

HISTORY
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN TRENTON, N. J.

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT OF THE TOWN

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of the southeast corner. The foundation, though much more extensive, is laid nearly on the site of the old church, which stood about eighty years."¹

While the building was in progress, Mr. Armstrong preached on every alternate Sabbath in the Episcopal Church, the rector of which (Dr. Waddell) had a second charge at Bristol, as Mr. Armstrong had at Maidenhead.

The new church was opened for its sacred uses August 17, 1806. The pastor conducted the services in the morning, and President S. S. Smith in the afternoon.²

The pastor preached from part of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple: 1 Kings 8:22, 23, 27-30. At the next public service in which he officiated, he preached on the conduct becoming worshippers in the house of God, from Hebrews 10:25 and Job 13:11. This subject was pursued in a third discourse on public worship as a duty to God, to society, to ourselves. For the services of the dedication, Mr. Armstrong prepared a prayer; and in the belief that on its own account, as well as for its historical associations, it will be read with interest and benefit by the people who worship in a house, which, though not the same as the one then dedicated, was included in the references of its supplications, I here insert it:

PRAYER.

"Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty. There is no God like thee in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart. Thou art our God, and we would praise thee; our father's God, and we would exalt thee.

"Thou art the God who hearest prayer. Where shall we go but to thee, who art the way, the truth, and the life?

"We adore thee for all the mercies and benefits which thou hast conferred on us through our lives. But especially we adore thee for the everlasting Gospel, and those gracious privileges to which we are called in thy Church on earth, and in thy Church in heaven. We adore thee that thy Church is founded on the rock Christ Jesus, and that the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against it. We

adore thee for the promise of thy presence to thy Church and people, that where two or three are met together in thy name, thou wilt be with them to bless them. We adore thee, O Lord, that when the place where our fathers had long worshipped was decaying with age, and the congregation of thy people needed room and accommodation in thy house, thou didst put it into our hearts to build a house for thy worship and service, and where thy people may meet and enjoy thy presence. We adore thee that thou hast permitted us to meet to set it apart, and dedicate it to the Lord our God by preaching, prayer, and praise.

“And now, O Lord, our God, we thus offer this house to thee; that thy people may here meet for purposes of reading, preaching, and hearing thy word; of prayer and praise; of fasting and thanksgiving; of the administration of baptism and the Lord’s supper, agreeably to the word of God and the constitution of our Church.

“And now, O Lord, make this house continue to be the habitation of the God of Jacob forever; a place where prayer shall be ever made to thee, and where Gospel worship shall be fixed and stated as long as it shall last for this purpose; and that there never may fail a people and a congregation to worship thee in this place throughout all generations.

“We pray that thou wilt be pleased to give success to the labors of the ministers of the Gospel in this place; accompanying the means of grace with divine power and energy, making the administration of the Gospel effectual to convince and convert, establish and sanctify thy people.

“And now, O Lord, our God, make it good for us that we have built a house for thy worship. But as the most sumptuous works of our hands can not communicate any holiness to the worshipper, make it good for us to draw near to God in the assembling of ourselves together at all commanded, fixed, and proper times in this place. Enable us, thy people of this congregation, and all who may worship with us in this place, collectively and individually, to dedicate ourselves unto the Lord; to present our souls, and our bodies, and our spirits unto the Lord as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service; to concentrate our time, our talents, our privileges, and opportunities, with all we have and are, to thy service; that each of us, and each of our families, with all who are near and dear to us, may prepare an habitation in our hearts and souls for God, and that our bodies may be the temples of the Holy Ghost.

“And we do most earnestly pray that all our offenses may be blotted out; that we may be washed in the blood of Christ; that the vows and offerings, the prayers and the praises which we and our posterity offer up now, and in all future time, may be accepted through the merits and intercession of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and made effectual for our and their salvation.

“Let thy grace and thy Spirit, O Lord our God, be with us to direct, assist, and strengthen us in all the prayers and supplications that we now and in future may offer in this place. Be graciously pleased to vouchsafe us thy presence herein continually. Hearken, O Lord, to the prayers and supplications of me thy servant, and of these thy people, in all times and in all circumstances, and in all places where we may pray in, or as towards this place; and when thou hearest answer us in mercy.

