

Boyds:
a Character Study

by Arthur Virts & Friends

Compiled by Ginger Gibson

FROM SCHOOLHOUSE TO CHURCH

In 1870, a group of people met every two weeks to worship with Rev. James S. H. Henderson in the little one-room Boyds School on Ten Mile Creek Road (site is now under the Little Seneca Lake). In 1875, James A. Boyd (for whom the town of Boyds is named), James E. Williams, Mahlon Lewis and other members started to build a church building which was finished in 1876 and is the church building we have today. James E. Williams donated the land for the Church and the adjoining cemetery. Col. James A. Boyd, who had laid the railroad tracks in 1873 from Washington, D. C. to Point of Rocks, MD, and owned a large farm consisting of about 1200 acres on both sides of the railroad, paid for much of the construction costs. The Board of National Missions gave the Church a grant of \$570 that was not paid back until 1960, when the church officers were looking into the financing of a new Christian Education Building. Thirteen members attended the Church at first.

From 1876 until 1888 the Church had several temporary preachers who were called "stated supply." On March 25, 1888, the Church installed Rev. T. Davis Richards as its first regular minister. Rev. Richards resigned his post after a disagreement with Col. Boyd and other Session members in 1896. Col. Boyd died on December 21, 1896, and is buried in the cemetery behind the Church.

After Rev. Richard's departure, the Church did not have a regular installed pastor for the next 30 years, but had at least four

stated supply or temporary preachers from 1896 to 1929.

The original church building did not have a steeple, vestibule or a bell. The members added these in the early 1900's and installed the stained glass windows in 1925. The Church built the first Sunday School building in 1923, and it was known as the Community Hall. They used this structure as a Sunday School building until 1963. In 1991, with a bequeath of \$100,000 from Mrs. Grace Pollock and contributions from members of the Church, the Church renovated this old building and it is known today as the Pollock-Williams Hall. It contains a meeting room, the Boyds Federal Credit Union office, and the Pastor's office. The names of the people who contributed to the renovation fund are on a plaque in the building.

Mrs. Sarah Rinehart Boyd, the widow of Col. James A. Boyd, died on October 28, 1925. She bequeathed the Boyds Presbyterian Church \$75,000 in her will. She asked that \$7,000 be used to build a house (manse) for the minister to live in. The balance of the money was to be invested and only the income from the investment was to be used for upkeep of the buildings and grounds and to help with the pastor's salary. The Church is still getting the interest on her investment. The Church rents the manse to a private family since the preacher bought his own house several years ago.

In 1928, electricity came to Boyds and the Church no longer had to use candles or lamps for light. They could power the organ by a motor rather than pumping the pedals.

In 1929, The Church installed Rev. James P. Kerr as its Pastor with a salary of \$1,950, plus housing. The Church built the manse in 1933 across the road from the Church. Rev. Kerr served as Pastor for approximately 31 years, when he suffered a heart attack. Rev. Kerr's ministry lasted through the great depression and World War II. A kind and gentle man, he and Mrs. Kerr held the Church together through its many struggles in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. When he retired, the Church was without a

pastor for two years.

On January 28, 1962, the Church installed Rev. Philip J. Lee as its Pastor, and he served the Church and community until April 1969, when he was called to a church in St. John, New Brunswick, Canada. Rev. Lee was responsible for the formation of the Boyds Day Care. He was instrumental in bringing the Church and community together, providing help, comfort, and support wherever he saw a need. He provided the spark of energy and leadership needed in the building program to construct the present Christian Education Building in 1963. He was one of the main organizers of the Boyds Civic Association in 1965 that fought the closure of the Post Office and kept the rock quarry out of Boyds.

The Church received its first black member in 1967. Mabel Dove, with her six children, joined the congregation. I held the baptismal bowl.

On October 26, 1969, the Church installed Rev. Merritt Ednie, who was ordained on September 28, 1969 at the First Presbyterian Church in Vandergrift, PA. The Boyds Day Care began in 1967 and operated until 1987. The Church signed the first agreement with the Early Learning Fun (ELF) School in 1991 that is in operation today in the Christian Education Building. Rev. Ednie has continued to bring the whole community together. He is responsible for the many improvements to the entire Church property over the past 35 years, such as the renovation of the sanctuary that was rededicated at an evening service on June 3, 1979, the renovation of Pollock-Williams Hall that was dedicated on October 27, 1991, and the upgrade of the cemetery and the manse. He has guided the Church to a position as a top giver in local, national, and international missions. He served as President of the Boyds Civic Association for several years. He served as Moderator of the National Capital Presbytery.

The Boyds Presbyterian Church property is the host for many community groups and projects. Outside organizations, such as the Boyds Federal Credit Union, Boy and Girl Scouts,

American Legion, the 4-H, the Boyds Civic Association, the Upper Montgomery County Athletic Club, Alcoholic Anonymous, the choral group "For the Joy of It," and the Seneca Valley Fellowship of Friends, use the Pollock Williams, Kerr Hall in the Christian Education Building, and the Church sanctuary. The Church is the center of activities for the town. The Church property consists of four buildings and a cemetery on 17 acres of land.

References: *Parts of this historical account were taken from "The Presbyterian Church at Boyds Station - The First 100 Years, 1876-1976" written by Elder Earle L. Vail. Parts were taken from Church and local news clippings collected by Arthur Virts and parts are from his memory having lived in the community since 1928.*

~ Arthur Virts

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