

HISTORY
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF FAIRMOUNT,
(Formerly Fox Hill.)

A SERMON

BY THE PASTOR

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“Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” – 1 Sam. 7:12.

Dark had been the days for Israel. The Philistines had defeated the army of God’s chosen people, and had even taken the Ark of the Covenant. For twenty years Israel had suffered the oppression of the enemy, and the yoke was grievous to be borne. Nevertheless out of this trouble came a deliverer, and the nation once more rose into power and prosperity. Hitherto had the Lord helped her. Dark as the days had been and many as the times had been when her end seemed almost at hand, out of them all the Lord worked glory, and Samuel, as he looked back over the history of Israel from Abraham to his own day, could say, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

As Samuel raised a memorial to God of his ever-watchful care, so we this day would erect a testimonial to our God, in acknowledgment of his gracious interpositions in our behalf, and to declare our gratitude to him in the ages to come; and on that testimonial we would inscribe these self-same words: “Ebenezer – hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

Throughout our land this year we have been setting up memorial stones on which the memories of the past are inscribed. Presbyterianism is not ashamed of its record. The martyr Church is willing that its history should be read and known of all men. Has not Presbyterian blood dyed red the soil of every country in the world? Has it not from the start been a missionary Church, carrying the banner of the gospel wherever Providence opened the way? Thus the Presbyterian Church has been endeavoring to fulfill the last command of Christ, to preach the gospel to every creature. From the old pulpit in Geneva where Calvin preached, through France and Holland, to England and Scotland, and over the sea to America, and the nations scattered throughout the wide world, has the Reformed faith spread and prospered. Amid the fires of the Inquisition and manifold troubles, the Church has enjoyed the presence of the Lord. As Tertullian long ago said, the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church. Looking back over the past, we gratefully exclaim, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

Only 70 years ago was the first Presbytery formed in this country, and the Moderator of our first General Assembly was the contemporary and friend of Washington. Previous to this, however, the Presbyterian system had been fully established through the Dutch colonization in New-York, and the Huguenot settlers in the Carolinas. From these weak beginnings strength has been developed, till the Presbyterian Church of to-day is one of the main forces at work for Christ in our land; for the Presbyterian Church has a reputation for sturdy orthodoxy that has given it immense influence in the religious affairs of the country.

Starting in a Republic, Presbyterianism has been true to its instinct, and has ever battled for freedom. It was the Presbyterians who gave Cromwell his greatest strength, and caused the establishment of constitutional liberty in England. It was Presbyterianism that to a great extent moulded the Constitution of the United States; and it would be an interesting study to compare that Constitution with the system of the Reformed Church, and see how great is their correspondence. This Bancroft has in some measure performed. This year we dedicate in Philadelphia a statue to Witherspoon, an able minister of our Church, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, whose voice was very potent in determining the character of the new Government. Before even the Declaration of Independence, the Huguenots of North Carolina had led the way towards that event by spirited resolutions, known as the Mechlenburg Declaration, in which the freedom of the colonies was demanded.

We honor, then, our Presbyterianism; “we love our sister denominations none the less because we love our dear old mother in the blue mantle all the more. Her garments may be dyed blue, and fools may mock at the hue, but it is the same color with God’s sky, and it is a fast color that never fades.” We turn, therefore, to the story of this individual portion of the great Presbyterian body.

As the mighty river hides its source in the far-distant forest, so the foundation of our church is hid in the maze of antiquity. All this country was settled apparently by German emigrants. As the Dutch settled New-York and that portion of New-Jersey near to Manhattan, so their brethren, the Germans, came in large numbers to Pennsylvania and New-Jersey contiguous thereto. These sturdy Germans left not their religion behind them. In their new home they remembered the God of their fathers. How could it be otherwise? Surrounded as they were by nature, yet unspoiled by human art, excluded from mankind by interminable forests, so that each clearing was hid from the eyes of all but God by a curtain of nature’s own weaving, dependent as they were upon their Maker for all things, how could they forget him? Nothing leads the soul upward so much as the solitude of nature. Nothing strengthens the faith of the soul in God so much as to be left alone with God and God’s work. From nature up to nature’s God is but a step, which is quickly and easily taken. But not only so. These emigrants came from a land of religious fervor. It was the land of Luther and Melancthon – the birthplace of Protestantism and the country of earnest Christian faith. Not as yet had the infidelity and rationalism of the philosophers descended to corrupt the people – that was left for succeeding ages to accomplish. The people still, as a rule, held fast to that truth which Luther had separated from the superstition of his age. Brought up in the cradle of the Reformation, they could not forsake their faith even in a foreign land. Hence as soon as they could prepare a place to lay their heads and shelter their wives and little ones, the axe was heard in the woods cutting down the trees which were to erect a house to the living God. As in Germany, so here, there were two great classes of Protestants, the Lutherans and the Reformed – the one adhering to the system of theology taught by Luther, and partaking more intimately of the spirit of Luther; while the other followed the system of Calvin, and was connected with the great Protestant Churches of Europe outside of Germany. In like manner, in this country the German settlers had their Lutheran and Reformed churches. The church which we this day represent was a

German Reformed church, which has now become Presbyterian, as have all these churches in this neighborhood.

