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The
BULLETIN

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

OXFORD, NEW JERSEY

By

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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.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. -----Rev. 3:20

"O Searcher of hearts, thou knowest us better than we know ourselves, and seest the sins which our sinfulness hides from us. Yet even our own conscience beareth witness against us, that we often slumber on our appointed watch; that we walk not always lovingly with each other and humbly with thee; and we withhold that entire sacrifice of ourselves to thy perfect will, without which we are not crucified with Christ, or sharers in his redemption.

Oh, look upon our contrition, and lift up our weakness, and let the dayspring yet arise in our hearts, and bring us healing, strength and joy. Day by day may we grow in faith, in self-denial, in charity, in heavenly-mindedness. And then, mingle us at last with the mighty host of thy redeemed for evermore."

Next Thursday the annual Fair and Supper. The latter will be served from 5 P.M. on. Oysters and fine ham to suit all tastes. Many useful and fancy articles will be on sale, and the candy table will be specially fine.

Mrs. Elise Zapp has been so pleased with Mr. Humphrey's Story on the Burial of the Delaware Indians that she has secured five complete copies to send to her friends. Some go to her relatives in Germany. We hope Mr. Humphrey in his modesty will admit that the printing of the story was well justified. Many others have spoken in praise of it. We made extra copies to supply the demand for copies in this way.

Mr. Humphrey is preparing a special article for the Bulletin on the origin of the D.L.&W.R.R. and we hope to print it soon.

The daughters of the late Anton Peterson have made a handsome donation to the Cemetery Association Fund, and the fine spirit in which it is given is to be seen in the letter accompanying the money. It is written by Miss Martha Peterson, and we quote a few sentences:-

"Jane and I thought it over last evening, and decided that it would be nice to make the amount \$25.00 for the Cemetery Fund in memory of our father. . . . As Daddy was so happy when the Cemetery improvement was suggested we know that he would be so pleased to have us give 25.00 to the Cemetery Fund."

The four daughters making this memorial donation are:-

Mrs. Carrie Borgstrom; Mrs Marie Thomas; Mrs. Jane Skov; and Miss Martha Peterson.

If the spirit of this action spreads among the plot owners and friends of the Cemetery, it will facilitate the effort to collect sufficient funds to make the needful improvements in the Cemetery.

The Cemetery Association now owns three fourths of the property, this was made possible by the generous donations by Walter Docker, Mrs Mary Cooper and the Sharp Estate, each owning one fourth share of the property. The other fourth share will we hope be turned over to the Association before very long, when some legal impediments have been overcome.

The interest taken in this much needed improvement is deep and wide spread, and as the Association is so firmly established, with a capable and efficient set of officers and board of trustees, there should be no longer doubt about the ultimate success of the movement.

The next meeting of the Association will take place December 19th, at 2.P.M. in the M.E. Church.

We understand that two funds are to be kept separate, the perpetual care fund, which will be put in a Trust Fund, and only interest to be used; and the General Fund to be used for improvements and upkeep.

The Underground Railroad in Oxford.

There is an old tradition that the Shippen Manor was once one of the stations of the "Underground Railroad," by which fugitive slaves escaped from their southern masters were assisted on their way to Canada, where they were safe from recapture. The tradition has been frequently repeated in print and is commonly believed.

Having given the subject considerable study we state our conclusions on the degree of truth that underlies it.

One feature of it is quite incredible, and that is that a tunnel was dug from the mansion house to the present railroad station.

A few facts will show the absurdity of this part of the story.

In 1861 the Civil War was begun, and thereafter slaves who escaped to the northern states were safe from recapture without going to Canada. And Oxford had no railroad until May 1856, and until 1862 all the trains had to run around the loop which passed by the Mansion house on the north, within twenty feet of the house, so that no tunnel was needed. The tunnel theory is due to the fact that in the basement of the house is a stone walled room without any opening, and that the tunnel started from this secret room. But Mr. Loux who has long occupied the house once entered the room and found no evidence of the tunnel. Probably the room originally was so built to keep vegetables fruits wines etc. in, where the heat from the three big fireplaces in the basement could not warm this store-room. So we must dismiss this part of the story as without foundation.

But on the other hand we are inclined to accept the tradition as based on facts.

The "underground railway" does not necessarily mean that the fugitive slaves were transported by railway trains; for that would expose them to recapture, but it meant secret help given the fugitives in their passage through the States, and this required friendly homes where they

they could be concealed until arrangements were made for them to pass to the next friendly home.

Doubtless they travelled by night and remained concealed by day. This was made necessary because of an Act of Congress which made it unlawful to render them assistance.

What route would the fugitives take who may have stopped at Oxford?

We have a hint of this in a statement of standard histories, which say that the Ohio river was the main route of slaves escaping to Canada from the region of Kentucky. They would row up the river by night and find lodging by day in some known friendly house.

Now slaves escaping from the region of Maryland would make use of the Delaware river in the same manner.

By rowing up the middle of the river in the dark they would easily escape notice, and hide during the day in some "station of the underground railway." Oxford would be well situated for one of these hiding places. They would leave the river at Foul Rift and come through the woods to Oxford.

Another important factor is that of the occupants of the Manor house. The period when fugitives in the greatest numbers made their escape in this way, was from 1830 to 1861, and the house was occupied by the Henry and Scranton families.

They would probably have all been friendly to such fugitives, and like abolitionists of the period glory in such help as a righteous act.

But doubtless too there were fugitives in the earlier times when the house was occupied by the Morris Robeson family who were ardent Quakers, the first advocates of the freedom of the slaves in the country.

It is known that negro slaves were owned by the furnace company from the very first. The slave house near the mansion house was originally built for that purpose in the early Colonial period. So that slaves were kept there during the times of Jonathan Robeson and the Shippens, or until 1809. It is probable too that local negroes, and those in the slave cabin secreted the fugitives and helped them on their way.



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