



Partial Plan of the Square, from Day's Historical Collections (1843).

Shows the "Meeting House" fronting East, chimneys on the corners, session room at the west end, and the lot surrounded with posts. The cut also shows the Episcopal Church, and the Court House and Town Hall which were burned on March 24, 1848.



THE..  
Old Stone Meeting-House

1757-1832

[First Presbyterian Church, Carlisle, Pa.]

A HISTORICAL SKETCH

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**First Presbyterian Church, 1904.**



## The Old Stone Meeting House, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

**I**N the study of the Presbyterian Meeting House one is tempted at every step to turn aside and take up the times through which it has stood, the scenes which have been enacted within its walls and about its grounds, and the lives and services of the many eminent men whose names are found upon her records. Side by side with such studies an inquiry into the size of a churchyard, the dimensions of a cold and inert stone wall, the construction of walks and entrances and the dates and terms of contracts, seems dull and uninteresting indeed. Yet to this uninspiring task I am about to set myself, only asking that through it all we may call up the years through which the old Meeting House underwent the tedious process of construction; that we people its aisles with the endless procession that moved amidst the restless scenes of a frontier life,—a procession that went out from its portals in silence, but not without leaving an impress upon the times which was to be measured not only by years but by centuries. The solid and substantial construction of the Meeting House bears testimony to the faith of its builders, not only in the structure they were rearing, but in the future of their adopted country as well, and in the Christian Idea for which they stood.

But it is not to the times nor to the persons I wish to call attention at this time. I leave this to the near future I hope, and to a better and abler hand. My inquiry will be into such matters of interest concerning the old Meeting House as I may be able to bring to the light from the venerable records of its early days.

Built on the frontier among the great oaks and hickories of the aboriginal forest, near the beautiful spring bearing the name of the Indian trader, Le'Tort, in a region subject to incursions of the Indians, it was, as has been said, at the same time a fortress and a sanctuary.

I think I shall best approach my subject by commencing with the year 1736, about which time a log meeting house was built by the Presbyterians of the vicinity on a bluff on the southern bank of the Conodoguinet Creek, about two miles northwest of Carlisle. Beautiful springs of cool water bubbled up among the rocks at the base of the hill, and the place became known as "Meeting House Springs." This was the pioneer church of this locality. It was built fourteen years before the County was erected, and was the logical and lineal ancestor of both the Presbyterian churches of Carlisle.

Here the Reverend Samuel Thompson was installed on November 14, 1739, and served the congregation for ten years. The division of the Presbyterian Church into "old side" and "new side" arose during his ministry, and continued from 1741 to 1758.<sup>1</sup> This schism spreading, took strong root in his congregation and was a source of friction during most of his pastorate. It was doubtless fought over with all the fiery zeal of the Scotch-Irish adherents of Presbyterianism.

Thompson was himself "old side" but many, perhaps most

(Where figures only are given the reference is to the page of the minutes of the Board of Trustees.)

<sup>1</sup>Nevin's Churches of the Valley, p. 233-4. As to the "new light" schism, perhaps the popular idea may be found in a communication from Gov. Gooch of the Dominion of Virginia, dated April 18, 1745. (page 182, Records of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. of A., 1706-1788), where he speaks of those "who, without orders or licenses, or procuring any testimonial of their education or sect, professing themselves ministers under the pretended influence of "*new light*," *extraordinary impulse* and *such like* fanatical and enthusiastical knowledge, lead the innocent and ignorant people into all kinds of delusions" (The italics are his own.)

See also reasons in the "Protestation" presented to Synod June 1, 1741 (pages 158-9). Dr. Wing, on the authority of Webster, informs us that "every Congregation in Donegal Presbytery was rent asunder," and that in this region it was not to any considerable degree a doctrinal controversy.



of his congregation were "new side." The ten years of his pastorate from 1739 to 1749 were years of contention. The ten years from 1749 to 1759 seem to have been years of disorganization and trouble, and the church was without a pastor. This state of things may have been partially due to the financial condition of the colony, and to Indian incursions which are said to have added to the dangers and anxieties of the inhabitants at that time.

Though this schism in the Church was officially settled in 1758, the old prejudices were so deeply imbedded in the minds of the people that the parties continued to exist. With the persistency and pertinacity characteristic of Scotch-Irishmen, neither party was willing to recede from its views, and the result was,—instead of one congregation two congregations.

One party called the Rev. John Steel, an "old side" man, who held to an educated ministry and was a non-revivalist. The other party called the Rev. George Duffield, a "new side" man, who held to a "home made revivalist ministry." Both were installed in 1759.

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**I**N the meantime both parties procured new locations in the Borough of Carlisle. Steel's church, if indeed one was erected there, was located on the northeast corner of Hanover and Lowther streets, and Duffield's on the southwest corner of Hanover and Pomfret streets. When they separated and abandoned Meeting House Springs I have not been able to ascertain; neither have I found anything concerning the Steel Meeting House, except that at a meeting of Presbytery held on August 16, 1760, that body resolved "to meet the third Tuesday of October, at Mr. Steel's Meeting House in Carlisle." It would be interesting to know what became of the building, for I find no bills for repairs such as are found referring to the Duffield house. This lot on Hanover and Lowther streets was afterwards sold. The account

of John Montgomery, treasurer, shows under date of May 26, 1776, the entry, "Received from Thomas Kennedy in part of his bond "for the old meeting house lot, 26th April, 1775, 33 pounds, 12 "shillings and 3 pence, and also another bond of 3rd February, "1776, of 26 pounds, 5 shillings and 6 pence."<sup>2</sup>

This sale could not have referred to the grounds at Meeting House Springs, as that property was not sold until January 13th, 1827, when it was purchased by Philip Weaver for \$3,500.00; the graveyard being reserved for burial purposes for the congregation.<sup>3</sup> Neither could the lot referred to have been one of those belonging to the Duffield congregation, as I shall presently show. And as it is called the "old meeting house lot" it is reasonable to assume that it could have been none other than the old Steel lot.

The "new side" called the Reverend George Duffield, and built their meeting house on lot No. 136, on the southwest corner of Hanover and Pomfret streets; the lot being 60 feet wide in front on South Hanover street, by 240 feet in depth on Pomfret street. At the foot of this lot was lot No. 122, 60 feet in front on Pomfret street, by 240 feet deep, which was also owned by the congregation. The meeting house on the corner lot was burned on March 11, 1789,<sup>4</sup> and both lots were sold in 1790, by the congregation then comprising both old and new school under Reverend Dr. Robert Davidson, and worshipping in the present stone building.