“If we sin—for no man liveth and sinneth not—and turn and repent, hear and forgive our sins, O Lord!

“If the love of thy people wax cold; if our grace languish, faint, and be ready to expire, give renewed faith, grace, and love.

“Hear us, O Lord, if we pray to be delivered from drought, famine, war, pestilence, disease, or death.

“Hear us, O Lord, if we pray to be delivered from blasting, mildew, and whatsoever might threaten to prevent or destroy the harvest.

“Hear us, O Lord, when we pray for all schools, colleges, and seminaries of learning;

“For our nation and country;

“For all who bear rule and authority over us;

“For peace and prosperity;

“For all missionaries and missionary labors throughout the world; that the Jews may be gathered, and the fullness of the Gentiles may come in; that the land of Ethiopia and the heathen may be given for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession to Christ Jesus.

“Hear, O Lord, and hasten the time when all the families of the earth shall be blessed in Christ our Lord, and when his knowledge and his righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

“Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting place, Thou and the ark of Thy strength. Let Thy priests, O Lord, be clothed with righteousness, the ministers of Thy religion with salvation. Let Thy saints shout for joy, and Thy people rejoice in goodness.

“Blessed be the Lord God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As He was with our fathers, so let Him be with us. Let Him not leave us nor forsake us; and incline our hearts to do all things according to His holy will.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; peace be within these walls, prosperity within this place. For my brethren and companions' sakes I will now say, peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee!

“The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee.

“The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

“And in testimony of the sincerity of our desires, and in humble hope of being heard, let all the people say, AMEN.”

A sketch of the new Church was made from memory, by the late Dr. F. A. Ewing, who wrote of it:

"Elevation seemed to be the great object to be attained, and so the walls were carried up to a height which would now be thought excessive. Its galleries were supported on lofty columns, and in consequence its pulpit was so high as sometimes to threaten dizziness to the preacher's head. Above the gallery the vaulted ceiling afforded almost room enough for another church. It had its tower, its belfry and bell, still sweet and melodious,³ its spire, which, had it been proportioned in height to the tower supporting it, would have ascended needle-like almost to the clouds. With all its architectural defects, however, it was a fine old building, well adapted to the purposes of speaking and hearing; filled an important office, both to the congregation and on public occasions; stood for years the chief landmark to miles of surrounding country, and at last resisted sternly the efforts of its destroyers. Its site, on the southwest corner of the graveyard, is well defined by the old graves and tombs which clustered close to its northern and eastern sides, and is the only part of the ground divided into burial lots."

Alas! before this manuscript could be brought to the use for which it was prepared, the body of its accomplished writer was occupying a grave in the very part of the churchyard described in its closing sentence.⁴

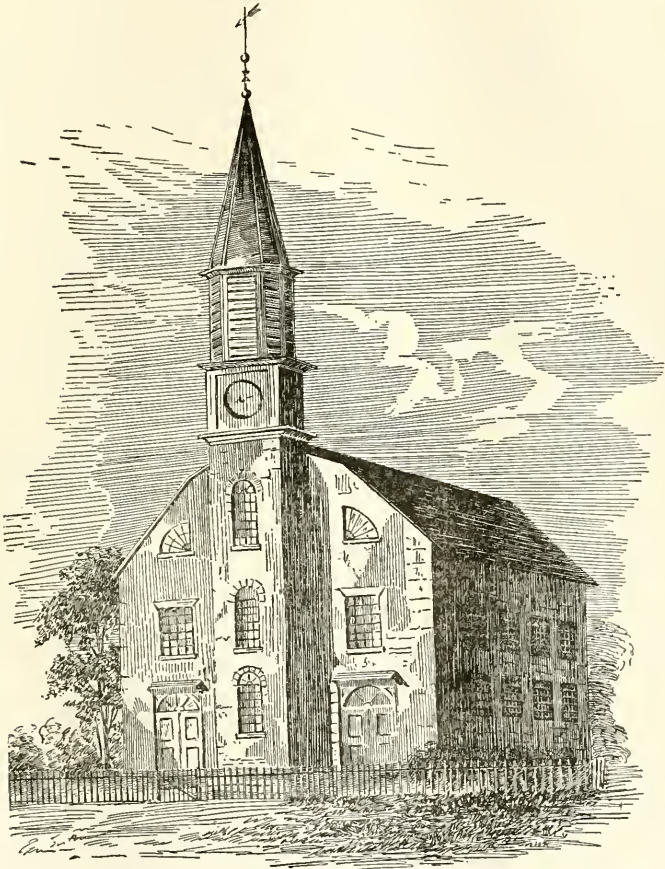
The building was of brick, and cost ten thousand eight hundred and twenty dollars. It had seventy-two pews on the floor, divided by two aisles, and thirty-six in the gallery. Forty-six were put at the annual rent of twelve dollars; eighteen larger ones at fourteen dollars. The gallery pews were free, and one side was reserved for colored persons.⁵

