

Religious Life in Lancaster Borough

By CAROLINE S. COLDREN

In Collaboration With M. LUTHER HEISEY

The earliest civic record of the Borough of Lancaster deals with a phase of the religious life of the community by regulating the activities of the inhabitants on the Sabbath day. It is a significant fact, and shows the devout nature of the officials; a fact that their successors can well view with pride.

Through the courtesy of Mayor Dale E. Cary and City Clerk Charles Laird a photostatic copy of the minutes of that first meeting of the burgesses has been obtained for the Historical Society, and we copy therefrom:

“At the same Meeting [of August 13, 1742] it was taken into consideration that by an Act of General Assembly of this Province made in the fourth year of the Reign of the late Queen Ann for the due Observation of the Lord’s Day. It is ordered that no Tradesman, Artificer, Workman, Labourer or other Person whatsoever shall do or exercise any worldly Business or Work of their ordinary Callings (Works of necessity & Charity only excepted) on the Sabbath Day herein called the First Day, upon pain that every offender forfeit Twenty Shillings to the use of the Poor. Provided always that nothing in the said Act extend to prohibit Butchers killing and selling on the Day in the Months of June, July and August before the hour of Nine in the Morning and after Five in the afternoon. And all Constables are required to search all Taverns or other Publick Houses or Places and if any persons are found Drinking or Tippling on the Sabath Day they are to forfeit one shilling six pence to the use of the Poor, And the keeper of such Tavern or Publick House, ten shillings to the same use. With a proviso that Travelers, Inmates, Lodgers and others may be supplied with Victuals and Drinks.

“Signed,

Thomas Cookson
Sebastian Graff

George Sanderson,
Town Clk.”

There were many laws; many with severe penalties, and to us in these days the punishment for some crimes seems severe. But this paper deals not

with the life of wicked inhabitants, but with the religious life of the early community.

Before the advent of churches into the community, can you imagine a winter's night with the family gathered about the open hearth, after the day's work was done; the father with the Bible on his knees or table, mother with a foot on the cradle; children — there usually were many — seated about him, perhaps some on the "holtz host;" father reads, and no doubt the children recite verses; for even the early English Primer starts:

A — In Adam's fall we sinned all; and so on.

Then off to feather beds. All this by candle light, fire light or perhaps fat lamps, as animal oil and a type of wick — tow or cloth — were used.

Then up and down the street goes the watchman, swinging his lantern, and perhaps saying something like this: twelve o'clock the sky's a-clouding; and later, five o'clock, the snow's a-falling. No alarm clock for those days. And if, alas, the hearth fire died out, hot embers from a neighbor must be carried carefully to start a new one.

In the earliest years of the community, before churches were built — first of logs, then of stone or brick — those of the same religious faith gathered in one of the larger homes and held services, usual led by a layman or lay reader. As time went onward, some sects, before they were well organized, held services in the courthouse in Penn's Square. The courthouse was a building which would hold "eight hundred persons without incommoding each other" (?).

There were some things which the early congregations practiced which we of a later day do not countenance, such as the lottery. It was a method of securing funds that met with no objection, and was practiced as early as 1567 in England and earlier in Florence. As it was legalized by an Act of Assembly, perhaps we (who have vices of our own) should be charitable in our judgment.

There were several denominations established during the life of the Borough of Lancaster. Fortunately, for the community, we would say, no one sect dominated the religious life of the town. Even the Master said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold," and so the Lutheran and Reformed people, with the others, dwelt in harmony, with a spirit of co-operation and mutual helpfulness among pastors and people, looking to the time when it would be possible to have "one fold, and one shepherd." We find no space on these pages to quibble or argue as to the precedence of any one church. The Lutherans started their church in 1734; the Reformed in 1736; but the Reformed dedicated their edifice in 1736, while the Lutheran body followed in 1738. Before this community was well established, the Reformed people, as well as some Lutherans, worshiped at Heller's, six miles northeast of the town. Trinity Lutheran Church has records bearing the date of 1729, for in that year "Lutheran children were baptized in this place." The following sketches are gleaned to a large extent from the church histories of the several congregations. The bibliography at the end of this article will lead the reader to much additional material.

The first church was solemnly consecrated by the pastor, John Casper Stoever, October 28, 1738, on which occasion he administered the Lord's Supper. The altar, which several liberal members had supplied, was of stone, surrounded by a walnut railing. The steeple of the church was furnished with bells. The organ, which was completed before 1744, was constructed by a skillful artist named George Kraft. That edifice stood on the spot now partly occupied by the grave-yard.

The men of that generation preferred long sermons; Mr. Barth furnished the pulpit of the new church with an hour-glass, or, to speak more strictly, a sand-clock, which measured one hour and thirty minutes. Mr. Stoever's successors appear, unlike so many of our own number, to have delivered sermons which were entirely too short, that is, not capable of being measured by the hour; it became necessary for Jacob Lochmann, five years after the consecration of the church, in 1743, to attach to the pulpit an iron rod which sustained the sand-clock in full view of the preacher and the hearers, thus securing to the latter sermons of a reasonable length in their opinion — one hour and a half.

This congregation was imbued early with a spirit of helpful missionary enterprise. The Rev. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America, visited Lancaster in December, 1743, "and contributed much by his preaching and influence to give confidence and courage to the members of the Trinity congregation. They became so much interested in Dr. Muhlenberg's efforts to establish the Lutheran church in Philadelphia, that they sent a sum of money to aid in building St. Michael's Church in that city. The amount donated was equivalent to one hundred German dollars."

An interesting paper found in the original records of Trinity congregation shows a list of donors, their gifts and services, in the early years of the life of the church.

