

MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton

## Early Protestant churches listed

CONTINUING WITH the Sara McCool history of Mahanoy City which appeared in the Evening Herald in 1874:

THE PROTESTANT churches of Mahanoy City are 11 in number.

The first to be established was the Presbyterian, commencing on June 24, 1860, when services were conducted in the Spruce Street school at various times by Rev. Samuel Colt of Pottsville, Rev. A. M. Lowry, Port Carbon, and Rev. William Thompson, Tamaqua.

With the exception of a small band of Methodists who discontinued their services for a time, the Presbyterian services were the initiatory religious efforts of the town. In January 1861, by resolution of the Presbytery held in Scranton, Mahanoy City was given missionary status in charge of Rev. William Thompson, who held services every other week. On Oct. 14, 1861, David Stuart, Dr. L. M. Thompson, Frank Carter, E. F. Smith and Dr. T. Turner were named to the first board of trustees, About the same time a sabbath school of 15 members was formed through the efforts of Mrs. Kate Thompson who served as superintendent and teacher. In one week's time the attendance rose to 45 members.

In April 1862, construction of a church edifice commenced on South Main Street. It was dedicated on Sept. 18, 1862, with the sermon preached by Rev. T. DeWitt Talmadge of Brooklyn. Rev. William Thompson served until Dec. 8, 1863, when Rev. F. F. Roth was sent to supply for one year. On Nov. 27, 1865, Rev. William H. Dinsmore was elected the first pastor and remained until the fall of 1868. David Stuart, Esq., was the first ruling elder. In November 1869, Rev. A. M. Woods was called to the charge and is the pastor as of this date (August 1874).

The congregation extended use of its edifice to other

denominations, including the German Reformed, Lutherans, Methodists and Baptists, until they erected their own buildings.

SAINT PAUL'S Reformed Church began in September, 1862, when Rev. L. K. Derr of Tamaqua began preaching to a half dozen families at the Spruce street school. On Jan. 17, 1863, the services were moved to the Presbyterian edifice.

On August 12, 1864, the congregation held a meeting and designated Rev. Derr to head a committee for the construction of a church on Main Street above Spruce. The cornerstone was laid on Sept. 18 and in the spring of 1865 the basement was opened for worship. The edifice was dedicated on Sept. 17, 1865, and Rev. Derr accepted a call to serve as the pastor commencing Jan. 1, 1866. He remained until April 1, 1870, when the position was filled by Rev. Henry A. Keyser, the current pastor. The membership numbers 400.

THE METHODIST Episcopal Church was organized July 15, 1863, under Rev. H. A. Cleveland and the first board of trustees included B. B. Swayze, M. L. Johnson, Philip Mank, Anthony Smith and Franklin Davis. The members worshipped in private homes, the public school, the Presbyterian church and sometimes in a tent.

Construction of an edifice on Mahanoy Street was begun in the autumn of 1863 and Rev. W. W. Davis was appointed pastor on March 9, 1864. The church was well on the way to completion when a wind storm on Oct. 28, 1864, caused the walls to collapse. (Note: The same storm blew down a wall of the Saint Canicus Church then under construction.) The work of rebuilding commenced on April 20, 1865, and the basement floor was dedicated on Dec. 17.

Rev. Samuel Reisner became pastor in March 1867 and served one year, followed by Rev. John S. McConnell who served two years and during whose pastorate the church con-



**HAPPY 50th!** — This a view of Centre Street looking east from Main at the time the borough celebrated its 50th birthday in 1913. Of the structures at the four corners of the intersection, only the Knapp building at right (southeast corner) remains.

struction was completed. Successive pastors since then have been Rev. Mathias Barnhill (1870-72), Rev. T. Montgomery (1872-73) and Rev. N. D. McComas (1873 to present).

EVANGELICAL Association services were begun at the school in 1860 under Rev. Michael Sindinger. He was succeeded in the following two years by Rev. J. Fry and J. E. Knerr. In March 1863, an organization was effected under Rev. Christian Gingerich and Rev. David Lentz of the Ashland Circuit, after which Mahanoy City was designated a regular appointment with a class of 15 members.

In 1864 a building committee was formed and chose a lot at Spruce and Catawissa streets where construction began in October. Although not completed, the church was occupied in February, 1865, with Rev. Lentz preaching the first sermon. In the spring of that year Mahanoy City was constituted a mission with Rev. R. R. Dreisher as the missionary. The

edifice was completed later in the year and named Salem Church.

