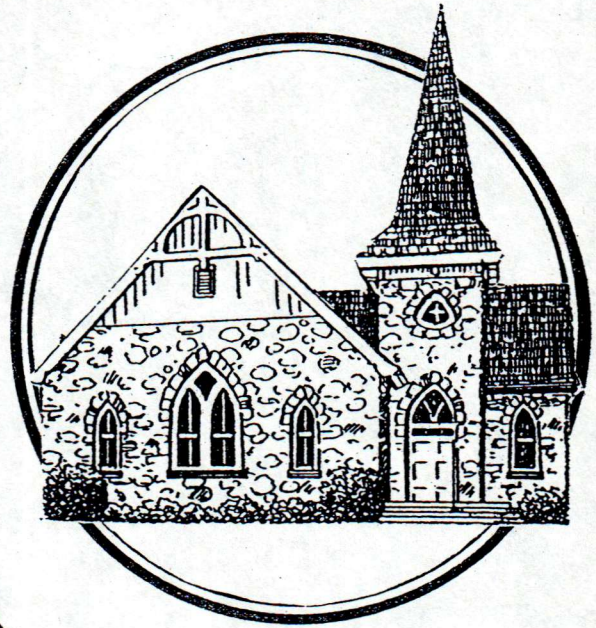


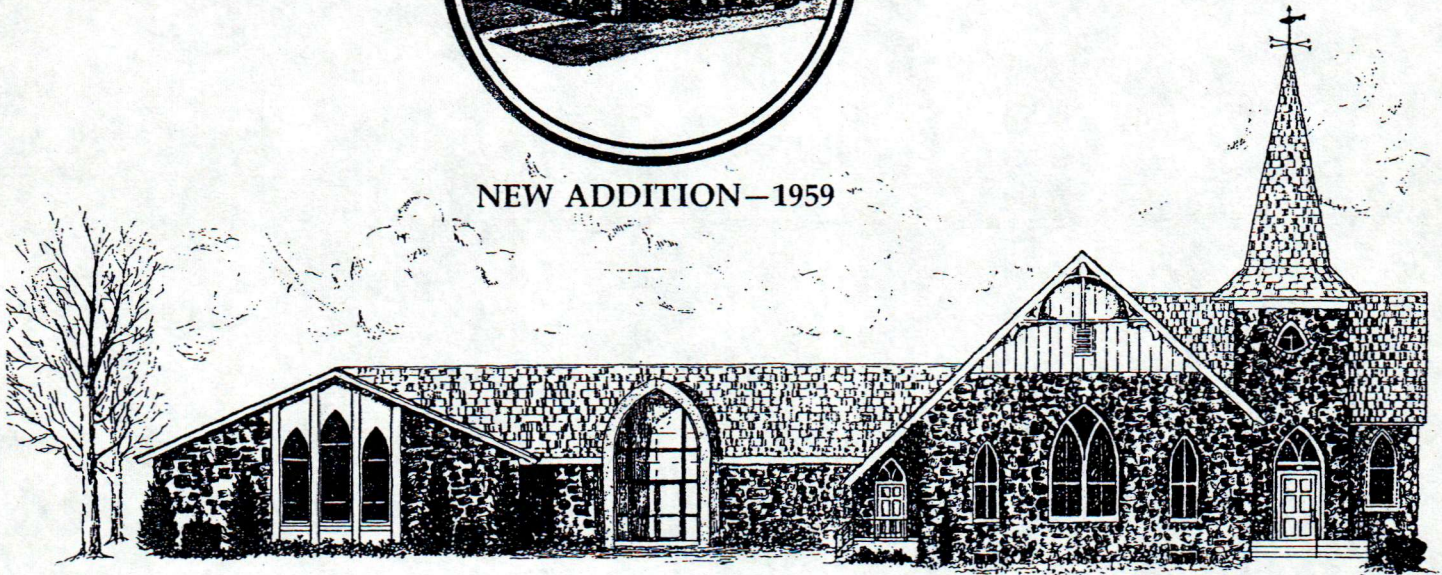
NEW BUILDING—1844



NEW BUILDING—1888



NEW ADDITION—1959



NEW BUILDING—1985

Grove United Methodist Church

A SHORT HISTORY OF GROVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In October 1771 Francis Asbury, sent by John Wesley, arrived in Philadelphia and preached his first sermon in the New World in Philadelphia at Old St. George's Church.

Francis Asbury then became a circuit rider, spending his life on his horse while riding through the colonies to serve the Methodist Societies. During his ministry in the New World, Asbury rode 275,000 miles on horseback.

In 1773 Asbury came to Chester County and met with a group of colonists who were worshipping in private homes. He organized this group into a society, named the Goshen Methodist Society. It was later, in 1784, that the Methodist Episcopal Church was established in America.

For a short time the Goshen Methodist Society continued to meet in private homes, but the group soon needed a larger meeting place. They then met in a log schoolhouse near the corner of Grove and Boot Road.

In 1783 they built a chapel of stone on land donated by one of the members. The church was known as "The Stone Chapel" and/or "The Hoffman Chapel" in honor of the donor of the land. Mr. Hoffman's farm was located on Grove Road a short distance from the church and can be seen today on the left hand side of the road as one rides south toward West Chester. Sheep are now being raised on the farm.

