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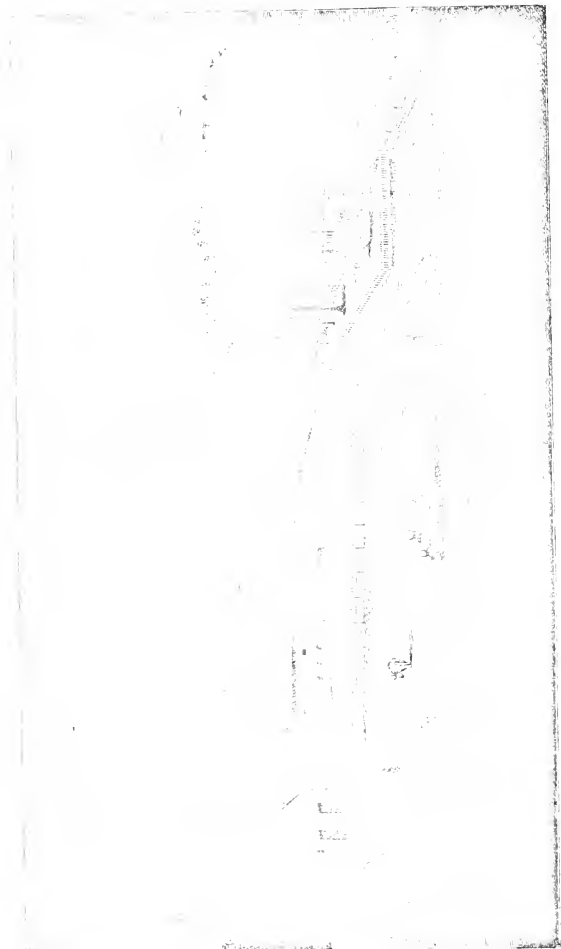
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THE ANNIN HOMESTEAD.



Centennial Celebration

BY THE

ANNIN FAMILY

AT

THE OLD STONE HOUSE

IN

SOMERSET COUNTY, N. J.

August 15th, 1866.



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FOR

FERDINAND J. DREER

A FAMILY GATHERING.

It was in the summer of the year eighteen hundred and sixty-six, and in one of the central counties of New Jersey, that there occurred a Centennial Celebration, of a character rare in this young country of ours, full as it is of change and movement.

The scene of this celebration was an old STONE HOUSE, some fifty feet in front, by forty in depth, with substantial walls, wide hall, and large open stairway. It stands, embowered in trees, in one of the prettiest little valleys of the State, through which flows a small stream, a branch of the headwaters of the Passaic. The country around it, pleasing in its variety of elevations and depressions, is in part fertile and well cultivated, giving evidence of industry and thrift; in part rugged and rocky, unfruitful save in shrub and bush and brier.

Close by is the village of Liberty Corner,* and,

* Originally called "Annan Corner," the name being changed in those Revolutionary days when liberty was the one thought of the people, probably by the owner of the Stone House himself.

some three or four miles off, beautifully situated on a high ridge with a charming prospect, is Baskenridge,* a place of some historic note. It gave to the Revolutionary Army one of its bravest and most disinterested general officers, and to the Cabinet of President Monroe one of its ablest members.† In its vicinity still stands the handsome, spacious mansion which, when the "Stone House" was in progress of erection, was the residence of William Alexander, better known under the title of Lord Sterling, as rightful heir to the Scottish Earldom of that name. This country seat was then surrounded by extensive grounds, including a handsome garden, and a spacious park, stocked with deer. In its stables were horses, whose breed and beauty were the pride of their wealthy owner.

Lord Sterling was one of Washington's Major Generals, and Senior Officer of the Revolutionary Army from New Jersey. When the Stone House was but nine years old, he gained from Congress, for his gallantry in capturing an armed British transport, one of the first votes of thanks ever passed by that body.

Six months later the inmates of the same village home were startled by far greater news,—the greatest and most exciting, indeed, that ever stirred the

* Now commonly written *Baskingridge*.

† Samuel L. Southard, born at Baskenridge in 1787.

hearts of a nation. When that Stone House was first built, it stood in an English Colony—the soil it rested on British soil, its occupants subjects of George III, King of Great Britain. But when ten years had elapsed, there came, one morning, to its hardy inhabitants, the soul-stirring news that they were no longer subjects of an old monarchy, but citizens of a sovereign State; one of thirteen Confederate States, that were, and of right ought to be, free and independent.

