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# The Episcopal Church

in

## Lebanon County.

PAPER READ BEFORE THE

LEBANON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JUNE 19, 1903,

—BY—

**Rev. Alfred M. Abel,**

**Jonestown, Pa.**

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VOL. II. No. 9.

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HOPE CHURCH, MOUNT HOPE.



# The Episcopal Church in Lebanon County.

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BY REV. ALFRED M. ABEL.

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In its first beginning, and early history, the Episcopal church in Lebanon county is closely linked with Lancaster county.

Just beyond the line which divides the two counties, at Mount Hope, is a little stone church which was built by Mrs. Harriet A. Grubb, in 1848, and consecrated by Bishop Alonzo Potter, Bishop of Pennsylvania, on the 9th of October, 1849. Mrs. Grubb belonged (by marriage) to the family who were the original owners of the Cornwall Ore Hills, and who until recently were still owners of one-sixth of those mines. After the death of her husband, and during the minority of her children, Mrs. Grubb was the mistress and manager of the Mt. Hope estate, and in the latter part of her life, after her retirement to Philadelphia, wishing to do the best she could for the people whose welfare she had deeply at heart, she built for them this little church, costing perhaps \$2,000, happily named, considering of what it has proved to be the spring—"Hope Church, Mount Hope": for its fruit was in the future, and the coming of its promise long delayed. Served by different clergymen for a few months during the years 1849 and 1850, it remained without any services for almost five years.

Then, in the summers of 1855 and 1856, Mr. Abel had Lay services, by direction of Bishop Potter, for two or three months each summer. After his ordination in June, 1857, he was sent by the Bishop to take charge of the church at Mount



CHANCEL OF HOPE CHURCH, MOUNT HOPE.

Hope, with instruction to undertake the establishment of church services in Lebanon, ten miles to the north. The only information the Bishop could give as to church prospects in Lebanon was that there was a lady there, a graduate of St. Mary's school, Burlington, New Jersey, who was a member of the Episcopal church. This proved to be Miss Elizabeth C. Mish, whose kindred are still well known in Lebanon, and who was probably the first, and, for a time, the only Episcopalian in this place.

Into our county, settled by people of German extraction, and speaking the German language, the Episcopal church, though truly American in its history and constitution, seemed to come as an exotic ; and we were plainly told that we were not wanted in Lebanon ; that there were enough churches here already. And had we not believed that the Episcopal church had something to give which the people of Lebanon had not yet received we would have accepted that verdict, and left the field to those already here.

But the prospects of the church were, as we have said, as yet rather in hope than in fruition.

Mr. Abel found eight or nine communicants in or near Lebanon, the Lebanon Valley Railroad, then nearing completion, having opened the town to the outside world. But, taking Lebanon as a centre, within a wide circle of more than fifty miles in diameter, including all Lebanon county, and goodly portions of the neighboring counties, the only Episcopal church was the little, truly, mission church, at Mt. Hope, with one resident communicant, to which number the few church people in Lebanon and Cornwall, eight or nine at most, were to be added. The mission work at Lebanon in its early days, was supported from Mount Hope ; and Mr. Abel lived there for three years, not moving to Lebanon until May, 1860.

The first service was held in Lebanon on Sunday, November 8th, 1857, in the parlour of Mr. Samuel Herman, on South 7th street, near to Cumberland, a gentleman who had recently

come to Lebanon as superintendent of the newly-introduced gas works. Mr. Herman's family, Miss Smith, and a few others, about one dozen persons in all, formed the congregation.

Services were started about the same time at Colebrook Furnace, ten miles from Lebanon, now called Old Colebrook, which have been kept up ever since, though, for many years past, only on week days.

After three services held in Mr. Herman's house, the congregation increased so much that a room called "Beneficial Hall," on North Tenth street, opposite the Moravian church, was hired. The congregation, at the first public service held in that hall, on December 13, 1857, was estimated to be about 100 or more. People came, drawn by interest or curiosity, to see the new service, and were even crowded up to sit on the window seats. But not only while worshipping there, but always in the service of our church in Lebanon, the people impressed me with their reverence and devotion, and their careful conformity to the order of our church, always, all of them, standing or kneeling, as the service required, and conforming to the methods of a form of worship which was new to most of them:—a lesson of respectable reverence which I have not always seen in other places.

