

The Church That Was Twice Born

A History of the First Presbyterian Church
of
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

1773-1973

by

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Associate Minister

Pickwick-Morcraft, Inc.
Pittsburgh

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Introduction

In First Church we have always tried to deal realistically with the Scriptures. But, in spite of the admonition, "and further, by these, my son, be admonished; of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh," the special committee, appointed by the Trustees and Session to plan an appropriate celebration of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, decided to have written an official history of this congregation. It was only natural that they should turn to the Reverend Ernest E. Logan, associate minister of our church, to be the author. Their choice was a splendid one as anyone who reads can tell.

Mr. Logan has been brilliantly trained, not only for the preaching and pastoral ministry, but for that all too rare talent of communicating truth and authentic fact in graceful words. Mr. Logan is a graduate, with honors, of Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, where his moderatorship was in history and political science and where he earned the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees. His Bachelor of Divinity degree in theology came from New College, Edinburgh, Scotland, and his Master of Education was conferred upon him by the University of Pittsburgh.

Mr. Logan had a special interest in First Church and its history because so many of our origins are based upon the contributions of people of other ethnic background, but most especially those who came from the Emerald Isle and Scotland.

Full well do I realize that there is a declining interest in history, and the falling off of attendance in history courses in college and university would seem to testify to that fact. There seems to be a general feeling that the past is not relevant to the modern age. What happened a thousand years ago in Europe or two hundred years ago in America has, many would say, little bearing on the vastly changed world of today. With the "electronic age," as McLuhan calls it, a whole new set of problems and priorities has been brought into existence and demands our full concentration.

There are many reasons for our focus on the here and now. Family continuity has been interrupted by the high mobility of people, so that many children seldom, if ever, see their grandparents. The amazing changes which occur in our cities, the rise of a suburban life style, the disappearance of old landmarks, all seem to suggest that the past has little or no meaning. Add to this the constant increase in all kinds of knowledge, where it is said, for example, that more medical information about sickness and health alone has been discovered in the past twenty-five years than in all the centuries which have elapsed since the time of Hippocrates. No wonder we so often greet each other with "what's new?"

Nevertheless, if anyone desires to know why the First Presbyterian Church stands today at the height of her strength and usefulness in God's Kingdom, then one must "look to the rock from whence we have been hewn." We need in the "now generation" to discover those things both God-given and human which do not change. It was Santayana who made the observation that those who will not learn from the past are doomed to repeat its mistakes.

There are, I am sure, perennial patterns in history and, perhaps more important, certain unmistakably persistent patterns in human nature. It is precisely here that the gospel is most relevant. For "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature." And if it is of the essence of God's love and provision that His Son should say "Marvel not that I say unto you, Ye must be born again," then should it not also be true that "THE CHURCH THAT WAS TWICE BORN" is also in His plan? At least it has seemed that way for two hundred years here in the City of Pittsburgh.

It is said in Don Quixote, "There are men that will make your books and turn them loose into the world, with as much dispatch as they would do a dish of fritters." Our history, however, written over a period of three years, is the product of love, research, attention to detail, and a desire to honor those who have toiled and rejoiced in the work of Christ in this church. If it is true that "a good book is the best of friends the same today and forever," then read on and let this friendship begin.

ROBERT J. LAMONT, *Minister*
First Presbyterian Church
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

February 1973

Foreword

In writing this history I have endeavored to keep to the original spelling and punctuation where quotations are made. As many of the quotations are from diaries and journals whose authors labored under difficult conditions, punctuation is often totally omitted and spelling most unusual. Please keep this in mind as you read such extracts from old documents. I did, however, replace "ye" with "the" and use the letter "s" where Charles Beatty and Francis Herron used the archaic "f," as this makes reading much easier. In old sermons I tried to punctuate to make sense clear.

I spelled the names of persons as I found them in the particular document consulted. The name "Jonathan" was on occasion spelled "Jonathon." Levi Frisbie appears to have normally signed his name thus and his friend David McClure spelled it the same way. Variations occur in the spelling of the name Aeneas Mackay also. Dr. Clarence E. Macartney used an "a" in the first syllable of his name, while his father and some of his brothers used the spelling "McCartney."

Throughout the history, I have used the term "Ulster Scot" to apply to Presbyterians from Northern Ireland in their native land. The term "Scotch-Irish" refers to Scots Presbyterians emigrating from Northern Ireland to the thirteen colonies before and after the American Revolution, and to their descendants.

The notes are placed at the back of the book rather than at the bottom of the page to make them less obtrusive. A small numeral placed above the line gives the reference. As each book or article is used, full details are given in that reference to obviate the necessity of providing a bibliography and thus save much space.

The references used in writing this book filled twelve large ring-files of written or photostat copies. It was therefore only possible to give those references in the notes which were pertinent to the subject. The materials from the files will be deposited in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, where through the courtesy of the Society they will be available on request.

I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to those who, during the past three and a half years, have made this work possible.

Especially would I like to thank Dr. Robert J. Lamont and the Boards of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh for giving me the privilege of undertaking this task, making available the resources and records of the church, doing everything to facilitate research, and setting me free from many of my pastoral duties during the past six months to complete the task.

I would like to thank the staff at both the church and camp for their helpfulness, and especially Mrs. Lawrence E. Van Kirk, private secretary to Dr.

Lamont during almost all of his ministry at First Church. Her advice was always helpful and particularly so for Dr. Lamont's ministry.

I wish to thank Mrs. Richard C. Nichols, Miss Toni O'Mara, Mrs. Andrew J. Marcinko, and Mrs. Walter Andrews, who helped with the typing.

Mr. James E. Alexander, Assistant Managing Editor of the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*, kindly read through the manuscript and Dr. George Swetnam, Feature Writer for the Pittsburgh *Press*, not only gave valuable advice but also researched some information I could not otherwise have obtained. The staff of both these newspapers were extremely helpful in providing information.

Finally, I wish to record my gratitude to Miss Florence C. McLaughlin for her help and encouragement from the beginning. She made available to me her copious notes on Pittsburgh, Western Pennsylvania in general, and on the Scotch-Irish, as well as interesting information discovered as she researched and wrote several articles for *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*. She also spent days copyreading and proofreading my manuscript, and furnished acceptable suggestions. This she did out of love for First Presbyterian Church and all that it stands for.

In 1972, the year before this book was published, I lent the manuscript to my friend Mr. James N. Kilpatrick. With my permission he based his excellent play "These Reverend Gentlemen," upon it, and incorporated brief extracts from it into the play's narrative. The play was copyrighted in the same year.

The staff of the following libraries and societies were most helpful throughout the work:

- The Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia
- The Clifford E. Barbour Library of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
- The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania
- The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Room and Microfilm Department
- The University of Pittsburgh Hillman Library
- The McCartney Library, Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania
- Assembly's College Library, Belfast, Northern Ireland
- The Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

I wish to express personal thanks to my wife, Muriel, who not only helped in organizing books and manuscripts, but also assisted me in the proofreading. To her and my two children, Eamonn and Colleen Rua, I must apologize for drastically curtailed vacations during the past three years to provide time for writing this history.

January, 1973

ERNEST EDWIN LOGAN

Contents

Introduction	iii
Foreword	vi
Illustrations	ix
Preface	xi
I. The Church on the Frontier Village	1
II. The Church on the Mission Field	3
III. The Church at the Gates of Hell	6
IV. The Church That Was Born in 1773	13
V. The Church That Endured Through Troubled Times	18
VI. The Church in the Revolutionary War	20
VII. The Church of the Unruly Laymen	25
VIII. The Church with the Gifted Minister	37
IX. The Church That Was Born Again	49
X. The Church with the Advocate for Christ	93
XI. The Church in the Industrial Revolution	105
XII. The Church with the Preacher Orator	117
XIII. The Church Calls a Pittsburgh Minister	121
XIV. The Church Faces the New Century	127
XV. The Church with the Bachelor Minister	169
XVI. The Church in the Golden Triangle	193
Notes	243

The Woman's Work Society	250
Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society	251
First Church Sunday School Staff	252
First Presbyterian Church Staff	254
The Church Session and Corporation	255

List of Illustrations

Frontispiece—Pittsburgh in 1761-1763

	<i>Page</i>
1. The Reverend Charles Beatty (Sketch)	4
2. The Reverend David McClure (Sketch)	7
4. Sketch of an Early Pittsburgh Area Settlement	15
4. Sketch of the Point at Pittsburgh (1700's)	18
5. The Reverend Samuel Barr	25
6. The Log Cabin Church in 1787	31
7. The Reverend Robert Steele (Sketch)	41
8. The Church within the Church	51
9. The First Wood Street Church	53
10. The Reverend Francis Herron, D.D.	57
11. Dr. Herron Preaching from the "Brick" Church Pulpit	61
12. The Mary Carson O'Hara Baptismal Bowl	72
13. The Sunday School Building in 1826	81
14. The Herron Memorial Plaque	86
15. The Reverend William Paxton, D.D.	89
16. The Second Wood Street Church	95
17. The Paxton Pulpit	99
18. The Reverend Sylvester F. Scovel, D.D., L.L.D.	103
19. The Sunday School Chapel (1881)	110
20. The Reverend George T. Purves, D.D., L.L.D.	115
21. The Reverend David R. Breed, D.D., L.L.D.	119
22. The Reverend Maitland Alexander, D.D., L.L.D.	125
23. The Oliver Avenue Plaques	137
24. The Stem of Jesse Window	145
25. The Painter Memorial Pulpit	149
26. First Church as Built During Dr. Alexander's Ministry	156
27. The Mary McMasters Jones Pulpit	158

	<i>Page</i>
28. The Alexander Memorial Doors.....	165
29. The Reverend Clarence E. Macartney, D.D.....	167
29. First Church During the 1936 Flood.....	179
30. V.E. Day Outdoor Service.....	183
31. The White House	185
32. The Reverend Robert J. Lamont, D.D.....	191
33. Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle.....	196
34. Christmas at First Church.....	199
35. The Sixth Avenue Church with New Addition.....	203
36. The Bronze Plaque—Vestibule	207
37. The Tuesday-Thursday Noon Clubs.....	209
38. Dr. Bodycombe and the Choir in 1961.....	211
39. The Camp Lodge.....	221
40. Good Friday at First Church.....	225
41. Scenes from the <i>Pittsburgh Power & Light Co.</i>	231
42. Man of the Year in Religion Award.....	234-235
43. David Pressau, the Quartet and Chancel Choir.....	241
44. A Candlelight Wedding at First Church.....	256

Preface

In 1729 Charles Beatty, a boy of fourteen years of age, left Northern Ireland in the company of his widowed mother to seek a fortune in North America. The fortune young Beatty discovered was to prove a vast one—not in material things, but in the wealth of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Young Beatty soon discovered that life was not easy for a cultured boy on the Western Frontiers of Pennsylvania. His ability to converse with ease in Latin had no market value in the wild woods of William Penn. To survive he had to learn new skills for a New World. Thus Beatty became a peddler and tramped from log cabin to log cabin, wares upon his back, trying to make sales to the exceedingly thrifty Scotch-Irish housewives. It wasn't easy! This training, however, was vital to his future career.

Beatty soon became a first-class salesman and a most careful accountant. Each article was methodically priced; each penny meticulously accounted for. To the day of his death Charles Beatty made inventory of every stitch of clothing on his body or off it, to the spare handkerchiefs he carried in his pocket. It was as though he were still a packman. Beatty also became used to rough living.

When God is training a man for a great destiny He leads him a step at a time; but sometimes the next step comes in almost fairy-tale fashion.

One day young Beatty, pack on shoulders, was tramping through Neshaminy. He paused outside the log cabin seminary of William Tennent. Perhaps some nostalgia of his Londonderry schooldays stirred in his soul. He eased the pack off his shoulders and began to chat with the students. The culture, the intelligence, the education of the youth were obvious; but it was his religious enthusiasm which caught the hearts of his listeners.

One of the students ran into the schoolhouse and brought out the great teacher.

As William Tennent listened, his spirit warmed to this youthful peddler who could converse as fluently in Latin as in English, and whose radiant religious fervor lighted up men's lives. There was a glow of Jesus Christ about the lad.

"Go sell the contents of your pack, and return immediately and study with me," cried the teacher. "It will be a sin for you to continue a peddler, when you can be so much more useful in another profession."¹

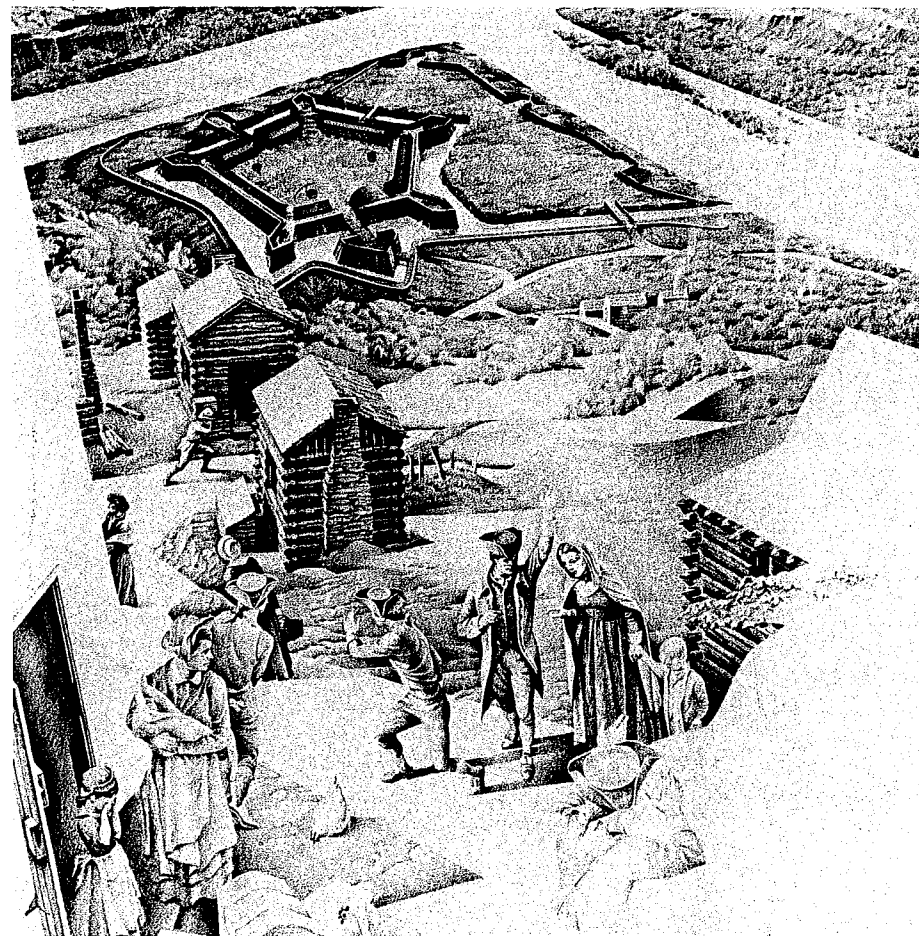
This was the first unbelievable step—there were to be many more pedestrian ones—before Charles Beatty became in turn preacher, Presbyterian minister, and finally chaplain under General Forbes. Eventually he marched with the victorious army up to the smouldering ruins of Fort Duquesne.

The day following the takeover of Fort Duquesne in another highlighted moment of life, the Reverend Charles Beatty, the erstwhile immigrant boy from Londonderry, was invited to preach the Thanksgiving sermon on this historic occasion in American history.

John Gibson, a young soldier of eighteen, was present on that day, and no doubt listened to this sermon.² About a quarter of a century later this same John Gibson was to become a trustee of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh.

Jonathan Plumer, a middle-aged New Englander of strong religious convictions, and Aeneas Mackay, a solid but undemonstrative Presbyterian, were probably also present at the first Thanksgiving service held in Pittsburgh.

These men would play a more vital role in fostering the infant Presbyterian congregation.



Courtesy of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
PITTSBURGH IN 1761-1763

The Church on the Frontier Village

After the fall of Fort Duquesne life proceeded steadily, but never without excitement in the little "wild west" frontier village of Fort Pitt. In 1761 James Kenny, a Quaker merchant from Chester County, moved into the village with a train of pack horses.¹

Kenny kept a journal portraying life in the rambunctious little village of Fort Pitt as vividly as though it were seen through the lens of a movie projector.

We see the beginnings of a congregation:

12 mo. 1st.—Many of ye Inhabitants here have hired a School Master & Subscrib'd above Sixty Pound for this Year to him, he has about Twenty Schollars, likewise ye Soberer sort of People seemes to Long for some publick way of Worship, so ye School Master Reads ye Littany & Common Prayer on ye first Days to a Congregation of Different Principels (he being a Prisbiterant) where they behave very Grave (as I hear), on ye occasion ye Children also are brought to Church as they Call it.²

Kenny also tells us that this school-church is "on ye Hill without ye fort . . ."³ The hill was probably "Grant's Hill," which is now almost leveled—present Grant Street.

Nine months later, August 30, 1762, the weekly worship service had become an established institution and attendance at the church in the school-house had increased, a fact which Kenny informs us, gave pleasure to the colonel.⁴

The utter decorum and gravity of the Presbyterian schoolmaster who conducted the worship pervaded this first "church" of Pittsburgh. The denominational affiliations of the people were mixed, but the majority of the attenders were probably newly-come Scotch-Irish, or Highlanders from the regiment. Their main objection to episcopacy was not so much to its litanies and prayer books, as to its hierarchy.

It should possibly be recorded that at this time, in 1761, when Kenny noted the soberer people of Pittsburgh worshipping under the leadership of a Presbyterian layman, calling the school a church, and raising the considerable sum of sixty pounds a year to maintain this institution to serve both as school and church, John McMillan, later the main founder of Redstone Presbytery, was a child of nine.

Kenny in his journal describes another kind of worship: that introduced by Frederick Post, the Moravian. Although Kenny liked Post as a person, almost everything about his religious service set the contemplative Quaker's nerves on edge. The hard-drinking soldiers of the garrison attended and their military band played at public worship.

"They had ye musitioners playing hymns and they were drunk yesterday,"⁵ Kenny writes. This rollicking service, the colorful military uniforms, the rousing hymn tunes, the temporarily sobered musicians had no appeal for the pacific, sober Quaker, who regarded silence as the ultimate in public worship. "I went not to hear them," he says. Incidentally, he hadn't gone to the grave, decorous service conducted by the "Prisbiterant" schoolmaster, either.

However, this interesting little community, with its contrasting types of public worship, its schoolhouse on the hill, "where the soberer sort of people" worshipped on Sunday; its stores packed with merchandise and rancid with the odor of traded-in furs; its contrasting voices of English, Ulster Scots, Irish, German, and Indian; its drunks and its hymnsingers—was to disappear suddenly and dramatically, as though the lamp in Kenny's "movie projector" had suddenly fused.

In 1763, Pontiac—the great Indian chief—struck at the whole frontier. It was a time of bloody scalps, screaming children, and blazing homes.

It is recorded in *Old Redstone* that: "on the 25th of July 1763, there were in Shippensburg, 1,384 poor, distressed back inhabitants, viz., men, 301; women, 345; children, 748; many of whom were obliged to lie in barns, stables, cellars, and under old leaky sheds, the dwelling-houses being all crowded."⁶ In a wilderness of devastation Fort Pitt was one of the three fortresses which held out. But the village had to be demolished as a military precaution to prevent infiltration by Indians.

In the country districts there were massacre, burning, looting, and such kidnapping that for years afterwards white children, grown to young manhood and womanhood, were discovered in Indian villages.

The young man, John Gibson, mentioned as being present with Forbes' victorious army at the fall of Duquesne, had the most breath-taking experience of them all. He had settled in Pittsburgh as an Indian trader in 1763. Shortly afterwards, during the Pontiac Rising, he was descending the Ohio river in a flatboat with two companions; the youths were taken by the Indians, and Gibson's companions were burnt at the stake. An old squaw who had lost her son in a recent battle decided to adopt John Gibson in his stead. He remained a captive of the Indians for some years and, marrying into the race, became brother-in-law to the famous Logan, a Mingo chief.⁷ For the rest of his life, John Gibson served as the human link between the Whites and the Indians.

The Church on the Mission Field

While Western Pennsylvania was being swept by the desolation of the Pontiac Rising, the Reverend Charles Beatty, acting as agent for the "Corporation for the Relief of Poor and Distressed Presbyterian Ministers and of the Poor and Distressed Widows and Children of Presbyterian Ministers," was exercising his remarkable business talent in an extensive fund-raising tour "to the general assembly of the Church of Scotland & to England & Ireland to procure contributions for this charitable Institution . . ."¹ True to form, he returned with a carefully kept diary, meticulous accounts, and an incredible sum of money. His expenses were exact, but minimal, made up of such items as: 1½ pennies for paper and 3 pennyworth of snuff.² Due to Beatty's frugal spending on himself, and his vast solicitations for others, he returned with a sum of almost four thousand pounds: part for the support of ministers; part for the relief of ministers' widows and children; part for ransoming white captives; and part for distressed frontier inhabitants and a mission to the Indians.³

Small wonder it was that at the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, May 1766, Beatty was chosen to go to the frontiers of the West to carry out the planned mission with the Reverend George Duffield as associate.⁴ George Duffield was of Huguenot-Ulster stock.⁵ They intended to make Fort Pitt village their headquarters in Western Pennsylvania.

The night they arrived at Fort Pitt—Friday, September 5, 1766—they dined in the officers' mess with, among others, Chaplain James MacLagan,⁶ who was one of Scotland's great orators and who preached alternate Sundays in English and Erse. The latter was a form of Scottish Gaelic almost the same as modern Irish.

On Sunday, September 7, Charles Beatty preached in the forenoon to the military garrison. Beatty writes, ". . . Mr. Duffield, at the same time, preached to the people, who live in some kind of a town without the fort, to whom I also preached in the afternoon. The audience were very attentive, and much engaged."⁷ The village got two sermons that day to the fort's one.

Beatty tells us that a Mr. Gibson, identified as a trader, who was taken prisoner during the last war by the Indians and was adopted by them into one of their chief families, took the missionaries under his care. Either the commanding officer of the fort, or Mr. Gibson, recommended them to one of the chiefs by a string of wampum beads. And the latter certainly furnished the missionaries with a horse.⁸

John Gibson, the eighteen-year-old soldier boy of Fort Duquesne, the captive of the Pontiac Rising, blood brother of the Mingo tribe, was twenty-six



THE REVEREND CHARLES BEATTY

now. Though he was not a very religious person, he had his dreams and enthusiasms. His particular dream, as he supervised the trading store, was that Christianity should embrace the Indians to whom he was now related by ties of adoption and marriage. To that end he would ride into Indian territory with the missionaries.

At the last moment, however, this became impossible: "Mr. Gibson afforded us all the assistance he could respecting the Indians & fitting out & would have Accompanied us but his Partner Mr. Hart is down in the County & thereby prevents the pleasure of his Company"⁹

Mr. Duffield preached again in the town on Tuesday. With this concentration of evangelism in the town the work apparently began to bear fruit, if we are to believe the London edition of the Journal. It is recounted there that on Wednesday, September 10, as the missionaries were making final preparations, the following incident occurred:

A person came up to us under deep impressions, inquiring what he should do to be saved. After some conversation I gave him a book, but he besought me and insisted upon me writing something suitable to his case, and what might also be of service to others of his companions, to whom he intended to show it: I complied with his request, and wrote as much as my time would anyway admit of.¹⁰

The mission to the Indians was not received by them with any enthusiasm. They were still smarting from the punishments meted out after the Pontiac Rising. The chiefs, however, were apparently impressed by the fact that Beatty and Duffield were friends of John Gibson, and received the missionaries kindly.

After just over two weeks among the Indians, Beatty and Duffield determined to return to Fort Pitt. Beatty resolved at whatever physical cost to himself that he would preach in the little town of Fort Pitt on September 28.¹¹ An urge to be at the frontier town seemed to drive him on. Few but a robust former packman could have made such an incredible journey in the time.

On Saturday, having just finished his exhausting and frustrating two-week mission, Beatty set out and travelled thirty miles mostly on foot, leading a tired horse a good part of the way. Mr. Duffield could not maintain this grueling pace. Rising in the darkness of Sunday morning, Beatty found that his companion, "by fatigue of the journey, together with the wet weather, was taken ill last night, so that I was afraid to leave him in such a situation; but he insisted on my going to the Fort according to my proposal, to preach to the people."

After we had taken the remains of our venison, which we had dressed last night, and meal made into some cakes, I parted with my company by daylight, crossed the **Beaver** River, and made the best of my way, (going on foot up and down hills to ease my horse) . . .

(I) arrived at the River **Ohio**, opposite to the fort, between twelve and one o'clock. I crossed the river in a canoe, swimming my horse alongside.

In the afternoon I preached to a considerable number of people, assembled in the little town near the fort. Having made known the distress Mr. **Duffield** and our company were in, for want of food and proper refreshments, a young man went to them with some bread and other necessaries.

29th. Monday. Was glad to see Mr. **Duffield** (considerably recovered from his illness) and the rest of the company safely arrived at the fort. Having given notice of sermon this evening, Mr. **Duffield** preached.¹²

It is to be noted that Mr. Duffield preached that Monday evening at the gun-firing for better conveniency of workmen, laborers, and others to attend.¹³ Obviously McClure and Duffield were now aiming their main evangelical thrust not at Fort Pitt military personnel, but at the townspeople, especially at the laborers and workmen. Beatty tells us that a considerable audience attended. He also felt that there was good reason to think that their labors had not been in vain.

The Church at the Gates of Hell

In the summer of 1772, the Reverend David McClure and the Reverend Levi Frisbie, two New England ministers who had been ordained by an Ordaining Council, set out on a seven hundred mile trip to Pittsburgh, intending to make the town their center for a mission to local Indian tribes. They were commissioned to go to the Delaware Indians on the Muskingum River in Ohio. They were engaged by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia and financed by Scottish Presbyterians.

David McClure was a double-chinned man who had the complacent look of one who took life easy. This was far from being the case. His body was mostly muscle, and he was of an eager, energetic disposition; had an inquisitive mind; could travel long and fast; and had a tremendous capacity for organization and improvisation. First and foremost, David McClure was a vibrant evangelist; but he also had, like the Apostle Luke, a gift for putting into his writing little colorful picture scenes and portrayals of character which make his journal live forever in the mind.

On crossing the lower Alleghenies he wrote:

Arriving at the summit, we were agreeably surprised to come upon a verdant plain, about half a mile in width, & what was more wonderful, a fine stream of water running from North to South, through the middle of the plain. We bathed in the refreshing stream; & so tame were the little fishes, that they came fearless to my feet & nibbled at my toes.¹

A rather unusual picture of two Puritan divines taking time out for a bath in a mountain stream!

Levi Frisbie, McClure's associate—a man of light complexion, of average height, and of rather corpulent figure²—also had a ready pen. As will be evident later, his writing could be vitriolic but vital.

