

THE CHURCHES OF DELAWARE

by

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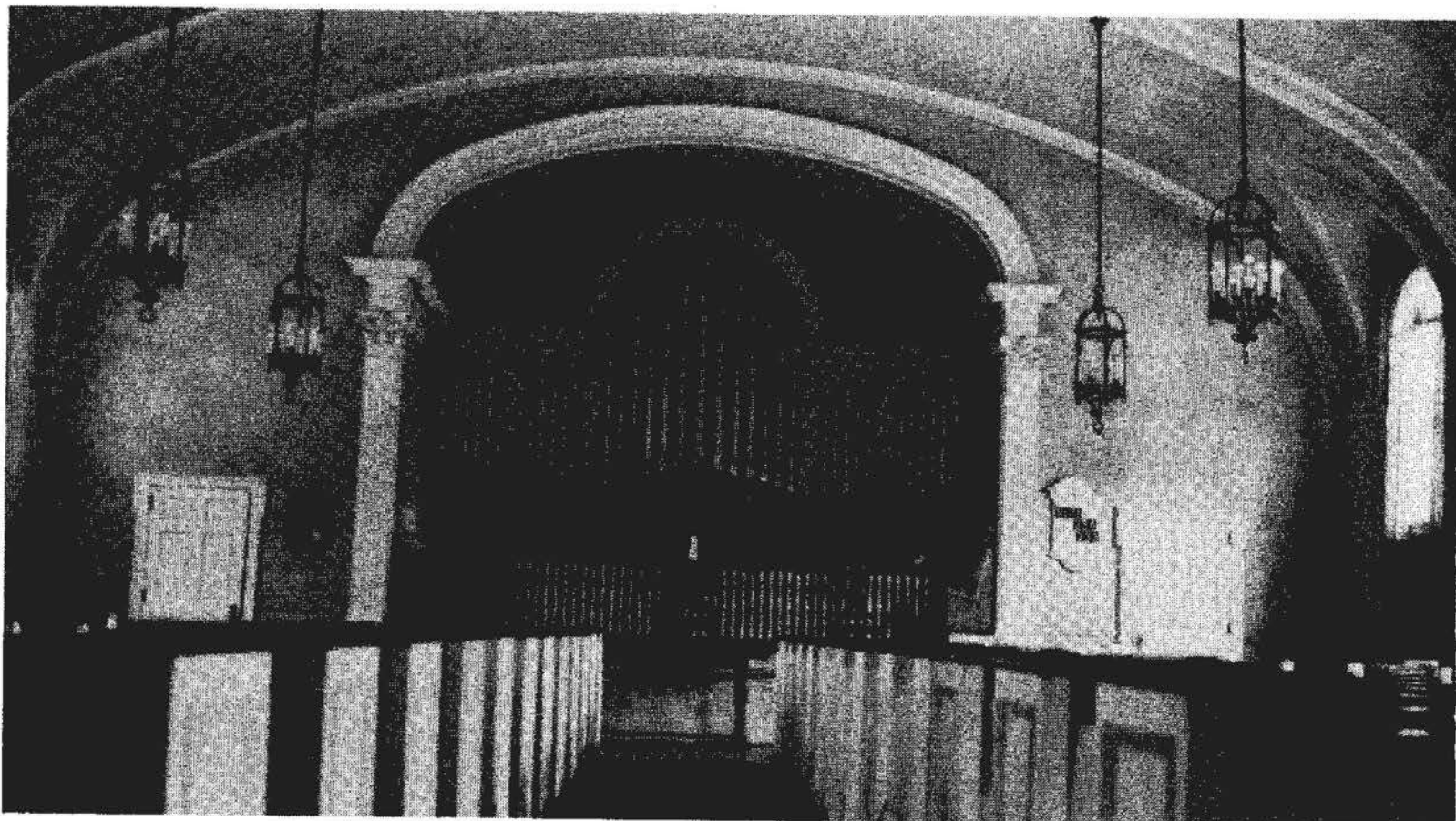


*A history, in brief, of the nearly 900 churches
and former churches in Delaware as
located by the Author.*

1947



HOLY CROSS R. C. CHURCH, DOVER
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THE PRES. CHURCH OF DOVER
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A talk was given by the Rev. J. J. Harney. At the afternoon service the Bishop conferred the Apostolic blessing on those present.

A new Moller pipe-organ was blessed at the morning service on Sun., Dec. 13, 1925, by the pastor, the Rev. Joseph A. Lee, D.D. A concert was given in the evening with Firmen Swinnen at the console. On Apr. 14, 1926, John E. Behen donated more land for the cemetery.

The Presbyterian Church of Dover. The site of the old Presbyterian Church and cemetery is on what was known in the early days of Dover as "Meeting-House Square." As early as 1711, the Presbyterians were holding meetings in private homes in Dover. A log church was built, presumably, in 1714. The exact date cannot be determined but an English missionary reported its existence on Aug. 27, 1717. On May 12, 1743, a new deed to the property was given to a board of trustees by the Town Commissioners. On Aug. 16, 1790, the corner-stone of the brick church was laid. This church was completed and occupied.