- Sept. 30, 1733 Johan Martin Weybrecht presented a pewter flagon and lid with wreath on it. It holds about two quarts. It rests upon three feet which are Cherubs. There is a lamb with a banner and cross engraved on it; also the three letters I. C. S.
- 1734 Johan Martin Weybrecht gave a pewter chalice, holding about one pint, a lamb with a banner and cross engraved on it, also the three letters I. C. S.
- 1735 A pewter baptismal flagon and bowl (which cost twelve shillings), for the congregation in Lancaster, from Joh. Casper Stoever, pastor in Lancaster.
- 1737 Georg Bart and wife, and Michael Ferrin and wife Anna Barbara, gave a white Altar cloth.
- 1738 Casper Lochman, Jacob Beyerly and Michael Beyerly, made a stone Altar in the church.

- Oct. 28, 1738 Simon H. Juda, through Pastor Joh. Casper Stoever, a sermon and prayer book to the church.
- 1739 Joh. Christoph Frankel gave a collection bag to the church.
- Captain John Stedman gave a small bell to the church.
- 1739 Pastor Joh. Casper Stoever gave a black Altar cloth to the church.
- 1741 Peter Grung gave a church song book.
- 1742 Adam Simon Kuhn gave a red cloth to be used to cover the Bread and Wine, at Communion.
- May 29, 1743 Christoph Frankel, Adam Lofler and Georg Honig had the "church chairs" put in the Chancel.
- Ludwig Franz Tottenbam gave the boards.
- June 1, 1743 Saddler Philipp Shultz and wife Anna Elisabeth, gave a cloth for the Baptismal table. Ludwig Franz Tottenbam, carpenter, made the table.
- June 11, 1743 Joh. Adam Lofler gave a small cloth for the Baptismal table which was made by his wife Margaretha, from the pieces that were left from the large white Altar cloth.
- Georg Honig gave walnut wood for the Chancel rail and posts.
- Aug. 15, 1743 Jacob Lochman gave the posts for the Lectern in the Chancel.
- Sept. 21, 1743 Christoph Frankel gave two pounds to purchase prayer books.
- Oct. 24, 1743 Johan Michael Beyerly gave the Record books, and the prayer (order of service) books.

Witham Marshe, a visitor to Lancaster in 1744, had this to say of the churches: "The religions which prevail here are hardly to be numbered. Here are Dutch Calvinists, who have a church built with square logs, and the interspaces filled up with clay. In this a small organ, good for little and worse played on by the organist.

"The sect of Luther have a church likewise. This is more spacious than that of the Calvinists, being built of stone, and is much larger than the other. The minister of this church is a gentleman of good character, and by his true pastoral conduct keeps his congregation in good order. [This was the Rev. John Dylander.] The ministers of the Dutch churches are allowed no certain stipend for preaching, but are paid at the will of their hearers. This is a great tie upon them to do their duty, and makes them more diligent than our clergy are. Happy people. In this way we may envy them."

Long has it been the custom of Lancaster churches to call their people to worship by the ringing of the bells. One such bell, cast in 1745 for the quaint society of Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata, was rejected by them, and secured by Trinity congregation. It rang through all the stirring times of the life of the colonies and the nation; it changed from religious duties to civic ones when it became the property of the Washington Fire Company, 1853 to 1882, then it again called people to worship at Grace Lutheran Church. The custom of ringing the bell at intervals during the fifteen-minute period

preceding the church service was inaugurated in 1786 at Trinity Church, and has been followed by the Protestant churches of our city to this day.

The Lutherans were observant of the rites of their church, for under the Rev. John F. Handschuh, in 1748, there were 243 persons in attendance at communion, in this town, which then had a population of 1400 people.

The old stone church served Trinity congregation until 1761, when a new brick church, started in 1761 and finished in 1766, was placed on the northeast corner of Duke and Mifflin Streets. This is the edifice standing today, but slightly altered from the original plans. The service of dedication was of such an interesting character that it warrants reprinting in full. Note especially the part in the musical service taken by Henry William Stiegel.

THE DEDICATION

The time fixed for the dedication of the new church of the Holy Trinity at last arrived. On Saturday afternoon, May 3, 1766, the church-officers, together with Rev. John S. Gerock, and Dr. Henry M. Muhlenburg met, and agreed upon the following programme:

1. To-morrow, at 9 A. M., May 4, being the Sunday *Rogate*, the invited ministers and deputies of the united congregations will meet in the School-house.

2. At 10 o'clock they will form a procession and go to the new church, in the following order: a. the Schoolmaster, Mr. Jacob Loeser, accompanied by all the children that attend his school; b. the Deacons of the Lancaster congregation, bearing the Vasa Sacra, or sacred vessels used in the administration of the Holy Sacraments of Baptism and the Lords Supper; c. then the Ministers; d. and after these the Elders and Trustees of the Lancaster congregation, and the deputies of the united congregations.

3. In the church of the Holy Trinity the ministers will occupy the space within the railing that encircles the altar, and the church-officers of the congregation, and the representatives of the united congregations will stand, forming a semi-circle, on the outside of the railing.

4. Then a. the Rev. H. M. Muhlenberg will open the service by reading Psalm 100; b. the choir, instructed and directed by Mr. Henry Stiegel, will sing the first verse of the hymn: "Komm heiliger Geist, Herre Gott, erfuell mit deiner Gnade Gut," accompanied by instrumental music; c. Rev. Mr. Gerock, as the pastor of the church, will then deliver the "declaration" in regard to the church, for what purpose, by the blessing of God, it has been built, designed, and is to be used. Then the choir will sing the second verse of the foregoing hymn.

5. After these one after the other of the pastors present will repeat a passage of Holy Scripture, appropriate to the consecration of the whole and its parts. After these passages have been pronounced,

6. Rev. H. M. Muhlenberg is to close with a short prayer, all kneeling; and

7. After the choir has sung the third verse of the former hymn, Rev. Gerock is to return thanks to all the friends and benefactors of the congregation.

