

Mrs. Nellie Hays Schoen

1839—1911

HISTORY

OF THE

VALLEY

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IMPERIAL, PA.

Compiled by J. S. BURNS

1839—1911

HISTORY

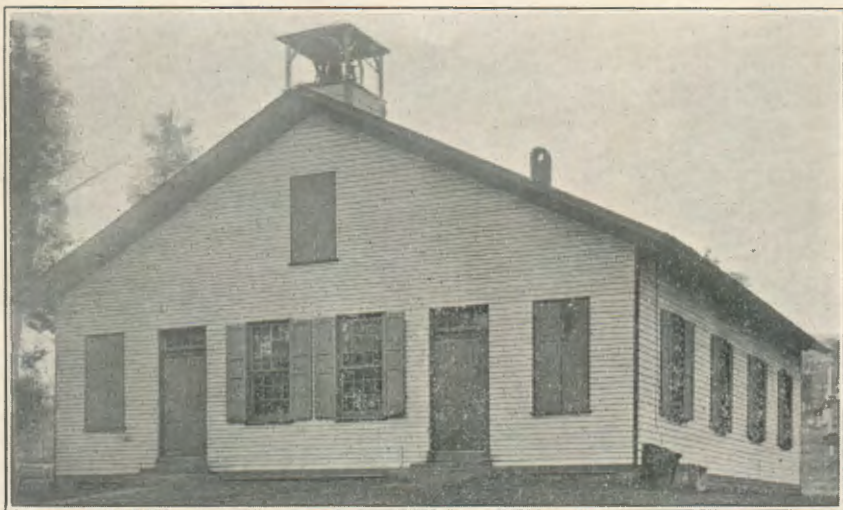
OF THE

Valley Presbyterian Church

IMPERIAL, PA.

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“Remember the days of old ; consider
the years of many generations ; ask thy
father and he will show thee ; thy elders
and they will tell thee.” Deut. 32:7.



OLD CHURCH

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me . . . I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon" I Cor 3:10.

History of the Valley Presbyterian Church IMPERIAL, PA.

Its Organization, Labors and Triumphs

THE earliest record of the Valley Presbyterian Church of Imperial, Pa., that we have been able to find is under date of February 11, 1839. It indicates that other meetings had been held previous to this one. The proceedings under this date we give verbatim :

"The building committee of a Presbyterian meetinghouse, to be erected on the west end of Jacob Guy's farm, met at the house of Jacob Guy. Members present—William Burns, Arter Forbes, Archibald Marshall, and Jacob Guy. William Burns was called to the chair; and Jacob Guy to the pen. Proceeded to business, as respects the house, which is to be 45 feet wide, and 55 feet long, decided by the people. On motion, the committee resolved that the house be 13 feet high in the clear; have 16 windows, 2 doors, with a fair-principle roof. The house to be enclosed, floored, and made ready for the plasterer; and be done in a good, substantial, workmanlike manner; and completed by November 1st, and have the best kind of hinges and fastenings for the doors and windows. Resolved further, that the secretary be authorized to have 50 hand-bills printed, and set up in different parts, asking proposals for the building. Adjourned to meet at Mr. Marshall's Wednesday, February 20, at 1 o'clock."

Under the date just named we find the same committee met; and from this minute we learn that the building committee was composed of five members, for in addition to the four named as present at the previous meeting we have the name of William Short present at this one.

The committee by resolution added further specifications to those recorded above, setting forth the depth of foundation; thickness of walls; breadth of flooring boards; number of lights in each window, and their size; width of doors, width of stone sills, and the kind of material for doors and shutters; the width of weather-boarding, and number of nails to be used. The whole to be covered with joint-pine shingles and painted with white lead, etc. Payments, one-third when the work is commenced; one-third when completed, and balance in two months.

The ground on which the building was to stand must be deeded before the foundation is started.

On March 14, 1839, under these specifications, Cornelius Borland contracted to do the work for \$1450, John Cook going his security.

On April 25, 1839, an order was issued on the treasurer, in favor of C. Borland for one-third of the contract money.

From the above date for a time history ceases. But evidently the building had been made ready for the inside finish, and the building committee was authorized to proceed with this, and the treasurer was authorized to borrow sufficient money to meet this expense, the following persons binding themselves for the fulfillment of the same:

James Stewart/
Archibald Marshall
William Burns
William Short
James McAdams

Andrew Johnston
John Miller
Jacob A. Guy
Joseph McGahen, Jr.