Who were the persons to whom, in their quiet village home in that immortal month of July, the great tidings came? A Scottish Presbyterian, his wife and six children, the youngest then ten years of age. And if it be asked how came their lot to be cast in that fertile valley of a far-off land, the answer is to be found in the terrible story of the religious persecutions that, in the latter years of the seventeenth and the early portion of the eighteenth century, desolated and depopulated the country of their birth.

“The prosperity of New Jersey,” says Bancroft, “sprang from the miseries of Scotland.”* Even the sufferings of the Waldenses were scarcely exceeded by those of the Scottish Cameronians, hunted like beasts of prey; nay, almost literally regarded as such by a monarch to whom is ascribed

* Bancroft's “*History of the United States*,” Vol. ii, p. 408.

the saying: "It will never be well with Scotland till the country south of the Forth is reduced to a hunting field." James II, with Stuart pertinacity, believed that the religious faith of a people can be extirpated. During his reign the experiment was fairly tried. Men, condemned by drum-head court-martial, were hanged in clusters by the wayside; women were fastened to stakes below sea-water mark, and left there to perish under the rising tide. "Recusants were shot on the roads, as they labored in the fields, or as they stood in prayer."* But Presbyterianism survived. Just before the issuing of a proclamation, "unparalleled since the days when Alva drove the Netherlands into independence,"† a patent-grant of East New Jersey had been obtained through the Duke of York; and the proscribed and persecuted covenanters emigrated by hundreds to the new territory.

Among those who, in the early portion of the eighteenth century, thus left home and country behind, and crossed to the New World, in search of freedom to worship God, had come, from the rich plains of Annandale as the family tradition has it, one of these down-trodden Presbyterians, John Annan by name, bringing with him his wife Elizabeth, and several children, including a son, William, then seven years of age.

* Bancroft, Vol. ii, p. 411. † Ibid, Vol. ii, p. 410.

In the quiet of an humble log-cabin, and in the undisturbed security of a log-church, which had been erected by some Presbyterian settlers at Baskenridge several years before his arrival—beyond the reach now of military tyranny or royal persecution,—the pious man enjoyed, throughout many tranquil years, that liberty of conscience which had been denied to him in his native land: becoming, under the pastorship of the Rev. Mr. Lamb, one of the leading Elders of the above Church.

But the great triumph of political liberty, that his country was soon to witness, John Annan was not destined to see. He had passed from this life, and the seven-year-old boy, whom he had brought with him to his forest home, was beyond middle age, when the “times that tried men’s souls” approached. William Annan had already built and occupied the “Stone House,” when the “long train of abuses and usurpations,” which a weak monarch and his short-sighted counselors indulged in, culminated in that odious stamp-act which was felt to be a death-blow aimed at American liberty.

No need to say which side the son of the Scottish Presbyterian took, in the great contest that was soon to commence. He came of a nation and a race too sturdy to abandon honest conviction, and of whom the historian has truly said: “They brought to America no submissive love for England, and

their experience and their religion alike bade them meet oppression with prompt resistance."* William Annan, during thirty years member of the New Jersey Legislature, was an unflinching Whig and patriot, furnishing to the full extent of his ability, aid and comfort to the friends of free government, during all the darkest days of the Revolutionary struggle.

Some of the most stirring incidents of that struggle occurred at no great distance from his own door. It was in the Widow White's Tavern, at Baskenridge, that Major General Charles Lee, then second in command to Washington, was captured on the 13th of December, 1776, by a party of British dragoons: a casualty which, though it was felt by the country as a misfortune at the time, yet, viewed in the light of that officer's subsequent conduct at the battle of Monmouth, may be regarded as an incident of favorable result to the republican cause.

With grief must the members of the Annan household have received, six years later, the news of a real calamity; the death of their distinguished neighbor, the gallant Sterling. He was not to see the final triumph of the glorious cause to which he had sacrificed health, property, life itself. Worn out by fatigue of body and mind, he died on the

* Bancroft, Vol. v, p. 77.

15th of January, 1783, less than a week before the solemn recognition, by treaty, of his country's independence.*

That long-looked-for independence secured to the inmates of the "Stone House," and to their descendants, all the blessings, civil and religious, to obtain which their ancestor had settled in the wilderness. And when a full century had elapsed, since the day on which that old homestead had been completed and occupied,—namely, on the 15th of August, 1866,—the descendants of John Annan† met in the venerable mansion, to congratulate each other, and render thanks to God for these and all other blessings which, during that century, had attended them and theirs. They came, grand-parents, parents, children,—representatives of every period of life, from infancy to old age,—they came, in number one hundred and twenty, at the invitation of the venerable owner and occupant of the "Stone House," then in his seventy-seventh year,—the namesake of the builder, another William, great-grand-son of the emigrant-ancestor who had bought,

* His private fortune was expended in the contest. The North American Review for April, 1847, speaking of Gen. Sterling, says: "an honorable example of a man, counting nothing of value in comparison with the sacred maintenance of his principles, and sinking every selfish consideration in the one strong and controlling feeling of an ardent patriotism."

