

First Presbyterian Church
1301 Chapline Street
Wheeling
Ohio County
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-202

HABS
WVA
35-WHEEL

31-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Architectural
Photographs

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HABS No. WV-202

Location: 1301 Chapline Street, Wheeling, Ohio County,
West Virginia.

Present Owner: Trustees of the First Presbyterian Church

Present Occupant: The congregation of the First United Presbyterian
Church.

Present Use: Sanctuary and church school.

Significance: This may be the oldest documented building in downtown Wheeling. Noah Zane deeded the land on which this Church stands "for the use, purpose and design of erecting a meeting house or church," in 1816. By 1825 a church was ready for occupancy. The existing portico, narthex and 54 feet of the sanctuary nearest Chapline Street are said to be surviving elements of the original edifice, although stylistic evidence indicates either rebuilding or extensive remodeling of the front portion during the remodeling done in 1854.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c.1825, 1854 and 1871. A newspaper advertisement dated May 19, 1821, stated that "Proposals will be received until Monday the 11th day of June next for building a Presbyterian Meeting House in the Town of Wheeling. Persons disposed to contract will apply to the Trustees, where a plan of the building can be seen." On September 4, 1823, the congregation elected seven trustees to raise money for the erection at a Meeting House. By 1825 a building which is said to have included the present portico, narthex and 54 feet of sanctuary, was ready for occupancy.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The First Presbyterian Church is built on Lot 13 of Square 11 in the Old Town Plat.

1816 Deed 5 October, recorded in Deed Book 9, page 8.
Noah Zane and wife

To

To the Mayor and Commonalty of the Town of Wheeling \$1 for Lot 13, Square 11, Ebenezer Zane's addition, "for the use, purpose and design of erecting a meeting house or church."

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- 1821 Deed 7 July, recorded in Deed Book 10, page 579.
Noah Zane and wife
To
Town of Wheeling
\$1 for the "East end of the Lot number five in the Eleventh Square in length 66 and in depth 7 feet...for the similar purpose in and design and none other for which the said Lot No. 13 was heretofore granted.
- 1885 Deed 11 June, recorded in Deed Book 77, page 157.
City of Wheeling
To
Trustees of First Presbyterian Chruch
\$1 for Lot 13, Square 11, and eastern end of Lot 5, Square 11, both of Ebenezer Zane Addition.
- 1917 Deed 1 October, recorded in Deed Book 159, page 489.
John M. Fawcett
To
Trustees of First Presbyterian Church
\$10 for property on the west side of Chapline Street, between Twelfth and Fourteenth Streets. "Beginning at a point in the West line of Chapline Street where the south line of the First Presbyterian Church lot and the north line of lot numbered fourteen in square 11 intersect said west line of Chapline Street, thence running in a westerly direction with the said south line of the said First Presbyterian Church lot and the north line of said lot fourteen and the north line of lot six in the same square, one hundred and seventy-two (172) feet and eleven and three-fourths (11 3/4) inches to a point in said north line of said lot six, such point being at the west face of a stone wall; thence running at right angles with said last mentioned line and along the west face of said stone wall southwardly sixty-seven (67) feet to an alley at the southwest corner of a brick stable; thence running in an easterly direction with the north line of said alley thirty-two (32) feet and ten (10) inches to the southwest corner of Mary L. Delaplaine's property; thence running a northerly direction by a line through the middle of the east wall of the stable, and by the same extended thirty-three (33) feet and six (6) inches to a stake at the northwest corner of Mary L. Delaplaine's property; thence in an easterly direction one hundred and forty (140) feet and one and three-fourths (1 3/4) inches along the north line of Mary L. Delaplaine's property and parallel with the North line of said lot fourteen to the west line of Chapline Street, thence in a northerly direction thirty-three (33) feet and six (6) inches to the

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place of beginning, also the right to use and enjoy the alley running east and west from Market Street to Chapline Street on the south side of said lots numbered fourteen and six (6) in square eleven."

4. Original plans, construction: Seven trustees were elected on September 4, 1823, to raise money for a Presbyterian Meeting House. The nearly \$10,000 which they collected was sufficient to erect a structure which in large part is believed to exist today. Although none of the original plans exist today, it is claimed that the present portico, narthex, and 54 feet of the sanctuary nearest Chapline Street are surviving elements of the original edifice.
5. Alterations and additions: In 1973 the First United Presbyterian Church celebrated its 150th year in Wheeling. At this time an extensively researched history of the Church building was written. Alterations to the original structure were carefully researched and documented.

