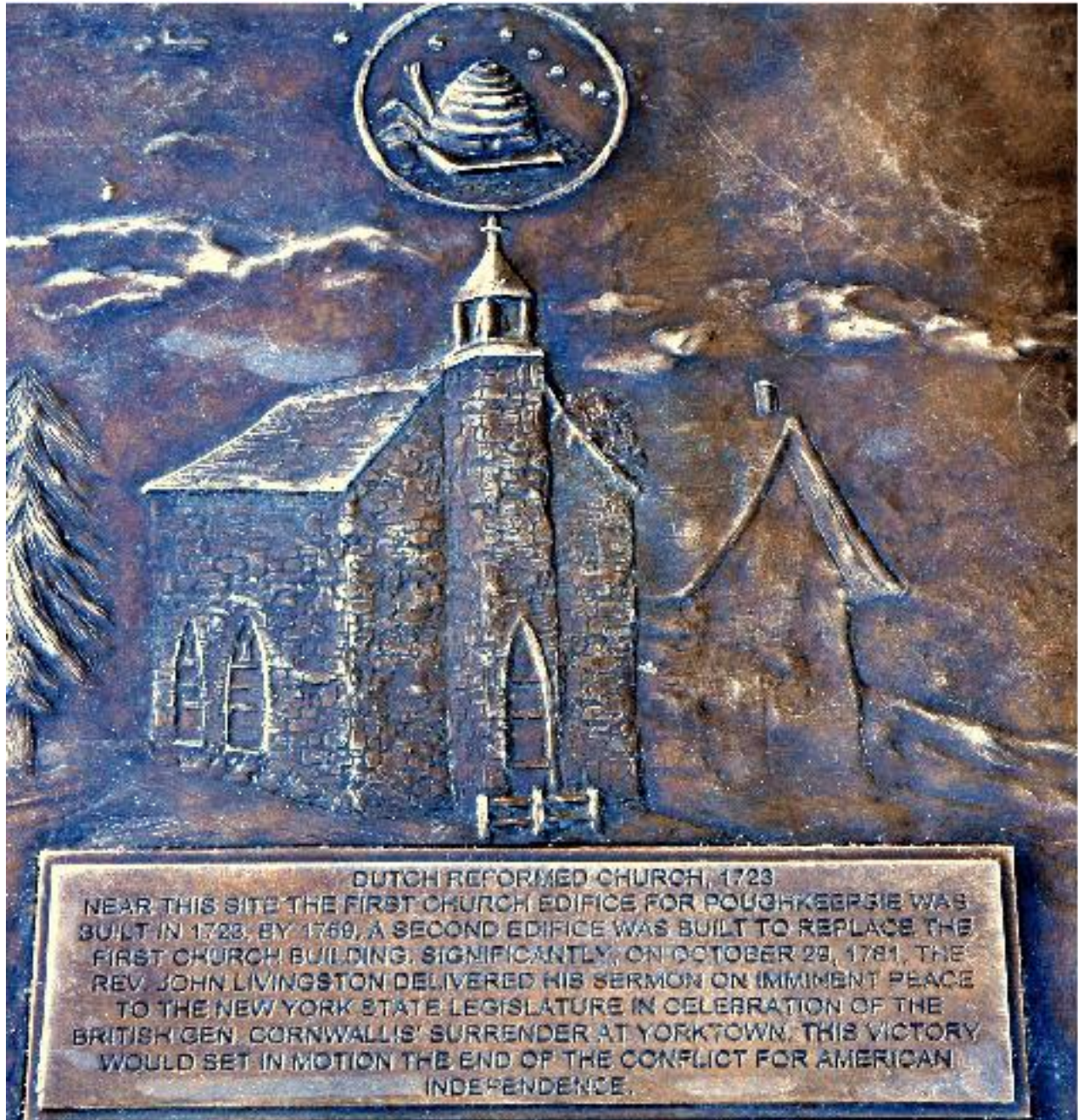


The History of the Reformed Church of Poughkeepsie Founded 1716



The Reformed Church building on Hooker Avenue is the sixth house of worship of the Reformed Dutch Church of Poughkeepsie.

The church was founded when a four-person (2 elders/2 deacons) consistory was formed October 17, 1716, by Dominie Petrus Vas, pastor of Kingston's 'Old Dutch' Church. It was the first church in Dutchess County; its first baptism was that very day: Marytjen, daughter of Frans De Lange and Marytjen Van Schaak, witnessed by Johannes Van Kleek and Aaltjen ter Bos.

