

*“Century Service: 1900-1950”  
I Peter 3:8-12 and Psalm 97  
June 28, 2009*

One hundred years ago, marijuana, heroin, and morphine were available over the counter at the local corner drugstore. Pharmacists claimed “Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health.” According to an on-line list of statistics for that time, the average life expectancy was 47 years of age. Fourteen percent of homes had a bathtub. Only 8000 cars drove on 144 miles of paved roads. The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower. Ninety percent of all doctors had no college education. More than 95 percent of all births took place at home. The population of Las Vegas was 30. There were no puzzles, canned beer, iced tea, Mother’s or Father’s Day. The average wage was 22 cents an hour. These statistics would change greatly before 1950. In fact, the world would be greatly changed through the first fifty years of the twentieth century.

Many of you have stories to tell about these turbulent, life-changing times, although none of you had been born, the Spanish-American War was barely ended when, in 1901, President McKinley was assassinated and “Rough Rider” Teddy Roosevelt became president.

Last Thursday evening, “Teddy” spoke in the main courtroom of the Old Courthouse across High Street. Assuming the persona of Roosevelt, Joe Wiegand recounted stories of Roosevelt’s life and our nation’s life. He noted his role in the creation of the U.S. Army War College here in Carlisle. References were made to battles with the steel and coal industries and many of the monopolies which developed in his day. Hundreds of books have been written about this president’s life and times, but hearing first-person recollections added vitality to those times of change in our nation’s life.

He did not have time to mention man’s first flight as the Wright Brothers soared above Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Three years later, a massive earthquake and fire brought San Francisco low. Then in the year of William Howard Taft’s election to the presidency, the introduction of Ford’s Model T announced the beginning of a massive change in transportation. The founding of the NAACP in 1908 signaled initial developments in one area of massive national and international social changes that will mark this half-century.

Books have been written about this era, but for now a few names will suffice to touch on these turbulent times. President Woodrow Wilson (a Presbyterian) wrestles with a load of national issues, including unprecedented massive immigration, which leads to a rising tide of racism and anti-Semitism. War erupts “Over There” in Europe and soon involves the entire world. Post-war years become known as “The Roaring Twenties.” In 1925 a recent college graduate, John Scopes, struggles through his first year of teaching high school but ends up in a highly publicized trial which pits the rapidly growing field of science against commonly held religious beliefs. These bumpy ten years conclude in 1929’s stock market crash. The Great Depression envelopes the country. “Brother, Can

You Spare a Dime?" Prohibition gains popularity - for some. The "Red Scare" leads to deportation for others. The KKK explodes. Meanwhile a man named Adolph Hitler organizes the Nazi party in Germany and begins to gain power.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt becomes president and inaugurates "New Deal" programs to rebuild the country. The Civilian Conservation Corps builds sites all over the country, including one in Michaux Forest which eventually becomes a church camp frequented by members of this church. As America erects new dams and builds new projects, the German airship HINDENBERG burns in New Jersey as it tries to land. But Germany itself does not crash. Instead Germany invades Poland and another world war begins. This country retools for production of all kinds of goods to support the war effort. Awareness of the world grows as attention is drawn to Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Russia. On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor enters the American lexicon as Japan attacks the United States and becomes another front in the world war. Names of more locations become familiar: Philippines, Midway, Wake, Guadalcanal, as well as Stalingrad and Casablanca. Finally, in 1945, Germany and Japan surrender, but not without the use of newly developed nuclear weapons.

Powers shifts continue as U.S. troops replace the Japanese in Korea. The Philippines become independent. Communists seize control of the government in East Germany while the Marshall plan gives aid to war-ravaged Europeans. On the home front, Jackie Robinson becomes the first African American major league baseball player, the United Nations takes shape, and the Soviet Union develops the atomic bomb, too. President Truman bridges the mid-century in politics.

In the midst of all this, the Protestant church in America tries to meet the needs and challenges of war and peace, racism and immigration, burgeoning cities, rising technologies, unemployment, scientific discoveries. Records indicate various approaches by denominations which are, themselves, multiplying. The temperance movement unifies many in the various denominations, but only for a while. Greater conflict develops with the rise of what is called "fundamentalism." Radically individualistic and preoccupied with exceedingly personal sins, fundamentalism shied away from the great social issues of the time. Eventually battles in the Presbyterian Church are waged at Princeton Seminary. J. Gresham Machen leads the charge for an inerrant view of scripture and a strong propositional orthodoxy. By the time this battle ends, Westminster Seminary is formed in Philadelphia and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church comes into being.

