more than forty years, resigning in 1948.

Mrs. Sallie Williams, wife of Elder Joseph Q. Williams, was the leader of the choir in the early years, and Mrs. Eastwick, nee Mattie Mecray, was also a director. In 1887, Mr. William Porter became director and served until his death in 1922. Mr. Lester Rodes succeeded him and when he left, Miss Porter was asked by the session to combine the duties of directress with her duties as organist. In 1948, Mr. William C. Watkins became choir master and Mrs. Horace G. Boorse became organist.

Among the choir members in the Lafayette Street church were Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Mattie Hildreth, Mrs. Sallie Eastwick, Susie Ludlam, Mame Porter, Minnie Mecray, Dot Stites, Carrie Hughes, J. Woodruff Eldredge, William Porter, Lemuel Miller, Sr., and Samuel Stites. At the time of the Golden Jubilee, music was provided by a double quartette composed of Minnie Mecray, Dot Stites (Eldredge), Carrie Hughes (Smith), Maud Hughes, John Mecray, Gilbert Hughes, Theodore Reeves, and J. W. Eldredge.

Three years later there was a larger choir, including besides those listed above, Marion Nelson, Rebecca Stevens, Mrs. Francis Hines, Georgie Edmunds, and Joseph Stites. Probably the member who has given the longest service in the choir is Mrs. Dot Stites Eldredge, who has devoted most of her entire life span to musical service; joining the choir at the age of twelve, she sang uninterruptedly for more than 50 years.

In the early 1900's, Mr. Gallagher had a children's choir; now, once again, a children's choir is taking part in the morning worship at the Visitors' Church. During the summer the choir is augmented by guest singers and paid soloists.

CHURCH OFFICIALS

During the second half of the church's life, we find the names of the early ruling elders being repeated as their sons and grandsons have taken their places in the session and on the Board of Trustees. There were the three Mecray brothers, John, Frank, and Jay, the former a trustee first, then serving as ruling elder from 1900 until his death in 1937. Frank was elected a trustee to succeed his brother and served as secretary of the trustees and as church treasurer for thirty-five years. Jay was financial secretary of the Sunday-School, and as a trustee was active in raising money for improvements to the church property. Their nephew, William C. Mecray, succeeded Frank as secretary of the trustees and church treasurer.

I. Harry Smith was president of the trustees from 1906 to 1920 when he was elected an elder like his father before him.

Gilbert Hughes, son of Thomas H. Hughes, was elected an elder in 1903 and served as clerk of the session from 1904 to 1944. Samuel Schellenger and Theodore Reeves were made elders in 1903 and Joseph Stites in 1906.

Capt. James Eldredge served as president of the Board of Trustees from 1923 to 1933, and his son, Hon. Samuel F. Eldredge is currently serving as vice-president. J. Woodruff Eldredge was elected a trustee in 1923 and served as president from 1937 to 1943. Dr. Frank Hughes was president of the board for two years, resigning to take his place on the Session in 1923, and Oliver Elwell served for two years as president in 1943-44.

Ralph T. Stevens, who has served as president of the Board since 1944, is the third generation to serve as a trustee, his father, Thomas S. Stevens, and his grandfather, Jonathan C. Stevens, having served in earlier years.

During the last 25 years Clement B. Newkirk, George O. Cummings, T. Tasker Smith, R. Clifton Ware, Edwin C. Miller, Clarence Davis, and Raymond L. Fite served first as trustees and then were elected ruling elders. Daniel Stevens, Walter Savage, T. Alfred Stevens, George J. B. Fisher, Viola B. Har-ker, Lulu B. Hughes, and William C. Dambach were elected ruling elders also.

The rotating system of eldership was tried out in 1923, discarded shortly afterward, and is now in force again.

Other trustees elected since 1901 have been Henry Rutherford, Charles P. Eldredge, Benjamin Hughes, Frank Hines, William G. Essen, Thomas S. Stevens, William McFaddin, Percy Fox, William H. Thompson, Edward Nittinger, Walter Savage, Jr., and Charles S. Eldredge. The present board includes Ralph T. Stevens, president; Samuel F. Eldredge, vice-president; William Mecray, secretary; Waters Ewing, Kendall E. Ewer, Raymond L. Fite, Robert W. Glaubit, Donald A. Gaver,

who served as treasurer of the church for a year and a half; and Cornelius Murray, the present treasurer.

The present Board of Deacons consists of eight active members: John J. Spencer, Jr., James R. Mecray, Belford S. LeMunyan, Louis W. Cox, George A. Reeves, George W. Roth, Kenneth Johnston, and George C. Shoemaker; and three inactive members: George Feitz, Edward Hutchinson, and Jonathan Sayre.

