

AN APPEAL

OF

The Presbyterian Historical Society

TO THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

OF THE SEVERAL BRANCHES

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

## NOTICE.

The Society regarding the subject of this appeal as very important, ventures, most respectfully, to ask every one who may receive it, not to throw it aside unread, but to give it a careful and thoughtful perusal.

## A P P E A L .

---

THIS Society was organized in 1852, and incorporated by Act of the Legislature of Pennsylvania in 1857. It embraces both branches of the Presbyterian Church, also both branches of the Reformed Presbyterians, and the United Presbyterian Church, and its officers and Executive Committee are selected in due proportion from all these bodies, and the supreme judicatories of each have given the Society their cordial sanction and recommendation.

The object of the Society is, "to collect and preserve the materials, and to promote the knowledge of the history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." To this end, it labors to collect all such books, pamphlets, periodicals, (including newspapers,) manuscripts, portraits, and other memorials, as tend to illustrate the history of Presbyterianism in this country; and to encourage the production of books, essays, and orations, bearing on the history of the Church; and by the united efforts of these different branches of one great family, cherish and perpetuate the memories of past toils and privations, reverses and triumphs, which are common to us all.

The Society has already collected a library of rare

and valuable historical materials, embracing 3000 volumes, 8000 pamphlets, magazines, and reviews, 150 volumes of newspapers, a large amount of valuable manuscripts, and 300 portraits of leading ministers and laymen in the different branches of the Presbyterian Church. Nearly the whole of these have been donations from a comparatively small number of the active members of the Society, in the very short period of twelve years. With a suitable building, where we could guarantee their safe preservation, there is not a doubt but that our collections would soon be more than doubled, by the free contributions of those who possess invaluable historical materials.

The further progress and usefulness of the Society, therefore, now *absolutely* require the prompt and enlarged liberality of the members and friends of Presbyterianism in this country. The security of our valuable collections, and convenience for their consultation and usefulness, demand that the Society should have at once a spacious and well arranged fire-proof building, containing a lecture room, committee room, library, museum, and gallery for portraits and paintings, so arranged as best to facilitate the easy and convenient consultation and examination of all the materials in the library, museum, and gallery.

The Board of Education of the Old-school branch of the Church, during the life and by the influence of Dr. Van Rensselaer, late Secretary of that Board, gave the free use of a portion of their rooms to the Society, which they have occupied until the present time. The place is, however, not at all adapted, either by arrangement, extent, or security from fire, to the wants of the

Society. Our materials are now crowded together, solely with reference to their preservation, and consequently cannot be consulted except by the expenditure of much time and great labor; and the pamphlets and magazines being simply stored, are necessarily huddled together in such a way, as utterly to preclude the possibility of consultation.

So much also have our materials increased, that even to store them requires much more room than was at first tendered to us by the Board of Education, and we are seriously trespassing on their convenience, and appropriating room which they actually require for their own use. Superadded to these considerations, the danger from fire makes it absolutely imperative that we should at once have a safe and permanent building. We adjoin two large hotels, where the danger of fire is greatly increased, and this collection of historic matter is too large and precious to the Church of Christ, to be longer left in its present condition.

These collections, small as they are yet, contain the elements of the unwritten history of Presbyterianism in this country. Some of our treasures have no duplicates, and many more are exceedingly rare, and if these should be lost, no time or labour or money could replace them, and that page of our history which they are destined to fill, must remain for ever unwritten and blank. They are a priceless treasure intrusted to us for future generations, and we have no right to leave them in jeopardy a single day.

The grave importance of immediately securing a safe depository will be illustrated by referring to a few statistics of conflagrations which bear directly on this subject.

State archives have been nearly or entirely destroyed by fire in New Hampshire in 1736; in Massachusetts in 1747; in New York in 1740-41; in New Jersey in 1686; in North Carolina in 1831; in South Carolina in 1698; all of which were accidental—and in Virginia in 1781, by the army under Arnold.

