

*Rev. L. A. Benson
with Compliments of the Author.*

NORRITON
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNA.

Regarded as the Oldest Church in Pennsylvania, claiming
connection with the great Protestant Reformation.

INCLUDING

HISTORICAL GLEANINGS

Pertaining to the Early Settlers and Representatives of the
several Religious Denominations, especially of
Eastern Pennsylvania.

BY REV. CHARLES COLLINS,

Member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia North.

"Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations. Ask
thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

—Deuteronomy xxxii, 7.

The old stone meeting-house still stands
Where are the men, whose toiling hands
Reared these firm walls, and built this place?
They've pass'd from earth—no mind can trace.

Two hundred years the winds have swept
O'er graves of those, once loved, long wept;
Some few inscribed, some without name,
But "dust to dust"—all marked the same.

COMPILED FOR THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Special Edition, Limited. Published by the Author.

HERALD PRINTING ESTABLISHMENT
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*Col. Bull removed from Virginia, and died in Northumberland county, Pa., 1824.

NORRITON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AND COLLATERAL GLEANINGS OF THE EARLY SETTLERS.

By Rev. Charles Collins,

Formerly minister of the Second Presbyterian Church, Norristown, Pa., 1861-'63, and later pastor of the Centennial Church, Jeffersonville, Pa., for nearly twenty years—1866-'85.

"Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. . . . That the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children."—Psalm lxxviii, 3-6.

Situated on the old Manatawny road; since A. D. 1800, known as the Germantown and Perkiomen turnpike; five miles north of Norristown, one-third of a mile south of Fairview village, between the nineteenth and twentieth mile-stones, Montgomery county, Pennsylvania.

History in any of its phases, to the ordinary mind, is always entertaining; and history pertaining to one's country or ancestry is always deeply interesting; while history of a general character, whether compiled from actual facts or traditional, yet being the result of patient research, when carefully studied, is always exceedingly valuable, thought-stimulating and educational.

A natural desire rules largely among intelligent persons to discover if possible something of their antecedents; hence, of late years, the effort is noticeable and commendable, carefully to collect all genealogical facts, and to encourage also, annual family gatherings.

The writer, while a school boy, became interested in the history of the old Norriton Presbyterian Church. In the providence of God, when scarcely twelve years of age, he began to spend the summer months, residing adjacent to this old building, and being naturally fond of the antiquated, took hold with interest to inquire into the history of the past. Although born in Philadelphia, yet a great portion of his life has been spent in close proximity to the church and grave yard of the church in question. Herewith he humbly presents the result

of his patient investigation, to which, for nearly sixty years, at intervals, he has cheerfully devoted time and attention.

With reference to the written records of the Norriton church, they seem to have been irrecoverably lost. Even if such records were kept, they were probably meagre and written at irregular intervals.

Kindly, yet earnestly, may I just here call the attention of all church officials to see the importance of carefully keeping the records of their respective congregations, including the names of all ministers, the membership, baptisms, etc., and also provide a secure place for preserving the same.

About fifty years ago I made diligent effort to inquire concerning the Norriton Church records, conferring with the late Elder John Shearer and Trustees Jacob Custer and Francis Burnside. The reply was that no records, either of the Session or Board of Trustees, could be found.

Mr. Burnside informed me, and I have since heard the same report, that many years ago, about 1760-'75, some records pertaining to the said congregation were found, written in a small blank book, among a lot of old papers in an upper room of the old Fairview Inn. These records were partly written in German, presumably in low Dutch, helping to establish the traditional statement (to which we shall refer later) that the primitive gathering, if not organization of this congregation, was made up of Hollanders.

The discovery of the Hudson river was made in 1609, and the founding of New Amsterdam, now New York city, in 1612. Therefore, it is not a matter of conjecture but a historical fact, that many years before William Penn's landing in the United States, the eastern part of Pennsylvania as well as a portion of New Jersey were preoccupied by both Hollanders and Swedes.

The Hollanders, however, being a more commercial people, were earlier in the field of exploration, and reached America years before either the Swedes or their more inland kinsmen, the Germans. It is recorded that some Hollanders visited the Delaware or South river in 1598. Settlements

were made upon it in 1623 by Cornelius May. Only ten years later, 1633, and some of them had settled along the valley of the Schuylkill.

It is worthy of note that the existing name of the river "Schuylkill" was originally bestowed by the Dutch, from the circumstance of its mouth having been concealed by several wooded islands, which prevented a ready recognition of the place where it flowed into the Delaware. Hence, from the terms "schuil" or "schuilen," signifying concealed or hidden, and "kill," a channel stream or river, came "Schuilkil," a hidden or concealed river. Schuylkill may therefore be considered a corruption of orthography. Governor Stuyvesant, in 1644, spoke of it as the "Narsche Rivierte," the little fresh river.

The Schuylkill was discovered in the summer of 1616 by Captain Hendrickson, a Dutchman, who entered its mouth in the yacht *Restless*. Twenty years later the Hollanders had established themselves along the river as traders, and dealt largely with the Indians for beaver skins and tobacco. At the same time they obtained liberal acquisitions of land on the river and adjacent thereto, for which cargoes of merchandise were exchanged. As an incident, it is related that an individual known by the name of Old Shrunken, in 1683, caught three thousand shad in one night, and a Captain Smith six hundred cat fish at one draught.

As to the Swedes, it is recorded that they first entered the Delaware river in 1637-'38, under the lead of Peter Minuit, who had previously been in the service of the Holland Company. They purchased land upon the west side of the Delaware, from Cape Henlopen to the falls at Trenton, and westward of the river for forty miles. Later, Christina, afterwards called Wilmington, was founded. Emigrants continued to arrive. Mocopanaca, now Chester; Coaquennack, the site of the city of Philadelphia; Wicaco and Kingsessing, now the southern part of said city, became settlements. The Dutch were not idle, however, but planted themselves at New Castle and other points, scattering as far as parts of Montgom-

ery and Bucks counties, tilling the land to the best advantage. At Bensalem, and near Churchville, Bucks county, two churches or worshiping places were established by Hollanders as early as 1670-'75, and the latter place was designated New Holland.

Numbers of English and Welsh settlers also came to these parts previous to the arrival of William Penn; for some English families quartered at Burlington and Salem N. J., in 1675; and some immigrants at the same time entered the Schuylkill to seek homes, but were peremptorily expelled by the Dutch and Swedes, who were jealous of any other competitors for the existing trade along that river.