8. And the whole congregation shall then sing the fifth verse of the hymn: "Sei Lob and Ehr dem hoechsten Gut."

9. This shall be followed by the performance of a select piece of church music, specially arranged and prepared for this occasion, at the request of the church-council, by Mr. Stiegel.

10. Rev. H. M. Muhlenberg shall then, at the request of Rev. Gerock and the church-council, deliver the morning sermon and Rev. Gerock one in the afternoon. In the evening the English Missionary of the Episcopal Church, Mr. Thomas Barton, will deliver a discourse.

11. Monday forenoon, May 5th, Rev. Mr. John Casper Stoever will preach and

12. Rev. Mr. Krug in the afternoon.

The musical selections had been printed for distribution, so that all were able to follow the choir during the performance of both days.

Numbers reveal the interest taken in religious affairs. It is claimed that the Rev. Just Henry Christian Helmuth in 1769 secured the signatures of 1300 persons to a certain set of church rules which he promulgated. In 1773, Old Trinity, which could accommodate 1500 people, found that "there were already fifty seats less than were necessary for the membership." Doubtless, members were drawn from the surrounding country as well as the city.

Quite strict were the regulations regarding burials in the church graveyard. In August, 1783, it was resolved that no suicide, malefactor, or any one who had lived and died in the open works of the flesh, such as adultery, fornication, theft, and drunkenness, also such as have contributed nothing whatever towards the support of the church, should be buried on the graveyard, unless a certain sum, to be fixed by the church council, or a committee of the same, be paid into the treasury in advance. Illegitimate children were to be interred in the graveyard, if their parents or grandparents have been contributors to the church; but they must be buried away from the other graves, near the wall, and there shall be no ringing or singing.

But there were others whom the church desired to have buried on their grounds — men prominent in the affairs of state. Thomas Wharton, President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, died in Lancaster, May 23, 1778, and by request of the church council the remains were buried within Trinity Church, in front of the old altar and pulpit. Major General Thomas Mifflin, Governor of Pennsylvania, passed away on January 19, 1800, and his remains are interred by the west wall of the church. Further, Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg, second son of the patriarch, who became a member of Congress and Speaker of the House, died June 5, 1801, and was buried in the old Trinity graveyard, but later the remains were reinterred in Woodward Hill Cemetery.

The "language question" was an acute problem with the early churches, and caused considerable friction among the church members. It was only after the Reformed and Lutheran congregations lost heavily among their younger members, who preferred to go to churches holding services in the English language, that the elders were reconciled to at least a compromise—one English service, one in German, on a Sunday. English was tolerated, for the Rev. Thomas Barton preached an English sermon at the dedication of Old Trinity, and that congregation in 1805 wrote to Synod saying, "they could not contribute unless provision was made for the education of pastors to preach in English also."

THE REFORMED CHURCH

The old log structure served as the first church for this congregation. The record tells the following story: Now as regards the building of our church, the beginning was made in the year 1736, and by the help of God it was so far completed that on the 20th of June, or upon the festival of Holy Whitsuntide, we held divine worship in it for the first time. The teacher and preacher, or pastor, called to this office of God, was the reverend and truly pious John Jacob Hock. Guided by God's spirit, he chose as his introduction (Scripture lesson) the words in the Prophecy of Isaiah, in the 35th chapter and the first verse, where it is written: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." But the text was the latter clause of the fourth verse of the 103d Psalm, which reads: "Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." And we joined with each other in singing the 84th Psalm.

The Old Log Church stood on the site of the present building, but back some distance from Orange Street. In 1746 the adjoining lot to the east was purchased, upon which a schoolhouse was erected. In the same year a steeple was added to the church to receive a bell, for the purchase of which (and a large clock) the members subscribed 60 pounds (\$150.00) in Pennsylvania currency. These had been bought on December 27, 1745, from the Ephrata Dunkers, who at that time discontinued the use of such "Babylonian trash" and tore down the spire. Until the steeple of the Old Log Church was completed the bell hung on the hickory tree near the courthouse under which the Indians held their councils and which gave the settlement its first name of Hickory Town. An authentic tradition relates that at a later time when Indians made an attack upon the town a quick-witted woman, Salome LeRoy Nauman, rushed into the church and gave the alarm by ringing the bell, whose peals could be heard four miles. When the church was removed in 1752, the clock was sold for 32 pounds, but the bell continued in use until 1774, when on an intensely cold day it burst as it was summoning the people to worship.

It seems that at the dedication of the new church a reorganization was effected, for in connection with that service all the places on the consistory

were filled. In the church record the following entry appears immediately after the report of the dedicatory service: "As regards the election of the first elders of the church, John Henry Bassler, Felix Muller, John Gorner and Peter Dorr were elected by the congregation and declared duly qualified. The first deacons elected were John Kaller and John Stephen Rammertsberger. At the expiration of the first year Elders John Henry Bassler and Peter Dorr were succeeded by Peter Balspach and Frederick Strubel.

The building of the Old Stone Church was begun soon after Philip William Otterbein assumed the pastorate. In the space in front of the wine-glass pulpit stood the communion table within a circular balustrade around which the members gathered to receive the Lord's Supper. The gallery was not built until 1769 and did not extend along the sides of the room until the interior was remodeled in 1822, when also a chancel replaced the wine-glass pulpit and communion circle, and a wooden floor was laid over the original brick pavement.

An interesting relic of the Old Stone Church is the lock which now bolts the doors of the front west entrance of the present edifice. It bears the following inscription (translated from the original German): "Now go we into the church, and may our Savior Jesus Christ be with us; yea, not only today and as long as we are upon earth, but as long as our soul lives. Jesus, Son of God, has the crown of honor; may He, on Heaven's throne, help us too.

