

# 292



*Some more Deford's Surmase History  
also some Thomas family history—*

*The*  
**BULLETIN**

**SECOND PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH**

**OXFORD, NEW JERSEY**

By

**A. G. YOUNT**  
*Minister*



*Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.—Deuteronomy, 32:7.*



And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

---Luke II. 13-14

" Father in heaven, whose mercy we praise in the yearly remembrance of the birth of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; Make known unto all men, the blessed Gospel of his incarnation, whereby thou hast clearly revealed thy love for the world. And help us so to celebrate his natal day in humility and gratitude, in unselfish love and cheerful service, that our keeping of Christmas may be a blessing to our souls, a memorial to Christ a benefit to our fellow men, and a thanksgiving unto thee for thine unspeakable gift of the Saviour. Amen."

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There will be a meeting tonight at 6:30, and followed with singing of Christmas songs, to which all persons are urged to come.

The Sunday School Christmas Exercises will be held in the church Monday evening (tomorrow). The children will have their appropriate parts to delight us all, and the young people of the School will lead the singing wearing white robes.

There will be two choirs of them, boys and girls. Santa Claus with his treats Christmas trees and appropriate decorations. Let the parents and church people all attend bringing their friends.

Let our motto be a "Merry Christmas" to all

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(from page two)

of note in surrounding states are deeply concerned in the plan to restore and preserve this rare historic structure." This letter was set to Rev. Lester H. Clee, 294 Mount Prospect Ave, Newark, N.J.

Hon. Winant Van Winkle, Rutherford, N.J. and

Dr. John C. Schley, c/o Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.

We suggest that other friends of the furnace plan write to these men to a similar purpose.

As the meeting of the Commission on Historic Sites with the Advisory Committee on the Budget of the Assembly was unsatisfactory in results, the Commission has requested the Editor to write letters to the Budget Committee presenting the needs of the Oxford Furnace.

We have done so, and herewith reproduce a copy of the letter as a matter of record.

" I am writing to the members of the Advisory Budget Committee of the Assembly in the interests of an appropriation for the Oxford Furnace, which the Commission on Historic Sites wish to restore and preserve as a historic shrine.

It has recently been decided to the State for that purpose, and now the Commission is asking the Assembly for the small sum of \$500. to repair and care for the furnace in the year following.

The Furnace was erected in 1741, when there was not a village in the State of 500 inhabitants, and was in operation until 1884; thus nearly spanning the whole period of colonial and state history.

It is still standing,--the only colonial structure of the kind in the State; but is now rapidly crumbling from long neglect, and if preserved at all it must receive immediate attention.

The historical sites of the State are mostly objects cherished on account of their association with some historic personality or event--a laudable motive--but the Oxford Furnace has in addition the unique claim of having been of vital service to the state and country over a period of 150 years.

It supplied munitions of various kinds for the French-Indian, the Revolutionary and the Civil wars; it furnished pig-iron for the numerous forges in all this region for the manufacture of implements for the farms, households and industries in the colonial period and even down to the middle of last century; and it was noted for the fire-backs, stoves, and rail road wheels cast at the furnace.

It also has the distinction of founding the city of Scranton, Pa. named after the owners of Oxford Furnace, who lived here while starting the iron works there which gave the start to that city.

Finally, the local citizens, the people of the part of the State, and many persons  
(concluded on page one)

According to Mr. Kempsey (bulletin, 205) the Welsh miners opened the first mine on Mine Hill, preceding the Germans and the Irish, because the oldest mine was called the Welsh mine.

We are now able to shed some light on the matter from a letter before us addressed to the "Owners of Oxford Furnace" and written by Thomas Thomas, from Pompton Plains, Jan. 31st, 1843. Here it is:

"Dear Sir: I am informed that you are in want of a man who can manage and work your furnace in a perfect way. I have had a good many years experience at the business in Wales and in France, and have been in this country 3 or 4 months, and if I can get a good place I will leave this place. I am at work for P.M. Ryerson at present. I have been working hard coal and soft coal in England and Wales, and cokes and charcoal coke and wood in France.

If you wish to know anything about my character, I have letters from England and Wales and France to show that I do understand my Business and the soundness of my character. I am a man of 49 years of age and very steady man. Please return me answer.

I remain your humble servant.  
Thomas Thomas, Keeper of  
Pompton Iron works,  
Passaic Co. N. J.

Whether he got a job soon after this letter, we cannot say, but we do know that Mr. Thomas became a settler in Oxford very early, and that he was joined here by two brothers from Wales, John and Jabez. All three worked in the Rolling Mill, as rollers, and are well remembered by our older citizens.

But that was 20 or more years later than the date of the letter, and we can only infer that he became connected with the Scranton's soon after the Letter.

We know that at that time the two furnaces--Oxford and Scranton, Pa., were owned and operated by George and Selden Scranton as a single business. We have before us business letters and documents which make that fact certain.

And so they would shift workmen from one place to another as they were needed. (Over

Again we know that Thomas Thomas married a Miss Janet Lewis, sister of the father of Mrs. Jennie Fichtel, and Mrs. H.B. Thompson. This was after Thomas came to America, and after his employment with the Scrantons. It is known that Mr. Lewis--a Welshman also--was employed at Scranton, Pa., before he came to Oxford, and the inference is that Thomas Thomas first went to work in Scranton and later came to Oxford.

Thomas Thomas had two daughters, Ida and Elizabeth, both married Philadelphia men, and have been lost sight of. But his brother, John Thomas, was the father of Mrs. Walter Docker, and others well known to old timers in Oxford.

Mr. Thomas Thomas was, like all Welshmen, a musician. He played in the Band and was a band-master of the Phillipsburg Band. He met a terrible death when starting to board a coal train this side of the Tunnel, to go to P'burg, to meet the Band. He served also as organist in St. Rose Catholic Church, and was genial and well liked by all.

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Mr. Lewis Wilderick, our Town Clerk, has put in hands a letter from a Mr. Frank H. Backhaus, son of Frederick J. and Louise Backhaus, German immigrants, who resided in Oxford in the 1860s and 1870s. Mr. Backhaus inquires:-

"May I ask your cooperation in obtaining my birth certificate. My family always gave Oxford as my birth place.

" I was born May 27th, 1868. My memory goes back to school days; a Mr. Castelane was Principal. Other teachers were Miss Scranton, Miss Person, and Miss Inness.

"We resided in a house owned by a Mr. Jacob Amend in the neighborhood of a farmer named Steve Lanning, on the street that runs from the Post Office, up by the the mines, and the Kimbals, over the hill to Washington. The family moved away from Oxford about 1880. There were two brothers and 5 three sisters, all have passed away. So I have to try this way to get the real facts."

We have been unable to find any church record of his baptism and birth, so we suggest to Mr. Backhaus to write the Bureau of Health, State House, Trenton New Jersey, giving name of parents, and date and place (supposed) of birth.

His home is in Rockville, Connecticut.



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