At a meeting of Dr. Davidson's congregation held on June 4, 1790, the following explanation of the proposed sale was made and entered on the trustees' minutes: "The lott that is to be exposed to sale, is that one on which the Church of the late Rev. Dr. "Duffield formerly stood, being a Corner Lott, on one part opposite to a stone house, belonging to Mr. Stephen Duncan, and "on another part opposite to Mr. John Hunters; and is bounded

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2. Treasurer's account, May 26, 1776.

3. 70. Deed book, Vol. 1, KK, p. 163. Cumb. Co.

4. Deed Chas. Steinecke and wife to Jacob Musselman.

"on the West by another Lott which now belongs to this congregation and formerly to the congregation of the said Dr. Duffield."<sup>5</sup> It was ordered advertised in the Carlisle Gazette, July 1, 1790, to be sold on August 6, 1790, at 3 o'clock p.m. It was conveyed to George Lefevre, the purchaser, by deed of "Robert Davidson, "D D., John Montgomery, Samuel Laird, John Irvine, Stephen "Duncan, William Lyon, John Creigh and Thomas Creighead, "Trustees of the Presbyterian Congregation of Carlisle," dated April 1, 1793, for the consideration of 135 pounds. It was described as lot No. 136 on the general plan of the Borough, "being "the same lot of ground on which a church was built by the Society under the Pastoral care of the Reverend George Duffield, "which was accidentally destroyed by fire."<sup>6</sup>

The Pomfret street lot No. 122, was sold April 1, 1793, to John Smith and John McCoy. McCoy seems not to have taken and paid for his lot, as the portion sold to him was afterward conveyed to William Buchanan by the Church on June 10, 1810.<sup>7</sup>

These sales with the sale of the Glebe at Meeting House Springs seems to have disposed of the grounds of both the old congregations. The only lot remaining being the lot on the Square in the centre of the town then in possession of the reunited congregation.

We have seen, then, the church divided and drifting apart under the Rev. Thompson, and during, or at the close of his pastorate in 1749, forming two Associations. Following this are ten years of a checkered existence, when in 1759 each party installed its own pastor and worshiped in its own church home.

There is reason to believe that the Steel congregation was the first to give up its separate location, on Lowther street; for not only was its property sold before the Pomfret street property, but numerous bills for repairs made to the Duffield Church are found as late as 1769, while none are found that refer to the Steel Church. But be that as it may, in 1786 we find the unified

5. 23.

6. 31.

7. 56 and 57.

congregation applying for a new charter, having as early as 1775 placed the proceeds of the sale of lots in the common treasury. And when the new charter was obtained we find among the trustees John Armstrong and others of the Duffield congregation as well as others from the Steel people, with the Reverend Dr. Davidson at their head.<sup>8</sup>

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**H**AVING taken this short view of the division of the Meeting House Springs congregation under Thompson, the formation of two independent congregations, and their subsequent reunion, let us go back to 1755, and look at the condition of affairs in the county precedent to the time when the present stone building was projected.

On July 30, of that year, Governor Morris proposed that such parts of the troops as had retreated to Fort Cumberland after Braddock's defeat and were not wanted for the garrison there should be "posted in the towns of Shippensburg and Carlisle,"<sup>9</sup> for the protection of the province;<sup>10</sup> "because," he says, in another letter to Colonel Dunbar, written the next day, July 31, 1755, "They," that is, these towns, "are in a very plentiful part of this Province and where the troops may be well supply'd."<sup>11</sup> Later a detachment of troops arrived here, and in the summer of 1757 we find Colonel Stanwix encamped with his troops a short distance northeast of the town.

To protect the population, as well, perhaps, as to be prepared with quarters for the troops that might be sent from Fort Cumberland, he wrote the same day to Thomas Penn that he had "at the request of the People laid the Ground for a wooden Fort "in the Town of Carlisle."<sup>12</sup>

Later a detachment of soldiers arrived here, and in the summer of 1757 we find Colonel Stanwix encamped with his troops a short distance northeast of the Fort. While at work on his fortifications, Stanwix wrote to Governor Denny:

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8. Second Charter, Aug, 26, 1786.

9. Col. Rec. Vol. VI, 513.

10. Ib 514

11. Ib 516

12. Ib 517

"Camp at Carlisle, June 28, 1757.

" \* \* \* \* I am throwing up some  
"Works round our Camp, and if it may have no other Use, it  
"keeps our Soldiers properly employed; tho' I apprehend I have  
"undertaken too much: but as it is supposed to be a Camp of  
"Continuance, either now or hereafter, I cou'd not make the  
"lines less."<sup>13</sup>

These letters indicate the original laying out and construction of Fort Lowther in 1755, which was located immediately west of the Square; as well as the presence of the Garrison, and the construction of the Breastworks or Intrenchments in the the neighborhood of the present Carlisle Shoe Factory in 1757, which were very much greater in area than the Fort.\* The presence of Colonel Stanwix with his troops would also afford a plausible reason for the alleged call for and presence of a Clergyman of the English Church, as the post was established as a permanent Garrison, or "Camp of Continuance."

Stanwix's letter also shows that he had undertaken what he apprehended was too large a work, or "too much," and that his troops were at work on these intrenchments on the 28th day of June, 1757. Only two days later and while the soldiers were at work on their intrenchments, General John Armstrong, on the 30th day of June writes, "Tomorrow we begin to haul stones for  
"the Meeting House \* \* \* \* the stones  
"are raised out of Colonel Stanwix's intrenchments."

I will here quote fully that portion, of Colonel Armstrong's letter of June 30th, just referred to, which relates to the hauling of stones for a meeting house, though this information is merely incidental. His letter concerned other very important matters which were weighing heavily on his mind.<sup>14</sup> Recalling that Richard Peters of Philadelphia, an English Churchman, to whom he was writing, had previously selected a location for a church in Carlisle, he closes his letter with these words:

<sup>13.</sup> Ib VII, 630  
\* Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania, Vol 1

"Tomorrow we begin to haul Stones for ye building of a Meeting House on the North Side of the Square, there was no other convenient place; I have avoided the place you Once pitch'd for a Church. The Stones are raised Out of Colo'l Stanwixes entrenchment; we will want help in this Political as well as Religious work."<sup>14</sup>