"I am come to call the sinners to repentance, and not the righteous.
Matt. ix: 13.

"Peter Kieffer, 1756."

This bit of workmanship tells how the early Christians in this town and province carried their religious tone into their shops and daily toil. On the plates of the stoves made by the early iron-masters were depicted well-known stories taken from the Bible; on the taufscheins and the geburts-scheins appeared scripture verses; above the doors of many dwellings appeared a "house blessing." On fractur and needle work also were found verses from the Bible. Almost every home possessed a "family Bible," revered and read diligently, and into it was written the complete family record of marriages, births and deaths; now proving to be treasure-troves for descendants and genealogists.

The regulations applying to burials in Trinity Lutheran graveyard were the same as those of the Reformed congregation. For the suicide—there shall be no covering for the coffin, no tolling, no pastor, no funeral services—"Kein Sang und Kein Klang."

A splendid spirit of benevolence was manifest in the early congregation. They supported a student—oldest son of a former pastor,—"out of love to God and gratitude to their now deceased pastor;" during the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia they sent a liberal sum of money to the poor, accompanied with a letter breathing a spirit of precious piety, tenderness and consolation; in 1797 they sent a donation of ninety pounds to the York congregation, whose church had been burned down; in 1820 there is the first record of a collection for missions.

The first baptism in this congregation occurred on June 20, 1736, but old records found in Trinity Lutheran Church show that the children of John Gorner, Peter Dorr and Peter Balspach — elders of this Reformed Church — were baptized by the pastor at Trinity in the years 1735-38. Old accounts show that ministerial acts were often performed by a pastor of a different church, when their own pastor was not available through absence, illness, or some other reason. The Rev. William Hendel officiated at a baptism that proved of more than ordinary interest. On December 14, 1766, the infant daughter of Nicholas and Catharine Hauer was baptized. In later life she moved to Frederick, Maryland, and became known to fame as Barbara Fritchie.

The Rev. John Conrad Albert Helffenstein ministered to the congregation during the trying times of the Revolution, and often preached to the Hessian prisoners interned in Lancaster.

The Rev. John Henry Hoffmeier served the Reformed Church from 1806 to 1831, and was highly esteemed for his good words and charity. He was so beloved by the congregation that at his death the body was interred in an honored spot beneath the pulpit in the Old Stone Church.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Excluding the French, Spanish and Maryland settlements, St. Mary's Parish was the fourth Catholic congregation in chronological order in what now constitutes the United States. St. Joseph's Chapel, Philadelphia, the chapels in Conewago, in what is now Adams County, and Goshenhoppen, Berks County, can lay claim to a brief priority; the former by eight years, the second and third by one year.

Early records show that Mary Prator, of Earl Township, in her will of April 11, 1741, bequeathed "to the Popish Church at Lancaster Borough the sum of two pounds, for the use and at the disposal of the minister." On August 10, 1742, the year in which Lancaster was incorporated as a borough, the Rev. Henry Neale purchased lots Nos. 235 and 236 on the Hamilton plan.

In 1742 the Rev. Richard Backhouse, of the Episcopal faith, wrote, "In Lancaster town there is a priest settled where they have bought some lots and are building a mass house, and another itinerant priest who goes back into the country." The mass house or log chapel was destroyed by fire in 1760. It had been at the time of its erection the only place of Catholic worship between Philadelphia and St. Louis. Members of all churches in the community were incensed by the loss of the chapel — the work of an incendiary, and the borough officials promptly offered a reward of twenty pounds for the apprehension of the offender, and financial assistance was given by many of the townsmen.

By 1762 the old stone church had been built, and there is a pretty tradition that the women of the church attended to the mixing of the mortar, while the men gathered stones in the fields nearby.

All Lancaster congregations numbered many members from the surrounding countryside, and "it was the custom for Catholics who came fasting in order to partake of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist to take their

noonday meal with the missionary and the distance they had to go to reach the nearest chapel showed the propriety of this patriarchal custom."

The Rev. Mr. Dilhet, who had seen alike the noble churches of Europe and the rough chapels of America, describes old St. Mary's as being "very fine" and the priest's house adjoining as being "elegant and very convenient, with a garden attached."

The early itinerant missionaries traveled on horseback, then in later years by carriage. Father DeBarth had a gig made by a Mr. Brown, carriage maker of Lancaster. He said, "As I frequently have to ride on hill sides have the tyers of the wheels hollow on the outside; I will be satisfied with the steel springs suggested. Rev. Mr. Neale's gig has several straps which secure the body of the gig to the running parts and prevents upsetting on the steep incline of the hillside— . . . have nothing done for mere ornament. . . . I have to drive through very rough roads, over roots and rocks, and am obliged to go slowly and carefully; in such places I could not go out of a walk for the greater part of my whole ride." The gig, which cost \$360, was a handsome affair, and an improvement over travel on horseback, for "after a long ride on horseback and even a short ride if the horse makes a blunder I am obliged to keep to my room," says Father DeBarth.

St. Mary's was served by many priests, but none gained the affections of her people as did Father Keenan. The story of his long service of fifty-four years and the building of the new church in 1854 belongs to days beyond the borough period, and must be omitted here.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

All churches in Lancaster borough were established by definite effort—excepting one. We learn that the Church of England was founded in the borough *by accident*, for their earliest church record states that some time before October 3, 1744, "the Rev. Mr. Richard Locke *accidentally* coming into our Borough of Lancaster a little before ye Date hereof, We agree to give him what Encouragement we could for his residence amongst us. And tho' destitute of any Sett Place of Worship for performing ye Divine Service of ye Church of England; & Its Members here but very few, yet in order to keep up & maintain ye polity or Government of ye Church we have met this Day for chusing of Church Wardens & Vestrymen, when ye following persons were Unanimously chosen:

Thomas Cookson, Esq.	}	Church Wardens.
John Postelthwait		

Edward Smout, Esq., Daniel Syng, William Bristow, John Folke, Morgan Morgan, John Connolly,	}	Vestry Men."