The archives of our General Government have suffered four different times by fire. First, in 1800, when the buildings of the War department were destroyed. Next, in 1814, when the public buildings, and many of the records and papers of the War, Navy, and Treasury departments, were destroyed by the British troops. The third time, in 1833, when the Treasury buildings were again burnt. And the last time, in 1836, when another demonstration was furnished of the utter absurdity and improvidence of such buildings as those in which the public archives were kept.

A striking evidence of the great value of a strictly fire-proof building was, that the valuable papers in the fire-proof rooms in the War office in 1814, and those in the fire-proof rooms in the Treasury department in 1833, were all saved, while most of the others were consumed.

Surely this black catalogue ought to rouse every one who loves the Presbyterian Church, to coöperate promptly, according to his means, in providing against such dangers to our historic collections. Who could contemplate, without grief, the loss of so many precious materials for our Church's history?

But the danger of having such a collection daily exposed to destruction, and liable to perish in a single night from the tinder-box now adjoining the Depository, is made fearfully impressive by the recent narrow escape

from destruction of the invaluable collections of the New York Historical Society.

After removing from place to place four times, and being compelled on each removal to occupy both unsafe and unsuitable premises, the Society took rooms, for a term of years, in the New York University buildings. Five years thereafter a fire broke out in the small chapel of the University, which was entirely destroyed, and, with ten minutes more of uncontrolled progress of the flames, the priceless treasures of that Society, the result of its labours and expenditure for nearly half a century, would have been lost for ever.

This practical illustration of danger so roused the friends of that Society, that in three or four years from that time it received ample funds, and reared for itself a noble building, which is a credit to the Society, and an ornament to the city, at a cost of \$85,000.

There its treasures are now arranged for easy and convenient examination and consultation, and are as safe from fire as human means and precaution can make them.

But we give an example even still more pertinent. The building formerly occupied by the Board of Publication, on the very spot where our treasures are now stored, was entirely consumed by fire, prior to the erection of the present building, entailing serious loss to that Board in the partial and entire loss of much of its valuable property. And even since this Society has occupied its present rooms, on one occasion, all its collections were in imminent danger of destruction by fire when the Chestnut Street Theatre, which occupied the present site of the Continental Hotel, was entirely consumed. During that conflagration the building of which this

Society occupied a part, was several times on fire, and but for the most prompt and energetic efforts of firemen, and others interested in the building and its contents, it must have been consumed, with everything our Society then possessed. With so many warnings, how can we longer delay?

In addition to the building, an endowment fund is absolutely essential to the success of the Society, to enable it to bind and arrange pamphlets, newspapers, and manuscripts; to prepare, print, and circulate catalogues of the collections of the Society; to bring out unpublished works of past generations, whose publication is beyond individual enterprise; to publish annually a volume containing the more important transactions of the Society, and such historical matters, in manuscript or in print, as may be deemed best to secure the great ends we have in view; to stimulate the production of biographies, and histories of Churches, Presbyteries, and Synods; to purchase rare and important works, which are essential to a complete historical library; to meet the expense of annual and other addresses before the Society, and before the several Assemblies and Synods of those bodies whose members compose the Society; and lastly, to meet current expenses and the salary of a librarian. Such a building as would meet the wants of the Society, and be worthy of such a noble Institution, could not probably be erected and furnished with all the necessary accommodations for less than from \$40,000 to \$50,000, and it is obvious that no endowment less than about the same amount would yield a sufficient income to enable the Society, in any good degree, to accomplish the objects above-named.