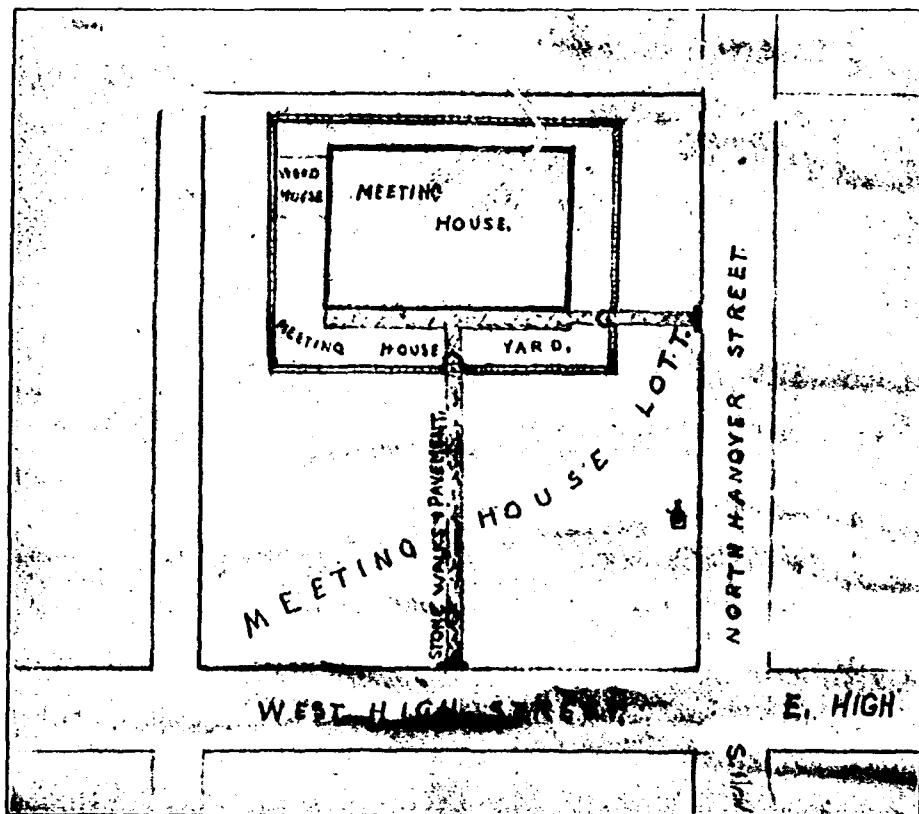
I must here say a few words about the writer of this letter, though his name and the eminent services he rendered his countrymen are well known to all readers of Pennsylvania history. Armstrong came to this country about 1748, became a resident of Carlisle. was a surveyor, a Justice of the Peace and a military officer under the Crown of Great Britain. He was preëminently a military man, and at that time held his commission of Colonel under George II of England. He laid out the military roads and was added as an advisory member to the Commission charged with locating and building a chain of forts from the Delaware westward to Maryland. We may be sure that Armstrong had no little interest in the fortifications in his own village, and that the intrenchments thrown up by Stanwix were not without his advice and approval.<sup>15</sup>

But besides Armstrong's interest in military matters he had an interest in something else,—the building of a meeting house in town. And what could he have done more practical and reasonable than what he did; that was, to have the stones that were taken out at the intrenchments hauled up to the place chosen for the building of the meeting house?

Passing by Armstrong's eminent public career I mention him now for another reason,—his close affiliation with the Presbyter-

14. Pa. Arch. 1st Series, Vol. III, 192. One important matter mentioned in this letter was the appointment of magistrates. The task of fixing these he says "is a very hard one." Then Benjamin Chambers seems to have been running a private fort and refused to deliver the guns. Chambers threatened Armstrong with a law suit. In relation to it Armstrong says, "If it's found that he designs trouble, (as he has the Brass and Malice of the Devil), I think the Governor should write to Col'o. Stanwix; in the meanwhile I will Open the matter to the Colonel, who may think it necessary to Siéz the Guns himself."

15. Pa. Arch. 1st. Series, Vol. III, p. 49, 79, 119. Col. Rec. VII, 233



Ground plan of the "Meeting-House Lott,"  
 Showing the stone walks from High Street and Hanover Street, the  
 building surrounded with a fence and fronting southward.





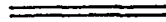
ian Church. He was both an Elder and a Trustee. In the new charter he was named as one of the Trustees, and continued in that capacity until the time of his death. He was a contributor to the building of the "Meeting House," as it was then always called; and as late as June 3, 1785, subscribed ten pounds toward the erection of the gallery which the accounts show he paid in full. In 1795, the year following his death, we find Pew No. 19 still retained in his name.

Now, it was this man, the soldier, the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Elder and Trustee,—not an English Churchman,—but a man in every way interested in having a meeting house in town, who wrote to Richard Peters, Secretary of the Province, the letter referred to.

From the tenor of the letter, and knowing what we do about the man who wrote it, I think we must at once assume that no other building than this meeting house could have been in the mind of the writer. Yet it is urged by some that the letter might equally well refer to the Episcopal Church because it was also built on the north side of the Square. But clearly not, for these reasons: He speaks of hauling stones for a "meeting house," the name given to all early Presbyterian houses of worship, and not for building a "Church," the name by which the English Church buildings were known. When he speaks of what they in Carlisle were preparing to build he calls it a meeting house; when he speaks of what Peters had selected a site for, he calls that a church.

Again, he says it was to go on the north side of the Square, that there was no other convenient place. This seems to indicate that the opposite portion of the north side was occupied; for we must not forget that the Square was then already divided.<sup>16</sup> If the northeast corner was not occupied he could not have said "there was no other convenient place." He might have taken that side. If he had referred to the building of an Episcopal Church we would be in a like dilemma, for the northwest portion

was equally available; but the English Church was built upon the eastern portion, and the earliest plots of the Square show an "English Church" located there near High Street, not far from the Irvine Corner.<sup>17 18</sup>



WE will drop this matter here and say that, if the purpose of the congregation was carried out, the first stones for the meeting house were hauled on July 1st, 1757. At what time work on the foundations was commenced and when the building was finally completed, seems unable of determination from reliable data. The foundations were laid with stones *brought to* the spot and not quarried there, as no cellar was excavated, though fine limestone exists in great abundance under the building. Its foundations were laid wide and strong on this very rocky base. It was a large undertaking for that day and with the limited means at command. Finding themselves unequal to the task, they adopted a method of raising money in vogue at that time. This was the lottery. Churches in Philadelphia, Lancaster, Reading, York, and the Episcopal Church here, all raised funds in this way.

16. Thos. Pen and Richard Penn } Patent Book A, Vol. 18, p. 153, Phila.  
to  
John Smith } 7th Sept., 1753, 27th of Geo. II

17. Plot in possession of John Hays, Esq., Tizzard and Holcomb. This plot was published subsequent to 1826 as it shows no fences nor trees, and the account of the Boro' published by J. Tizzard & Co. in 1824, states that the Presbyterian church was enclosed with paling.—Charter &c., of Carlisle, J. Tizzard & Co., 1824, p. V.