The difficulty of securing qualified ministers plus the inroads made by the Methodists resulted in the church becoming practically defunct for about twenty years. In 1818, an effort was made to resuscitate the church but it does not appear to have been very successful. On May 15, 1825, the church was reopened and occupied.

The Convention which framed the 1831 Constitution of Delaware held its meetings in this church. About this time the absence of a congregation led the State Legislature to appoint a committee to look after the property. In October, 1835, the church was reorganized and for the next nine years intermittent services were held.

On Feb. 22, 1841, an Act of Incorporation was passed by the General Assembly. Three trustees were specified as "Trustees of the Pres. Meeting-House and Graveyard in the town of Dover." On June 24, 1844, a regular pastor was installed. A new bell was installed and first used on Apr. 10, 1870. The property was enclosed with an iron fence in November, 1874.

The brick chapel which stands at the corner of Bank Lane was built in 1880. This chapel was built and furnished by George V. Massey, Esq. It was dedicated on June 27, 1880, by the Rev. C. Huntington. Addresses were made by E. S. Reynolds and F. A. Williams. A new organ was opened on July 16, 1882.

In 1887, major repairs were made to the church. Among the prominent Delawareans buried in the graveyard are former Governor Jacob Stout, former Governor Charles Polk, Thomas M. Clayton and Captain John Haslett. The oldest tombstone is that of Rebecca Kelley who died on Sept. 25, 1773. In 1941, the tower was removed from the church.

The present church on State Street, was built in memory of the Rev. Thomas G. Murphey, pastor of the church from 1844 to 1861. The church received title to the site on Sept. 19, 1922. The church was started in 1923 and was dedicated on Easter Sun., Apr. 20, 1924, by the Rev. J. Ross Stevenson, Pres. of Princeton Seminary assisted by the Rev. G. A. Burslem. This church was the gift of the Rev. Mr. Murphey's son, Sanford S. Murphey who also built and endowed the Elizabeth W. Murphey School, in Dover, in memory of his mother. The manse adjoining the church was purchased on Apr. 24, 1926.

A Resolution was passed, at the 1947 session of the State Legislature authorizing the Archives ~~Dep't.~~ to accept the old Pres. Church building on Governor's Ave. as a gift from the N. C. Presbytery. It was proposed to con-

vert the building into a State Museum. As the State provided no money for this work it became necessary to solicit private funds to carry out the project.

Grace Methodist Church (M.P.) at Dover. This church was organized in 1890 and met in the schoolhouse which they purchased on Apr. 13, 1893. The last service was held in the schoolhouse on July 9, 1893. The building was then torn down to make way for a new church building. A tent was erected on the lawn and services were held here during the summer. In the fall they secured the use of the Pres. Chapel for their meetings.

The corner-stone of the new church was laid on Sun., Sept. 3, 1893, at 3 P. M. In addition to the pastor, the Rev. L. F. Warner, those taking part included the Revs. W. L. S. Murray, J. H. Gohegan, M. P. Fikes and W. P. Taylor. The last meeting in the Pres. Chapel was held on Dec. 10, 1893. The new church was opened on Sun., Dec. 17, 1893, by the Rev. L. F. Warner, the pastor, assisted by the Revs. David Greenfield and J. F. Sheridan. Additional land was purchased on Aug. 27, 1921. The church was rebuilt in 1935.

Jewish Congregation at Dover. During 1939, a number of Sunday meetings were held in the Capitol Theatre for the purpose of establishing in Dover, a Jewish Congregation for Central and Lower Delaware. They were incorporated on Feb. 1, 1939. The only Synagogues in Delaware are all located in Wilmington. For some reason the Dover effort was abandoned.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church was organized, at Dover, on Nov. 24, 1917. Meetings were held in the New Century Club. The church was built during the years 1931 and '32. The dedication services were held in December, 1932.

St. Luke's Christian Church was organized, in 1917, by Dr. R. S. Stephens. It was incorporated on Oct. 30, 1917. On Mar. 31, 1920, they purchased the old shirt factory at Governor's Ave. and North St. and fitted it up for church purposes. The name "St. Luke's" was adopted on Apr. 28, 1920. The corner-stone was laid on May 16, 1920. The church was closed in 1931 and the property was turned over to the People's Church on Apr. 27, 1931.

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, at Dover, was organized, in 1924, in the New Century Club. The church site on Lotus St. was purchased on Mar. 5, 1924. The corner-stone of the present church was laid on Oct. 19, 1924, by the Rev. C. T. Ohlinger. The dedication service was held on Apr. 26, 1925. The service at 10:30 A. M. was conducted in the German language. The dedicatory sermon was preached by the Rev. H. H. Brauns of Phila. A service, in English, at 2 P. M., was conducted by the Revs. L. Geiger and E. Totzke.

The M. E. Tabernacle of Dover was located on New Street. It was dedicated on June 18, 1876, by the Rev. J. H. Caldwell. This was an effort by the Methodists to reach a group of people who ordinarily did not attend any church.

St. Paul's Methodist Church (M.E.) and **Armory M. E. Church** at Dover. In the 1880's, in an effort to reach a new group, a band of Methodists began holding meetings in the old Armory on Lookerman Street. They named their group the Armory M. E. Chapel. On Mar. 24, 1887, E. M. Stevenson donated