**Barts Centenary United Methodist Church History**





United Brethren Barts Church Centenary Church

The history of Barts Centenary United Methodist Church involves three congregations, and reflects the history of our nation and the Littlestown area over the last 175 years. On the following pages are facts about these three congregations ( [Barts EUB](http://bartscentenary.com/barthist), [Centenary United Methodist](http://bartscentenary.com/cethist.htm) and [Littlestown United Brethren](http://bartscentenary.com/ub.htm)) and the buildings that were used.

Barts (UB) and Centenary (Methodist) Church are closely linked in local history as well as denominational history and doctrinal statements. In 1991 the congregations of these two churches were blended to enhance ministry through better stewardship of available resources.

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UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH HISTORY - The original UB building erected in 1822 is believed to be one of first ten churches constructed by UB's in the entire denomination. It was erected by Phillip Bishop Sr., a native of Lancaster County who moved into the area in 1809 and died in 1932. In 1826 he transferred the lot to trustees Philip Bishop Jr., Christian Bishop, Jacob Bishop and Jacob Shank "with the church thereon erected and built and all appurtenances to the said church and lot of ground... in trust for the use, intent purpose of the United Brethren in Christ in the United States for ever, for a house and place of worship for the society aforesaid, yet never-the-less to be free for any other society of Christians to worship therein and to hear the word of God preached therein at all times, when not occupied by the society aforesaid..." There was also a clause reverting the property to Philip Bishop if the UB society there ever ceased to meet.

While the church was an extremely strong one for some fifty years, it began to decline in the 1870's ? possibly in connection with the situation between Rev. James M. Bishop and Rev. J. Phillip Bishop, two sons of Philip Bishop Jr. and ministerial sons of the congregation. The 1886 History of Cumberland and Adams Counties published by Warner, Beers & Co, includes a biographical sketch of Levi Bishop, another son of Philip Bishop Jr. which contains the following revealing statement: "About this time time the pompous presiding elder of the United Brethren Church had grown a little too big for his boots, thought he ought to have entire control of the church property, and, by his under officials, made demands on Mr. Bishop for the title papers, which were, however, refused. Then they resorted to litigation, in which they failed. Mr. Bishop is at present trustee; holds the title papers, and will hold them; but since the agitation he, with his family, have worshiped elsewhere."

Following the 1889 division of the denomination, both groups continued occupying the building. In the words of the 1892 UBOC PA Conference journal; "Littlestown has also been visited during the year. Here some of our best people reside. The church house is open to orthodox Christians and consequently can't be closed against us. Our people for the time being worship with the Liberals, but continue to adhere to the time-honored principles of our church. They deserve favorable consideration from the conference at this time."

The split proved fatal to the already wounded congregation, and neither the Liberals nor the Radicals were able to sustain a viable work. By 1900 the Liberals had abandoned the appointment and the Radicals were meeting there very irregularly, if at all. At that time John Amos Bishop Sr., a grandson of Philip Bishop Sr., successfully petitioned the court to enforce the reversion clause in the 1826 deed and return the property to the estate of Philip Bishop Sr. As one of four children of John Bishop, who was one of nine children of Philip Bishop Sr. , he requested the court to sell the property and award him (1/4)x(1/9) = 1/36 of the proceeds. As the amount of the property involved was not large, and the complications were enormous, it is possible that the action was taken out of family jealously and/or the desire to permanently prevent the Radicals (or the Liberals?) From using the building.

The original decision, however, was appealed to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court by the building's current trustees ? Laura Bishop, V. Bishop, M.D. Bishop and Cornelius Wolfort. In the end the original decision was upheld ? although a final partition of the property was not determined until the August 1923 term of the Court of Common Pleas. The Church (not the original 1822 building, but a later one erected on the site) was razed in 1925, a final appraisal of $8000 for the lot was determined in 1926, and the property was sold to the neighboring Catholic church. The place where the UB church stood is now the front lawn of St. Aloysius School.

