



## Second Presbyterian Church records, 1809-1981 SCHS 428.00

**Creator:** Second Presbyterian Church (Charleston, S.C.)

**Description:** 8 linear ft.

**Biographical/Historical Note:** Presbyterian congregation founded in 1809 as "The Second Presbyterian Church of the City and Suburbs of Charleston." The sanctuary, which was dedicated in 1811, is located at Meeting and Charlotte streets.

**Scope and content:** Records chiefly consist of minutes of meetings of the church association, corporation, deacons, and sessions; church registers of baptisms, communicants, marriages, and deaths; records of auxiliary organizations and committees; and miscellaneous items.

"Minutes of the Association" (1823-1836) includes entries on the calling of Rev. William Ashmead of Pennsylvania, his death in 1829, and an offering for his widow Clara F. Ashmead. Minutes of corporation meetings of 1836-1857 include "Rules of the Temporal Government of the Second Presbyterian Church." Later corporation minutes include a letter (April 1862) from the Confederate Ordnance Office in Richmond (Va.) thanking the church for the offer of its bell and lead window weights to be cast into cannonry; a letter (1865) of resignation from Rev. Thomas Smyth, suggesting John L. Girardeau as his replacement; and an entry noting the disrepair of the church, "our impoverished congregation," and the death of Rev. Smyth (1873).

Minutes of the session dating October 1855 concern the establishment of a Sunday school for black members. Minutes of April 1858 include copies of letters from Robert and Joseph E. Adger requesting certificates of disunion; and minutes of May 1861 notes that fifty men of the congregation are in military service, and that almost all the "expected ministers" had become chaplains or joined the Home Guard. Minutes of June 1861 include a clipping of a newspaper article about Rev. Smyth's sermon on Fort Sumter and "the prosecution of this defensive war." An entry for February 1862 notes the admission of Maria Johnston, a free person of color.

Auxiliary organization records include minutes and accounts (1823-1897) of the Female Education Society, organized to give financial aid to theological students; a Home Mission Committee record book (1907-1917); a Men's Club minute book (1909-1915); and a Bible class attendance record, 1857. Miscellaneous items include a church cash book (1828-1880); "Recollections of Our Choir and Cemetery," a manuscript dated May 1861; and two scrapbooks. Printed material consists of a hymnal (1831), and a church manual of 1854.

**Preferred citation:** Second Presbyterian Church (Charleston, S.C.). Second Presbyterian Church records, 1809-1981. (428.00) South Carolina Historical Society.

**Search terms:**

Adger, Joseph Ellison, 1824-1898.  
Adger, Robert, 1814-1891.  
Ashmead, Clara Forrester, d. 1837.  
Ashmead, William, d. 1829.  
Girardeau, John L. (John Lafayette), 1825-1898.  
Smyth, Thomas, 1808-1873.  
Second Presbyterian Church (Charleston, S.C.)  
Second Presbyterian Church (Charleston, S.C.) -- Records and correspondence.  
African Americans -- Religion -- South Carolina -- Charleston.  
Presbyterian church buildings -- South Carolina -- Charleston.  
Presbyterians -- South Carolina -- Charleston.  
Charleston (S.C.) -- Church history.  
Minutes.

**Series Overview:**

0428.01 Association and Corporation records  
0428.02 Deacon records  
0428.03 Registers  
0428.04 Session records  
0428.05 Church auxiliary organization and committee records  
0428.06 Miscellaneous records

**Container listing:****BOX 1**

0428.01 *Association and Corporation records*  
0428.01.01 "Rules for the Government of the Association of the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, So. Ca. Adopted on the 2[nd] of April 1828"  
0428.01.02 "Minutes of the Association" (1823-1836). Includes entries on the calling of Rev. William Ashmead of Pennsylvania, who died Dec. 1829; his eulogy (Jan. 1830); and letters between a church committee and Mrs. Clara F. Ashmead, his widow, who received an offering of \$810 from the church. Also entries concerning several prospective pastors, including Rev. George W. Bethune, who declined the appointment in 1830.  
0428.01.03 "The By Laws of the 2nd Presbyterian Church of the City and Suburbs of Charleston." Undated; includes a list of members' names.  
0428.01.04 "Minutes of the 2nd Presbyterian Church." Includes a record of its organization dated Feb. 8, 1809; and minutes of the association for forming a Second Presbyterian congregation. Also includes the act of incorporation (1809); and minutes of meetings of the Corporation (1810-1827). A sketch of the ministry of Rev. Thomas Charlton Henry is found in minutes of 1827.