In 1835 the Church organized a committee to obtain a church bell and town clock. A tower to house the church bell and town clock was erected in 1836. The tower was designed by a Philadelphia architect, Charles Chislett, and cost \$3,413.17. A dispute between the church and the City of Wheeling over the responsibility for the clock resulted in the unexplained disappearance of the clock. It is thought that the city might have asserted its claim on the clock and installed it in the Capitol Building erected in 1876.

In 1854 the first major remodeling and rebuilding program was initiated. At a cost of \$8,445 the west wall of the church was removed, and the length of the building was extended 24 feet. "New doors had been cut when the vestibule was built and the windows and doorways of the original structure were filled in with bricks." The church was lengthened further in 1871 to accommodate an organ chamber.

Repairs initiated during 1883-1885 resulted in the introduction of new stone steps, a platform, painting the cupola, a lightning rod, sewage and repairs to the organ loft. A bond issue of \$10,000 facilitated further repairs in 1885. These included the removal of the gallery, replacement of box pews, and the installation of cathedral glass memorial windows. In 1892 electric lights were installed, and the present metal ceilings were installed.

In 1948 the church celebrated its 125th anniversary. At that time a careful study was made of early history of church in

order to coordinate the present needs of the church with its past traditions and further needs. A new roof was installed, the old wiring was replaced, and "the sanctuary renovated and restored to its original period." The original "Williamsburg green" was used on the Church walls while window frames, cornices and trim were painted a medium grey.

In 1955 plans were initiated which resulted in 1958, in the construction of a new Christian Education Building. Erected on the site of the old Church House, this new building was designed by Harold E. Wagoner, an architect from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Byrum Construction Company executed the Wagoner design. The building has a walk way cut into the south wall of the narthex. The building was first opened for use in October, 1958.

B. Historical Context:

The history of the First Presbyterian Church of Wheeling is necessarily a history of the town and city of Wheeling. Built on land donated in 1816 by Noah Zane, son of Wheelings founder, the First Presbyterian Church was integrally involved in the early growth of the Town of Wheeling.

The Reverend James Hughes, a Presbyterian, was granted an appointment to preach in Wheeling. He was the first preacher of any denomination to hold services in Wheeling. In 1814 Hughes was ordained and installed as pastor of the United Congregation of Wheeling Town and Forks of Wheeling. After five years the United Congregation had one hundred-thirteen members. The project to erect a Presbyterian Meeting House was successfully concluded in 1825. The Reverend James Hervey and the Reverend William Wylie served the congregation jointly on a divided time basis. In May 1826 the First Presbyterian Church of Wheeling was formally admitted to membership at a meeting of the Washington (Pennsylvania) Presbytery. Three elders, Andrew Woods, Sr., Peter W. Gale and Redick McKee were elected.

In 1832 the First Presbyterian Church congregation was reorganized. The severe flood of February 1832 inundated the Ohio Valley and did much damage to the low lying settlement at Wheeling. "At the same time a man suffering from the dread Cholera disease was put off a boat at Wheeling. By 1833 Cholera was of epidemic proportions. Scarcely a family escaped the dread disease. Noah Zane, who made the land available for the First Presbyterian Church died of Cholera in 1833." The severity of the 1833 Cholera epidemic was reported in the Centenial History of Ohio Lodge No. 1, A.F. & A.M. as reaching as many as twelve deaths by Cholera in one day.

In 1847 sixteen members of the First Presbyterian Church were dispatched to form the nucleus of the Second Presbyterian Church,

then being organized. Two years later the Third Presbyterian Church organized with assistance from members of the First and Second Presbyterian Churches. A Fourth Presbyterian Church composed, in part, of First Presbyterian Church members was organized in 1851. The need for more Presbyterian Churches reflected the growth and geographical expansion taking place in Wheeling during the mid-nineteenth century. According to the First Wheeling City Directory published in 1836, when Wheeling was incorporated as a city, the population was 6,000. The ethnic dominance of the Scotch-Irish changed at mid-century with the influx of German people to the Wheeling area. By 1854 the population had risen to 14,000 and the First Presbyterian Church membership had grown sufficiently to justify a remodeling and rebuilding program.