The journey became a very trying one. Mr. Frisbie was an extremely sick man for most of the arduous seven hundred mile journey. "I . . . was sick half the way, and unwell the other half," he wrote. "The weather was extremely hot and the sun poured down a whole flood of rays upon our heads without favor or affection."³

The two ministers climbed the steeper slopes of the Allegheny Mountains by the simple expedient of holding on to the tails of their horses—a rather risky business, as the hooves of the brutes kicked back sharp stones into their faces.

The last night they churned their way up the mud banks of Bushy Run—as Frisbie vividly puts it in Ulster dialect: "among brash and slaugh."⁴ The two hapless gentlemen obtained refuge from a rain storm in a cabin where they



THE REVEREND DAVID McCLURE

were almost eaten alive by vermin. So swollen were their faces next morning that the landlady apologized for the accommodations and charged them nothing.

Seven miles out of Pittsburgh, "Mr. Frisbie's horse tiring, we walked most of the way from Elliot's to Pittsburgh . . ." wrote McClure. This was the final indignity.

The arrival of the two reverend gentlemen, baked in mud, their faces puffed with flea bites, both leading their horses, and one obviously seriously ill, was the sensation of the day in Pittsburgh. Quickly the story went around the town.

Jonathan Plumer, noted for his kindness and ridiculed for his Christian faith, heard of it, sought out the two men, and did all he could to help them. This Jonathan Plumer would, under God, provide much of the spiritual dynamic which would lead to the formation of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh.⁶

Without much concern for punctuation, and with "unsteady hand" because seriously ill, on September 3, 1772, Frisbie penned his first impressions of Pittsburgh:

The famous Fort Pitt is situated on a point of land formed by the rivers Monongahela and Allegheny which unite their streams just below it and form the Ohio—the fort on the parts of it next the land is built with bricks (;) on the other parts of fronting the two rivers tis formed only by the earth thrown up and covered with turf—and the stockade is by long white oak posts—it contains three large but ill built barracks, and a large brick stoupe unfinished, there are but few soldiers in it at present commanded by one Captain Edmiston . . . The situation of the place is very beautiful, the land being extremely level and fertile—there are a number of orchards planted at great expense . . . gardens, but very ill furnished and cultivated—at a small distance eastward from the fort is the town of Pittsburgh . . . the people of most note are traders, their chief traffic is with the Indians, who are constantly here, and some of them almost continually intoxicated—This place is a confluence of all kinds of people who are the most vicious, ignorant, and unpolished of any people I was among. There is little or no religion and but a small degree of morality—but not to confound them all in the stamp. for there are a number of very moral generous complaisant gentlemen . . .⁷

The day after their arrival, Thursday, August 20, 1772, the two men were sufficiently recovered to go about their business and on the Sunday of August 23, David McClure preached to the Fort garrison of about two hundred soldiers paraded under arms, and to the inhabitants of the village.

Meanwhile, in the afternoon Mr. Frisbie preached, this time simply to the inhabitants "in the Village."⁸ This second team of missionaries, like the first, found themselves reaching out more and more to the villagers.

Monday was a day for sightseeing. Beatty saw Coal or Smoke Hill, an open coal vein which had accidentally caught fire. The inhabitants were now using its coal to heat their homes. From there he rode to Braddock's field.

It was a melancholy spectacle to see the bones of men strewed over the ground, left to this day, without solemn rite of sepulture. The fact is a disgrace to the british commanders at Fort Pitt. The bones had been gnawed by wolves,

the vestiges of their teeth appearing on them. Many hundreds of skulls lay on the ground. I examined several, & found the mark of the scalping knife on all. I put one, & a jaw bone, in my portmantau, which I afterwards presented to Mr. Stewart's Museum in Hartford. The harness of the horses remained unconsumed on the ground.⁹

McClure faced another melancholy situation. Dr. Edward Hand, the military surgeon, declared Mr. Frisbie unfit for an arduous mission to the Indians.

It was indeed very disagreeable to go without him, & to encounter the hardships of the wilderness alone, & without a companion with whom I could hold friendly & christian conversation.¹⁰

Since it had to be so, David McClure set off for the Delaware Indians accompanied by Robert McClelland as guide. John Gibson, still clinging to his dream of Indian and white reconciliation through religion, not only lent a "markee" tent, but himself rode into Ohio as far as the Seneca tribes.

When McClure at last reached the Delawares (near Newcastle), to whom his mission had been explicitly directed, he found this tribe exceedingly well served by Moravian missionaries. Working on a long-term basis, they were winning great love and respect for the cause, and disciples for their Master.

The Indian village was made up of neat houses and well-cultivated gardens, adjoining a communal cornfield. Family life was being purified and the Moravians and Indians together were building one of the finest Christian communities in Western Pennsylvania.

The Indians even had their own church building. A bell summoned them to evening worship. The sanctuary was lighted with candles around the walls on which hung paintings of Jesus in the manger of Bethlehem attended by Joseph and Mary, Jesus on the Cross, and the Resurrection. Men and boys sat on one side of the sanctuary, women and girls on the other. Devout hymns were sung in the Indian language, in which all blended their voices, while prayers were solemn and impressive, addressed to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who died for the sins of men.

McClure and the pastor slept in the sanctuary on a feather mattress carried in to honor the guest.

Before they went to sleep the Moravian pastor gave some account of the work of his people throughout the world, stressing the fact that "the principal object of the Brethern was to carry the knowledge of J(esus) Ch(rist) among pagans, & not to build on other's foundations, or enter on other men's labours."¹¹

Here was no virgin mission field among wild savages, but the beginnings of a gracious Christian community, far in advance of anything Pittsburgh had ever known, or was to know for some time.

David McClure was never a man to begin to sow seed where another was reaping a harvest. He did some straight thinking and, no doubt, a good deal of straight praying. Obviously his call was not to compete with the Moravians.

But there was a field for mission. And what a field! Pittsburgh and its environs could provide all the savages and pagans a missionary might seek.

It would seem to anyone who reads the *Journal of Charles Beatty* or the *Diary of David McClure* that God willed to have evangelists in Pittsburgh, for He seemed to always turn Indian missionaries back to the city.

Like Charles Beatty and Duffield before him, we now see David McClure with thoughtful brow, turn his face from the Indians he had come to convert, to the daredevil town from which he had set out. Maybe he was thinking of the Apostle Paul's words: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Maybe he was thinking that God's soldier should attack Satan's Kingdom at Satan's citadel, and perhaps the nearest thing to that citadel in the early 1770's was Fort Pitt.

On September 13, 1772, he preached at Fort Pitt in the morning and in the afternoon in the village, becoming better acquainted with the large Plumer family.

David McClure felt under obligation to make a second attempt to preach to the Indians. It was unsuccessful and he returned finally to Pittsburgh before October 14, 1772.

On my arrival at Pittsburgh, found Mr. Frisbie in comfortable health. In my absence he had frequently preached to the people there, and in neighboring settlements.¹²

God had, it would seem in His providence, kept Mr. Frisbie there. Levi Frisbie seemed to concentrate on two places, Pittsburgh and Long Run.

In both of these places Jonathan Plumer had large interests. Long Run was about eighteen miles from Pittsburgh and already had a church building. The congregation still exists today, 1972, joined along with nearby Bethel United Presbyterian Church to form Christ United Presbyterian Church, Irwin.

Congregations were already forming or about to form in the next few years in places like Chartiers, Bethel, Lebanon, Pigeon Creek, Round Hill, and Rehoboth.

Where McClure and Frisbie regularly preached, they tell us, "A great proportion of the people manifest a desire for the Gospel, and would gladly make provision, for the support of ministers, according to their ability."¹³

The problem was that there were neither ministers nor supplies to spare. When McClure now requested such from the Donegal Presbytery he was informed that none were available and that Frisbie and he would have to be the supplies.

The two men now set up a division of labor.

Frisbie settled in McThey's tavern apparently, and on Sunday morning preached either in the tavern, at Mackays, or at a local schoolhouse—if there were one—or in one of the buildings of the fort which was being evacuated by

the English army. But, as the diary reveals, much of the thrust was to the villagers. In the afternoon he rode out to Long Run near the present town of Irwin and preached in a log church constructed there. Apparently Frisbie adopted this itinerary as his own and carried it out during almost all his stay in Pittsburgh.

McClure set up an itinerary for himself in the settlements around Brownsville and Ligonier. When in Pittsburgh, David McClure always stayed with Colonel Aeneas Mackay. It was in the home of the latter that he set up his itinerary, a step which was to have vital significance in establishing Presbyterianism in Western Pennsylvania.

Let him tell of the historic act which would eventually help to create much of the present Redstone Presbytery. I will not change the narrative except to put in brackets the present name of the church mentioned:

26 (October, 1772) "Returned to Eneas McKay Esq. at Pittsburgh, at whose house, I make my home, at this place. Esq. McKay is Commissary to the army. Is a friendly social and high spirited Scotchman. Is the friend of order and religion, or the form of it. His wife is good natured & hospitable. It is one of the most orderly and respectable families in the place.

27. Sent word by Mr. Carnhan, of Jacob's Swamp, (now Mount Pleasant), that I would preach there the next Sabbath. Received a letter from Mr. Cooper, Scribe of the Presbytery of Donnegall, informing, that they could send no supplies to the settlements west of the mountains, and that they had authorized us to preach there. Sent a message by Mr. Proctor to the people at Proctor's Tent (later Unity), that I would preach there, the Sabbath after next; and by Mr. Laughlin, that I would, with the permission of providence, preach at Ligonier (later Pleasant Grove), the Sabbath after that.¹⁴

This itinerary would come to form the nucleus of the Eastern section of old Redstone Presbytery, along with other stations supplied by McClure. He would ride it every week through the winter months until he exhausted himself.

The two preachers found that Christmas was celebrated in Western Pennsylvania with more verve than discretion. This was especially true of Pittsburgh. Mr. Frisbie writes most expressively in a letter headed:

Pittsburgh 30th December, 1772:

I am to preach a sermon upon New Year's Day and I suppose after sermon all the blackguards will be drunk. Good heavens deliver me from this place!

Frisbie's caustic wit led him into a little poetic composition based on the meter of the 120th Psalm, which he calls "120th Psalm My Version":

Hard lot of min! My days are cast
Among the sons of strife
Whose never-ceasing brawlings waste
My golden hours of life.
O might I fly to change my place
How would I choose to dwell
In some wide lonely wilderness
And leave these gates of hell.¹⁵

Mr. Frisbie had never read Clement C. Moore's famous poem "The Night Before Christmas." It would not be written for over a hundred years. But his

letter contains the phrase, "The night before Christmas . . ." and enlarges on it, picturing that night in Pittsburgh in the year of Grace 1772. The letter continues:

The night before Christmas, you never see what shooting and shouting there was among the blackguards . . . O ignoble vulgars! Captain Dorin the Quaker Baptist . . . came into Mr. McTheys with a drunken retinue, and I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year was all the word, in return for which a bowl of toddy and there in the very room they charged their bellies with liquor and their guns with gun powder . . . and the shooting of the former was as proper and honorable for that memorable day, as the latter.

Very early on Christmas morning, I was awakened by firing and hallooing the savage notes of joy with which the carnalia had hailed the dawning day. Methinks the daylight was almost ashamed to appear, to discover to the more sober brothers such a pack of scoundrels . . .¹⁶

David McClure also had problems at the beginning of the New Year of 1773. On January 6, while preaching to a congregation in the open air at Stewart's Crossings, he realized that several of his congregation appeared almost intoxicated. McClure also had health problems. By February 4, he was ill with exposure and cold. He writes:

. . . Mr. F(risbie) and I agreed to exchange. I accordingly went to Pittsburgh and put up at my friend, Esq. McKay's. My service here is not, so laborious, as it is confined only to two places, this, & the Long Run; whereas my rides comprehend five different settlements, in 3 of which I preached on Sabbaths, and the other two on week days.¹⁷

Apparently McClure preached in Pittsburgh a very challenging Gospel. On October 18, he had preached on "The Blindness of Man, by Nature, in Spiritual Things." Now, on February 21, he preached on "The Final State of the Righteous & the Wicked."¹⁸

In spite of all obstacles the two ministers continued to proclaim the Kingdom and to urge repentance and new life.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Church That Was Born in 1773

Somewhere between the arrival of the two preachers in August 1772 and April 1773, a group had formed which constituted a spiritual unity, or at least an organized one, which was capable of petitioning Donegal Presbytery for supplies. We know some of those who appear to have been the leaders of this developing religious life in Pittsburgh.

We must note that at this time a wave of religious fervor had begun to sweep across the settlements area which was to form later that portion of the Redstone Presbytery in the region of Ligonier and Brownsville. These people were intensely spiritual.

Pittsburgh, on the other hand, was mainly made up of people who had more of the form than the spirit of religion. Few had been touched by revival. Jonathan Plumer was a sincere Christian; so apparently was Major Edminston of the Fort. Others tended to regard themselves as simply "Presbyterians," in the denominational sense of the word.

One Scotsman seems to have had the faith of his fathers as a heritage which he treasured dearly, even if he did not altogether understand it. This was Aeneas Mackay, a regular commissioned officer of the crown who according to many historians had signed the papers of surrender with George Washington at Fort Necessity. David Jones, an itinerant Baptist pastor, who had stopped briefly in Pittsburgh before the arrival of McClure and Frisbie, said of Aeneas Mackay: "Part of the time at Fort Pitt, was kindly entertained by Mr. Aeneas McKay, who is deputy Commissioner here. Have reason to speak of him as the apostle Paul did of Onesiphorus."¹⁹

McClure endorsed this estimate as he came to know Aeneas Mackay better. In the latter part of his *Diary* he liked to refer to the Commissioner as, "my friend Aeneas McKay." McClure came to be accepted as one of Mackay's family and rejoiced in the fact, while the Ulster Scot in him could never quite get over the fact that the Mackays would never accept payment for his keep. "In this family, I have lived agreeably several weeks, since my first coming; for which they refused any compensation."²⁰

McClure describes both morning and evening prayers in the home which were attended by the whole household. He recounts how his friend Aeneas Mackay took instruction in applying the Christian spirit to his relations with his servants.²¹

On the more homey level, McClure liked the comforts of the Commissioner's house and the good home cooking of Mrs. Mackay. He tells us that fresh green peas were served that year as early as May 31.

David McClure was not to know that Mrs. Mackay would outlive two husbands, and entertain in Pittsburgh until she was nearly one hundred three years of age; that the Mackay's son-in-law, Stephen Bayard, would be one of the first Trustees of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh; and that their son Samuel would also be a member, as will later appear.

Another man who became a great friend of David McClure was Mr. Jonathan Plumer. When the missionaries had arrived in Pittsburgh, reference was made in the *Diary* to "a happy few who live in the fear of God, & maintain their integrity, particularly a Mr. Jonathan Plumer & his family. He was originally from Newburyport. In his family, which is numerous & laborious, the life of religion is duly maintained. The dissipated respect him for his goodness & benevolence; but by way of reproach give him the name of *Solomon*. He was the first man who found us on our arrival, & treated us with every mark of attention and kindness, in his powers."⁴

It was probably Jonathan Plumer who encouraged Frisbie to set up the itinerary between Pittsburgh and Long Run. He had bought a farm at Long Run. Hence the interest in both places.

Jonathan Plumer had been a boy of fifteen when George Whitefield conducted a mission near his home in Newburyport. The boy's father would not allow his children to go to the mission. Mrs. Plumer decided to go, and coaxed her husband to let the son go with her as an escort. Jonathan that night experienced a dramatic conversion which was to make Jesus Christ the lodestar of his long and exciting life.⁵

Jonathan Plumer later moved west and fought in the Braddock campaign; and according to family tradition, marched, with the victorious Forbes army, on Duquesne.⁶ He received a grant of land on the southeast side of the Allegheny River. "On this tract, at a point about one hundred yards east of the old Ewalt house, which stands at 45th Street, a short distance from Butler Street, Jonathon Plumer erected a log Cabin and made some improvements. It was in this cabin, on the morning of the 5th December, 1762, that George Plumer was born."⁷

Mr. Plumer had a farm at Long Run and seems to have spent time in both places. He had a saddlemaking, a brickmaking, and other extensive business interests in Pittsburgh. It is claimed that Jonathan was a pillar of the First Presbyterian Church as late as the Reverend Barr's day.⁸

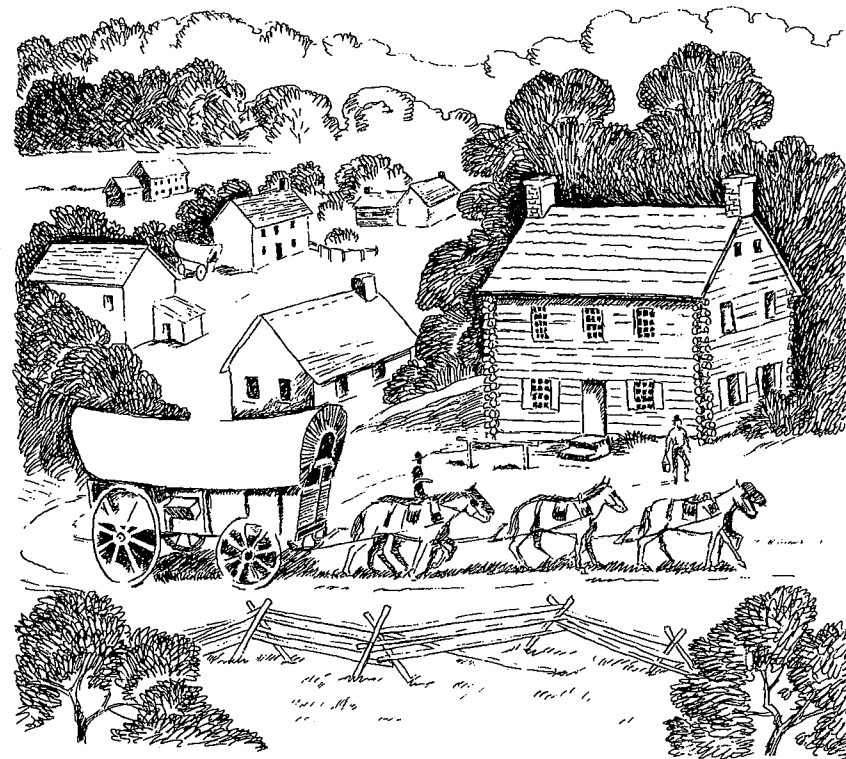
In his old age, Jonathan Plumer was noted for the fact that he continually prayed God would "pour out His Spirit upon all flesh" that, as he put it, "all our sons and daughters may prophesy." His prayer seemed to be answered, for all his children were deeply religious, and at least four of his grandsons became ministers.⁹

A great, great-grandson of Jonathan Plumer, Dr. John S. Plumer, is at this present time an elder in First Presbyterian Church, though the succession of Plumers in First Church has not been continuous through two hundred years.

Another friend of McClure was John Gibson. Known as "Horsehead" Gibson, and very much mixed up with Indians—Gibson did not always inspire confidence to those of the white population with whom he came in contact. McClure early in his *Diary* writes: "The greater part of the Indian traders keep a squaw, & some of them a white woman, as a temporary wife. Was sorry to find friend Gibson in the habit of the first."¹⁰

Being acquainted with John Gibson's early life, his adoption into the Indian people, his marriage to the sister of Logan the Indian chief, his concern for his wife's people, his activity in the Beatty attempts to establish good communication with the Indian tribes, we realize that McClure appears to have misread the situation. John Gibson became a valuable friend to David McClure and later to the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh.

Mr. Sample is mentioned early in the *Diary* as the owner of the inn where the missionaries first stayed. Samuel Sample and his wife Sarah were buried



in the First Presbyterian Churchyard and it is claimed that they were members of the congregation.

A number of men whose names are linked to the Presbyterian cause were in Pittsburgh at this time.

Their names appear in the records of their struggle with Dr. John Connolly, in 1774. Besides Aeneas Mackay, there were Devereux (or Devereaux) Smith, John Ormsby, Richard Butler, William Butler, George McCully, and John Irwin. Thomas Smallman's name appears in the Augusta Committee of May 16, 1775.

Some of these men were Episcopalians who revolted against both king and bishops and turned to the Presbyterian church.

By April 1773 the sustained preaching of Frisbie and McClure over a period of eight months had begun to show results. The missionaries that month made their way to the Donegal Presbytery. It was a hazardous trip.

Once on Laurel Mountain, the two men faced a pack of wolves:

The sun shone bright on their winking eyes, which was to us a favorable circumstance, as they do not see well in a clear day. As those ferocious animals are unused to a human voice, I proposed to Mr. F. that we should hallow, & made the most frightful noises we could. This had the desired effect. We, at the same time, riding slowly forward, they gradually withdrew from the path, the largest bringing up the rear . . . Their bodies tapered off, from a deep chest to the hinder parts. Their eyes were small, & their ears short & erect. Their noses sharp. They had long bushy tails, and the hair of their bodies a light gray.¹¹

On another occasion McClure writes that they encountered a widespread fire "running up the sides of the lofty mountains to their summits, to an elevation of about 40 degrees, it had the appearance of the heavens in flames."

The fire ran through the valley to the north of us, & in some places came within a few rods of the path. As we rode along the margin of the fiery element, & saw ourselves as it were hemmed in between the flaming mountains, the scene impressed our minds with the majesty of God who formed the lofty mountains & rules the elements.¹²

On April 14, 1773, David McClure and Levi Frisbie, having been examined at considerable length as to their beliefs and personal faith, were "cheerfully" admitted as members of Donegal Presbytery.

The following is a copy from the Records of the Donegal Presbytery meeting at Middle Spring April 14, 1773:

. . . the Revd. Messrs. David McClure & Levi Frisby having produced several Papers manifesting their Ordination, & their Commission from the Honble. Board of Correspondents, to promote the Christian Religion among the Indian Tribes to the Westward; but finding no door of access to those Indians at present, & desiring to supply among our Frontier Settlements, requested to be admitted as Members of this Presbytery, declaring themselves to approve the Westminster Confession of Faith, & Catechisms, & the Presbyterian Form of Church Government, & the Presbytery having conversed with them at Some considerable length as to the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, do cheerfully admit them as Members of this Presbytery . . .

Ordered that Supplications & other papers directed to this Presbytery be now taken in & read . . .

A Petition from Big Spring for Supplies, the Lord's Supper & a Minister to Catechise.

From Path Valley, Ligonier, Tyrone, Hempfield, Mount-Pleasant, Pitts Burgh, George-Creek, The two Whiteclay-Creeks, Muddy Creek, Dunkard-Creek upon the Monongahela, united Congregations of Sherman's Valley, Great Cove, & Dicks Gap for Supplies.¹³

Owing to the fact that McClure and Frisbie had not been dismissed by their own presbytery, this action of admitting the two men as members of presbytery had to be reversed by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, but it was allowed that they were taken under care of the presbytery temporarily, and therefore their work validated.¹⁴

On Tuesday, April 14, 1773, Pittsburgh had requested supplies from the Presbytery of Donegal and would obtain them from this date until the Revolution put a temporary halt to all supplies.

As we see, several other churches, which were later to form part of Redstone and which had been supplied over the months by McClure and Frisbie, also made application for supplies.

When the Donegal Presbytery met on October 14, 1773, Mr. McPhearin was ordered to supply at various places, including Fort Pitt on the third Sabbath in November.¹⁵

The missionaries would be leaving Pittsburgh and Redstone at the beginning of June; and it was felt apparently that those groups of Presbyterians, whose situation seemed to warrant supplies and could pay for and maintain them, should make request.

Pittsburgh, which received more of the time of McClure and Frisbie than any other place in Western Pennsylvania, made such application.

Before leaving Pittsburgh in June, the Reverend David McClure and Doctor John Connolly, surgeon at the garrison, were guests at Aeneas Mackay's home. The situation appears to have been set up by the host, for the two men, the minister and the medical doctor, were to have a walk along the banks of the Allegheny. During the stroll, McClure tried to convert his companion, but Connolly—son of a Roman Catholic father and a Presbyterian mother—would have none of it. He said he didn't believe all the Bible, that religion was all a piece of policy. Nor was he interested in being "born again."

When McClure urged on him reliance on Jesus Christ, the doctor replied that he wished to believe, but could not.

Apparently Connolly had led a dissipated life, and McClure writes "was informed by my christian friend (Mr. Plumer) that the Doctor was, at times, exercised with very serious awakenings."¹⁶

For the benefit of all concerned it was a pity that he did not exercise his conscience a bit more that afternoon.

The Church That Endured Through Troubled Times

Between the date of the departure of the two missionaries and the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in Western Pennsylvania, the infant congregation of Pittsburgh faced heavy odds.

The Virginia Tories under Lord Dunmore claimed the forks of the Ohio. Dunmore's agent was that Dr. John Connolly, the military surgeon of the British Army, whose conversion David McClure had so earnestly sought as they walked together along the banks of the Allegheny that June evening before he left Pittsburgh. And the man who took the brunt of the punishment was, ironically, the host at whose house they had met that evening, Assistant Commissioner Aeneas Mackay himself, who stood loyal to Pennsylvania.

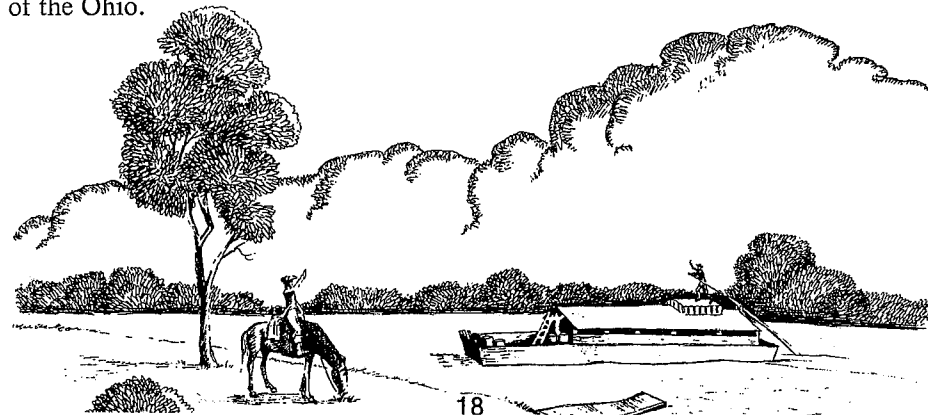
John Connolly certainly did need conversion! On one occasion Mrs. Mackay was slashed across the arm with a cutlass by one of Connolly's officers; and a little later, in the presence of the doctor and under his authority, Mackay was beaten to the ground and then carried off to jail.

Connolly, all zealous for his lord and master, changed the name of Fort Pitt to Fort Dunmore.

With the dour tenacity that a Scotsman can sometimes command, Aeneas Mackay remained unshaken in his loyalty to his people. With him stood Devereux Smith and Andrew McFarlane.

With the victories of the patriots at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, the pressure on Pennsylvania was eased and the strength of the Virginia Tories was broken.