As the Charter was obtained from the Legislature of Pennsylvania, and as Philadelphia was the early centre of Presbyterianism in this country, and the name and locality of the first Presbytery, it is obviously appropriate that the Society should have its permanent location and its building in the city of Philadelphia; and we feel the utmost confidence that the noble Presbyterian family of that city, when called upon, will promptly furnish the means for the building. In view, however, of the fact that we have now in our congregations many, both ladies and gentlemen, to whom a kind Providence has given large means, and that God is leading such, in increasing numbers, to make princely donations to our colleges, seminaries, and benevolent institutions, for purposes of building and endowment; while we will thankfully receive any sums which the masses of our people in this city and elsewhere may be pleased to contribute, the Society appeals first especially to Philadelphia Presbyterians of enlarged means, in the confident hope that the heart of some one will be moved to furnish the Society with such building as it requires; and thus rear for himself the most graceful monument, which will endure as long as Presbyterians shall have a history in the world. Or, if no one should claim the honor of such a munificent contribution to preserve and perpetuate the history of the Church of God, will not some one present an eligible lot, and one or a few combine and present the building as their joint offering to this noble cause? But even should this not be the case, we trust the subscriptions of the many in the city of Philadelphia will soon furnish us all that will be required for the building. If

Philadelphia will promptly present the building, and the commencement of the endowment fund, there cannot be a doubt but that God's people in other cities and portions of the Church will speedily complete that endowment. But in the absence of enlarged liberality on the part of Philadelphians, the Society will apply in New York and elsewhere for the building funds, and if furnished, the building may not be located in Philadelphia.

To perpetuate the memory of the wonderful works of God, and the wonders he has wrought for us and our fathers, is a noble work. God himself has evinced his estimate of the importance of preserving the history of the Church, in the fact that nearly one-third of the whole Bible is taken up with that theme. Surely, then, the history of the Gospel Church, as passing before our eyes, claims special attention at our hands; and those who labour and contribute to preserve and perpetuate it, may confidently look for the smiles and approbation of the great Head of the Church. Ample materials for the full and satisfactory history of the Church yet remain, and may be obtained; but many of these materials, in their nature, are perishable, and if our building and endowment are not speedily secured, a large amount of material will be hopelessly lost. We will be constrained to see probably the most valuable extant collection for the history of Presbyterianism in this country remain incomplete, and in a great measure useless.

All subscribers of one thousand dollars and upwards, toward the building fund, together with the Executive Committee for the time being, shall constitute a Committee to select the site for the building, decide upon

the plans, and superintend the erection and fitting up of the same.

As soon as a sufficient sum is secured, in the view of this Committee, a proper site shall first be obtained and paid for, unless such site shall have been given or devised and accepted for the purpose, and a contract, with proper specifications, shall then be entered into with some competent architect, builder, or mechanic, for the erection of the building in such wise that no debt shall remain after the completion thereof; the building to be of good architectural proportions, of proper size, and fitted for the purpose, but perfectly plain, and thoroughly fire-proof within and without.

The conditions of the subscriptions shall be regarded as including a pledge on the part of the Society, that all funds paid, excepting only the expense of securing the same, shall be invested in United States bonds, or other undoubted security, by the Treasurer, under the direction of the Executive Committee, whenever the sum in the treasury amounts to one thousand dollars—funds for the building, temporarily, and until the same shall be wanted in the purchase of the lot, or erection of the building; and those for the endowment, permanently; and that the monies raised shall be applied in the above manner, and to the above purposes, and in no other way. Should any one individual purpose to furnish the funds to erect the building, he, or she, may pay the whole amount at once, or as the same may be required in the purchase of the lot and erection of the building; and if the donor desires it, he or she shall have the sole voice in the selection of the site and the general architectural character of the building, subject only, in both cases, to the approbation of the Executive Committee.

In accordance with a memorial addressed to them by this Society, the following is the action of the Assemblies and Synods of those Churches whose members compose this Society, at their meetings in May, 1864, viz.

*General Assembly which met in Dayton, Ohio, May, 1864.*

The following resolution was unanimously and cordially adopted, viz.

*Resolved*, That the General Assembly regards with favour the objects of the Presbyterian Historical Society, and also its present efforts to secure funds for the erection of a suitable fire-proof building for the safe preservation of its valuable collections, and for an endowment, and commends the Society to the confidence and favour of our people.

*General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, which met in Philadelphia, May, 1864.*

The Committee to bring in a minute on the subject of the memorial of the Presbyterian Historical Society, asking this Synod to adopt such action as in their judgment would be likely to aid the Society in its present efforts to secure funds with which to erect a fire-proof building for the preservation and proper arrangement of its valuable collections, and create an endowment, the interest of which should be appropriated to the benefit of the library, recommends the adoption of the following resolution, viz.