Alexander McAdams
Alexander Baggs
Robert Burns
John Stewart
John Logan

At this juncture, as we find in all emergencies of this kind, the ladies came to the rescue, and Jane Miller, Elizabeth Stewart, Elizabeth Marshall, and Margaret Guy carried subscription-papers to pay for erecting the pulpit. And in a short time they reported \$75 on subscription. The pulpit was erected for the sum of \$45.

Finally this "Presbyterian meetinghouse" was completed at a total cost of \$1836.20.

And not until June 1st, 1840, were steps taken to secure an organization of the church. On this date the following petition was ordered:

"To the reverend Presbytery of Ohio:

We, the undersigned, residing within the bounds of the Presbytery of Ohio, respectfully represent that we occupy a district of country comparatively destitute of the ministrations of the Gospel, and a convenient Presbyterian Church. Our location is between the congregations of Montours and Hopewell on the east and west; and Raccoon and Sharou on the south and north; the distance between the two former is about 10½ miles; and between the two latter 11½ miles.

We would farther respectfully represent, that there are amongst us several aged and infirm persons who cannot attend either of the above churches. That many of us have young and large families, whom we cannot take regularly to any existing sanctuary of God. That there are many persons who would probably become constant hearers in a Presbyterian Church who do not now worship anywhere. And we farther state, that in the prospect of having a house of worship erected among us, in which doctrines contrary to our views, and contrary to the sacred Scriptures and the standards of the Presbyterian Church would be taught, we have thought it advisable, in self defence, against the introduction of vexatious and dangerous errors amongst us, to erect a building which is guaranteed to be used as a Presbyterian place of worship. In view of these facts, we, the subscribers, belonging to different churches, or inclined to hear and support the gospel, do hereby pray your reverend body to organize a Presbyterian Church amongst us with the appellation of

MONTOURS VALLEY CHURCH

Signed:

Alexander McAdams

Joseph Wherry

William Baggs

John Byers, Sr.

John Stewart age 63.

James Wherry

Andrew Johnston

John Logan

Samuel Maloney

James Stewart, Sr. - 53

Henry Logan

William Burns

John Patton

G. Meanor

J. B. Meanor

Alexander Marshall

Andrew McHenry

Joseph Craig

Andrew Burns

Jonathan Byers

John Byers, Jr.

James Kelley

Andrew McMinn

Robert McMinn

Joseph McGahen, Jr.

Thomas McGahen

Alexander Jeffery

David Shaffer

John Shaffer

John Linton

J. D. Linton

Francis Hood

G. Willson

E. Flanegin

James McCandless

J. McClelland

J. G. Gaimleish

Thomas Armour

Isaac Byers

Samuel Byers, Sr.

Samuel Byers, Jr.

Uriah Stewart

Alexander Byers

William Burns, Jr.

John Jeffery

G. W. Holmes

W. J. Johnston

Alexander Jeffery

Margaret Jeffery

D. Jeffery

Robert Cunningham

William McCandless

John Marshall

Philip McCandless

Alexander Logan

A. McBride, Sr.

A. McBride, Jr.

William McBride

W. Marshall

J. White

W. Johnston

J. Crawford

Alexander Marshall

G. W. Ringer

A. Fields

John Miller

Henry McBride

Jacob Guy

William Armour

Alexander Meloney

James Todd

V. Elliott

Robert Burns

John Burns, Sr.

James Stewart, Jr.

James McAdams

Alexander Baggs

John Lusk

Marshall Short

Thomas Short

W. Wallace

Hugh Lusk

David Boyce

J. Willson

J. Cox

James Patton

J. McMahon

R. Stevenson

J. Flanegin

R. E. Morgan

Thomas Willson

J. Millegan

H. Crooks

J. Lewis

H. C. McFarland

John Short

J. Boyce

Robert Walker

The foregoing petition was presented to Ohio Presbytery at a meeting held June 18, 1840, by James Stewart, Sr., and Jacob Guy. Presbytery deferred action until their next meeting. They resolved, however, to hold a conference at Hopewell on the first Thursday of September, and in the meantime notify the congregations of Pisgah, Montours, Sharon, Raccoon, Hopewell and Bethlehem, together with those interested in the new church, to be represented at said conference by two commissioners. Dr. Elliott, the Rev. A. D. Campbell and the Rev. James D. Ray were appointed commissioners from Presbytery.