A new difficulty arose for Pittsburgh. The Virginian Patriots, one of the most powerful groups in the Revolutionary War, now laid claim to the forks of the Ohio.



After the departure of David McClure and Levi Frisbie, and through these troubled times, the little congregation continued to receive supplies from Donegal, a Presbytery which was laboring desperately to provide for its own needs. Two supplies a year was about as much as a small isolated congregation could hope for before the dawn of the Redstone Presbytery.

On October 14, 1773, Mr. McPhearin was instructed by the Donegal Presbytery to preach at Fort Pitt on the third Sunday in November.¹

In 1774 Vance and Black were sent to preach in Fort Pitt.²

In 1775 there was a remarkable concentration of preaching here. McKnight, Slemons, Farquhar, King, and Linn were instructed to preach in Pittsburgh by Donegal Presbytery.³

Others may have come, as a number of supplies were sent to "The Frontiers," "The Western Frontier of Pennsylvania," etc. These loose terms were used so as not to offend Virginia, so there may have been more supplies directed to go to Pittsburgh. To Virginia, "Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania," no longer existed.

Then on Saturday, September 9, 1775, came the great John McMillan, whose ministry was going to mean so much to Western Pennsylvania in the years ahead.

This was to be a decisive weekend for Pittsburgh. John McMillan writes in his journal:

Saturday preached at Josiah Richards on Robinson and rode about 13 miles to Ft. Pitt. and lodged at Mr. Armobey's. The 2nd Sabbath preached at Ft. Pitt and rode about 7 miles to Thos Ross where I tarried till Tuesday . . . Wednesday preached at a meeting house on Long Run.⁴

On Monday, September 11, 1775—the day after John McMillan preached in Fort Pitt, the Fort was seized by Captain John Neville commanding a Virginia company, having been ordered to hold it for the patriots. This Captain John Neville was also later to become a trustee of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh was now caught up into the Revolutionary War. Before long her men were scattered throughout the colonies. The congregation of Pittsburgh would not require supplies from any presbytery for a considerable time. The church was identified with her men, and—from this period on—her men were out on the battlefields, fighting in the East against the English, in the West against the Indians. Pittsburgh was late into the action; she would be the last to lay down her arms, and could only do so when the British, the Indians, and the Tories were defeated.

Meanwhile, the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh was wherever the action was.

The Church in the Revolutionary War

Aeneas Mackay and John Gibson each played decisive roles in the war, one in the East, the other in the West.

John Gibson was sent east first of all, but it was realized that his tremendous gifts for working with the Indians were not being sufficiently exploited, so he was transferred to the West where he was invaluable to the cause of the emergent nation, winning over the Indians, bringing supplies up the river from the South, and frustrating the attempt of the English to use the Indians against his fellow Americans.

One of the most heroic figures of these years was Aeneas Mackay. In 1776, the Eighth Pennsylvania Regiment with Mackay as its colonel was formed by order of the Continental Congress for defense of the exposed Western border against forays of the Indians.

Late that year, Washington being hard-pressed, the Eighth was ordered to his assistance. As many Western Pennsylvanians were already fighting, there was an immediate outcry. This would leave the West without men to protect it from the Indians. Reinforcements were vital, however, and the long march began.

The march was led by Aeneas Mackay. It is described by William G. Lytle in the *Pittsburgh Press*, April 13, 1933.

IN the winter of 1776-77 Fort Pitt was on the frontier, 30 days from headquarters and 24 hours from the red death.

WASHINGTON needed help. The Eighth Pennsylvania Regiment of the Continental Line started across the mountains in the dead of winter. They left camp at Kittanning, Jan. 6, 1777. Colonel Aeneas Mackay walked at the head of the line, an old Scotchman, wracked by the cold, but driven by a fire within.

Long days of floundering through the drifts. At night, camp fires burned in the silent forest places while half-frozen men foraged firewood. They slept with their hunger, while the wind moaned through the creaking trees.

A slow-moving column, a dark shadow on the white expanse of snow, trudging down great mountain passes beneath the stare of a cold sun. A few black specks far ahead and behind, rangers on the watch for ambush. Tracking down valleys. Struggling up mountain sides. Ringed by a vast silence.

IT was an army without banner and drums. The wild wind clutched at ragged clothing. The drums of their spirit beat a rally.

THEY trooped down upon the Eastern plains like a company of wild men. And Colonel Mackay, who had brought them through to Washington, died soon after he had reported the command.

The cold had sapped his life away.¹

This prose poem catches the atmosphere so starkly that when you have finished reading it you have an uncanny feeling that you have really been present at this epic event in Pennsylvania history.

Associated with the family of Colonel Aeneas Mackay was that of Colonel Stephen Bayard. Before the Revolutionary War, Bayard had built up a prosperous firm in Philadelphia.

Joining the Third Pennsylvania Regiment, he became a captain at an early date and later was promoted to colonel. The early years of his service were at Fort Pitt where he met Elizabeth, the daughter of Aeneas Mackay, the first white child to be born at the Fort. Later he married the young lady, who was many years his junior.

After the war, Bayard and Major Isaac Craig obtained three acres of land in the heart of the present Golden Triangle. When the heirs of the Penns realized they had made a mistake in selling, the two men waived their rights and were richly compensated with thirty-two lots on present Liberty Avenue where they engaged in some fairly profitable enterprises.

From this time until 1788, Stephen Bayard became very active in the affairs of the reconstructed congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, and was one of the founding trustees.

When, in 1788, he moved to a tract of land twelve miles south on the Monongahela he named it Elizabethtown (now Elizabeth) for his wife, and began shipbuilding.

In 1815 he returned to Pittsburgh and died on December 13 of that year. He was buried in the cemetery of First Church. His ashes could not be identified for removal at a later day, and so the remains of Stephen Bayard, son-in-law of Aeneas Mackay, founding trustee of the post-Revolutionary First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh are at present resting in its crypt.

Ebenezer Denny, another Revolutionary soldier, was to play an important role in First Presbyterian Church and his family to be a vital element in its history for the next two centuries.

Denny began his military career in his fifteenth year as a youthful dispatch carrier to Fort Pitt. By the end of the war he was a subaltern and took part in the storming of the British forts at Yorktown.

In recognition of the gallantry of his regiment, he was detailed to plant the flagstaff on the British ramparts.

Denny's son later wrote:

The young officer mounted the parapet in the presence of the three armies, and was in the act of planting the flag-staff, when Baron Steuben rode out of the lines, dismounted, took the flag, and planted it himself. The disappointed and mortified subaltern had nothing to do but submit. But not so his colonel, Richard Butler . . . He, that night, sent Baron Steuben a message, as everyone expected, and it took all the influence of Rochambeau and Washington to prevent a hostile meeting.²

Ebenezer Denny later married Nancy Wilkins. Their offspring, Harmar Denny, married into the O'Hara family and thus founded the famous Denny-O'Hara dynasty in First Church.

James O'Hara was an Irish Protestant, educated in France. He had served in the British Coldstream Guards. Aged twenty, he emigrated to America and eventually made friends with the then Colonel George Washington who may have suggested Fort Pitt as a likely place of opportunity for a young man.

Thus, when the Revolutionary War broke out, O'Hara was an Indian trader in Pittsburgh. Throughout the war he served as supplier to the army.

In 1784, James O'Hara married Mary (Polly) Carson and brought his bride to her new home in Pittsburgh. Setting up house in the King's Orchard, James joined the congregation of his Presbyterian wife. Thus, while he kept a "priest's room" in his home,³ for any traveling clergy, and later donated land for the first Roman Catholic Church, James O'Hara became trustee of the 1784 reconstituted Presbyterian Church. He was also the first quartermaster general of the United States of America.

These are some of the Revolutionary families which linked to form important family dynasties in First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh. One other pair, however, must be mentioned, that of the Nevilles and Craigs.

When Captain John Neville, commanding a Virginia Company, seized Fort Pitt in 1775 to hold it for the Revolutionary army against all British and Tories, it was as though he had sounded a tocsin for the total involvement of the men of Pittsburgh in the war. He served through the war and was a colonel of the Fourth Virginia Line and a member of the Society of Cincinnati.⁴

While originally an Episcopalian, John Neville switched to Presbyterian, as did John Gibson, Richard Butler, and many others. No doubt, Neville was encouraged in this transfer of loyalties, not only by the alliance between the King of England and the Anglican bishops, but also because his daughter, Amelia, married Isaac Craig, a native of Hillsborough, County Down, Northern Ireland.⁵

Isaac Craig, a house joiner in Philadelphia at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, was appointed a Captain of Marines and sailed in the sloop *Andrew Doria* in Commodore Hopkins' squadron, with Paul Jones, Joshua Barney, and others. He later served as Captain in Proctor's regiment of artillery. He fought in battles at Princeton, Brandywine, and Germantown; he also fought against the Six Nations. He was a founding trustee of First Church.⁶

The Neville-Craig window in the present church commemorates the two families—John and Winifred Neville and Isaac and Amelia Neville Craig.

John Gibson, mentioned often in this history, was also a founding trustee of First Church and lived well into the nineteenth century. His was the most exciting life of all the First Church men.

The names of the sons of First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh enrolled in the War of American Independence are almost too numerous to mention. The Revolutionary Roll Call of the congregation reads like a Pittsburgh street directory.

Forty-eight officers and non-commissioned officers of the Colonial and Revolutionary Armies who were associated with First Church have been listed by Dr. Clarence E. Macartney in the February Issue of "FIRST CHURCH LIFE," 1941.

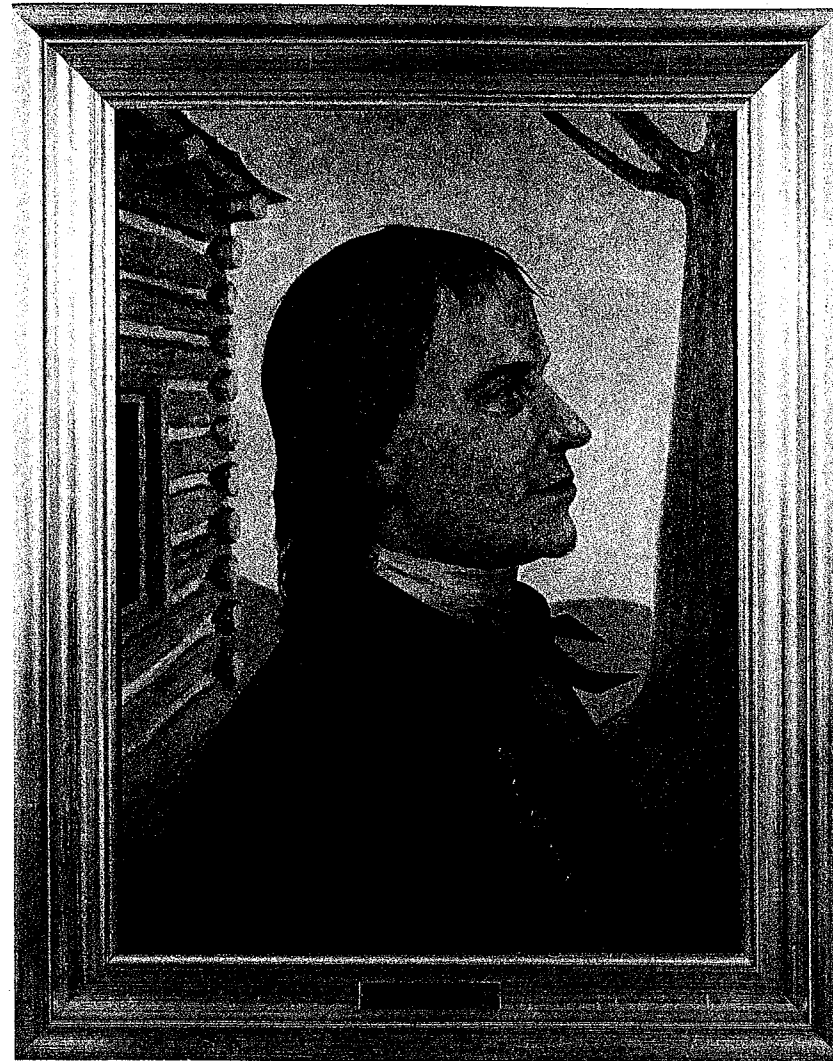
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
and the
WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

TRUSTEES OF THE FIRST CHURCH
AND OFFICERS IN WASHINGTON'S ARMY

General James O'Hara	Colonel Stephen Bayard
Major Ebenezer Denny	Colonel John Gibson
Major Isaac Craig	Captain John Wilkins

OFFICERS OF THE COLONIAL AND REVOLUTIONARY ARMIES
WHO WERE ASSOCIATED WITH THE FIRST CHURCH

Capt. William Anderson	Maj. Abraham Kirkpatrick
Com. Joshua Barney	Maj. Joel Lewis
Col. Stephen Barney	Col. Stephen Lowrey
Capt. John Brandon	Capt. George McCully
Sergt. Felix Brunot	Col. Aeneas Mackay
Capt. Edward Butler	Col. George Morgan
Capt. Percival Butler	Sgt. John Morgan
Gen. Richard Butler	Col. James Morrison
Col. Thomas Butler	Gen. John Neville
Gen. William Butler	Lt. Col. Presley Neville
Chaplain H. H. Brackenridge	Qm. General James O'Hara
Capt. Samuel Dawson	Maj. John Ormsby
Capt. Ebenezer Denny	Lt. Gabriel Peterson
Gen. Alexander Fowler	Asst. Qm. Samuel Sample
Col. George Gibson	Maj. John Small
Col. John Gibson	Maj. Thomas Smallman
Capt. John Guthrie	Capt. Devereux Smith
Capt. Henry Heth	Lt. Jacob Springer
Capt. Michael Hufnagle	Capt. David Steel
Sgt. Maj. John Howe	Capt. Adamson Tannehill
Capt. Thomas Hutchins	Capt. George Wallace
Capt. Nathaniel Irish	Capt. Edward Ward
Capt. John Irwin	Capt. John Wilkins
Col. James Johnston	Qm. Gen. John Wilkins, Jr.



THE REV. SAMUEL BARR
1785-1789

The Church of the Unruly Laymen

After the Revolutionary War, a rugged group of soldiers and ex-officers drifted into Pittsburgh either singly or in companies.

Some, like John Gibson, James O'Hara, Adamson Tannehill, Richard Butler, John Irwin, George McCully, and Devereux Smith were Indian traders or government agents returning to former haunts. Others, such as Isaac Craig, Stephen Bayard, Ebenezer Denny, John Neville, George Wallace, and John Wilkins were men who had discovered the new frontier during the war, saw its opportunities, and decided to settle down.

Many of these men were Scotch-Irish Presbyterians; others were Anglicans. Practically all became either temporary or permanent Presbyterians.

As already indicated, the Anglican Bishops during the Revolutionary War had sided with the King of England. Episcopacy, becoming thus identified with Anglicanism, had not only lost face, but part of its membership. A new American nation had been born with childhood allergies to both English tea and English Episcopacy.

The new population of Pittsburgh was no longer made up of easygoing colonists from the old country. Here—with some fine and notable exceptions—was a new breed of men, hardened war veterans who had survived the desperate years by force of arms; men who stood in peril of the hangman's noose if their cause were lost; men who had learned to hate with gusty passion; men who had lived in the shadows of violence and sudden death; hard-drinking men with a lust for life and property and power; materialistic men whose Christian faith had been an early casualty in war.

Now these men proposed to settle down in Pittsburgh. They did so as a military conclave, prepared to follow their hard-bitten military leaders, the ex-generals, the ex-colonels and the ex-chaplains.

This establishment wanted religion, but they wanted it as a reinforcement for society rather than as a life-changing evangel.

Such men would not easily respond to the logic-loving Presbyterian minister of the day; though a chaplain like the Reverend Charles Beatty, a real man's man with evangelistic fervor and Kingdom vision, could have been, under God, the salvation of the city. But now there was no Beatty, no Duffield, no McClure, and no Frisbie. The day of the heroic missionary was over.

From the first the laymen took the initiative, and they were certainly not ready-made material for saints.

One of the most rugged of all was John Wilkins, an unsuccessful tavern owner from Carlisle. One cannot help liking the man in spite of his conceit and brazenness. A military man who had raised his own company in the Revolutionary War, he was a brash egocentric with an engaging frankness. He saw himself as the hero of every drama. He also knew nothing of the pre-Revolutionary history of the congregation of First Presbyterian Church. His personal narrative, written in his old age in 1809, suggests that Presbyterianism came West with John Wilkins in 1783 and that the First Church was his creation:

In the middle of October, 1783, I left Carlisle and set out in the wagon with a light gun in my hand, and arrived in Pittsburgh November 10.

When I first came here I found the place filled with old officers and soldiers, followers of the army, mixed with a few families of credit. All sorts of wickedness were carried on to excess, and there was no appearance of morality or regular order. As I have already remarked, when I first came to this town there appeared to be no signs of religion among the people, and it seemed to me that the Presbyterian ministers were afraid to come to the place lest they should be mocked or mistreated. I often hinted to the creditable part of the people that something ought to be done toward establishing a Presbyterian Church in this place and encouraging it.¹

With Mr. Wilkins' encouragement, application was made for supplies to the recently-formed Redstone Presbytery at its fifth meeting held in Buffalo Church, April 13, 1784; and on April 14, 1784, the Reverend Joseph Smith was appointed to supply at Pittsburgh the fourth Sabbath of August.²

According to Colonel Samuel Scott—as reported on page 138 of the *Centennial Volume of First Church*—preaching and the communion took place in 1784 on the Indian burial mound where the Church was later built.

It was in this year that the controversy over the boundaries with Virginia ended and one of the members of the Mason-Dixon Line Commission brought one hundred sixty Bibles into the area to be distributed.

Again on October 19, 1784, supplication was made to Redstone Presbytery. This time the "Bullock-pens" appears along with "Pittsburgh" as also seeking supplies.³

In the spring and early summer of 1785, Alexander Addison appeared in Pittsburgh.⁴ He was seeking to be received into the ministry and he appears to have played a major part in the reorganization of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh.

Alexander Addison, carrying a copy of his licensure to preach from the Presbytery of Aberlour in Scotland, opened Presbytery with a sermon in December 20, 1785,⁵ and for some time was permitted to preach in the area. Eventually, however, Presbytery refused to ordain Mr. Addison and he took up the practice of law, becoming one of the greatest of Western judges. He never gave up his interest in the church and became the driving force behind the lay leadership of First Church for the rest of his life—and no friend of Redstone Presbytery.

Hugh Brackenridge, an ex-chaplain of the Revolutionary Army with universalistic leanings, wanted an ecumenical church for Pittsburgh. His bid for a "religious society," as he termed it, had the backing of the military hierarchy with its mixture of Presbyterians, ex-Episcopalians, and deists.

Because of his religious and cultural background, James O'Hara had a respect for religion and the clergy which ultimately helped lead his family into deep loyalty to Christ and His church. Ebenezer Denny, Stephen Bayard, and Isaac Craig were men of like background and disposition. These four were to play a major part in the ultimate organization of First Church.

Brackenridge himself looked on religion as a useful device for cementing moral order in the community—the minister was to be a complaisant man, a sort of chaplain to the community, and to take his orders from the ex-military hierarchy.

The establishment of a clergyman in this town, to carry the idea no farther, is a high political good. The black cloth, the sedate and grave presence of a divine, the idea of dignity and reverence, from common opinion, annexed to his character, restrains the disorderly in the streets where he walks, or in the neighborhood where he lives.⁶

So wrote Brackenridge.

An efficient robot dressed in clerical attire was close to Brackenridge's idea of a minister, provided the ex-chaplain and his friends could set up the puppet mechanism and pull the strings.

The Reverend Samuel Barr, the man who now came forward as the first long-term minister of Pittsburgh, was not likely to allow any man to make a puppet out of him.

Mr. Barr was a red-headed, strong-willed little Ulster Scot, newly arrived from Londonderry, Northern Ireland, where he had been licensed to preach the gospel. He had received his theological education at Glasgow University, Scotland. He possessed a legal mind, honed to a razor's edge, a shrewd business instinct, and a well-filled purse.

Samuel Barr was a Calvinist of the old school, who in a moment of high idealism refused a call to the wealthy congregation of New London, Chester County, to come as a pioneer preacher to Pittsburgh.

With his new wife and a servant girl, the latter tied to the horse in case she should go to sleep and fall off, the Reverend Samuel Barr trekked across the mountains to Pittsburgh. He had first heard of the town's opportunities in the home of his father-in-law at New Castle in the East.⁷

Mr. Barr was not suited either by character or temperament to be pastor in a church dominated by highly aggressive individualists who sought a near Unitarian community church; nor was he suited to a presbytery of fervent revivalist ministers. He was a down-to-earth, old-fashioned Calvinist. The set-up

looked like a vicious triangle with minister, congregation, and Presbytery all on different sides of it.

Hugh Brackenridge, himself a man of letters and learning, was at first highly impressed by the cultured, precise, business-like divine, and eagerly sponsored Mr. Barr as a suitable candidate for his envisioned community church.

The original elders of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, ordained in 1785, were Stephen Bayard, William Dunning, Robert Galbraith, and John Wilkins. As we see, Hugh Brackenridge was not named among them, nor would he have desired to be. Yet it was he who played a decisive part in the incorporation of the church during these early years.

Already in 1785, Brackenridge had a bill in the Legislative Assembly at Philadelphia asking for the incorporation of a religious society in Pittsburgh.⁸

In 1786 when the bill was read a second time the wording was amended to read "lots for a church and a burying ground."⁹ When the bill was called up it proved to be a bill to incorporate the "Presbyterian Congregation," in Pittsburgh, "at this time under the care of the Reverend Samuel Barr."¹⁰

Mr. Brackenridge urged that to incorporate a Presbyterian Society would be to divide the people and make probable the loss of the church they had. The loss, he felt, would be great "because religion was useful to keep up order and enforce the practice of morality."¹¹

By the time the bill passed on September 29, 1787, due to the influence and pressure of Mr. Findley, member of the assembly from Westmoreland County, the title "Presbyterian Congregation" was accepted.¹² The controversy over the title of the church had delayed the bill until September 29, 1787. Thus, the Presbyterianism of First Church was reassured, and Mr. Brackenridge's attempt to substitute an ecumenical church defeated.

There was an unfortunate aftermath to this ecumenical proposal. Apparently, when some years earlier he had been invited to become minister of First Church by Mr. Brackenridge and the other broad-minded Presbyterians, the Reverend Barr had entered into an agreement with his sponsors to baptize the children of anyone so desirous, whether they were actually on the communion rolls of the congregation or not. This practice of open baptism by Mr. Barr would lead to serious difficulties with Redstone Presbytery at a later date.

Sharing the ministry of the Reverend Samuel Barr with First Church was the country congregation of Bullock-pens, later Pitts Township, still later Beulah. This congregation first made application for supplies on October 19, 1784, six months after Pittsburgh sought supplies from Redstone Presbytery.¹³

The Reverend Barr resided in Pittsburgh and travelled out to Beulah to fulfill the ministerial duties he also owed to that congregation.



THE LOG CABIN CHURCH—1787

The building of the log church seems to have been the work of Mr. John Wilkins, who grumbled that most Pittsburghers were more interested in horse-racing than building of a church.

Mr. Wallace and myself were appointed to take subscriptions and superintend the building. Mr. Wallace paid little attention and the whole business devolved on me. I myself worked at the building with my own hands and chunked and daubed it with the assistance of attendants.¹⁴

The Pittsburgh *Gazette* stated, August 26, 1786, that "a church of squared timbers and moderate dimensions is on the way to be built."¹⁵

Mr. Barr traveled east in late summer of 1787 to raise money and obtain a grant of land. The Penn heirs, John Penn and his cousin, John Penn, Jr., deeded on parchment on September 24, 1787, to eleven trustees, two and one-half lots of the ground already designated (the old Indian burial mound) for the nominal sum of five shillings, ". . . as well as of the laudable inclination which they have for encouraging and promoting morality, piety and religion in general, and more especially in the town of Pittsburgh."¹⁶

The names of the original trustees as stated in the act passed by the Legislature to incorporate the Presbyterian congregation of Pittsburgh were the Reverend Samuel Barr, John Withers, Robert Galbraith, Stephen Bayard, Alexander Fowler, George Wallace, David Duncan, Adamson Tannyhill (Tannehill), John Gibson, Richard Butler, and Isaac Craig. William Dunning, John Wilkins, Stephen Bayard, and Robert Galbraith were original elders, as already stated.

The Presbyterians, with no small degree of presumption, appear to have already erected a log cabin church on the site, by August 1786, according to the Pittsburgh *Gazette*. On July 8, 1787, three months before the church was incorporated, or the land granted, Samuel Vaughan says in his sparsely punctuated *Journal*: "The town consists of about 150 houses mostly log or framed, some good stone a presbeterian meeting, near 400 Men."¹⁷

The German Evangelicals, under the Reverend Johann Wilhelm Weber, had occasional circuit services in a log building where they met for worship. This group also received two and one-half lots on later Smithfield Street.

The Episcopalians received two and one-half lots, comprising the other half of the Indian burial mound. With the practical disintegration of Episcopacy in the new nation, it was not until 1797 that a group of Episcopalians invited the Reverend John Taylor to become their pastor. He was a former Irish Presbyterian who, with much discouragement, conducted services in various places. In 1805 the Episcopalian Round Church was erected on the triangle at the corner of Sixth Avenue where Azen's now stands.¹⁸

In 1808, the Roman Catholics received a resident priest.

Thus it was that First Presbyterian Church had to itself practically all of organized religion in Pittsburgh until almost the beginning of the nineteenth

century. During this period Pittsburgh was not gospel hungry, and even First Church found it difficult to survive as a spiritual entity. As a social catalyst and an organizing force, however, it created, or largely created, almost all of Pittsburgh's institutions.

In his trip East, Mr. Barr was also engaged in raising money, and at this time of financial need a spirit of unity prevailed. Mr. Barr did not seem at first to be altogether opposed to Mr. Brackenridge's ecumenical plan. In an appeal for funds he points to the moral renewal of Pittsburgh and gives credit to the spirit of Christian unity:

"To think," he wrote, "that a number of people who had been bred up to different persuasions should unite in love and harmony to promote the gospel of Christ. An instance of the like kind is rarely to be found in the annals of modern history."¹⁹

Here is true ecumenicity based on loyalty to Jesus Christ and His gospel, and to this Christ-centered unity, the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh has always adhered.

On the day the church was formally opened, the usually prosaic Samuel Barr struck a truly lyrical note:

Oh how comfortable to reflect that the place where not long since the wigwam and the tomahawk were erected, and where nothing but the screeches and cries of savages were heard . . . to behold the temple of God. . . . How ecstatic the joy . . . that we have been instruments of rescuing some whose minds are pregnant with inveterate habits. . . . This is a work that claims the attention of every Christian. . . . To this we are excited . . . by all the motives of the Gospel of Jesus, for it has the promise of happiness in this life and in that which is to come.²⁰

Though never spiritually aggressive under Mr. Barr's ministry, First Church became socially creative to an astonishing degree.