## **BOX 2**

- 0428.01.05 Minutes of meetings of the Corporation, 1836-1857. Includes (p. 18) "Rules of the Temporal Government of the Second Presbyterian Church" (and revised rules, p. 273); also, a "List of Subscriptions to build the present Lecture Room in Society Street" (p. 130).
- 0428.01.06 Minutes of the Corporation, 1858-1908. Includes minutes of a meeting in April 1862 in which it was resolved and carried that the church should donate its bell and lead window weights "to be cast into cannon" for the cause of the, and a letter (tipped in) from the Confederate Ordnance Office in Richmond, Va., accepting their offer and thanking the church for it. The letter is dated April 14, 1862, and hereafter there is a gap in the records. The next is dated December 15, 1865, in which the president, William Smith, after alluding to "the separation occasioned by the war, and the devastation we have experienced" presents a letter of resignation from Rev. Thomas Smyth. The letter suggests J. L. Girardeau of Zion Church as his replacement. More regular entries begin in 1866. Another letter of resignation from Rev. Smyth is dated Nov. 15, 1870, and is followed by correspondence between him and Charles H. Simonton, president, concerning a misunderstanding about the payment of church bonds held by Smyth (1871). An entry for May 11, 1874, notes the disrepair of the church building, and the impropriety of asking "that money be raised in our impoverished congregation" for repairs, and also notes the death of Rev. Smyth. Minutes of a meeting on May 3, 1875, tender recognition and gratitude to the ladies of the church. "When did we ever know this band of noble women to fail in any of their undertakings for the advancement of the interests of our Church..." In 1878 there are resolutions concerning deceased member Hugh Rose Banks (p. 194, etc.)

## **BOX 3**

- 0428.02  
0428.02.01 *Deacon records*  
Minutes of the Board of Deacons, 1848-1867. A meeting of May 25, 1861, mentions sewing machines and a "plan of assisting those of the poor of our church as may be willing of earning a support for themselves and families." Minutes of May 28, 1861, recommend "the investment of all the disposable funds in the hands of their Treasurer, in Confederate States bonds." After November 1861, there is a gap in the entries until August 1866. At the end of the volume a list of pew holders (dated 1854) is pasted in.
- 0428.02.01 Minutes of the Board of Deacons, 1868-1900. Includes a pen sketch of a memorial monument to John Knox (1824-1898, "our deacon"), a native of Ireland, and some remarks on his life (p. 571).

## **BOX 4**

- 0428.02.01 Minutes of Deacon board and court meetings, 1900-1923. Includes (p. 54-55) a tribute to Rev. Gilbert Robbins Brackett, who died in 1902. Minutes of a meeting of June 19, 1916, partly concern the new pastor Rev. Melton Clark.
- 0428.02.01 Minutes of the Deacon board and court meetings, 1937-1942

### **BOX 5**

- 0428.02.01 Minutes of the Deacons board and court, 1942-1949. Minutes of meetings of late 1942 and early 1943 partly concern Rev. S. H. Bradley.

### **BOX 6**

- 0428.02.01 Minutes of the Deacon board and court, 1949-1952

The following two items are wrapped volumes located next to Box 13

- 0428.02.02 Cash account, Board of Deacons, 1890-1905
- 0428.02.03 Ledger, Board of Deacons, 1890-1905. Includes accounts for foreign missions, the Charleston Bible Society, the Sunday School, home missions, the church poor, Thornwell Orphanage, and "Support of the Evangelist."

### *0428.03 Registers*

- 0428.03.01 Church register, 1811-1893. Mainly a register of members, but also includes lists of officers, pastors, and elders.

### **BOX 7**

- 0428.03.01 Register of baptisms, 1832-1909
- 0428.03.01 Register of marriages, 1833-1869

### **BOX 8**

- 0428.03.01 Register, 1886-1952. Includes registers of deacons, communicants, baptisms, marriages, and deaths.
- 0428.03.01 Register, 1921-1938. Includes a list of pastors and elders since 1811.
- 0428.03.01 Register, 1903-1942
- 0428.03.01 Register, 1953-1961. Spine title: "Membership Roll of Church"

### **BOX 9**

#### *0428.04 Session records*

- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1811-1837. Includes interspersed entries detailing the names of white and black communicants and the dates they were admitted to communion in the church.

### **BOX 10**

- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1837-1852. This volume has considerable damage and is in very fragile condition. Handle with great care.
- 0428.04.01 Loose items removed from minute books dating 1855 to 1870. These include letter, Aug. 10, 1855, from a New York instrument maker concerning a proposed organ for the church; a report dated May 4, 1857 to the pew holders, by Fleetwood Lanneau, corporation president; and a letter, June 11, 1858, from Rev. Thomas Smyth.