The records of the Holland church allude to churches, viz.: Passaic, N. J., 1693, Revs. Berthoff, Coens, Du Bois, Van Driessen; Holmdel, N. J., in Monmouth county, 1695-'99, Revs. Wm. Lupardus, Antonides, Freeman, Morgan; at Smithfield, Pike county, Pa., 1737, Rev. Fayenmoet.

Of the Germans, while a few scattered names were reported as early as 1640-'50, as emigrants coming from New Amsterdam to Pennsylvania, yet about the first of their arrival as a body is the record of some twenty families that settled at Germantown in 1683. They continued steadily to increase, extending their settlements in the early part of the eighteenth century, principally to Hanover and Frederick townships, Montgomery county. They took up lands in the valley of Perkiomen in 1700, extending later, about 1720, to Norriton and Worcester townships, and between 1730 and 1740 to Towamencin and Salford townships, and in 1740 going into Berks and Lehigh counties.

To classify and condense the emigration alluded to we would name the Dutch or Hollanders as the pioneers, about 1620; then the arrival of the Swedes, 1637-'40; the incoming of the English Friends or Quakers, 1680-'85: the same years the arrival of the Germans, including the Mennonites, Dunkers, and the Swiss or Reformed denomination; also the Lutherans. Of these original settlers the Welsh came in large numbers, having purchased of William Penn, before leaving England, forty thousand acres in Merioneth or Merion, said land

extending into Chester county, now Tredyffrin township, Pa.

Later, in 1734, came the Schwenkfelders, arriving at Philadelphia and settling in Worcester, Towamencin and Salford, Montgomery county; and in 1742 the arrival of those who were founders of the Moravian church in Pennsylvania.

The late Moses Auge, in his book, "Lives of Eminent Men," alludes to Rev. John Philip Boehm as arriving in Montgomery county in 1720. Also, to Rev. George Michael Weiss, from the Palatinate on the Rhine, arriving about the same time and settling at Skippack, bringing with him four hundred emigrants. Four years after Mr. Weiss' arrival, from a report made to the Synod of Holland, we learn that there were fifteen thousand Reformed members holding to the old Reformed Confession in America, chiefly in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Boehm's work points to Blue Bell Church in this county, and Weiss' labors to Wentz's church, Worcester township.

From another source we find that the meeting houses of the English and Welsh Friends are nearly all marked by their antiquity. As early as 1680-'85, Philadelphia, Burlington, Pemberton, and Mount Holly, N. J.; Gwynedd, 1698; a little later, Plymouth, Horsham, Oxford, Abington, Attleboro, Haverford, Lower Merion, in Montgomery county, and Uwchlan, Chester county; Welsh Quakers, 1690; also, in Tredyffrin township, an old meeting house.

Thus far the writer has recited these historical gleanings as preliminary, and with the view of establishing the fact that some Hollanders, about 1660-'70, and probably holding the lands as squatters, or without legal title, first established this place of worship, subsequently known, and in later years organized as the "Norrington Presbyterian Meeting House."

Notice the fact, that it was not until October 2, 1704, that William Penn, proprietor of the province of Pennsylvania, sold to his son, William Penn, Jr., all the lands comprising the township of Norriton, Montgomery county.

We must naturally conclude that these pioneer Hollanders, and who for forty or fifty years before, perhaps, were

dwellers upon these lands, must have acquired their rights as tenants from some of the Indian tribes, for their main thoroughfare was the Indian road called "Manatawny."

Be this as it may, later on, and probably about 1700-'15, there was a noticeable change. The taxable owners of land now, although comparatively few as yet, were found to be of Scotch-Irish blood, Hollanders and Germans, they having combined together to purchase the lands contiguous to the old log meeting house, located in the then manor of Williamstadt, in Philadelphia county.

In 1707 another great influx of Holland emigrants began; also from Ireland and Scotland.

We proceed then to say that more than two hundred and fifty years ago numbers of men and women, representing family ties, abandoned their homes and ventured across the sea, seeking a peaceful dwelling place upon these friendly shores.

Almost without exception, Protestant in faith, though of different nationalities, yet one motive chiefly impelled them, viz., that they might worship God according to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, and the dictates of an enlightened conscience.

They loved the truth as comprised in the Gospel of Christ; they gloried in the cross, and the unspeakable privilege of acknowledging and honoring God by an humble life service of faith and devotion, far more than the possession of wealth, fame, or any earthly gifts. Inured to hardships and persecutions, tested by severe trials, and having suffered more or less from fiery discipline, they fled, not as miscreants or criminals, but as peace makers; and so, being constrained by conscientious principles, were led to these friendly shores, that they might enjoy liberty to worship God, and by their lives bless humanity.

Mysteriously providential, yet controlled by infinite wisdom, were the early Protestant Christians directed to this land. Distinctly may we trace the hand of Jehovah in all their movements, and especially discover His grace, in delivering them from the yoke of oppression, and providing them an earthly home where none should molest or make afraid.

Thus they came, suffering deprivations and tossed about roughly over stormy, wintry seas. They committed themselves to God, asking for divine protection and guidance, and after weary weeks they looked anxiously for the sight of land, until at last they were cheered with the realization of another earthly home, though in a strange country.

So, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, did the Hollanders come to New York; a little later the Pilgrim Fathers to the rock-bound coast of Massachusetts; then followed by the Swedes, the English and Welsh; other colonies of settlers from Scotland and the north of Ireland and Switzerland; they were scattered among the hills and along the rivers of eastern Pennsylvania and states of New Jersey and Delaware.

But particularly of the early Hollanders, who were essentially Presbyterian in doctrine, together with the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, we are to speak. From these nationalities just named, we as Presbyterians feel honored in tracing our forefathers.

Our admiration for the well-established principles of Protestantism and the doctrines of Calvinism, leads us to point to these noble, self-sacrificing men and women, as the faithful missionaries and hardy pioneers to the untried western world.

“ Amidst the storm they sang,
 And the stars heard and the sea,
 And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
 To the anthem of the free.
 The ocean eagle soared
 From his nest by the white waves' foam,
 And the rocking pines of the forest roared—
 This was their welcome home.