With his friend, Mr. Brackenridge, the Reverend Samuel Barr—during his honeymoon days with the congregation—pushed forward the formation of Pittsburgh Academy, which later developed, through the Western University of Pennsylvania, into the University of Pittsburgh. This was a joint effort of the two men in its beginnings, though the choosing of trustees lay with the lawyer.

Mr. Brackenridge chose twenty-one trustees, the men he felt were the best qualified in Western Pennsylvania. Of these, six were clergymen and the Reverend Samuel Barr headed the list. It is noted that of the six clergymen, five were Presbyterians and one was an Associate Seceder (later United Presbyterian). Of the fifteen laymen chosen as trustees, four served also as original trustees of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh.²¹

Mr. Barr's business gifts were recognized in his being appointed, along with Hugh Ross and Stephen Bayard, to form a committee which was responsible for building Pittsburgh's first market house. Admittedly, a ramshackle affair, it was the beginning of a market which was to expand and become a focal

point of Pittsburgh's growing trade. The market, as an institution, endured to recent times.

It is noted that in the petition for the formation of Allegheny County the name of the Reverend Samuel Barr is second on the list.

In 1788, when Allegheny County was formed in the First Court of Quarter Sessions, the entire bench was composed of people of First Church. The President Judge was George Wallace, while James Scott, John Wilkins, and John Johnston were the Associates.

A notice appears in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 15, 1788, page 2:

Died here on Wednesday morning last, at 5 o'clock, Samuel McKay, son of the late Colonel Aeneas McKay, of this place, in his 22nd year, much and justly lamented. His remains were interred on Thursday, and an excellent sermon, adapted to the occasion, was preached by the reverend Samuel Barr from the 16th Psalm, 11th verse, *Thou wilt show me the path of Life.*

Mr. Barr also instituted the practice of catechizing the children and youth of the congregation on Sabbath evenings in the summer. This practice became the germ of the later Sunday School.

During 1785, the Reverend Samuel Barr preached with great acceptance to the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh. First Church possesses three sermons preached by Mr. Barr in Delaware. They are all on Sabbath observance, forming a trio. The reasoning in them is clear, concise, and logical. They carry conviction. There is little in them, however, to warm the heart.

The honeymoon period between minister and congregation was destined to be of short duration. A coolness set in.

The first antagonism arose with Hugh Brackenridge. Samuel Vaughan, visiting Pittsburgh in the early summer of 1787, went to the Presbyterian Church and heard Mr. Barr who, "gave a good Discourse to 120 persons,—several who had taken ambrage [umbrage] for his dispute with Mr. Brackenridge on politicks & did not attend."²² The politics here referred to was having a Presbyterian Church rather than a community one.

However, the fact that an attendance of 120 (with some absenting themselves over a quarrel) was regarded as a small attendance is remarkable. The town of Pittsburgh had only 150 houses, and at this time church membership in the United States was less than seven percent of the population.

Mr. Barr's enthusiasm for Christian unity seems to have begun to wane early in his ministry. When Robert Ayres, a Methodist evangelist, rode into Pittsburgh, Methodism received a cool reception from the Presbyterian minister.

Ayres writes with abbreviated spelling and using capitals for emphasis, on March 26, 1787:

. . . Monday Rode into Ft. Pitt and Conversd wt. Mr. Barr Who Seemd Very Dry and Rather Discouraged me from Coming Into the Town to preach which Causd Some Exercise of mind. Returned to Frd. Quinn's & tarried.²³

It was now becoming evident that Mr. Barr was a Calvinist of the old or conservative side and was not going to be popular either to a Pittsburgh congregation of broad-minded liberals or to a Presbytery of fervent evangelists.

By now the break with Brackenridge was radical. Already the latter had written of his erstwhile minister friend, the Reverend Mr. Barr:

I shall be under obligation to him to mention me in his prayers, if he can think of it. If it does no good, it can do no harm, as I do not go to hear his sermons and still continue to pay him, I may as well take that as get nothing.²⁴

Before long even more serious dissensions arose between Mr. Barr and two leading laymen in the church, Mr. Wilkins and Mr. Wallace. Eventually, practically all the leaders in the church were embroiled in a very bitter dispute with their minister.

The matter went to Presbytery.

It had become evident that Mr. Barr, a conservative Calvinist, would get little sympathy from the evangelical Presbytery of Redstone. Differences over baptism and church discipline were evident. The Redstone Presbytery took a much stricter line than Mr. Barr.

John Wilkins, a leading elder of First Church, cleverly played on this. With a touch of malice, he told the Presbytery that when Mr. Barr had asked him to become an elder he had declined because he liked his game of cards, but that Mr. Barr said that it would be acceptable for him as an elder to play, provided he indulged only in private. It was stated that on one occasion Mr. Barr was himself invited to play cards. The minister allegedly replied that "it would not suit, as there was a number of bigoted, narrow-hearted McMillanites on the other side of the river, who, if they would hear of it, might call him to an account."²⁵ To speak thus of the "cardinal" of Redstone was simply to ask for trouble.

Graver charges were made, that Mr. Barr had collected money in New York and Philadelphia for the church at Pittsburgh, but that he had never produced it. Furthermore, it was stated that Mr. Barr had not preached regularly.

The minister of Pittsburgh replied that he had been unable to exercise church discipline because his elders had not supported him; that he had not been able to hold services on occasion because the congregational leaders had locked the church doors at the hour of public worship; and that all money was accounted for.

Presbytery seems to have placed the major share of the blame for this unhappy situation on Mr. Barr—dissolving his pastoral relationship with the Pittsburgh congregation and forbidding him to "exercise any part of his ministerial office until the mind of our Synod is known thereon, to whom we do refer the ultimate determination of this affair."²⁶

Synod finally met on the fourth Tuesday of November, 1789, at Pittsburgh for consideration of the whole affair "De Novo."

From the Synod, which was not a biased body, Mr. Barr received the privilege of directly cross-examining his accusers.

As any one who has read Mr. Barr's tightly-reasoned sermons would predict, he proved a first-class lawyer. His examination uncovered a mean little plot on the part of the leaders of the church to discredit their minister, so that salary owing him would not be a burden saddled on the congregation. Most of those concerned finally made this ugly admission.

Perhaps the most damning evidence against the leaders of the congregation came from the members of Pitt Township Congregation (now Beulah Church) to which Mr. Barr itinerated. A delegation now came from Pitt Township to Synod with a remonstrance signed by one hundred sixty of its members. They witnessed to their satisfaction with Mr. Barr in every respect and urged that he return as their pastor.

Furthermore, a remonstrance was presented by sixty subscribers of First Presbyterian Church expressing satisfaction with their pastor and voicing a desire that Mr. Barr return to be their minister. Some of these members, including John Gibson, had previously witnessed against him.

One by one Mr. Barr neutralized the charges laid against him, revealing them for what they were—a rather clumsy conspiracy, which now backfired and blackened only the reputations of his accusers.

Synod disciplined John Wilkins, Robert Galbraith, and George Wallace, Esq., stating that they should "not enjoy the privileges of the Church in our communion until they testify repentance for their unworthy conduct, and receive a public rebuke for the same before the Church, by a regular minister," who would be appointed by the Presbytery of Redstone for that purpose.²⁷

Altogether the lay leadership of First Presbyterian Church does not appear in a bright light at this time. The congregation owed Mr. Barr seventeen pounds at the conclusion of his ministry. Perhaps their inability to pay their minister, and their attempt to blacken his character to avoid having to do so, was due to certain personal debts being built up by a number of the members of session and the board of trustees.

When Patrick Murphy, the local tavern owner, drowned while attempting to rescue a child from drowning, his books were examined and it was discovered that amounts owed to him by leading members of the board of session and trustees of First Church ranged from one pound to thirty-nine pounds.²⁸

Mr. Barr accepted a call from the church of Christiana Bridge in Newcastle, Delaware, one of the oldest and finest churches in the country.

When he left Pittsburgh, the Reverend Mr. Barr sold his considerable local properties. An advertisement appeared in the Pittsburgh *Gazette* stating that all Mr. Barr's property in Pittsburgh and its vicinity would be put up for sale. The

property consisted of: a house with a lot; three vacant lots; a lot of sixteen acres; two lots on the other side of the Allegheny; and two lots on the Sewickley Creek containing 530 acres.²⁹

As a personal investment, Mr. Barr had purchased the lot No. 440 fronting on Wood Street, adjacent to the church. This land came into the hands of the trustees in 1802. This proved to be one of the most important business transactions in the history of First Presbyterian Church, enabling her to enter the twentieth century financially stable under the Reverend Maitland Alexander, and readapt herself to a new world.

The Barrs had two children born to them in Pittsburgh, and ten more born into their family after they moved to Delaware. So it could be said of Samuel Barr, as of Job, that the Lord blessed the end of his life more than the beginning.

Pittsburgh owes much to this great man whose Scottish mother down the years kept a private room in her Ulster home to pray for her children.

Mr. Barr died in 1818.

Miss Jane Barr, the daughter of the first Presbyterian minister of Pittsburgh, lived to provide Dr. Scovel with much information regarding her parents and Dr. Barr's ministry in Pittsburgh.

It was her opinion that the Reverend Barr's interest in First Church and his readiness to continue to serve as its minister was unabated after his being cleared of all charges by Synod.

But, as was to be expected, my mother was unhappy at the separation from her family, and, as I am informed, she could not accustom herself to the rough country and people, and being of a timid disposition, she lived in continual terror of the Indians, who were very numerous, and who would carry off one or other of her infant boys and keep them all day in their wigwams, she being afraid to show any want of faith in them, even so much as to ask them not to take them, or enquire when they would bring them back; but when they did return them, she always felt as if she had received them from the dead.³⁰

This all seems fairly likely. The picture of life in Pittsburgh at this time is faithful to the facts, as is the character of Samuel Barr, a man who would not easily give up a difficult ministry.

At this time Mr. Alexander Negley, who had moved into the East Liberty valley as early as 1778 and assisted in the reorganization of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh in 1784, had persuaded his Pittsburgh pastor, the Reverend Barr, to begin monthly services in his home. The occasion for the invitation was to give the Reverend Barr the opportunity to address groups of surrounding settlers who had gathered in the large Negley farmhouse for protection from Indian raids which broke out at this time. Mr. Barr carried out this ministry during the last months he spent in Pittsburgh.³¹

Perhaps Hannah, the servant girl, brought back East the most interesting reminder of Pittsburgh, a perfect imitation of the Indian war whoop. With this

fascinating and soul-chilling mimicry, she attained fame among her friends in Delaware.

After the departure of the Reverend Barr, Pittsburgh existed on supplies.

A Mr. Samuel Mahon (licentiate of Carlisle Presbytery) did preach 1792-1793 and received a call from the congregation and a promise of a reasonable salary. Two hundred forty people supported him.

Presbytery, however, refused to sustain the call. He became a lawyer and practiced in Natchez. Redstone Presbytery gave many lawyers to the profession.

A Mr. Sample preached as supply during part of 1794. Mrs. William Eichbaum had been baptized by him. She told Dr. Scovel that "an old friend, in view of Mr. Sample's later life, had suggested she should be baptized over again."³² Mr. Sample went into the legislature and apparently became a rather flexible politician.

At the General Assembly of 1794 a petition was presented by the "congregation of Pittsburgh, requesting to be separated from the Presbytery of Redstone, and to be annexed to the Presbytery of Carlisle." The decision was negative.³³

Apparently for some years after this the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh either provided its own supplies, accepted the preaching ministrations of passing clergy—such as the youthful Francis Herron in 1799—or kept their doors padlocked to keep out Methodists.

The chief personage in the church during this period—and in fact acting almost as minister without appointment—was Judge Alexander Addison, who had been rejected as a candidate for ordination by Redstone Presbytery.³⁴ It was Judge Addison who introduced hymn books to First Church before the close of the century.

During this time the Whiskey Rebellion broke out. Redstone for once was in a much more lawless state than Pittsburgh; for it was in Redstone that the insurrection against the newly formed United States government found its focus. A number of the laity of these churches were debarred from communion by their courageous ministers, until they confessed and repented their sins of violence.

In the meantime, the unshepherded members of the Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, in spite of their regrettable lack of religious fervor, were loyal to the government and upholders of law and order.

In social action the Pittsburgh Presbyterian Church showed itself on the side of the angels in spite of being denied clerical leadership by the Presbytery.



THE REV. ROBERT STEELE*
1800-1810

**No likeness available—sketch made from historic records.*

The Church with the Gifted Minister

However, the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh was soon to have a minister after its own heart.

At first he did not appear to be a suitable candidate for a church whose leaders had vilified their previous minister, and whose laity had gained a reputation for taking church affairs into their own hands.

The Reverend Robert Steele was born in Ballykelly in the County of Londonderry, Ireland, a county which gave Pittsburgh its first two ministers. He attended a grammar school also in Derry and then spent three sessions at the College of Glasgow. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Route, which was like a little piece of pure Covenanter Scotland transplanted to Northern Ireland. The date of his license was July 29, 1788.

In the year 1789, Mr. Steele accepted a call to the congregation of Scriggan in Dungiven, which lay on the banks of a winding river ten or fifteen miles out of Londonderry.

Ordained in Dungiven by Derry Presbytery on November 2, 1790, Robert Steele married a Derry girl, Isabella Hazlett, in June of the following year.¹

Seldom have two people been so delightfully mated in marriage. The Reverend Mr. Steele was a scholar, a gentleman, a gifted violinist, and a born educator as well as an idealist and a visionary. He was fastidious in dress and delightfully extrovert.

His wife, also an extrovert, was a student of Shakespeare and a quick-witted woman ready to follow her husband, if necessary, to the ends of the earth.

After ten years that necessity arose.

The Reverend Robert Steele, for all his grace of person and fastidious dress, was a real man's man. He rejoiced in men's groups and clubs and organizations. He was also an idealist in a very sordid world. Here lay his peril. Mr. Steele's Ulster ministry coincided with the most troubled years of Irish history. The penal laws were kindling rebellion in the hearts of the proud, ambitious Presbyterians of Ulster.

In reaction to these laws a third of the Scotch-Irish emigrated to America and fanned out across Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kentucky. They had provided much of the thrust for the American Revolution, which the British termed a Presbyterian rising; and men like Patrick Henry and John Witherspoon became the folk heroes of the Ulster Scot. It was inevitable that a party of political activists should arise in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and that at least some ministers should be involved.

Eventually fire broke out over Ulster. But the "Sons of Liberty" in Ulster failed. Spies, paid informers, and divided councils lost the day and "1798" marked the end of Ulster Scots Nationalism.²

It was a "killing" time. Lord Londonderry, who appears to have been something of a sadist or a brute, had the Reverend James Porter hanged on a gallows between the nearby Presbyterian meetinghouse and the manse. Porter's only sin seems to have been that he lampooned Londonderry in the local paper. When Londonderry's invalid daughter pleaded with her father not to hang the minister, and Mrs. Porter stood at his gate in supplication, Lord Londonderry sent out the word that he intended to hang Mr. Porter, but he would not commit the body afterwards to quicklime. Instead, Mrs. Porter could take the corpse to the manse and have it buried. When Mrs. Porter conveyed the news to her husband, "Billy Bluff," to use the Reverend Mr. Porter's pen name, replied with a rather pathetic wit: "Well, Mary, I'll sleep at the manse the night anyhow."

Daniel English, a young Covenanter, was forcibly dressed up in grave-clothes and marched four miles to Connor Bridge, accompanied by a vast concourse of his friends, who sang the 119th Psalm until the hills echoed with the sad, sweet melody. At Connor, Daniel English was executed.³

Neither of these men was involved in rebellion.

Apparently the Reverend Robert Steele, aged thirty-one years and minister of Scriggan, was involved. Word came to presbytery that he had pleaded guilty to treason and rebellion before a court-martial. His name was stricken from the rolls.

Mr. Steele very wisely decided not to wait to pick up his credentials, but made for Derry fast and took immediate passage to America, accompanied by his wife and infant son. Two other sons followed later.

Mr. Steele was an extremely fortunate man.

His first task in the New World was to be received into the Presbyterian Church. On June 26, 1799, according to the minutes of that day, the Reverend Robert Steele appeared at a meeting of Redstone Presbytery seeking a field of service. He had only a testimonial of his standing as a Gospel minister from his congregation—none from Londonderry Presbytery or the Synod of Ulster, as he had to leave his country precipitately. From New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk he had also letters of recommendation regarding character and good standing in Ireland as a Gospel minister. At the same meeting application was made by the congregation of Pittsburgh for supplies.

A mating seemed inevitable, but the period of waiting and espousal was going to be just as long as the Redstone Presbytery could make it. Any minister seeking the pulpit of the Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh was already highly suspect to that highly suspicious body.

It is most unlikely that Presbytery knew the full circumstances of Mr. Steele's leaving Ulster, and they certainly never dreamed that his name had been stricken from the rolls of his Presbytery in Ireland. Indeed, it is quite possible that Mr. Steele never knew of it himself. No doubt he regarded himself as a persecuted martyr in the cause of human justice and freedom. And it is more than possible that his colleagues in Ireland had their tongue in their cheek as they drew a line through his name on the rolls of Presbytery, and later of the Synod.

But thus it stands in the minutes of the General Synod of Ulster which met at Lurgan, August 28, 1798:

Derry Presbytery report . . . That Revd. Robert Steele, having pleaded Guilty to a charge of Treason & Rebellion before a Court Martial his name was erased from the List of Presbytery.

On the same page, the execution of Mr. Porter is recorded and also that two other ministers and two probationers had been charged with treason or sedition.

One wonders if the rugged old revolutionaries of First Church knew the full story of Mr. Steele's involvement in the 1798 rebellion, the treason to which he is alleged to have confessed and the dramatic escape by near miracle from the hangman's noose.

Certainly it is true that the tall, graceful young minister of fresh complexion, who dressed so immaculately in satin breeches, silk stockings, knee buckles, and pumps,⁴ and who was a good player of the violin, had come as close to death in the cause of human dignity and freedom as any of the Devereux Smiths, the Ormsbys, the Butlers, the Bayards, the Craigs, the Wilkineses, the O'Haras, or the Gibsons. Had America failed in her revolution as Ulster did, then the names of the trustees and elders of First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh would have been high on the list of men wanted to be hanged by the English crown.

It is more likely that the church leaders did know of Mr. Steele's political exploits in Ireland. That could be why they accepted Mr. Steele so readily at the first; that could be part of the reason they loved him all through his ministry with a love which was well nigh passionate.

But it was not the whole reason. Mr. Steele was a man who engendered love. The new minister of First Church was said to be undemonstrative, but strong and patient and true to his convictions. He had gifts in this respect to which Mr. Barr could never attain and it is doubtful whether, from the purely human and functional aspect, the Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh could have obtained a better minister or, for that matter, a better minister's wife.

Mrs. Steele, also a scholar, was a keen student of William Shakespeare. The lady of the manse had a subtle wit and, on looking at an oven constructed by her husband—whose craftsmanship never quite matched his good intentions—

was heard to remark that "one could certainly bow down and worship her husband's handiwork without breaking the second commandment because his homemade oven had no likeness to anything in heaven or on earth."⁵

The precentor, who was also the local tavern owner, thought so highly of Mrs. Steele that he insisted that his five pounds a year precentor's salary be given to her.

An instance of the innate kindness of the Steeles and the gracious impression they made on those with whom they came in contact, is contained in Dr. Elizabeth Collett's story of the journey of the Reverend William Van Horne. Mr. Van Horne was formerly a chaplain in the Revolutionary War and a personal friend of George Washington. He rode west with his wife, son, and six vivacious daughters to take possession of a large grant of land in Lebanon, Ohio.

On Saturday night, October 31, 1807, two days after they reached Pittsburgh, the father died.

The Steeles proved themselves valuable friends, arranging for the Reverend Van Horne to be buried in First Presbyterian Church cemetery. Miss Elizabeth Van Horne writes: "Mr. Steele in his Prayer of the morning in an affecting manner noticed the melancholy event, sang an appropriate hymn—and at the commencement of his Sermon made some just observations . . . (On) Sunday evening Mr. Steele & his lady . . . spent the evening with us in a very friendly way."⁶

In the sphere of Christian friendship, Mr. Steele and his wife exercised a tremendous ministry.

Mr. Steele was a Mason and also a member of the Mechanical Society. As a member of the latter group, Mr. Steele was fortunate in having some mechanics each give a day's work to help build the back part of a dwelling house into which the Steeles moved. Mr. Steele was of an industrious disposition and eked out his meager salary by working a garden. With five children, this was a help.

The Mechanical Society, whose members have been referred to, was an organization in Pittsburgh in which the men of First Church were very much involved. This was a time in world history when many scientific discoveries were being made and were being applied to life. The works of men like Sir Isaac Newton and Benjamin Franklin were eagerly studied, and the virtues of working with both brain and hands emphasized.

In his preaching ministry, the Reverend Steele's work was quite satisfactory to many of the church leaders who were ex-military men and possibly tended a little toward the deistic outlook of their recent French allies. The laws of the universe discovered by Newton were the outward evidence of a Supreme Being or Architect of the Universe. The emphasis was on law and morality and their Supreme Author. Some of the themes of Mr. Steele's sermons were: "The Charms of Virtue," and "The Important Duties of Justice, Humanity, Charity

and Universal Love." Obviously, Mr. Steele's sermon titles must have appealed to Hugh Brackenridge and his friends, but hardly to Redstone Presbytery.

Mr. Steele read his sermons, although the congregation preferred unwritten ones. He had a quiet, low-key approach. But apparently on special occasions, when his emotions and the artist in him were aroused, he could make excellent addresses without manuscript. At funerals, where his sympathies were touched, this seems to have been especially the case.

It should be noted regarding his Christian faith, however, that according to those who knew him best, Mr. Steele was a Christian gentleman of personal piety and conviction. In fact, under his ministry in 1809, the Presbyterians departed from Mr. Barr's precedent and invited Bishop Asbury to preach in the First Presbyterian Church. This unexpected invitation to the Methodist bishop filled the latter with joy and astonishment.⁷

It was, however, as an educator that the Reverend Robert Steele excelled. In religious education he was far in advance of his peers in presbytery, synod, or indeed in the whole country. In Christian education the minister of Pittsburgh was not only a genius, but also a century ahead of his time.

Robert Raikes is credited with founding the Sunday School Movement in Gloucester, England, in 1780. In fact, Raikes' Sunday School was radically different from modern Sunday Schools.

Raikes, a great humanitarian, had at heart the uplift of the uneducated poor. His aim was to provide education for the masses on Sunday, their only day of freedom from long hours of toil. Teachers were paid a shilling a day to instruct in reading, writing, and morals, using the Bible as a textbook. The schools were in session from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Raikes' Sunday School organization was essentially a system of elementary education using the Bible mainly as a textbook.

Mr. Steele, toward the end of the year 1800 and while still only a stated supply of the church, opened a Sabbath School which lasted for an hour and a half each Sunday between morning and afternoon service. From the pulpit he urged members to encourage their children to attend. The program included Bible reading, memorizing the *Longer and Shorter Catechism*, prayer, exposition of scripture, and a systematic oral instruction in faith and conduct. He had a kindly, familiar, and conversational way of teaching.

As children developed, they were used on a monitor system to instruct younger pupils. The Sunday School had an enrollment of thirty-five to forty pupils, many of whom later became leading lay workers in the church. Much of the lay thrust in Dr. Herron's great ministry came from this Sunday School founded by Mr. Steele. Many of the girls, after they married, developed into vital Christian workers. The school endured for at least two years before lay

opposition and the demands of building a new church brought the project to a standstill.

The full list of pupils is not known, but the following names are recorded: Nancy Morrow (Mrs. James Crossan), Charity McKinney, Jerusha McKinney (Mrs. Butler), Mary Reid, Matilda Craig (Mrs. Reese E. Fleson), Harriet Craig (Mrs. John H. Chaplin), Polly Boggs (Mrs. Thomas Wallace), Miss Sample, Mary Sturgeon, Mary McNickle (Mrs. James Biddle), Miss Wills, Mary Stevenson (Mrs. Alex. Johnston), Margaret Irwin (Mrs. Matthew George), Eliza Irwin (Mrs. Alex. Semple), Rebecca J. Johnston (Mrs. William Eichbaum), Eliza Riddle (Mrs. Dr. Jos. Gazzam), Catharine Willock, Mary Evans (Mrs. John Bayard), Letitia Anderson (Mrs. John Caldwell), Mary Ann Anderson (Mrs. John Way), Henry Steele and Robert Steele.⁸

The Pittsburgh Moral Society was formed by the members of the church with its aim the uplift and improvement of society. It was zealous in temperance work and education.

In 1809, a non-denominational Sunday School Society, under the auspices of the Moral Society, patterned on the Raikes' plan, was introduced with much publicity and lay enthusiasm. Its aim was intellectual and moral. Spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic formed the curriculum and teachers were paid one dollar a day. It was the Raikes plan and almost, if not altogether, secular. One of the teachers was a Mr. Gilland, a Roman Catholic.

This Sunday School, organized by such fine people as Mr. J. Johnston, Major Ebenezer Denny, and the famous John Gibson, faded out in nine months.

The type of Sunday School established in 1802 by Mr. Steele gradually became acceptable all over the country during the nineteenth century. Even into the early twentieth century, Mr. Steele's Sunday School would have been advanced insofar as an emphasis was laid on understanding rather than mere memorization. Conduct was carefully related to moral values and there was a place for devotional exercise and prayer.

There were successes and failures in Mr. Steele's ministry. The successes were largely due to the gracious character and the personal piety of the Steeles. In place of vindictiveness towards the preacher, there was real love for the young minister and his wife.

The failures were due to lack of infectious spiritual leadership on the part of Mr. Steele, non-involvement in the great spiritual awakening sweeping Western Pennsylvania, and the social follies and crass materialism of the congregation. Drinking, card playing, and the attainment of social status were the chief preoccupations of church members. Far from being a soul-winning church with a vital impact on the life of a growing town, First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, to use its new title, was cast in the mold of Hugh Brackenridge's religious society with more than a touch of "Vanity Fair" about it.

The rot was evident during Mr. Barr's day. It was more deadly during Mr. Steele's ministry because less evident. The signs, however, were there. The foundering of what may have been the finest Sunday School in the nation, because the people did not want it, was an indication that there was a serious weakness in the church.

Some of the laymen realized this.

There was in Pittsburgh a group of men of deep evangelical fervor. With Jonathan Plumer active at the inception of the church in 1773, it would be strange if such were lacking. Possibly it was this group which had urged the calling of a minister in 1800, for it is claimed that the Kentucky revival gave the impetus for such a move.

Apparently some of these men were disappointed in Mr. Steele as a preacher, though they liked and respected him as a man.