Services were continued on Sunday afternoons in Beneficial Hall till the mid-summer of 1858, when they were transferred to a large room then used as a public hall in the third story of the Eagle hotel, 9th and Cumberland streets; and in the fall of 1858 another removal was made to what was then known as "Town Hall," i. e., the first story of the large building on North 9th street, opposite Zion's Lutheran church.

Services were held here for one year, until the fall of 1859, when the congregation obtained a lease of the hall of the Sons of Temperance, in the second story of that building.

Services were held here for four years until the newly-built chapel was occupied.

On August 16th, 1858, the congregation was formally or-

ganized and a vestry elected. The names of the first six vestrymen then chosen were Messrs. William Coleman, Samuel Herman, Antes Snyder, Josiah Funck, LaFayette Brower and Geo. K. Bowen. Antes Snyder, at that time resident engineer at Lebanon, in charge of the Lebanon Valley Railroad, was a son of Simon Snyder, a former Governor of Pennsylvania, and Geo. K. Bowen was a clerk in his office.

Soon after a charter was adopted, and the church was incorporated under it, as "Christ Church, of Lebanon, Pa., the order of the Court being signed by Judge John J. Pearson, and bearing date "January 6, A. D., 1859. In May of the same year the church was admitted into union with the Convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

The name of the church was changed in 1865 from "Christ Church" to "St. Luke's."

A lot at the southeast corner of 10th and Walnut streets had been bought by Mr. William Coleman for an Episcopal church, in the summer of 1857, some months before any services of the church had been held in Lebanon. He subsequently gave to the church instead the value of the lot, \$500, which was applied towards the purchase of the lot, on South 6th street, on which the chapel was afterwards built.

In the Spring of 1863 sufficient money had been obtained to justify the building of a church, and the corner stone of St. Luke's chapel was laid by the Right Rev. Wm. Bacon Stevens, Assistant Bishop of Pennsylvania, on the 15th of May, 1863, and the chapel was consecrated by Bishop Potter, on the 21st of October, 1863. "St. Luke's Day," which would have been appropriate for its consecration, coming on Sunday in that year, the nearest day convenient to that date was chosen for the consecration. The cost of the building and furniture, complete, was \$3,227, exclusive of the lot, which, with subsequent additions, bought after the chapel was finished, cost \$2,250.

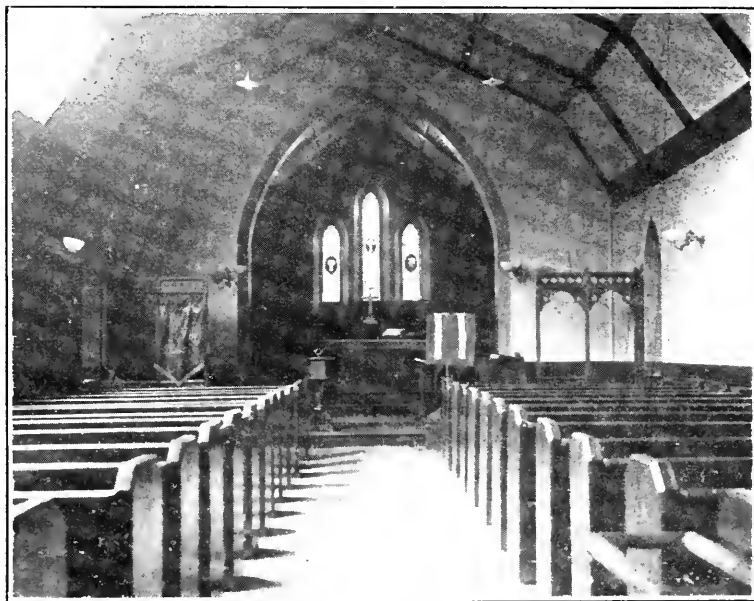
As an indication of the slow growth of the church up to that time, it may be mentioned that the number of communi-



CHAPEL OF ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, LEBANON.

cants reported for St. Luke's church, in May, 1863, after five and a-half years of service, was only sixteen. People were afraid to attach themselves to a church which had no settled abiding place. But after the chapel was built it was said, "Now we think you are going to stay." Two years later, in May, 1865, the number of communicants reported was thirty-four.

