



*Graystone Presbyterian Church
1808-2008*

*A Brief History of the Building of Our Church
in Celebration of Our 200th Anniversary*

*Building of the
First United Presbyterian Church
Indiana, PA*

**WALL MURAL—SUPPLIED BY P.J. REEVES
COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA, PA**

The painting on the wall behind the pulpit was paid for as a memorial to D.C. Mack and Emma E. Mack by their children Joseph, James, Edgar, Olive and Paul. The mural cost \$1,100.

(Letter February 4, 1927)

The P.J. Reeves Company provided the church building committee with two pencil sketch compositions as suggested subjects for the mural. They were #1-The Sermon on the Mount (a pictorial scene) and #2-The Four Evangelists with Jesus (decorative figures). The letter sent to Reverend Pinkerton requested that a subject be selected from the two choices, and that J.P. Reeves Company would then provide a watercolor sample (in full color) which would be sent to them for their approval/consideration. The committee rejected subject #1 and suggested that #2 be modified to simplify the portions above and beneath the five figures. The committee rejected any symbols to accompany the evangelists, and selected the first line of text from each of the four Gospels to include with the evangelists' figures. Beneath the figure of Jesus Christ, the text "Come unto me..." was requested. C.M. Sensenig (an artist employed by P.J. Reeves Company) sent the prepared color design for the mural to the committee about February 28, 1927. The architect George Savage hand-carried the color design back to Philadelphia, returning it to the P.J. Reeves Company immediately after the committee approved it, so that work on the mural could begin.

In selecting a design for the church which would revive English Gothic style architecture...the most notable features of which are repeating pointed arches in the structure and jewel-like translucent stained glass...the builders provided us with a beautiful space for corporate worship which continues to inspire all who worship in the building today.

By Sandra Burwell
Bicentennial Committee
Graystone Presbyterian Church
Indiana, Pennsylvania
April 2, 2006

Doctor J.C. Pinkerton was the pastor of the First United Presbyterian Church, Indiana, PA, from 1923 to 1929. It was during his pastorate that the congregation undertook the challenge of building a new church, which would look to the future needs of the growing congregation.

George E. Savage of Philadelphia was selected as architect. Savage was a Presbyterian himself and had built a church for his home congregation, the Oak Park United Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, PA. His architectural practice, located at that time in the Witherspoon Building, was solely devoted to church architecture, and numerous church building by Savage had been built or were then under construction in Pennsylvania. In correspondence between the Rev. Pinkerton and George Savage, the architect mentions traveling to visit his current projects in Tyrone, Williamsport, Lewistown, Harrisburg, Gettysburg and even one church in Ohio. He was working on twelve to eighteen churches at any one time, traveling by train all over the state to meet with committees and oversee progress and details. The architect promised Dr. Pinkerton he would visit Indiana personally monthly to check on construction of the church. (letter June 8, 1924)

Reverend Pinkerton had consulted the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce in reference to George Savage's reputation. He had also inquired of the pastor of the Oak Park Church in regard to the architect. In a letter to Pinkerton (April 11, 1924) Savage's own pastor enthusiastically endorsed the architect and assured Pinkerton that the architect had given satisfaction in the building he had designed for the Oak Park congregation and was an upstanding member of the church and a valued trustee.

When the Indiana, PA congregation decided to build a stone church, George Savage wrote to Dr. Pinkerton, "I know they will be more than pleased by their decision as they will have a church true to tradition and distinctive, and one that will stand for generations." (letter July 5, 1926)

The total building cost of the First United Presbyterian Church (now Graystone Presbyterian Church) Indiana, PA was \$190,000. The architect's fee (4% of the total cost of the building) was \$7,600—but George Savage rounded the figure to \$7,000, donating \$600 to the church in his final bill submitted to them on June 27, 1927.

Correspondence via letters and Western Union telegrams and copies of bids and contracts are compiled in a large loose leaf notebook documenting the history of the construction of the First United Presbyterian Church, Indiana, PA in the 1920's. This is the source of the information provided herein. In reading all this correspondence one is struck by the gracious and polite language and tone of these many communications from all parties involved.

*Those Who Played a Crucial Role
in the Building of
The First United Presbyterian Church
Indiana, PA*

George Savage had recommended the NORTH CAROLINA GRANITE COMPANY when the building committee selected stone as the material to be used in the new church. This company located in Mt. Airy N.C. provided all the exterior stone and donated the cornerstone for the church (“a gift worth over \$100” according to the architect). The cornerstone was laid on June 6, 1926.

HYDE MURPHY COMPANY of Ridgway, PA—Suppliers, jobbers, fixtures, hardwood (bond for construction October 20, 1925) - Paid \$167,500

BIDDLE-GAUMER COMPANY of Philadelphia, PA—All lighting fixtures and installation (February 19, 1927) - Paid \$2,300

LIGHTCAP ELECTRIC of Indiana PA

AMERICAN SEATING COMPANY—pews and furniture

LUDOWICKI CELADON COMPANY—manufactured the terra cotta tiles used on the roof

UNION ROOFING COMPANY of Altoona, PA—built the roof (roofers’ contact April 2, 1926) This company guaranteed the tile roof against leaks for five years. (This did not cover leaks in the copper stopgutters and copper cornice gutters along eaves.)

HART & CROUSE COMPANY of Utica, NY—(May 25, 1926) Manufacturers of the coal-stoked boilers for heating the building.

ARTHUR S. BIRDSALL of Indiana, PA—(May 25, 1926) Practical Plumber

SEYMOUR RUFF & SONS of Baltimore, MD—Stonework and Masonry Contractors, furnished all stone materials, including basement, and furnished all hoisting machinery.

JAMES L. CHIVERAL of Baltimore, MD—Supervisor of building construction. Paid \$90 per week (which included board and traveling expenses)

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STAINED GLASS

The contract for the stained glass windows for the First Presbyterian Church of Indiana, PA was awarded unanimously to the J.P. REEVES COMPANY, 6136-38 Cedar Avenue, Philadelphia, PA.

After visitations to several churches in Pittsburgh to view their glass, and after reviewing two other bids for the stained glass (one from a Pittsburgh company and one from a company in New York), the J.P. Reeves Co. of Philadelphia was selected. The contract (May 22, 1926) specified all windows to be of English antique glass, painted and fired. Decorative grissaille treatment was also specified. Of the two samples of grissaille sent to the building committee, the lighter version was chosen. Grissaille treatment was popular in English gothic churches and refers to windows done in tones of grey (“gris” is French for grey).

In a letter to the P.J. Reeves Co. from the chairman of the First United Presbyterian Church building committee, Mr. Mabon (July 1926) outlines the cost allowances for the various church windows:

- 1 Nave Window—\$2,500 (Nave window contains the figures of Isaiah, Jesus Christ, and Paul—text accompanying the figures was chosen by Reverend Pinkerton.)
- 8 Aisle Windows @ \$350
- 2 Transept Windows @ \$1,250 (in the areas of the balconies)
- 10 Clerestory Windows @ \$75 (high windows under the roof)

All others together (including those in Sunday School area) - \$625

TOTAL—all windows—\$9,175.00

The bill paid to P.J. Reeves Company for the glasswork was \$9,800. Their company brochure stated, “Three essentials which combine to make a window a thing of beauty—Harmony of Color, Correctness of Design, and Beauty of Treatment.”