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PRINCETON HYMNS.

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In the literary product of the sons of Princeton Seminary, there is naturally included a good deal of religious verse. Few varieties of religious verse—from epigrams to epics—have been wholly neglected. But, as was to be expected, a considerable part of it takes the form of hymns. A large number of these hymns have been occasional in their origin, have served their purpose, and have passed out of sight. A not inconsiderable number of them, however, have taken their places in the permanent hymnody of, at least, the Presbyterian Church. In this “centennial year,” when Princeton Seminary is reviewing its work of an hundred years and, as it were, “taking stock” of the services it has rendered the Church and the Churches, it is worth while, perhaps, to endeavor to estimate with some exactness the contribution it has made to the hymnody of the Church also.

The most natural way of doing this is to pass in review the Hymn Books which have been most widely in use in the Presbyterian churches for the last fifty years or so, and note the hymns of Princeton men which have found place in them. We have therefore examined, with this end in view, a series of Presbyterian Hymn Books and, in order to get a little wider view, have added to them a few other very

EARLY HISTORY OF EVENTS LEADING TO ORGANIZATION OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF MAUCH CHUNK, PENNA.

BY KATE MCVICKER SMITH.

It gives me much pleasure to comply with your¹ wish for a sketch of the early history of this church, or rather of events leading to its organization. I, too, realize that its foundation was laid long ago, in the lives of the men and women identified with the early days of Mauch Chunk. Its history is a legacy of the past, due to the present and to the future. Realizing that I am now probably the only person living possessing accurate knowledge, even at second hand, of the religious events that preceded the establishment of this church, it gives me pleasure to comply. My father and mother were not only among the first active Christian workers, but were the last survivors of that noble band. I am well aware that, unfortunately, much interesting history is now absolutely beyond recall. But, I gladly contribute my mite.

The early story of Mauch Chunk from the secular side is already on record. It has been and still is being repeated in our western land and in our new possessions, as may be seen in the development of their mineral wealth. The discovery of coal made Pennsylvania rich. The existence of vast beds of anthracite near Mauch Chunk was known to a few scientific men in Philadelphia, and the possibility of using it in the manufacture of iron had to a limited degree been demonstrated by Messrs. White and Hazard in their wire mill on the Schuylkill. With true business instinct they secured a land patent, for some twenty thousand acres of coal land at and near Summit Hill, land originally patented to Jacob

¹ This paper contains the substance of a communication addressed by the writer to the Rev. James Cattanaach.

Weiss for his services in the Revolutionary War. The firm of White, Hazard & Hauto was incorporated at Harrisburg 1818, for the navigation of the Lehigh River. They were confronted by almost insurmountable difficulties, which to many minds spelled absolute failure; yet all were successfully overcome by the keen intellect and mechanical skill of White and Hazard; for Hauto soon dropped out. Previous to 1820, the men employed in this arduous work, left their wives and families at home, unwilling to expose them to the hardships they must face. About the year 1825 or 1826, Messrs. Isaac Salkield and Archibald McVicker followed the fortunes of their employees, bringing their families with them. Other early arrivals were Charles Sturgiss and wife, William Butler and family, James Bigger, wife and foster-son, George W. Smith, William Sayre and three sons, William Zane's family, and James McCrea. At this time, Mrs. Josiah White joined her husband. The ladies not only missed the social and religious life enjoyed at home, but early recognized the baleful influences surrounding the young in a town without Sabbath and sanctuary privileges. After much study and earnest prayer, a few women determined they would try to remedy this condition of affairs. They met in the home of Mrs. Sturgiss and decided to start a school for Bible study and prayer. In our day one would not expect any hesitation about the name for such a school, but sectarianism was rampant then. To call it a "Sunday School," would savor of Episcopacy or Methodism; "Sabbath School" would be decidedly Presbyterian, and thus antagonize both. The Friends elsewhere had already pre-empted "First Day," so these Christian, peace-loving women decided it should be called a "Lord's Day School." Thus they opposed no church, while all could unite, as they did. An assembly room was a more formidable question, for no suitable place could be suggested. The Misses McVicker and Salkield were detailed for that duty. After many futile efforts, they called on James McCrea in his wheelwright shop at the "Bear Trap," one of the odd names bestowed by the pioneers of that day. Mr. White had invented a peculiar

sluice for a lock then being built on the canal, which he was testing on the creek at that spot. Bears were numerous, and when some curious people asked the men what they were doing, one bright fellow replied, "Making a bear trap." The name stuck for many years. Our town hall now occupies the site.

When they told their errand, Mr. McCrea replied, "Well, ladies, it is surely time something was being done for the ladies. You say you can't find a place; what is the matter with my shop? It is large and light." "But," said they, "where would people sit?" "I'll soon fix that," was his genial answer. "Saturday, when work is done, I'll sweep out the shop and make seats with these clean planks. Come around then and I'll show you." The ladies gladly accepted his kind offer. Saturday, when they came to inspect, they were delighted with the large airy room, well filled with seats, which, however, had no backs. Sabbath morning a goodly attendance, including several men, encouraged the hearts of these faithful women.

