



BICENTENNIAL MOMENT

SECESSION AND THE CHURCH The Murfreesboro 1st Presbyterian Church along with most Southern and border states split from the main national body of Old School Presbyterians, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA). After the Gardiner Spring Resolutions passed at the end of May 1861, the General Assembly denounced secession as an act of treason. The Murfreesboro church joined the Presbyterian Church in the US (PCUS) which existed from 1861 to 1983. The PCUS was one of the more conservative bodies of Presbyterianism throughout most of its history, with a strong emphasis on subscription to the Westminster Confession and interest in Calvinist scholasticism, particularly as expressed in Common Sense Realism and later the Princeton Theology. However, in the immediate years after World War II, many ministers and churches, especially in larger cities, began to adopt a more modernist understanding of doctrine and church life. One important product of this liberalization was ecumenism, expressed in merger talks with the "northern" Presbyterian Church, known as the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. After 1958, despite the common reference as "northern," the UPCUSA had congregations in all 50 states, with most of its southern churches the result of a 1906 merger with most of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. In 1983 the PCUS and the PCUSA formed the present Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) of which 1st Presbyterian Murfreesboro is a part. The minutes for 1861 of the Murfreesboro church do not mention secession or war. The later appeals for damages to the church building insist that the Church took no stand and that no officers of the Church served in Confederate forces. It is hoped that this does not present a difficulty for anyone seeking to enter the United Daughters of the Confederacy, but that was the statement made. Dr. Eagleton's son, George, was preaching against secession in Hopewell church at Milton in December 1860. However, after Tennessee reversed its decision against secession and did secede, George Eagleton entered the Confederate chaplaincy. Another member who opposed secession and was later elected to the State Senate as a Republican was William Y. Elliott. He was an Elder in the Church, Clerk of the Session, and he said he had always been a Whig as long as there were Whigs and then a Republican and that he had opposed secession and he hadn't said very much about it, but he thought it was a mistake. The congregation had elected him as an Elder after the War and he served as Clerk of the Session. He is remembered in one of the church's windows. [Information researched by Susan Daniel & the late Ernest Hooper].