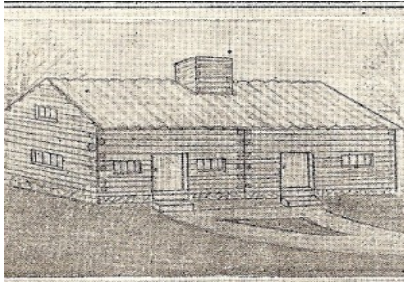


History of the Church

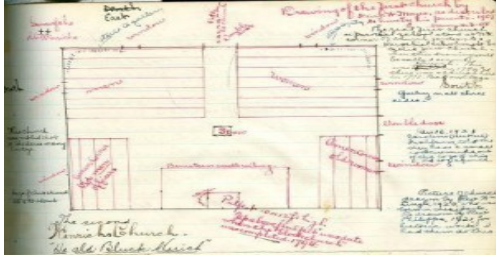


Scotch-Irish families established the beginnings for this congregation in the early 1730s. Joseph & Hannah Berryhill settled on the land and a log cabin combination parochial school and place of worship was built on their property. The early settlers who worshiped here were Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and German Reformed. This first house of worship is said to have been located at the far west end of the current church property where a marker indicates the approximate site. This is near the highway that was the original Native American trail leading to the Susquehanna River.

In 1784 the land that included the first house of worship was sold to Franz Wenerich (Francis Wenrich) and his wife, Elizabeth, and in 1792 the family sold $2 \frac{3}{4}$ acres and 18 poles of their land, including the house of worship and a spring, to the four congregations. That deed was signed by Phillip Heckart, Leonard Umberger, Jacob Planck, and John Gaverich. The building was identified as Wenrich's Church.



Soon the congregations built a second house of worship on the property, now marked by a memorial in the middle of the present cemetery. Completed in 1794 and identified as "eine blocke Kirche", it was constructed of hand-hewn 12 inch square logs donated by members of the congregations. A drawing of the building and a diagram of the interior were created in the 1920s while there were elderly members who still had memories of it.



It was 35 feet by 40 feet with two double-door entrances, one on the west and one on the south. There was a balcony on the east, south and west walls with interior stairs. Note the “amen corners” on either side of the pulpit for the elders, church officers and their wives – men and women sitting on separate sides of the church. The wine-stem pulpit, on the north, rose ten feet above the congregation. The stove in the middle was central to all.



Sixty-two years later, on September 13, 1856, there were only two congregations, Lutheran and Reformed, when they laid the cornerstone for the third and present house of worship. Bricks for the building were made on the Moyer farm that was just west of the church property. The new church was completed by the summer of 1857. The interior included a gallery across the south wall with stairs on either side and a high pulpit on the north wall flanked on either side with the “amen corners”. The colonial framed windows were placed so high that worshippers, even when standing, could not see the outside. Two aisles divided the pews, and stoves in the front with stove pipes extending along each wall warmed the congregations in winter. A 1000 pound bell, brought from Troy, New York, was first rung on October 4, 1857 for the dedication service.



Extensive remodeling in 1891-2 changed the exterior and interior of the building. The gallery was removed, a recessed alcove was added to the north wall, the two doors were changed to one central double door, the steeple was replaced and stained glass windows were added. The finer interior work included wainscoting, carpet, a chancel platform with railing, and curved pews on either side of a central aisle.

In 1913 additional remodeling added a tin ceiling and iron-framework kerosene lamps. The property was re-graded and stonework was added.



In 1953 the Lutheran congregation withdrew to build their own church. In 1957 the remaining Reformed congregation hired their first full-time pastor. And in 1959 they laid a cornerstone for an addition to the building. The addition included an educational wing on the east side of the church with an east foyer to the sanctuary and the first indoor plumbing. In 1981-2 a west wing, a west foyer to the sanctuary, and remodeling of the east wing expanded the facilities to allow for a large fellowship hall, a large kitchen, offices, and additional classrooms. In the year 2000 a south foyer to the sanctuary was added, and in 2007 we expanded to both the east and the west of the building.