A tract of land at the corner of Main and Market (where the present church office building now is and the plaque pictured on the front cover is embedded in the sidewalk) was given by Jacobus Van Der Bogert to Barent Van Kleek, Myndert Van Den Bogert, Pieter Fielee and Johannes Van Kleeck on December 26, 1716 as the site for a church building and recorded as the first deed on page 1 of the record of deeds.

The church was incorporated in 1789 (recorded Dutchess County, Book No. 1 of church certificates). The name of the church, The Reformed Dutch Church of Poughkeepsie, has remained unchanged all these years, although it has been known simply as The Reformed Church of Poughkeepsie since the building of the present house of worship on Hooker Avenue.



The first church building, 1723-1760, seen above (left side) in the Gerald Foster mural "The Hamlet of Poughkeepsie, c.1750" (1937) in FDR's Poughkeepsie Post Office (west gallery wall) was on a square "Corner Lott" (150'x150') "Lying and being in Pochkeepseng, butted and Boundett on the Nort Sid to the Rood that runs to the Eastard" [Main St.] and "on the west along the Rood that runs to the Sout..." [Market St.]. So it is located in the deed by which Jacobus Van Der Bogert conveyed to Barent Van Kleeck and others a piece of land "to bild and maentaen a proper Mieteng hous to worship the one and thriee-only God...in the Neder Dutch lingo." The congregation's subscription to the new building through the selling of pews was managed by Leonard Lewis, Barent Van Kleeck and Pieter Palmetier, elected Kerkmeesters (Church Masters). We detail this because Leonard Lewis, Colonel in the Militia, Dutchess County representative in the Colonial Assembly from 1713 to 1726, and keeper of Poughkeepsie's first tavern, was one of the great (7x and 8x) grandparents of Presidents George H. W. and George W. Bush.

Even with a building, however, a 'settled' Dominie ('minister') from the Netherlands was not called until 1730 when the Poughkeepsie Church united with the Fishkill Dutch Church to secure a shared clergy person. They offered the following financial package: an annual stipend of 70 pounds in 'New York money' paid in two installments, a house in the dominie's village of choice, firewood piled by the house, a fenced garden, a horse, bridle and saddle, a cow, and rum.

Newly ordained and just 28 years old, Rev. Cornelius Van Schie arrived September 20, 1731. He preached in the two churches on alternate Sundays. He chose to live in Poughkeepsie. But he did not stay long. His report to Amsterdam in May of 1732 complained that everything here costs twice as much as in Holland and the excessive wear and tear of constant horse-back riding necessitated unexpected and expensive clothing replacement. Furthermore, many of the citizenry could neither read nor write. Schie told the Amstvedam classis: "[I]t can hardly be believed what trouble and toil a minister has, to introduce any civility into these places where there never has been a minister before. For many people here are like the wild horses of the woods which have never yet been broken, and which will not allow the bit to be placed in their mouths till after some time." Dominie Schie quickly moved elsewhere: to the assistant pastorate of the Dutch Church of Albany in early 1733. No dominie took his place until 1745!

The second building (c. 1760-1822) was a necessity. It is identified by the "D Church" with a tower on John Livingston's hand-drawn map to the left. Although kept in good repair, the walls of the first church fell (no record of cause) and it was decided on February 15, 1760, to build the replacement church across the street and a little west. There are no representations of its exterior. Building the second edifice across the street left the entire original church site for Poughkeepsie's growing cemetery (the story of this lot, which became known as the

'Old Dutch Burial Ground', is chronicled in The Poughkeepsie Eagle, October 28, 1911).



The Poughkeepsie and Fishkill churches dissolved their union in 1774.

During the second building's 60-plus years, its most distinguished pastor was a son of Poughkeepsie, Rev. Dr. John H. Livingston (b. May 30, 1746), son of Henry Livingston. Educated in divinity at Yale and the University of Utrecht, Holland, John fled New York City's North Reformed Church (corner of William and Fulton Sts., no longer there) where he had pastored since 1770. He fled with Rev. Solomon Froeligh, then pastor of four congregations on Long Island. Livingston lived at first in "Livingston Manor" in Columbia County and ministered in that vicinity. Froeligh, born in Red

Hook, came to Poughkeepsie and, because the Reformed Church's pulpit was empty, pastored the Poughkeepsie church

from 1776 to 1780. Livingston became its pastor from 1781 to 1783 and moved to "Livingston Mansion" south of the center of Poughkeepsie.