18. An early map, published previous to 1765, it is said, indicates an "English Church" on the northeast corner of the square, and the "Presbyterian Church Ground" on the northwest corner. This is referred to as proof that the Presbyterian Church was not built at that time. There seems little force in this, as for a long time after the house was built and occupied the ground or lot in front of the building was known, not only by the public generally but upon the Church records themselves as "Meeting House Lott," "Meeting House Yard," "Church Ground," &c. Though the fences were taken down in 1826, the lot is still known as the "Church Lot,"

About the year 1760 a license was obtained from Lieutenant Governor Hamilton, whose second term commenced in October, 1759, authorizing the congregation to raise by lottery "a small sum of money to enable them to build a decent house for the worship of God." But not long after, and before the scheme had met with success, an Act of the Provincial Legislature was passed, on February 17, 1762, repealing the Lottery Act, and prescribing a penalty of £500 for erecting and carrying on a lottery, £20 for advertising or buying or selling; excepting State lotteries licensed by act of Parliament.<sup>19</sup> The repeal, however, did not affect this lottery, as the Act did not extend to any lottery advertised in the public newspapers of this Province on or before the 4th day of February, A.D., 1762.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, although this lottery had been advertised before that date, the sale of tickets seems not to have gone on very rapidly; and the repealing Act served to retard the sale of tickets, and as an excuse for delay in paying over the money. It was also made a pretext by some of the members who had purchased tickets, to have the amounts paid credited on their stipends due the church. But in this they were not successful. We have no account showing how much money, if any, was paid over before the passage of the repealing Act, and the work of building went on with delay and embarrassment, if, indeed, it progressed at all during this period.

A petition was then presented to the Legislature on behalf of the congregation setting forth that, though the Act had passed granting the lottery, and they had taken all possible means to dispose of the tickets, nearly one-half remained unsold, and they therefore prayed indulgence of further time. After long failure to recover the money the following Special Act was passed on September 20, 1766:

"An Act to enable the Commissioners hereinafter named to settle the accounts of the Managers and sue for and recover

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<sup>19</sup>&<sup>20</sup>. Dallas, Vol. I, Ch. CCCCLXXXIX.

“from several persons such sums of money as are now due and  
 “unpaid on account of the lottery set up and drawn for erecting  
 “a house of worship at the town of Carlisle, in the County of  
 “Cumberland, for the use of the First Presbyterian Congregation  
 “under the pastoral care of John Steel, Minister.””<sup>21</sup>

Even this Act seems to have worked results very slowly, and how much was collected during the next three years is not shown by extant records. The Act just referred to, having expired by limitation, a further extension was granted on September 30, 1769, <sup>22</sup>. We have records showing the collections after this last Act. These payments appear in the same list with private subscriptions, and amount to 185 pounds, 8s. 3d., mainly “pay’d in  
 “by William Hodge in Philad’a, balance due from his lottery  
 “book.”<sup>23</sup> “We find also cash payments at this time by Ephraim Blaine, Washington’s Commissary General, James Wilson “Attorney,” one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence; Robert Magaw, Col. Fifth Pa. Battalion, Doctor Irvine, (the Dr. Irvine with whom Molly Pitcher lived, who was not at that time a military man,) Capt. William Thompson, Judge Allen, John Trindle, after whom the spring known as Trindle’s Spring was named, Hermanus Alricks, Hugh McCormick, and others.

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**I**N 1768 we find a subscription toward the church erection aggregating 131 pounds, 2s. 3d. This is mainly a Philadelphia subscription, and has the following heading:”

“The Presbyterian congregation at Carlisle Under the Pastoral Care of Revd. Mr. John Steel being under the Necessity  
 “of Erecting a House of Publick worship and Notwithstanding  
 “The said Congregation have contributed largely towards Building the same yet part of the Work is Unfinished and are obliged to Apply to their Friends for Assistance.”

<sup>21</sup>. Pa. Stat. at Large DXLVI, 52.

<sup>23</sup>. Church Acc’ts, Paper No. 24.

<sup>22</sup>. Ib DC, 316.

<sup>24</sup>. Ib. Subscription, No. 31.

We see by this that though the people had contributed largely, doubtless in money, labor and material, the work was not completed. What had already been done must have consumed considerable time. But desirous of finishing the work, they called upon their Philadelphia friends for assistance. And these subscriptions were made, if dates are correct, a year before the lottery money came in.

In this list of contributors we find the names of many eminent men. Among them are the names of Chief Justices Thomas Willing and William Allen; Thomas Mifflin, afterward Governor of the State; Jos. Fox, Esq., who had been a Commissioner present at a treaty of amity with the Indians held at Carlisle, January 15 to 22, 1756; J. Dickinson, Esq., subsequently President of the Supreme executive Council, after whom Dickinson College was named; Robt. Aitkin, who published the first edition of American Bibles in 1782; Robert Bell, who published Blackstone's Commentaries in 1784; Brig. Gen'l. James Ewing, Brig. Gen'l Samuel Miles, Lt. Col. Caleb Parry, who was killed in the battle of Long Island, and others worthy of mention.

In order to determine the possible correctness or incorrectness of the date, 1768, which is written on the back fold of the subscription, examination was made of the Biographies of eminent Philadelphians, to ascertain the date of the death of as many of the subscribers as could be found in that way. Then the indexes of the Probate of Wills and the granting of Letters of Administration in Philadelphia County were examined to ascertain how near the date of death of any of the subscribers approached the year 1768. The names of quite a number of them were found.

If any of them would be found to have died near but after 1768, we would be justified in assuming that the date written on the subscription paper is correct. The wills of Robert Porter and James White were found probated in 1770. The identification of this James White as the James White on the subscription was not entirely satisfactory. The will of George Noarth was

probated in 1771. This name does not recur on the record for many years thereafter. The peculiar spelling of the name and other indications seemed clearly to warrant the assumption that this was the same person who signed the paper. Other names follow which can be clearly identified, but those mentioned are the nearest to the year 1768. We may therefore say that the date 1768 is doubtless the proper date of the Philadelphia subscription.

From this time, then, 1768 or 1769, work seemed to go on with more hopefulness. At what time the house was in a condition to be occupied is uncertain. The roof was put on in 1769 and 1770 as shown by accounts, from which time the house may have been occupied.

The provision for erecting the gallery in the meeting house was carried out in 1786, the final settlement for the work having been made with John Creigh on Sept. 19, 1797. To defray the expense of its construction, we find this subscription made in 1785:<sup>25</sup>

"We do hereby severally promise and engage to pay to John "Creigh, 'Treasr. (or his' successor) Treasurer appointed by the "Managers for Erecting a Gallery & finishing the Presbyterian "Church in Carlisle the sums annexed to our names respectively "for the purpose of finishing said Church."

