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*The*  
BULLETIN

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

OXFORD, NEW JERSEY

By

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*Minister*



Oxford Historical Record

What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. -----Psalm 8:4, 5.

"O God, the Protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we may finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy dear Son, our Saviour. Amen."

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Recent visitors in Oxford were Mr. William A. Edwards and sisters of Harrisburg, Pa., who came to see about their old family lot in the Cemetery. They were born here in the 1870s and 1880s, and had not been in Oxford for 52 years.

They in some way heard of the improvement of the Cemetery, and came to arrange for their plot's proper care. They will put up a tombstone and otherwise improve it.

In a letter to Mr. Weston he wrote "I was glad to hear from you as you are an old friend from my birth place. I was pleased with the information about the Cemetery. Mrs Henderson was very kind to us, as well as Mr. Docker."

The mother Elizabeth Edwards died here in 1882 when the lot was obtained; also a brother James died in Oxford. There still survive three sons; Ellsworth, Roscoe and William; and three daughters, Elizabeth (Mrs. Wm. Gluck), Gertrude (Mrs. Walter Atick), and Emily (Mrs. Benj. Whitman). They were members of our Church. The Bulletin trusts they may become regular visitors in Oxford, and especially attend the annual reunions.

Relatives and friends of Elder and Mrs. Kelskey were visitors over last week end, and attended our church service on Sunday morning



History Of Oxford Second  
Presbyterian Church  
(Continued from Bulletin, no. 421)

We have now to deal with the steps taken, which in time led to the independent organization of the Church, and which extended over a period of more than twenty years, from about 1840 to 1863.

The first step of which there a definite record was the organization of a Sunday School.

There has recently been found in the Iron Company's office, a small ledger having the title in the hand writing of S.T. Scranton in these words:-- "Catalogue of Books belonging to the Oxford Furnace Sunday School, Warren County, New Jersey; Sept. 16th, 1843."-----

It contains a list of 114 small books, and also the names of donors of various sums from \$.12½ to \$1.00 toward purchase of the books.

The names were the following:-- S.T. Scranton, John Mysler, Jno. Phenerd, John Lanning, John Schenidau, E.T. Henry, Ellen C. Axford, Charles Scranton, Stephen Lanning, Abram Seiple, Edward Taylor, William Shaffer, Thos. Buckley Jr., Bergen Mysler, Peter Lisk, Sam'l Babcock.

It is reasonable to say that the families of these men largely made up the Sunday School membership at that time, and formed the nucleus of the future church.

Just when the Sunday School was started cannot be determined, but certainly before 1843, and for our purposes may be set at 1840.

The next step in the movement toward organization was to hold religious worship in connection with the Sunday School sessions. This was made possible because the First Church had called a new pastor, Rev. James McWilliams, who was to devote all his time to the one congregation of which Oxford Furnace Presbyterians were a part. It was arranged that Mr. McWilliams should conduct the services in Oxford Furnace probably beginning in the year 1843, and not later than 1844.

This was a most important event, not only because the first time religious services were ever held in Oxford regularly, but more for

reason that it was the beginning of the separate congregational worship of the Oxford Second Presbyterian Church. As the First Church dates its historical beginning in 1744 when they first had ministerial supply, so Oxford 2nd can rightly claim 1844 as its historical beginning. For the First Church was not organized until 1764, 20 years after its beginning, so the Second, one hundred years later, began regular services in 1844, though not independently organized until 1863.

The small congregation began to grow gradually due to the zeal of the new society and the faithful pastoral oversight of their devoted minister. But the local population was limited at that time. A history of the State, published in 1844, says "Oxford Furnace has an iron furnace grist-mill, store, and half a dozen houses." So necessarily the growth of the church was regulated by the increase of the population, which was steady though slow until the 1860s.

However, the church with the hopefulness of youth pushed to greater things; and in 1848 took a most advanced step by erecting a place of worship suitable for the needs of the Sunday School and congregation.

This was the old stone chapel, the first church building ever erected in Oxford. The lot, now occupied by the present chapel and the Manse, was deeded to the Trustees of the First Church by Judge Wm. P. Robeson and wife, on December 30th, 1848.

The deed was in fee simple, with no reversion clause.

That old building had a notable career of public usefulness unique in the history of Oxford. For eleven years it was the only church house, and it was the social center and the fountain of culture for the community. Some of the most noted of the lecturers in the nation were brought here to instruct the local people in various lines of culture and reform. Among them was the famous Temperance leader, Miss Frances E. Willard. Our authority for this is Mrs. O. N. Perry, who says: "We had many fine lectures from noted speakers and college professors... Many people from Scranton and New York City were frequent visitors (over



at our Church services. Among them Mr. William E. Doge."

And after the brick church was erected the public school was held in it until the brick school house was built. And through the forty years of its existence the Sunday School met in it, beside many small religious and all the social meetings of the church were held in it.

And within its hallowed walls the Second Presbyterian Church of Oxford was organized in 1863.

This historic building was torn down in 1884 to make room for the present frame chapel, and the stone used in the basement walls of the new edifice.

During the period from 1840 to 1863 the church was a part of and under the care of the First Church, and no doubt owed much of its prosperity to the mother church, in supplying a pastor and in financial aid in the construction of the old chapel.

The two ministers of this time were Rev. James McWilliams and Rev. Dr. Frederick K. Knighton, whose names should never be forgotten in the history of our church. Mr. McWilliams was an able and greatly beloved pastor and the small group of members at the beginning rallied to his leadership, and so made possible the building of the church in 1848, which was then a really great undertaking. Mr. McWilliams was succeeded as pastor in 1854, by Dr. Knighton, whose pastorate both at the First church and in Oxford was one of extraordinary success.

He was pastor of the First Church 20 years - the longest in its history, and his successor wrote:- "Dr. Knighton's ministry, judged by the record, must ever be regarded as one of the most memorable in the annals of this Church. . . Not seldom he preached four times a day; beginning here at this church he would make the circuit of the Furnace, Serepta, Delaware; usually by foot."

He was a very learned man and in addition to the regular sermons, he frequently gave lectures of public interest in the old chapel.

It was in his pastorate the Oxford Second was organized.

(to be continued)



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*Elders*

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