For 120 years this plot of ground has been consecrated to the service of God, but tradition takes us farther back. In the absence of all written data, we must receive the testimony of men, and, carefully weighing and sifting the evidence so obtained, find, if we can, the truth.

Giving the greatest care to all the rules for distinguishing the true from the false tradition, it would seem probable that more than 130 years ago there was an old log church at the foot of the hill, on the farm of Mrs. Katie Sutton, now farmed by Mr. Geo. S. Hoffman. This church was the parent of the present one. When and by whom this old log church was built is the secret of the past, buried with the bones of generations long since dead. It was, however, the testimony of an old patriarch, dead now a very long time, that as his mother told him he was baptized in that old church. All which is rendered the more probable from the description of other places and things surrounding the church, which are proved to be true. So also the graveyard, which within the memory of many existed on that spot, would lead to a like conclusion. May it not be that it was in this church that Michael Schlatter preached in July, 1747, when he speaks of preaching in the church of Fox Hill? All this is buried in deep obscurity, from which there seems to be no resurrection. We therefore turn back once more the curtain which time has hung before the father's old log church, and give our attention to things more certain because more recent.

About 120 or 125 years ago it was determined to build a new house for the service of the living God. Ground was obtained for this church on the hill known as Fox Hill, then called Foxenburgh – the site of the present church. The name Foxenburgh was derived from the original owner of the hill – a man named Fox. It seems that this Fox was a very enterprising farmer, introducing a new and superior variety of wheat into the country. The people took such a fancy to this brand that they would come to Fox's place from a great distance around to buy wheat. Hence it began to be said they were going to Foxenburgh – and this name has clung to it ever since. It may be interesting to note that this Fox lived on the farm now owned by Mr. J. Van Dervoort Welsh, in an old log house in the hollow below the house now occupied by Mr. Jacob Heldebrant.

The land on which the church stands was given to the congregation by James Parker, the non-resident owner of a vast tract of country in this neighborhood, and from whom the place was called Parkersville. To this day, therefore, we rejoice in the benefaction of Mr. Parker, and in this church he has an interest which shall never pass away, though his name has already been forgotten in connection with the lands around it.

On this spot a church was finally erected and dedicated to God Almighty. The exact date of the building of this church can not now be determined, and we can only approximate thereto. It must have been built before 1760, as by the testimony of old persons, now dead, it was standing at that date. We therefore place the date of this church as far back as 1760.

The old church must have been a curious affair from all that is said about it. Those who worshipped in it in their younger days – and there are many yet living – describe it as a wooden structure, shingled, not only on the roof, but on the sides also – it was a shingle church. Inside it was neither lathed nor plastered, but boarded up. The floor was formed of two-inch plank, not nailed, put pinned down. The seats were the plainest and most substantial that could be made, consisting simply of a board properly supported, and another board nailed up perfectly straight for a back. The house was lighted by two rows of windows, and the shutters consisted of plain boards with long iron bands to secure them in position. Galleries surrounded the church, while the pulpit was not placed at the end, as is customary, but on one side. This pulpit was hung up, as one who in youth often worshipped there has aptly described it, “like a swallow’s nest,” and a large sounding-board held up a rod of iron formed a fitting cover for the “Dominie.” If the introduction of sounding-boards into our churches to-day would have any tendency to keep alive the attention, by all means let us hang them up afresh.

And here the people assembled to hear the word of God, and no doubt, when first built, it was very sumptuous compared with their own houses, for still the log-house predominated, and few indeed must have been the frame buildings. In winter, the glow of the preacher’s discourse was expected to keep up the circulation, for in those days it was an abomination to heat a church. Those who could, Sabbath after Sabbath, sit in the cold, dreary church to hear the gospel proclaimed deserve our honor and commendation; for bitterly cold must have been that house, with its window-lights mostly broken out, and abundant opportunity given for the piercing winds of winter to sweep through and through. One of the boys of that period can tell of how he got his ears well warmed for trying to warm his feet in church. Being almost frozen by the biting cold, he kicked his feet back and forth, making considerable noise. On reaching home his father boxed his ears very severely, notwithstanding his pleading the impossibility of remaining quiet. His father would hear no such excuse, telling him he could “stand it as well as the other boys.”

They were, however, to some degree, alive to creature comfort. The women used to bring their little foot-stoves with them, and stopping at some friend’s house near the church would light a charcoal fire, and so keep their feet warm during the service. Hence it was a fruitful source of quarrelling among the children as to who should sit by mother and enjoy a portion of her stove.

Who first conducted service in this church is not known. All that is certain down to 1768 is that the Rev. Mr. Graff, pastor of the Lutheran church of New-Germantown, from time to time would conduct service on the Hill.

In the year 1768 the churches of Fox Hill and German Valley, with those of Rockaway and Alexandria, were united under one pastorate, and Frederick Dalliker was called to the charge. It was under Mr. Dalliker’s ministrations that the old stone church of German Valley was built. Mr. Dalliker served these churches for the space of fourteen years, which is noteworthy as being next to the longest pastorate which this church has

enjoyed; so that at the beginning of its history it was more greatly blessed in this respect than it has been since.