On September 30, 1802, the Synod of Pittsburgh had met in Pittsburgh Presbyterian Church and ratified the action of Redstone Presbytery in receiving Mr. Steele. He could now serve as minister officially.

The next year an appeal for a new Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh was presented by a group of laymen who obviously wanted no part of the Reverend Steele. Four of their representatives, James Morrison, William Barrett, William Semple, and William Gazzam, prepared, signed, and presented the following petition to the Synod of Pittsburgh in October 1803:

To the Rev. Synod, now sitting in the borough of Pittsburgh, most humbly sheweth. That we, the subscribers, being appointed by a number of our brethren, either already united to the Presbyterian churches, or desirous of being so united as becometh the general supporters of the Christian cause; do represent that we have not united in the call of the Rev. Robert Steel, as pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, but that, nevertheless, being averse to a separation, if it could be avoided consistently, with our spiritual advantage did, for some time, attend the preaching of the said Rev. gentleman, and most of us subscribe to his support, but finding no kind of spiritual advantage, have long since withdrawn, and are now as sheep without a shepherd. We bring forward no charges against Mr. Steel, or any members of said church, considering that if even sufficient ground should exist, this is not our present object; but assure the Rev. Synod that our present object is to receive the immediate benefits of what we deem a Gospel ministry.⁹

The petition sounds mild until one comes to the last sentence which is deadly, suggesting that the Reverend Steele's ministry is anything but a gospel one. In fact, the petitioners may have had a point, if the known themes of Mr. Steele's sermons are representative of his preaching, for one senses little of the glad news of forgiveness and new life in Christ in them.

A possible further reason for the dissatisfaction of the evangelicals with Mr. Steele is to be found in the fact that the new Synod of Pittsburgh met in First Church in 1802.

This was its historic first meeting. It immediately constituted itself the Western Missionary Society and began an aggressive program of Christian

evangelism. "The Board of Trust" which this Synod appointed at its first meeting to run missions both "local" and "foreign," in the sense that they ministered to both the Indians and whites, was "the germ and model" of all subsequent Presbyterian missionary boards in the Presbyterian denomination.¹⁰

This epic event took place in First Church and initiated the board controlled missionary work of the Presbyterian Church in this country. Revivalist ministers delivered thrilling and challenging appeals for deeper commitment to Christ and His Kingdom. Mr. Steele's read sermons on the cardinal virtues must have seemed rather dull in comparison.

The lack of spirituality in First Presbyterian Church which had already alienated many of its finest members and led to the foundation of the Second Church, bore bitter fruit toward the end of Mr. Steele's ministry. With the encouragement of his people, he launched on an elaborate building program. The new edifice was to be of brick, fifty feet long, exclusive of steeple, and forty-four feet wide. It would enclose the old log cabin church. This building came to be known as the "the brick church."

When interested and puzzled spectators saw the brick building going up and encompassing the old log church, they inquired how to get the old building out.

To this inquiry, the invariable reply was that it would be easy: it was intended to eventually set fire to the log church and burn it out. Some, no doubt, believed this.

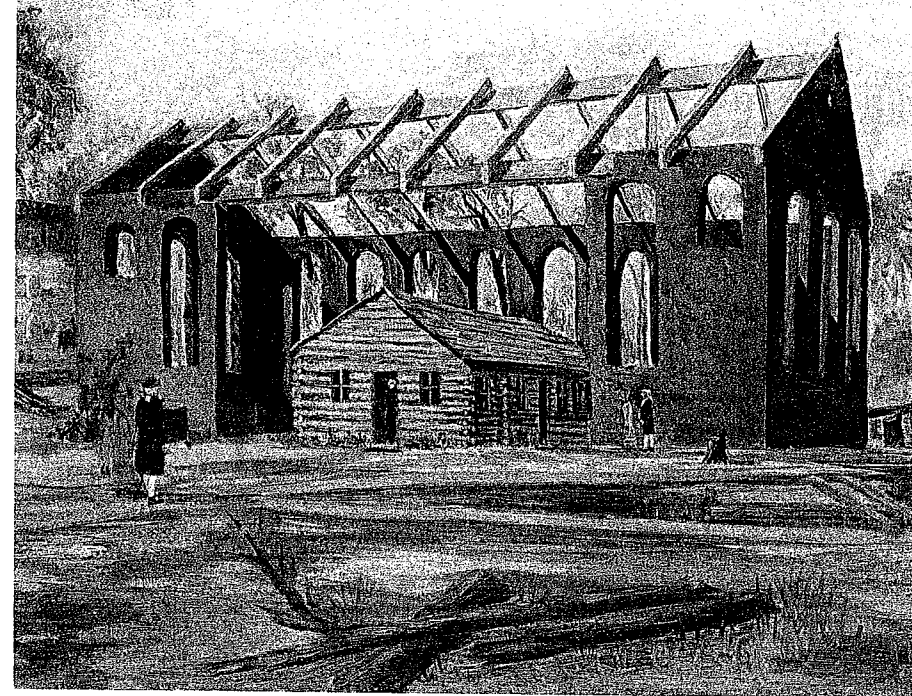
As a matter of fact, the builders simply dismantled the log church and passed the logs and old furnishings out through the windows of the brick church.

The new church fronted on Wood Street, on the property originally bought by Samuel Barr.

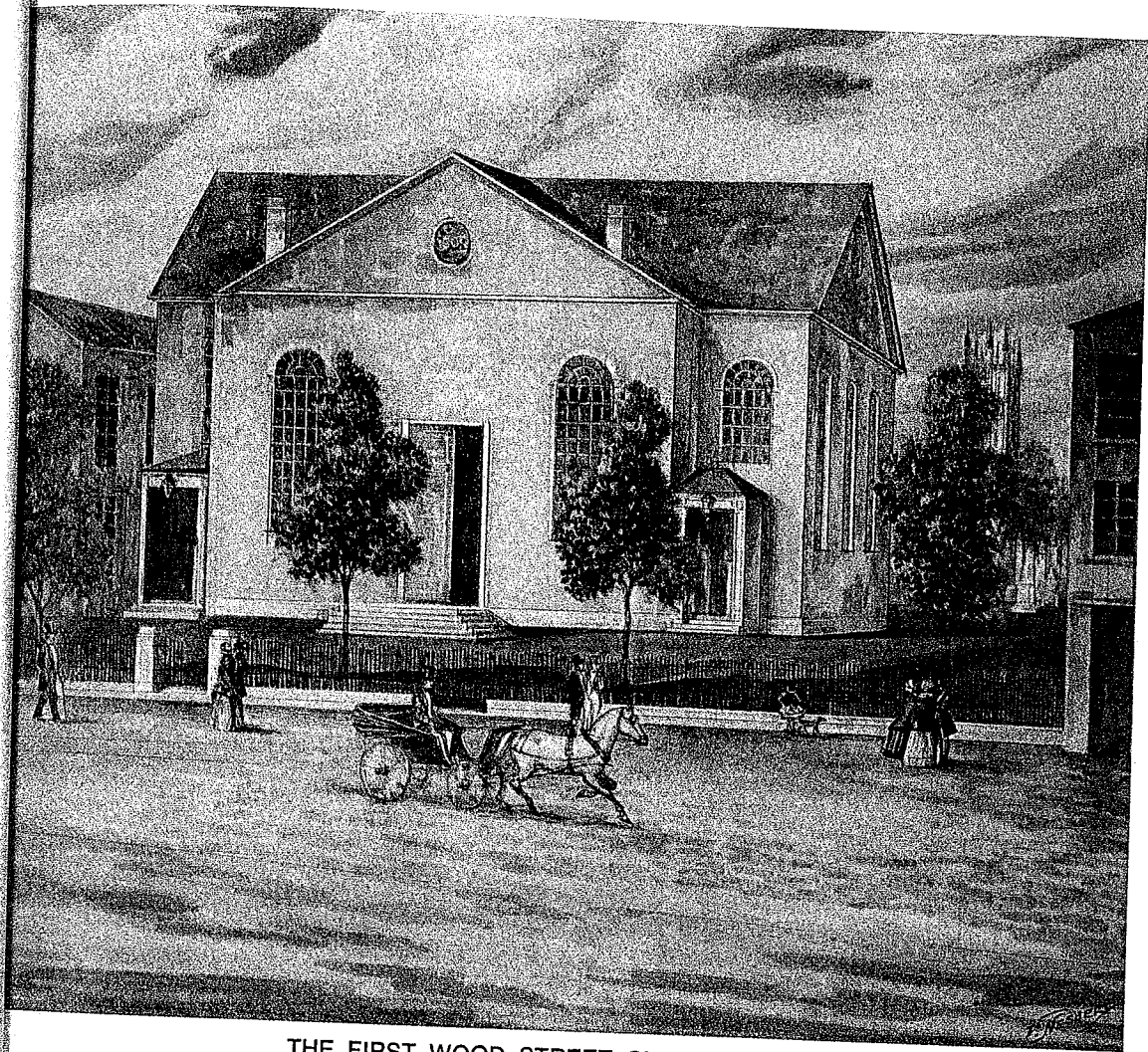
The building progressed rapidly; the pledges trickled in slowly—very slowly! On February 20, 1805, the congregation was in debt for \$1,500 and the work was incomplete, while workmen were demanding wages and creditors, payment.

In this emergency, the inherent weaknesses of Mr. Steele's pastorate and the unspiritual state of the church clearly revealed themselves. In their extremity, the church leaders and people appealed, not to the God who rewards faith and enlarges the heart of His people to give generously, but to the old gaming instinct which had bedevilled Pittsburgh through the years.

We read in the minutes "that as the subscription for building the Meeting-house is inadequate to the expence, an application be made to the Legislature for a Lottery to pay debts incurred . . ." ¹¹ A committee was formed to carry this resolution into effect. Tickets were printed and sold at five dollars each. The



BUILDING THE "BRICK" CHURCH AROUND THE OLD LOG ONE
From a Painting by Gertrude Scandrett



THE FIRST WOOD STREET CHURCH—1805

first prize was to be \$800. To give the sordid affair a more "religious" and ritualistic flavor, the pastor's sons turned the wheel.

When the first lottery failed to realize the money needed, the congregation came up with an encore in the form of a second—a bigger and better lottery.

The second lottery ended in utter chaos and confusion. Apparently the very questionable procedure of paying workmen their back pay in lottery tickets was adopted. No accounting was ever made of the number of lottery tickets sold; no one seemed very sure of what sum was realized or who got the prizes.

Various demands were made for an accounting. Suit was ordered to be entered against the managers of the lottery. At a congregational meeting a committee was appointed to inform the governor of the "delinquency of the commissioners of the lottery."¹²

"No correct account of the amount of tickets sold was ever rendered," wrote Judge Snowden.¹³

Before long the whole financial structure of the church seemed to be endangered. Pledged pew rents were not coming in and the trustees threatened litigation against the defaulters, a procedure hardly calculated to help sell such rents in future years.

By June 1810, the congregation had a debt close to \$3,999 and no visible resources to meet its commitments.

At 4 a.m. on March 22, 1810, a bitterly cold morning, a fire broke out on Wood Street and seemed likely to destroy a whole row of frame houses. Mr. Steele, always eager to help those in trouble, hurriedly half-dressed in shirt and trousers and carried water from a hole cut through ice in the river. The temperature was sub-zero.

His clothes were slopped that morning with icy water, and in spite of a resulting cold he insisted through the next days on collecting for the unhappy families whose homes had been destroyed.¹⁴ The cold developed into what was probably double pneumonia and he died on March 31, 1810, leaving a wife and five children—three boys and two girls.

The grief of the congregation was profound. The pulpit and surrounding railing were draped in black mourning cloth. Despite the grave financial situation, the pew rents were turned over to the widow during the interim, \$200 a year being voted to her. The Masonic fraternity raised the astonishing sum of \$800 for her. Mr. Steele had been chaplain of Lodge No. 45 of Ancient York Masons and a man greatly beloved by his brethren.

First Presbyterian Church has never been able to obtain a pictorial likeness or a daguerreotype of Mr. Robert Steele as it has of all her other ministers, including Samuel Barr.

The Reverend Robert Steele was buried in the graveyard adjoining the church. Mrs. Steele lived on Seventh Street for some years, and afterwards, Colonel James O'Hara very kindly gave her occupancy of the old log house, then empty, where he and Mary Carson O'Hara had lived in their early married life. This was the house mentioned so often in the novel, *The King's Orchard* by Agnes Sligh Turnbull.

Meanwhile the First Presbyterian Church was facing a critical situation.

After the Revolutionary War, practically every grace and gimmick had been tried to reestablish the enthusiasm which followed the McClure and Frisbie ministry. All were tried: ecumenism, orthodox Presbyterianism, business manipulation, and religious education at an unbelievably high level. And when all failed, the leaders had quite literally taken a gamble which had not come off.

Now the church had come to the end of its resources. Perhaps that was its healthiest situation in years, for when men and organizations come to the end of their resources, sometimes God has His opportunity.

When Mr. Steele died, the total church membership of First Presbyterian Church was fifty-eight communicants. Of course, many others—who were essentially adherents—regarded "First" as "their" church.

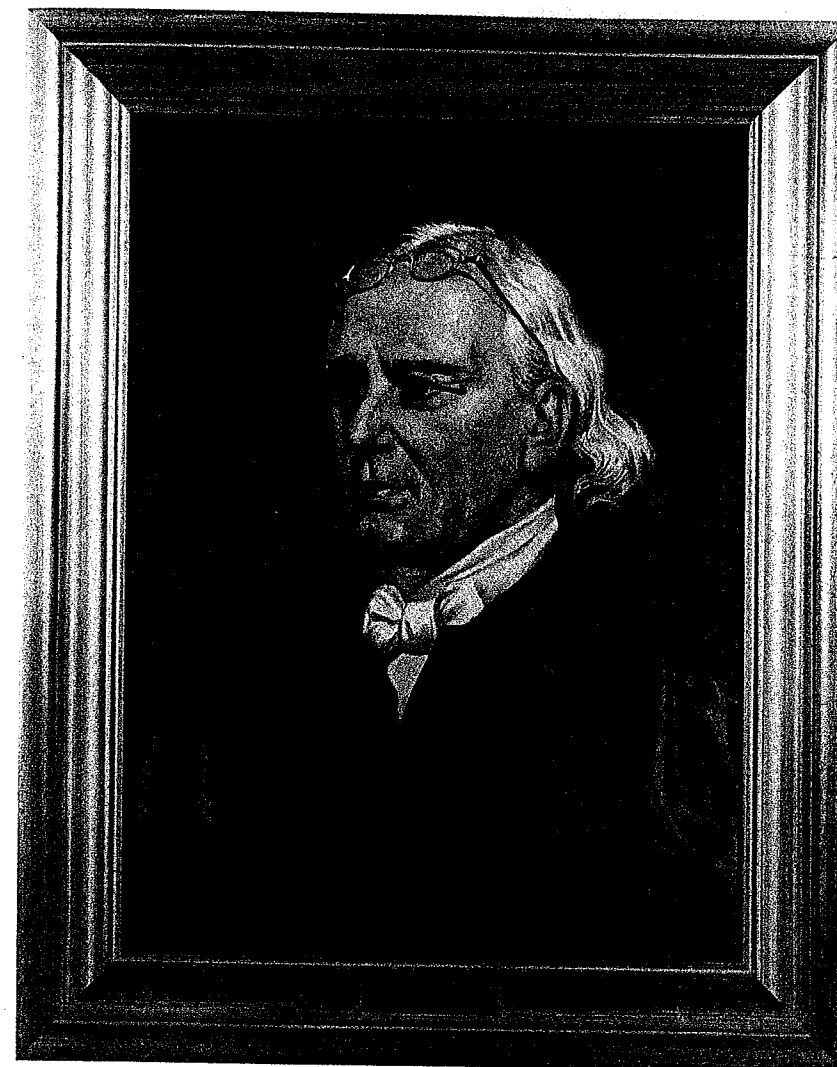
For three months after the Reverend Steele's death, the stricken congregation took no action regarding a regular ministerial appointment, but carried on with supplies.

Finally, they invited the Reverend Joseph Stockton, principal of Pittsburgh Academy, to preach for six months. Mr. Stockton, professor, preacher, and physician had been minister at Meadville for nine years.

His years in Pittsburgh were to be most fruitful in a variety of areas, both religious and scholastic. His work in the academy, in a decade, led to its becoming the Western University of Pennsylvania. His work as president of the Sunday School Associations in Pittsburgh and Allegheny Town was vital. He organized a Presbyterian Church in the latter town. He became one of Dr. Herron's revivalist team of ministers. Mr. Stockton was also president of the Pittsburgh Humane Society. In 1832, the meeting which resulted in the formation of the Orphan Asylum, was held in his house.

During the six months the Reverend Joseph Stockton occupied the pulpit of First Church, ten new members were added to her membership, an increase of around sixteen per cent.

According to the best evidence, Mr. Stockton refused all payment for his services, preferring whatever money was available to go to Mr. Steele's widow.



THE REV. FRANCIS HERRON D.D.
1811-1850

The Church That Was Born Again

The state of religion in Pittsburgh and in First Church had just about reached its lowest ebb. To this unspiritual, worldly church came a man who, under God, was to be one of the most dynamic forces born of the religious revival which swept Western Pennsylvania after the Revolutionary War. His name: Francis Herron.

With this man as its minister, First Church changed from being the prodigal son of the Redstone Presbytery to one of the world's most potent churches, with over a hundred eager, part-time workers in Pittsburgh and with missionaries and martyrs at the ends of the earth.

Francis Herron was born near Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, in 1774, during the Revolutionary War.¹ He came of Scotch-Irish parentage, probably from the covenanting Herron family of Rathfriland, County Down. From his parents he inherited a warm, evangelistic Christianity, born in the revival movements which had been sweeping through the area.

Francis Herron's early life gave little indication of the spiritual power it was later to display. He received a solid training in the *Shorter Catechism*, and its theology was welded into his heart and mind. We have no record of any sudden, dramatic call to the ministry. He was graduated from Dickinson College and in 1798 was licensed to preach.

After his licensure, however, Francis Herron passed through an experience which changed his life and made his ministry. With Mr. Brown, later to become his brother-in-law, and one other licentiate, he traveled as far west as Chillicothe, Ohio. The young men were guided by a frontiersman who often had to lead his party through wilderness country by "blazes," or a man-made marking on the trees. On two successive nights the little party had to camp with Indians for shelter.

The young men wished to acquaint themselves with the revival in the frontier country. That purpose was certainly realized. Francis Herron and his friends came into first-hand contact with the tremendous movement of the Spirit of God in the frontier churches of Western Pennsylvania—with the exception, of course, of the sophisticated congregation of Pittsburgh. During this trip, Francis Herron even preached for the great Dr. McMillan at Chartiers Church and became a friend of the Redstone revivalists.

On the way home the young minister stopped at night at Pittsburgh, finding accommodations at the only place available, the local tavern. The keeper of the public house, like most of his predecessors, had strong connections with the

local Presbyterian congregation. He urgently coaxed Francis Herron to preach in Pittsburgh's log cabin church. The time was between Mr. Barr and Mr. Steele's ministries when Pittsburgh was snugly enjoying an even deeper period of religious lethargy than was usual for that most lethargic church. The doors had been padlocked against Methodists or other like-minded enthusiasts, but any wandering Presbyterian minister was encouraged to preach and keep the church in Calvinistic succession and a going concern.

A messenger hurriedly gathered a congregation of a score of people. When they opened the doors of the log cabin church they found it alive with a multitude of swallows who had taken it over as a nesting box. There in that swallow-infested church, before a handful of people, Francis Herron preached his first sermon in the town of Pittsburgh, ten years before his great ministry was destined to begin.

Dr. Herron, years afterwards, said that he believed the sermon made a greater impression on the swallows than on the congregation, for two reasons: First, there were more swallows than people; second, the birds seemed to have a stronger vested interest in the church building than had the congregation.

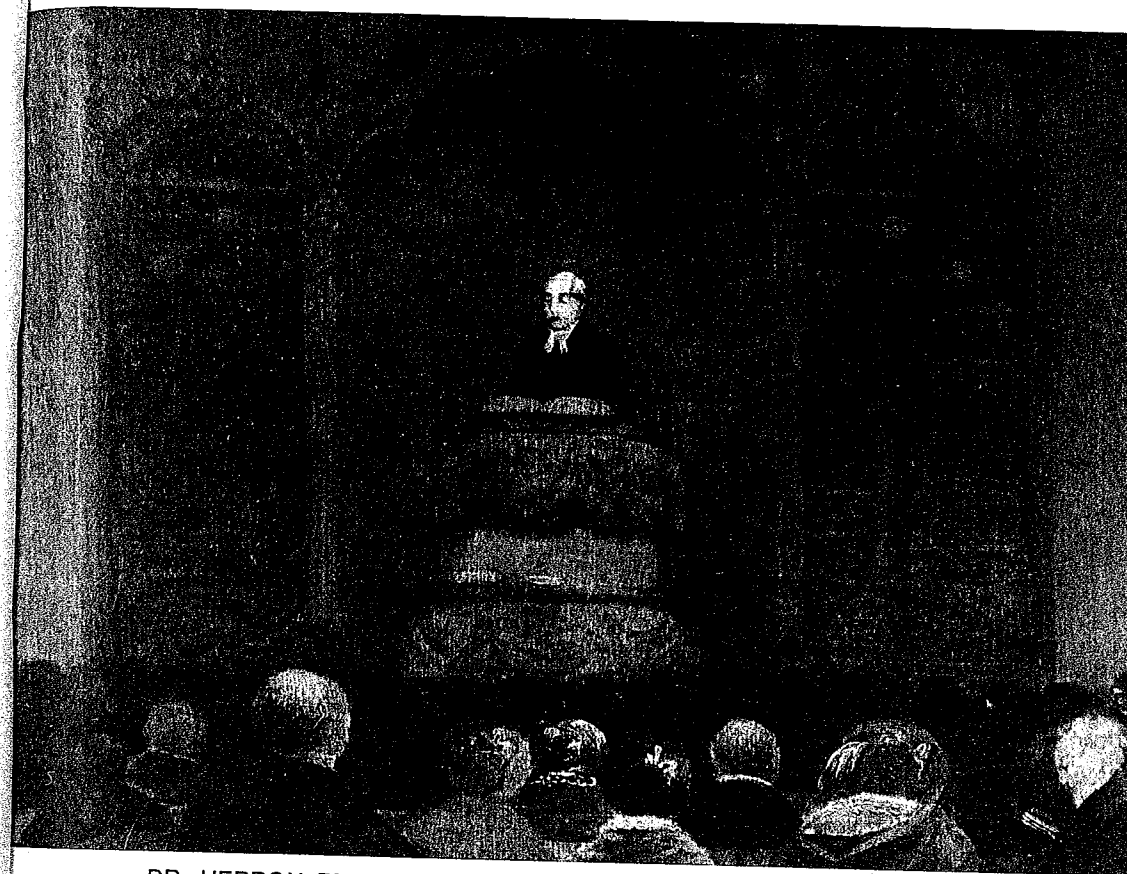
On arriving home, the Reverend Francis Herron received a call from nearby Rocky Spring congregation and was installed there on April 9, 1800, about the time that Mr. Steele came to Pittsburgh.

In Rocky Spring, during the ten years Mr. Steele ministered in Pittsburgh, Francis Herron preached and prayed and witnessed until many of the men, women, and children of his congregation caught the glory of Christ in their lives and entered into their pastor's joy.

Prayer meetings, Bible classes, and careful instruction in the catechism were the ordinary means employed by Francis Herron in his first charge at Rocky Spring. That which was extraordinary was supplied by the Spirit of God in a most remarkable degree and the church became a vital outpost of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

In 1802, he married the lovely Elizabeth Blain of Carlisle and began fifty-three years of married life before she pre-deceased him. Francis Herron again came to Pittsburgh in 1810, this time to visit his sister, Mrs. Peebles, who resided in the town. His intention was to stay with her for a few days and then to make a side trip to his brother-in-law, now Dr. Brown, the President of Washington College. While staying with Mrs. Peebles, he was invited to preach in First Church, recently become vacant under the tragic circumstances of Mr. Steele's death.

The text chosen by the Reverend Francis Herron was Song of Solomon 2:8, "The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh, leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills." The Christ-centered sermon, surprising as it may sound, took the sophisticated socialites of Pittsburgh by storm.



DR. HERRON PREACHING FROM THE "BRICK" CHURCH PULPIT

We do not have a copy of this early sermon on the Song of Solomon, Chapter 2, Verse 8, but we do have the original copy of a sermon later preached by Dr. Herron on the text, Song of Solomon 5: part of verse 16, "Yea, He is altogether lovely."² Dr. Herron tended to repeat his best material and it would seem reasonable to suppose that in both instances he focused his message on the attractiveness of Christ, which was one of his unflinching topics. Certainly, to read the sermon in the church's possession indicates the winsomeness which crept into the minister's preaching when he spoke of his Master.

Perhaps the sermon reaches its highest literary peak as its writer described the loveliness of Christ as seen through the eyes of angels at the Incarnation. There is a touch of Milton in the prose.

Christ was altogether lovely in the view of angels. At His entrance into our ruined world, an angel was dispatched from heaven to earth who flew with joyful haste to a company of poor shepherds who watched their flocks by night, and tells them the news that fills heaven with astonishment.

Then came the Miltonic prose rapture.

And suddenly . . . crowds of angels left their mansions in the skies . . . We find them crowding round the manger in which the infant God lay . . . and had we now a glimpse of heaven . . . we would see . . . ten thousand, and thousands of thousands all united in the ascription of honour, and power, and glory to Him, who is altogether lovely in their view.

The sermon in essence goes on:

This leads me to state the preciousness of Christ to believers; but it may be asked, "Why to none but believers?"

They and they only have experienced the Saviour's cross to be . . . a sovereign balm for every wound, and a cordial for every fear. They, and they only, have known what it is to have had a heart healed by His gentle hand, and a clamorous . . . conscience pacified by His atoning blood.

The Reverend Mr. Herron spent part of the week, after preaching, with his brother-in-law, Dr. Brown. The following Sunday, being in Pittsburgh with his sister, he was once more asked to preach in First Church. The desire to hear the young minister was so great that, the mud being too deep for ladies to walk to the church, some rode on horseback, some were actually carried there by their husbands.

Apparently the preacher's words again thrilled the hearts of those lovely ladies, carried through the muddy lanes of Pittsburgh, and the men who carried them—for a meeting was immediately held and a call from Pittsburgh made out to Mr. Herron.

The Reverend Francis Herron was thirty-seven years of age when he received the call. His appearance was that of a tall athlete. At first slender, he became heavier in late years; but his body was always intensely strong and under almost perfect control. He had tremendous stamina and a relentless will power. His features were finely cut, while wavy hair fell in masses on his great shoulders. His voice could challenge like a trumpet or take upon itself a note of homey kindness and consideration. His face was glowing with health

and an expression of a good nature, which no one who knew him ever mistook for complacency. His straightforwardness could be most disarming and sometimes extremely disconcerting.