With the Episcopal Church (Christ Church) closed at that time because many of its members still adhered to the cause of England, the Reformed Dutch Church became the only church open in Poughkeepsie during, and for several years after, the Revolutionary War.



During Livingston's pastorate, the New York legislature was moved from Kingston to Poughkeepsie, after the British burned Kingston. When the legislature received news of British Lieutenant General Lord Charles Cornwallis' surrender in Virginia at Yorktown [note: Cornwallis surrendered on October 19, 1781, but word did not reach Poughkeepsie until October 29], the Senate and Assembly adjourned to the Reformed Dutch Church, where Dr. Livingston led them in a service of prayer and thanksgiving.

The only account of the event, contained in a journal published from 1781 to 1783 in Poughkeepsie by John Holt, set the following scene:

"On Monday, the 29 ultimo, when the first certain intelligence of the above glorious event [the capture of the British army]

arrived here, his Excellency, the Governor, the members of the Senate and Assembly, and many other persons, attended divine service in the Dutch Church, where the Rev. Livingston officiated in a solemn manner, to express their joy and gratitude to the Almighty for this signal interposition in our favor....” It was during Livingston’s ministry that English became the dominant language in the Poughkeepsie Church. Dr. Livingston preached in both Dutch and English, but after his pastorate, English became the only language of The Reformed Church’s worship. In his original contract, now with the New York Historical Society, members signed and indicated how much they would contribute to Livingston’s pay and whether they planned to attend the English or Dutch services.

Dr. Livingston preached his farewell sermon November 23, 1783 and on December 7 began preaching again in North Reformed. The following year he became professor of didactic and polemic theology in the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. In 1810 he was appointed president of Queen’s College (now Rutgers). He retained both positions until his death, January 20, 1825.

Beginning June 17, 1788, the Reformed Dutch Church was again in the midst of political realities when the New York Convention meet to ratify the new Constitution of the United States across the street in the Dutchess County Courthouse. The delegates gathered for prayer in the Reformed Church. After the new Constitution was adopted, the Reformed Church incorporated in New York in 1789.

John Henry Livingston (1746-1825)

After Dr. Livingston, The Reformed Dutch Church fell on hard times spiritually and financially. In 1794, under the ministry of Rev. Cornelius Brower (1794-1808), the church sought ways to address its then financial weakness by leasing its cemetery land on the south side of Main Street for commercial use. The

church has used it commercially ever since.

Addressing the church's spiritual needs awaited another decade or two.



Rev. Cornelius Cuyler

Rev. Cornelius C. Cuyler came to Poughkeepsie Reformed right out of seminary in January of 1809. He led the congregation in a 24 year period of remarkable growth. He started his ministry in the second building, but after a few years envisioned a third, larger sanctuary. It was a period of revival known as the Second Great Awakening. Rev. Cuyler himself chronicled in 1815 what happened in "A Narrative of the Revival of Religion, in The Reformed Dutch Church of Poughkeepsie."

Cornelius Cuyler was installed on January 2, 1809; the Reformed Dutch Church had only 43 members. By 1813 things changed. A Sunday School was begun; Wednesday prayer meeting crowded the church; Sunday evening services grew. By 1822 the second church was too small; a new sanctuary was necessary. That

building was dedicated December 24, 1822. This third building was further west on Main, on what was then the corner of Main and Little Washington Streets (now Main and westbound 44/55). The new church had its tower in the center of the north end. Rev. Cuyler remained in Poughkeepsie until

1833. When he left, the church had a congregation of 1500 members, with 462 in active and vigorous attendance.

After Cuyler, the church needed to expand again, but this time it was decided to build a new daughter church just a few blocks away at the corner of Catherine and Mill Streets. Second Reformed was started with members dismissed for that purpose in 1847.

“Old First” (as it was now called because there was a ‘Second Reformed’) was renovated in 1854, but the building itself only lasted three more years. On a bitter cold (-20 degree!) Sunday morning, January 24, 1857, fire broke out just after worship. The building was destroyed; the bell melted! Later the bell was used to form three bells each presented to a local fire company “in token of their heroic efforts to save the building.” After Old First burned, its congregation worshiped at Second Reformed while a fourth house of worship was built on the site of the burned building.