What sought they thus afar?
 Bright jewels of the mine?
 The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
 They sought at faith's pure shrine.
 Aye! call it holy ground,
 The soil where first they trod,
 They have left unstained what there they found—
 Freedom to worship God.”

It is our purpose now, in a few paragraphs, to advert to the founding and organization of the Presbyterian church in Pennsylvania, and some reference to other places.

It is worthy of note that Pennsylvania was populated very rapidly, especially its eastern boundaries.

The persecution of the Quakers under the reign of Charles II. and his successors, and the bitter intolerance manifested towards the Protestants by the Papists, drove thousands away from the north of Ireland, who had formerly removed from Scotland.

We cannot trace the calamities and persecutions which continued through four deplorable reigns. That struggle, and the consequent scenes of blood, would of itself fill all the pages allotted for our paper.

Suffice it, that history records consecutive years of severe trials from 1637 to 1661, referring especially to the sufferings of the Irish Presbyterians.

Many were treacherously and brutally murdered; others in large numbers were banished to Scotland; and many were the cases of unjust imprisonment authorized by the Bishop of Down. Other thousands suffered almost martyrdom by excessive fines, imprisonments in dreary prison cells, and cruel whippings, from 1662 to 1688.

Such were some of the providential dispensations, which seemed necessary to prepare our emigrant forefathers for exile, and probably to inspire them with a deeper appreciation for the privileges of worship and gratitude to God, for the strange way that He was pleased to lead them.

From this we may infer, that during the time of James and Charles, the north of Ireland was for a season to the Presbyterians of Scotland what New England was to the Puritans—a place of refuge from persecution, and deliverance from the chains of oppression.

Many, also, known as English Dissenters, were ungenerously dealt with, and after reaching New England were recognized as Congregationalists.

As early as 1637 the pious Rutherford wrote to John

Stuart, Provost of Ayr, Scotland, as follows: "I would not have you think it strange that your journey to New England has got such a dash! Let me hear from you. If I saw a call for New England I would go."

In 1641 a Scotch minister, Rev. Mr. Castell, published a book, commending a plan for introducing the Gospel into the colonies.

Immediately after the battle of Dunbar, several shiploads of Scotch prisoners (Presbyterians) were sent to the plantations to be sold, and of this number many were consigned to servitude beyond the Atlantic ocean.

From 1645 to 1670, numbers of these poor exiles were ruthlessly scattered along the Atlantic coast, from Massachusetts south as far as Charleston, S. C., and even to Georgia. Others made their way to the British West India islands, Barbadoes, Antigua and Jamaica; also, St. Thomas. In the English islands just named, Moravian missions had already been established by the Germans, and at St. Thomas a Reformed Dutch church (Holland) was early organized.

Between 1670 and 1684 (the latter being a year when great numbers were banished to these colonies) Scottish Presbyterians settled along the eastern branch of the Elizabeth river, near Norfolk, Va.; also along the southern part of the state of Delaware, including the peninsula.

Rev. Francis Mackemie—who was settled and preached as a Presbyterian minister, 1683, at Elizabeth river, Va., living at Rehoboth, Md., same year, organized the church at Snow Hill, Md—wrote under date of July 28, 1685, of one Rev. Mr. Wardrope, a Presbyterian minister, as having removed to Pennsylvania to preach. There is a tradition that Mr. W. preached occasionally at Norriton, and that Rev. Mackemie also visited the place.

During the period just referred to, which was some thirty years before the close of the seventeenth century, the Hollanders and Swedes also selected homes, both in Delaware and Pennsylvania. At Duck creek, close to Smyrna, and at New Castle and Christiana creek, they had settlements and

preaching places. The Hollanders usually selected inland residences, while the Swedes selected for their homes lands along the creeks or rivers.

As early as 1662 (which I gathered from an old book in the Philadelphia library) was a reference to one Dr. Thomas Wynne, a medical practitioner. He, together with his brother and other friends, all Hollanders, was found settled in Philadelphia. This was twenty years before the landing of William Penn.

In 1657, at New Amstel (New Castle, Del.), one Rev. Everardus Welius was appointed to preach in the Dutch meeting-house, and his successor, Rev. Warnerius Hadson, who was ordained in Holland, while on his way to this place to preach, was lost at sea during the voyage in 1664.

In 1694 there are records of a small sect of German Pietists, occupying land near Germantown. Twenty years prior, it was reported that a couple of families akin to the above were squatters at the Rising Sun, about two miles southeast of Germantown. The names of the Germantown settlers of 1694 were John Kelpius, John Seelig, Conrad Matthias (perhaps Matthews), and a physician, Dr. Christopher Witte. The latter returned to Germantown, and died there in 1765, living to be over one hundred years of age.

Scotchmen, Hollanders, and some Welsh, combined with William Penn for the purchase of New Jersey; and to-day the large number of Reformed Dutch and Presbyterian churches in that state, some of them organized over two hundred and fifty years ago, abundantly confirm this fact.

Gabriel Thomas, writing from Pennsylvania to London in May, 1695, alludes to "numerous Low Dutch congregations and Presbyterian settlements in eastern Pennsylvania as early as 1671." He adds: "They are chiefly from Holland; a few from England and Wales; and makes mention of these same people as having places of worship and settlements, in Delaware and Maryland.

Among the early settlers in Tredyffrin township, Chester county, Pennsylvania, prior to 1700, were the Friends, or English Quakers, and Welsh Presbyterians.

Dubois, Newkirk and Vanmeter, and others, were among the early names of the founders of the Great Valley Presbyterian Church.

Especially in New York, on Long Island, did the Hollanders, years before the above date, occupy the land. Jamaica, L. I., was possibly the first settled, but at Newtown, L. I., is the record of one Rev. Wm. Leverich, serving as a Low Dutch preacher in 1651, and continuing until 1669.

In Bucks county, Pa., it is well known that large numbers of Hollanders, Welsh and Germans were settled considerably before William Penn's arrival. The same is true as to Montgomery county, Pa. This fact is readily explained; that so attractive a country adjacent to New Jersey, and on the highway to New York, would naturally be sought after and explored by these emigrants. And this circumstance is authoritatively published, that to these parties Edmond Andros, then Governor of New York, granted letters patent for the lands, and thus encouraged them in their primitive settlements. "Watson's Annals" confirms the above statement.