The Lord's Day School was successfully opened, and a meeting for organization called for the next evening at Mr. Bigger's, when Mr. James Bigger was chosen Superintendent, Miss Jean McVicker, Secretary and Treasurer. A small fund for necessary supplies was raised, which Miss McVicker secured through Rev. James P. Engles, from the Sunday School Union in Philadelphia. Miss McVicker's letter telling of the great need for such a school, its organization and aims, resulted in a gift from him of twelve dollars' worth of books toward a library that formed the nucleus of a good one in the future. Probably the first result of this movement was a neat frame church, the pulpit being open to all denominations. It eventually became the property of the Methodists, who were the first body to organize. A change in the working force of the school occurred in April, 1827, when Mr. G. W. Smith and Miss Jean McVicker were married and she retired, her husband succeeding to her duties. A Christian home grew up around a family altar, soon becoming a center of usefulness and a minister's home, open to God's servants

of all churches, especially Presbyterians. Among the men whose unseen influence still remains was Brother Abel, who preached the first Methodist sermon in Mauch Chunk. His home was in the Butler family. Brother Abel lacked what in that day was a very essential qualification of a Methodist Episcopal preacher—he could not sing; but when enthused by good singing he was wont to cry out, “Sing on, brethren, sing on”; “Hallelujah.” “When we all get to heaven Brother Abel will sing, too.” Another of the early influences was Rev. James Gayley, a Presbyterian minister. He was deeply interested in the Lord’s Day School, and in the cause of temperance. Through his influence, the social glass was banished from my father’s table and sideboard, at a time when it was universally used, and when not to offer it to a guest was to appear mean and stingy.

In the providence of God, Rev. James May, rector of the Episcopal Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., came to Mauch Chunk seeking members of that fold who might be stranded there. On the 28th of November, 1834, he held the first Episcopal service in this town. His sermon on that occasion resulted in the establishment of two churches (of very different types—Episcopal and Presbyterian) during the next year. Among his hearers was Mr. G. W. Smith, one of the early workers in the Lord’s Day School, who, because there was no Presbyterian church within reach, had never united with any church. Mr. May’s sermon convinced him that it was his duty to confess publicly the faith that was in him. My mother was a member of a Presbyterian church in Philadelphia. She suggested that he write to Rev. Mr. Gray, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Easton. My father did so, stating why he wished to unite with that church; also telling of a number of Presbyterians here who were like sheep without a shepherd. Mr. Gray’s reply was a cordial invitation to unite with his church at the approaching communion. The invitation was gladly accepted. My father went to Easton, was examined, baptized, and received into the First Presbyterian Church of Easton. When Mr. Gray went to the next meeting of Newton Presbytery, he took

that letter with him, and eloquently pictured the zeal of that young man, shown by traveling thirty miles over very bad roads for the privilege, and dwelt on the shepherdless condition of those children of the church, pleading for some one to break to them the bread of life. On motion of Rev. John Gray, a committee consisting of three ministers, Messrs. Gray, Candy and Junkin, and Elders McKean and Green, was authorized to visit the field, and if the way were clear, organize a church. I wonder if in our day of privilege we can understand the emotion with which this little band of Presbyterians received, through Dr. Gray's letter to my father, the glad news that their prayer had been answered, or the cheerful alacrity with which they prepared to receive the committee. Summit Hill was visited and canvassed; all Christians of like faith found there were invited to unite in the new organization, which they readily agreed to do. At the time fixed for the visit, October 30, 1835, only two of the committee, Rev. Dr. D. X. Junkin and Elder Enoch Green, were able to be present. Piloted by Mr. Smith, they visited Summit Hill, where they found eight Presbyterians ready to unite with Mauch Chunk. They could give but little time to a slight investigation of the coal opening, and in company with the Summit Hill contingent, enjoyed their first, and very novel ride on a gravity railroad. Next day, November 1, the First Presbyterian Church of Mauch Chunk was organized, and three elders, Messrs. James Bigger, John Simpson and G. W. Smith were ordained. Early removals soon left my father the only elder, but always the efficient co-worker, firm friend and loyal supporter of Rev. Richard Webster, the first pastor. Once for four years and again for two he was alone in the eldership. Compatibility of temper, ever-increasing friendship and devotion to God's service, made the bond between them unusually strong, helpful and very dear. Though but seven years of age then, your writer retains a vivid recollection of that event, of their ordination and her own baptism with several other children.

This brings me to the beginning of Miss Webster's able and very interesting history of this church. One unimportant

mistake crept into Dr. Junkin's sermon on the fiftieth anniversary. Naturally he supposed, because my father was baptized when received into the Easton church, that that was about the date of his conversion. Before his marriage he was an earnest, active Christian, but he was an orphan and had no record of his baptism; hence the rite was administered at that time.

Asking Miss Webster's pardon for venturing on this explanation, not criticism, of her admirably written history, these notes are submitted, hoping they may add something to the interest of the approaching seventy-fifth anniversary.