The third building with center tower, ablaze.



The fourth building's steeple in the background, corner Main and Little Washington.



This fourth church, pictured above, seen in the background with its spire, was dedicated Tuesday, September 7, 1858. It came to be known as the "Town Clock" church. One of the church's four old clocks remains with the City, a second and third adorn the exterior and interior of Zimmer's Jewelers on Raymond Avenue, while the fourth is kept in the archive room of the present Reformed church. The bell in the Tower was made in Sheffield, England and weighed 4,000 lbs. The spire of the building was taken down in 1878 when the frame-work decayed. It is seen here without its spire.

The fourth building with steeple removed.

In 1896 the Reformed Church built a mission church directly west toward the river, now near Vassar Brothers Hospital on

Reade Place.

The fifth building (below) was the one originally built as Second Reformed on Mill Street. In 1913 talks with Second Reformed resulted in a decision to unite both congregations and to build a new church edifice. On September 7, 1913, a united worship service in the Mill Street sanctuary began. Since Second Reformed was without a pastor, the pastor of 'Old First', Dr. Clifford Case, preached. The property of 'Old First' was sold in 1919 to hotel developers.

On September 25, 1913, the site for a new united church building was chosen: the empty Hunter Cooke lots on the corner of Hooker and Hanscom Street. A legal union of the two congregations took place January 1, 1914 when a new united consistory took over. The 'new church' retained the name of The Reformed Dutch Church of Poughkeepsie but called itself simply 'The Reformed Church of Poughkeepsie.' Rev. Clifford Case resigned as "Old First" pastor. At the first meeting of the new consistory on January 7 he was called as the pastor of the united congregations. Thus the Mill Street church of Second Reformed became the fifth house of worship of The Reformed Dutch Church of Poughkeepsie. Rev. Case remained its pastor until he died of pneumonia March 7, 1920. His picture hangs at the entrance to the present Reformed Church's 'Case Chapel.'

It took nine years to raise the money, choose an architectural design and build the present church on Hooker Avenue. It was dedicated January 7, 1923 under the pastoral

leadership of Dr. J. Addison Jones who came to the church's pastorate October 28, 1920. He served until January, 1945. During his tenure the church built the Church Office Building (1931) on the site of the church's first location, the south-east corner of Main and Market.

The Hooker Avenue church is the sixth house of worship of

Dutchess county's first worshipping community.

The Reformed Church of Poughkeepsie, amidst ancient trees and adjacent to Bartlett Park, is one of the gems of the Hudson Valley. Dedicated to the glory of God on January 7, 1923, the edifice "is one of the most beautiful parish churches in America." Charles Collens, its architect, designed subsequently The Riverside Church, The Cloisters and Union Seminary - all in New York City - and the libraries of both Vassar and Williams Colleges. "Designed in Early



The mission church, still standing on Reade Place, was sold a couple of decades after its building, to another denomination.



Second Reformed, now First Lutheran on Mill Street, became the fifth sanctuary.

English Lancet type of Gothic architecture, ...the stone pillars and arches and the trussed wooden ceiling surround one with a feeling of reverence. The gold cross on the communion table, the Old English grisaille glass windows with their alternating reds and blues, and the brownish gray of the interior stone, all harmoniously matched, create a sanctuary of rest and peace.” (Edwin C. Coon, *Old First*, p.77.)



“Jesus Blesses the Children” by Louis C. Tiffany, N.Y., was given “In memory of the Rev. Clifford P. Case, D.D., 1873-1920”, by Mrs. Ellen Shepherd Varick Barnes; it stands at the head of Case Chapel. “And he took the children in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them” (Mark 10:16).

The Nave

On the chaptrels at the bottom of the arches supporting the roof inside of the Reformed Church of Poughkeepsie are the coats of arms of the member churches in 1920 of "The World Alliance of Reformed Churches," started in 1875. Today the WARC's membership is over 220 denominations .

(1) REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

Central device taken from the coat of arms of William the Silent. The traditional banners above and below the Coat of Arms are omitted. The banner usually at the top carries the words "Nisi Dominus Frustra" (Latin: 'Without the Lord all is vain'). At the bottom is usually "Eendracht maakt Macht" (Dutch: 'Union Makes Strength').