NOTES.

I.

MASKELL EWING, named in this chapter, belonged to what is now the widespread family of Ewing in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Maryland. Thomas Maskell, of England, married Bythia Parsons in Connecticut, in 1658. Thomas Stathem, of England, married Ruth

Udell, in New England, in 1671. Maskell's son married Stathem's daughter. *Their* daughter was married in 1720 to Thomas Ewing, who had recently come to Greenwich, West Jersey, from Ireland. Their eldest son was Maskell (1721), who was at different times, Justice of the Peace, Clerk and Surrogate of Cumberland county,



Sheriff, and Judge of the Pleas, and died in 1796. One of his ten children was the Maskell Ewing, of Trenton. He was born January 30, 1758; in his youth he assisted his father in the clerkship in Greenwich, and before he was twenty-one was elected Clerk of the State Assembly. This brought him to Trenton, and he filled the office for twenty years. He was for a time Recorder of the city, and also read law in the office of William C. Houston. In 1803 he removed to

Philadelphia, and in 1805 to a farm in Delaware county, Pennsylvania. He represented that county in the State Senate for six years. He died on a visit to Greenwich, August 26, 1825. His son Maskell was born in 1806, was a lieutenant in the army, and has died within a few years.

Among the branches of the Ewing stock was the family of the Rev. John Ewing, D.D., Provost of the University of Pennsylvania (1779-1803), and pastor of the First Church of Philadelphia. On our session records of September 17, 1808, are the names of "Margaret and Amelia, daughters of the late Rev. Dr. Ewing," as then admitted to their first communion, and May 6, 1808, "Mrs. Dr. Ewing" to the same.

II.

Not long after the establishment of the congregation in their new house, two of the oldest Trustees, both corporators of 1788, were removed by death, namely, MOORE FURMAN and ISAAC SMITH. A notice of Mr. Smith has already been given.

MR. FURMAN was one of the successful merchants of Trenton. In the Revolution he served as a Deputy Quartermaster-General. He was the first Mayor of Trenton, by appointment of the Legislature, upon its incorporation, in 1792.

Mr. Furman was elected a Trustee June 12, 1760, and Treasurer in 1762. Soon after that year he removed to Pittstown, and afterwards to Philadelphia. He returned to Trenton, and was re-elected to the Board in 1783, and continued in it until his death, March 16, 1808, in his eightieth year. His grave-stone is in the porch of the present church.⁶

Though so long connected with the temporal affairs of the congregation, Mr. Furman was not a communicant until November 1, 1806. He made a written request of Mr. Armstrong that in case he should be called to officiate at his funeral he would speak from the words: "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." (Psalm 31.) This request was faithfully followed in the body of the discourse, to which the Pastor added as follows:

"This congregation well know his long and faithful services as a zealous supporter and Trustee of the concerns and interests of this Church. In the revolution he was known as a faithful friend of his country, and was intrusted by government and the Commander-in-Chief of our revolutionary army—whose friendship was honor indeed—in offices and in departments the most profitable and the most important. When bending beneath the load of years and infirmities, how did it gladden his soul and appear to renew his life, to see this edifice rising from the ruins of the old one and consecrated to the service of his God! And did you not see him, shortly after its consecration, as a disciple of his Redeemer recognizing his baptismal