The active members of the Session in this one hundredth anniversary year are Rev. Melvin H. Dillin, moderator; George J. B. Fisher, Raymond L. Fite, Mrs. Samuel A. Harker, Clement R. Newkirk, R. Clifton Ware, William L. Dambach, Clarence M. Davis, and Mrs. Frank R. Hughes.

A history of the church would not be complete without an account of the organizations which have played an important part in its growth. The Sabbath School, Home Missionary Society, Foreign Missionary Society, the Senior Christian Endeavor Society, the Junior C. E. Society, and the Ladies' Aid Society have all contributed their share to the development of the "Visitors' Church" through the past century.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL

The Sabbath School is the oldest of the church organizations. For many years, even before the organization of the church, a branch Sabbath School was maintained on Cape Island under the supervision of the session of the Cold Spring Presbyterian Church. Records extend back to 1832.

As part of the Cape May Church, the Sabbath School was first convened April 4, 1852, with five teachers and thirty pupils. John F. K. Stites was elected superintendent by the session. He resigned on September 10, 1858, and Joseph Q. Williams was named as his successor and served for many years. A newspaper clipping tells of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Presbyterian Sunday School held on New Year's Eve, 1879, in the church to which the public was invited. The children of the school who had undergone training by the Reverend Mr. Shields and competent members of the choir presented "a concert of unusual excellence." The report for the year listed a membership of 118 with an average attendance of ninety.

Among the teachers of the 15 classes were Charles Sweeney, A. L. Haynes, Isaac H. Smith, J. E. Hughes, Emma Stites, Mary Hughes, Clara Shields, Mrs. M. Williamson, and Mrs. S. Ludlam.

Contributions made for foreign missions were \$36.59; for domestic missions, \$27.69, and for the Library, \$62.97. The local Sunday School has always given generously to missions.

Mr. Samuel Stites was elected superintendent to succeed Mr. Williams. Following him, John W. Mecray assumed the office in 1885 at the age of eighteen, and continued until his death, having served fifty years. Oliver Elwell, Edwin C. Miller, Edward Pickard, and Miss Joan Wollaston followed John Mecray for brief periods as superintendents. William L. Dambach is the present superintendent.

For many years the Sunday School met in the afternoon, then was shifted to 12:00 o'clock. It now convenes at 10:00 o'clock, before the morning service.

Some of the teachers who in the past 50 years gave loyal and devoted service were Mrs. Mary Hughes, Miss Hannah Smith, Mrs. T. Tasker Smith, Mrs. Frank R. Hughes, Mrs. Frank B. Mecray, Mrs. Lydia Bachman, Mrs. H. B. Moyer, Mrs. J. E. Mecray, and Miss Marion Nelson.

For many years the Cradle Roll was under the direction of Mrs. Frank Hines, and the Home Department under Mrs. A. B. Little.

Worthy of mention was the class of small boys started by Mrs. T. T. Smith in 1897. This was reorganized as an adult bible class in 1912 and named "The Crusaders." In 1907 it had a membership of forty and raised the money to furnish its classroom. Attendance dropped in 1918 due to the fact that 22 of the boys enlisted in World War I, but 150 service-

men stationed here during the war attended the class at one time or another. Reunions of the class were held in 1928, 1930, 1933, and 1941.

The adult woman's Bible class, known as Class 4, was taught for many years by the late Mrs. Mary Hughes. Miss Hannah Smith succeeded Mrs. Hughes, and in 1914, the class was formally organized and officers elected. Regular business meetings were held, and three or four hundred dollars a year raised by means of dinners, teas, coin cards, and food sales. The money was given, \$100 or \$150, for the Easter offering, and \$150 for Recognition Day annually. The first piano for the Sunday School room in the new church was bought by Class 4. Presidents of the class were Mrs. Gilbert Hughes, Mrs. J. W. Eldredge, Mrs. Sidney Goff, Mrs. Walter Savage, Mrs. Joseph Elwell, Mrs. Frank R. Hughes, Mrs. Edwin C. Miller, and Mrs. Bertie Adams. Mrs. Alice Glaubit has been president since 1944.

Among Class 4's gifts made to the church throughout the years were new dishes and silver, expense of which was shared by the Ladies' Aid; a damask cloth for the communion table, new kitchen equipment, and a new hotel size gas stove for the kitchen. The present teacher is Miss Ella Bennett.

THE LADIES' AID SOCIETY

The organized women of the church, known as the Ladies Aid, have always been active. In the very early years of the church, the trustees could scarcely have made ends meet without their assistance. Mrs. Sallie Williams was in charge of the Aid at that time, and the harder the task, the better the Ladies Aid liked it. Mrs. Charlotte Bridenthal was president for many years, but was inactive during the last years of her incumbency and no meetings were held for 16 years.