In 1782 the Rev. Casper Wack accepted a call to the churches of Lebanon, German Valley, and Fox Hill. Mr. Wack was a man of great activity, carrying on large farming and milling interests in addition to the care of his large parish. He was the first native-born American to enter the ministry of the German Reformed Church in this country. Hitherto no English sermons had been preached on the Hill, but now Mr. Wack makes a new departure, and occasionally preaches an English sermon. Towards the close of his ministry, it was his habit to preach in English in the morning and in German in the afternoon. Those who desired to hear English preaching before this were obliged to go as far as Lamington, to the old Presbyterian church of that place. This change of Mr. Wack marks a new period in the history of the place, as it shows that the Germans were now giving up their language, and with that their nationality, and seeking to become completely Americanized.

Mr. Wack was a man of considerable humor, all the more sharp because so dry. The following story is told: "A Universalist preacher once, attempting to dispute with him, affirmed that his doctrine was an old one, that it was preached in Paradise, meaning to claim the promise of the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head as a proof of the doctrine of universal salvation. Mr. Wack replied, 'Yes, your doctrine was preached in Paradise, and the Devil preached it; his text was, Ye shall not surely die.'" I am indebted for this anecdote to the sketch of the German Valley church, prepared by the Rev. I. A. Blauvelt.

Mr. Wack left his charge in 1809, having served this people twenty-seven years, being nearly twice as long as any other pastor; and during all this time he sustained a high character as an efficient and successful pastor. Much is due to Caspar Wack for the present prosperity of the churches over which he was pastor, and for the extension of religion in the building of new churches in this neighborhood. He left here in 1809 to take charge of the churches of Whitmarsh and Germantown, Pennsylvania.

Up to this time the church had remained faithful to the German Reformed Discipline, but now a change of church connection was deemed expedient. The Presbyterian Church had begun that advance which was to place it among the foremost denominations of the land, and had already occupied many important places in the surrounding country. The churches in the Valley and on the Hill felt that the sympathy of their sister churches in the neighborhood would be a source of great good to them, and hence they sought admission to the Presbytery of New-Brunswick, within whose bounds these churches lay. They made the application for admission on the 5th day of October, 1813, the sixty-second anniversary of which day was commemorated by the installation of your present pastor, which application was granted the following day, and a call was made out for Rev. Jacob Castner, a licentiate of the Presbytery, which was accepted, and ordination and installation services took place on the 19th of November following.

The elders of this church at the time of this movement were Morris Crater, Jacob Schuyler, Morris Crater, Jr., and Frederick Apgar.

But before we go further with the history, let us stop a moment to take a glance at the condition of this neighborhood at that time.

This land is the work of man to a large degree. Poor in itself, the industry of yourselves and your fathers has made it what it is. It took hard work and constant care, but that work and care have been abundantly rewarded by fertile fields, and a comfortable living.

The change that has taken place in a hundred years is extremely great. You can imagine your great-great-grandmother sitting by the open window spinning flax, while her husband sat outside breaking the flax for her. Beside him lays the constant companion of the early settler, the old-fashioned flint-lock musket, with which he is prepared to protect his home and his dear ones; for Indians and desperadoes prowl about in the neighboring forests. Those were days of trial and danger, but they raised up a race of hardy, earnest men, not afraid of the whistling of the wind, nor the creaking of a branch on a dark night.

All this country was then thick woods, with here and there a clearing. There were not at that time roads running in every direction, giving easy access to any point to which one desired to go, but the roads wound around a good deal, so as to make the most of each. For example, instead of driving the straight road to the Valley, it was necessary to go around by Unionville, and then along the old road over the hill beyond Mr. Larman's house, where at that time was an old log-house. There was no other house on the road till just at the entrance of the Valley, where there was a frame house, which still stands, about one hundred and fifty yards from the main road. So it was with other roads, most of which were first travelled in the memory of many here present.

The people were much given to superstition, and according to their account the whole country was bewitched. There was an old graveyard in the neighborhood of Fairmount post-office, but no one would dare go near it, because it was haunted. Here, the common saying was, hobgoblins and ghosts and evil spirits, and men without heads, all bloody and terrible to look upon, might be seen at night – stories frightful enough to scare most people who had not sufficient courage to withstand the prevailing belief of the age in the power of evil spirits. This graveyard was devoted to the burial of negroes, and the spirits mostly took the appearance of that race. Close by lived an old negress, famous as a witch, and who, it was currently believed, had communication with the spirits which troubled the place.

The road now known as the turnpike – or rather that portion from Fair Plains to the Unionville road – led through a thick wood. The trees grew up close on each side of the road, and the branches intertwined overhead, making one of those grand forest colonnades that civilization is fast destroying from the face of the earth. Close by the road two trees sprung from one stump, separating from each other as they grew up.

About five feet from the stump a peculiar knot was formed, uniting the two trees together. This knot well represented a man's face, and was encircled by a white ring, giving a good imitation of hair. It is curious that nature is constantly running into the human form. There are innumerable profile rocks, and a little study with a live imagination can make a human face out of many a natural form. In the night-time this tree-face would be lit up with fox fire, and give all the appearance of a man glaring down at the passersby. Hence it began to be rumored that an evil spirit haunted the road, and people were afraid to travel at night, until at last the deception was discovered and the tree cut down.