In this subscription will be found the names of General John Armstrong, James Hamilton, Esq., Samuel Lyon, Governor Wm. Denny and many other prominent and historic characters.<sup>26</sup>

One is struck with the beauty, accuracy and distinctness with which these accounts were kept. This gallery was built across the ends of the room, and along the south side or front of that day.

25. Account Book, No. 23.

26. On looking over this list of subscribers, as well as the Phila. subscription, it is noticeable that many were members of the legal profession. And in this connection, also, it may be mentioned that a list of old lawyers, published in a record of the Philadelpeia Bar, is embraced under the heading "List of Departed Saints."

**A**LTHOUGH the Congregation had been chartered, they had forfeited their Charter, and now applied to the General Assembly of the State and were incorporated the second time on August 28, 1786. This Act contains the following preamble:

"Whereas the members of the Presbyterian Church, in the Borough of Carlisle, in the County of Cumberland, now under the pastoral care of the Reverend Doctor Robert Davidson, have in a petition to this house, represented that the said Church was incorporated by a charter obtained under the former government; which charter has become void, by reason that the members of said congregation, being some years destitute of a Pastor, neglected to choose Trustees on the day required by the Charter." The preamble continued, praying that the Church may be again incorporated." Among the incorporators was John Armstrong, whose last presence at a meeting of the Board of Trustees appears on Oct. 27, 1794. It was only three weeks before, during the whisky insurrection in Western Pennsylvania, that President Washington spent several days in Carlisle. It would be interesting to know if the president did not call to see his old friend, and what were their last words, for they could never have seen each other again.

The President with his Officers attended services in this Church on Sunday the 5th of October, when doubtless Alexander Hamilton accompanied him. On the 29th of September, before leaving Washington Hamilton wrote to Ephraim Blaine as follows: "The President whom I have the honor to accompany leaves this place tomorrow for Carlisle, where he will probably remain three or four days."<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Robert Davidson, who preached the sermon on the occasion referred to, in a note to his sermon, says, "The President of the U. S., Governor Mifflin and many other gentlemen of high rank being present, the Preacher was restrained from saying as much as he could have wished on this subject, lest an expression

<sup>27</sup>. Charter.

of his real sentiments might have appeared to some the language of adulation."<sup>28</sup>

Dr. Wing in his history stated that, "as soon as the walls and roof were formed we have reason to believe that the house was occupied for worship. It is said that before the pews were erected, people brought their benches, and each family claimed 'a sitting' where it had deposited its seat." This may account for the "ground rights" to which attention will be called later, and for which the holder was required to pay rent.

"The floor when completed was of brick, somewhat raised along the outer wall, against which were the square pews of the quality. The doors upon the south side opened upon two aisles running across the audience room." After the finishing of the gallery, I get my best description of the building from Dr. Duffield. The exterior will need no description, as the building, which is constructed of limestone, plentifully found in this region, retains its original proportions. The change of the windows on the north side will be mentioned later. When the building was remodeled in 1827, the high pulpit was removed from the north side, and a lower platform and pulpit were erected in the west end where they are still located, and the gallery altered. The walling up of the large windows, and the placing of smaller windows on the north side to correspond to those on the south side,

28. Letter of Alexander Hamilton to Ephraim Blaine. Congressional Library, Washington, D. C.:

Phila., Sep. 29, 1794.

DEAR SIR:

The President whom I have the honor to accompany leaves this place tomorrow for Carlisle, where he will probably remain three or four days. He wishes you to provide some convenient rooms (say three) during his stay. It will be most agreeable for them to be at a private house on the express condition that they be paid for; for the President will not by any means be accommodated on any other terms. If they cannot be had on these terms at a private house let the best thing possible be done at a Tavern.

Yours with esteem and regard,

A. HAMILTON.

Ephraim Blaine Esq.

29. Sermon on the Freedom and Happiness of the United States of America. Preached by Dr. Robert Davidson, Oct. 5, 1784, in The First Presbyterian Church, Carlisle, Pa.





**Pulpit of Pastorate of Rev. Canway P. Wing, D.D.**



can be seen on the outside of the north wall. The locations of the two entrance doors on the south side can also be seen.

Dr. Duffield speaks of the substantial character of the building and its admirable proportions. The architect, Robert Smith of Philadelphia, built the steeple of Carpenter's Hall and of Christ Church, in Philadelphia. The old church has been much admired by architects, and has been by one of them declared to be one of the purest and most attractive specimens of the Greco-Roman style he had ever witnessed.

Dr. Duffield continues his description as follows:

"The projector and his coadjutors," he says, "deserve our praise as well as excite our wonder, for the bold daring of their purpose to erect a building on the very borders of a savage wilderness, so far in advance of the place and the age. Its interior was finished after the places of worship in Scotland and the north of Ireland, extensively adopted by the early emigrants who migrated thence into Pennsylvania. The building is a parallelogram well proportioned. Originally, the pulpit was on the northern and one of the larger sides, centrally situated between two large arched windows, equidistant from either end of pulpit, ascending from the lower to the higher part of the wall and furnishing light and free circulation of air both to the first and second stories, fronting the area between the galleries, which formed the nave of the building."<sup>30</sup>

It will be interesting to note that the pulpit ornaments were procured by the ladies, an early precedent which seems still to obtain. And not only were the ornaments so procured, but the pulpit itself was erected from the ladies' subscriptions. Listen to the dignified language of the superscription:

"We, the Subscribers, being informed that a sum of money is wanted to complete the Ornaments of the Pulpit in the Presbyterian Church in Carlisle, which was erected by a subscription raised by the ladies principally residing in said town, and willing

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30. Dr. Duffield, "One Hundred Years Ago." July 1, 1857.

that our names may also appear as promoters of so laudable design, do promise to pay, into the hands of Mrs. Margaret Craighhead, the sum annexed to our names respectively, to be forwarded to Mr. John Montgomery in Philadelphia who is getting the ornaments prepared for the above purpose."<sup>31</sup>

"A small window immediately in the rear of the pulpit, and in the center of richly paneled wainscot work, afforded air and light to the preacher, over whose head drooped an ornamental sounding board pendant from the ceiling, yet gracefully ornamented with the cornice and frieze of the panel work upon the wall. It was of size sufficient to hold three ministers. In front of it, immediately starting from its base, was a 'clerk's desk,' elevated some eighteen inches or two feet above the tops of the pews, which the precentor occupied, and in which he rose to 'line out' or read each line of the Psalm and by his loud, sonorous voice lead the vocal praise of the congregation, most of whom took the words from his previous utterance of them, in the absence of books then not abundant or easily to be obtained.