The same Mr. Watson refers to the original Market Square Church, of Germantown (now Presbyterian), as being a Holland congregation, under the Synod of the Reformed church of Holland, and from thence its first pastors were sent. The first building was of logs, date unknown, probably about 1695.

Old records of the Dutch Reformed church confirm the statement, that Holland ministers, perhaps coming from New York or northern New Jersey, visited and preached in North and South Hampton, 1700 to 1710; also at Germantown, Neshaminy, Bensalem, and other places adjacent.

On May 20, 1710, Paul VanVleck, a Holland minister, was installed pastor of the united churches of Germantown, Bensalem and Neshaminy. Traditional reports allege that this same Paulos VanVleck was accustomed to preach at Norriton and the Low Dutch church of Neshaminy a few years before, say about 1705-7, and questions arising concerning his credentials were referred to the Classis at Amsterdam,

and subsequently he was fully recognized in the ministry. He first appeared as a school master, at Kinderhook, N. Y., 1702, and sometimes preached, but complaints were made against him, and he was obliged to desist.

It may, therefore, be reasonably inferred, that a number of these Dutch churches, both in Montgomery and Bucks counties, so far as their origin, were contemporary with some of the Holland churches of New Amsterdam (New York) and contiguous points, probably worshipping in their rude log houses for a half century, more or less, before the organization of the Neshaminy, Bensalem or Abington Presbyterian churches; and likewise before the founding of the renowned Log College.

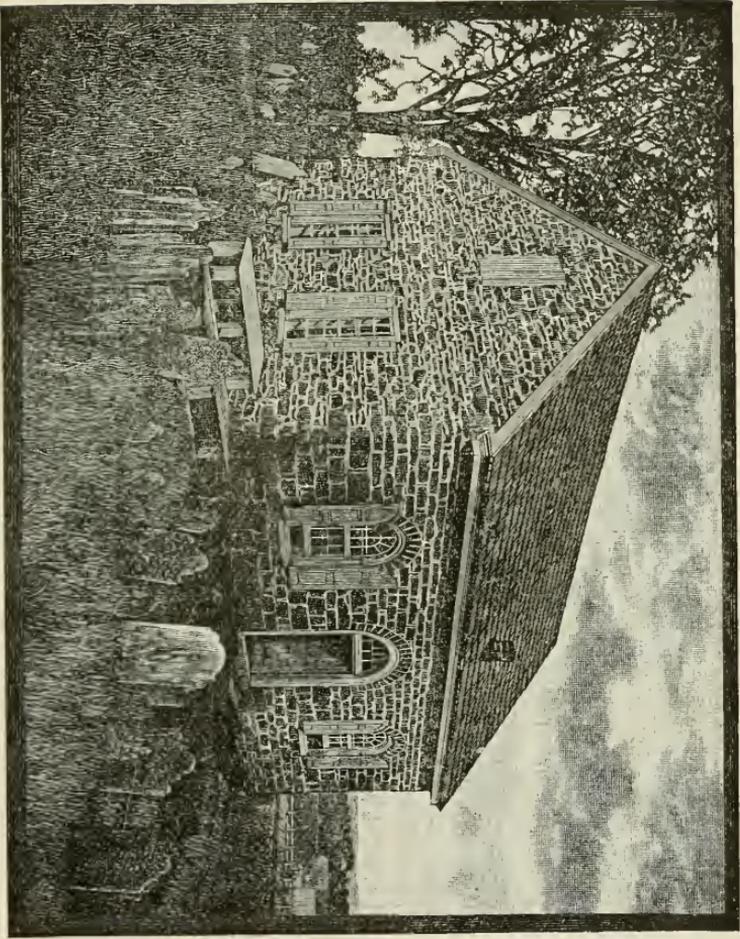
Let it not be overlooked, that in New Amsterdam (now New York), as early as 1609, Hollanders had landed, chiefly with a view to business enterprises; but the planting of the church as an organization is dated from 1628. It was known as the Dutch Reformed Church.

Twenty-three miles east from Norristown, and two miles from Churchville in Bucks county, is an ancient settlement, known for over two hundred years as "Holland." The remains of a very old grave-yard are still to be found, attached to which, two centuries ago, was a log meeting house, used by a Low Dutch congregation. This spot is located near Feasterville.

The late Rev. Abraham O. Halsey told me (about 1860), while pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church of North and South Hampton (organized in 1710), that the present location at Churchville was the legal successor of the ancient congregation and the old church, which building at Holland had long been obliterated. The present large stone church building is the third erected upon the premises.

Of its former history, there is little known, except traditionally, and the dates, many of them utterly extinct, on the old grave stones.

A few of the names of the seventeenth century were Vanarsdalen, Wynkoop, Vanmeter, Coryell, Vanzant, Cornell, Craven, Lefferts, etc.



OLD NORRITON CHURCH.

We shall now speak particularly of the old Norriton Church. Located on the Germantown and Perkiomen turnpike, near the twentieth mile stone, and about five miles north of Norristown, is to be found the plain stone building, long known as the Norriton Presbyterian Church.

It is a spot of sacred antiquity, as in bygone years the dates upon the tomb and grave stones gave undoubted proof of burials prior to the year 1700. The burial ground is enclosed by a substantial stone wall, giving the appearance of great antiquity.

Evidently the walls of the church are the same as when erected. Over the antique windows are substantial arches of stone, and upon the north or rear side of the house, two small windows, intended for pulpit light, are still there. One large double door, for ingress and egress, is found upon the front or south side.

I remember well, as a lad of ten years of age, the internal parts of this church. I speak of it as it appeared between 1833 and 1843. The pews were the old style, hard board seats, very high, straight backs, so that a child with difficulty could see over them; one aisle in the centre, entering from the door, with two square blocks of pews, on either side of the pulpit. These corner blocks of pews made recesses, in which space two old-fashioned stoves, designed for burning long sticks of wood, each stove conveying tortuous sheet-iron stove pipes to the chimneys upon either side.

The quaint pulpit of the olden time would be regarded as a rare curiosity to-day. Its dimensions were only large enough for a single good-sized man. Where the minister stood to preach was a closely confined place with three panelled sides, having a small desk for the Bible and hymn book, the wood work being dark oak. The steps ascending to the pulpit were narrow and spiral, while directly over the preacher's head was a conspicuous round arched sounding board of perhaps three feet in diameter, neatly made, with ornamented mouldings, out of selected walnut boards. Immediately behind the speaker, upon either side, were the two small windows alluded to.