## **BOX 11**

- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1852-1867. Minutes of a meeting of October 1855 concern the establishment of a Sunday school for black members. Minutes of April 10, regret the resignation of Rev. H.M. Smith. A copy of a letter dated April 19, 1858 from Joseph E. Adger to Thomas Smyth requests a certificate of disunion for himself and his wife in order to join the Anson Street church, where he feels called to work. Letters of July 1859 concern the character and reputation of a lady desiring to join the church. Entry of May 1861 reports that "some fifty men connected with the congregation were called to the islands and batteries most of the time from Dec. 20 [1860] until May [1861]" and that "almost every one of our expected ministers felt called to go with our troops as chaplains or unite in the Home Guard companies." There are no entries after May 1862, until one for 1866 which describes the scattering of the congregation as war refugees. There are a few entries for 1867, and a number of letters (loose or pasted in) between pages 496 and 497. They date 1860-1861 and are apparently all addressed to Rev. Thomas Smyth. One from Mr. D.L. Buttolph at Riceboro [Plantation] dated April 12, 1861, mentions articles by Smyth which he considered "the soundest, strongest argument for slavery as it exists among us that I have ever read." There is also a newspaper article of June 13 [1861] about Smyth's sermon on "the recent glorious victory at Fort Sumter" and "the prosecution of this defensive war." An entry of November 1861 describes the current military conditions, and one for February 1862 notes the admission of Maria Johnston, a free person of color. The volume also includes minutes of meetings of the court of deacons.
- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1867-1884
- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1908-1921. Includes resolutions on the death of Augustine T. Smythe (born 1842, died 1914).

## **BOX 12**

- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1921-1928
- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1928-1938
- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1945-1950

## **BOX 13**

- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1950-1956
- 0428.04.01 Disbound minute book, 1956-1961

Between Boxes 13 and 14 there are more session minute books (unboxed) on the shelf:

- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1961-1964
- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1964-1967
- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1968-1973
- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1975-1977
- 0428.04.01 Session minute book, 1978-1981

## **BOX 14**

- 0428.05 *Church Organization and Committee records*
- 0428.05.01 Bible class attendance record, 1857. Cover title: "Absentee Roll Book." The first section lists names of teachers and members of various male classes; the second section, female classes.
- 0428.05.02.01 Female Education Society minute book, 1823-1864. Includes a loose copy of the constitution of the society, the purpose of which is "to assist in educating some pious, promising young men of talents preparatory to a course of Theological Studies, or in maintaining them at the Theological Seminary in Princeton." There are no entries for 1862. Entry for January 1863 states that "There was no meeting held..." due to the "distracted state of the country now engaged in a fierce and bloody war, the bombardment of our City, and the dispersion of its inhabitants." Entry of January 1864 describes the activities of the theological students, one of whom has become a Confederate chaplain, and another, an officer of artillery in Confederate service. There is one last brief entry for 1864.
- 0428.05.02.02 Female Education Society account book, 1847-1892. Includes a list of members and beneficiaries (up to 1932 for the latter). The first section contains accounts dating from 1847 to 1864. Afterwards there are accounts of the reorganized (?) Female Education Society, 1869-1892. A note in the volume states that the society began in the 1820s and dissolved in 1863 "by the dispersion of its members during the terrible war."
- 0428.05.03 Standing Committee minute book, 1813-1827
- 0428.05.03 Standing Committee minute book, 1866-1909 (see also 428.06.04)
- 0428.05.03 Standing Committee minute book, 1909-1921

## **BOX 15**

- 0428.05.04 Home Mission Committee record book, [1907]-1917
- 0428.05.05 Men's Club minute book, 1909-1915

0428.06 *Miscellaneous records*

- 0428.06.01 "Resolutions of Policy" (1930s-1949)  
0428.06.02 Church cash book, 1828-1880  
0428.06.03 [Cemetery Fund] ledger, 1828-1857  
0428.06.04 Typed transcript of Standing Committee minutes, 1866-1909  
0428.06.05 "Recollections of Our Choir and Cemetery." A manuscript dated May 1861 containing two addresses written for the semi-centennial celebration of the church. Penciled on cover: "Return to F. Lanneau"  
0428.06.06 Letter, 1866, from William Dewees concerning church finances.

**BOX 16**

- 0428.06.07 Scrapbook, 1934-1935  
0428.06.07 Disbound scrapbook, 1959  
0428.06.08 Printed material. Consists of two volumes, a hymn book of 1831 entitled The Boston Handel and Haydn Society of Church Music..."; and a church manual dated 1854.