In the Spring of 1867 the building of a parsonage was



INTERIOR OF ST. LUKE'S CHAPEL, LEBANON.

begun on the ground of the rear of the chapel, reserved for it. Though practically finished in that year, in consequence of Mr. Abel's absence in Florida, in the winter of 1867-68, it was not occupied until the beginning of June of the last-named year, (1868,) when he and Miss Conklin, who was in charge of Mr. Abel's household during the whole time of his living in Lebanon, moved into it. The cost of building the rectory

was nearly \$7,500. It was not entirely paid for when finished, but the debt remaining upon it was assumed, and finally paid, by Mrs. William Coleman.

In September, 1871, a free parochial school was started in the southern part of Lebanon by Mrs. William Coleman, which afterwards increased to such an extent that four teachers were engaged, and over one hundred children were taught in it. Subsequently a large school house was built by Mr. Robert Coleman, for his mother's schools, on South Sixth street. These schools continued to do an efficient and flourishing work for more than twenty-one years from the date of their first beginning.

In the early part of 1876 several services were held by Mr. Abel in the chapel of the Swatara Institute, a boarding school for boys at Jonestown, upon the invitation of Rev. Prof. Edward J. Koons, the head of the school. Later Prof. Koons and a number of persons living in Jonestown, twelve in all, including Professor Koons, attached themselves to the Episcopal church, and were confirmed by Bishop Howe; and on the 23d of March, 1877, an organization of the congregation in Jonestown, as a mission church, was effected by the election of Geo. F. Meily as warden and Jacob G. Heilman as treasurer, and Mr. Thos. H. Brunner, J. Wesley Maguire and Jacob G. Heilman were elected a building committee, "St. Mark's" being adopted as the name of the church. Services were held at this time in the United Brethren meeting house at Jonestown, which was rented for that purpose.

On February 1st, 1878, Mr. Abel resigned the rectorship of St. Luke's church to take work in Washington Territory, and was succeeded by Rev. Chandler Hare, who took charge of the parish and its work April 1st, 1878, and was instituted as rector by Bishop Howe, on May 31st, 1878, and Mr. Koons was admitted to orders in the Episcopal church, June 2d, 1878. Soon after a church was built at Jonestown for St. Mark's congregation, which was consecrated by Bishop Howe on November 11th, 1878, and placed in charge of the Rev. Edward