In 1867 Rev. D. Z. Kemble was assigned, followed by Rev. J. C. Hornberer in the spring of 1868, at which time the membership had increased sufficiently to receive designation as a station. The succeeding pastors have been Rev. R. J. Smyser, Rev. W. K. Weand, Rev. A. M. Stirk. THE CHURCH OF Faith, Episcopal, was organized on Aug. 17, 1861, under Rev. Henry Getz who continued as rector until May 31, 1869.

Led by Charles M. Hill Jr., Thomas Westcott, John Conyngham, Wesley Hammer, F. M. Nichols, Henry Jackson, a chapel with attached parsonage was erected at a cost of \$10,000. The current rector, appointed in 1870, is Rev. Joseph W. Murphy.

CHRIST GERMAN Lutheran congregation began in 1861 with a few persons gathering at the school house under the leadership of Rev. J. F. Bayer of Tamaqua.

In 1862, the services of Rev.

Mr. Willard of Schuylkill Haven were secured for six months and an unsuccessful attempt was made to effect an organization. In 1863, Rev. Mr. Weber of Ashland supplied the ministry.

It was not until 1864 that the eastern Pennsylvania Conference granted recognition and Rev. Henry Geiss was sent as missionary. An organization was effected and construction of a church began at Main and Mahanoy streets. Rev. Geiss left Mahanoy City in 1866, before the new church was finished.

Rev. I. J. Burkhalter was the next pastor, but differences in languages and customs led to disharmony. As a result, the pastor left in 1867 and took the English members with him to form their own church. The remaining German portion was unable to finance the building debt and the property fell into the hands of the sheriff.

On March 20, 1867, under Rev. Daniel Sanner, a group of 25 members reorganized as an entire German church and the unfinished edifice was bought at sheriff's sale for \$2,700. In the spring of 1868, Rev. Schimpf of Pottsville became the pastor. On Sept. 10, 1868, the new church was reconsecrated.

SAINT JOHN'S English Lutheran Church was organized on Aug. 7, 1867, by Rev. Burkhalter and 79 members who left the German Lutheran Church. They immediately initiated plans to construct a church on West Mahanoy Street and built a frame structure for \$4,500.

Succeeding Rev. Burkhalter as pastor were Rev. P. Weiser in 1869 and Rev. D. Beckner in 1871.

THE PRIMITIVE Methodist Church was commenced on March 3, 1864 when Rev. C. Spurr preached to a group in the school house. In the autumn of that year Rev. G. Parker formed the first class of five members. Rev. William Bell and Rev. John Walter followed for brief periods, and in 1865 Rev.

Edward Compton led the congregation in a decision to erect a church on Catawissa street. The construction took place in 1867 under Rev. G. Parker, who was succeeded in 1868 by Rev. R. Stephenson. In 1869 Rev. Spurr returned and remained until 1873, when Rev. R. Fothergill, the present pastor, arrived. The church has 60 members and the sabbath school has 100 children.

THE WELSH Baptist Church is located on Catawissa Street near the Primitive Methodist Church, with Rev. W. D. Thomas as the current pastor.

THE WELSH First Congregational Church is located on Centre Street and has Rev. D. Todd Jones as its pastor. The congregation had its beginning on the third sabbath of July, 1863, at a general prayer meeting in the home of William Richards, Mahanoy Street. The following week at a gathering in the public school, a sabbath school was formed and the prayer meeting continued.

In September 1863, Rev. Evan Price preached the first Welsh sermon. On Dec. 20, the church was organized through the instrumentality of Rev. John E. Jones of Minersville. Ground for construction of an edifice was acquired for one dollar from Richard Kear of Minersville. Construction was completed in 1864 and the pulpit was supplied by Rev. Robert D. Thomas. Rev. D. Todd Jones was pastor for four years until August 1874, when he returned to Wales.

A COMMUNITY Sabbath School Association representing the various Protestant denominations has been in existence since Nov. 27, 1871. Philip Conrad, Esq., was the first president; Charles Bensing and Elijah Gregory, vice presidents; W. I. Balantine, secretary, and Henry Jackson treasurer.

(Note: This concludes the excerpts from the Sara McCool history.)