"The stairway to the pulpit started from the end and door of the clerk's desk and enclosure, and ascending to a square landing, level with the tops of the pews, turned thence at a right angle, from which two or three steps led into the minister's enclosure, as many feet above the precentor's.

"The pulpit, desk and stairway, were all enclosed in a square area, into which entrance was had through a door, in keeping with, and presenting in front the form and appearance of the general panel work of the pews. On either side of this enclosure was a bench, which afforded accommodation for the deaf, the infirm, weak and aged, or such members as received aid from the deacon's fund, or had no other place to sit." Such was the description of the church. The many changes that have been made to the interior render it now quite unrecognizable by the foregoing description. The interior certainly had all the dignity the exterior suggested.

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31. Paper No. 21.

As to the music in the church, at the first meeting of the Board under the charter of 1786, Six pounds per year was voted the "Singing Clerk for the cong."

I find the first mention of a choir in a report from a pew Committee, May 31, 1828, as follows: "The two front pews, Nos. 29 & 30, being intended for the accommodation of the choir, were not assessed or valued." The first mention of United States money is made on May 28, 1798, "The Singing Clerk was allowed 20 Dollars for last year's salary." But no instrumental music was used at that time, for as late as Sept. 1, 1828, the Board acceded "to the request of the Committee of the Board of Trustees of Dickinson College in granting permission for the celebration of the two societies and the annual commencement of Dickinson College. It being understood that no Instrumental music be permitted by the Board." It may not be generally known that the first commencement of Dickinson College was held in the church on the last Wednesday of September, 1787, the Board being "willing to encourage literature and comply with the wishes of the Trustees of so useful a seminary."<sup>32</sup>

A sum of six pounds was voted to the sexton who was to ring the bell on Sabbath mornings six minutes, and the afternoon bell twelve minutes. This bell was the Court House bell, and mention is made several times of a committee waiting on the County Commissioners, when a new sexton was appointed, in relation to the ringing of the bell.<sup>33</sup>



**I**T seems that when the building was first occupied, and while in an uncompleted state, the interior was rather meagerly furnished. It is doubtful whether the pulpit with its elaborate canopy, railing and stairs, and the clerk's desk, which afterward gave it character, were then in place. The pews were plain benches, the floor of brick.

<sup>32.</sup> <sup>13.</sup>  
<sup>33.</sup> <sup>1b.</sup>

. Originally there was no pew system as there were no pews. A sort of squatter sovereignty obtained, and individuals who wanted to sit could bring their own benches and select a location. Mr. Montgomery was appointed to have an 'out-house enlarged a little; that is,' it is explained, "the house at the corner for holding the benches, &c.'" These benches were doubtless for general use for such persons as had not set any permanent bench of their own on 'ground' or location set apart for the purpose.

Though pews were erected on the ground floor at a very early date, the tenure by which they were held was called the "ground right," and was determined by the location. The word "pew" seems not to have been used for the seat. On the gallery, erected later, however, pews only are mentioned, the term "ground right" never being used. The "ground right" was conveyed by formal action of the Trustees, and not rented as pews now are.

One of the first things done under the new charter was to fix a value on the pews. But we find ground rights still frequently referred to as apparently distinguished from pew rents. On October 1, 1792, it was proposed for consideration, whether such legal methods as has been resolved on by the Trustees "to compel payment of the outstanding debts due by individuals for the ground rights of pews in the church, and also for pew rents should be pursued, or some other method devised." On the 6th of August, 1787, a committee was appointed to "enquire who held pews on the lower floor without having paid anything to acquire *a property* in the same."<sup>31</sup> Again, we find the collectors authorized to take notes from those indebted for "ground rights in the house, as well as from those in arrears for pew rents." And more than a year afterward suits were determined upon for collection of arrears "both of ground right and pew rent."

The whole pew system seems to have been re-adjusted, however, and we have the list of the pew holders in 1795-96, containing the names of Col. William Alexander, General John Arm-

strong, Col. John Alexander, Ephraim Blaine, Thomas Creigh, Esq., Gen'l William Irvine, Thos. Duncan, Esq., James Hamilton, Esq., William Denny, Jr., Dr. Chas. Nisbet, Rev. Dr. Robt. Davidson, and many others worthy of note.<sup>35</sup>

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**I**N the earlier days the use of the Glebe or farm at Meeting House Springs was granted the pastor as his residence, and he was allowed in addition such salary as the congregation agreed to pay. This salary was called his stipend and he a stipendiary. The stipend was assessed on the heads of families, and collectors of stipends were regularly appointed, who paid over the amounts collected to the treasurer.

It appears that the stipend was readily and logically merged into pew rent by action of the congregation in 1798, when it was "Resolved, That the balance due by the congregation (occasioned by the losses of persons deficient in payment of their stipends) to the pastors of the congregation, be equally assessed on the pewholders according to the value of their pew rents."<sup>36</sup> In 1811 the congregation appointed a committee to "examine the state of the stipends, as then assessed and laid on the pews, and make report; and that the Treasurer enter in his book the names of pewholders, and charge them with the stipends as assessed by the said committee, commencing with October 1st of that year."<sup>37</sup> Before this time collectors in the various districts collected the stipends and made return to the Treasurer. Now the Treasurer was himself to keep a book account of the amounts charged against the individual pewholders and collect the same. At this point, therefore, we may drop "Stipends," and speak of pew rents only.

As seats were held by a more formal right than at present, the occupants were very tenacious in holding out for their rights.

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35. Pew Book, No. 15.

36. 43.

37. 59.

A few examples may be interesting. The ground right of Samuel Laird having been infringed upon by reason of a change of the pulpit stairs, the pastor came to his relief. An agreement was made between Dr. Davidson and Mr. Laird that Mr. Laird should "for the present occupy the pew in the gallery which was reserved by the congregation for their Pastor; Mr. Laird accepts the same for a time, in exchange for his ground on the lower floor." and pay the same as he formerly paid.

John Steel had a claim against the congregation for a balance of salary due the Reverend John Steel, former pastor. At the same time John Steel owed a considerable sum for his pew. It was agreed "The arrears due by John Steel, Esq., should be allowed on account of Quarter's stipends due by the Congregation to his father the said Rev. John Steel."<sup>38</sup>

Mrs. Alexander, widow of Col. John Alexander and daughter of John Byers who originally "held the pew occupied for a number of years by Wm. Moore, Esq., lately died," made application for a pew as rightfully belonging to her family. The Trustees after mature deliberation gave the said pew to Mrs. Alexander.<sup>39</sup>

When the re-adjustment of pews was made one of the rules was as follows: "Any member who hath been seated sundry years and hath paid yearly stipends shall not be moved provided he will subscribe and pay as much as will entitle him to his seat agreeably to the above Rules."