This superstitious fear has not passed away from some who yet believe the woods to be haunted, and fully expect a "spook" to waylay them at any moment. Through these strange beings have done no one any harm, still the stories that are told round the fireplace on a winter's night keep alive the superstition of the past.

Among these stories may be mentioned one that closely resembles that of the Wandering Jew. It is reported that an old Indian on moonlight nights may be seen travelling up and down Rockaway Brook, from Sutton's Mill-Pond to the Middle Valley road. There are even persons who have seen those who not only saw the Indian, but tracked him in his wanderings.

Another story is told of a spook pursued by some daring men. Finding himself hardly pressed, the spook took refuge through a knothole in a hollow tree, when the man with a ready wit plugged up the hole, and Mr. Spook was fast in his prison. There he even now remains, lamenting his evil fate.

The state of religion on the Hill was very low, according to our notions. All that was needed to admit the candidate to church membership was to be able to repeat the catechism. Good as the catechism is, there is something in religion besides head knowledge, and this something was overlooked.

There was also a great deal of language used by church people which would in our estimation hardly be accounted Christian, and yet no doubt they used it through ignorance. The name of God was invoked too carelessly, and other expressions were used which a high-toned piety has driven from Christian lips. Perhaps an anecdote of an old dominie will exhibit this characteristic. As it is the expression of the minister, who it may be supposed was a leader in righteousness, it will give some idea of what the general conversion must have been. The old dominie was out in his field trying to catch his horse, which was a very spirited animal. But every time he approached, and was just about to put the halter on, the horse would make a jump and be off to the other side of the field. And so the dominie chased his nag until, wearied out and heated with the chase, he at last broke out, "Well, then, go to the devil with you, if you will." It so happened that one of his parishioners was near by and heard the dominie's talk, and coming forward, said, "Dominie, you have given the devil a fine present this morning." "Ah! Joe," said the minister, "ah! Joe, I was mad."

We sometimes lament because the young people do not always come to church to worship God. Let us take a glance at the young people at that time. The floor of the gallery was perfectly flat, and as the front was unusually high, only those who sat in the first row of seats could be seen from the pulpit or see the pulpit themselves. In the back part of this gallery the young men would gather, and there they would play cards without detection, so that in those good old days the house of God was turned into a gambler's den.

This part of the State in those early days was very sparsely inhabited. The number of votes cast at a poll in the township of Tewkesbury seventy years ago would be 80 or 90, whereas now there are five or six times as many. Training-day was a high day among the people. The farmers, justly realizing how much the success of the late war had depended on their skill and courage, kept alive the martial spirit by military exercise. But only thirty-five or forty would turn out on training-day, being probably a full representation of the able-bodied men of the township.

Let us also recall that about seventy years ago a man was brought up before the justice on a charge of crime and found guilty. His choice was given between a fine of \$15, or ten lashes on the bare back, or banishment. He chose the last, and was banished to Schooley's Mountain, just this side of Pleasant Grove, which at that time was considered almost out of the world.

It was, then, through the influence of Jacob Castner that the church of Fox Hill was brought into the Presbytery of New-Brunswick. This was evidently a wise course, as it brought the congregation into sympathy with a body active and zealous in the Lord's work, and gave it the help of brotherly fellowship with the Lord's people in neighboring churches.

Mr. Castner filled three pulpits in turn – German Valley, Chester, and Fox Hill. The Chester church went under the name of Black River, and stood on the hill where now the burying ground is. In this large parish Mr. Castner labored faithfully for four years. He was peculiarly adapted for his work, being a bold, practical, and energetic preacher, often preaching with such power and unction as to cause tears to flow down the faces of the most hardened men. Even in those days church service was sometimes disturbed by disorderly persons; and Mr. Castner has been known to go outside and march the offenders into church, sitting them down in such a way as to show his determination to have order kept – and his noble physique giving the guarantee of his ability to do it. Such discipline was generally effectual. Mr. Castner remained in charge till the fall of 1817.

It was during his pastorate that the building of a new church was determined on, and finally, in 1816, the edifice was erected. This church was built on the site of the present one, though it was smaller in dimensions; galleries were on three sides.

It was a stone church, like the present one, and, no doubt, was a fine church for the day in which it was built. This building cost \$2,850.

Mr. Castner was much encouraged in his work when he saw the improvements on Fox Hill. A new road run through to the valley, and a new church, together with the opening of a tavern close by, were signs of advance which cheered the good man's heart.

In the following year, 1817, the church was incorporated according to law, and a board of trustees elected under the corporate name of "The President and Trustees of the First Presbyterian Church in Parker's Village, on Fox Hill." Henry Miller was President. The church was now fully organized and ready for work.

Fox Hill seems always to have been a scapegoat for all the neighborhood. Even at that time no one envied the name of Fox Hill. If any wrong was done, Fox Hill must bear the blame. This is seen from Mr. Castner's farewell sermon. The text was Matt. 23:37 – 39: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." In the midst of his discourse he exclaimed, "Woe! woe! woe! To Fox Hill." This woe has been pronounced many a time, but still Fox Hill exists, and is to-day, under a new name, more happy and prosperous than ever before; and it remains only with the people, by their quiet and peaceable lives and by their charitable deeds, to wipe off a reproach so ill deserved.