These men were prominent in the borough; Cookson was the first burgess, and John Folke an assistant.

Work on the first church was started in 1745, but was not completed until 1753. At first the Episcopalians were few in number, and had great

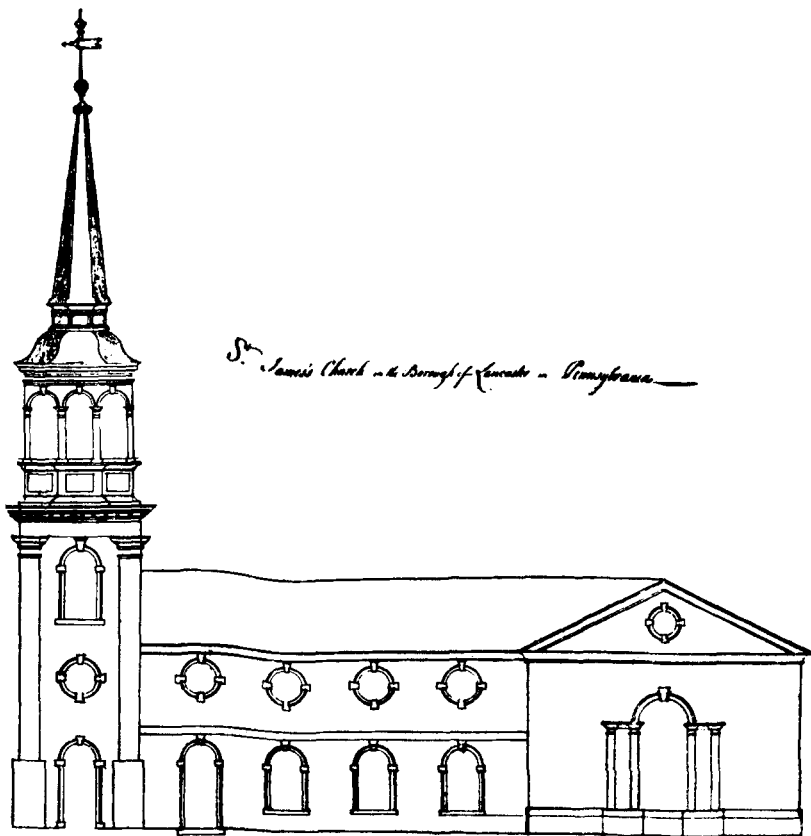
difficulty in raising funds for the completion of their church and for the support of a rector. Conditions did not seem to be favorable to the Rev. Mr. Locke, who wrote in 1747, "A great many Papists live here; . . . it is very much overspread with New Lights, Whitefield's followers; Covenanters, who receive their sacrament with a gun charged and drawn sword; and profess they will fight for Christ against civil magistrates. The Moravians seem to live in common, and hold a very odd notion of election — that those only are saved who have a drop of Christ's blood in their hearts. They do not increase very much for want of proper assistance from regular clergymen and some encouragement for their support, as it is in Maryland and Virginia. Mr. Whitefield hath been here twice, invited by the Moravians; but he did not seem to answer their expectations. The Dutch have several odd sects of religion. The Menists [Mennonites] that are something reformed from John of Leyden. They somewhat resemble the Quakers, for they bear no arms, and have a sort of community. The Dumplers [Dunkards] which seem in their way of living to be much like the ancient Essenes amongst the Jews. They observe the Saturday, and have all things in common. There is another sort amongst them who have only their assembly every full moon."

The number of communicant members of St. James's Church on Christmas Day, 1751, was twenty-four; a lesser number than at St. John's at Pequea, and Bangor Church at Churchtown. Eight years later the number was about fifty. The Rev. Thomas Barton accepted an appointment to this church, and preached for the first time on Easter Sunday, 1759. He was destined to spend over nineteen years in this parish, and was forced to remove from this place when his loyalty to the English Crown made his presence no longer desirable.

In 1760 Mr. Barton had this to say of conditions in Lancaster: "If the church in Lancaster ever flourishes, it must be by means of the Germans, who are the principal inhabitants of the place. But the want of an organ of which these people are extremely fond, and in which they place almost half their devotion, has hitherto kept them back. Many of the Lutherans who gladly embraced every opportunity to teach their children the religion, manners and customs of England, would come to our church if we had but an instrument to celebrate the praises of God in the manner that they have been used to. Dr. Kuhn [Adam Simon Kuhn, a prominent member of Trinity], a public-spirited gentleman of this persuasion and an eminent physician, has proposed to us to purchase a small organ for about £60 sterling and that he would not only give us £5 towards it, but play for us gratis."

In 1762 Mr. Barton felt the need of "a gallery (which as we have the pleasure of seeing our congregation increase, we presume will be soon wanted), and a bell, which we alone of the many societies (congregations) in this populous place, are destitute of."

When Mr. Barton left this place, the church was closed until 1783, when the successive rectors were the Revs. Hutchins, Rigg and Clarkson. When Lancaster became a city, St. James's parish decided to erect a new edifice of brick which was completed in 1820.



ORIGINAL ARCHITECT'S DRAWING OF ST. JAMES'S CHURCH

Built 1746-53. Through the efforts of William Frederic Worner, a copy of the above was secured from Prof. A. H. Young, who while on a visit to London obtained the drawing from the Episcopal Society's headquarters. This place has been bombed in recent raids and all original papers destroyed.

In the Presbytery Records of Donegal, a supply was asked for, in June, 1742, for the Lancaster Presbyterians. We may assume that services were held in homes and later in the courthouse.

