

Commission on Archives and History of the
Susquehanna Conference

Report to the Conference for 2020

John F. Piper, Jr., Chair

The Susquehanna Conference Commission on Archives and History is charged with collecting, preserving, and making available the records of the Annual Conference. These records include those of the Commissions, Boards, and Agencies of the Conference and of closed churches and programs. They also include Conference minutes and publications. Anyone is welcome to use these records. Many of them are available online; others may be accessed by contacting the Archivist, Dr. Milton Loyer.

The pandemic of 2020 has affected virtually everything in society, and the Susquehanna Annual Conference and its Commission on Archives and History are no exception. The Commission held its spring 2020 meeting at the First United Methodist Church in Lewistown just before the pandemic hit and effectively shut down all in person meetings. Since then the Commission has been able to carry on much of its work without in person meetings, thanks largely to the efforts of Archivist Loyer, and the Rev. Rodney Miller, leader of the Historic Sites and the Oral History Committees.

The Archivist has continued his work with newly acquired materials, including those of closed churches. The many closed churches in Harrisburg gave the Archives their records. The Archives has received at least one major artifact, the pulpit from the 1894 organizing conference of the United Evangelical Church. The Archivist has also served as the Editor of *The Chronicle*, the journal of the Conference Historical Society.

Miller has worked with the Rock Chapel historic site, coordinating with Commission member and site manager, Cindy Sowers. Despite the pandemic Sowers was able to complete an important project, which was to rebuild the entrance walk and to build a new walkway from the parking lot. The increased use of the Chapel for special events in the past several years made it important to improve accessibility.

The Oral History program is one of the Commission's major efforts. It offers retiring elders and other clergy the opportunity to record their memories of their years of service. Miller managed to contact and secure interviews with many of last year's retirees. He is working on scheduling interviews with those retiring this year.

The historian asks a very familiar question, "How did we get the way we are?" The Commission is a working commission and is engaged in trying to answer that question for United Methodism in the Susquehanna Conference.

John F. Piper, Jr. Chair, February 2021