During the ten years named above, from December, 1835, to January, 1839, the tall, stalwart form of Rev. Robert W. Landis (in later years a professor in Danville Seminary, Ky.) held forth as the pastor of Lower Providence Presbyterian Church; and from May, 1839, until October, 1844, Rev. Sylvanus Haight was the minister. I recall distinctly the reverential appearance and earnest sermons of the latter. He was a man already advanced in years, stout in physical frame, pleasant countenance, snow-white hair, winning with the children, and greatly respected by the congregation. Public worship in those days was regarded as a privilege and not a task; therefore, the first day of the week would show a full congregation, when services were held at Norriton.

Instead of Sunday school, the custom of those days was to hold a singing school in the afternoons, to which the young of both sexes would come en masse, and make the old church ring with the music. A Mr. Foust; also, Mr. Kendall, were the teachers.

Now as to the old grave-yard adjoining the church. It contains perhaps about one-third of an acre of ground, and is enclosed by a stone wall, seemingly in good repair.

In 1833 to 1840, from actual observation, the grave-stones were far more in number, than at this writing. The tombstones have generally been well preserved: but the primitive, dark sand-stones, worn by the elements, rain-storms and winters of two centuries, have many of them entirely disappeared.

In 1835 a number of such grave-stones stood fairly up against the church walls on the north as well as the east side. At the time the writer made earnest and repeated efforts to decipher the epitaphs, names and dates and record the same. Subsequently, two or three years later, he made another effort. He well remembers that among the number were some epitaphs graven in Dutch or Holland; also, German words, showing dates prior to 1700. Some were the names of ministers, evidently those who had labored there; others were probably some of the first settlers in this new wilderness; and some two or three had been soldiers, possibly in the Revolutionary War.

In the rear end of the grave-yard is a flat stone without any inscription, said to be very ancient, of a man killed in a neighboring stone quarry. These dark-colored sand-stones, unattractive, dilapidated, illegible, and long uncared for, adjoining the church building, at length disappeared. With some reluctance, yet I feel constrained to furnish an explanation.

In January, 1844, it was deemed necessary by the trustees of Lower Providence Church to repair and modernize the old building; also, to underpin the walls of the house upon the north and east sides, as well as repair the grave-yard walls.

Accordingly, in the following spring, the old style pews were removed and replaced by others, the floors were repaired, the antiquated pulpit and sounding board were taken down, and a new roof placed upon the building. Daniel Shuler and Andrew Shuck, carpenters, did the work.

At the same time the walls were pointed and repaired. It was early spring-time; the masons were short of stone to finish the work; and the old memorial stones, some of them already defaced and broken, together with the old date stone, which had fallen to the ground, were ruthlessly destroyed, gathered together, daubed with mortar and driven under the old walls, thus leaving as a memento of these workmen (their names unknown) a cruel act of thoughtlessness or heartlessness, perhaps both.

This piece of vandalism is much to be deplored, because the very grave-stones in question belonged to the ancient days. They bore inscriptions and testimonies to the memory of the first settlers of Norriton, and the thought is a sad one, that there is no remote possibility that any of those lost names shall ever be restored or recovered.

As already intimated, although the lapse of many years had rendered the lettering difficult to decipher, the family names of some, at least, distinctly bore evidence that they were Hollanders, having the prefix of "Van." The names of some of the first land holders in the vicinity were Dutch, such as Van Fossen, Van Santword, Van Baun, Amish, Yeagle,

Du Bois, Rittinghausen, Kester (or Custer), Beyes (or Beyer), Le Fever and Recup.

It may be proper to add incidentally that the alterations to the old church above were not done by the unanimous consent of the trustees. The Providence Church was without a pastor at the time. The sexton, Mr. Shuck, was directed by Colonel A. W. Shearer and Francis Burnside to put on a new lock upon the front door to prevent the work; nevertheless, the alterations were made.

The items and facts just recited were confirmed by Andrew Bean, an aged resident living immediately opposite the church; also, by Samuel B. Beyer and the late John Hoffman, Esq., who also resided near by.

The ancient tomb and grave-stones, now extant, were chiefly made of marble, and are fairly modern in antiquity, compared with those rude, dark sand-stones, first used in the primitive burial ground.

Taking now a retrospective glance, one can imagine how changed are the surroundings of that old house of worship.

When it was reared out of logs, doubtless a dense forest surrounded it, and the Indian would pause and gaze, and perhaps wondered why it was built there; and frequently, it may be surmised, the curious savages would rest beneath the forest trees, quietly lingering there, ignorant of the old Dutch preacher's message, yet possibly enjoying the sweet concord of sounds welling up from the united voices of the worshipping assembly. The little Indian children would play among the first made graves, and with childish innocence pluck the wild flowers from the silent mound.

No other road save the Indian path was there; afterwards called "Manatawny"; and upon the southern slopes of the present Fairview village did these friendly Indians abide in their accustomed huts.

To speak specifically of the old Norriton Church, my opinion (which has been duly confirmed by traditional statements) is, that this religious society or organization was at first composed of Hollanders, the original members having

landed at New York, but later emigrating from Bucks county thither. It is probable that they made some terms with the Indian owners for the use of the land. Without doubt they built the first meeting house from the trees of the forest, and it is possible about 1675. There was at that time no taxable inhabitants, but it is known that in twenty or twenty-five years later the population had not only materially increased but also changed by the incoming of a new emigration of Scotch and north of Ireland pioneers.

Early in the eighteenth century this fact was established by the names of the owners of farms whose respective tracts of land were parts of the manor of Williamstadt, comprising 7,480 acres (later Norriton township), granted in 1704 to Wm. Penn, Jr., and shortly after to Isaac Norris and William Trent.

In 1712, Isaac Norris, by purchase from Trent, acquired the whole tract. This manor was changed to the township of Norriton in 1730, at which time there were but twenty-five taxables therein.