In 1763 Hamilton donated a piece of ground on which to erect a church building but we have no definite date as to when the first building was erected. No records give the early history of the church; baptisms, marriages and burials were not recorded until 1821, although there were minutes prior to this period. Robert Fulton's father led the singing when the services were held in the courthouse.

Hazard's Register, (vol. 5, p. 22) tells us that in 1765 the Presbyterians erected a large meeting house. The building committee consisted of William Montgomery, John Craig and Samuel Davis.

The *Pennsylvania Gazette* informs us about the lottery drawn for the purpose of raising funds to erect a church building in 1766.

The chapel was built over the graveyard, some of the stones not having been removed. Among the graves under the chapel is that of John Wilkes Kittera, Esq., who died June 6, 1801, aged 48 years and 7 months. Mr. Kittera was the representative from Lancaster County, 1791-1801. The oldest tombstone, under the chapel, is that of David Wells, who died October 15, 1764, aged 55 years. See Pennsylvania Genealogical Society publication for a record of the cemetery under the chapel.

In the year 1769 the Rev. John Woodhull was called as the first pastor. By the terms of this call Mr. Woodhull was to preach in Lancaster one-third of his time; the other two-thirds he gave to the Leacock Church. During the pastorate of Mr. Woodhull the War of the Revolution occurred, and when a company of militia raised by Captain Ross was in readiness for the field, they were invited to attend the Presbyterian Church and listen to a sermon to be preached by the Rev. John Carmichael, A. M. On Sunday, the 4th of June, 1775, the company assembled in uniform and listened to a sermon from the text, Luke 3:14, "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." The shadow of pacifism did not appear there!

Mr. Woodhull served until 1779, when in the following year he was succeeded by the Rev. Nathaniel W. Sample, an able preacher and teacher. Edward Shippen was then one of the trustees.

James Hamilton transferred lots Nos. 19 and 491 to the church, "for use of the minister of the Presbyterian Church in communion with the Church of Scotland, for a site for a church, school, or almshouse, and for burying ground for the members aforesaid, and to and for no other use, intent, or purpose whatsoever." Later the lot on Lime Street was sold, but a half-lot adjoining the church was purchased.

The congregation met first in the courthouse until their building was completed in 1770; this building was enlarged and improved in 1820.

THE MORAVIAN CHURCH

Count Zinzendorf preached in the old Lancaster courthouse in 1742, and converted many of his hearers to the Moravian doctrine. The next year he sent the Rev. Jacob Lischy to preach to his followers. There was not entire harmony among the early churches. The Rev. Lawrence Thorstanson Nyberg caused a cleavage in Trinity Lutheran Church, and drew many away to form a Moravian congregation. Dr. Schmauk, in his history, wrote: "This was the year [1744] in which the dark swamp in the center of the little town of three hundred houses was cleared of its wood and drawn of its stagnant and poison-bearing water. But the poison of bitterness, and that stagnation of truly religious life, which is the result of ecclesiastical disputes and congregational discord, was still making itself felt." In November, 1745, Bishop Spangenberg presided over the sessions of the "Pennsylvania Synod" meeting in the courthouse. They were greeted by a rabble which assailed them with stones. However, the bishop, undaunted, prayed so fervently for the offenders that many were won to his cause.

In April, 1750, work was started on a schoolhouse and parsonage, which was also used for church services. Part of the old gray stone walls remain to this day, the oldest remnant of a church building standing in the city. To build this, ten Moravian brethren from Warwick (Lititz), together with five other friends, with eight wagons, arrived in Lancaster, and worked diligently for two days, hauling ninety-four large loads of the finest stones from a quarry on the "city land" for the structure. Before building operations, the members met in the home of Edward Smout, Justice of the Peace, and on April 16, 1749, the Holy Communion was administered for the first time. Formerly, this Edward Smout was a vestryman at St. James's Church.

In 1765 this church secured an organ, built by the famous Moravian organ builder, David Tannenberger, of Lititz.

The old Moravian Cemetery at Prince and Marion streets was a revered spot, and remained unmolested until the land was acquired for a post office site. Then the remains were reinterred in Greenwood Cemetery. The Graffs are found under large flat stones in the Lancaster Cemetery. Members of many prominent families of the early days were buried in the old cemetery—Graff, DeHoff, Eberman, Henry, Demuth, Bender, Stoner, etc.

The old stone church served the Moravians until the end of the borough days, but two years later (in 1820) it was replaced by a brick edifice, which remains to this day, but slightly altered.

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OR QUAKERS

The earliest authentic record of Quakers in Lancaster is found in the report of the Sadsbury Quarterly Meeting for "5, 13, 1754," which stated: "Sadsbury monthly meeting acquaints this meeting that the Friends living in and near Lancaster have for some time past, by their allowances, kept meetings for worship on First days in Lancaster, and they do now, on behalf of those Friends, request that this meeting would appoint some Friends

to give them a visit and to consider how far they may be capable to hold and keep meeting for worship with reputation."

On May 1, 1754, James Hamilton deeded to Peter Worrall, Isaac Whitelock, and Thomas Poultney, "trustees of the Quaker Society in Lancaster borough," two lots of ground on the east side of South Queen Street, sixty-four feet front and two hundred and fifty-two feet deep. This is the site later occupied by the Odd Fellows' Hall, and now by the Haldy Marble Yard.

The minutes of the Sadsbury Monthly Meeting of August 11, 1755, reported that "This meeting, on mature consideration, do allow those Friends in and near Lancaster liberty of building a Meeting-House on the ground proposed and agreed to by the Friends in the Borough of Lancaster, as also liberty of holding and keeping meetings for worship, and that their week-day meeting be kept on the fifth day; which is allowed till further notice."

