

PENNSYLVANIA BIBLE SOCIETY

Good Tidings – Celebrating 200 Years of Fulfilling Scripture Needs

Summer 2008

Bicentennial Kick-off Event

Thursday, June 12 was a beautiful day for the six-month countdown event held in Washington Square. The Pennsylvania Bible Society had a half birthday celebration in anticipation of its 200th birthday on December 12, 2008. Local businesses (* see below) provided refreshments to commemorate the founding of America's oldest Bible Society. Hundreds of well-wishers stopped by to enjoy refreshments and learn more about America's first Bible Society.

Scriptural materials and Pennsylvania Bible Society history brochures were distributed to many that work and live in the area and came out to enjoy the day. Since the event was held in the historic Washington Square, tourists from Pennsylvania and many other places also took part in the celebration.

The event was successful in making many more people aware of the mission of the Pennsylvania Bible Society and acquainting them with the location of the Scripture Resource Center at 7th & Walnut Streets. Thanks are given to the staff and volunteers who spent many hours preparing for the event and assisting on June 12. The day was uplifting to participating PBS members and enjoyed by so many that another event will be planned for next spring to celebrate the 1st year of our 3rd century of fulfilling our mission.



* Thanks to Canada Dry of Delaware Valley, Herr Foods Inc., Oceanaire Restaurant (7th & Walnut), Starbucks Coffee (8th & Walnut), Wise Foods Inc., and the McAvoy Family



*"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News!
...So, faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard
comes through the Word of Christ."* Romans 10: 15, 17

Part of Bible Society History

- **November 10, 1808** – Mr. Robert Ralston, a prominent merchant and philanthropist in Philadelphia writes a letter to his friend Josiah Roberts of Britain telling of his desire to start a Bible Society in America.
- **December 11, 1808** – Ralston, Rev. Ashbel Green, Rev. Jacob Janeway and Dr. Benjamin Rush meet at Ralston's house to plan the first Bible Society in America.
- **December 12, 1808** - Date of the first formal meeting of the Society. The first president was Bishop William White. First Vice President was Dr. Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Bicentennial Year Membership

We need your participation and generosity to ensure that America's 1st Bible Society continues its mission of Scripture distribution deep into the 21st century.

(Please see page 3.)

Meet the Original 24 Managers of the Pennsylvania Bible Society - Part I

Clergy:



Bishop William White – (April 4, 1748 – July 17, 1836). Born in Philadelphia and received his education at the College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania). Studied theology under Proctor William Smith of Christ Church and in 1772 went to Britain for his ordination. When the rector of Christ Church departed in 1779, White took over there and at St. Peter's, positions he held until his death. White was also Chaplain to the Continental Congress from 1777 to 1789. When the Bible Society formed in 1808, White became its first President and stayed in that position until his death.



Ashbel Green – (July 6, 1762 – May 19, 1848). Born in Hanover, New Jersey and graduate of the College of New Jersey in 1783. From 1792 till 1800 Green served as the Chaplain to Congress in Philadelphia. Was pastor of 2nd Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. In 1812 Green went to Princeton, New Jersey for the formation of Princeton Theological Seminary and to become the President of the College of New Jersey. He served as the College's President for 10 years before returning to Philadelphia where he lived until he died. Was manager of the Bible Society from 1808-1848 and became the Society's 2nd President after Bishop White's death.



Philip F. Mayer – (1781 – April 16, 1858). Was pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. John in Philadelphia. Was for many years President of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and Philadelphia Dispensary. Was manager of the Bible Society from 1808-1858 and became the Society's 3rd President in 1848, a position he held until his death in 1858. In the entire history of the Bible Society, Mayer was the longest serving member serving for 50 years.

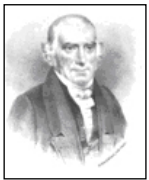


J.J. (Jacob Jones) Janeway – (November 20, 1774 – June 27 1858). Ordained in 1799 as an Associate Pastor in the 2nd Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, where he remained until 1828. After serving in Philadelphia he was called to a Dutch Reformed Church in New Brunswick, NJ for 2 years. Was elected a trustee of Rutgers University in 1820, and was a vice-president from 1833-1839. Was a director of Princeton Theological Seminary from 1813 till 1830 and was President of the Managers of the seminary from 1849 to 1858. Manager of Bible Society from 1808-1834.

Non-Clergy:



Benjamin Rush – (December 24, 1745 – April 13, 1813). Born in Byberry Township; studied at the College of New Jersey at the age of 14 and received a Bachelor of Arts in 1760. Went to Edinburgh in 1766 and received his Doctorate of Medicine. Selected as professor of Chemistry in the College of Philadelphia in 1769; in 1789 succeeded to chair of the Theory and Practice of physic and of clinical medicine. Was for many years one of the physicians of the Pennsylvania Hospital. Rush was manager of the Bible Society from 1808-1813, and was one of the original gentlemen present at Ralston's residence to form the Society on December 12, 1808.



Robert Ralston – (December 18, 1761 – August 11, 1836). Born in Little Brandywine, Chester County. Became a merchant in Philadelphia but did not strive to grow rich, and was much-admired for his character. Was ordained as a ruling elder of 2nd Presbyterian Church and was also President of Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church. Ralston was a manager of the Bible Society from 1808-1836 and was the Society's first Treasurer and initiated the first meeting of gentleman in his private residence on December 12, 1808 to form the Bible Society.