This conference was held. At a meeting of Presbytery held at Montours on October 7, 1840, the commission reported, and requested that the prayer of the petitioners for a new church be granted. Presbytery then appointed the Rev. James D. Ray and the Rev. Reuben Lewis to organize said church, which was done November 4, 1840. But instead of "Montours Valley Church" Presbytery named it

VALLEY CHURCH

The first clerks selected to lead the singing in the new church were Alexander Byers, Archibald Marshall, Joseph McGahen and Jacob Guy, and they were allowed to select their own place of standing. (It was customary in those days for the clerks to be seated in front of the pulpit and to stand while leading the music.)

The records indicate that the first sermon preached in the new church was by the Rev. McEwing, July 5, 1840. This same minister preached for six Sabbaths in succession. During the time intervening between this and November 1840, services were held by the Revs. Miller, Arthurs, McEwing, Marshall, Smith and Coon.

On November 4th, the same date of organization, the first ruling elders were elected, namely, James Stewart, Sr., John Byers, Sr., John Miller, and Jacob Guy.

The first administration of the Lord's Supper was held December 13, 1840; and the officiating ministers on this occasion, and for the preparatory services, were the Revs. Jeffrey and Ray.

The records indicate that services were regularly held, and other ministers preached in addition to those named above, as follows—Pettigrew, Murray, Reed and McCraig.

The number of persons admitted to the church during the year 1840 was 27, as follows:

John Byers—certificate
Robert Burns—certificate
Jane, his wife—certificate
Miss Elizabeth Byers—certificate
Mrs. Nancy Forbes—examination
Jacob Guy—certificate
Margaret, his wife—certificate
Andrew Johnston—certificate
Elizabeth, his wife—certificate
John Logan—certificate
Margaret, his wife—certificate
Joseph McGahen—certificate
Emily, his wife—certificate

John Miller—certificate
Jane, his wife—certificate
Thomas McGahen—certificate
Nancy, his wife—certificate
James Stewart, Sr.—certificate
Isabelle, his wife—certificate
John Stewart—certificate
Elizabeth, his wife—certificate
James, their son—certificate
Jane, their daughter—certificate
Rachel Stewart, wife of James—certificate
Joseph Wherry, certificate
Elizabeth, his wife—certificate
John Wilson—examination

During the year 1841 the following persons were admitted :

Mrs. Jane Wilson—certificate
Mrs. Margaret Thompson—examination
James McKinley—examination
Alexander Marshall—certificate
Elizabeth, his wife—certificate
Henry Logan—certificate
Agnes, his wife—certificate
Miss Mary Logan—certificate

Miss Margaret Logan—certificate
Mrs. Margaret Jeffrey—certificate
Delila Jeffrey—certificate
Jane Huston—certificate
Jane Foster—examination
Alex H. Burns—examination
Jane, his wife—certificate
Miss Mary Elliott—certificate

This makes a total of 43 members admitted during the first two years ; and nearly all of them by certificate from Montours Church.

A comparison of the number who signed the petition for a new organization, and the number who united with this church during the first two years of its existence, indicates that human nature in those early days was much the same as at the present time, in the fact that when a new project is launched, many are willing to witness the experiment, but hold themselves aloof until its success is assured, before lending a helping hand.

Beginning with the first Sabbath of February, 1841, the Rev. Samuel Pettigrew became stated supply for the ensuing three months. The records do not indicate the amount that he received for his services during this time.

On April 21st, 1841, a call for a pastor was presented to Presbytery in the following form :

"The congregation of the Valley Church, being on sufficient grounds, well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, Samuel Pettigrew, and having good hopes from our past experience of your labors that your ministrations in the gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call and desire you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation, promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from all worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise, and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of four hundred dollars, with the increase, in regular half-yearly payments, during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church.

In testimony whereof we have respectively subscribed our names this 19th day of April A. D., 1841."

JOHN BYERS

JAMES STEWART, SR

JOHN MILLER

JACOB GUY

The following is the response from Presbytery :

"Allegheny, April 22, 1841.