Sunday was the great play-day of the people. It was spent by many in stoning squirrels along the fences, in hunting, in fishing, and in wrestling in coal-pit bottoms. This last amusement may need a little explanation. The country being well wooded, much profit was derived from burning charcoal; in these pits the young men had a smooth place to wrestle in, while all around were stones and briers. Unionville was the great race-course, and here, on Sunday afternoons, the fast horses were brought out and trotted, some of which afterwards attained celebrity in larger fields.

Mr. Castner did a good work in bringing about a better observance of the Sabbath, for it is our American Sabbath that has more than any other thing been the source of American prosperity. We have honored God in strictly observing the sacred day of rest, and God has blessed us in return. Would that the whole world might "remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." Thank God for the Sabbath, and thanks to Jacob Castner for so nobly and successfully pleading for the holiness of the Lord's day.

Mr. Castner removed to Washington, Warren Co., N. J., where he died. He was succeeded by John C. Van Dervoort. Mr. Van Dervoort had not as yet completed his education, but was still studying in the seminary at New-Brunswick.

The Presbytery at first complained against his course as irregular and unpresbyterian, but it finally ordained and installed him. He preached at German Valley and Fox Hill, giving two Sundays at the former place and one at the latter. Although not what would be called an able man, Mr. Van Dervoort was a most excellent pastor,

reaching by his tender, earnest appeals the sinner's heart. He did not confine his labors to the Sabbath, but during the week, at the log farmhouses, or wherever he could gather a few together, he would preach the glorious gospel of Christ. Thus it was from house to house he proclaimed Jesus Christ and him crucified. One incident will exhibit his characteristic zeal and earnestness, and will show how he would exhort the people till they were greatly moved. On one occasion he took for his text Prov. 29:1, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." In the course of his remarks he said: "I have prayed with you, I have urged you, I have warned you, I have done everything to show you the danger, and I have pointed out the remedy. What more can I do? This I will do: I will implore you here on my knees no longer to harden your necks" - and falling on his knees in the pulpit, he continued his sermon in the attitude of prayer, producing a most powerful impression. After a very successful ministry, he left here in 1825 to take charge of the church in Basking Ridge.

In 1828 Mancius Smede Hutton entered upon his duties as pastor of the two churches of German Valley and Fox Hill. Mr. Hutton makes the first record in our session-book - the old books having been lost for many years. This loss is greatly to be deplored, as so much of the interesting history of our church has been doomed to oblivion, and so many names of persons prominent in church affairs forever forgotten. At this time the elders of the church were Morris Crater, John C. Salter, George A. Vescelius, and Philip Crater.

Mr. Hutton met with notable success in his ministrations, and at one time there was a very powerful revival in the church. The result of this special outpouring of God's Spirit was the addition of more than forty members to the church, and throughout his pastorate many were continually added.

While the church was under his care there began to be trouble about infant baptism - whether non-communicants have a right to present their children to the Lord in baptism. The session decided that they have, and so it is recorded in the book - the first entry in our session-book. This question from time to time has agitated the people.

Dominie Hutton left here to accept a call to the South Dutch Church of New-York, which afterwards divided, a part becoming the Washington Square Reformed Dutch Church, where Dr. Hutton remained as pastor till this last year. For many years he occupied a commanding position in the city, being greatly beloved by his people, and holding in his audience many very able men; but of late years his church has suffered from its position down-town, and has finally been sold, so that the pulpit that knew him so long shall know him no more. The church here remembers, and will ever remember, with gratitude, the solid work Mancius S. Hutton did for them. Never has there been a pastor so greatly beloved as he.

During the year 1835 James Scott was installed pastor of the two churches that had so long been united together.

The church had now passed from the jurisdiction of the New-Brunswick Presbytery into that of Raritan; but Mr. Scott, becoming dissatisfied with the course of the Raritan Presbytery in establishing a church at Lower Valley, induced the churches to apply to Synod for a change of relation, and according to the appointment of Synod in 1841 they entered the Newton Presbytery. In this was showed a prominent characteristic of the man – namely, great quickness of temper and irritability under opposition.

During Mr. Scott's ministry thirty-eight were united to the church – twenty-six on profession of their faith, and twelve by certificate from other churches. The total membership was now eighty-three.

As Mr. Scott was only on the Hill every third Sabbath, he would preach twice on that day, and, according to the old style, one service would follow the other with but a short intermission. As his sermons were usually quite long, the people could not reach home till late, when they were afflicted with hunger and weariness. Being remonstrated with on this subject, he replied: "The people of Fox Hill are like those of other places. They are grasping after every thing temporal, and very eager in the acquisition of wealth. But," he adds, "I find that little preaching suits them best." How true this is of many persons. They can never acquire too much wealth, but the very least amount of spiritual grace suits them best.

