

March 16, 1987

From: George E. Thomas, Ph.D.
Clio Group, Inc.

To: Marianna M. Thomas
Thomas & Newwanger Architects

Re: Fifth Baptist Church
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The record group 201 at the American Baptist Historical Society, Room 1106, in the Crozer/Colgate Seminary building contains the archives of the Fifth Baptist Church. They fall into four groups, the less informative records of memberships, Baptist Youth organizations and the like, the more useful general files, and the records of the Financial Committee Meetings and the Records of the Minutes of the Fifth Baptist Church, and finally, the Fifth Church Light, a publication of the church between 1887 and 1892 which contained several illustrations. In addition, the church records are of significance in containing information on the old Sansom Street Baptist Church on the 800 block of Sansom Street, designed in 1811 by Robert Mills, and sold in 1824 to the Fifth Church.

The following summary is intended to provide a chronology of the buildings:

26 December 1858	Committee appointed to search for new location Fifth Baptist Church Minutes, Vol. 1858-1979 (Hereafter FBCM 58-79).
13 March 1859	Note paid for the purchase of a lot at 18th and Spring Garden streets. Finance Committee Records 1838 - 1968 (Hereafter FCR 38-68)
17 January 1860	Committee for new edifice appointed FBCM 58-79 p. 25
27 February 1860	Found lot at 18th and Spring Garden FBCM 58-79 p. 29.
5 March 1860	Purchase of lot voted, FBCM 58-79, p. 29.
6 February 1860	Building account \$2,000.00 paid to Architect, \$7,500.00 to builders Kilgore and Hudders. FCR 38-68 [Presumably this represented payment for the chapel building]
19 November 1860	New chapel ready for occupancy this week, Alfred Biles Architect, Kilgore and Hudders, Builders, cost \$9,000.00 FBCM 58-79 p. 40.

New chapel to open Thurs. 29 Nov. 1860. FBCM 58-79 p. 40.

- 26 August 1861 Curtains placed at window at back of pulpit FBCM 58-79. p. 56.
- 14 October 1861 Architect Biles paid per contract as architect of the meeting house; \$250.00 paid of \$500.00 bill with \$1,000.00 to be owed. [This is the church work, the chapel having been completed] FCR 38-68.
- 13 March 1862 Building committee authorized to propose to contractors \$10,000.00 ; \$1,000.00 on signing, \$9,000.00 in six equal payments; balance as a mortgage over five years, with work to be completed in 6 months. (accepted!) [church financially tight because old meeting not sold] FBCM 58-79 p.74
- 13 May 1863 Report of sale of old meeting house with requirement that old building be demolished [FCR 38-68]
- 19 May 1862 \$11,000.00 mortgage to John Kilgore [the builder]
- 13 May 1863 "Organ worthy of church given by members of the board", organ a J.C.B. Stanbridge at a cost not to exceed \$3,000.00 (given in 1884 to a church in Franklin Pa. when new organ installed) FCBM 58-79, p. 101-2.
- 18 December 1863 Report of cash finally coming for sale of old meeting (\$19,000) permitting continuation of church construction. FCR 38-68.
- 29 February 1864 \$5,000.00 more needed for work; minister proposes not using church until debt free FBCM 58-79, p.117.
- 1 May 1864 Various expenses including \$1320.00 gas pipes and fittings; furnishing meeting house \$1058; \$9309.62 work on meeting house FCR 38-68
- 31 October 1864 Dedication with mention of "young and promising architect, Alfred Biles, "Sacrificed his life on the alter of his country." FBCM 58-79 p. 134.