The committee appointed to bring in a report expressing the views of Presbytery, in returning the call of the Valley Church, for the pastoral labors of Samuel Pettigrew, to said church, would respectfully report:

That in the view of Presbytery the sum of four hundred dollars promised in the call is not sufficient to sustain a minister of the gospel in a comfortable manner. The individual called in the present case is a young man who has exhausted all his means by years of preparation for the gospel ministry. A library is absolutely necessary to enable him to prosecute his studies with success, which of itself would require much of the above named sum. When a minister receives an incompetent sum he is necessarily driven to some other occupation to make up the deficiency. This deprives the congregation of those labors which they ought to receive from the pastor. And thus they themselves are the first sufferers. It operates unfriendly upon the pastor, making him worldly minded and preventing that spiritual and mental growth which would be the consequence of an entire devotion to the studies and labors of the ministry. Or if he attempts to live on his salary alone, he is crippled in all his operations by pecuniary embarrassment. Nor can he enjoy the luxury of contributing to the benevolent operations of the day. While the people are enjoying fully the bounties of Providence and providing for their families the minister who faithfully labors among them can scarcely meet the demands made upon him, while he can do nothing for his children. With respect to the phrase, "with the increase," used in the call,

Presbytery would say that is a new form of expression, objectional because it is indefinite. If that increase should be but small it would not meet the wants of the pastor. But if the hopes are sanguine that it would be large the congregation should have run the risk of that increase. They could more easily do it than their pastor. While, therefore, the Presbytery commends the zeal of their infant church, displayed in the erection of a building and employing, thus far, a stated supply, thus ensuring to themselves the regular administration of the Word and ordinances, they feel constrained by a sense of duty to return the call into the hands of the session of the Valley Church upon the ground that the sum mentioned in the call is insufficient to sustain a pastor in a comfortable manner.

REV. LEA } Committee
WM. B. McILVAIN }

For several months following this the pulpit was supplied by different ministers and notably among them was Mr. Pettigrew.

The spring meeting of Presbytery was held in the Valley Church in April, 1842. A committee was appointed with instructions to make all necessary arrangements for this meeting. Among other things it was authorized to secure some member of Presbytery to give a lecture on temperance on one evening of their sessions. This shows that the temperance cause was being advocated in the Valley Church quite early in its history.

MINISTERS

"Faithful men able to teach others also." II. Tim. 2:2.

On October 3, 1842, a call, moderated by the Rev. McKaig, was made for the Rev. Smith F. Grier, at \$400 per year, to be paid semi-annually. Mr. Grier later accepted this call and began his labors as the first stated pastor of this church at the opening of the year 1843. Year after year he served this people at this rate of salary.

At a congregational meeting held August 18, 1851, he stated, "That after nine years trial I have found my salary barely sufficient to sustain me and I think I should receive something more."

An effort was made and his salary was increased to \$450, which he accepted for another year.

At the fall meeting of Presbytery 1852 he asked for a dissolution of his pastoral relations, which was granted.

From the time of the above dissolution until late in 1857 the church was without a stated pastor. Much of this time the pulpit was filled by the Rev. W. P. Harvison, and several efforts was made to secure him as a pastor. But on account of his poor health the matter was deferred from time to time.

On August 31, 1857, the Rev. Wm. Hunter of Hopewell moderated a call for the Rev. Samuel C. Jennings at a salary of \$300 per year, to be paid semi annually. He was also retained as pastor of Sharon Church and for several years his labors were divided between these two congregations.

Soon after the pastoral relations of Dr. Jennings began, four deacons were elected, namely: John Matthews, Isaac A. Walker, George Burns and Thomas Jeffery.

Dr. Jennings held his pastoral relations with the Valley Church until April 27, 1868, when he asked that they be dissolved. His request was granted. On the same day the congregation adopted the following resolutions:

RESOLVED—1st. That we reluctantly through a painful sense of duty, acquiesce in said request, believing that the field of his labors is too great for his physical strength and that it is the will of Providence that it shall be confined to Sharon, which has petitioned for his whole time.

2nd. That we give our unqualified testimony to his being a talented, faithful, and efficient minister of the Gospel amongst us that he has labored in season and out of season to win sinners to Christ, and that we will remember with feelings of the warmest affection his instructions and advice in spiritual things.