*Resolved*, That this Synod regard with interest the general objects of this Society, and with favour its present efforts to secure a safe and convenient building and an endowment, and earnestly commend it to the liberality of the members of our churches.

*Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, which met in Philadelphia, May, 1864.*

The Committee to whom was referred the memorial of the Presbyterian Historical Society, recommend the adoption of the following minute:

This Synod has learned with great pleasure, from the memorial addressed to it by the Presbyterian Historical Society, that it is making an effort to secure funds for the erection of a fire-proof building for the safe preservation of its large and continually increasing collections of materials, and for an endowment, accruing to the benefit of the library, therefore

*Resolved*, That this Synod recommend the Society to the liberality of all our people who have the ability to aid it in accomplishing the noble work in which it is engaged.

*General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, which met in Philadelphia, May, 1864.*

*Whereas*, The collection and careful preservation of ample materials for perpetuating the history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America is of the greatest importance; and *Whereas*, The Presbyterian Historical Society is labouring with much diligence and success in the noble work, and has already collected a large amount of most reliable historical matters, and is now making vigorous efforts to receive funds for the erection of a strictly fire-proof building for the preservation and convenient use of its collection, and for an endowment, the interest of which will be appropriated to the purposes of the library, and has, by its memorial, asked the General Assembly to adopt such minute or resolution as, in its judgment, would most effectually aid the Society in the accomplishment of its object; therefore

*Resolved*, That the Assembly cordially commends the Society to the enlarged liberality of all our churches.

*General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, which met in Newark, New Jersey, May, 1864.*

The following resolution was unanimously adopted:

*Resolved*, That the Assembly renewedly express its cordial approbation of the objects and aims of the Presbyterian Historical Society in its efforts to preserve and perpetuate the history of the Presbyterian Church.

At the annual meeting of the Society, held the 17th of May, 1864, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted, viz.

*Resolved*, 1. That the Society heartily approve the action of the Executive Committee in the appointment of the Rev. D. V. McLean, D. D., as Agent to receive the funds for the erection of the building for the Society, and for the endowment, and that he is hereby cordially commended to the confidence and liberality of the churches and congregations represented in this Society.

*Resolved*, 2. That it shall be the aim of this Society to secure for the building fund at least \$40,000 to \$50,000, and a like sum for the endowment.

### FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the "Presbyterian Historical Society," formed in 1852, and incorporated by act of the Legislature of Pennsylvania in 1857, the sum of \$ , or the following described property, viz.

*(Then here specify the purpose of the bequest.)*

# AN ACT

## TO INCORPORATE THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by authority of the same,* That David Elliott, William M. Engles, W. R. De Witt, Albert Barnes, George H. Stuart, J. B. Dales, J. T. Cooper, James Hoge, Charles Hodge, Samuel Hazzard, Samuel Agnew, Robert J. Breckinridge, William Chester, George Howe, William B. Sprague, Henry A. Boardman, C. Van Rensselaer, John C. Backus, John Leyburn, William S. Martien, Alfred Nevin, Thomas H. Skinner, John A. Brown, Samuel H. Cox, Peter Force, Edwin F. Hatfield, George Duffield, George Duffield, Jr., Henry B. Smith, Matthew W. Baldwin, Henry J. Williams, B. J. Wallace, J. N. McLeod, John Forsyth, James Wood, Thomas Beveridge, James M. Wilson, T. W. J. Wylie, S. J. Wylie, Thomas Smyth, M. L. P. Thompson, and J. F. Stearnes, and their associates and successors, shall for ever be, and they are hereby, erected and created a body politic and corporate in deed and in law, by the name, style, and title of the Presbyterian Historical Society, and by that name, style, and title, shall have and enjoy perpetual succession, and be able and capable to purchase, receive, take, hold, and dispose of real and personal estate, to sue and be sued, plead and be impleaded, to receive and make all deeds, transfers, conveyances, and assurances, contracts, and agreements whatever, to have and use a common and corporate seal, and the same to break, alter, and renew at pleasure, and generally to do and perform any act, matter, and thing necessary to promote the objects and design of this act of incorporation, with full power to enact and repeal all rules, regulations, and by-laws which may be found expedient and desirable: *Provided always,* That such rules, regulations, and by-laws shall not be contrary to or inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States or of this Commonwealth.