The Civil War brought tension to Wheeling over both the issues of slaveholding and secession. The co-pastor of the Church, the Reverend John J. Baker, was a Southern sympathizer. Presbyterian ministers of the Pittsburgh area adopted five resolutions following the attack on Fort Sumter which expressed support for the Federal government and refused aid to the Confederate states and their supporters. The Reverend Mr. Baker, therefore, resigned his office with the First Presbyterian Church.

Following the War, the Church involved itself in civic activities. In 1876, Dr. David A. Cunningham was installed as pastor and initiated an active missionary program. There were over 400 church members by 1880 who were engaged in the missionary enterprise lead by Dr. Cunningham and his wife. Dr. Cunningham served until 1908. During his service the West Virginia Legislature passed a law which permitted churches to hold property. At this time, 1885, the City of Wheeling transferred the First Presbyterian Church to the corner of Thirteenth and Chapline Streets to seven named trustees of the church.

During the twentieth century several men have served the church in a ministerial capacity. One who was much beloved and who later served as Secretary of the American Bible Society in New York City, was the Reverend Frederick W. Cropp. The Reverend Martin L. Gehrhardt served the church during the time of its 125th anniversary and was instrumental in providing congregational support for the renovation and restoration work done as part of the anniversary celebration.

C. Sources of Information

The First Presbyterian Church. Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness, Wheeling, West Virginia, c.1956-57.

The First United Presbyterian Church. Sesquicentennial Program
and History, March 15, 1973, Wheeling, West Virginia, 1973.

Interview: The Reverend David P. Birch
September 22, 1976

Prepared by: Candice Reed, Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
September 1976

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This Greek Revival masonry church has a tetrastyle Ionic portico centered on its five-bay front. The interior contains stained glass memorial windows and a pressed metal ceiling.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Rectangular, 132' long, five-bay front, two basements in rear and one in front, width not recorded.
2. Foundation: Cut stone.
3. Wall construction: Common bond brick, front and 20' of sides plastered and painted pale yellow with white trim.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing walls support timber spanning members. Sanctuary floor is supported by four columns in basement.
5. Porches, stoops, etc. See photographs for front portico. Portico floor is said to be about 3' above grade.
6. Chimneys: Two old sealed up chimneys and one new chimney are on original section. A furnace chimney and kitchen chimney are on the later addition.
7. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: See photographs for front doors, which have about 12' reveals. Two secondary north entrances lead to upper and lower basements. Those have paired metal doors with plain moldings.

b. Windows: See photographs.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape: The original building has a low hipped roof with a west gable. The portico has a gabled roof. A parapet surrounds the main floor. The addition has two roofs. The roof above the storage room is a low hipped roof abutting the church wall. The other is a shed roof about ten feet lower.
- b. Cornice: See photographs. The cornice returns for about 20' along the flanks of the church.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The main floor contains a vestibule, or narthex, from which the auditorium-sanctuary is entered. A south door in the narthex leads to the 1957 structure. Above the narthex is one large room that once led to the gallery removed in 1885.

The basement under the auditorium does not extend beneath the narthex. It contains one large room and a partial hall at the east end that runs to the north alley. A south door in the large room leads to the 1957 building.

2. Stairways: Two U-shaped stairways, one at each side of the narthex, lead to the room above and formerly served the gallery.
3. Flooring: The floors are wooden with carpeted portions. The narthex floor is covered with composition tile.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are painted plaster with a 3' wooden dado on all walls. The auditorium ceiling is pressed metal. Another pressed metal ceiling is stored in the second basement of the 1957 addition.
5. Doorways and doors: Two sets of paired doors lead from the narthex into the auditorium. There are two fire doors between the original building and the 1957 addition.
6. Windows: See photographs.

D. Site: See photographs.

Prepared by: John McRae, Architectural Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
September 1976

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, HABS Principal Architect, in cooperation with the Friends of Wheeling, Inc. The measured drawings were made during the summer of 1976 under the supervision of John M. McRae (University of Florida) with architectural technicians Mark L. Hall, Foreman; (Pennsylvania State University); Edward C. Freeman (Arizona State University); Ruthie D. Wiley (Mississippi State University); Alan G. Wilig (City College of New York); and Architectural Historian Candace Reed (George Washington University). The photographs were taken in 1977 by HABS Photographer Jack E. Boucher.

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