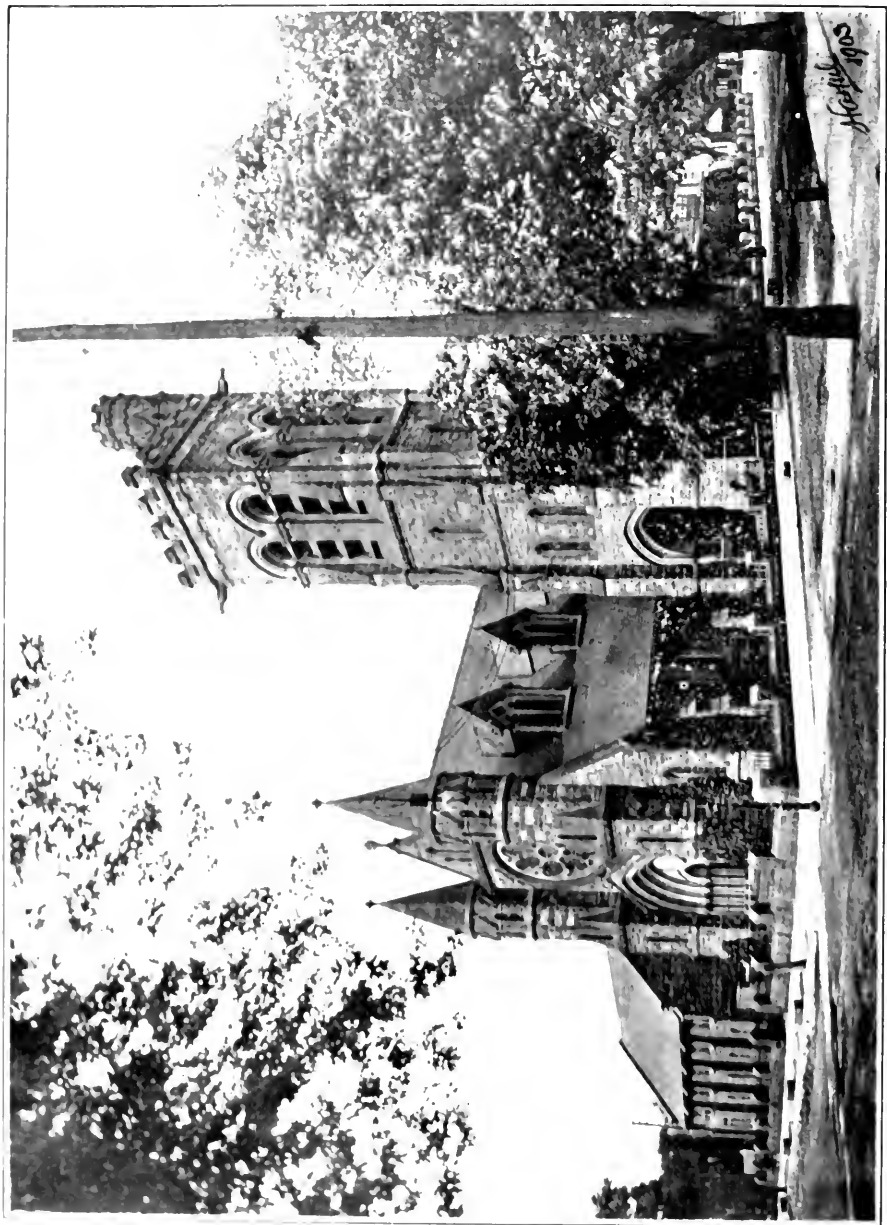
J. Koons, under Mr. Hare. The "Swatara Institute," or "Heilman Hall," as it was afterwards called, was purchased by Mrs. William Coleman, in May, 1878, and deeded to the Right Rev. Marc Antony DeWolfe Howe, Bishop of Central Pennsylvania, for a "Church Home for Children."

The property remained in the Bishop's hands till 1881, when, on the 10th of November of that year, it was opened for the reception of children. Rev. A. M. Abel, having been called by Bishop Howe, returned from Olympia, Washington Territory, and was by him appointed house father and chaplain, and Miss A. I. Conklin was appointed matron.

Mr. Hare made all the preliminary arrangements for the inauguration of the Church Home at Jonestown, and the necessary alterations and furnishing of the building, visiting many parishes of Central Pennsylvania to secure such things as were necessary; which were sent in large numbers in answers to his appeals. He continued to act as warden of the Home until his death.

The house was formally set apart and opened as a "Home for Destitute Orphans and other Desolate Children," by Bishop Howe, on the 29th of December, 1881, assisted by a number of clergy of the diocese, and in the presence of a large number of people from Lebanon, Jonestown and Harrisburg.

On St. Luke's Day, October 18th, 1879, the corner stone of the new St. Luke's church, to be built on the lot at the corner of 6th and Chestnut streets, was laid by Bishop Howe. On St. Luke's Day, October 18th, 1880, the church was consecrated by Bishop Howe. It was a beautiful consummation of the hopes of the parish, and a result of its legitimate growth. On Trinity Sunday, May 27th, 1888, the corner stone of Trinity Chapel, at the Colebrook Furnace Mission, West Lebanon, was laid by the Right Rev. N. S. Rulison, Assistant Bishop of Central Pennsylvania, and it was opened for service on March 25th, 1889, and consecrated by Bishop Rulison, on June 5th, 1890. This church was built by Mr. Robert H. Coleman, and given by him to the board of trustees of the diocese.



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ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, LEBANON, CONSECRATED OCTOBER 18TH, 1880.

