

SIX TRICENTENNIAL VIEWS OF KENT COUNTY

A TRICENTENNIAL VIEW OF MILFORD

MILFORD

1 Milford, Kent Co. Del.
Scale, 20 Rods to the Inch.

References.
Lot. 3771. Mrs Davis
2 C. Watson
3 J. H. Lamp



SOUTH MILFORD

F174
M6
T69

As far as is known, the first meeting of Methodists was held here in 1777 in a private home, a practice that was continued for the next decade. In December of 1787, the then Methodist Society purchased land on North Street from Joseph Oliver and constructed a frame church building that was completed in 1790. This building was surrounded by a cemetery that eventually provided still well marked burial sites for many of Milford's most historic figures.

In 1842, a brick church was built on the corner of Third and North Streets to better serve the needs of a growing congregation. This was eventually replaced by a larger edifice on what was then Railroad Avenue (now Church Avenue). Begun in 1871, this church was not completed until March of 1877. The name "Avenue" was adopted. Extensive improvements were made in 1889.

Ground was broken in February of 1939 for the present Avenue United Methodist Church with dedication occurring the following December. A social hall and educational wing were added in 1954.

During the summer of 1910, a group of Methodists, seeking to establish another church in South Milford began tent meetings on S.E. Front Street and in the following October organized the Methodist Protestant Church of Milford. In November, the Rev. L.A. Bennett, who with the Rev. J.L. Nichols had earlier conducted the tent meetings, was named the first full-time minister, and, following purchase of a lot at Front and Franklin Streets, a temporary tabernacle was constructed.

In January 1911, plans were made for the building of a permanent church with corner stone placement taking place on September 3 of the same year. On May 19, 1912, the new home of the Methodist Protestant congregation — a beautiful white block and marble edifice, with seating capacity of 1100 — was dedicated. In 1939, the name of the church was changed to "Calvary Methodist".

In the spring of 1949 the Calvary Methodist Church was remodeled with addition of a new kitchen and expansion of Fellowship Hall and Sunday School facilities.

On March 3, 1951, fire destroyed the entire church complex. The congregation, however, immediately began planning a new church on the site with construction begun in late October of the following year. While the church was being rebuilt, the congregation held services in the high school auditorium and in the Avenue Methodist Church.

The new building was dedicated on March 7, 1954 and further expanded with addition of a new educational building in 1967. Today's Calvary United Methodist Church has one of the largest and most active congregations in the area.

The brick church at Third and North Streets still serves as a church being the home of the St. Paul's United Methodists, a black congregation.

The first African Methodist Episcopal Church in Milford was organized in 1859 and acquired its first church building in 1892. In 1937, the congregation now known as Bethel A.M.E., built a new church at 205 N.W. Fourth Street which has continued as its place of worship.

Area Baptists organized in 1873, established Milford's first Baptist witness in 1874, and constructed their first church here on N.W. Second Street in 1875. This building continued as the First Baptist Church of Milford until 1962 when a new larger church was constructed on Old Shawnee Road just outside the city's limits. This has since been expanded on several occasions.

Other Baptist churches in the area include a Southern Baptist Church at Lynch Heights, on Delaware Rte. 113, just north of Milford, and a Faith Independent Baptist Church, also on Rte. 113 but near the southern boundary of the city. Also the Mt. Enom Baptist Church at 46 West Street.

Up until 1910, the spiritual needs of the few Catholics living in the Milford area were served by priests from the Holy Cross Parish in Dover with services being held once a month at various places in the area. However, this was rectified in 1910 when St. John's, the first Catholic Church in lower Kent County, was built on Maple Avenue.

Nearly 44 years later, a growing St. John's Parish built a large modern brick edifice at the corner of Seabury Avenue and School Place which was dedicated on November 25, 1954, and continues to serve the needs of a growing parish.

Another church that began with a very small group of worshippers and has experienced unusual growth is the Church of God which held its initial meetings here on the second floor of a small store on Montgomery Street in 1934, later acquiring a small building of its own on N. Washington Street.

By 1953, the once small congregation had outgrown its previous quarters, resulting in the construction, that year, of a handsome new house of worship at 500 N. Walnut St. This edifice was expanded by addition of a Christian Education building in 1960.

Although there had been Lutherans in the area for many years, they did not formally organize as a local congregation, until February of 1956 when, as the Reformation Lutheran Church of Milford, they began holding regular services, first in the I.O.O.F. Building and later at the Grange Hall.

As a result of steady growth, the Lutheran congregation decided to built a "home" of its own; with the result that a handsome brick church was built at 613 Lakeview Avenue with dedication being accomplished on September 16, 1962.

In recent years, the First Church of Christ, Scientists, which was formerly based in a small Christian Scientist reading room, downtown, has built a new house of worship at 900 S. Walnut Street.

Other congregations having comparatively new church buildings include the Church of Nazarene on Salevan Place, near the intersection of Tenth Street and U.S. Rte. 113; the Lighthouse Christian Center, on Del. Rte. 14, a short distance from Milford's western boundary; the First United Pentecostal Church of Milford, also on Rte. 14.

Other small Milford churches include Aldersgate Wesleyan at 406 Marshall Street; Pilgrim Wesleyan on S.E. Front Street; the Bible Presbyterian Church on N.W. Second Street; the Mount Siani Tabernacle, 318 Church Avenue; and the Jesus Love Temple in the former Schine Theatre building, downtown.

Nearby small communities, such as Houston and Lincoln, which are generally considered part of the "Milford area," are apparently included in the Chamber of Commerce total.

Regardless of denomination, age or size, the many churches of the area serve well the spiritual needs of their congregation.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCHOOLS OF THE MILFORD AREA by David S. Hugg

Although education in the earliest days of our country was, unfortunately, available to only a few, Milford has apparently had "schools" of one type or another from the time of the community's founding.

According to research done by Jane Herson in compiling information for the Schools Section of the Milford Historical Society's "A History of Milford, Delaware," there was a small "Select School" here as early as 1777 when the Rev. Alex Huston apparently supplemented his meager salary as pastor of the area's first Presbyterian Church by conducting classes, presumably in a meeting house located on the King's Highway near what was known as Three Runs.

Other religious groups, notably the Methodists, whose first small frame church on North Street included a school room, and the Quakers, who had a small meeting room-school on Quaker Lane off today's U.S. Rte. 113, apparently operated small schools in the 1790's.