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The
BULLETIN

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

OXFORD, NEW JERSEY

By

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Minister



Oxford Historical Record

For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

---Isaiah 30:15

"O Lord, whose favor is life, and in whose presence there is fulness of peace and joy; vouchsafe unto us such an abiding sense of the reality and glory of those things Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee, as may serve to raise us above the vanity of this present world, both in its pleasures and in its necessary trials and pains; so that under Thy guidance and help all things here shall work together for eternal salvation. Amen."

Next Sabbath morning we will observe the Lord's Supper. It will be our Summer Communion Service and the last until October. Let us all plan to be present to honor the memory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As announced there will be no morning Worship on Sunday July 30, but there will be Sunday School at 9:30 to which all are invited.

The Sunday School will have no sessions in August, but so far as our present plans go, there will be a morning Worship each Sabbath at 10:30.

The death of Mrs. Edna Scharrer Connelly, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Scharrer, of Oxford, on Sunday July 9th, at Plainfield, N.J.

She was in the prime of life and in vigorous health, but became the victim of pneumonia.

The funeral was from the Ford funeral home in Wash. N.J. and interment in the Wash. Cemetery, on Wednesday afternoon, July 12th.

While our contributors are enjoying their summer vacations, the Editor will tell about the discovery of the new documents on which to base a new history of the Furnace, beginning in this issue.

Documents for a History of Old Oxford Furnace

When the Old Oxford Furnace was deeded to the State of New Jersey in October 1935, the Commission on Historic Sites sent the following dispatch to the New York Times:-

"Edgewater Park N.J. Nov. 2nd, 1935.
"The Old Oxford Furnace in Oxford, Warren County, where cannon balls were cast during the Revolutionary War, and which, in 1839, passed into the hands of George and Selden Scranton, for whom the city of Scranton, Pa. was named, will be restored as the only historic industrial plant owned and preserved by the State of New Jersey. Old military headquarters, inns, mansions, and birthplaces publicly owned and maintained, dot New Jersey from the Delaware River to the Hudson. The Furnace, however, will be unique, as it will be a memorial to the rise and development of American industry."

In view of the important place this old monument is sure to attain in State and National history, the necessity of a full and accurate historical account of it becomes a pressing need. This is especially the case because all printed notices of its early history are meager in detail and generally inaccurate.

This is strange and unaccountable considering the statement of J.M. Swank (Iron in All Ages, 1884, page 118) that "It is the second furnace in New Jersey of which there is any exact record, Shrewsbury being the first." Mr. Swank was evidently well informed about the sources for a history of the early period of the furnace.

But now it is possible to supply an adequate history based on newly discovered official documents, covering the entire period of the furnace from 1741 when it was first begun to 1884 when it was finally blown out. All these documents have been discovered in the past four years, that is, since the furnace became the property of the State; though the search for such records was begun two years earlier. And as the owners of the furnace in the colonial period were residents of

Philadelphia we thought it likely that some clue might be found there in the records of those two families, the Robeson and Shippen.

Our search began there at the Museum of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, in 1935, and there we found one of the most important documents bearing on Oxford history. This was the Will of Dr. William Shippen, always known as the Elder. It was the original manuscript written in his own hand writing. It was dated Sept. 1, 1783. The section on Oxford Furnace lands reads as follows:-

"I give, devise and bequeath unto my son Joseph all my lands in Sussex County, in New Jersey, which I purchased of Jonathan Robeson and my brother Joseph Shippen, called Oxford furnace lands with all the improvements thereon, containing about five thousand acres of land more or less, Viz. the Furnace tract, bought of Wm. Coxe, contains 578 acres, Vansants tract 250 acres with allowance, Jona. Coxe and Comp'y tract 1000 acres, Loftus tract 1300 acres, mine tract 100 acres, Fulsome tract 100, Pine Swamp tract 100, Sam'l Smith tract 205 acres, Lime kiln tract 140 acres, Richley's Place & Durham, resurveyed for Wm. Shippen, 315 acres. Also Swamp tract 674 acres, and one acre on the Delaware for landing, etc."

The most surprizing thing in this statement was that he had purchased the lands of "Jonathan Robeson and my brother Joseph."

Now no historian had ever mentioned this Joseph (who was six years older than William) in connection with the furnace history. This new name among the owners left us much puzzled, and naturally stirred our curiosity, and the spirit of the chase was upon us.

As Oxford was a part of Sussex county from 1753 to 1824, we thought of hunting for records there; and a few months later a search in the Sussex county court house in Newtown we found an old lawsuit against one Henry Slaughter for trespass (damages) brought by Joseph Shippen & Co. This was in the year 1755, and the summons were executed by the Sheriff, Maurice Robeson, son of Jonathan Robeson! In the complaint the
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names of the owners were given in full many times and were, Joseph Shippen, Jonathan Robeson and William Shippen. This was the official title of the company, and proves that Joseph Shippen was the principal owner at that time.

But this only complicated the case; for all the histories assume that Jonathan Robeson had bought the land on which he erected the furnace.

Then how did Joseph Shippen come to be the principal owner in 1755?

We had to wait nearly a year before finding a clue that led to the solution of the puzzle.

In September 1936 we renewed the search for data at Newton, and made our greatest discovery in finding four Indentures (Deeds) which give all the facts from 1745 to Dr. Wm. Shippen's Will in 1783. (Book H.)

The first and most important was the deed of Jonathan Robeson which conveyed to Dr. Wm. Shippen one fourth interest in 6 of the 8 tracts and one sixth in the two others.

But our concern is with the furnace tract of 578 acres, of which $\frac{1}{4}$ interest was sold. Robeson states that he purchased one half interest in this tract from Joseph Shippen in 1745. This deed of 1749 left Robeson with only $\frac{1}{4}$ interest in the furnace tract, which he advertised for sale in 1756.

So the conclusion is inevitable that Robeson never owned the controlling interest in the furnace, and that the tract belonged from the first to the Shippen family.

The other three deeds were as follows. Jonathan Robeson to Dr. Wm. Shippen, all the rest of Robeson's interest in the furnace lands; this was in 1762. There were two deeds by which Joseph Shippen conveyed all his interests in the furnace and lands to his brother Dr. Wm. Shippen, dated 1765 and 1766.

Thus Dr. Wm. Shippen became the sole owner of the furnace properties, and remained so until his death in 1801. This Dr. Wm. Shippen, the Elder, was a great patriot, a member of the Continental Congress, a trustee of Princeton College, and a member and a trustee of the 2nd, Presbyterian Church of Phila. Pa.

(to be continued)



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