The one grave weakness his friends noticed in Francis Herron was that he himself was so sure of God that he found it hard even to countenance an honest doubter and he never could hide his hostilities on this matter. His name was Francis or "Frank" and he lived up to it.

The state of the church to which the young man had received a call was atrocious. Financially, First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh was bankrupt. The sheriff was about to put the whole property for auction to satisfy the demands of its many creditors.

Morally, the church was sadly degraded. There was no church discipline; materialism was largely the creed of its members; fashionable follies and social habits, gambling, drinking, and loose speech had made Pittsburgh the Vanity Fair of the Western Frontier of Pennsylvania. Its First Church congregation was not merely a faithful reflection of the city's life, it seems to have been the pace setter.

Spiritually the church was a "drop-out." Few bothered to attend public worship even when it was available. Those who did regarded religion as a form rather than as a force. In fact, the little remnant of people who had a care for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ had quite literally dropped out and were trying, without apparent success, to form some kind of live congregation under the name of "Second Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh."

Francis Herron tackled the problems of First Church as a gifted football coach might begin his work with a team relegated to the bottom of the league.

First, he had to show himself a man whom men could respect. Next, he had to prove himself a business administrator who could resolve a disastrous financial situation. He then had to begin to exercise discipline in a church where discipline was regarded as an unwarranted invasion of a man's private life.

The Reverend Francis Herron knew that it would be in the spiritual realm that the real crunch would come. Under God there must emerge a born-again church. That was the ultimate goal of thirty-seven year old Francis Herron. To it he applied two hundred fifty pounds of raw muscle, brawn, and brain, and abounding faith in God.

An incident occurred very soon after his arrival in Pittsburgh which indicated the resourcefulness of this young man of God. He was standing at the door of his residence one day when a skirmish broke out among some teamsters. Two of them were resolved to fight. Perfectly fearless, Francis Herron seized hold of them, one in each hand, and held them apart with a giant grip. One more savage than the other cried, "Let me go, parson, or I'll strike you." "Strike

me!" said the doctor, tightening his hold. "It will take six of you. I will have no fighting in my presence." The man was powerless and peace was restored.³

It was remarked in that early day that the Reverend Francis Herron was worth all the policemen combined in the young city.

Mingled with the muscle, brawn, and the driving dynamic energy of the man, there was a strange innate kindness in him which was utterly disarming and which is one of the essential ingredients of a great minister.

Aroused one night from sleep by a noise in his bedroom, he inquired, "Who's there?" A voice imitating that of a woman servant replied, "It's me, sir." Detecting the imposter, Dr. Herron immediately sprang out of bed and as the thief was retreating down the stairs, he seized him by the hair and held him in his iron grasp. The robber, knowing himself mastered, surrendered. The doctor led him down the stairs into the kitchen, struck a light, stirred the fire, and seated the culprit by his side to talk with him about his soul.

After long conversation in which the man expressed a great penitence and promised to lead a new life, the doctor knelt by his side and prayed most earnestly to God on his behalf.

When they arose from prayer, the doctor was about to send him home with a goodly supply of food for his family when it occurred to him to inquire the time. Mrs. Herron went to look at the watch; it was gone. The thief had stolen it and notwithstanding his professions of penitence was about to depart with it in his pocket.

The doctor seized him again and made him give back the watch. The poor fellow, who no doubt had been confused by the strange mixture of physical violence, concern for his soul, and provisions for his family, now became more deeply penitent than ever. The doctor in the kindness of his heart forgave him again and sent him away with such a supply of provisions as to leave rather a scarcity for the next morning's breakfast.⁴

To the immediate problems of First Church this forthright, energetic young minister now applied himself.

The problem which demanded immediate attention was the bankruptcy of the congregation. The sheriff of Allegheny County levied upon the purchased lot and the church buildings, and announced them to be up for public sale. Dr. Herron, with the concurrence of the trustees of the church, attended the sale and purchased the whole property in his own name for \$2,819. Probably citizens did not like to bid against the minister for his church, so it went cheap. Shortly afterwards, he sold a small portion of this property to the Pittsburgh Bank for \$3,000. The debt was paid and the profit went to the church treasury.

The pulpit ministry of Francis Herron had the same forthrightness. It has frequently been stated that Dr. Herron was not a great preacher. The extracts already given from his sermon on "The Loveliness of Christ," the copy of which

is in the possession of First Church, seems to suggest otherwise. So do the other sermons of his possessed by the Church in manuscript form. Dr. Herron had to rely on the impact of his preaching under the power of the Holy Spirit as an instrument for transforming First Church during the first six years of his ministry. That impact was amazingly effective.

The fact is that Dr. Herron as a preacher was far ahead of his time. The preaching style of that day was based on Greek rhetoric. Long, rolling sentence structures were the order of the day. Polysyllabic words impressed the half-educated. The preacher, like the Greek orator, built up to a climax. He also used studied gestures and loved the dramatic and exaggerated in illustration. Anecdotes were thought to be imperative for the great, spellbinding preacher.

The minister of First Church cared for none of these things. He never could declaim. He had no time for anecdotes. He didn't use dramatic illustrations of sinking ships and men hanging over cliffs by slender ropes.

Dr. Herron was interested in communication, not rhetoric. And communicate he could. He had an almost uncanny knack of baring the human soul. He asked probing, searching questions that cut into the quick of a man's conscience. He exposed sin in its multitudinous disguise. He opened up a man's soul as skillfully as a surgeon in this modern twentieth century might lay bare the arteries of the human heart with his scalpel.

In short, Dr. Herron exposed sin, let its guilt stick and then preached Christ as the answer. The old hymn of John Newton sums it up and has long been a favorite of the ministers of First Church:

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound!
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

To bring men and women to see their need, Dr. Herron was absolutely frank. Rhetoric or tricks of dramatic art would have spoiled such a ministry.

Preaching on the text: Proverbs 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy," he exhorted the congregation, in the first part of that text, with these words:

If you have never confessed and forsaken your sins you are still unpardoned; you are still under the power and dominion of sin and such are far from God and love your distance from Him well . . . sinned you have—condemned you are—and without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance unto life—perish eternally you will.

Could anything be so frank and unadorned? Yet that simple and continuous reversal of sentence structure strikes like cold steel into a man's heart. Francis Herron was a concerned man speaking to people he saw to be in grave danger.

Always, Dr. Herron liked to finish his sermon with emphasis on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ:

How transforming to feel a dark, disordered mind opening to admit the light, and the shining of the heavenly day. How precious Jesus appears to you when, by His blessed Spirit He settled the cloud that bewitched your understanding and removes the veil of darkness and unbelief from off your hearts!

A further instrument of change available to Dr. Herron in the early days of his ministry was that of church discipline. Here he was the same open, straightforward man of God. Here he could be tender and gentle with those who had fallen, repented, and wanted to fight on:

Let us then learn wisdom and skill, like able generals, from defeat—though spoiled in some slight skirmishes, let us not be discouraged—but renew the contest more humbly indeed, but not with less determination.

With those who had sinned against the light, however, the doctor could be inflexible. And, in his opinion, those who indulged in card playing, dancing, and the theatre were in this latter category. We must recollect that Pittsburgh was gambling mad in those days and that a loosening of moral discipline was then, as with some today, flaunted as a status symbol of so-called "social freedom."

Apparently some young people arranged a ball and in a mood of bravado sent Dr. Herron an invitation to attend, announcing a member of First Church as manager for the evening and informing Dr. Herron that some of his members would assert their freedom by taking part.

Dr. Herron, receiving the note, announced from his pulpit the next Sabbath that on such and such a night there would be a ball held by those who served the devil and, he feared, by some who professed to serve God. On that night he, too, would hold a party; he invited all to attend, particularly the young ladies.

Jesus, he knew, would be there.

He begged those who attended the opposition party to remember that after nine o'clock he would retire alone and pray for God to have mercy upon the triflers. He would intercede for them until morning; and he would "session" any of his members who would be at the ball, if any should be there after their pastor's warning.

His party was crowded; the ball was a failure.

No one was anxious after this to notify him of the approach of such entertainments.⁵

It may have been those young people who gave Dr. Herron his nickname. They knew his name was "Francis" and by tough experience came to realize that he lived up to its English equivalent, which is "Frank." Dr. Herron came to be known as "Old Frank" and that name he wore as a badge of honor all his life. It came to be a title of love, just as people later came to refer to their beloved Abraham Lincoln as "Old Abe."

It was this quality which won him respect from all kinds of people.

If Dr. Herron was dissatisfied with the results of a collection, he simply assessed the required remainder sum, and sent to certain persons for their share.

They almost invariably paid. When a family in poverty fell under his notice he almost commanded a merchant to send them a barrel of flour or a ham. And on the whole the businessmen responded cheerfully, and loved him for his frankness. No one could refuse 'Old Frank.'⁶

They knew he cared.

In 1813, William Lecky, a member and trustee of the church, pitying the children of the poor, gathered a number of them into his wagon shop opposite the church on Wood Street for a Sunday School. Eliza Irwin taught them to sing Isaac Watt's hymns. Shocked at the innovation, members of the church arraigned him before the session. Dr. Herron said, "Let him go on with his teaching, something will come of it." Soon Lecky's Sunday School occupied the session room and a number of children began to attend church. A number became fine Christian men and women.

The fact is that Dr. Herron believed implicitly that God was concerned for every part of a man's life—and for the apparently secular as well as for the sacred—with the empty table as well as with worship on the Sabbath Day. For this reason Francis Herron was foremost in promoting the business welfare of the city and entered into every practical scheme for its development with the energy of a business tycoon.

(Dr. Herron was) a public man of the highest and best type. . . . In the earlier history of this city he took a lively interest—in every mill and factory that was erected—in every enterprise to promote the convenience of the people or the adornment of the city—in the opening of new avenues of trade, and in the securing of new business and commercial advantages to the community. He was one of the 'Fathers' of this city, and no man loved it better, or did more to promote its highest welfare.⁷

Already in 1815 signs of grace had begun to appear in First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh. In 1815 the "Female Cent Society of Pittsburgh" gave fifty-seven dollars to the Western Missionary Society. This society appears to have been composed of women from First Church.

Dr. Herron knew, however, that while he could witness and preach and pray, only a dynamic work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the congregation could give life to the near-dead church to which he had been called.

First Church's primary need was not a man of God, but God Himself.

The city needed revival, and the path to revival was prayer. Hence, Dr. Herron must have a prayer meeting.

Here he would receive little help from his eldership. There were only two elders. One, a Mr. James Cooper, was a Calvinistic formalist of the old school who did not like change. In fact he regarded prayer meetings as Methodist innovations, not for Presbyterians.

The other elder, Mr. James Beech Clow, was a sincere Christian, but certainly not a dynamic one at the beginning of Dr. Herron's ministry. In fact, it would appear that he was so lethargic physically that he had developed sleep-

ing into a fine art. He could sleep in almost any circumstance, even on horseback, or mowing the grass; yet he never fell. In church he could sleep during the sermon and still hear it. During the early years of the century, however, James Clow was the only elder who officiated at communion. James Clow had always had a love for the things of God and grew rapidly in grace under Dr. Herron's ministry. His singing voice was sweet and clear, and was one of the great worship assets First Church of Pittsburgh possessed at the beginning of Francis Herron's ministry.

With so little encouragement from the congregation, Dr. Herron had to turn for support to the Reverend Thomas Hunt of Second Church, with whom he commenced prayer meetings. The two ministers did not dare to use either church building, since the opinion current in both congregations was that a prayer meeting was altogether an outgrowth of fanaticism, an extravagance that could not be tolerated.⁸ So it was decided to use for the prayer meeting a small room in which the Reverend Hunt taught day school. They invited those who wished from either congregation to join them. The response was one man and six women. The man, a Mr. Thomas Davis, later became a fine minister of the Salem and Blairsville congregations.

For eighteen months this group continued to meet for prayer. No one joined them. Heads of houses forbade their wives and daughters to attend.

Finally, Dr. Herron was waited upon and told that this extravagance could not be endured, and a stop must be put to these meetings at once. To this the doctor replied with imperial majesty, so characteristic of the man:

Gentlemen, these meetings will not stop—you are at liberty to worship God as you please; but I, also, have the liberty to worship God according to the dictates of my conscience, none daring to molest or make me afraid.⁹

This was the turning point; opposition abated; numbers joined the nine and the church which was born in 1773 rapidly became one of the great focal points of Christianity in America, with an outreach not merely to a new, expanding frontier in the West, but one which in a few decades was to become world-wide.

Dr. William D. Howard in his history of the Second Church claims that Dr. Herron's famous stand on prayer meetings was the turning point in the moral and spiritual history of Pittsburgh.

From about 1818, opposition not only began to wane, but the prayer meetings began to increase in attendance. A new spirit of power and transforming grace began to work in the hearts of the church leadership. This was not yet revival, but its precursor.

Soon there were actual conversions in the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh. The remarkable thing is that so many converts were from the prominent and fashionable ranks of society, not imports from the revival areas around the city. They were the leaders of church and community who repre-

sented the foremost families in Pittsburgh. Among the heads of these families were aging officers of General Washington. A number of the latter found in the service of Christ a glory even greater than they had known in the service of their country.

Two elders of the church, Mr. Cooper and Mr. Clow, shared in this renewal, and James Brown and John M. Snowden, the latter the editor of the Pittsburgh *Mercury* and director of the Bank of Pittsburgh, were added to the session. Two families who were brought into deeper relationship with the Kingdom of Jesus Christ were the O'Hara family, especially the mother and daughter, and the Denny family.

Soon the church had to be enlarged. "This was done by removing the side walls and enlarging the width of the building, to an extent sufficient to make an aisle and a row of additional pews on each side."¹⁰ A session room erected at the rear was destined to be the birthplace of Western Foreign Missionary Society, the Western Theological Society, and the Third Presbyterian Church.

The building in which the congregation of First Church was born again was simple: Four square walls and a concavity at the rear containing the recessed and uplifted pulpit, with a flight of steps at each side and the pulpit desk projected in semi-circular fashion.

A gallery faced the pulpit at the front end of the church and contained the choir. There were also side galleries.

The windows were tall and continuous with circular tops, lighting both main floor and galleries. Let William G. Johnston continue the description:

The 11 x 15 panes of glass in these were made in the first glass-house built in Pittsburgh, in 1795, by James O'Hara and Isaac Craig. The windows were screened by green Venetian blinds. . . . Five large egg stoves were used for heating; one at each end of the side aisles, and one by the middle door. The pews were high-backed. . . . Looking up to a far-away ceiling, I yet see at each corner of a quadrangle where were located air-vents, circles a yard or more in diameter. These were painted in semblance of the vault of heaven, blue, and studded with gilded stars; so as I gazed, my child fancy was often enraptured. From a central circle, thrice as large, and similarly adorned, hung an immense glass chandelier, the present of General James O'Hara. This was indeed elegant, rather too much so to be in keeping with the extreme plainness of all else surrounding. At night, when its double row of tall sperm candles were lighted, there was a dazzling brilliance from its myriad of crystals; and at the later day when gas was introduced, the effect was yet more striking.¹¹

This building, erected during Mr. Steele's ministry, had nearly led to the bankruptcy and ruin of the congregation. In it the great ministry of Dr. Herron took place during roughly forty years.

Shortly after Dr. Herron retired the third sanctuary took its place.

The chandelier referred to as presented by General James O'Hara, President of the Board of Trustees, was a thank offering for the success of the glass-

making in Pittsburgh. The chandelier was accompanied by a letter which was read on August 25, 1818, at a meeting of the board:

Gentlemen:

A chandelier is presented to you for the First Presbyterian Church, in token of a glowing desire to promote the lustre of this enlightened society. With sincere regard,

(Signed,)

By their humble servant,
JAMES O'HARA.¹²

The chandelier was used to light the sanctuary for thirty-five years.

Fitted with a hundred sperm candles, skillfully set in ascending circles, the chandelier drew all the boys of the neighborhood to the church at sundown to see Archie Henderson, the sexton, light it. Archie had a clever trick of smearing each candle wick with turpentine and at the lightest touch of his taper it would burst into flame. To the boys it looked like magic.

It is hard today, in these flood-lit modern times, to realize the crowd-drawing effect of such a brilliant illumination.

In Dr. Herron's time, nights were illumined by spluttering lanterns and sperm candles. The doctor made full capitalization of General O'Hara's chandelier, always advertising and announcing his evening service for early candlelight.

The Archie mentioned as church officer was himself one of the famous characters of Pittsburgh. Archie Henderson was a thick-set, sandy-haired, red-faced and short-necked man, who, as a sideline to his office, heated hot bricks on the sanctuary stove and rented them out to pew holders.

Archie chased dogs around the church with a stout cudgel, on occasion during the service!

On one Sabbath morning when he had finally trapped some unlucky mongrel, he lifted it by the scruff of the neck and carried it still yelping down the aisle. Dr. Herron paused in his sermon, momentarily nonplussed. Conscious of the sudden break in the sermon, Archie stopped short in his stride, turned around to the pulpit and with the yelping dog suspended high in one hand, gave an airy wave to the doctor with the other and called: "Carry on with your sermon, doctor. Don't mind me!"¹³

Archie could dig graves in the crowded graveyard of First Church with a nicety of measurement and an economy of spacing which did credit to his judgment.

On one occasion, Dr. Herron stood watching him at work and commented favorably on his craftsmanship. Archie replied: "Not a man in the country could match it. But when the time comes, doctor, I'll dig a far handsomer one for you."

The time never came, for Dr. Francis Herron long outlived Archie the Sexton.¹⁴

The Reverend Richard Lea informs us that Dr. Herron, like many other ministers, was tone deaf and knew little or nothing about music. He always claimed that his favorite tunes were "Pisgah" and "Silver Street," but those who heard him sing affirmed that the only distinction he recognized in tunes was fast or slow, soft or loud.

Eventually, Dr. Herron was prevailed upon by the young people to sanction the formation of a choir.

Thomas Fairman, who opposed change on principle and was something of a Covenanter, eventually yielded without much grace, but insisted, "They shall never have an instrument—no never!"

Later on, of all people, his own nephew took instruction in playing the bass viol and becoming proficient, began to play at church service, but only as an accompaniment to the choir.

All went well at first, for apparently Thomas Fairman was as musically deaf as his pastor. He couldn't distinguish between instrumental music and choral singing. But alas! as a voluntary Blair began to play a tune. Fairman jumped up from his seat in the aisle.

"Where are you going?" exclaimed a peacemaker.

"To the gallery to smash that fiddle!"

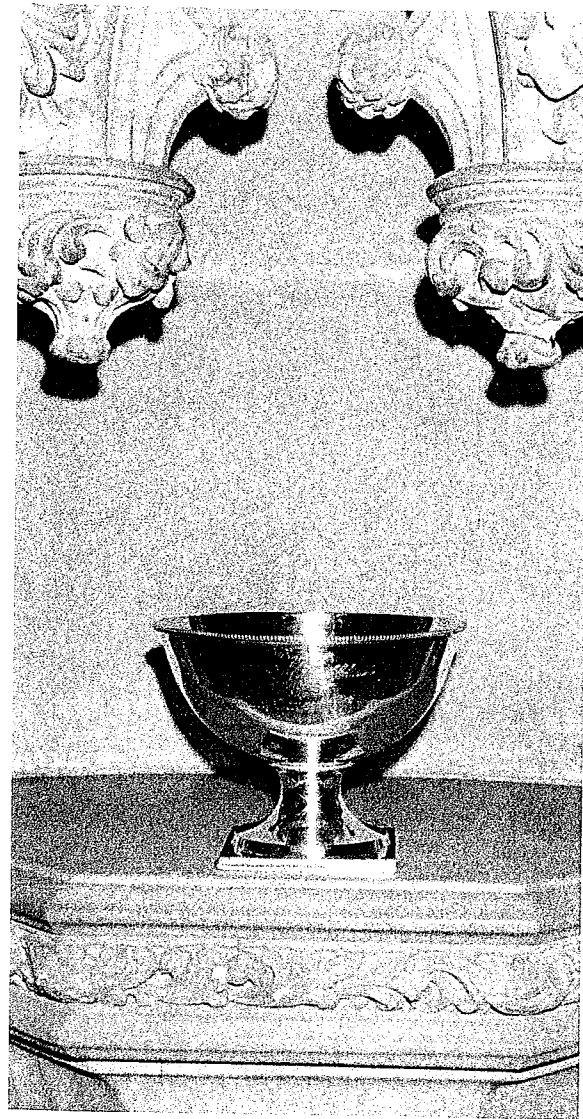
"Sit down, Tom—it's been playing there for a month, and (has) never hurt us."¹⁵

Fairman sat down—and that was an end of the matter. The bass viol was accepted. In fact, a small stringed orchestra became an establishment. Such a development would have delighted the heart of Pittsburgh's second pastor, Robert Steele.

A year after General James O'Hara presented the chandelier, he died, December 17, 1819, at the age of sixty-six. He had come to Pittsburgh in 1773, and had long been a trustee of First Church. James O'Hara had joined First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh after marrying the former Mary Carson, who was a Presbyterian.

Early in its history, this cultured family became a decisive factor in the transformation of First Church. Mrs. Mary Carson O'Hara and her daughter, later to become Mrs. Harmar Denny, were among the first of the congregation influenced by the spiritual ministry of Dr. Herron.

In 1834, Mrs. O'Hara gave the beautiful sugar bowl from her silver tea service, to be used in the Sacrament of Baptism, and was inscribed with the words printed at the right of the following picture.



*Presented
to the
First Presbyterian Church
of Pittsburgh
by
Mary Carson O'Hara
to be used in the
Sacrament of Baptism
1834*

THE MARY CARSON O'HARA BAPTISMAL BOWL

It replaced the plain china bowl used until that time.¹⁶ The silver tea service is believed to have been a wedding present from her father. If so, the bowl is almost two hundred years old. It was given in memory of her son, who died shortly after his marriage. In the year that she made the presentation, Mary Carson O'Hara died.

In the present cathedral-like First Presbyterian Church, instead of a standing baptismal font, an ornate placement area carved into the center stone pulpit holds the much-used Mary Carson O'Hara baptismal bowl.

Under its first minister, Samuel Barr, and that most reluctant layman, Hugh Brackenridge, First Presbyterian Church had played a major part in the establishment of the Pittsburgh Academy. It was, therefore, appropriate that, when in 1822 the limited curriculum of this institution being inadequate for the city's needs, the Western University of Pennsylvania (later the University of Pittsburgh) was launched, the installation service for the principal and faculty was held in First Presbyterian Church. Dr. Herron also was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Western University of Pennsylvania for many years.

Judge McCandless describes the inauguration of the Western University:

It was a public pageant in which the people and the civic authorities participated, and was attended with more than ordinary pomp and ceremony. There was a procession with music, banners and badges, in which the city fathers, the judiciary, gentlemen of the different learned professions, the trustees and students marched to the old First Presbyterian Church, where the venerable and accomplished Dr. George Stevenson, the then President of the Board, delivered the inaugural address to the faculty, which was happily responded to in the solid, massive eloquence of the Rev. Dr. Bruce, the Principal.¹⁷

Dr. Herron early established a Sunday School. An oral tradition dates the Sunday School from the year 1812, and claims that the first meetings were held in a stable near the old cottage mill in the upper part of the town. The evidence for this very early date is considered unreliable by some.

In 1815, Dr. Herron, having heard of the success of schools established by a Reverend Mr. May, a returned missionary, decided that this plan was better than his own method of catechetical instruction. So, the younger part of the class was transferred to volunteer teachers. Mrs. Mary Wilkins had charge of an infant department, one of the teachers being Miss Rebecca Herron, the minister's daughter. Modern visual aids were used, including a stress on bright color.

Soon schools were being organized outside the congregation in a missionary endeavor to reach children of the great unchurched masses. In 1817, the two Presbyterian Churches and the two Methodist Churches had formed the Pittsburgh Sunday School Association under the guidance of the Doctor. The historic event took place in First Church. This association supervised the Sunday School teaching throughout the city.

The First Church schools met at 8 a.m. and were in session through 10:45 a.m., when there was a break for church service. After 1 p.m., they reconvened and continued until the 3 p.m. service.

Every other Sunday there was a meeting for prayer and discussion.

A descriptive letter dated August 5, published in the *Pittsburgh Recorder* is quoted by David McKnight. The writing is rhetorical:

Just as the sun was emerging over the eastern hills, I proceeded from my couch, to contemplate the wonders of creation and enjoy the sweet breezes of the morning. Progressing, my attention was suddenly arrested by a group of interesting and respectable persons of both sexes, who were approaching one of our churches. Others seemed likewise directing their way to the same place. Attracted by curiosity to know what particular object the young persons had in view so early on the Sabbath morning, I was induced to mingle with them and to enter the sacred place.

There were assembling here persons from various religious denominations and churches in town, and harmony, peace and love seemed to animate every countenance. In this house of prayer I found a minister of the Gospel, whose years exceed three score and ten, discoursing on the love of Jesus to a fallen and perishing world. His ancient locks and wrinkled brow, his bowed form and faltering voice, his pious and endearing conversation and admonitions, commanded attention and reverence.

. . . . At half past six this interesting Christian company separated, to go to their respective homes and further prepare for their several duties at eight o'clock.¹⁸

The minister referred to was Joseph Patterson.

A Mr. James Wilson and a Mr. Nathaniel Smith organized a Sunday School for negroes in a carpenter shop which stood at the corner of Smithfield Street and Diamond Alley. Soon the school numbered over one hundred children and older people. The children, according to reliable sources were learning to read at the very early age of three years. This school proved to be one of the most successful ventures initiated by First Church, and soon came to occupy the former building of Second Church on Diamond Alley.

In 1825 First Presbyterian Church began its own independent Sabbath School organization. This association drew up its own constitution and was run by a Board of Managers. The first president was John Hannen. The association proved very successful.

In 1830, a Mr. Bacon from England demonstrated in First Church that infants could be taught by using picture post cards, models, and other visual aids. These exhibitions led to the formation of an infant department of eighty to one hundred pupils.

In 1831, two teacher training classes were set up in First Church, one for young women, led by Mrs. Harmar Denny, and one for young men, conducted by Mr. Joseph Pollock.

In the first sixteen years of Dr. Herron's ministry, First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh had been born again into a new congregation which must have delighted the hearts of old Redstoners.

Now from Redstone came the Reverend Joseph Patterson, retiring from Montour and Raccoon Churches. His idea was to spend the remainder of his years in less active labors. True to Redstone tradition, however, he found this difficult.

The Reverend Joseph Patterson as a young man was sent with a companion as a missionary to the Northwestern Indians. When he returned, Dr. John McMillan asked Patterson how he had succeeded in his pioneer task.

"Well," said Patterson, "we started with no provision but cornmeal and bear's grease. My stomach soon revolted at this fare. I must either return or get sick."