SECT. 2. That the fundamental articles of the Constitution of this Society shall be as follows:

*Article 1.* This Society shall be known by the name of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

*Art. 2.* The objects of this Society shall be to collect and preserve the materials, and to promote the knowledge of the History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

*Art. 3.* Any branch of the Presbyterian Church, whose admission shall be approved by the Society at its annual meeting, shall become an integral part of the same. The branches now constituting the Society are, The Presbyterian Church whose General Assembly met in the First Presbyterian Church in New York City, in one thousand, eight hundred and fifty-six; The Presbyterian Church whose General Assembly met in the Presbyterian Church on Madison Square, in New York City, in one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six; The Associate Reformed Church, the Associate Presbyterian Church, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

*Art. 4.* Any person may become a member of this Society by the payment of one dollar annually, and shall thereby be entitled to receive a copy of the Annual Report. The payment of ten dollars at one time, or in annual payments, shall constitute a life-member.

*Art. 5.* The officers of the Society shall be a President, one Vice-President (from each of the Churches represented in the Society,) a Corresponding and Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, and an Executive Committee, of which Committee at least one member shall be from each of the Churches represented in the Society; all the officers shall be elected at each annual meeting of the Society.

*Art. 6.* The annual meeting of the Society shall be held in the city of Philadelphia on the first Tuesday in May.

*Art. 7.* The Executive Committee shall be composed of not less than nine nor more than twelve members, (of whom the Corresponding Secretary and the Treasurer shall be members *ex officio*,) to whom shall be committed the work of devising and executing measures to secure the objects of the Society. They shall make an Annual Report of their proceedings at the Anniversary Meeting, shall cause an address or addresses to be delivered during the meeting of the General Assembly or Synod of each Church represented in this Society, and shall have power to issue publications from time to time, and to provide means for defraying the necessary expenses of their operations. The Executive Committee shall meet quarterly, on the first Tuesdays of February, May, August, and November, and at other times, if deemed necessary by any two members, on the call of the Chairman. Vacancies occurring in their body by death or otherwise, may be filled at any regular quarterly meeting.

*Art. 8.* The formation of a library, containing publications and manuscripts, shall be regarded as a prominent measure to be accomplished by the Society. The Executive Committee shall have charge of the Library, and shall appoint a Librarian. Publications, manuscripts, and other historical relics, may be placed on deposit in the library, to be returned to the persons depositing the same on their written application.

*Art. 9.* This Constitution may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at any annual meeting: *Provided*, That notice of such alteration be proposed at a preceding meeting of the Society.

*SECT. 3.* That the officers and members of the Executive Committee of this Society, until others are regularly chosen under the provisions of this act, shall be those now in office, namely: *President*, Thomas H. Skinner, D. D.; *Vice-Presidents*, R. J. Breckinridge, D. D., LL.D., William B. Sprague, D. D., Edward F. Hatfield, D. D., Col. Peter Force, John Forsyth, D. D., John N. McLeod, D. D., Thomas Beveridge, D. D.; *Secretary*, J. B. Dales, D. D.; *Treasurer*, Samuel Agnew, Esq.; *Executive Committee*, C. Van Rensselaer, D. D., J. C. Backus, D. D., Samuel Hazzard, Esq., George Duffield, Jr., B. J. Wallace, H. J. Williams, Esq., G. H. Stuart, Esq., J. B. Dales, D. D., and Joseph T. Cooper, D. D.

*SECT. 4.* That the annual income of the real estate held at any time by the said Society shall not at any time exceed the sum of three thousand dollars.