The Lancaster meeting house was completed about 1759. In that year Isaac Whitelock, the treasurer, kept an account of the building expenditures of £551, 6s, 3p. Among the items shown were payments to Eigholts & Albright for bricks, and to Christopher Marshall for paint. Among the contributors to the building fund were various Monthly Meetings of Chester County, George Leonard, Isaac Whitelock, Peter Worrall, Thos. Poultney, Cal. Sheward, and Caleb Cope.

The old graveyard, which was located in the rear of the meeting house along Christian Street, is obliterated. Those who revere the honored dead, feel that it was a fortunate occurrence that the remains of General Thomas Mifflin, himself a Quaker, were placed by the permanent walls of a Lancaster church, rather than in this now desolate and deserted spot.

Services were held in the meeting house from the time it was completed until about 1810. From that time until it was sold (in 1845), it was used occasionally as a schoolhouse, and from 1816 to 1822 the Rev. John Elliott preached in it.

A writer states that "The Quaker method of cultivating the inward light was by silence and meditation. They believed that by sitting still and fixing their thoughts on God they brought themselves into relation with Him. This stillness constitutes a large part of their worship. They sit silent in their meeting houses; not a word, or prayer, or sermon is heard until the spirit moves some one to speak; and it is not at all uncommon for these meetings to be held in perfect silence from beginning to end." They avoided all excitements, festivals, anniversaries, or anything that interfered with tranquility, and attempted to develop the pure spirit by pure meditation.

THE HEBREW CONGREGATION

The Hebrews have a history in Lancaster which is much older than is commonly supposed. That they had a society here prior to 1747 is conclusively shown by the fact that, on the 3d day of February, 1747, the borough of Lancaster conveyed to Isaac Nunus Ricus and Joseph Simon, a half-acre of land in the township of Lancaster "in trust for the Society of Jews settled in and about Lancaster, to have and use the same as a burying-ground."

In 1735, Joseph Simon came to Lancaster and had a store in Penn Square. The Jews had no regular synagogue but met in the home of Joseph Simon. A portion of the Ark, used in the service, is in the possession of the Jewish Historical Society, in Philadelphia, and two scrolls of the law were given to the Philadelphia Synagogue. Joseph Simon is buried in the above mentioned cemetery with an inscription in Hebrew and in English:

“And Joseph gave up the Ghost,
and died in a good old age.
An old man, and full of years
and was gathered to his people.
Joseph Simon
Departed this life
the 12th day of the month Shebot,
in the year 5565,
(corresponding with the 24th day of
January, 1804)
aged 92 years, in a good old age.

“And he walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.” From the above we can form an opinion of his associates of like faith,—traders, furriers and merchants, for they occupied a place of honor in the community.

In 1747, Dr. Isaac Cohen, from Hamburg, lately arrived in Lancaster to practice the art of healing. Poor persons were cured gratis provided they could show a certificate from a clergyman that they were really poor.

In 1747 the Rev. Richard Locke wrote: “Here are less Quakers than in many other counties, and but very few Indians appear. Here are ten families of Jews.” In an assessment list for 1757, the name of Jacob Lasar or Leazar appears among the list of ministers, so we could draw the conclusion that he was the rabbi of the Jews. In General Edward Hand’s letter of March 17, 1789, proposing Lancaster as a permanent site for a national capital, it is stated, “There are seven places of Public Worship, besides a temporary Synagogue in the Borough of Lancaster.” But it seems that there was no permanent synagogue until 1867, and that, quite probably, the Jews gathered for worship in the home of one of their number previous to that date. The will of Joseph Simon contained a clause providing the “silver plate used for religious worship” in his family and two scrolls of the law were to remain in the family of the testator’s son-in-law and executor, Levy Phillips, during the latter’s lifetime, after which they were bequeathed to the Philadelphia synagogue.

From 1804 to 1855 there were no interments in the Jewish cemetery, which would indicate that few Jewish families remained in Lancaster during that period.

METHODISM

On June 2, 1772, the Rev. Joseph Pilmoor wrote in his diary, “Left Lebanon . . . rode on through a fine pleasant country to Lancaster, where



PHILIP BENEDICT

**At whose home Methodism was started in
Lancaster Borough in 1807.**

I preached in the courthouse, and was enabled to preach the word of God with boldness. The following day I was afraid I should not get an opportunity to preach, as it was the time of the court; but it happened that there was no trial in the afternoon, and the court being adjourned to ten o'clock the next day, I got the courthouse, and preached about six o'clock to a small congregation of decent hearers, but there is no prospect of much good at present." This is the oldest record of Methodist preaching in Lancaster.

The Methodist Conference for 1797, meeting at Symrna, Delaware, made an appointment at John Mullen's in Lancaster. The Rev. William Colbert preached for the first time in Lancaster at the Mullen home on November 6, 1797, and continued at times until July 2, 1798. The work did not prosper, for he wrote in his journal, "The class here appears to be in the worst state of any I have yet met in the circuit," and "The Society in this place is in a poor way." Surely, there was room in Lancaster borough for a warm-hearted, expressive, demonstrative type of religion such as Methodism, in whose meetings the decorum could be broken (!) by an "Amen" or a "Praise God." The first sermon preached in Lancaster by the Rev. Henry Boehm, son of the venerable Martin Boehm, was in 1805, standing on a butcher's block in the old market house at Penn Square. A rowdy, coming from Slough's tavern, the White Swan, threatened to assail the preacher with a brick-bat; Boehm, however, stood his ground so bravely that his assailant quailed before him and retreated without further molestation.