So, as I believe in special prayer, we knelt down. I told the Lord I was willing to serve Him, but He must give me something which I could eat, or I would die."

"Did He answer your prayer?"

"Yes!"

"What did He give you?"

"Nothing better to eat."

"Then how?"

"Why you see," said Patterson, "I laid down in His forest, slept safely under His care, and when I awoke He had given me an appetite so voracious that corn meal and bear's grease tasted **good**, which was as much an answer to prayer as though he had sent me beef and pudding."¹⁹

Joining First Presbyterian Church, this great old saint of God became a dynamic, though unofficial associate, of Dr. Herron. His chief work became that of an agent for the newly formed Bible societies of the city. Such work in the hands of such a man became a major missionary enterprise.

Along the river banks, old Father Patterson set up his apostolate—climbing from boat to boat, a missionary and friend to the vast hordes of families floating west by the way of the Ohio. Father Patterson, as he was affectionately called, helped them with his shrewd counsel, for he also had been a pioneer. Now as a colporteur, Father Patterson became the friend of the river migrants and supplied them with a copy of the Bible for the new home they would shortly set up in the western wilderness. Dr. Herron, whose recreation was fishing and who loved the river and its traffic, helped him by running a meeting for riverboat men.

In 1819, the Reverend E. P. Swift, another great preacher and evangelist, cut from the same cloth as Dr. Herron and Father Patterson, had come as minister to Second Church.

In 1826, the Sunday School had outgrown its limited space in the session room and was moved to a new building containing several rooms on Sixth Avenue. This was one of the first buildings specifically built for Sunday School work.

During 1827, Dr. Herron was elected moderator of the General Assembly. In that year one of the important decisions to be made was the placement of a seminary for the West. Two sites were under consideration: One in Allegheny Town, North Side Pittsburgh, the other in Cincinnati. Dr. Herron requested permission to leave the chair and speak on behalf of Allegheny Town. His eloquence swayed the Assembly and Allegheny Town was chosen, though only by the narrow margin of two votes.

Thus, the seminary came to Pittsburgh and temporary accommodation was given to commence the work in the session room of the First Presbyterian Church in November 1828.

From the beginning of Dr. Herron's pastorate in 1810 to 1827, First Church had gradually been coming to new spiritual life and vitality. A favorite prayer of Dr. Herron's was that the Spirit of God would breathe into the dry bones of formal religion. In fact, it was a custom of those who arrived at the church during Dr. Herron's first prayer to ask, "Has he got to the dry bones yet?" knowing this was inevitably the climax to which his prayer moved.

Dr. Herron's prayer was soon to receive a dramatic answer when, in 1827, revival came to Pittsburgh.

After a Wednesday evening prayer meeting about the middle of Dec. 1827, Dr. Herron, Dr. Campbell and five or six others, tarried around the stove after the rest had retired, and the conversation turned on the state of religion in the church, and the importance of Christians praying for a revival of God's work. Their minds immediately became so much interested, that it was proposed to engage in prayer upon the spot.²⁰

On the Saturday evening they met again for prayer and parted with a hope that God was about to do great things. The doctor also was informed that a prayer meeting had been held in the room of a saintly mother, a Mrs. Irish.

These indications of coming revival stimulated the doctor to preach on the following morning with unusual power and solemnity. As he closed the service he announced that he would preach that evening on a rather unusual subject. This brought out a large congregation and he gave out his text: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of years; in the midst of years make known, in wrath remember mercy."

From this text he preached a dynamic sermon on revivals in religion. He had not been long speaking when someone rose to his feet and walked towards the door. Doctor Herron paused, waited silently until the man was out, and then proceeded. Soon someone else got up to go. Again the doctor waited until he was gone; then said: "If any more wish to go, I will wait, as I do not wish to be disturbed." Soon another got up, this time in the gallery and went clattering down the stairs. Dr. Herron was silent and the man went out closing the door with a vicious bang.

"It appears," the doctor said, "that the devil is determined to annoy us tonight; if any more wish to go, go! I shall not stop, but finish my discourse amidst any confusion."

When he ended his sermon he suggested that after the benediction was pronounced, the careless would go to their homes, and those who wished to see a revival in the church would meet him in the lecture hall and pray for half an hour for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church. The lecture hall was crowded and that night marked a new era in the life of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh.²¹

On Monday evening the doctor called for a similar meeting, and met with similar results. For three or four months such meetings were held daily—sometimes twice a day—and interest and intensity increased as the weeks went by.

At the Communion Service on the second Sabbath in January, fifty-five persons united with the church, thirty-five of these on profession of new-found faith.

After this Communion, the working of God's Spirit in the hearts of the people became even more evident. The lecture room had to be abandoned and the church opened to accommodate the crowds.

The weather during all this time was so wet and inclement that the winter of 1827-28 was known as the wet winter. Yet through the darkness of streets, dimly lighted by the flicker of sperm-oil lanterns, and along pavements deep in mud, the crowds groped and squelched their way. Nothing could stop them.

At another Communion in March, twenty-seven more persons were added to First Church. Several young converts later went into the ministry, the first few of the subsequent many, although it was not until the last two decades that really large numbers of young men and women began to go into full-time church work.

A direct outcome of the 1827 revival in First Church was the formation of East Liberty Presbyterian Church as an organized body.

This is not to suggest that East Liberty had not already a long history of vital congregational life. Mr. Alexander Negley, who had lived there since 1778, had been one of the earliest members of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh and assisted in its establishment over the years. As already stated, Mr. Negley had in those days invited the Reverend Barr to ride out from Pittsburgh and preach in his home. The tradition of having services in his home was maintained by his son, Jacob, who bought a portable pulpit. In 1818, thanks to the Negley family, a large house of worship was built.

Just before the 1827 revival in First Church, a minister, the Reverend John Joyce, originally from Ireland and a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin, came to Pittsburgh from the Southern states of this country where he had been a most successful revivalist.²²

Mr. Joyce worked with Dr. Herron in the 1827 revival in Pittsburgh and apparently was himself greatly stimulated by the happenings of the winter of 1827-28.

The Board of Missions, recognizing the gifts and graces manifested in this cultured evangelist, commissioned him to act as an evangelist-at-large in the Pittsburgh area. With Mr. Francis Bailey, a much loved elder of First Church, who had also been stirred by the revival and who had recently moved out to East Liberty, Mr. Joyce began a survey of the area.

The two men discovered twenty-two Presbyterians who had presented certificates and signified on September 28, 1828, their desire to form a Presbyterian Church in East Liberty. Eleven of those certificates, or exactly half of them, were from First Presbyterian Church, six from Second, two from Bethany, one from McKeesport, and two from the Associate Reformed Church of Pittsburgh. These were the only churches represented in the founding membership in East Liberty Presbyterian Church. The Reverend Mr. Graham of Beulah had been appointed by Presbytery to work with Mr. Joyce in the establishment of the church in East Liberty, but he strongly opposed the move and petitioned Presbytery to discontinue its efforts to found any such congregation in the area.

On presenting the petition to Presbytery for the organization of a church in East Liberty, Francis Bailey was met with the chilling statement "There is nobody in East Liberty . . . with whom to form an organization."

Mr. Bailey, with modesty but characteristic ardor replied: "There are plenty of people there, and we expect to have them converted, and then they will make a church."²³

The first pastor, the Reverend W. B. McIlwaine, lived for a time at the home of Mr. Francis Bailey.

In spite of the problems the church was established and is one of the great churches of Presbyterianism today.

Another congregation soon established through the leadership of First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh was the First Church of Allegheny. Messrs. John Hannen and family, John Irwin and John Patterson along with their wives, Mrs. John Grubbs, and Miss Mary Anderson were among those who went out from First Church to take leading roles in the new congregation.

John Hannen, a man who carried "an old-fashioned ivory-headed cane, had a sedate but cheerful manner." Known in First Pittsburgh as "the beloved disciple" because of his gentle manners and his devoted life, he played the leading lay role in the life of the new church. His daughter and step-daughter, trained from childhood in First Church, later married missionaries.

Dr. W. W. McKinney, speaking of the founding elders of the First Church of Allegheny, stated that:

Mr. Hannen was the most gifted and experienced. He had served since 1818 in a similar capacity in the First Church of Pittsburgh and he had profited by those years of training in piety and service under the guidance of Dr. Herron. . . . His energy and consecration found numerous channels of expression in the expanded work which the church was soon to undertake throughout the community.²⁴

Three new elders were ordained following the revival at First Presbyterian Church.

One was the Honorable Harmar Denny, who had married Elizabeth Febiger O'Hara, daughter of General James O'Hara and Mary Carson O'Hara.

Harmar was Dr. Herron's dearest friend and identified in spirit with the man he loved like a brother.

The offices held by Harmar Denny in state and society are too numerous to mention. He was a member of Congress 1829-37, trustee of the Western University, and a director of the Western Theological Seminary.

William Plumer and James Wilson were also ordained. James Wilson, who had helped organize the first Sunday School for black children, lived until the year 1883, and at nearly ninety years of age must have been a good source of material for Dr. Sylvester F. Scovel's history.

Another elder was John M. Snowden, editor of the Pittsburgh *Mercury* and director of the Bank of Pittsburgh. It was he who wrote the first little history of the church, which is incorporated in the minutes.

Elder Francis Bailey joined First Church about 1824. After the 1827 revival, as already noted, he helped organize East Liberty Presbyterian Church. He returned to Pittsburgh in 1842, and was a director of the Western Theological Seminary and president of its Board of Trustees. His wife was Mary Ann Dalzell, a daughter of John Dalzell of Oneida County, New York, who had come from County Down, Ireland.

With Mr. Bailey was associated his friend Robert Beer, also a member of session. So alike were the two men that they were called the "Siamese twins." Together, they worked with their pastor to extend the kingdom and the success of Dr. Herron's ministry owed much to their faithfulness in the work.

Mr. Robert Beer had endured the hardships of frontier life. As a young man he used to come into Pittsburgh on Sundays dressed in tow-clothing which he felt unsuitable dress for church. So he would sit on the stone steps where he could hear the service and then get away before the congregation was dismissed. He loved the church and began to teach in the Sunday Schools as soon as they were formed. He became an elder in 1855 and served for twenty-five years. For the last twenty years of his life he gave himself with Francis Bailey to visiting the congregation.

It was Robert Beer who ordered the tablet which commemorates Dr. Herron. He lived until 1880, having been a member of the church for over half a century. Mr. Beer became very frail in later life. Towards the end of his life, when asked his opinion on church policy he replied: "It has been a little dark with me, lately; but I know this, anyhow: 'Whatever's for Jesus Christ, that I'm for.'"

The John Dalzell, whose daughter, Mary Ann, had married Francis Bailey, had come in 1817 to Pittsburgh with his brother, Matthew Dalzell, from Ballywattcock, County Down. Like Robert Steele, John had been implicated in the 1798 Rebellion and had fled the old country. A younger brother, James,

arrived in 1825. James married Martha Duff and their large family was to become prominent in First Church. A Robert Dalzell, possibly a cousin who was in business with them, was also prominent in First Church life.

At the request of the Synod of Pittsburgh, Redstone Presbytery on April 16, 1822, dismissed the Reverend Francis Herron and the congregation of First Church, Pittsburgh, together with other ministers and their congregations, to form a Presbytery of Pittsburgh. It was later announced, however, that these ministers with their several charges had been united with the Synod of Ohio.

One of the most decisive events in the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh took place a year or two after the 1827 revival, in 1828 or '29. This was the beginning of organized women's missionary work.²⁵

Three school girls, Mary Jane Craig, Hannah Laughlin and Susan Irwin, became interested in missions after reading the *Youth's Magazine*, very largely devoted to foreign mission work and edited by the Reverend Job Halsey.

They began to make pen wipers and sold them to their friends in school for five cents each, intending to give the money thus obtained to foreign missions. A teacher, hearing of the effort, remarked that their profits would only amount to a mite. The girls adopted the teacher's estimate of their contribution as a name tag and became known as the "Mite Society."

Soon three others joined the rolls of the "Mite Society," Mary Herron, Mary Denny, and Isabella Craig.

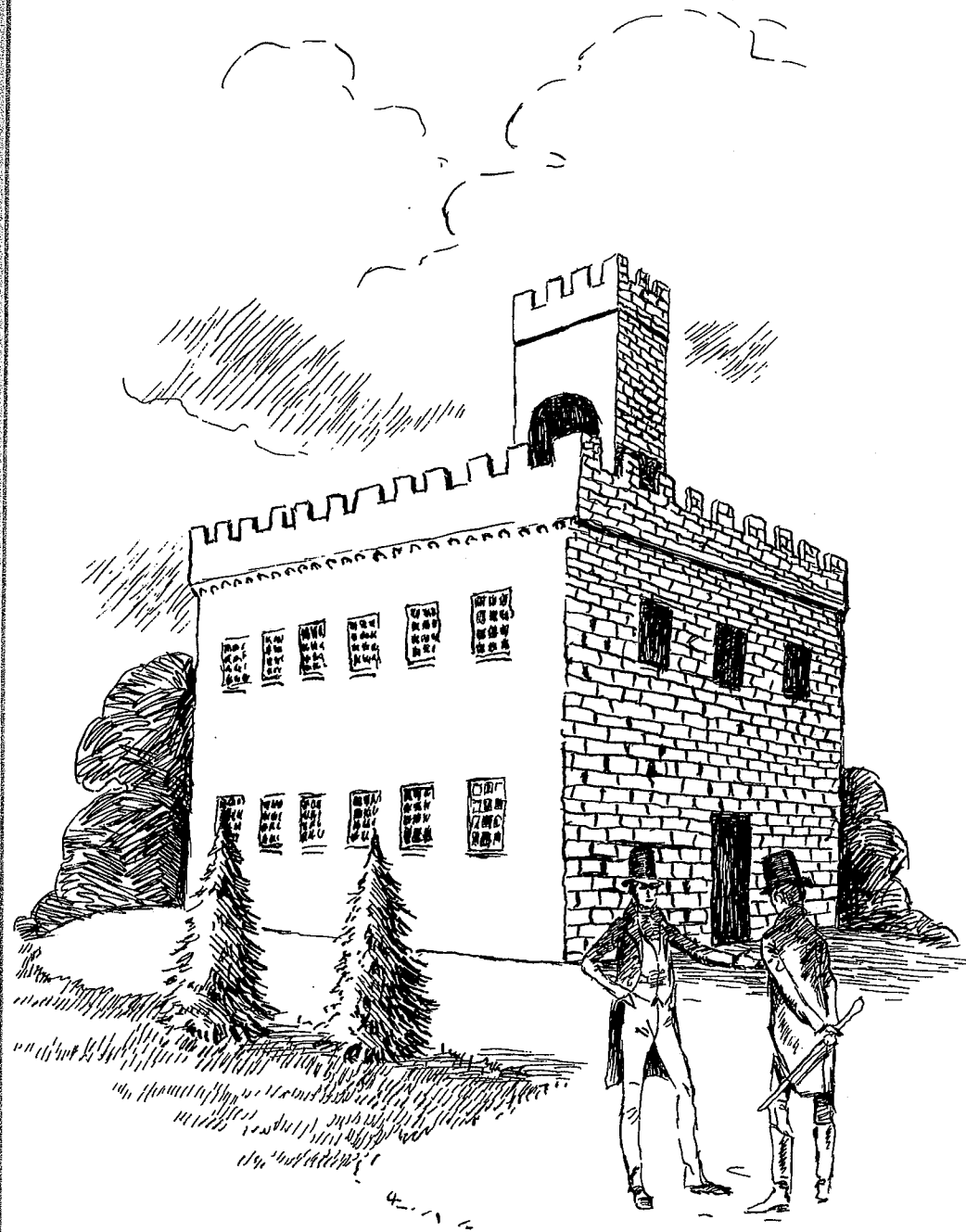
In 1833, the six girls and others who had joined them, began to make fancy articles and even children's clothing. Isabella Craig, who appears to have been a born promoter, put the articles in a basket and traded them from door to door. In 1833 this was an extremely daring act for a young lady.

They raised \$30 and gave the money to the Reverend William M. Thompson, who was starting out as a missionary to Syria. Later this missionary was to publish the famous religious best seller of its day, *The Land and the Book*. It has become a travel classic on the Holy Land.

In the year of 1833, there began a remarkable missionary outreach from First Church, partly by these school girls. Many of the missionaries were young seminarians who had joined First Church and superintended its Sunday Schools. Quite a few married First Church girls who became their missionary wives.²⁶

John Lowrie, who had been superintendent of two First Church Sunday Schools in his seminary days, and was licensed in the church in 1832, set sail for India as a pioneer missionary in 1833. He later became secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions.

In First Church that same year, the Reverend Joseph Kerr married Mary Jane Caldwell, one of the early "Mite Society" group, who was John Hannen's



THE SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING IN 1826

step-daughter. They went as missionaries to the Wea Indian Tribe. Miss Nancy Henderson, another First Church girl, went with them as a missionary.

Wells Bushnell, seventeen years of age, who had been converted during Dr. Herron's ministry, became one of the famous pioneer missionaries under the Western Missionary Society. He had married Eleanor Hannen, John Hannen's daughter and in 1833, he resigned his pastorate in Meadville and formed a team with the two other First Church members to go to the Wea Indians.

James Wilson, superintendent of First Church's Arthursville Sunday School became a missionary in Ludhiana, Allahabad, and Agra in India.

Albert O. Johnson, later one of the Cawnpore martyrs in the Sepoy rebellion of 1857, joined the church from the seminary. John Cloud, early missionary and a martyr in Africa, appears to have been a teacher in one of the church's Sunday Schools.

Susan Irwin, one of the three young school girls who founded the "Mite Society," married the Rev. J. S. Travelli and became a missionary to India in 1836.

First Church missionaries of these early days who gave most potent witness to the kingdom were Dr. and Mrs. William Speer. Cornelia Brackenridge, later Mrs. Speer, had come to First Church with her parents when she was thirteen years of age. She grew up to be a young socialite, very popular among the "in" set. Her sudden conversion caused something of a sensation among the sophisticated circles in which she lived.

After conversion, Cornelia Brackenridge became a Sunday School teacher in First Church, and in May 1846 married William Speer, the superintendent. In August that year they sailed for China. They had a dreadful voyage of five months in a sailing ship. Cornelia was with child and the confinement broke down her health. April 16, of the following year, she died at the age of twenty-four. Her baby also died and they were buried in the Macao Cemetery.

Cornelia's exciting personality and heroic life left a tremendous mark on the people of First Church. Her last words were: "I am willing by God's grace to suffer, recover, or die."²⁷

Furthermore, her husband survived her to become one of the finest missionaries and writers in the denomination and later Secretary of the General Assembly's Board of Education.

He maintained his connection with First Church all his life. It was Dr. William Speer who, at the Centennial, gave two addresses which are incorporated in the *Centennial Volume*.

In 1836, the "Mite Society" became an auxiliary of the Western Foreign Missionary Society with Miss Isabella Craig as president, Miss Mary Herron as vice-president, and Miss Hannah B. Laughlin as secretary.

They called themselves the Young Ladies' Missionary Society and in their first year raised one hundred dollars.

In 1840, a first annual sale was held, and invitation verses were written by a poetess whose good intentions were better than her meter:

Friends and neighbors, 'All Hail,'
Won't you come to our sale,
And examine the tasteful variety
Of things useful and gay,
Which we mean to display
And all made by our Sewing Society?

"Ladies come, one and all,
And give us a call;
We are sure you will not find us dear:
Our prices are low,
And our work, we well know,
Is as good as you find anywhere."²⁸

However, with hard work—sewing, cooking and handicraft—together with levying fines on each other for missing the sewing session, which ran four hours or more at a time, they raised in 1860 the sum of eight hundred dollars.

The ladies met in the afternoon to sew and worked on into the late evening or night when husbands, brothers and gallants joined them for tea. The men brought lanterns to escort the ladies home and saved them from stumbling into mudholes. In those days there were no paved streets and no city lighting.

In 1850, another young girls' society was formed. This organization became the home missionary society of the church.

Its books make good reading. "Two years in succession in the same handwriting we have amounts unaccounted for—nine cents, one year! fourteen, the next!"

Another entry reads: "Received for making night cap 45 cents; two night caps \$2.00."

In 1846 it is recorded that a Miss Jane Brooks heard a missionary sermon and with childlike eagerness offered her Bible. In her diary on that date is the entry "mission, one cent."

In the year of the 1827 revival, First Church had two Sunday Schools with an enrollment of 170 pupils. As a result of the revival, converts began a missionary drive aimed at the children of the great unchurched masses. David McKnight describing the drive writes:

Out into the suburbs and alleys and streets they went again, Sabbath morning after Sabbath morning, through the heat of summer and the bitter cold of winter, and brought them in,—led them in,—carried them in,—compelled them by some inducement to enter the sacred place. Doubtless some will

read these words, who have gone into the homes of the little truants early on the Sabbath, taken them from their beds, put their clothes upon them, washed their faces, combed their hair and marched them off triumphantly to the school-room, with a stick of candy in one hand and the other clasped in that of their faithful friend.²⁹

Three years later the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh had eight Sunday Schools, with a total enrollment of six hundred scholars, sixty teachers and seventeen officers. Six of the schools had circulating libraries, and the total number of books in the libraries was four hundred. All those working in the Sunday Schools were church members.

The small Sunday School building of 1826 was becoming inadequate, but it was not possible to replace it until 1841 when the old building was torn down and a new one built facing in towards the church and away from Sixth Avenue to give more privacy. It was a rectangular, two-storied building with easy access and plenty of windows.

In 1832, revival came again to First Church. Dr. Herron and Father McCurdy had gone to assist the Reverend Samuel Tait in a revival which had broken out in the latter's congregation. On the Sunday after the doctor returned, it was evident as he preached that spiritual power was present to an unusual degree. He sent word to Father McCurdy to come and help him in what was obviously the beginning of another revival.

McCurdy replied that he could not come as revival had also broken out in his own congregation.

The 1832 revival was if anything more prolonged than that of 1827. Old Father Patterson, the river boat evangelist of Pittsburgh who again became active in the 1832 revival, died in his home just after he had been kneeling in prayer into the late hours of the night. This deepened the solemnity of the revival meetings.

A cholera epidemic throughout the country also led many to prayer. The Reverend Joseph Stockton, principal of the academy, Dr. Herron's friend and helper in revival, and the minister who had supplied the church between Dr. Steele and Dr. Herron's ministry, died as a result of the plague. So did Dr. Swift's youngest son. A serious mood spread into the minds of Pittsburgh's citizens in which large numbers rethought their relationship to Christ and His Kingdom.

Many also attributed the mildness of the plague in Pittsburgh to the direct intervention of God—only forty deaths out of a population of 20,000.

As a result of the 1832 revival, 114 members were added to First Presbyterian Church rolls. Conversion among young people in the Sabbath Schools was a feature of this revival.

The 1827 revival had played a large part in the formation of East Liberty Presbyterian Church. Out of the years of prolonged revival after 1832, Third

Presbyterian Church was born. With an addition of 114 new members, Dr. Herron felt First Church was passing its efficiency peak. Hence, in cooperation with Second Church he encouraged some of his finest and most energetic young men to form a new congregation not many hundreds of yards from his own. This church became the Third Presbyterian Church, and today on Fifth and S. Negley is also one of Pittsburgh's famous congregations.

After the 1832 revival, and as early as 1833, First Presbyterian Church had twelve Sabbath Schools and 1,212 scholars, with 121 teachers—and this at a time when the total membership of the church was 422 members. In other words, well over one out of every four members was a Sabbath School teacher. And that occupation in Pittsburgh in those days demanded rugged energy. First Presbyterian Church's Pittsburgh Schools extended all over the city, meeting in stables, cellars, shops, and warehouses. On Saturday night the teachers often had to clean, clear, and prepare the building. On Sunday morning it meant an early start, trudging through snow and ice with a pack of wood and coal to light fires and heat rooms before the children came.

Some of these Sabbath Schools later became churches.

In 1835, a Reverend Gallagher, a celebrated revivalist came to Pittsburgh, who as Dr. Paxton says, "preached enough of truth to produce real genuine conversions, and enough error to awaken enthusiastic extravagancies."³⁰

It was a heady, exciting, emotional winter in all the churches of Pittsburgh. Singing could be heard in the hotels and even along the streets. In whatever church Mr. Gallagher preached, excited crowds thronged. The evangelist would come out of the pulpit and down the aisles. Mourners' benches were set up. The atmosphere was different to the solemnity and low-key approaches of previous revivals.

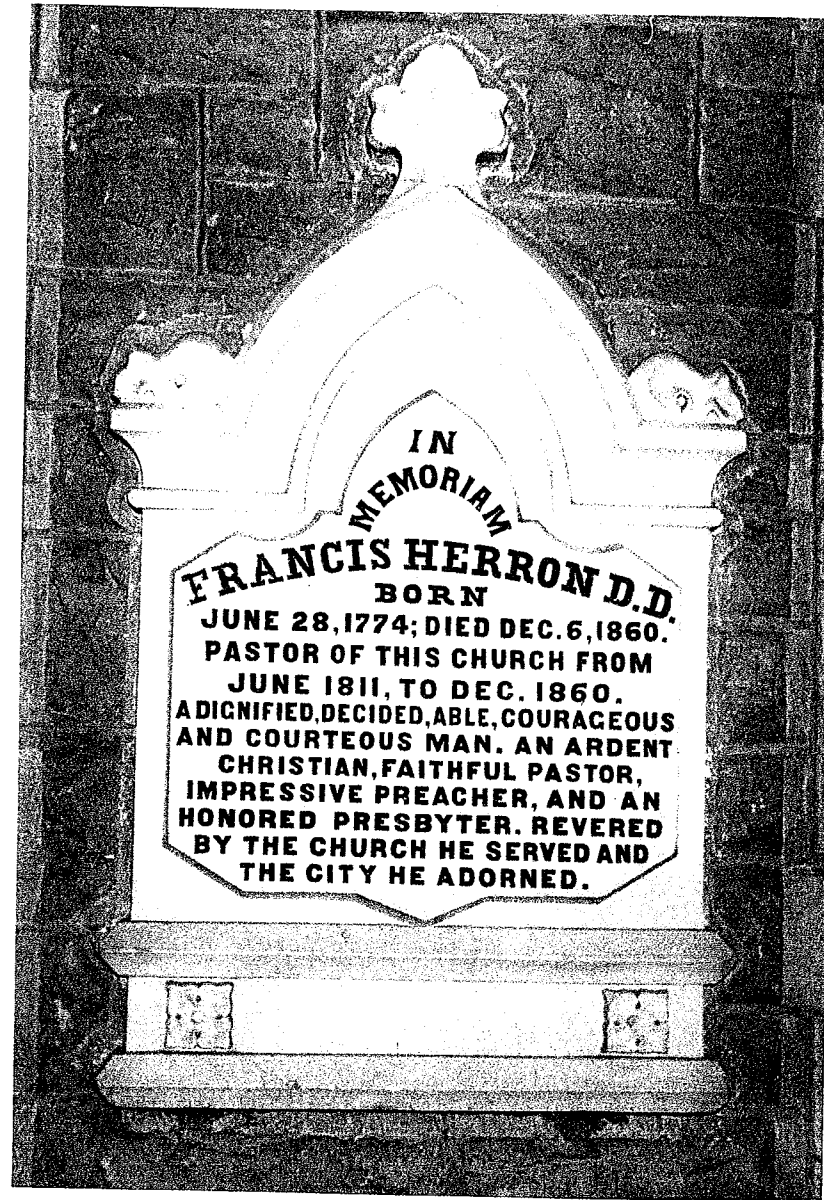
Dr. Herron, who belonged to the "Old School" and was more strictly Calvinistic in his outlook, cooperated, but with some reservation. Afterwards, when the results of the mission were assessed, it was found that some wonderful and lasting conversions had been brought about. A considerable number of others, however, relapsed to their former way of life and became hardened against religion.