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BARTS CHURCH HISTORY -

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| Barts Center has been standing in a grove of trees in Union Township since 1907, but the congregation had its beginning in the early 1800's.  Prior to 1846 inhabitants of the area gathered at the home of John Jones, just over the Maryland line, to attend preaching services. This was the outgrowth of a protracted meeting on the camp ground of John Jones, which according to the Adams County Historical Society, which featured Bart's Church in its March Newsletter, became known as "Jones' Appointment" of the United Brethren in Christ, Virginia Conference, Frederick Circuit.  In 1846, Jones Appointment became part of the Westminster Mission, U.B. in Christ, Virgina Conference. The congregation remained in Maryland for two years. In 1848 , the Pennsylvania Conference accepted its transfer and the Jones' Appointment was added to the Littlestown Circuit.  The congregation is worshiping in the house of John Barts by 1853. On February 28 of that year, Bart conveyed to the trustees of the U.B. in Christ congregation, a lot for the site of a church in the neighborhood of his house. An open and free road, sufficiently wide for carriages and wagons to pass to and from the lot with little or no hindrance, is assured. Free use of water from a certain spring is also assured.  The first church served the congregation until May 9, 1907 when the members gave a farewell service in preparation to moving into a new building. An account in the Adams County Independent said, "Many friends of this old established church came to give a final farewell to the old building, in which they had so often enjoyed themselves."  A cornerstone was laid for the new (present) church in June of 1907. A box contained within holds copies of a Bible, a Book of Discipline, copies of different periodicals of the U.B. Church and copies of the Hanover Record and the Adams County Independent of Gettysburg. This new edifice was formally dedicated on January 12, 1908. The cost of this new building was $3,557.  In 1946 the United Brethren in Christ and Evangelical denominations merged, and the church becomes known as Bart's Evangelical United Brethren Church. In 1957, E.U.B. Church and the Methodist Church begin talks and eventually merge (1968), and the church becomes Bart's United Methodist Church.  In the early 1990's Barts and Centenary of Littlestown are blended into one congregation known as Barts~Centenary United Methodist Church. The church building in Union Township becomes Bart's Center and the Church in Littlestown becomes Centenary Center.  In the summer of 1997 a renovation project began at both centers. Bart's has had the stained glass windows restored and protected. They have had the bell loft redone. The parking lot has been expanded and a pair of steps and walk added. |
| http://bartscentenary.com/oldbarts.jpg |
| **Original Church Building** |
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| http://bartscentenary.com/inbarts.jpg |
| **Inside remodeled in 1957** |

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CENTENARY CHURCH HISTORY-

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| Centenary Center was originally a Methodist church before the uniting of the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist denominations. This church on East King Street dates back to 1827 when the first Methodist Class was held here. The members of this class were John McIlvaine, Rachel Sweeny, Jonathan Forrest, Catherine Bishop and Henry Beltman. Littlestown was a part of the Gettysburg circuit, with the Rev John Bair, presiding elder; The Rev. Samuel Clark , preacher in charge, and the Rev. George Hildt, junior preacher. Services were held in the [United Brethren Church](http://bartscentenary.com/ub.htm). The first church building was dedicated on Christmas Day, 1846. The Rev. Thomas McMullin was preacher in charge and the Rev. Thomas H. Switzer, junior preacher. A lot had been purchased by John McIlvaine's father for $135 and was deeded to his son, who in turn deeded it to the trustees of the church. The complete cost of the building, including furniture, was $700. Among the list of expenses was 1 dozen spit boxes, $2.25; 3 lard lamps, $4.00 each. Levi Smucher was carpenter; E.Swope, the mason; E. Stonesifer, the plasterer, and Andrew McSherry, the painter.  In April, 1876, a new church was begun on the site of the old and in August the cornerstone was laid; dedication day was September 2, 1877. The parsonage was purchased in 1882. The church building was remodeled in 1893, in 1912, an again a few years ago.  Prior to 1877 the Gettysburg church supplied preachers. In 1876 the circuit was divided with the Rev. Owen Hicks as pastor serving here, and it was during his pastorate that the second church was dedicated. The cost was $5000 with no encumbrances at dedication time. On May 31, 1905 the members mourned the sudden loss of their pastor, the Rev. George M. Larned. In1908, the old parsonage was razed and the present one built, at an approximate cost of $2,500.  On July 26, 1920, the Charge received another great loss and school when the pastor, the Rev. Hugh Strain, died. His son, the Rev. Samuel W. Strain, entered the ministry and continued his father's work as pastor of the church.  On November 1, 1925 the Methodist Social Hall was dedicated. The building cost was approximately $7,800 with subscriptions being started by the gift of $750 from the estate of Lizzie Nicks. The social hall was used for high school plays and for basketball games until the Maple Avenue School was built in 1933. It was later used as a cigar factory, sewing factory, a bowling alley, a sewing factory again, for storage, and now is converted into an educational and social, building for use by the members. The senior center got its start here. The community food pantry began in this building. Day care was housed here for a time and at present the Head Start program uses this facility. It has been used by several other groups throughout the years.  In 1991 Centenary United Methodist Church and Barts United Methodist Church came together as one charge and became the first blended congregation, (known as Barts~Centenary United Methodist Church,)in the Central Pennsylvania Conference. | |
| http://bartscentenary.com/swen.jpg | http://bartscentenary.com/johnmcv.jpg |
| |  | | --- | | **Mrs. Rachel Sweeny, known as "Mother Sweeny," the first Methodist in Littlestown, was born August 19, 1774, and died March 28, 1861; she is buried in Evergreen Cemetery, Gettysburg. She walked from Littlestown to Gettysburg to attend classes there. About 1821 her house had become the home of itinerant preachers, and the first local Sunday School of the denomination was organized there.** | | |  | | --- | | **John McIlvaine Founder of Methodism in Littlestown.** |   http://bartscentenary.com/otherman.jpg |
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| **Hamilton Forrest,**  **President of Building Committee** | |