The Good Samaritan Hospital of Lebanon was originally started, and continued for some time, as a parish hospital of St. Luke's church, and mention is made of it as a parish agency in a number of Mr. Hare's reports. Though it has now come to be an institution of more general character, it still owes a good deal to the interest and support of members of St. Luke's parish. Mr. Hare, not being in good health, was granted leave of absence from July, 1890, to September or later, 1891, and spent the time in Europe and the East. During his absence the rectory was enlarged and improved under the supervision of Mr. Josiah Funck, the senior warden of the parish, at a cost of about \$6,500, an amount not far from the whole cost of the original building. The greater part of this expense was borne by Miss Sarah Coleman, of Cornwall.

In his report of June, 1882, Mr. Hare writes: "An addition to church work in this parish during the past year has been the opening of four reading and recreation rooms on the main street of the town. For the last six months these rooms, opened every evening except Sunday, have had an attendance of about fifty young men of an evening." In his next year's report he says of them: "We esteem these rooms to be of incalculable good to the town." A public library was also established in connection with these rooms.

In his annual report of June, 1890, Mr. Hare writes of the parish day schools and of the reading rooms: "The four parish day schools have completed the 19th year of their existence, with an average daily attendance of 112 pupils. The public reading rooms are also still sustained, now in the 9th year, with from 15 to 20 attendants each evening." Two years later, in June, 1892, (his last report,) he says: "The four parish day schools have completed the 21st year of their existence, with an average daily attendance this year of 104 pupils. The public reading rooms, after continuing open every night for twelve years, have been suspended for the sake of economy."

Both of these were Mrs. Wm. Coleman's works, and she

was the chief supporter of the parish schools, until her death, which occurred on April 22d, 1892. Deprived of her support, the schools were soon after closed.

After the closing of the reading rooms and library, the books of the library, to the number of 2,200, were donated by Mr. Hare to the public school library of Lebanon.

The Rev. Mr. Hare was called to his rest on the 19th day



CHANCEL OF ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, LEBANON.

of January, 1893, after a faithful and efficient ministry of fifteen years.

His work was continued up to the last hours of the last day of his life; and though for a long time in ill health, his death at the last was sudden and unlooked for. He was succeeded by the Rev. James Powers Hawkes, who assumed charge of the parish June 13th, 1893.

Mr. Hawkes resigned the rectorship April 15th, 1896, and was succeeded, after an interval of some months, by the Rev. John Mitchell Page, the present rector, who entered upon his duties in the Fall of 1896.

Such are some of the results which have ripened from the little seed sown at Mount Hope five and fifty years ago.