In 1840, 1841, and 1843 there were again revivals and the strength and energy of First Church were renewed and intensified.

In 1842, a convocation of ministers and elders was held in First Church, at the suggestion of Doctor Herron. They came from the Synods of Pittsburgh, Wheeling, and Ohio. Elisha McCurdy, aged at this time eighty years, made his last appeal to his fellow workers:

Brethren, wake up! Talk to sinners kindly, affectionately, frequently and God will pour out His Spirit . . . if we will do our duty. Farewell, Brethren, and God be with you.³¹

This plaque stands near the center door of the church in the vestibule:



THE HERRON MEMORIAL PLAQUE

In 1837, despite the unhappy economic situation and the panic which ensued, a high tariff Whig wrote of Pittsburgh: "There is nothing left in Pittsburgh but Dr. Herron and the devil, and sometimes I think Dr. Herron is getting the upper hand."

During the 1830's, Dr. Herron worked with Dr. Swift to establish the "Board" system in the Presbyterian Church. Knowing that the General Assembly would not welcome this apparent reversion to denominationalism, the first step was to organize the Western Foreign Missionary Society as the stated agency for the foreign mission work of the Synod of Pittsburgh. This took place when Synod met in Second Church in 1831. Harmar Denny was president throughout its existence. Dr. Herron was chairman of its executive committee, and the key man was Dr. Elisha P. Swift, corresponding secretary. Its meetings were generally held in the lecture room of First Church.

This society became the forerunner of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church. The organization of a mission board led to a temporary split in the denomination, but when the divided churches reunited in 1869, they did so with the board system recognized and maintained as the most efficient organization for mission.

In 1847 Mr. Harmar Denny and Captain and Mrs. Edward E. H. Schenley donated twenty-four acres of land in the vicinity of Twenty-Eighth Street to be the site for West Penn Hospital. When built there was no money to furnish the Hospital, but Mrs. F. R. Brunot along with Mrs. Denny soon led a group, "The Helping Hand Society," which provided what was necessary.³²

Toward the middle of the century, however, Dr. Herron's enormous energy was slowing down. The suggestion of an assistant was made, but the doctor felt the time had come for First Church to seek a new minister. In 1850, he resigned. The church granted him a pension of a thousand dollars a year. He lived to be eighty-six, perhaps the oldest minister in the West.

In his retirement, he spent much time on the Ohio River. He loved the rivers of Pittsburgh with their moving boat traffic and floating population. As already mentioned, during his ministry he had held services for the boatmen, upstairs at the corner of Wood and Water Streets.

Now in his declining years, as an old, old settler, signing himself "Rip," he tells us in an entry of the *Post Gazette*:³³

At the extreme point, was the boat yard of Joseph McCullough, who built broadhorns. In front of this were fishery grounds . . . while in the stream opposite . . . were generally anchored the skiffs and other light crafts of many lovers of angling. Among them were the Rev. Francis Herron, George Shiras, etc.

Again we read:

All along the river here and there were great rocks, one of which was quite celebrated as 'Foster's Rock' where was fine fishing water, undisturbed by

boats and much frequented by the Rev. Francis Herron, George Shiras, and a lady named Stephenson who was passionately fond of angling and quite an expert at the art.

But Francis Herron was primarily a fisher of men. That fact is illustrated in the present church building, by the beautiful Tiffany stained glass window in his memory. It depicts Jesus as the fisher of men preaching from Peter's boat, at the lake side of Galilee.

Between 1818 and 1839 there were added to the church rolls, 408 by examination, only 218 by certificate—in other words, almost twice as many by profession of faith as by transfer.

Dr. Herron lived for a decade after his retirement. Every Sunday saw him seated on a special chair kept for him under the pulpit, his face serene, his heart at rest among the people he loved.

Between Dr. Herron and his successor, Dr. Paxton, there was a father-son relationship which was a blessing to the church. Dr. Paxton always credited Dr. Herron's advice as being the human catalyst which under God sparked the first revival in his own ministry.

At nearly eighty years of age, Dr. Herron was invited to preach the last sermon in the church he loved. This brick church, built by the Reverend Steele, had led to the lottery and the near bankruptcy of the church. Under Dr. Herron's ministry it had seen the establishment of one of the great congregations of Christendom. Now, just before it was torn down to give place to the third edifice, Dr. Herron mounted its pulpit and preached with deep emotion, closing with the following words:

And now I wish to say, in conclusion, my career in the gospel ministry is drawing very near to a close. And having, in my feeble manner, preached 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God,' for more than half a century, to my fellow-sinners, both here and elsewhere, I wish it to be recorded and remembered, that I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. And would to God that it was written as 'with a pen of iron and with a point of a diamond,' on every heart, both of saint and sinner, that this gospel is the only remedy for the ruined creature, man. And, my fellow-sinners, if you are ever saved from the ruins of your apostacy, you must be saved by this gospel, according to God's plan of salvation through CHRIST, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.³⁴

Dr. Herron lived until 1860 and, as Dr. Scovel sums up the old saint's last days expressively:

It was a life-evening so calm, so bright, so typically perfect that it seemed, like a far-northern sky, rather to melt into heaven's morning than to die in any darkness.³⁵

When Dr. Herron died, all mourned a father. Businesses, and even the courts, were suspended in his honor.



THE REV. WILLIAM PAXTON D.D.
1851-1865

The Church with the Advocate for Christ

William Miller Paxton, aged twenty-seven, became the fourth pastor of First Presbyterian Church in 1851. There was little interim period and it is likely that Dr. Herron had some influence in the choice of his successor.

The new minister's grandfather, William Paxton, of Bart Township, Lancaster County, fought in the Revolutionary War. After the War, he became a Presbyterian minister and served for fifty years as pastor of Lower Marsh Creek Presbyterian Church. William M. Paxton, his grandson, began the study of theology three months after his grandfather died and became eventually the pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, and later Professor at Princeton where he completed fifty-two years in the ministry. Thus, the two men, grandfather and grandson, spanned 102 years in the ministry, from soon after the Revolutionary War until the twentieth century.¹

William M. Paxton in his youth, however, had decided to study law. He graduated from Dickinson College where a revival broke out during his last year. The revival does not seem to have had any radical influence on William. He simply went on with his law practice without apparent commitment to anything other than his chosen profession. He began to work in the law office of Judge George Chambers at Chambersburg.

The community of which he now formed a part was visited by revival after about two years. Apparently Judge Chambers was himself converted. But William Paxton, if moved emotionally in this revival, gave little indication of the fact.

His sister, however, began to exercise a transforming influence on his life, and after two years of law, he joined Falling Springs Presbyterian Church in March 1845. A month later he was received under the care of the Presbytery of Carlisle as a candidate for the ministry.

William M. Paxton, on entering Princeton Seminary, was no callow divinity student, but a born advocate, with an almost uncanny gift for logical thinking, an instinct for getting to the heart of any subject, and an even more amazing gift for communication and rhetoric. His training and gifts had been fitting him to present most convincing briefs in court. He was never to fulfill that early ambition in the law courts of the land. Instead, he was to present more convincing briefs for the Kingdom of Christ in the sanctuaries and courts of the church; and like other lawyers and judges, to prepare young men to follow him in his practice, not of law but of grace.

Under Dr. Charles Hodge and Dr. Archibald Alexander of Princeton, William Paxton now had a double training in theology. "Dr. Hodge," he says,

"gave us a subject with massive learning, in its logical development, in its beautiful balance and connection with the whole system. Dr. Alexander would take the same subject and smite it with a javelin, and let the light through it."²

Under this dual inspiration, William M. Paxton longed to be a doctrinal preacher who could make doctrine light up as in a spiritual transparency by putting the illumination of his own spiritual experience inside. "A heart that is full of Christ will gild every doctrine with the halo of His glory,"³ he said.

William Paxton early proved to be a gifted preacher. At first he memorized his sermons, but when a licentiate, he preached before the Honorable James Buchanan, afterwards the fifteenth President of the United States and a friend of the Paxton family. The President-to-be took him aside and said:

William . . . that sermon you gave us today was written out in full and committed to memory . . . you were looking in the back of your head for your sermon, instead of putting yourself out upon your congregation . . . that is mere drudgery and will weaken you. Either write out in full and read . . . or study your subject thoroughly and speak directly to the people out of a full mind and mastery of your subject.⁴

From that time on, William Paxton prepared his sermons as an oldtime lawyer used to prepare his brief, pacing up and down the courthouse corridors with his client. In the little parlor where the young minister prepared his sermons, friends used to trace the line of worn-out rug where he had paced for hours at a time. Before preaching, he prepared his gospel brief without pen or pencil and without a scrap of paper or book, except his Bible. He sought the joints of his text, arranged the logical divisions under heads and had the capacity for moving in logical sequence to his conclusion, using apt and vivid illustrations. He called this method of preparing sermons "walking them out."

Dr. Paxton always preached the full hour, but it was said that a listener could remember everything he said, so logical and inevitable were the sermons' progressions. The first few sentences were, as he put it, "a center shot at a target." The rest was so clear, so logical, so well illustrated that it was hard to lose interest.

William Paxton was tall and graceful in the pulpit. He wore no gown but was immaculately dressed in the old-fashioned, but dignified dress coat. He held his slender form erect and walked to and fro across the wide pulpit, carrying neither notes nor papers of any description. If Dr. Herron had many of the characteristics of St. Paul, and he certainly had, then his successor must have had more than a little of Apollo in his person. No orator—not even the great Dr. George Tybout Purves—was to surpass him as a preacher.

On his call to Pittsburgh from his first charge in Greencastle, Pennsylvania, Mr. Paxton was warmly welcomed by Dr. Herron. Hardly had the new minister been installed when a fresh revival came to the church in the winter of 1851-52. Dr. Paxton afterwards declared that the catalyst which led to the revival was

the counsel of Dr. Herron to call an "enquiry meeting," as a result of which most of the seventy-five persons who attended made decisions for Christ.

Without Dr. Herron's coaching, Dr. Paxton might easily have become a mere preacher of brilliant sermons. With the old doctor's help, he became a revivalist and an organizer for the Kingdom of God as well.

The 1851-52 revival had marked the crisis for the pastorate of Dr. Paxton. That revival, begun in the first few months of his ministry, had hardly died down before another and even stronger one followed.

During the vacancy in 1850, a Juvenile Society was formed from the Sunday School, with Miss Hannah Laughlin (later wife of Dr. John Rea) as president.

A growing congregation required a larger church building so that the erection of a new sanctuary was commenced in 1852 and completed in 1853, at a cost of \$25,000.

The *Gazette* describes it:

The building . . . measures 85 feet front by 128 feet in depth. . . . The entire front, with its two massive but elegant towers, which project on both sides of the graceful centre, is built of Baden stone.

In pleasing contrast with the splendor of the exterior is the interior. The chapel, into which you enter, after passing under the groined ceiling of the vestibule, is remarkable for its elegant simplicity. The whole space, eighty-five feet long, is spanned by a single arch of sixty feet. The ceiling is groined over the windows, enriched with neat mouldings and bosses of leafwork: its point is fifty three feet above the floor.

A striking feature is the lowness of the galleries, which are supported by clusters of columns, with foliated capitals. . . .⁵

The building was large enough to seat the great crowds which flocked to it. It was also able to house the famous Synodical Conventions and accommodate meetings of the General Assembly.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the church was the pulpit. It was built to the specifications suggested by Dr. Paxton and to suit his unusual style of preaching, which involved much walking backward and forward. The outer line of the pulpit was twelve to fifteen feet, near to the dimension of his study. Across this line Dr. Paxton would pass and repass, addressing eye to eye every part of the great congregation. Without detracting from Dr. Paxton's remarkable gifts as a preacher, it was possibly this fairly frequent movement of the minister about the pulpit and the consequent head and eye movements of his listeners, which enabled them to sit physically untensed and relaxed through the hour-long sermons which Dr. Paxton gave. In this technique, Dr. Paxton, either by instinct or by craft, anticipated modern preaching techniques, but not the length of modern sermons.

His biographer tells us that Dr. Paxton always used the full hour for his sermon. His sermons even today are perfect models in the art of preaching and are exciting reading. They have a strangely modern touch.

body movement in preaching, and the consequent wide pulpit, First Church today has a similar wide pulpit, for the present central pulpit was copied from that of Dr. Paxton. Indirectly, it thus reflects Dr. Paxton's first study.

Congregational praise was led by a choir under the direction of Mr. John Wright until the early sixties.

An organ was introduced in 1862 in the new church and in 1863, Mr. C. C. Mellor, of a well known musical firm, became organist. He served in that capacity until 1884 when he was succeeded by J. A. Bell who served for fifty years, spanning four pastorates, until April 8, 1935. In November 1936, Aneurin Bodycombe became the organist, carrying the succession into the 1970's.

Tragedy struck the Reverend William Paxton in 1854 when his young wife died giving birth to a baby. The child also died. In November 1855, however, Mr. Paxton married Caroline Sophia Denny. He was thus linked through her to the O'Haras, the Wilkins, and the Dennys, all early members of First Church. Caroline's father was, of course, Congressman Harmar Denny.

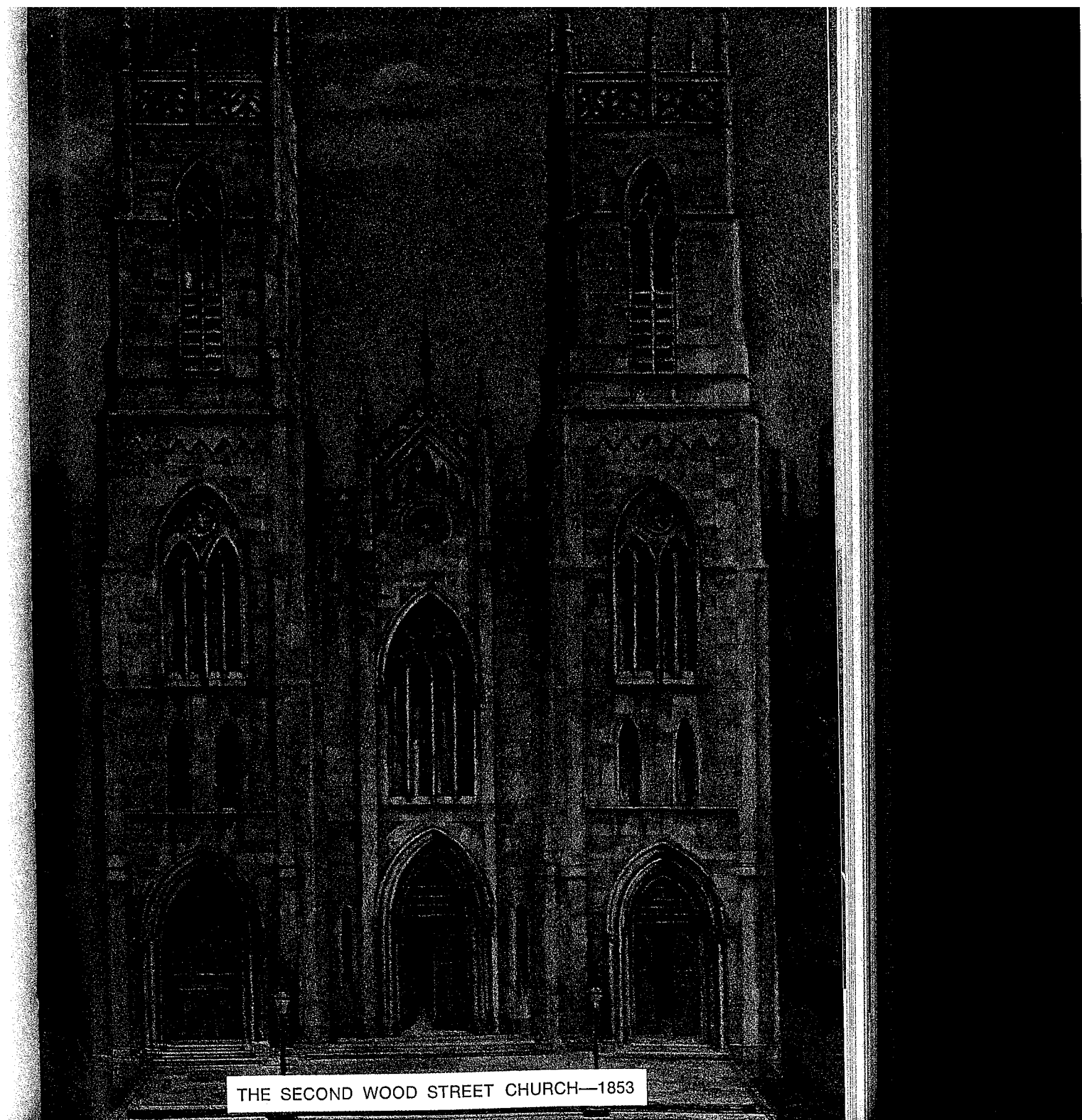
In 1860, their first child James, was born. James Dunlap Paxton was later to become a Presbyterian minister. Mrs. Paxton became a tremendous source of strength to the minister, for in her was concentrated all the energy of her exciting ancestors.

Dr. Herron had instituted the Synodical Convention in Pittsburgh whereby, at spaced intervals, beginning in 1842, ministers and elders of the surrounding synods gathered for spiritual uplift and mutual encouragement. That which took place in First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, in 1857, had vital impact not only on First Church congregation, but also on world-wide Christianity.

The opening sermon was preached by Dr. James Hoge of Columbus, Ohio, on the text: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." This thought became a theme of the convention. The hearts of those who attended the convention were strangely moved as the meetings continued. Theodore Monod, the son of Frederick Monod, the eminent preacher of the Reformed Church in France, was present and as a result of the impress laid on him during the conference he too became a preacher and a powerful influence in the Reformed Church of France.

Melancthon Jacobus, the eloquent minister of Central Church, preached at the convention a sermon which was to startle Christendom into new life. This sermon, published throughout the world, gave inspiration especially to Morrison of India and refurbished the whole Indian Church for its great evangelical mission.

Out of this 1857 Convention, grew the world-wide week of prayer. It was first proposed at Ludhiana, India, by missionaries of the Presbyterian



Board, "having (as they say) been greatly refreshed by what we have heard of the Lord's dealings in America."⁶

The Chinese nurse, Mrs. Tsang, attending the family of Dr. Happer, a delegate to the convention and associated with First Church, was converted. Mrs. Tsang carried the revival spirit back to China and partly through her began the woman's work in Canton.⁷

The convention had practical results quite unforeseen at the time. It led to more virile opposition to slavery and gave the anti-slavery movement a strong religious backing in the Pittsburgh area. Truly this was a convention that left a mark on history.

The 1857 Convention left an especial stamp on First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, and led to revival in the same year. A particular appeal was made to young men and youth, and, as a result of the 1857 revival, young men's activities became a more vital part of the work of First Church, while mission schools were more actively developed than previously.

It seems that almost invariably when a revival came to the First Church of Pittsburgh the result was the formation of a new Presbyterian Church. On this occasion the formation of a new congregation predated the revival for, on June 30, 1857, Mt. Washington Church was organized by a committee of Presbytery consisting of the Reverend Dr. William Paxton and his very active elder and Sunday School superintendent, Alexander Laughlin.⁸

In 1860, a professor of sacred rhetoric was appointed in Princeton. As a result Western Theological Seminary was found to be at a disadvantage. The faculty persuaded Dr. Paxton to undertake a like charge at Western Seminary. No funds were available for a salary, but Dr. Paxton from 1860-72 occupied the chair and did the work without remuneration.

In 1860, the minister of First Church persuaded session to pass the "Amusement Rule" which was in effect until 1867. Under this rule, those who attended theaters or dances were disciplined by the session, who refused them communion.

The rule was dropped in 1867.

More serious matters than theater-going or dancing were now beginning to occupy the attention of the citizens of Pittsburgh. "Slavery or Freedom" became the burning issue, and soon slavery or civil war appeared the only alternatives.

One other apparent alternative, however, had been considered by northern Presbyterians. It was the American Colonization Society which was organized in Washington, D.C., December 16, 1816, by two brothers-in-law, the Reverend Robert Finley of New Jersey and Dr. E. V. Caldwell of Washington. This society was supported by such men as Daniel Webster, Francis Scott Key,

Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, James Monroe, and James Madison.⁹ Until the Civil War, the General Assembly recommended its support to members and large sums of money were raised for this organization.

The Colonization Society aimed at raising money for black people who were desirous of emigrating to Liberia as an opportunity presented itself. It must be remembered that any slave who escaped servitude after the Fugitive Slave Act had no secure hiding place in the United States. His only hope was Canada. Pittsburgh was one of the chief junctions in the underground railroad. Many of its concerned citizens took tremendous risks to help runaway slaves to get to Canada. The Colonization Society at least provided, in Liberia, an alternative to Canada. Through its efforts the African Republic of Liberia was built up.

The Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Colonization Society was organized on September 25, 1826, in First Presbyterian Church. At a later date, this society when reorganized, pledged \$5,000 in Pittsburgh and vicinity to secure the liberation of a hundred slaves, and ten individuals pledged themselves to give \$100 a year for five years to support the society.

As already stated, the American Colonization Society proved to be a stopgap humanitarian measure. Soon men talked of war. The Synod of Pittsburgh met in First Presbyterian Church in January 1861, praying for three days that God would have mercy on the guilty nation and that war could be prevented.

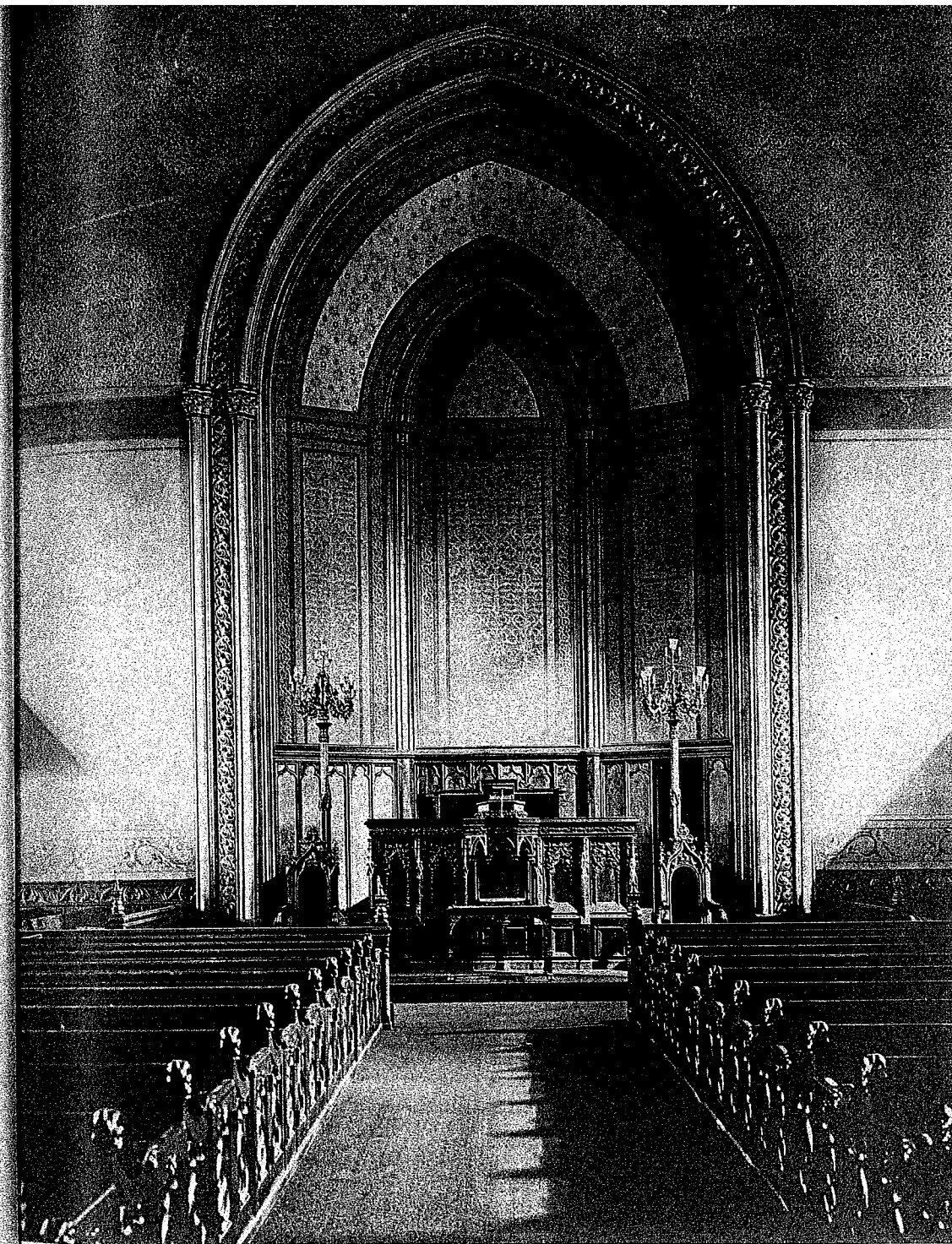
When the war commenced, First Church left no doubt in the minds of men where its sympathies lay. Dr. William Paxton had the power to move both minds and hearts with his voice. He used his logic and fiery passion in the Union cause.

The men of First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh were deeply involved on the field of battle; and in the factories and foundries the people of Pittsburgh helped provide the weapons of war and the money to supply the Union armies.

In one great community meeting, held in First Church, \$50,000 was raised for the Sanitary Commission.

The meeting of the Pittsburgh Branch of the Christian Commission was also usually held in First Church. This body had a home for sick and wounded soldiers. Meals were provided as troops passed through the city. After the Battle of Stony Run when, in 1862, great losses were sustained by Brigadier General William Negley, this committee raised over \$12,000 for the sick and wounded. Pittsburgh ranked fourth in the country in benefit and service.¹⁰

One of the most energetic and earnest supporters of the cause was the minister's wife, Mrs. Caroline Paxton, the former Miss Denny. Under her



THE PAXTON PULPIT