

First United Methodist Church, dedicated 1892

— HISTORY OF THE ARCHITECTURE —

1772: Held first recorded Methodist preaching services, Center Square courthouse.

1809: Built one-story brick chapel, southwest corner of Walnut St. and Christian St.

1842: Dedicated second house of worship, southwest corner of Duke St. and Walnut St.



First Methodist Episcopal Church, 1842-1892

1890: Laid cornerstone for third church, northwest corner of Duke St. and Walnut St.

1892: Dedicated Lancaster County limestone Gothic Revival house of worship.

1946: Accidental fire caused extensive damage to Gothic Revival house of worship.

1953: Dedicated restored house of worship.

1991: Built new administrative offices and classrooms.

1996: Completed renovation of sanctuary.

2000: Lightning strike damaged truncated tower.



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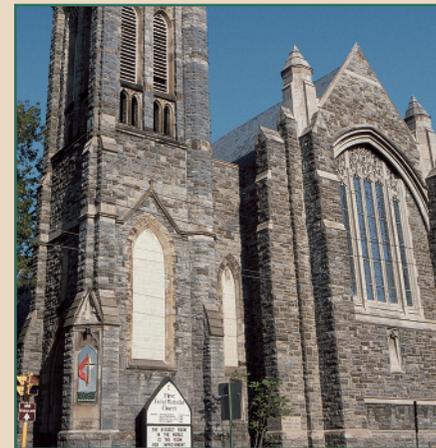
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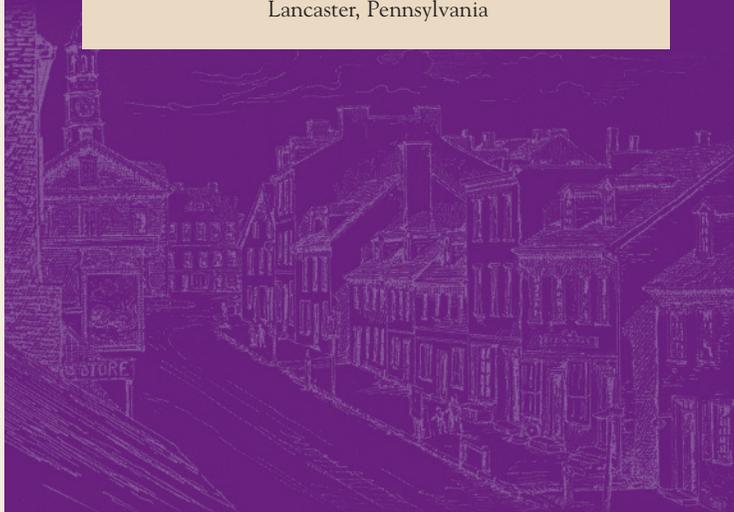
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*First United
Methodist
Church*

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STORY OF THE PEOPLE AND NEIGHBORHOOD

Like the Episcopalians and Presbyterians, the Methodists of Lancaster borough held their first recorded worship services in the Center Square courthouse. Circuit riding preachers passed through Lancaster as early as 1772, holding occasional Sunday services in the courthouse until 1807. One such preacher was the Rev.

Henry Boehm, born in southern Lancaster County.



Rev. Henry Boehm

When the Rev. Boehm was 28 years old in 1803, he led an outdoor revival in the square. Standing on a butcher's block in the open-air market house, Boehm began preaching. An annoyed patron at a nearby tavern threatened him with a brickbat.

The young preacher bravely stood his ground, singing a hymn as the would-be assailant retreated without causing any physical harm.

When church business brought the Rev. Boehm back to town in 1807, he stayed at the local Public House for the night. As it happened, the German Lutherans chose that very evening to conduct a lottery, raising money to finish paying for their steeple.

Seeking quieter company, Boehm spent some time visiting with an old acquaintance. She told him about the Philip Benedict family, and he made his way to their house on North Duke St. The Benedicts invited him to establish a permanent society in their home. Although Boehm declined the invitation, he supported the Lancaster society's request for a resident pastor, often visiting when he passed through town.

In 1809 the small group purchased a lot on the corner of Walnut St. and Christian St. and built an unpretentious brick chapel. Lighted with tallow candles and heated with a wood-burning stove, the little church warmed the hearts of Methodist worshippers. By 1840 the streets around it

were lined with palatial red brick and stone homes, many owned by the city's wealthiest citizens. Some church members thought the tiny chapel was too modest. When plans for a larger house of worship began taking shape, a significant group lobbied to relocate to East King St. Land was purchased, but the matter was not settled.

On October 1, 1840, men of the congregation decided to vote. When they reached a deadlock, someone suggested an unusual solution for Methodist societies of the time. Let the women vote. The women agreed, swinging the ballot in favor of staying on Walnut St. This meant the chapel had to be dismantled, and the society would be without a church home during construction. Once again, a woman rose to the occasion. Maria Louisa White had been a tavern keeper on Orange St. before joining the society. She offered the second-floor of her former inn as an "Upper Room" for Methodist worship services.

Two years later, the congregation dedicated its red brick house of worship. A friendly main entrance faced Duke St., but the cost of construction encumbered the society for many years. By the time they retired their debt some 40 years later, many other Lancaster congregations had erected larger houses of worship. The Methodists also began planning a more classic, proper church.

They purchased land directly across Walnut St. and laid the cornerstone for a Gothic Revival structure sometime in 1890. In November 1891, they sold the old church, holding a farewell service the second Sunday in December. Soon after the New Year 1892, members of the congregation gathered to dedicate their new house of worship, described by one local newspaper as "probably the handsomest church edifice in Lancaster."

Throughout these years, the Methodist Episcopal society also nurtured its keen interest in outreach and mission. Sabbath Schools in different parts of Lancaster City were started. Three of these survive today—St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Grandview United Methodist Church, and Christ United Methodist Church.

The congregation also helped sponsor Henry and Ella Appenzeller, a missionary family who lived and worked in Korea. After Henry Appenzeller was lost in a shipwreck, his wife and children moved to Lancaster. Daughter Alice attended a private girl's school on North Duke St. Her outgoing personality and pleasant, open spirit won her many friends.



Alice Appenzeller

When Alice Appenzeller returned to Korea as a teacher in the early 1900s, the Methodists of Lancaster supported her with both finances and prayers. Because of her work, Lancaster's First United Methodist Church has maintained strong connections to the Methodist community in Korea.

During the 20th century, several accidental fires damaged the interior of the Gothic Revival house of worship. Each time, the congregation chose to restore the grand old church. Today, its limestone exterior walls are lighted from the ground up at night. The sanctuary's memorial stained glass and solid wood pews soften the space, and Sunday morning services resound with Methodist hymns played on a carefully-maintained Moller church organ.

Earliest Known Record: 1772 worship services in Center Square courthouse
Current House of Worship: Gothic Revival, completed 1892, rebuilt after 1946 fire