Only this much more about the pews: When the church divided it was agreed that "those who held by purchase from the congregation the fee simple right to pews might reconvey the fee simple right to the congregation,—the transfer to be entered in the pew book, signed by the persons transferring the same; but such transfer should not release any one from purchase money due."<sup>40</sup>

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38. 35.  
39. 33.  
40. 70.



For the heating of the room, stoves were erected at an early day and foot-warmers went out. Remains of smoke flues may still be seen. When the house came to be used for night services there was not much light except about the pulpit and the Clerk's desk. Hymn books were not required where the hymns or psalms were lined out. Possibly the first lights were tallow candles and lard lamps. These doubtless required the attention of an active sexton.

Some attempt at ornament and increase of light was evidently made in 1795, when the bill of David Lindsey was approved for making sconces. In 1826, on Feb. 13, a tender of lamps was made through Mr. Duffield on behalf of the ladies of the congregation, who had interested themselves in having the church lighted by lamps which they had procured for the purpose together with the balance of \$4.26 remaining of the fund collected.

As to candles, it is rather amusing in these days to read the sober and important entry in relation to light made upon the record of the proceedings of our provincial legislature which I fell upon in my researches concerning the church. Evening coming on while in session, we find this Order entered upon the record with all due formality, on April 1st, 1755: "Ordered, That candles be brought in. And they were brought in accordingly."

In addition to attending to the lights, the sexton had the stoves to look after, see that wood was provided, and sweep the undesirable festooning from the walls. It is not many years since, when, in amending the by-laws of the Church, the directions requiring the sexton to keep the cobwebs off the walls and look after the lamps were stricken out as no longer necessary.

Originally the heating was of a primitive character. But in October, 1791, three stoves were ordered in, to be paid for by subscription. The sexton then asked extra pay and got it. Afterward a fourth stove was put in. The remains of the smoke flues are still to be seen in four corners of the room near the ceil-

ing. A wood house was provided at the west end of the building for the storage of wood. And it seems that a door or possibly two doors led into the building from that end.

We have often heard of the walks and fences about the church, and it is a satisfaction that we have now definite knowledge on this subject. On Oct. 27, 1794 the Board of Trustees ordered "a flag stone walk from the south gate of the meeting house, and also from the east gate, to the paved foot ways of the Streets adjoining the meeting house lott."<sup>41</sup> Showing that there was a fence around the building, we find on May 11, 1795 the following resolution: "Ordered, that the treasurer be empowered to employ Mr. Officer to make a new gate for the front of the Church Yard." Though the meeting house was fenced in, the entire lot was not. In October, 1796, a resolution was passed directing that "posts without rails be placed in such a manner as to enclose all the space in front of the meeting house yard southward to the street."<sup>42</sup> These posts were to be about three and one-half feet high. On May 20, 1811, a committee was appointed "to make a new pavement, leading from the street to the south front of the church," and was further instructed to "make the fence along the north side of the house from ten to twelve feet from the wall." Later, on March 14, 1825 a committee was directed "to contract for and superintend the making of a stone pavement in front of the church the whole length of the building, and one leading from the public pavement on the west side of Hanover Street and thro' the eastern gate to join the front pavement, and another leading from the public pavement on the north side of High Street thro' the front gate to join the said pavement in front of the church."<sup>43</sup>

These facts make very plain the arrangement of the walks, and of the fences, except that there is nothing to show the distance the front fence stood from the building. In the rear the distance was twelve feet. In the front the distance was doubt-

41. 37.

42. 37.

43. 103.



**The old Meeting House, fronting southward,  
Surrounded by the paling fence, with the stone walks from High Street  
and Hanover Street through the gates into the Meeting House Yard.  
The wood house to the left, with a rocky portion of the lot.**



less some greater. The space in front of the meeting house yard was known as the meeting house lot. And because the space in front of the fence, between it and High Street was called the "meeting house lott," some have imagined there was only a lot of ground on the north-west square and no building. The portion of ground outside the fence was called "the lott;" that inside, the "yard." Though against one of the provisions of the early charter it is said that under the new charter the lot served in the early days as a place for the horses and carriages to stand during the long services, the trees furnishing a grateful shade in the summer time.

Many persons will remember the pump which stood in front of the market house near where the drinking fountain for horses now stands. It was formerly said that any one who had drank from that pump, should he leave Carlisle, was destined finally to return. Diagonally opposite, on the church corner, there was also a well now for many years closed. The congregation at a meeting held on Nov. 4, 1799, consented to the sinking of the well at the request of the County. The Commissioners of the County, "by the advice of the Court and Grand Jury, granted \$200.00 for the purpose," and the congregation, "considering the great utility of the well proposed" agreed to the proposition. The exact location can be approximately fixed."

The condition of the Square about 1825 would scarcely have satisfied the present Civic Club of Carlisle. The northwestern section was rocky in its western part, the churchyard was fenced in, and the lot in front used for hitching horses on meeting days among the old trees. On April 10, 1826, a communication was received by the Trustees from the Town Council relative to certain proposed improvements to the Square. The proposition of the Borough was, "the levelling and ornamenting with trees and walks the four quarters of the public square as set forth in a copy of the resolution of said Council, and a written communication of said committee presented and read at this meeting." A draft

or plan of the improvements was exhibited. \$100.00 was appropriated by the Town Council and \$184.00 subscribed individually. The Committee of Council was authorized to open quarries at the west end of the church building, and to remove the fences and trees standing on the ground, and such other things as might be necessary to complete the improvement according to the plan: provided that no injury be done to the Church edifice; that the wood house be replaced, and the holes made by quarrying filled and leveled; and that a pavement three feet wide secured by curb stones be made the whole length of the Church on the north side.<sup>45</sup> This resolution took down the fences, removed the forest trees, opened the driveway on the north side of the church, and doubtless closed the lot to the horses and carriages.

Relative to the condition of the Square two years before these changes were proposed, its need of improvement, and the fence around the meeting house, the following will be of interest. It is taken from a Borough Ordinance Book published in 1824, in a description of Carlisle. "In the center of the town, an open space was originally left, which when improved, will add much to the beauty of the place. On the South West side of this Square, is situate the Court House, county offices, & Town Hall, all neat two-story Brick Buildings. On the South East side of the same Square, running parallel with High Street is the Market House, one hundred and forty-three feet in length, and forty-five in breadth, handsomely paved and finished. On the North West side, is the Presbyterian Church, a large stone edifice, neatly enclosed with paling, and on the North East side, is St. John's Church."<sup>46</sup>

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45. 107.