It has been said that the old schoolhouse was used to shelter horses after the 1783 Chapel was built.

In 1844 a larger two-story structure was built. The altar in the sanctuary was on the east side of the building. The main entrance faced south toward the cemetery. Two other entrances were on the north and west of the building. An article in the Daily Local News in later years said that the people in the congregation felt that a mistake had been made because the building did not face Boot Road to welcome travelers along that main road.

A new and larger building was soon needed. In 1888 preparations for a third building (the present sanctuary) on the site were being made. In January of that year stone was begun to be quarried at the Birmingham quarry and brought to the church property..

The last services in the 1844 church were held on April 29, 1888. In the Daily Local News an article said that the last convert in the church was Mrs. Gray, wife of the village blacksmith, who joined the church the evening before.

The doors and window sash were removed from the building that week so that, quoting from the newspaper, "some time this week the building will be blown down (or up) with dynamite."

Services the next Sunday were held in the school house after which, the newspaper reported, "a temporary frame structure or tent would be constructed by next Sunday".

When the 1844 church was built, it was moved east of the site on which the previous, or Stone Chapel, had been built. By 1888 the tombstones were very close to the building. The new 1888 church was built a little further east than where the 1844 church stood in order for the carriages coming from Boot Road to drive around the building

The planned dedication of the new Grove Methodist Episcopal Church scheduled for November 25, 1888 was postponed because the pews did not arrive. Dedication was held in January of 1889 with the congregation sitting on chairs since the pews were *still* not delivered. The cost of the church was, according to the newspaper, "about \$7,000" and was "dedicated free of debt".

During early 1950s the church was having financial problems. The church was without a pastor for 6 months. There was talk of closing the church. During that time, J. Holland Heck and William Zuschnitt continued to serve in all capacities to keep the church open.

The Educational Building addition was completed in 1959. The building measured 148 feet in length and 82 feet in width. The classrooms in the building were first used for Sunday School on November 22, 1959.

Together with the furnishings, the total cost of the building, as reported November 22 at the Consecration Service, was \$137,000.

The cornerstone was laid on October 2, 1960. Cornerstone laying was initially delayed because the first stone contained the wrong date. The second scheduled ceremony was also delayed because birds had nested in the space the stone was to occupy.

The sanctuary was extensively renovated and carpeted in 1966. Up to this time the floor was not covered with carpeting and the sanctuary was heated by the hot air which rose from the large vent in the middle aisle to provide heat for the sanctuary when, and if, the aging furnace was working.

Prior to the renovation the Adult Sunday School classes were held at the west and north sides of the sanctuary and were separated from the main part of the church by doors which slid upwards. These doors were used to provide room for additional seating when the sanctuary was crowded.

The sliding doors at the back (north side) of the sanctuary were removed. Pews were placed in this area. In addition the space above the new pew area was converted to a balcony. A new Baldwin organ was purchased. Doors which were pushed to the side were installed to separate the west room from the sanctuary. A door was placed in the south side of the west room for access to the sanctuary. The cost of the project was approximately \$35,000.

The congregation worshipped in Asbury Hall from February to June while the work was being completed.

Bishop J. Gordon Howard re-dedicated the renovated church sanctuary at the 9:30 service of worship and dedicated the Educational building at the 10:45 service on Palm Sunday, March 30, 1969. Reverend James W. Morris was pastor at this time.

In the middle of the 1980s it was evident that the church needed to expand once more. Groundbreaking for the expansion work was held in December 1984. During these renovations a second floor was added to the building. Five new classrooms, a music room, a parlor and a new vestibule for the sanctuary, named Memorial Hall, were added to the building. The sliding doors on the west side of the building were removed and pews were installed.

Special arrangements were made for a stone mason to quarry serpentine stone at a quarry south of West Chester which had not been used for 50 years in order to face the building and the Educational building with the same type of stone as that used in 1888.

Bishop F. Herbert Skeete participated in the Consecration Service on February 1986.

While this short history describes the buildings in which the people of Grove worshipped, it should be noted that the membership of the Grove Church worked hard to maintain the building and support its upkeep.

Without the courage of the early colonists, the preaching of Bishop Asbury and many pastors through the years, and the work and financial support from the members of the Grove church, we would not be able to worship in the church.

Bishop Francis Asbury has been honored by having Asbury Hall named for the circuit rider who first visited the community in 1773. Likewise, in the Educational Building the laymen who were responsible for the survival of the Grove Church when it was without a pastor in the early 1950s are honored for their service: The Heck Library and the Zuschnitt Lounge.

To these people who worked so hard through the past years to support the present Grove United Methodist Church we owe a big debt.

Betty and Ivan Lichty
Church Historians

NAME CHANGES

GROVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1773

Asbury met with colonists and organized a **Methodist Society**
first called "Goshen"
later to be known as "Valley"
finally "Grove"

Society members met in log schoolhouse near the northwest corner
of the graveyard.

1784

The **Methodist Episcopal Church** in America was
established.

1939

The Methodist Episcopal Church; The Methodist Episcopal
Church, South; and The Methodist Protestant Church united to
form **The Methodist Church.**

1968

The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren
united to form **The United Methodist Church.**