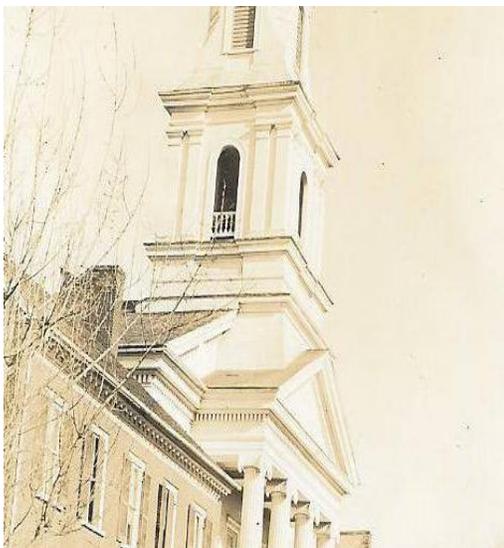


A Town Clock at Last

Clocks in steeples of church are today mostly for aesthetics, they once served an important purpose. Before the 1950s many people did not have watches and prior to the 1800s even home clocks were rare. The officials of Middletown wanted to be like many other towns and have a town clock in the center of town. Approaching Zion to house the clock in our steeple was the most logical place to put it, since the clocks were always placed in the tallest structure, which Zion's has the distinguished honor of being.

With the Zion building a new church caused dreams of grandeur to become common, among them being the prospect of a town clock in its steeple. For nine or ten months during the course of construction of the church periodic efforts were made to raise the necessary funds for the project, but by October 1859 hopes of having a clock in the steeple fell short because a lack of financial support from the public.



On April 27, 1889, another move was started to have a town clock placed in the steeple of the Church. The council minutes state that "Permission to place a clock in the steeple of the church having been asked by the citizens, through Brother Herman Routzahn, the church council agrees to permit one to be place there upon the following conditions, that no injury be done the building in any way; that the congregation shall be at no expense whatsoever in the matter, either in the putting up or in the keeping in repairs of the same, and that no other person than the sexton of the Lutheran Church Zion shall be appointed to wind and attend to it, the salary to be fixed and paid by the Corporate Authorities of Middletown." This was the second effort to have a town clock placed in the steeple, but again the move failed and the dream was not realized until many decades later, when the present clock was placed there, a gift to the local residents.

Pictured left, above the bells there is a louver opening. This opening was on all four sides and painted green. The louvers were on all four sides. They were removed and the clock faces replaced them.

In 1915, a proposition from Mr. Price of the Precision Electrical Co., of Frederick, was made to place a town clock in the church steeple, with a master clock somewhere in the church. Council held the decision over for the congregational action. At a congregational meeting on Easter Monday the installation of a clock was approved, the clock to be paid for by popular subscription, but failure again, evidently through the inability of the sponsors to raise the amount necessary for its installation.

Finally after nearly 60 years since the first approval, November of 1918, considerable attention was paid to information concerning the installation of the new town clock in the Lutheran Steeple. The clock faces replaced the four large, green shutters which for many years had been a familiar sight in the steeple, just above the bells. Benjamin Shaw and Leslie Fulmer, local carpenters, had removed these shutters and replaced them with circular openings for the clock faces, which were placed by a representative of the Seth Thomas Clock, Co. in New York City. Some delay was occasioned when one of the dials was broken in transit and another had to be ordered before the clock could be put into full operation. However, without waiting for the arrival of this new dial and its installation on the south side of the steeple, the clock was started running and its striking of the hour was a welcome sound to those who had waited so long for the fulfillment— a town clock in the church steeple. It was revealed after the installation had been completed and the clock was at last running, that the two donors had been Mrs. Charles M. Shank, a member of Zion and Emory L. Coblentz, of the Christ Reformed Church.

Difficult was experienced in August, 1939, in replacing one of the clock faces in the steeple of the church because of its size. The clock face had been broken during painting the steeple and when the replacement arrived it was discovered it would not go through the trap door from the belfry leading up into the steeple. It had to be hoisted up on the outside, a rather precarious operation.

