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Collection 612 First Presbyterian Church Collection

**By Susan Sancinito
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History

The First Presbyterian Church of Trenton dates to the formation of the United Churches of “Hopewell” and “Maidenhead” (the Trenton region). The date of formation is given as 1712, with a church building erected in 1726 (stone) and rebuilt in 1805 (brick). The church is considered to be the first house of worship in the settlement of Trenton. During the Revolutionary War, the church was occupied (and damaged) by the British and Hessians. The third “First Church of Trenton” building was dedicated in 1840 on State Street near Broad Street.

In 2023 it was announced that a nonprofit had been awarded a \$3 million grant by the New Jersey Historic Trust to convert the church complex into the Steeple Center, a performing arts facility.

Scope and Content Notes

This collection consists of church history, financial reports and reports of church activities/committees, sermons, and cemetery records.

Series Description

Series I. Church Histories

The first series consists of “Two Hundred and Twenty-Five Years, 1712-1937,” a booklet that recounts the church’s history through the various pastors over the years. It has several illustrations and black-and-white photographs of the church and its pastors. There is a pamphlet to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the church. Another publication was issued on the

275th anniversary in 1987 and was edited by Bea Scala. It is illustrated with drawings of the church's building in its various incarnations. [Box 1, Folder 1]

Other items include a photograph of a charter from King George II, presumably from the founding of the church; a copy of an invitation to the 200th anniversary in 1912 addressed to Miss Anna M. Hutchinson; a booklet issued for the 250th anniversary of the church in 1929 listing "historical items," including silver belonging to the church; a summer 1934 program giving information about services, as well as a brief history of the church; a 2003 pamphlet listing "Old First Church" activities; a concert program from May 15, 1983 listing pieces performed and names of performers; a stapled document listing church history by year; 1937 church anniversary stamps; a "Welcome to First Presbyterian Church" brochure; an April 28, 1918 pamphlet with information about the religious service, as well as an "Honor Roll" list of church members engaged in active military service (World War I); a pamphlet from November 17, 1918 contains updated information; a page about a service on March 9, 1930; a pamphlet listing "Historical Notes"; two different pamphlets entitled "A Chronological History of the First Presbyterian Church of Trenton"; a pamphlet with a biographical sketch of the Reverend James Francis Armstrong, 1750-1816; an illustrated booklet, "A Brief Historical Sketch of the First Presbyterian Church of Trenton, N.J.," by Edward Allen Morris (1951 & 1954); "A Chronological History of First Presbyterian Church in Trenton" by Edna Lear Blinn (1962); "A Study of the Architecture and Design of the First Presbyterian Church of Trenton" by Edward Allen Morris, Jr. (1951); a pamphlet, "Welcome to First Presbyterian Church (Founded 1712)" (1977); a pamphlet "First Presbyterian Church, Trenton, N.J." (undated); a pamphlet "Hanover Street Ministry" (undated); and a newspaper article regarding the future conversion of the church into a performing arts center (2023). [Box 1, Folder 2]

Series II. Audit Reports

The second series contains audit report pamphlets for 1936, 1937, 1939, 1940, 1954, 1956, 1958, 1959, and 1968. A "Campaign for Funds" (1946) is included, along with an accompanying letter from Gordon A. Philips, General Campaign Manager, and a 1946 flyer entitled "This is the dark side!" which is a plea for donations. [Box 1, Folder 3]

Audit reports compiled by William A. Compton & Co. include the years 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1954, and 1955. [Box 1, Folder 4]

Series III. Directories/Manuals

The third series contains a November 1916 *Manual of the Religious Society or Congregation of Christians, Usually Known as the First Presbyterian Church of Trenton, New Jersey*, which is essentially a directory of societies, pastors, and communicants. Other manuals/directories, some occasionally illustrated with black-and-white photographs, encompass the years 1894, 1903, 1932, 1937, 1940, 1954, 1957, 1960, 1967, and 1970. [Box 1, Folder 5]

Series IV. Historical and Cemetery Records

The fourth series includes a brochure listing the Revolutionary War soldiers interred in the church cemetery, as well as a separate general list of burials in the cemetery. There is a "Memorial Tribute" pamphlet to the Reverend John Rosbrugh, martyred during the battle of Trenton in 1777 (author: Douglas H. Robinson). Another pamphlet entitled "Old Church in Trenton" by Barbara Murphy mostly gives information about the cemetery. A booklet, "First Presbyterian Church...An Introductory Essay" by Marian B. McLeod gives a history of the church. [Box 1, Folder 6]

Series V. Programs (Special)

The fifth series includes a September 22, 1973 program "A Reading from the Poems of Richard Burdick Eldridge" (reader: Dr. Andrew M. Sebben). There is also a program for "Yankee Doodle Fought Here," presented by The Trenton State College Bicentennial Singers, dated April 20, 1975. Also included are a December 7, 2004 program for the Trenton Children's Chorus Holiday Concert, and a May 14, 2005 program for "A Tribute to Founding Director Sue Ellen Page." [Box 1, Folder 7]

Series VI. Sermons

The sixth series consists of two copies of "Light to My Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong," edited by Marian B. McLeod and dated 1976. [Box 1, Folder 8]

Series VII. Woman's Association

The seventh series includes by-laws and programs relating to the church's Women's Association. The various dates are: 1945-46, 1948-49, 1949-50, 1950-51, 1951-52, 1954-55, 1956-57, 1959-60, and 1960-61. [Box 1, Folder 9]

Series VIII. Yearbooks

The eighth series consists of a number of "Year Books." They are dated 1920-1921 (2 copies); 1923-1924 (2 copies); 1924-1925; 1925-1926 (2 copies); 1927-1928 (2 copies); 1928-1929 (2 copies); 1929-1930; 1930-1931 (2 copies); and 1934. They are sparsely illustrated (an image of the minister and church) and include lists of members and delineate church business and organizations. [Box 2, Folder 1]

Series IX. Annual Reports

The ninth series consists of a number of church annual reports. The included years are: 1886 (damaged and very fragile - a report of the Sunday schools by Elmer Ewing Green); 1896; 1902; 1903; 1905 (includes a handwritten page listing infant baptisms); 1906; 1908; 1918; 1955 (2 copies); 1956; 1958 (2 copies); and 1959 (2 copies). These include financial information, as well as details on church events. [Box 2, Folder 2]

The second folder of annual reports consists of staple-bound 8.5" X 11" reports for the years 1963, 1965, 1967, 1968, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, and 2001 (2 copies). They include reports of various commissions/committees, as well as financial information.

Container List

Box / Folder / Folder Title

- 1 / 1 / First Presbyterian Church Anniversary Booklet
- 1 / 2 / Histories of the Church/Welcome Packet
- 1 / 3 / Audit Reports, 1936-1968 and Campaign for Funds Materials
- 1 / 4 / Report of Audit
- 1 / 5 / Directories/Manuals
- 1 / 6 / Historical and Cemetery Records
- 1 / 7 / Programs (Special)
- 1 / 8 / Sermons 1 / 9 / Women's Association
- 2 / 1 / Yearbooks
- 2 / 2 / Annual Reports
- 2 / 3 / Annual Reports