We append herewith some of the names of those whose tomb stones exhibit dates previous to the Revolution:

Joseph Armstrong, aged 4 years, died April 29, 1740. Archibald Thompson, Sr., aged 68 years, died in 1745. Samuel Thompson, aged 35 years, died in 1746. Robert Thompson, aged 40 years, died in 1746. Robert Thompson, aged 46 years, died in 1747. Moses Thompson, aged 31 years, died in 1748. Robert Dunn, aged 40 years, died in 1748. Jane Christey, aged 72 years, died in 1756. John Christey, aged 87 years, died in 1766. Robert Porter, aged 72 years, died in 1770. Joseph Armstrong, Sr., aged 80 years, died in 1766. Mary Armstrong, aged 76 years, died in 1776. Barbara Henderson, aged 34 years, died in 1772. Catharine Freeman, died in 1776. Archibald Thompson, Jr., aged 39 years, died in 1779.

Many of the older stones were found without any lettering, hence entirely unintelligible, owing to the soft and perishable nature of stone used in those early days. Notwithstanding this, the descendants of these nameless ones who lived after them possessed sterling characters, and were a credit to later generations. Especially true is this, as to many worthy

families who settled as emigrants in both Norriton and Worcester. They were a sturdy stock from the north of Ireland, noted for their enterprise, intelligence, and reliable Protestant principles. These Scotch-Irish people came quietly and unheralded, but made the best of citizens; and although many of their posterity have since removed away from the vicinity of the old church, they have carried with them a good record for honesty, fidelity and christian character, wherever it has fallen to their earthly lot to dwell.

It may not be amiss, therefore, to furnish some additional names found in the little grave-yard, to make known to the present generation, and possibly some relatives, those who once lived in the neighborhood, and worshiped in the old meeting-house.

Buck, in his Montgomery county history, visited this old burial place in 1858, while the writer made his occasional visits to the same place beginning full twenty years earlier, say in 1835.

Armstrong, Bayley, Burns, Hooven, Curry, Smith, Knox, Christey, McCrea, Dunn, Bryant, Darrah, White, DeHaven, Hanna, Fitzwater, Freeman, Fulton, Porter, Foster, Richards, Hiser, or Heyser, Trump, Henderson, Thompson, Keesey, Zeigler, McGlathery, Stuart, Patterson, Philips, Stroud, Stewart, Lefever, Shannon, McLean, St. Clair, Baker, Dettra.

The above, it will be understood, are names representing families, and as a consequence, some names exhibiting a large number of graves. For example: the Armstrong family, one of the earliest, shows over thirty graves. Also, there are several of the Thompsons, the Porters, the Stuarts, the McCreas, the Burns, the Pattersons, and others.

The head stone of one Mary Curry records almost a centenarian, departing this life in 1804, in her ninety-eighth year; also John Porter, dying in 1821, in his ninety-fifth year.

Here lie the remains of Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Stuart, an officer in the Revolutionary War, and an old resident of the neighborhood, who died May 27, 1799, aged 51 years.

This old congregation, claiming, as we believe, to be the mother of all the Presbyterian churches in Pennsylvania, gave the first exhibit of church extension, by the organization of the Presbyterian church, denominated "Norriton and Providence," which occurred in 1730.

This church, now called "Lower Providence," has already erected its third edifice, and dedicated the same in the early summer of 1869.

During the months while engaged in erecting the new church building, the Lower Providence congregation met stately for worship on Sabbath days in the Jeffersonville church, the same having been tendered by the pastor, Rev. Charles Collins, and session of said congregation.

The Jeffersonville church was taken down and removed in May, 1875, together with the remains of those buried in the cemetery adjoining, about three-fourths of a mile east, on the Ridge turnpike, and a new granite building erected, known thereafter by a new charter, as the Centennial church of Jeffersonville.

Just here it may be proper to say, that after the Lower Providence church was first built, about 1730 or '32, the current of population seemed to turn in that direction, and possibly the spirit of dissension already rife helped also to weaken the old Norriton congregation.

This item will explain how rapidly the then new graveyard of Providence filled up; and likewise, how very many of the same family names were multiplied there, which has since grown to large proportions as a rural resting place for the dead.

This fact of the united congregations, the "Norriton" and the "Providence," so long under the direction and control of the same session, and so long enjoying the same pastors, since 1758 at least, until this writing, 1894, is a remarkable statement; hence, by legal succession, the Lower Providence church has always, heretofore and now, the ownership, as well as all rights in the real estate, and entire control of the building, as to its uses for public worship.

We have also regarded it as a mistake, perhaps lack of due consideration, when in the Spring of 1844, the Trustees of the Lower Providence church permitted the alterations that were then made to the old building. In a previous paragraph we have made allusion. At that time we think the Providence church was without a pastor, or possibly better counsel might have prevailed.

Before the destruction of the old oak board floors, and especially the old pulpit and sounding board, internally, it was a quaint exhibit of the olden time. Why not have done the necessary repairs, but at the same time preserve the work of the forefathers, as was done in the case of the ancient Lutheran church at the Trappe (now Collegeville), erected under the charge of Rev. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, in 1743.

The venerable Jacob Beyer, Sr., with whom I had many conversations, informed me, about 1835-'40, that the existing old Norriton church was very similar in its external appearance to the old Lutheran church just named, and formerly had, to his distinct recollection, an antiquated hip-roof, which he thought (trusting to his memory), being dilapidated, was taken off about 1774-'75, and the present barn-roof style substituted.

He also told me that his great-grandfather, Abraham Beyer, the founder of the family in Montgomery county, who married Rosina Yeakle in Holland, settled within a short distance of the Norriton church in 1736. He lived just over the line of Norriton in Worcester township, then in Philadelphia county, and died October 30, 1754.

His son was Andrew Beyer, who married Philipina Weyand November 7, 1758, died April 19, 1773, aged forty years, and had removed to the Norriton township farm. His son, Jacob Beyer, Sr., married Rachel Metz. He was born February 14, 1762, and died August 23, 1846, in his eighty-fifth year.

He had a distinct recollection, good memory, and many reminiscences pertaining to the Norriton church prior to, and after the Revolution, was often personally present during

those trying years, and entertained me frequently with interesting recitals of his early days and the by-gone years.

One statement impressed me, and which he loved to repeat, viz., that when his great-grandfather settled there in 1736, he told his family, after careful inquiry and investigation, that the Norriton meeting-house was, at that date, called an old church and burial place, at least a half century or more in existence; that the building was first of logs, and stood some twenty years; that probably about 1698 to 1705 the present stone church was erected; also, that Hollanders were first on the ground; and later, probably just after the violent struggles in Scotland, lasting from 1660 to 1688, the new emigrants took up the soil.