A man once complained to him that he could not afford to give largely to benevolent objects, because, as he said, he was only a poor man and had to work hard for all he obtained. Mr. Scott argued with him that he was much better off than a few years back; and he continued, "How do you know how much richer you will be? How do you know what God Almighty has put under your feet? You have simply been using the surface of the soil, but God may have stored away abundant riches beneath the crust. What do you know of the wealth that may be hid away under the ground?" Whether this argument accomplished the purpose for which it was intended we know not; but this we do know, that since then the words of Dominie Scott have come true, and out of the bowels of the earth a very rich iron ore has been taken, and just recently a nickel mine has been opened, and is now in operation.

On the 26th of March, 1843, Joseph Magee and John J. Crater were ordained elders by Mr. Scott, though he had already been dismissed by Presbytery to accept a call to the Dutch Church of Newark.

The following resolutions were passed at the congregational meeting which accepted the resignation of Mr. Scott, February 14, 1843:

"Resolved, 1st. That the congregation of Fox Hill shall acquiesce in the decision of Presbytery. At the same time they wish Presbytery to understand that nothing but what appears to be the movement of Providence could lead them to consent to the separation of a union so blessed to them, and one so universally acceptable.

"Resolved, 2d. That in accordance with the recommendation of our pastor, Mr. Scott, if Presbytery dissolve the relationship, this congregation take measures to support the gospel the whole of a minister's time for the future."

And so in accordance with this resolution the long tie that had bound these two neighboring churches together was broken, and henceforth both stand alone to battle for the Lord. The event has proved the wisdom of this course in that each church has supported its own pastor, and the churches have thrived apart. Hence, from this time we shall speak of Fox Hill church alone.

The church of Fox Hill now called as its first pastor the Rev. I. S. Davison. The effect of the change showed itself in a large ingathering of souls into the church. During his stay forty-seven persons were admitted to church membership, thirty-eight of them being on profession of their faith.

In March, 1846, two new elders were elected – namely, Frederick P. Hoffman and George H. Lindebaury, who still remain with us – the only members of the session as constituted at that time now living.

The session became interested in a plan for active benevolence and systematic giving. It was resolved to urge upon the Church their duty in this respect, and the pastor was desired to prepare a sermon on the subject. There certainly could have been no subject of greater importance, and one which our present session would do well to consider.

There seems to have been one unfortunate characteristic of Mr. Davison's pastorate. It was a time of trouble. During the four years he remained in charge here there were no less than two investigations into the character of church members, and five trials for various offences. The effect of these was seen at once. It put a damper on religion. From the time of the commencement of these proceedings we read of scarcely any additions to the church. This was the natural result of the turmoil in the church, for Christ does not love dissension.

The pastors had heretofore lived in the Valley. At first a house was owned by the two congregations in common at Middle Valley. This was afterwards sold, and the present parsonage of the German Valley church bought, when the connection between the two churches was broken. Fox Hill church had no parsonage for its pastor. Settling, therefore, with the Valley church for the portion of the house owned by them, and raising other funds, they went to work with a will, and soon raised a house for their minister. This is the present parsonage.

All who have lived in that house have reason to be grateful to Mr. Davison for his thoughtfulness and kindness; for all the trees which form such a pleasant shade at the parsonage – as also at the church – were of his planting. Thus may one perform actions, the good of which may descend to those unknown to him even many years afterwards.

Mr. Davison sought and obtained a dissolution of the pastoral relation in the spring of 1847. He still lives, being a teacher in the city of Brooklyn, N. Y. It is a very

pleasing thought that all the pastors of this church, since its independent existence, except one (who died on the field), still live to do the Master's work.

Mr. Davison was succeeded after a short interval by Rev. Charles M. Oakley.

The plague of investigation and trial which broke out under Mr. Davison was still continued and five additional trials took place. This circumstance can not be too deeply lamented. It was a source of evil to the church beyond computation. The people's attention was turned from the subject of their own individual piety, and they were sent up and down, hunting out all the evil in the neighborhood. From being eager to advance the kingdom of Christ, they became simply rooters in the mire and dirt of scandal. Hence the church was contaminated, for one can not handle coal and not be blackened.

Mr. Oakley last autumn revisited his former charge. It was with great pleasure that the older members of the church once more welcomed their former pastor after twenty-five years' absence. He is a man of evident piety, having a spirit almost childlike in its simplicity and faithfulness. He eminently illustrates the childlike character of the Christian. Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. One such example of living Christianity is worth a hundred sermons.

Eleven persons joined the church under his ministration, two of whom were by certificate from other churches.

Mr. Oakley is still preaching the everlasting gospel of peace – supplying at the present time the pulpit of the Presbyterian Church at Amagansett, Long Island.

As a faithful historian it becomes us to present all classes of facts, whether they cause pride or shame in those who hear. Hence I am induced to copy the following report on the state of religion in the Fox Hill church.

“We are permitted to report nothing specially encouraging during the past six months. With some few pleasing exceptions, it is to be feared that but too great a lack of spirituality prevails among God's professing people We have to mourn a sad dearth of divine influences One important duty of heads of families, it is to be feared, is too generally neglected, the duty of religious instruction in the family on the Lord's day, and some instances, it is to be apprehended, exist of the omission of the duty of family prayer.”