3rd. That we esteem him as a Christian gentleman in his manners, manifesting that urbanity and kindness in all his intercourse with us which characterizes the ambassador of Christ. And that the want of his social and friendly visits as our beloved pastor will be felt by us all.

4th. That we take leave of him as our pastor, commending him to the care and blessing of the Great Head of the church, hoping and praying that his labors in the future may be as abundantly blessed as in the past."

For several months following the release of Dr. Jennings the pulpit was filled by supplies. Among them was Dr. Williams, also the Rev. Taylor, who was stated supply for a short time.

But renewed efforts were put forth to secure the services of the Rev. Wm. P. Harvison, which was finally accomplished and he began his labors October 1, 1869, as stated pastor and continued in this capacity until his death September 18, 1870.

At a meeting held October 3, 1870, the following resolutions were adopted.

"WHEREAS: In the providence of God, we have been bereaved of our pastor, the Rev. Wm. P. Harvison, by death.

RESOLVED: That we recognize the hand of God in this dispensation of his providence.

RESOLVED: That while we lament our loss we rejoice to be able to bear testimony to his ability as a minister and his fidelity as a pastor.

RESOLVED: That we tender our sympathies to the bereaved family of the deceased and that we implore the verification of our Heavenly Father's promise, to be a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless.

RESOLVED: That a copy of these resolutions be handed to the widow and a copy to the editor of the Presbyterian Banner, for publication.

On December 18, 1871, at a meeting moderated by the Rev. Watering of Mansfield (now Carnegie) a call was made for the Rev. M. N. Cornelious, every member present voting in the affirmative. At this time the Rev. Cornelious was pastor at Oakdale. At the opening of the new year he began his services as pastor of both churches. This continued until April 21, 1873. Under this date the following was adopted at a meeting of the congregation:

WHEREAS: The Rev. M. N. Cornelious, for reasons deemed good and sufficient, has tendered his resignation as our pastor. Therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That in view of all the circumstances we acquiesce in said resignation, although we do so with feelings of regret.

For a year following the above date the pulpit was filled by supplies, and a greater portion of this time by the Rev. J. P. Hamilton. From time to time an effort was made to secure him as pastor. But all efforts in this direction failed.

On March 16, 1874, at a meeting moderated by the Rev. G. M. Kerr of Racoon, a call was presented for the Rev. Wm. Hanna, for half time in connection with Hebron. This call was accepted and he began his labors April 1, 1874. For the following six years these pastoral relations existed, ending early in 1880.

For nearly a year after the close of the Rev. Hanna's ministrations, the church was without a pastor.

Early in 1881 the Rev. G. M. Spargrove became pastor. This relationship lasted for about one year.

On October 30, 1883, the Rev. Samuel H. Moore was installed pastor of the Valley Church. The Rev. M. H. Bradley presided and preached the sermon. The Rev. William McCibben delivered the charge to the people and the Rev. S. J. Fisher delivered the charge to the pastor. In January, 1885, the Rev. Moore was released from this pastoral charge, he having received a call from the Wilkinsburg Church, which he thought afforded him a larger field of usefulness.

During the interim which now followed the Rev. Charles Herron became stated supply.

From the early spring of 1888 until the spring of 1889, the Rev. S. W. Douglass was stated pastor.

In the spring of 1889 the Rev. S. J. S. Moore was installed pastor. This pastorate extended over a period of six years. At a meeting held January 6, 1896, he notified the congregation of his intention to ask Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relations existing between them and asked that a commission be appointed to join asking for the same. This was done at the spring meeting of Presbytery.

On May 4, 1896, the congregation met according to previous notice, with the Rev. C. P. Way, pastor of Hebron, as moderator. A unanimous call was made at this time for the Rev. J. J. Graham. Wm. A. Thompson, elder, was appointed to present this call at a meeting of Presbytery, held the following day at Point Breeze, Pittsburgh, Pa. This call was confirmed. The Rev. Graham served this people for six years and proved himself to be an incessant worker. He was constantly up in arms against the evils of the day and especially the liquor traffic. He preached his farewell sermon to this congregation April 27, 1902.

On December 23, 1902, the Rev. H. W. McCombs was installed pastor. The Rev. Jesse S. Cotton presided. The Rev. R. S. Holmes preached the sermon. The Rev. John M. Gaston gave the charge to the pastor. The Rev. J. M. Mercer the charge to the people.