It is a historical fact that the Presbyterian church in Ireland was mainly the offspring of Presbyterian emigration from Scotland, and, as in the sister kingdom, it grew up under severe persecutions and sufferings, driving several ship-loads of emigrants to Philadelphia about 1688-'90.

I might add that Jacob Beyer and Andrew Beyer, sons of the last named Jacob Beyer, Sr., often took pleasure in after years to repeat the above statements. To strengthen this view, fifty or sixty years ago Joseph Metz, Charles Gouldy, the brothers Jacob and John Dorworth, who died aged ninety-four; Christian Dettra, who was almost a centennarian; and one John Metz, now living at ninety-two years of age, have at intervals in past years repeated similar statements to me.

The late John Hoffman, long a justice of the peace, had at intervals in former years given me some valuable traditional statements. He also referred to the old, black grave-stones, now extinct, and referred to an old deed of a Holland minister owning a farm close to the old meeting-house, about 1700-1710.

The following is an extract of a historical sermon by the writer, delivered in July, 1876. It is descriptive of the old house of worship:

"Here, in strange solitude, upon the lower declivity of wooded Methatchen, the old log house of worship stood two

centuries ago. We can readily imagine that the wild and wandering red men oft halted and heard with wondering interest, mingled with awe, the unintelligible jargon of the sturdy Dutchmen who offered prayer in uncouth language to the Great Spirit, or whose lofty hymns of praise went up as sweet incense to the Father of Light from the recesses of these forest glades. They still lingered by the woods and waters that their fathers loved, long after the white man's axe had made scattered clearings, and their dusky children, in company with those of the pale faces, played gleefully over the green hillocks made by the graves of the first settlers.

"The old log church probably stood from thirty to forty years, or until after the arrival of Penn and his English Quakers, and a more steady settlement of the infant province began. An important evidence as to the antiquity of the newer stone church was the old date stone, which stood at the eastern gable of the house. This was broken and destroyed at the same time with the older tomb-stones above mentioned. Unfortunately, it is an undecided point whether this bore the inscription of 1689 or 1698. If the former, it would cause it to rank as the oldest church in the state; otherwise it comes second in antiquity. An approximation toward ascertaining the exact time has been sought through researches among title deeds of lands granted in the vicinity, by which some information might be obtained as from whom the property was derived, and when it was set apart for religious purposes. But insurmountable difficulties have hitherto baffled the search, and no transfer of the adjoining property earlier than 1704 has been found. Probably from no title granted originally from Penn or his successors, does it owe its land.

"But forty or fifty years later the original Dutch settlers were to be superseded by another and a very different people, speaking a different tongue, though worshipers in the same faith, and also adherents of the theology of Calvin, the Scotch-Irish. From and after 1700 these came in and settled the surrounding country. We can imagine that from their predominance the language used in worship was speedily changed to English; that there were some jarring and disagreements in those rude times with the former inhabitants; but that the latter soon acquired English and became accustomed to the new order of things. The inscriptions found upon the present tombstones inform us of the family names common among these Scottish settlers. In after times, at a much later period,

still another influx of people of another race began gradually to occupy the surrounding region, strangers to the language, and unfamiliar with the manners and customs, as well as the traditions of the Presbyterians. These were mainly German Dunkards, Mennonites and Schwenkfeldters. Thus smothered and hemmed in by adverse influences the old church began to decay, its membership died, emigrated to the west, or removed to more congenial associations, until it has long since ceased to exist as a separate organization.

"In the beginning of December, 1777, a division of the American army under Washington began its march towards Valley Forge, which was to become famous for all time, on account of the sufferings and hardships endured there with such patience and fortitude. The weather was cold and severe during their march thither. A portion of the sick and exhausted soldiery found welcome rest and shelter for a brief period within the walls of the Norriton church, which lay along the route of their dreary march.

As confirmatory of the premises we have already taken concerning the status, age and changes of the Norriton church, it will be helpful to carefully observe the following facts:

The Bensalem church, as furnished by Dr. Thomas Murphy in his excellent "History of the Log College," sets forth the age of the Bensalem church, Bucks county, as being organized in 1710; adding, "it must have been a preaching place for some years before. Its proximity to the settlement of Hollanders, who, at an early period, formed the Dutch Reformed church in the neighborhood, and the many Dutch names found among its original members, would indicate that a large part of its families at first came from that people."

With reference to the church of Norriton and Providence, Dr. Murphy says: "We have been much perplexed with the question whether Norriton (at first called Norrington) or Bensalem, should have the first place in the annals of our Presbytery."

It is certain that in Norriton we have the very first trace of a Presbyterian enterprise within our bounds. A trustworthy tradition affirms that a plot of ground was purchased there for a grave-yard, forerunner of a church, in the year

1678, no less than twenty-seven years before the founding of the Presbytery. * * * It also appears, that a Welshman named David Evans was preaching in that neighborhood before 1705. * * * It comes to light with certainty, that in 1714, Norriton enjoyed stated preaching by Rev. Malachi Jones, who was then pastor of Abington church. At that time, 1714, we date the commencement of the Norriton church as Presbyterian, though, undoubtedly, it was a preaching place long before.

The church of Providence, which was founded sixteen years later, in 1730, adopted the strange plan of holding services in Norriton during the winter season, and at Providence during the summer.

Many of the names of the worthy ministers who labored in these two churches, have been lost, but the following are known to have preached there:

Malachi Jones, 1714, for thirteen years; David Evans, 1727, four years; Richard Treat, 1731, ten years; John Rowland, about 1741-'45; John Campbell, 1747, six years; Benjamin Chestnut, 1756, nine years; David McCalla, 1774, eight years; Wm. M. Tennent, 1782, thirty years; Joseph Barr, 1814, three years; then followed John Smith, Joshua Moore, Thomas Eustice, Chas. W. Nassau and William Woolcott; Rev. Robert W. Landis, December, 1835, to January 1839; Sylvanus Haight, 1839 to 1844.

Rev. Henry S. Rodenbough was ordained and installed May 14, 1846. Faithfully, and most acceptably he ministered to this congregation, and was called to his heavenly rest, deeply mourned by a devoted people, May 3, 1890. Rev. Claude R. Brodhead is the present pastor, and was installed October 3, 1890.

The Abington church, Montgomery county, was organized 1714, Rev. Malachi Jones, pastor; and the Neshaminy church in 1726, when Rev. Wm. Tennent, Sr., became pastor, and continued for sixteen years.

