

477

The  
BULLETIN

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

OXFORD, NEW JERSEY

By

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*Minister*



Oxford Historical Record

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The Lord Reigneth; let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the establishment of his throne. - - - - Psalm 97:1,2.

"Almighty God, we beseech thee, grant unto thy people grace that they may wait with vigilance for the Coming of thy Son our Lord, that when He shall arise from Thy right hand to visit the earth in righteousness and thy people with salvation, He may not find us sleeping in sin, but diligent in thy service, and rejoicing in thy praise, that so we may enter with Him into the joy of paradise of thy eternal life and glory. Amen."

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Among the callers at the Manse the past week were the Rev. Irving Maxwell, who was pastor of this Church from 1887 to 1895, his wife and daughter, and mother Mrs. O. N. Perry, who is in her 98th year; and yet they drove from South Jersey, to Newton, and stopped in Oxford on their way home? They are seemed well and happy, and blest us with their cheerful greetings.

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Also a pleasant visit by Mrs. Althea Bibbinger, of Philadelphia, who has been visiting with her mother and her brother John E. Bibbinger at Changewater.

Much of her early life was spent in Oxford, and lived with kin' folks, Mr. Aaron W. Davis and wife, both of whom were school teachers in Oxford.

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We appreciate a note from Philip W. Henry, in reference to the Manuckchuck Club, saying, "I have no recollection of the club, or my being its guest; I left Oxford when I was 16 years of age; and though my mother and younger members of my family remained there several years longer my visits to Oxford were not frequent, and it is quite possible that on one of these occasions I may have been a guest of the Club."



Mrs. Ella Blackwell passed away at the age of 72, in St. Luke's Hospital, Bethlehem, Pa., on August 30th, after an illness of several months.

She was the daughter of Philip Repp, and born at Mt. Hope, N. J.

In 1882 she was married to William E. Blackwell, Rev. E. C. Cline performing the ceremony.

She was received into our Church in 1892, by letter from the 2nd, Presbyterian Church, Scranton, Pa., according to our church records.

During her long widowhood she resided in or near N. Y. City, but of late has made her home with her sister, Mrs. Mary Martinus, in Bethlehem, Pa. Another surviving sister is Mrs. Herbert Weston, of South Orange, N. J.

Interment was in the cemetery at Hazen, N. J. Saturday, 11. A. M. Sept. 2nd.

The services at the grave at her own request were conducted by the pastor of this church.

#### George Little

Mr. George Little died at his home in Oxford, August, 31st, in the 70th year of his age. He was born in Oxford, and spent nearly all his life here. He was the son of William B. Little and his wife Amanda Shafer.

He was an employee of the Oxford Iron Company. At the age of 15 he worked in the casting room of the old furnace, and was one of those employed there during the last cast in 1885. The alarm clock that hung in the casting room was ever after a cherished possession which he promised for the old furnace museum when established.

He leaves a daughter, Mrs. John Rankin of Oxford, and a son, Lester, of Washington, N. J., besides one brother and four sisters.

He was a faithful member of the Methodist Church, but in the absence his pastor, the funeral services were conducted by the pastor of this church, from the Ford funeral Home in Wash. N. J., with burial in the Cemetery there, on Saturday 3:30, P. M. Sept. 2nd. Thus pass two more old Oxford citizens, descendants of very old and respected families.

In Bulletin No. 107, February 14th, 1932, Mr. George S. Humphrey had an article on the Furnace history in which he said:--

"It is related, though not on very good authority, that for some years before the blast furnace was built in 1741, a 'Catalan Forge' was operated on the same site; the bars produced being hauled to Foul Rift on the Delaware River, loaded on Durham boats and transported to Philadelphia."

As Mr. Humphrey did not give the source of the tradition we presume he heard it from the Scrantons, and they would have gotten it from the Robesons. If such were the fact we think it is worthy of serious consideration. For if true, it supplies an answer to a vital question concerning the history of the furnace.

But before explaining this statement, it will help to a better understanding of the discussion, if we explain just what a Catalan Forge was in those early times.

The construction was very simple. A pit was dug in the ground, about two feet deep, and lined with fire-resisting brick or stone. Above this was erected a larger stone structure of four walls, one of which was pierced for the tuyere or blast pipe of copper. In this structure the ore and fuel were placed, and ~~smelted~~ producing iron in small quantities. The Catalan forge was then a very small blast furnace, and in fact it was a very simple matter to enlarge and improve it into the standard furnace.

Now it is known that in the early days of the iron business in this region, it was customary to test iron ore when and where it was discovered, by building a Catalan forge for without great expense this could be done and so determine the quality of the ore. Then when it was found to be of satisfactory quality and quantity, a furnace was erected on the site of the forge.

So we think it highly probable that a Catalan forge was built on the site of the old furnace, and operated for some time until the extent of the lode and kind of iron it would produce was fully (over)



determined and widely known among iron men.

Now without such a development here, it seems very unlikely that Jonathan Robeson would have undertaken to erect the furnace here at great expense of time and money.

From his home in Philadelphia to the furnace was a long two days trip on horse-back through almost pathless forests in which were a few scattered settlers.

Suppose he had been told by his neighbor, Joseph Shippen Sr. who owned the land, that there was iron ore here in Oxford. That would not have interested Mr. Robeson, for he knew that iron ore was found in many places in eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. His own father had built a forge not far above Valley Forge, Pa., and he still owned it.

But if Mr. Shippen could show him samples of the iron and ore, and tell him about the Catalan forge, the richness of the ore, the near by stream to make the blast, then Mr. Robeson would surely be interested enough to make the trip here and examine it thoroughly for himself.

But if he had by chance come here before the ore had been tested, or a forge had been built, it is not probable that he would have taken the chance and trouble of determining that himself.

So we feel rather certain that the tradition of the Catalan Forge is well founded.

And we have a satisfactory answer to the question of how Mr. Robeson learned about the iron ore here, and as to who first told him we need not inquire, for all iron men would have heard of rich ore deposit; and possibly other iron men actually came to examine it, or even sought to get the contract to build the furnace here.

Another interesting conclusion is, that, if the tradition be correct, the history of the Oxford iron business must be set back several years earlier, in the 1730s. But of course it is hardly probable that evidence to prove it beyond doubt will ever be discovered. Yet it is a very interesting speculation to those who care much for such matters.



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