46. Boro. Ord. Pub. 1824, J. Tizzard & Co.

**E**ARLY in 1827 three plans for a session room were submitted, and on Feb. 19 of that year the trustees approved a plan for erecting and finishing an extension or addition to the Church, 26 feet by 50 feet for a session room and Sabbath school. This was to be erected at the west end of the old building, and was to have a cellar eight feet deep. Experience shows that such matters of improvement grow; and when the contract was let, it included in addition to the new building, a change in the interior of the church edifice at a largely increased expense.

We now come to the time when the high pulpit was removed from the north side of the room and placed in the west end, and the gallery altered by taking down the west end and placing a new section on the north side. This with the remaining galleries on the south side and eastern end completed the galleries as they are today. On October 9, 1826, "a thorough repair and alteration of the inside plan" of the building was authorized. Pews No. 50 on the lower floor, and 89, 90, 91, 93, and 94 on the front of the western gallery, and 74, a front pew on the eastern gallery were granted free to the use of the students of Dickinson College until the repairs commenced. The use of the church has been freely granted on many secular as well as religious occasions. The services incident to the laying of the corner stone of the present Episcopal Church were held in this building. The corner stone was laid with masonic ceremonies on Friday, September 8, 1826. Though the program for the occasion does not state in what church the services were to take place, it directed certain organizations to occupy the gallery; and under date of September 11 the following minute is found in the proceedings of the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church: "A communication from the committee appointed by the Episcopal Church to superintend the ceremonies of laying the corner stone of their new edifice, requesting permission to use the Presbyterian Church for the purpose of performing the ceremonies incident to the occasion, was read; "Whereupon it was Resolved, That the request of the Committee be granted, and the committee furnished with a copy

of this resolution." On the 6th of August following the carpenters took possession of the building for the purpose of making the repairs, and the congregation worshipped in the Lutheran and Reformed Churches while the changes were being made. Among the contributions at this time was twenty dollars from the Masonic Lodge of Carlisle, made August 15, 1827.

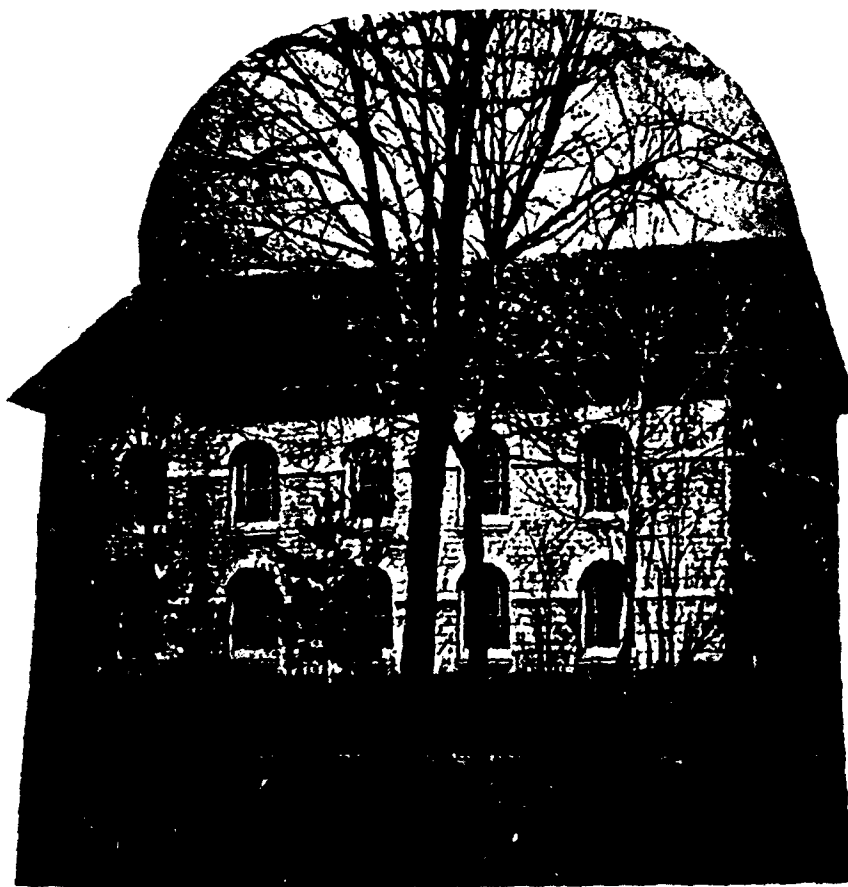
About sixty years ago a resolution was passed "That the walls be painted blossom colour, the ceiling carmine, the molding and all the wood work white." It seems never to have been carried out.

The two doors on the south, which was the original front, were now removed and windows substituted. The east end was changed to the front with three entrance doors. The windows on the north side were filled in and new windows conforming to the south side were put in. As before stated the pulpit was removed and a modern one placed in the west end. A new distribution of pews was made, showing eighty-eight pews on the ground floor and fifty-nine in the gallery, where four pews in the north east corner were "appropriated to the people of colour." Soon after, in September, 1828, a brick pavement was laid the entire width of the east or new front of the building, extending to the sidewalk on the square. This became necessary for a more convenient approach to the new front, and it yet remains. The grounds were ornamented with trees, and other outside improvements made.

On Monday, December 3d, 1832, a notice was read at a congregational meeting, that by a resolution of the Carlisle Presbytery, passed at *New Ville* on November 29, 1832, a number of the members were formed into a separate congregation. A division was asked for and the Second congregation formed.

Here I close this sketch of the old Meeting House, whose history down to this time is of common interest to the Presbyterian churches of Carlisle and vicinity.





**The Meeting House after the fences were removed, ornamental trees planted, the front changed to the eastern end and the south doors changed into windows,**



**F**ROM the memorable 12th of July, 1774, when the meeting in this Church which was presided over by John Montgomery the president of its Board of Trustees took action on the subversion of the rights and liberties of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay by Great Britain, the meeting-house has stood the champion of the liberties of the people. On the committee appointed that day not less than seven were of this congregation. One, James Wilson, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and all were destined to become prominent in the great struggle for an independent national existence.

Here Washington and Hamilton listened to the eloquent words of the learned Dr. Davidson. Here, not only were eulogies pronounced on the characters and patriotic services of Washington, Adams and Jefferson, but here too, tender and lasting memories of Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley were enshrined in the hearts of a sorrowing and sympathizing people. Here, on every occasion of national sorrow or national rejoicing the great public heart-beat has been felt pulsating through pulpit and pew. Here was welcomed the unshackled slave. Here, when the Indian problem forced itself on the public mind, Sitting Bull and the charming Bright Eyes filled the house as perhaps it had never been filled before. Through many years and on many memorable occasions these gray walls have echoed the stirring call to patriotism and to piety, fusing into one great emotion the love of home and country and of the Eternal Fatherland.