Also extensive chronology: Ground broken May 1860; cornerstone laid 5 Sept. 1860; Chapel complete 29 Nov. 1860; War's outbreak slows sale; Spring 1862, death of one of contractors [presumably Hudders]; costs: ground. \$11,603.50; organ \$3050.00; Iron railing and curb \$3703.00; building \$48,513.00; Bell \$660.00; Carpet and cushions, \$2085.00; furniture, \$1342.00; misc. \$5801.00 \$77,458.00 Total

10 March 1865 Bills presented, Jos. Chapman for frescoing and glazing \$21.00; W. Philips repairs to slating FCR 38-68.

9 February 1866 John Gibson frescoing and painting, \$40.00; Messrs Gibson for glazing; \$18.60.FCR 38-68

3 July 1867 Painting and graining, James McKnight, \$96.50 FCR 38-68.

25 May 1874 Thorough Church renovation undertaken; church to be closed for July and August for work FBCM 58-79 p. 383

6 August 1873 Financial committee recommends exterior painting and interior repairs FCR 68-91

Workman listed: L.S. Wright, organ repairs, \$50.00; Chas. Fell painting church, \$990.35; Cornelius for gas fixture \$10.00; J. and G. Gibson for glazing windows, \$65.11; Bromley carpets FCM 68-91, 5 Nov. 73; 5 Aug. 74.

30 November 1874 Work completed; frescoing and painting, \$1721.50; carpet and matting \$900.21; Gas fixtures and fitting, 558.45; cloth for doors and organ \$14.30; cleaning \$15.75. FBCM 58-79 p. 395

7 November 1882 Has time come for major repairs? lack of space, need to accommodate 1000 members estimated cost of work \$20,000.00 FCM 68-91

28 January 1884 Report of remodelling committee of three architects interviewed, B. Linfoot, Hazelhurst and Huckel, Isaac Pursell, chose Pursell; \$20,000.00 fund established, FBCM 79-05, p. 69

11 February 1884 Work also to be done to chapel and social room FBCM 79-05

Requests from other churches to buy organ (originally given to Franklin Pa. Baptist church

17 June 1884 Authorized to hire H.L. Rosevelttto build new organ at a cost not to exceed \$5,000.00 FBCM 79-05 p. 78.

26 October 1884 Return to wonderful enlarged church; FBCM 79-05, p. 82

5 November 1884 Appoint committee to remodel church; committee has completed work at a cost of \$43,000.00. FCM 68-91

6 January 1886 Can church get electric lights? No, wires not yet to area FCM 68-91

3 February 1886 Wires now at church and have new electric lights at a cost of \$91.25 FCM 68-91

30 May 1887	The rooms at the east end of the chapel needing more light, and better ventillation, resolved that large window be lowered and improvements made at a cost not to exceed \$400.00. FBCM 79-05 p. 129.
29 August 1887	Old pulpit furniture sent to Bethadora Baptist Church, Lansdowne, Pa. FBCM 79-05 p. 130.
3 January 1889	Alterations to gallery doors as desired by pastor. FCM 68-91.
20 March 1896	Committee on church repairs reports frescoing of walls in chapel, painting, new heater, light new pavement, new carpet in church and chapel; \$5,000.00 - 6,000.00, authorized to proceed; also alterations as per plan would cost \$4,000 - 5,000 additional, authorized to proceed; FBCM 79-05 p. 266
21 October 1896	Work done at a cost of \$2,000.00 beyond estimate FBCM 79-05, p. 271
5 May 1906	Tin roof repairs, chapel painting and church painting, \$75.00; heater repairs, \$165.00 FBCM 06-23
3 May 1906	Water motor to be added to organ FBCM 06-23
27 September 1907	From sale of old brass church nets \$25.00 FBCM 06-23
1 May 1908	Organ badly in need of overhaul, B.J. Anchor to be paid \$250.00 with water motor to be done for additional \$400.00 FBCM 06-23
4 September 1908	Organ repairs completed and S. Faith motor added FBCM 06-23.
6 December 1911	Major heater repairs by Jas. Quigley \$402.36 FBCM 06-23
5 December 1922	Question of changing pitch of organ, Mr. B.F. Anchor said to change pitch a mistake; church accepts advice FBCM 06-23
2 October 1923	Repairs need to roof and cupola FBCM 06-23
6 November 1923	Improvement fund of \$17,000.00 raised; Henry Pentland repairs cupola, \$185.00; J.S. Wilson painting \$1,274.00 FBCM 06-23
1 February 1922	Minister's letter "We need to raise the roof of the chapel and add a second story for a complete primary department. FBCM 06-23 p. 350.
15 February 1923	Committee for enlargement of church reports and received instructions. FBCM 06-23, p. 374

11 March 1923	Plans submitted, estimate of \$50,000, later raised to \$60,000. Beyond church capacity FBCM 06-23 p. 374-5
28 January 1924	\$55,000.00 plan modified to \$15,000 plan FCM 24-31
7 May 1924	Scope of work enlarged and described. See Appendix 2 FCM 23-31
12-16 October 1924	100th anniversary of church services for a week FCM 24-31.