† So spelt originally, but most of the descendants, including the present owner of the homestead, now write it *Annan*.

from the assigns of William Penn, the tract of land which has been known, from that day to this, as the "Amman Farm."

How stirring must have been the associations called up in the minds of those who accepted this hospitable invitation, as they rambled over the old house and its surroundings!—associations connecting the prosperous present with those rude days when bounties, offered by law for wolf and panther scalps, were raised from ten to twenty shillings a head; when the mail ran once a week in summer, and once every two weeks during winter, between New York and Philadelphia; when goods were forwarded from the interior of Jersey to New York, once a fortnight, "weather permitting, and business presenting itself,"—days of secluded life, long before a newspaper had ever been published in the State.

They visited the basement of the ancient dwelling where, when the waves of war swept close, patriot soldiers had cooked their frugal rations; where, at other times, school had been kept; and where, still at others, Pastors of the Baskenridge Church,—Kennedy and Finley and Brownlee—had often addressed attentive audiences, convened from the neighborhood.

They examined the walls, laid up with massive blocks taken from a neighboring quarry; ascended

into the attic, and inspected the old beams and rafters, time-stained indeed, but solid and sound as when first placed there in colonial days; they admired the roof with its projecting eaves, corniced and carved after the quaint manner of the olden time; they took note of the inscription over the old-fashioned portico; the initials, cut in primitive style, of the Annan by whom it was erected—W. A., together with the date, 1766; and the additional initials H. S. M.—in testimony that a certain Hugh Sunderland was the Mason by whom the walls were laid.

Then they wandered out to the “Old Spring,” and drank of its clear cold waters, resting awhile under the magnificent oak that shaded the spring-house; a native it was of the aboriginal forest, its trunk some six feet in diameter, and its great branches stretching laterally out full seventy feet. There they bethought themselves, perchance, of the eager consultations of public interest, and the stolen trystings of timid love—of the cheerful social reunions and the solemn religious gatherings—that a hundred years may have witnessed under the ample shade of that mighty tree.

After a time the visitors, recalled from their ramblings, filled hall and rooms and porch, joining in brief but appropriate religious exercises by the Rev. Mr. English, Pastor of the Liberty Corner

Church. After the well-known hymn, "The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want," had been sung to an old Scottish air, a portion of Scripture read and a prayer offered, the speaker alluded to the cause of this assembling. Exhibiting to his audience a yellow, dingy parchment, the original deed of possession by which the property was still held, he touched upon the first settlement of the family on that spot; the building of the original log-cabin, to be replaced, in the second generation, by the commodious dwelling in which they were now gathered together. He spoke of the integrity and the faithfulness, political and religious, that had always characterized the inmates of that dwelling; and of the marks of public confidence they had severally enjoyed. Every owner of that house had, in succession, been Elder, either of the Baskenridge or Liberty Corner Church. Not only the builder himself,—the first William Annan,—but also two of his sons, John and Joseph, had served, for many consecutive years, in the Legislature of the State. Another of his sons, Alexander, the first child born in the Stone House, passed away but a few years since; dying at Newark, where he had long been respected and beloved. And a son of the present owner, the Rev. John Annin, had officiated for fourteen years with much acceptance, as Pastor of the Church of Cedarville, in Cumberland County;

his six-year-old child, William, being a representative in the *sixth* generation of the old stock.

Then were read to the audience the following verses, having no claim to originality, but modified and adapted for the occasion by one of the guests.

THE OLD STONE HOUSE.

A hundred years ago was built
 Our house--this house of stone :
 Hundreds of storms have o'er it passed,
 Hundreds of tempests blown.
 Through Revolution's bloody days,
 Through years of ill and good,
 Through generations' rise and fall,
 And changes such as come to all,
 Our old Stone House has stood.

A hundred years ago was built
 Our house--this house of stone.
 No alien ever made it strange
 In this our dear old home.
 For not a soul has ever owned,
 In all the years by-gone,
 One jot of title, right or claim,
 But what was in the Annan name,
 In this their first-made home.

How thoughts go back through years long gone,
 To loved ones living here !
 To father, mother, sister, son,
 And other kindred dear.