Edward Pennington – (May 8, 1766 – March 16, 1834). Pennington was a sugar refiner with his eldest brother Isaac. From 1805 till 1823 Pennington was a manager of the Pennsylvania Hospital. In 1805 Pennington, with other business leaders and artists in the city, helped organize the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Manager of the Bible Society from 1808-1815.

Dr. Peter Van Pelt – (1778 – 1861). Descendent of Dutch Immigrants who settled in Brooklyn, New York during the 1680s. Van pelt was a dentist and surgeon in Philadelphia. Most famous for his son, Peter Van Pelt, Jr. who became pastor of St. Thomas' Church in Philadelphia. Manager of the Bible Society from 1808-1835.

* Look for Part II of the Original Managers in the next newsletter!




PBS ~ Membership & Mission

Yesterday - Robert Ralston, 1st Treasurer

Robert Ralston, the first Treasurer and co-founder of the Society, strongly emphasized fiscal soundness in the printing and distribution activities of the infant Society. He set up the mechanics for a permanent trust fund. Through the generosity of early Society members this trust fund grew during the 19th Century and is primarily responsible for the continued existence of PBS today.

Today - Scripture Distribution - our raison d'être

Bibles are in our veins and they fill the shelves of the Scripture Resource Center, but unless we get them in the hands of people who need them, we do not fulfill our mission. PBS gets this done by distributing Scripture to the following ministries: 


Churches: Scripture materials for: worship, Bible Study, outreach, Sunday school, vacation Bible, scholars, and ministerial aids.

Education: Christian academies, private church schools, college courses, Bible study programs, addiction and self-help programs, and seminary students.

Youth Ministries: Summer camp, after-school, mentoring, "Meet you at the Pole," Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts Award Programs.

Outreach: Prisons, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, block parties, community events, street ministries, Habitat for Humanity homes and staff, Christmas programs for underprivileged children and their families.

Disaster Relief: Katrina direct and those relocated, the Salvation Army.

General Distribution Services: Hospitals, nursing homes, Armed Forces, pastors in Africa, churches in Mexico, domestic violence programs, First Night Festivals, emerging ministries, National Day of Prayer and International Language Bibles. 

325,000 pieces of Scripture were distributed in 2007 – over 200,000 were free-of-charge

Tomorrow - 2008 and Beyond

PBS encourages you to consider a financial role in bringing God's word to those who want to hear it. Your support in the form of a membership gift, or a donation in honor or in memory of a loved one during this momentous year will help ensure that PBS will continue its mission of Scripture distribution deep into the 21st century and beyond.

Special Bicentennial Membership

The Pennsylvania Bible Society needs your support to ensure that our mission of Scripture distribution thrives not only in this Bicentennial year but also into the future. We have been good stewards of the legacy left us by Robert Ralston and the early members of the Society. We have existed because of their generosity. We look now to your generosity to keep this ministry vibrant.

Benefits of Membership

All Bicentennial year donors will be listed in the commemorative booklet to mark this historic occasion. Contributors at the Supporter and Patron levels will receive a special invitation to the 12/12/2008 celebration.

Members will receive the 2009 Scripture calendar, 2009 Daily Bible Reading Guides for their family, friends, and church or organization associates, and future newsletters with PBS Scripture offerings and history. The most important part of being a member of PBS is knowing that you are advancing the mission to *distribute Holy Scripture to all who want to hear it, without note or comment, at an affordable price, or free of charge to those who cannot afford to purchase it.* The countless individuals and ministries that benefit from our Scripture programs will appreciate your assistance.

Please use the enclosed form and envelope to join us in celebrating 200 years and become part of our 3rd century.

Historical Discovery!

We have recently discovered that during the first 30 years of the Bible Society, Robert Ralston, the Society's first treasurer and initial organizer, wrote 90 letters to a colleague at the British and Foreign Bible Society. These letters are located at the British Society's library at Cambridge University. We worked with the librarians there to obtain copies of these letters. The first of these letters, dated November 10, 1808, contains information of the initial conversations in Philadelphia to form the Bible Society. Stay tuned for future updates about this collection!

PBS



(Founded 1808 AD)

Pennsylvania Bible Society

Scripture Resource Center

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www.pabible.org

10:30 to 3:30 – Tuesday through Friday

We look forward to serving you at our Scripture Resource Center located on the street floor of the Bible House across from Washington Square whether in person or over the phone. There are a variety of editions and translations of the Bible as well as other scriptural study helps for you to browse through or purchase. Our professional staff will help you locate the particular items you need. They can also assist you in placing an order for shipment or delivery throughout the country. As a convenience to our local patrons who may be pressed for time, we extend our unique customer service to curbside pick-up for orders called in to the Resource Center in advance.

Of Timely Interest for the Fall

2009 Daily Bible Reading Guides will be available in the fall. Contact us to reserve the quantity you need for your individual, church, or group use. There is no charge for the guides. PBS appreciates reimbursement for shipping or you can pick them up at the Resource Center.

2009 Scripture Wall Calendars – first one complimentary to PBS supporters. Additional calendars are \$2.00 at the Resource Center and \$3.75 by mail.

Back to School – Bibles for children in many versions, sizes and prices.

Hiking Bible – Contemporary Eng. Pocket-Zip Cover Bibles #1510-112799 (\$17.00)

Firefighter's Bible – Special Prayer & Devotional Section #1932-00972 (\$17.00)

America's 1st Bible Society ~ Fulfilling Scripture Needs Since 1808