Contract, Box No. 201 #10 contained contract with George Payen and Co, to do work in 1924, attached is summary in Appendix 2

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS BOOK 2

1932	New heating system recommended, bid of \$3,698.00 approved and additional work for two new metal stacks. p. 117
1 October 1937	Bid for new roof \$1862.55, with some exterior and interior painting \$560.00, p. 131.
1940	Numerous glass repairs and some new glass added in chapel; families asked to endow and repair glass in church; some two dozen windows removed and repaired. Columbia Glass Co. p. 363.

Illustrations:

Exterior and interior of pulpit in **Fifth Church Light**, Vol. 4 No. 3 (Feb. 1891)

Engraving, **The Baptist Encyclopedia** Wm. Cathcart, DD. Philadelphia, 1884, p. 911, with a short history of church.

Cover, **Fifth Church Light**, Vol. 4, No. 9 (Sept 1892)

"Class of 64" c. 1910

Exterior of church with group in front, Signed and dated J. Bennett, 1920

Interior of Church in 1924, Keystone Photo Service [presumably after work done in 1924]

1946-1952	State Baptist Convention meeting in church in autumn
	Anchor Co. still caring for organ
	New Hammond organ delivered 12 March 1947
13 January 1949	Quaker City Stained Glass Co repairing glass

CONCLUSIONS:

The Fifth Baptist Church was one of the most important churches in Philadelphia, marking the uptown move of Philadelphia Baptists at mid-nineteenth century. The church was the first in its region, and was intended to take advantage of the boulevard character of Spring Garden Street. Alfred Biles (d. 1862) was one of the founders of the Philadelphia chapter of the A.I.A. and by all accounts was one of the best young architects of his era. This is the only building known to have been by him. Alfred Biles does not appear in the 1854 City Directory, but may well have been related to Samuel or Joseph Biles, both of whom lived in West Center City in the 1850s and were listed as carpenters. The builders, Killgore and Hudders, were listed as carpenters working out of Franklin Place and living at 120 Wood Street. The extensive carpentry of the original interior would seem to reflect the origins of the builders in the wood trades.

Leaded Glass

The church seems to have had leaded glass from the outset, set into wood tracery that subdivided the major windows into four lancets with pivot sash at the base. Above, quatrefoil windows formed a transition to a nearly circular window which was infilled with a large quatrefoil. None of the photographs are clear about the leading pattern, but the facade photograph of the 1890s suggests that the major lancets were subdivided by leaded glass quatrefoils bordered by plain glass. This would be in keeping with 1860s leaded glass. Examples of the type would be the windows by Henry Sims in the Second Presbyterian Church at 22nd and Walnut streets or the glass in the Church of the Advent in Cape May.

The windows of the chapel were apparently plain glass until the 1940s when the last major campaign of glass was undertaken. It might be possible to find members of the congregation or the Quaker City Stained Glass Co. which worked on them.

Additional information on original workmen:

Messrs. Gibson; John Gibson -- House painter, decorator and glass stainer, 79 S. 11th Street (1854 Gopsills). It is important to note that the Gibsons continued to be used in 1870s suggesting that they supplied the original glass. It is worth noting that a George Gibson exhibited stained glass at the Centennial Exhibition in 1876, and may have been a part of this family.

W. Philips, slater (not listed)

Jos. Chapman -- painting and glazing, 127 Spring Garden. House painter (1854 Gopsills)

J.C.B. Stanbridge -- organ maker, professor of music, 44 S. 13th St. (1854 Gopsills)