Oh where will be each kindred one
 A hundred years from now ?
 Those now in youth, and strength, and health,
 And those with locks of whitened wealth,
 And wrinkle-furrowed brow ?

What kindred band will haply meet,
 A hundred years to come ?
 Who 'll tread yon Church with willing feet,
 A hundred years to come ?
 Pale, trembling age and fiery youth,
 And childhood with its brow of truth,
 The rich and poor, by land and sea,
 Where will the mighty millions be,
 A hundred years to come ?

We all within our graves shall sleep,
 A hundred years to come.
 No living soul for us will weep,
 A hundred years to come.
 Then other men these lands will fill,
 Others the old Stone House will fill,
 This kindred band will scattered be,
 In silent graves by land and sea,
 A hundred years to come.

Our Father, Thou that hearest prayer,
 Imploring now we come.
 Oh may Thy grace each one prepare
 To meet our certain doom !
 Then grief nor care shall dim that hour
 When we shall feel death's chilling power ;
 But joyful shall our spirits rise,
 To hail thy coming in the skies,
 And greet our kindred home.

At the close of the exercises the company was summoned to a plentiful repast, seasoned with much grateful talk over by-gone incidents, and many pleasant recallings of family legends from the dim memories of the past.

Then the doxology was sung, a benediction pronounced, and the guests, taking leave of each other and of their venerable host,—tears and smiles mingling in the farewell—departed to their several homes, never again to meet in family greeting as now, on this side of that Dark River which all must cross.

On the other side, in the Better Land, may they all be happily re-united, nevermore to part!

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THE following are the names of as many of the descendants and kindred of John Annan, and others present on the above occasion, as the compiler has been able to obtain.

William Annin,
Eliza H. Annin,
Gertrude S. F. Annin,
Jane Annin,
Sarah E. Annin,
Sarah E. Annin,
Mary C. Annin,
Wm. Annin,
Robt. Edwards Annin,
Phebe Ayers,
James Van D. Ayers,
Fanny B. Ayers,
Fanny Ayers,
John Ferd. Boyle,
Lydia Annin Boyle,
Harriet P. Boyle,
Sarah Annin Boyle,
Edward P. Boyle,
John Annin Boyle,
Mary P. Boyle,
Helen H. Boyle,
Wm. F. Boyle,
Netty A. Boyle,
Parmenas Castner,
Fred'k K. Castner,
Mary Annin Castner,
Alfred S. Castner,
John L. Van Liew,
Antoinette A. Van Liew,
Julia B. Van Liew,
Sarah K. Van Liew,

Wm. E. Van Liew,
Mary A. Van Liew,
Martha A. Van Liew,
Wm. Annin Losey,
Harriet O. Losey,
Sam'l Annin,
Jessey Irvin,
Emeline A. Irvin,
Charles Conklin,
Hiram Ayers,
Eliza Neville Ayers,
Joanna Gaston Brown,
Mary Brown,
Ida Brown,
Isaac Gaston,
Wm. Sergeant,
Daniel Annin,
Abbey P. Annin,
Phebe M. Annin,
Adaline C. Annin,
Sarah Ross Beach,
Sarah M. Bliven,
Sarah R. Bliven,
Charles Bliven,
Abby D. Bliven,
Moses Sayre,
Elizabeth Dickinson Sayre,
Alex. Annin,
Susan Annin,
Margaret Annin,
Margaret Miller Norcross,

Alex. Annin Norcross,
 Abby E. Norcross,
 Joseph M. Norcross,
 Joseph Annin,
 Margaret Annin,
 John Annin,
 Samuel Annin,
 Esther Morford,
 George Morford,
 Alex. Annin,
 Elizabeth Annin,
 Phebe Miller Johnson,

Mary Emma Johnson,
 Ferdinand Dreer Johnson,
 Frederick Dreer Earl,
 Mary M. Annin,
 John J. Annin,
 Edwin L. Annin,
 Ferdinand J. Dreer,
 Abigail Dickinson Dreer,
 Abigail Matilda Dreer,
 Ferdinand J. Dreer, Jr.
 Frederick Alex. Dreer,
 Edwin Greble Dreer.

Rev. John C. Rankin,
 Mrs. Rankin,
 Rev. James T. English,
 Rosella May Anderson,
 Charles T. Anderson,
 Wm. W. Anderson,
 John C. Sutphen, M. D.
 Fanny K. Sutphen,
 Hugh M. Gaston,

Mrs. Gaston,
 Miss Gaston,
 Isaac Gaston,
 Francis Runyon,
 Clarissa C. Runyon,
 Wm. A. Compton,
 James H. Day,
 Jane S. Day.