Later in this period, especially after the Second World War, theological scholarship intensifies. Presbyterians develop new educational programs with a strong Biblical base and an awareness of the kind of world which demands an informed faith.

Historian - theologian (Lutheran) Martin Marty reflects on this period of history. He concludes, "There were many who did find ways to get along with each other, using religious symbols and motives to seal their bonds. The conflicts draw our eyes. It is easy

to overlook the quietly faithful people who lived in harmony with each other.” This observation held true for a vast number of congregations, including, I believe, First Presbyterian. In part, the benefits of long-term pastorates are exemplified in just two pastors through this entire period.. Andrew Neely Hagerty , graduate of Lafayette College (founded by Presbyterians) is installed as pastor on April 27, 1893. He serves this congregation for 35 years and 5 months, retiring in 1929. Very quickly, R. Walter Anderson is elected and installed as the church’s twelfth pastor in 216 years on the first Sunday in January, 1930. Rev. Anderson, of good Swedish ancestry, serves twenty years.

In his book about this church, Allan Thompson well remembers both pastors and recalls Hagerty’s support for young people. Hagerty also took a leading part in mission work in helping to form Third Presbyterian Church, an African-American congregation in Carlisle, and he served as counselor to several of its pastors.

“He was sound in his faith and orthodox in all his beliefs,” writes Thompson. “Of a quiet disposition, nevertheless he was friendly and always a welcome visitor.” By now many of the early leading members of the congregation have died. Hagerty’s style and manner, as well as his leadership in worship, attracted others. In the early part of the century, pew rents were dropped and financial commitment with the use of envelopes was adopted. A common communion cup was replaced with the gift of individual cups. The board of deacons was enlarged and four women were ordained to office! (Very unfundamentalist!)

By 1908, the additional chapel became two floors with the wrap around balcony, its shape still visible in the Gathering Room, now back to two rooms. Vestiges of the skylight, installed at the same time and now re-used, are visible in the Stuart Room. A large arch was cut through the wall behind the pulpit for the enlarged organ and choir loft. A Sunday school centennial was celebrated. By now, six generations of Thompsons have served the congregation in various ways, including the Sunday school.

At the outbreak of the first world war, Hagerty and the congregation supported “the Government in no uncertain manner,” writes Thompson. A memorial elm was planted in the yard in memory of John Gutshall and Paul Leinbach. The Honor Roll bore thirty names at the back of the sanctuary. The Lamberton Memorial baptismal font was given, as were hymn boards and an American flag, this to honor Admiral Benjamin Lamberton, a captain on Dewey’s flagship in the Battle of Manila Bay.

Under Dr. Hagerty, many members were received amid difficult and trying years. California native and Princeton Seminary graduate Walter Anderson brought with him a practice of deep study and fine leadership in worship. Under his ministry, one of his four children, Roland, entered the ministry of Word and Sacrament, as did William Strohm and Robert Jacoby, later to serve as interim pastor here in 1995.

Anderson was active in the Carlisle presbytery and served in many capacities. He visited members along with trained elders and deacons. The Washington Bicentennial of 1932

was celebrated during his years. Again, many changes in membership and leadership occurred, including the loss through death or moving. In 1934, the church celebrated its bicentennial with a pilgrimage to Meeting House Springs, photos of which are in the archives. Under the WPA during the depression church records were microfilmed, the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sunday School was observed, as was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christian Endeavor. A church house rented from Farmers Trust took care of office and social space. A World War II Honor Roll was added, as was another flag. Allan Thompson, superintendent of the Sunday school for over 34 years, resigned the position.

Years of dedicated service by church members and two long-term pastors added strength and vitality to the congregation amid great transition, opportunities for service in the community, and controversies which tested faith and enriched understanding. The statistics concerning the average income, length of life, size of family, and available services and opportunities had certainly improved since 1900. Yet, one could hardly imagine the changes about to come for the world, the country, or First Church after 1950!

#### RESOURCES:

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\_\_\_\_\_, *Protestantism in the United States: Righteous Empire*  
Thompson, Alan D., *The Meeting House on the Square*

*Rev. Jon A. Black*  
*First Presbyterian Church*  
*On the Square*  
*Carlisle PA*

*275<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year*