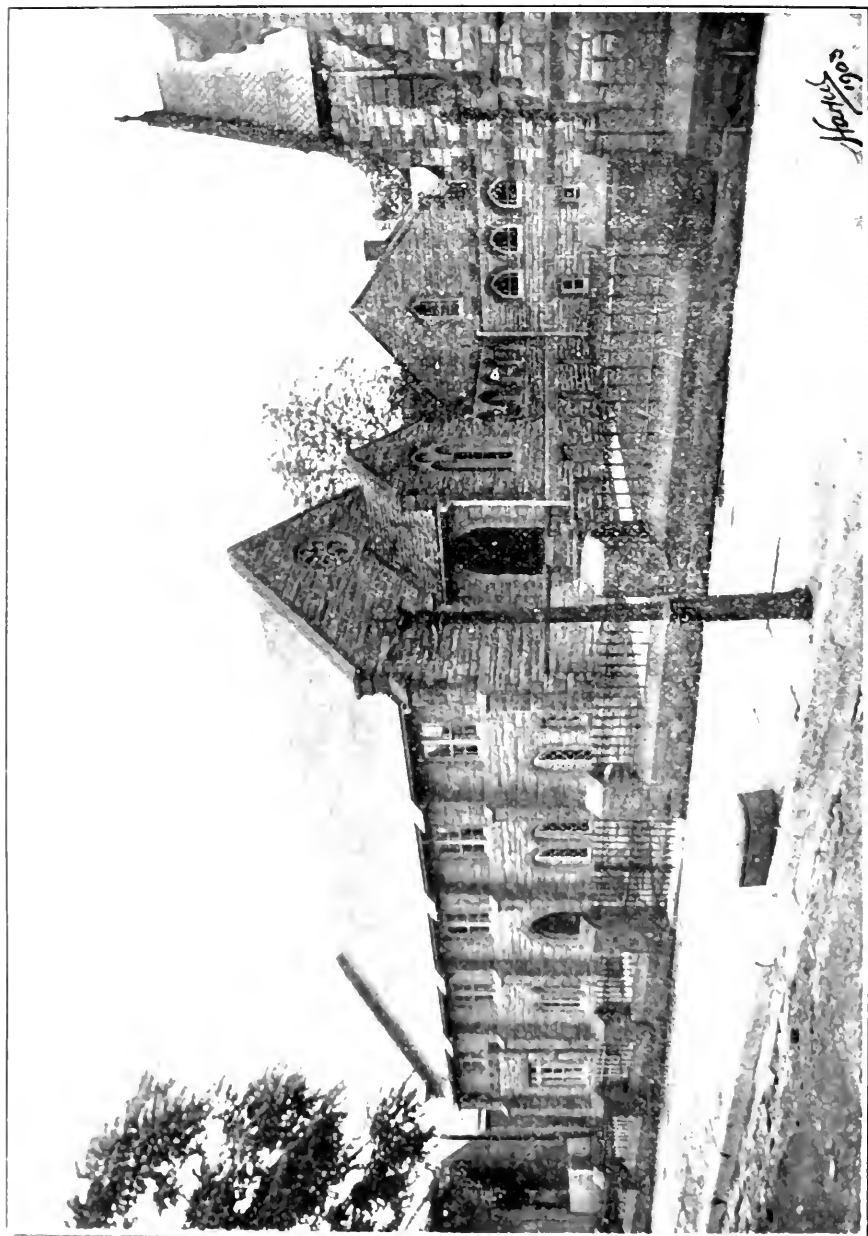
It may be interesting to note that the little stone church at Mt. Hope, a plain building, costing perhaps \$2,000, has recently been greatly enlarged and beautified by Miss Daisy Grubb, the present owner of the Mount Hope estate, who has spent many times its original cost upon it, making "Hope Church, Mount Hope," one of the most comple and prettiest rural churches to be found anywhere.

And so, the "Hope" has grown to fruition; and we pray that it may ever grow, more and more.

As an indication of the growth of the Episcopal church, from its small beginning in Lebanon, we may note, that the number of communicants reported by Mr. Page, as belonging to the parish in May, 1902—last year—was 252; the number, however, actually communicating, at least once during the year, being 186. The number of actual communicants reported for that year for St. Mark's church, Jonestown, was 20. This would make 206 people actually receiving during the year, with 60 or 70 more having the right to communicate, but for some cause or other failing to use their privilege.

Besides the Sunday-school and its officers at Trinity chapel, West Lebanon, there were reported last year (1902,) 22 officers and teachers, and 142 scholars, in the Sunday-school of St. Luke's church, besides various parish agencies: St. Luke's Guild, an association of men for church work; also, St. Katharine's Guild, St. Agnes' Guild, Mother's Meeting, Society of St. Agatha, Alter Chapter, and Chorister League, being organizations of women and younger persons, and of boys and girls of the parish, for various offices and works connected with the church and its parish life.