On November 29, 1916, a meeting for reorganization was held, at which Mrs. Bridenthal's resignation was received. Mrs. Samuel F. Eldredge was elected president, serving for one year. Other presidents following her were Mrs. Thomas Van Winkle, 1918-1920; Mrs. Walter Smith, 1922-1932; Mrs. William Sheppard, 1933-1934; Mrs. Samuel F. Eldredge, 1935; Mrs. Tasker Smith, 1936-1937. Mrs. J. Woodruff Eldredge has served from 1938 to the present time.

The aim of the society has always been to give assistance to the trustees in the upkeep of the church property, and the manse, and the minute book shows that thought to be paramount in all actions taken. When the new church was built, the Ladies Aid bought the carpet for the auditorium and the Sunday School room. They paid for the brass rail around the choir loft and the railings on the outside church steps. They paid the bills for papering and painting the inside of the manse, for new window shades and for storm windows for the manse. They shared with Class 4 the cost of new dishes and

silver for the church dining room. They made donations of cash to the trustees to pay for fuel oil and insurance premiums. These expenditures were financed by suppers, food sales, teas, and white elephant sales, and coin banks filled by members.

Other work done by the Aid was the sending of flowers to the sick, gathering good second hand clothing, repairing it, and packing boxes for home mission stations in various parts of the country.

THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR SOCIETY

The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor was established in 1888 and was very active for forty years. Meetings were held each Friday evening and were attended by as many as 75 in the two decades between 1890 and 1910. Members were active in soliciting money for the building fund and instrumental in raising the money for the purchase of the site for the church. In two years, 1893 and 1894, they contributed \$2025 toward the purchase price of the site. By means of shares in the building loan, they were able to contribute a substantial amount toward cancellation of the mortgage on the church in 1904.

Theodore W. Reeves served as president of the society for many years. It did a fine work in training the young people in the church for a life of Christian service. Unfortunately, because of war conditions, the society became inactive in the 1920's.

Miss Emma Stites, an active worker in the church, started a Junior Christian Endeavor Society in 1894. Meeting at 3:45 every Friday afternoon, it brought together the younger element in the church for religious training. Miss Stites was superintendent for many years and was assisted by Mrs. Tasker Smith and Mrs. Sidney Goff in her work with the children. Later Mrs. Samuel Eldredge was superintendent. It too ceased to function actively in the late 1920's.

THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY

There were originally two missionary societies in the church, the Home Missionary Society and the Foreign Missionary Society. The earliest records of the former date from 1891, at which time there were 29 members. Mrs. Eliza D. Hand served as president for the years 1891 to 1896, with Mrs. Priscilla Rutherford as secretary and Mrs. J. E. Hughes, treasurer. Mrs. Electa Edmunds served as president from 1897 to 1911, when the record ends.

The Foreign Missionary Society had as president in 1901. Mrs. Rebecca Mecray and as secretary, Mrs. Eldredge Johnson. In 1904 Mrs. Mary Hughes was president and Mrs. Henry Edmunds was secretary; they were still in office in 1915.

The two societies merged in 1930 or 1932 to form the Missionary Society of the Cape May Presbyterian

Church with Mrs. Samuel F. Eldredge as president, Mrs. T. Tasker Smith, secretary, and Mrs. Albert Little, treasurer.

Following Mrs. Eldredge as president was Mrs. Jay E. Mecray, with Mrs. Curtis Bosserman as secretary. Mrs. T. Tasker Smith was elected president in 1938, an office which she held until 1948.

This resume of the activities of the Cape May Presbyterian Church and its affiliated organizations has brought us to the year 1951, and to the centennial anniversary of the founding of the church.

In anticipation of this celebration, Miss Salome Holloway for several years has given contributions toward a Centennial Fund which, it is hoped, may be greatly augmented before the year's end by gifts from members and friends of the church. Elder and church master Raymond L. Fite and Mrs. Fite have presented to the church as an anniversary gift a set of collection plates which fill a long felt need.

The centennial anniversary was formally celebrated on Sunday, August 5, 1951, with Rev. Irwin S. Yeaworth, pastor of the Covenant First Presbyterian Church of Cincinnati, Ohio, preaching the sermon.

And thus ends the history of the first one hundred years of the First Presbyterian Church of Cape May. Material for it has been gathered from the register of Cape Island Presbyterian Church; from minutes of congregational meetings from 1854 to 1930; from complete minutes of the Board of Trustees from 1855 to 1951; from a privately printed history of the first 25 years of the church by Rev. Edward P. Shields; from an historical sermon delivered by Rev. Curtis Bosserman on the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the church; from newspaper clippings and programs of special events held through the years; from bids and bills received at the time of the building of the church; from minute books of some of the organizations which are far from complete, and from interviews with some of the older church members who have called on their memories of bygone days for information. If any mistakes have been made, or if names have been omitted which should have been included, please accept the humble apologies of the author.