



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

Collection 3031

**Scots Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia, Pa.)
Records**

1768-1791

1 box, 0.15 lin. feet

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Abstract

Scots Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, established in 1766, divided in 1786 when part of the congregation decided to detach itself from the Scottish synod and unite with other American Presbyterian branches. Rev. William Marshall (1740-1802) and his followers, who opposed these actions, were officially forced out of Scots Presbyterian Church after a series of legal suits. Marshall and his followers relocated to a new place of worship at Fourth and Walnut Streets, where he continued to serve his congregation under the auspices of the Associate Presbytery until his death in 1802. Today, Scots Presbyterian Church is referred to as Old Pine Street Church.

Materials included in this collection are minutes and pamphlets, and copies of legal depositions, testimonies, and judges' statements related to the schism of the congregation in 1786.

Background note

With the help of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, a presbytery was established in Philadelphia in 1766, to which Scots Presbyterian Church traces its roots. The congregation's elders were chosen and ordained the following year and a plot of land was purchased near Fourth and Shippen (now Bainbridge) Streets, on which a church and minister's home were erected.

Rev. William Marshall, born in Fifeshire, Scotland, in 1740 and ordained by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania in 1765, was called from his post at Deep Run, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in 1768 to serve the Philadelphia congregation. He replaced Rev. David Telfair and was installed as pastor of Scots Presbyterian Church in 1771. For the majority of his time with the Philadelphia congregation, Marshall held services at the organization's second house of worship on Pine Street above Third, while other services continued to be held at the first church at Fourth and Shippen. The Pine Street church still survives today, though not in its original architectural form, and is now referred to as Old Pine Street Church.

Soon after the Revolutionary War, during which Scots Presbyterian Church was used by the British as a hospital for Hessians and later as a stable, some members of the congregation believed that the church should free itself of affiliations with any foreign ecclesiastical body, such as the one it held with the Scottish synod. They also wanted to unite with other reformed Presbyterian branches in America. Rev. Marshall and about one-half of the congregation opposed these actions, and as a result was prohibited from occupying the pulpit after the "reformers" took possession of the church in 1786. A series of lawsuits ensued over the course of the next three years, and Marshall and his followers were forced to find a new place of worship after property rights for the Pine Street church were granted to the reformers. Marshall, who was replaced by Rev. Robert Annan of Boston, and his devotees held services at Fourth and Arch Streets under the auspices of the Associate Presbytery until 1791 when they entered a new church that had been erected at Fourth and Walnut Streets. He served there until his death in 1802 and was buried in front of the church.

Around 1822 Scots Presbyterian Church severed its connection to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of America because of the congregation's desire for "more liberty of worship, and more catholicity of communion." The church was transferred to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America and, in so doing, became the Eighth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. During the 1860s membership in the church waned as the pastorate changed hands almost every other year. In 1869 the church's Board of Trustees voted unanimously that:

Whereas: It is painfully evident that with its greatly reduced membership and diminished resources, our church cannot be efficiently and prosperously carried on in its present locality.

The church was practically closed and without members until 1884 when the decision was made to unite the Scots Presbyterian Church with the South Broad Street Presbyterian Church. The property on Pine Street was sold for the sum of \$17,000 and the bodies of the dead, which had been buried in the adjoining graveyard, were re-interred at Mt. Moriah Cemetery. A new church was built for the united congregation at Broad and Castle Streets in 1887.

Scope & content

The single box of materials for this collection contains minutes of the sessions of the Scots Presbyterian Congregation from May 15, 1768, until September 12, 1791. The sporadic minutes, typically ten to fifteen lines in length, mention church elections, services, and problems that arose with members, sometimes resulting in excommunication.

The collection also contains a manuscript entitled "State of the Case of the Scots Presbyterian Church," which at first takes the form of a third-person narrative, then switches into the first-person by the second chapter. The manuscript presents the history of the congregation, presumably written by William Marshall. Chapter titles include: "Of the building the Church," "Of the difference between the principles of the Associate Reformed Synod and the Associate Presbytery," and "Of the violent ousting

June 10 & 11 1786." Pasted onto the inside cover at a later date is a list of newspaper articles that covered the division of the congregation in 1786.

Also included are legal depositions, testimonies, and judgments dated 1789 and related to the court case that arose as a result of the congregation's 1786 schism. This segment also includes two documents signed by members of the church that in 1768 named William Marshall as their chosen pastor, and in 1786 proclaimed their support of William Marshall and their condemnation of the "most tyrannical" resolve of the trustees to unite with the Reformed Presbyterians and depose of Marshall. There is also Marshall's signed statement of acceptance of his disapprobation.

Three pamphlets are also included: "A Letter from the Associate Reformed Synod, to the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania; and Another from that Presbytery, in answer to the former," which includes within it "A state of some facts, relative to the controversy now subsisting, concerning the Scots Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia" (1787); "Act of the Associate Synod, explaining the connection of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania with the said Synod" (1788); and "Act of the Associate Synod in Scotland, concerning the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania" (1785). The box also contains a vague letter dated June 6, 1786, that informed Marshall of his infringement upon the rights of several men of the congregation and of his right to appear before these men for "his own vindication."

Separation report

None.

Related materials

At other institutions:

William Marshall Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, finding aid available:

<http://history.pcusa.org/finding/phs%20359.xml>

Mariners' Church Records, Presbyterian Historical Society

Bibliography

The Presbyterian Historical Society. "William Marshall (1740-1802) Papers, 1764-1802."
<http://history.pcusa.org/finding/phs%20359.xml> (Accessed 6/30/04).

Thompson, John C. Scots Presbyterian Church: old and new, 1766-1887. [Philadelphia: 1887?]

Subjects

Church controversies – Pennsylvania – 18th century

Church history – Pennsylvania – 18th century

Presbyterianism – Church polity – Pennsylvania – 18th century

Presbyterianism – History – Pennsylvania – 18th century

Religious disputations – Pennsylvania – 18th century

Marshall, William, ca. 1740-1802

Associate Synod of North America. Presbytery of Philadelphia – History – 18th century

Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania (1753-1782) – History

Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania (1782-1801) – History

Associate Reformed Synod (1782-1801) – History

Eighth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia (Philadelphia, Pa.) – History – 18th century

Mariners' Church (Philadelphia, Pa.) – History – 18th century

Scots Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia, Pa.) – History – 18th century

Third and Scots Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia, Pa.) – History – 18th century

Third, Scots, and Mariners' Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia, Pa.) – History – 18th century

Administrative Information

Restrictions

None.

Acquisition information

Gift of John McAllister.

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Processing note

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Box listing

Title	Date	Box	Enclosure
Minutes	1768-1791	1	1
"State of the Case of the Scots Presbyterian Church"	n.d.	1	2
"State of the Case of the Scots Presbyterian Church" (cover only)	n.d.	1	3
Legal depositions, testimonies, and judgments	1789	1	4
Pamphlets and manuscript complaint against William Marshall	1785-1788	1	5