On the 25th of September, 1902, the corner stone of a



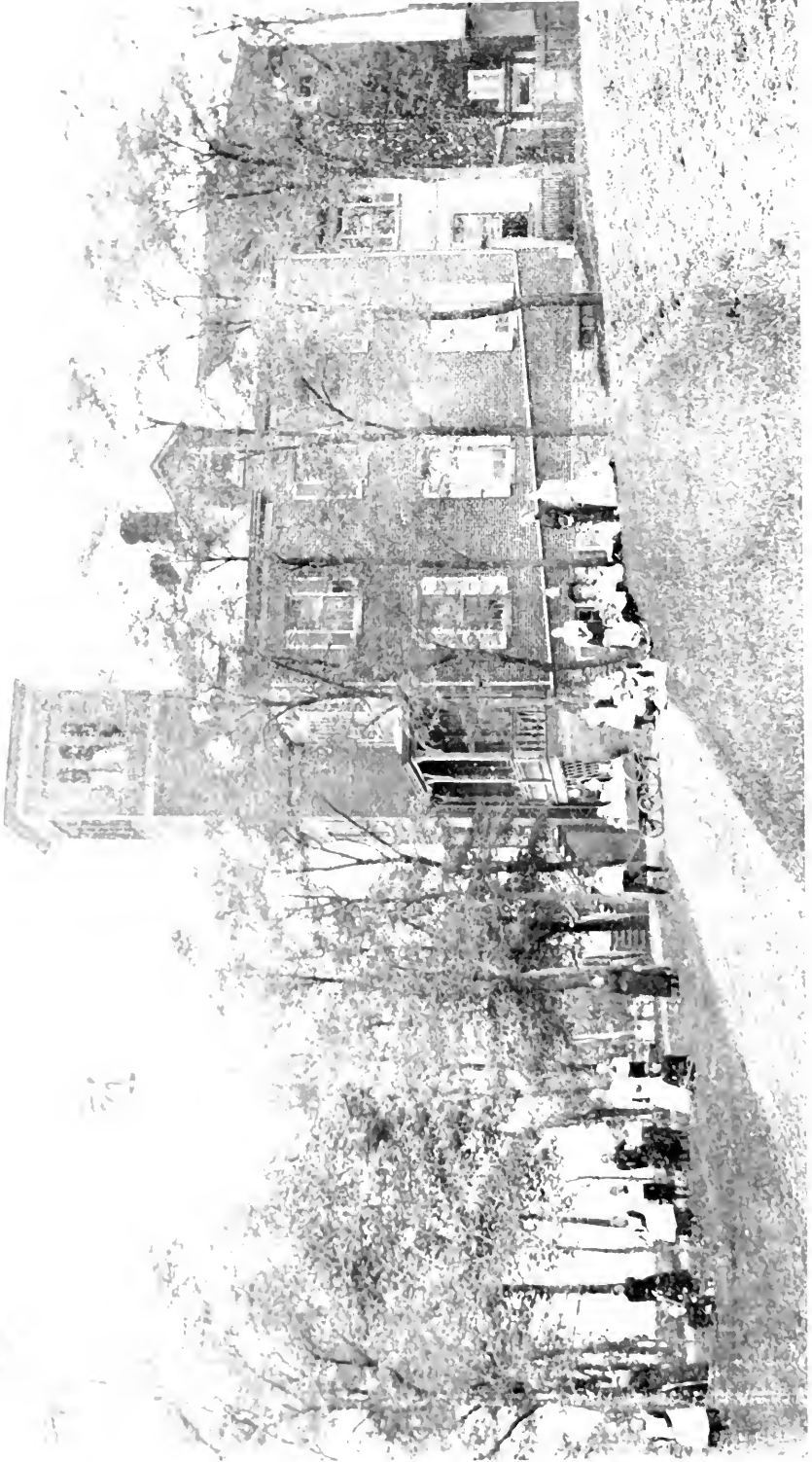
ST. LUKE'S PARISH HOUSE, LEBANON.

commodious and beautiful parish house for St. Luke's church was laid with appropriate ceremonies. This house, built through the munificent generosity of Miss Isabel C. Freeman and her sister, Mrs. B. H. Buckingham, is now finished, and it is expected will be opened and dedicated by Bishop Talbot, on the 30th of June, some ten or twelve days from the present date.

And so the church, which came in as an unknown stranger, and an object of curiosity and wonderment to the people of Lebanon, may fairly be considered now to have become an integral part of the city's life, and acknowledged as an influence, working with others for the uplifting and betterment of its people, rich and poor.

The things we have recounted—schools for poor children, an orphanage to furnish a home and Christian nurture for children who are destitute and homeless ; a hospital, for the sick and dying, to heal and save them, if possible, and other like works, show here, as in myriads of other places, both in heathen and in Christian lands, what the church of Christ stands for.

If the Episcopal church, by having done, or doing, even though imperfectly, her share in these things, can make manifest that she is verily and indeed a living part of Christ's holy church, her members may well rejoice, and strive to share more deeply in her life.



CHURCH HOME FOR CHILDREN, JONESTOWN, PA.



FIRST EIGHTEEN CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH HOME, JONESTOWN, DECEMBER, 1982.













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