Charles Wood became pastor in 1851, and remained here till 1855. The total membership was 81, which seems to be about the average. Nineteen entered the church on profession of faith, and eleven by certificate, making thirty in all, showing a good degree of success. Two new elders were added, Conrad Rarick in 1851, and Philip Philhower in 1853.

The most important event of Mr. Wood's ministry was the building of the present church. The old church began to be in such a dilapidated condition that a change was needed. As in all cases, there were two parties formed at once in the church. One desired to repair and tinker up the old building, the other went in strong for a new one. It seemed at one time as if the first of these two parties would carry the day, but after considerable discussion it was decided to leave the question to the judgment of a competent builder. Both parties being thus agree, it was so referred, when the builder chosen decided that the old church could not be properly repaired, and that a new building was needed. This settled the question, and the congregation went hastily to work to erect the new house. The contract was made and the building commenced on the site of the old structure. The present church is considerably larger than the old one, though it has but one gallery, while the other had three. The whole cost of the building and furnishing the church was \$3,800, and at its dedication only \$450 remained as a debt on the church. The dedication took place July 25, 1852, the sermon being preached by Dr. M. S. Hutton, the former pastor.

Before the dedication of the church it was determined to have a bell in the tower. The effort was made and the bell was obtained. It was a great day when the bell was hung, and the people turned out far and near to lend a helping hand. Fox Hill in this respect was in advance of the neighboring churches, having its bell before German Valley, New-Germantown, or Lamington. The first bell in the neighborhood was owned by the Congregational Church of Chester. This was many years ago. The first time this bell was rung, the people crowded from all around to hear, and some even went from Fox Hill for that purpose, and these may remember the minister's coming to the door and saying that, as the bell was about to ring, they must hold their horses, lest they should run away; and so every man stood by his horse's head while the sexton rang the bell. These are past days and with the past has gone much of the simplicity and naïveté that characterized it.

The mania for investigation and trial, which had so long characterized the people, was now directed against their pastor. The trustees requested the elders to present certain charges against their minister at their stated meeting. This was done July 8, 1854. The charges, as recorded, were these:

- “1. That having a physician in the bounds of our congregation, Mr. Wood had no right to be absent three weeks under the care of another, and thus leave his people under the necessity of sending for a neighboring minister in one of two cases of sickness.
- “2. That there had not been preaching during the spring and summer for three Sabbaths.
- “3. That Mr. Wood had not been sick – that it was a mere pretence of his – and therefore he was without excuse in not remaining at home.
- “4. A certain mysterious discourse, preached by the pastor about a year since, had been interpreted in a vision, had by a certain member of the congregation, as being intended for, and directed to, certain individuals.”

No doubt these charges seemed grave and weighty to those who made them; but were it not for the evident earnestness of the framers, we should be inclined to consider the whole thing a joke, for certainly there is something almost laughable about them.

In Nathaniel B. Klink the church again found a leader. Mr. Klink was a man of considerable ability, and during the four years of his pastorate there was quite a revival – fifteen joining the church at one time. During his ministry the church received 26 new members.

In 1856, Morris Rarick and Peter H. Hoffman were elected elders, neither of whom now act.

Again we read of investigations, trials, and excommunications, three new trials taking place. Within so short a time there is hardly a church in the country that has suffered so much from this fruitful source of disaster. If it is needed, the surgeon should not be so tender-hearted as not to amputate the mortified limb. But bad indeed must be the condition of that man who is continually under the knife. So with the church. While we would not hesitate to apply the church discipline where it is needed, we should be very careful never to resort to those extreme measures till Christian love has done its utmost to reclaim the offender.

Mr. Klink will be remembered not only as a preacher, but also as a farmer. He was well trained in the farmer's life, and on the little parsonage lot he would raise grain that all the farmers envied. His spring pigs would weigh in October 250 or 275 lbs., and he had pork to sell. His chickens were wonderful; and he would sell eggs all the year round. He kept two cows, and the butter made under the supervision of Mrs. Klink was most excellent. Thus Mr. Klink was a leader, not only in the pulpit, but out of it in the daily toil of a farmer's life.

After an interval of over a year, Rev. John R. Willox was chosen pastor, and this choice being confirmed by Presbytery, he was installed in 1861. As Mr. Willox was so well known to those present, it will not be necessary to enter on any very extended narrative of his pastorate. He remained longer in charge than any minister since the days of Caspar Wack. Twelve years he labored among you, and it was not till the Master called that he laid down the charge which you had given him.

Mr. Willox was born in October, 1810, near Aberdeen, Scotland. He came to this country and taught school for a time in the Valley. Becoming dissatisfied with Presbyterian doctrine, he left that church and joined the Lutheran, studying in the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. His first charge was at Friesburg, Salem Co., N. J., and finally he removed to Riegelsville, Pa., where he was very successful in his labors, 160 being united to the church during his ministry there. In 1861, having become convinced that the Westminster statement of doctrine contains "that system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures," he sought a return to the Presbyterian fold. Hence he accepted the call to the Presbyterian church of Fox Hill. During his long

pastorate of twelve years, 54 persons joined the church on profession, and 5 by certificate making a total of 59. He baptized 64 infants and married no less than 93 couples.

In the year 1869 the church name was changed by an Act of the Legislature to the “First Presbyterian Church of Fairmount,” and no longer can it be called Fox Hill – that is a thing of the past.