On September 7, 1807, Henry Boehm came to Lancaster to read proof sheets, printed in German, at the printers—Henry and Benjamin Grimler. He stopped at a public house, and found "the Lutheran where there in great numbers to draw a lottery, the proceeds of which were to finish a church steeple." Later, while walking along a street, he met a woman who had been a member of the Methodist Church in Germantown. Boehm wrote: "She told me there was a man by the name of Philip Benedict in Lancaster who had been awakened at a camp meeting, and he and his wife were seeking the Lord, and she advised me to call and see them, telling me where they lived. I went to the house, pointing them to Jesus, and prayed with them. As I was about leaving they said, 'O, that we could have Methodist preaching in Lancaster!' I told them they could have it. So I left an appointment to preach at his house. It became a permanent preaching place. In a little while I formed a class of six members—Philip Benedict and his wife, and four others [this included John Beam and Ann Beam]. This was the nucleus of the society which remained permanent. I am thankful that I had the honor of planting the tree of Methodism in that city." Benedict's home was located about 125 North Duke Street. Here Methodism had its home for nearly two years.

By deed, dated February 12, 1810, the Methodists secured a large lot at the southeast corner of Walnut and Christian Streets, whereon they build their first church, and directly on the east was laid out the Wesleyan Cemetery.

The Rev. John S. J. McConnell tells us the church "was an unpretentious, one-story, brick edifice, thirty-eight feet front by forty-five feet deep. The front was towards Walnut Street, but some distance back from the sidewalk. The pulpit was elevated about six feet above the floor. The ceiling was arched, and the pews were plain. The building was warmed by an old-fashioned 'ten-plate stove' in which wood was burned. This was placed on the side of the church occupied by the women. The lights were furnished by tallow candles placed in sconces and needing to be snuffed about every five minutes." It was dedicated on December 17, 1809.

In 1809 the preachers were James Smith and Thomas Burch; in 1810 James Bateman and John Walker. In 1811 the Lancaster church was made a station with the Rev. Thos. Ware as pastor.

In the *Lancaster Journal* for July 28, 1810, appeared this notice: "A camp-meeting will be held on Thursday, the 9th of August next, on Martin Boehm's place, and will continue several days. Strange preachers will attend this solemnity. The Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Society, will preach on Sunday, the 5th of August, in the new meeting house in Lancaster."

The church was returned to the circuit in 1812, and did not become a station again until 1828. The first church served its members until 1841, when a second edifice was built on Duke Street, south of Walnut Street.

The bells of the borough churches could of themselves make an interesting story. They pealed forth in clarion call and resonant ring to draw the villagers together for worship. Their message was one of invitation and fellowship. Even when their tongues were silent, the eye could discern scripture messages cast upon their sides. The famous Liberty Bell had an equally famous verse. The bells of our own First Reformed Church entreated, "Come and Worship Jehovah with Praise," and "Come into His Presence with Singing."

Today the sound of the bells is just as clear and heeded just as faithfully as in the days of old, and thousands of worshipers, as of yore,—

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.

—Psalm 100:4

SOURCES OF MATERIAL

Ellis and Evans' History of Lancaster County, p. 438, et seq.

Klein's History of Lancaster County, vol. 2, p. 703, et seq.

Memorial Volume, Trinity Lutheran Church, 1861. 974.992 L973t.

Trinity Lutheran Church, original papers and programs.

History of the First Reformed Church, 1904. 974.992 R322f.

Two Hundred Years and More of the First Reformed Church, by C. Nevin Heller, 1936.

The Catholic Church at Lancaster, by S. M. Sener, 1894. 974.992 C363s.

The Rev. Bernard Keenan, by Richard M. Reilly. Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society, vol. 28, p. 85.

The Church of England in Lancaster County. L. Co. Hist. Soc., vols. 35, 37, 40, 41. By William Frederic Worner.

Inscriptions on Tombstones, St. James's Episcopal Churchyard. By William Frederic Worner. L. Co. Hist. Soc., vol. 37, p. 137.

Handbook of the Moravian Congregation, 1923.

Early Jewish Colony in Lancaster County, by Monroe B. Hirsh. L. Co. Hist. Soc., vol. 5, p. 91.

Shaarai Shomayim Congregation, Program of the Eighty-fifth Anniversary, 1941.

History of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, by John S. J. McConnell, D.D., 1893. 974.992 M592f.

From the Minute Book of the Borough

The following excerpts were taken from the "Corporation Book," or Minutes of the meetings of the Burgesses, and show some of the items which engaged the attention of the Borough Fathers in those times.

SWINE

November 30, 1752.

"No person or persons shall suffer any Swine Hogs Shoats or Pigs belonging to them to run at large within the limits of the said Borough wether the [they] be yoked or ring'd, or otherwise from the 6th day of December."

A penalty of fifteen shillings for each animal found running at large was placed upon the owner.

MILE STONES

September 17, 1770.

"Agreed that the Expences attending the finishing and setting up the [four] Mile-Stones which were agreed by the late Burgesses and Assistants to be placed on the public Roads leading to the Borough be paid out of the Corporation Moneys, and that an order be given by the Burgesses upon the Treasurer for the amount in favor of William Henry who hath undertaken to have them done and properly placed."

Will. Atlee,
Ch. Burg.

Attest

Cas. Shaffner
Town Clk.

February 8, 1771. By Cash paid Tobias Rehm for Mile Stones £2 - 8 - 0.

CONTINENTAL STABLES

July 13, 1782.

"Agreed Likewise that the Continental Stables in the Borough of Lancaster be also converted & fitted up into Barracks for the Reception of any Such Troops as may necessarily Require Quarters in this Place."

Attest: Lewis Heck, Town Clk.

SMOKING

December 29, 1796.

“The Corporation taking into Consideration the evil Practice of Smoking Pipes & Segars by boys as well as grown Persons through the Streets and alleys of this Borough and the dangerous Consequences which may be occasioned thereby—

“It was Resolved that if any Person or Persons whatsoever presume to smoke a Pipe or Segar in the Streets or alleys of this Borough after the first day of January next, shall pay the sum of 3/9 for each offence, to be applied to the Use of the Poor.”