(2) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Device depicts burning bush, with dove, as symbol of the Holy Spirit of God over it. Around the burning bush are inscribed the words "It is not consumed," referring to the experience of Moses and the burning bush.

(3) PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND WALES

This device has two circles – the left one is an open Bible which has written on its face "The Word of God endureth forever". The right symbol copies the Church of Scotland with the burning bush design and legend "It is not consumed".

(4) WALDENSIAN CHURCH OF ITALY

This shield has three layers of symbols. A white circle with the motto 'FERT' repeated. Then a white and red flag. These two layers copy the coat of arms of the Royal House of Italy, the House of Savoy. The motto, FERT, is believed to be an acronym, Foedere et Religione Tenemur (Latin: "PactandReligionHold Us Together"). On top of this is a candle on a stand with seven stars around it. Around it are the words in a circle, "Light Shineth in Darkness". The

Waldensians are followers of Peter Waldo of the late 12th century. They adopted the faith of Reformed Geneva in 1532. Many were martyrs. John Milton wrote about them, "Thy slaughtered saints whose bones lie scattered on Alpine Mountains cold...."

(5) REFORMED CHURCH OF THE NETHERLANDS

Device portrays four heads blowing violently upon the foundations of the church without effect. The Church had 100,000 martyrs in the Reformation period. It sheltered the Puritans – and many Jews and other persecuted peoples. The Netherlands was the first country to insist by law on Religious Liberty.

(6) CHURCH OF THE CZECH BRETHREN

This church grew out of the work of the work of the martyr John Hus (d. July 6, 1415). Promised safe conduct to appear at the Council in Constance, Hus instead was thrown in prison and, without a trial, burned at the state. This did more to quicken Christian interest than all of his preaching and writing. Martin Luther was called 'The Saxon Hus.'

(7) REFORMED CHURCH OF FRANCE

This device also carried the design of the burning bush on which is written in Hebrew "Jehovah." The Reformed Church of France is the original Protestant denomination in France. They came to be called 'Huguenots' but the origins of this name are unknown. 10,000 were martyred on St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572. The New Paltz Reformed Church was founded by Huguenots, probably part of the 500,000 exiled by the persecutions of France. John Calvin, the foundational thinker of the Reformed faith, was French.

(8) NATIONAL PROTESTANT CHURCH OF SWITZERLAND

The seal in the center carries the words "Consistory of the National Protestant Church in Geneva". This is the church that did the most for the Reformed Faith. It gave us the leadership of Calvin, Farel, etc. At the top of the small shield are the words "After darkness comes the Light". Below it are the rays of light shining up from the letters IHS, a Christogram based on the first three letters of "Jesus" in Latin IHSOVS.



The Chancel



The Chancel floor has Christian theological and ethical symbols in its tile. Stand facing the altar at the top of the steps and look down. Read from the center moving outward using the guide below.

Center tile: The conqueror's or victor's cross: a Greek cross divides the first and last letters of "Jesus" (upper left) and "Christ" (upper right), and the four letters of the Greek word for triumphant, NIKAI, on the bottom.

Four tiles around center, the Four Virtues:

upper left: lower left: upper right: lower right:

IUSTICIA, justice PRUDENTIA, prudence TEMPERANTIA, temperance FORTITUDO, fortitude

Four tiles at the outer corners:

upper: right:

lower: left:

TEMPERANTIA, temperance (Chi-Rho first two letters of 'Christ' (Cristos) in Greek; the 'labarum' was a vexillum (military standard) that displayed the "Chi-Rho" symbol, formed from the first two Greek letters of the word "Christ". It was first used by the Roman emperor Constantine I. Here it occurs with , Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, meaning 'the Beginning and the End of all things.'

CARITAS, charity (love) a common symbol on Christian tombs which treats the Cross as the Greek (Chi) combined with the (Rho), to name Christ, superimposed on the Greek N for , triumphant.

The origin of the Four Cardinal Virtues identified as such is unknown. They appear in Plato and the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom 8:7: "She [Wisdom] teacheth temperance, and prudence, and justice, and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life."

St. Augustine provides a profound analysis of the Virtues understood as expressions of Love in *The Customs of the Catholic Church*, 1.15: "For these four virtues (would that all felt their influence in their minds as they have their names in their mouths!), I should have no hesitation in defining them: that temperance is love giving itself entirely to that which is loved; fortitude is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object; justice is love serving only the loved object, and therefore ruling rightly; prudence is love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it."