In this year Philip P. Hoffman and John Rinehart were added to the board of elders.

In 1861 the Synod of New-Jersey transferred this church back once more to the Presbytery of Raritan, and here it remained until the grand reunion of the Old and the New School Presbyterian Churches in 1870 caused a reorganization of the Presbyteries, and the formation of the Presbytery of Morris and Orange, into which the church found its way rather curiously. The church really belongs to the Presbytery of Elizabeth, but by some mistake was left off their roll. Finding themselves forgotten, they set about to hunt a church connection. Morris and Orange seemed the most available, and to that Presbytery the church applied for connection, which was granted.

In 1870 a fair was held, the second made by this church. The first fair was held directly after the building of the church, and brought in a good sum of money towards defraying the building expenses; and now, as repairs were needed, it was thought desirable to repeat the experiment and raise the means for that purpose. This fair was very successful, so that your committee were enabled to refit the church and repair the parsonage.

But the faithful pastor was never permitted to worship in the church as renewed. On the 23rd of February, 1873, his spirit went home to its reward. Let me quote a few words from the funeral discourse of Rev. I. A. Blauvelt: “During his last illness, in speaking of his religious life, he said that he had often felt doubts of his final acceptance with God. Since he had been sick, however, and expecting to die, he had fresh disclosures of the love and mercy of God; ‘and now,’ said he, ‘I have a full assurance of hope – not that wild, enthusiastic assurance of which some speak, but it is an assurance like that spoken of by the Erskines and the Alexanders – an assurance which rests upon the complete atonement of Jesus Christ,’ And then he went on to say that he took no comfort in looking over his past life; that had been sinful. His hope all rested on Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. And he continued to speak in this way through his entire sickness. He very often repeated the hymn,

‘Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.’

The expression of entire self-distrust and helpless reliance on Jesus Christ which this hymn contains seemed exactly adapted to his views and feelings. When he had come face to face with death, he was made to feel that Jesus Christ was all.”

So died John R. Willox. He has gone to his rest and is waiting for those to whom he so long revered to join him in glory. “Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”

On the 20th day of September Frank P. Tompkins was elected pastor. His stay was short, and marked by no event of general interest, and on July 26th, 1874, the pulpit was again declared vacant.

During the next year the church was distracted by a multiplicity of candidates, and it was not till September 1st, 1875, that they were able to unite. At that time a call was made out for your present pastor, who accepted it, subject to the consent of Presbytery, which, at its fall meeting, granted the request of this congregation, and your pastor was installed on the 5th of October.

During the past winter, God has graciously visited your community, and many souls have been gathered into his garner.

You have also deemed it wise to adopt the plan of term eldership, and have elected to the office of ruling elder the following persons; George E. Salter, Frederick Hoffman, Elias Hockenbery, and Peter Hoffman, in addition to George H. Lindebaury and Philip P. Hoffman re-elected. These were ordained and installed on Sunday, May 6th.

The church has therefore had thirteen pastors, as follows: Frederick Dalliker, 1768 – 1782; Casper Wack, 1782 – 1809; Jacob Castner, 1813 – 1817; John C. Van Dervoort, 1818 – 1825; Mancius S. Hutton, 1828 – 1834; James Scott, 1835 – 1843; Isaac S. Davison, 1843 – 1847; Charles M. Oakley, 1847 – 1850; Charles Wood, 1851 – 1855; Nathaniel B. Klink, 1855 – 1859; John R. Willox, 1861 – 1873; Frank P. Thompkins, 1873 – 1874; William O. Ruston, 1875.

For one thing this church is especially to be commended – it has not yielded to the custom among many of the smaller churches of having stated supplies rather than pastors. The ancient office of pastor has been honored, and every minister who has labored here has been a pastor not one stated supply in 120 years.

During this time, so far as recorded the following have been the elders:

Morris Crater,	}	<i>Elders in 1813.</i>
Jacob Schuyler,		
Morris Crater, Jr.,		
Frederick Apgar.		
John C. Salter,	}	<i>Added before 1828.</i>
George A. Vescelius,		
Philip Crater.		
Joseph Magee,		elected 1843.
John J. Crater,		“ “

Fred'k P. Hoffman,	“	1846.
Geo. H. Lindebaury,	“	“
Conrad Rarick,	“	1851.
Philip Philhower,	“	1853.
Morris Rarick,	“	1856.
Peter H. Hoffman	“	“
Philip Hoffman,	“	1869.
John Reinehart,	“	“
George E. Salter,	“	1876.
Fred'k Hoffman,	“	“
Elias Hockenbaury,	“	“
Peter Hoffman,	“	“

There have been three churches erected on this spot – 1st, the old shingle church; 2d, the first stone church, 1816; 3d, the second stone church, 1851.

And now, brethren, from this history gather courage. The church has seen many a day of trial and dismay, but “hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” It is the Church of Christ, and we feel assured the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Out of the depths God has again and again brought you, and to-day you are stronger than ever before. This is the old church consecrated by the memories of your fathers. Give it your veneration, your love, your devotion. From the past gather strength for the future, and go forward rejoicing always in the Lord.