The Rev. H. W. McCombs continued his duties until October 5, 1906, at which time he asked the congregation to join him in asking Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relation between him and the church. Soon after this relationship was dissolved.

At a congregational meeting held March 23, 1907, with the Rev. Laughlin of Montours, moderator, a unanimous call was made for the Rev. W. J. Snyder. This call was confirmed and soon after he took up the labors of the church. This pastoral relation still exists November 1911. He has been decidedly active in securing the erection of the new church.

ELDERS

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." I. Tim. 5:17.

The following is a complete list of all the ruling elders elected and ordained since the organization of the Valley Church. The first four named constituted the first session and were elected November 4, 1840, this being the date of organization :

John Miller	George Burns	John Deemer
John Byers, Sr.	John Matthews	H. E. McBride
James Stewart, Sr.	Thomas F. Jeffrey	Silas B. Marshall
Jacob A. Guy	Wm. A. Thompson	J. C. Eaton
John Lusk	Henry Leech	B. C. Elliott
James Stewart, Jr.	John R. Marshall	John S. Fisher
Joseph McGahen	John Shafer	Harvey Barnhart
Samuel Meanor	A. W. Enlow	S. A. Shields
Isaac Walker	Russell M. Allison	A. D. Stewart

The session, at the dedication of the new church, November 26, 1911, consisted of :

Henry Leech	John S. Fisher	Harvey Barnhart
S. A. Shields	A. D. Stewart	

Mr. Leech was ordained June 16, 1873. He has been in constant service as ruling elder ever since and at the date of dedication was about 85 years of age. His name first appeared in the records of the congregation January 29, 1858.

FIRST LIBRARY

The first Sabbath School Library was established in August 1846 and James S. Moore was first librarian. And S. F. Grier, A. H. Burns and John Miller was committee appointed to purchase the books.

USE OF TOKENS

On November 12, 1855, a resolution was adopted to dispense with the use of tokens at time of communion.

The Sacrament in early days was a great occasion. All communicants received these "tokens" from the elders, which entitled them to the privilege of communing. These "tokens" were simply bits of lead with the initial letters of the congregation upon them and were distributed to all who expected to join in communion.

SINGING—ORGAN

On December 5, 1841, the following was adopted:

RESOLVED : "That we sing without parceling out."

It was the practice in "ye olden time" for the clerks to stand on a platform in front of the pulpit. One of them would "line out" two lines at a time, then all would sing, and repeat this process until the hymn was sung

On April 19, 1875, an organ was introduced. Misses Allie G. Hays and Aggie Stewart were the first organists. In 1911 a piano is in use. Miss Freda Bowers is pianist.

MEMBERSHIP

The aggregate accessions to this church since its organization are approximately 820. The present membership is 220. It seems to be impracticable to give the individual names in this connection.

"Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:20.

NEW CHURCH

"Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths." Micah 4:2.

In the spring of 1911 the first church, endeared to the hearts of so many of the people of Imperial and surrounding country by tender associations and remembrances, was taken down that a new edifice might stand upon the sacred ground occupied by its predecessor.

This structure, a brick, is 44 x 66 feet, two stories high. On the first floor is Sabbath School room, class room and kitchen. On the second floor is vestibule, ladies' parlor, session room, Christian Endeavor room and an auditorium with a seating capacity of 300. Total cost, approximately \$12,000. The contractors were McKown & Beattie of Coraopolis, Pa.

To the ladies of the congregation much credit is due for their energetic efforts to secure funds for the erection and furnishing of this building. And in years to come it will stand a monument to their credit. It bears the name "VALLEY" the old one was known by. To many of the members whose families have been represented in this congregation since its very beginning this name is linked with too many tender associations to be lightly thrown aside.

And finally on the 26th day of November, A. D. 1911, the people assembled and dedicated this new edifice to the service of God.

And through all these years the destiny of this church has been carefully guided by the hand of the Living God. And many of its LABORS have been met with trials. But for each trial inflicted, a TRIUMPH has eventually been awarded.



NEW CHURCH

“Whosoever thou art that entereth this Church, remember it is the house of God : Be reverent, be silent, be thoughtful; and leave it not without a prayer to God, for thyself, for him who ministers, and for those who worship here.”