



QUICK FACT FRIDAY



Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church

The "little white clapboard" church at the corner of Church and Hibben Streets in the Old Village of Mount Pleasant has quite a history. Planters, some of whom had arrived from New England in 1696, started the mother church, best known today as Old Wappetaw (site can be found on Fifteen Mile Landing Road in Awendaw, just north of current location). That church called its first minister, a Congregationalist, in 1699, but throughout its long history, many of the ministers were Presbyterian. After the American Revolution, the Old Wappetaw congregation was chartered by the state legislature and its Sanctuary, which had been burned by the British when they evacuated the area in 1782, was soon rebuilt.

Since many of Old Wappetaw's members were acquiring summer cottages in or near the Village of Mount Pleasant, worship services were conducted in the village from time to time to accommodate them. Beginning about 1828, those services were held in a community church building that had been erected on a lot now known as 226 Bennett Street. A private individual sold that lot in 1846 with no mention in property transfer records of a building on the property. We do not know where summer services may have been held from then until the present Presbyterian Sanctuary was erected in 1854; but, from the time the present church was built, it was known to all as the "Presbyterian Church," although it was not affiliated with any organized church body. It was, however, served by Wappetaw's Presbyterian minister. Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church was organized by a handful of Civil War survivors who struggled to keep it alive during some of the more difficult years in United States history. The Sanctuary had been completed in 1854 as a branch of the Independent Congregational Church of Christ Church Parish. That church, which existed in name only following the war, had been disorganized by the deaths and departure of the majority of its members. Several years after the Civil War began in 1861, the present Sanctuary building became a Confederate hospital. Before the war ended, possibly during the Confederate evacuation of the area in 1865, a Union artillery shell burst overhead, raining small pieces of scrap iron down through the roof.

In January 1866, a Quaker teacher claimed the church building for use as a school for the children of former slaves, occupying it until fall of that year. It was the beginning of what later became Laing School. Cornelia Hancock wrote to her family in Philadelphia: "There was nothing but the dilapidated building; not a chair, table, slate, pencil, book. The only thing that suggested itself to my mind was to take some coals from the improvised fire and make letters and figures on the white columns in the church." Evangelists and part-time ministers served the church until 1948, when the congregation (48 strong!) called its first full-time minister, Rev. Thomas W.

Horton, Jr. Rev. Horton, although serving full-time at Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church, was also responsible for the Sullivan's Island Chapel of Second Presbyterian Church of Charleston. The Sanctuary has been expanded twice to accommodate a pipe organ, an enlarged choir loft and additional seating for the congregation. Several additions to the campus have taken place over the years, also to serve a growing congregation.

For More Information: "A Stately Heritage", The Story of Mt Pleasant Presbyterian Church (1699-2001), 2001 and [Historical Markers](#) (Markers #4 and #32) in the *Our History* Section of the Town website

Image Credit: South Carolina Department of Archives and History

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