Traditionally, we have the statement, that the coming into the vicinity of the Norriton and the Providence churches, of

one Rev. John Rowland, about the end of 1739 and through 1740, a most memorable revival of religion transpired. He preached in the two churches alternately, until the whole region round about seemed pervaded with "the great awakening."

Of this noted evangelist we shall have more to say in some following pages. Suffice it, that scores of sinners were converted, and many careless Christians revived and established in the faith.

It is certified that among the number were the grandfather and grandmother of Rev. Archibald Alexander, D. D., long the beloved and greatly respected professor in Princeton Theological Seminary. In the Providence grave-yard, may be found the progenitors of the Alexanders belonging to two or three generations.

The above facts, calmly considered, go very far to establish our plea, that the Norriton church is really the oldest in the state, not excepting the meeting-house at Lower Merion. During the early part of the eighteenth century this church was well-known to the Hollanders settled in Bucks county, as well as New Jersey, and later, during the great revival that began at Freehold, N. J., in 1732, under the labors of Rev. John Tennent, the Norriton church, as a Presbyterian congregation, notably participated.

A remarkable schism interrupted the progress of the Presbyterian church as a denomination, in 1740. It made havoc as the evil rapidly spread. The log church first built at Providence, had been recently replaced by the first stone building.

Owing to the prevailing disturbances, Norriton was without a regular pastor, but one, Rev. John Kincaid, took hold as their minister, and did a good work.

Rev. John Rowland, who had received his education at the Log College, applied for a license to the Presbytery of New Brunswick, N. J. He was ordained as an Evangelist June 1, 1741. After laboring a year in New Jersey, he came over into Pennsylvania.

In 1742, accordingly, he took charge of Lower Providence church, and Charlestown church, Chester county, Pa. But whilst he was the instrument in performing an extraordinary work in the community, with ability and tact to reach the masses, yet a little later, dissensions, strife and personal envy, resulted in disorder.

Largely as a result of the division of the Presbyterian body just referred to, it was destined to divide many of the congregations, and had already most seriously affected both Norriton and Providence churches. The tendency was to weaken both, but Norriton suffered most.

The consequences of the schism, and the soreness resulting from the separation of kindred and friends, had kindled undue animosity; hence, even those who were workers in the Master's vineyard, were first to suffer.

To advert to the causes of the division, we might say, that for two or three years preceding the preaching of the renowned Revs. Geo. Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent, so eloquent and earnest, yet so thoroughly Evangelical in its tone, had arrested the unusual attention of the multitude.

The lethargic slumbers of the formal professors of religion were awakened by these bold innovaters, whose service naturally aroused opposition.

The two parties were called, by way of distinction, "old lights" and "new lights."

Long fomenting grievances resulted in increased hostility, the division of congregations, together with untold acrimony, and a spirit of unforgiveness.

Old Norriton church, with its staid membership and rigid adherence to the Westminster standards, opposed Whitefield. A goodly portion of the members seceded, and cast in their lot to strengthen the Providence church, and uphold the teachings of Rev. John Rowland.

He was evidently an independent preacher, with boldness, fortitude, and ability to defend his cause, yet remarkable for his readiness to speak fluently, intelligibly, and convincingly to those who were not yet heirs of salvation. To show the

character of the man, we quote from a narrative written by him in 1744, now one hundred and fifty years ago.

Is it not true that "distance lends enchantment to the view," as we learn, that the glamour which appears as a bright vision, and which we are inclined to call "the good old times," is apt to be dispelled, as we get a nearer and clearer view of former days.

He attempts to describe in no very favorable terms the character of the people to whom he was then ministering, at New Providence church, as it was then called.

The tone of this letter is exceedingly condemnatory as to the spiritual condition of the membership, charging upon them an exhibition of unkindness in their intercourse with one another, and an utter lack of benevolence and Christian charity.

In this narrative which he wrote and addressed to Mr. Prince, he says:

"In the year 1743 I came to live in Charleston, Chester county, Pa., and have continued according to the order of Presbytery, preaching among them, and the people of New Providence.

"But as my ministry has been chiefly successful in the latter place since I came into these parts, I shall only speak of what I have observed of the work of God in New Providence.

"The people of this place, before I came, were but an ignorant sort of people, unacquainted with religion, both as to principle and practice; and though they would pretend, some to belong to one denomination and some to another, yet a vain name, was all. Looseness prevailed much in the place, and there was not one to speak to another in a suitable manner, neither of the vileness, deformity and unprofitableness of the ways of sin, nor of the glory and excellency, and profitableness of the ways of God.

"I know not that any of them observed family prayer, or ever asked a blessing on their food. This was the case among them, as they told me several times, and again since I began to write this narrative.

“The conviction and conversion of the people of New Providence occurred within about two months of one another.

“It was the time of my traveling among them that the Lord chose to bless for their ingathering into Jesus Christ; and since I have labored stately among them it has been as much my endeavor to build up those who were called into the fellowship of God as to convince sinners of their misery; and to this end my labors were blessed again among them throughout the year 1744.

“As to their conviction and conversion unto God, I may say, they are capable to give a scriptural account of these things.

“I forbear to speak of many extraordinary appearances, such as some scores of persons, crying out at one instant for mercy, and of others, falling down and fainting.

“These people are still increasing; and, blessed be the Lord, since the great revival, are endeavoring to walk in communion with God, and with one another. And for this end they now meet in society in the meeting-house, two or three hours at a time, for praise and prayer, and they find this an excellent means to prepare them for the Sabbath.

“They are now careful to maintain the worship of God in their families, and to use all agreeable, proper means to increase their own knowledge in the things of God.

“I choose to say no more, though I may truly say, that what I have spoken of the glorious work of God in this place, is but a little to what I might have said.”

The authority for the above, is the Rev. Archibald Alexander, D. D., page 353, “Log College,” published by the Presbyterian Board.

Dr. A. adds, “that the faithful, yet sometimes denunciatory preaching of Mr. Rowland, gave him the soubriquet of “Hell-fire Rowland.”

A veritable yet remarkable story is told of Rowland, which involves some interesting questions of psychology, and seems to show in a remarkable case how mysterious are the subtle workings of the human mind, concerning the philoso-

phy of which science has as yet given us little light. It also indicates the almost incredible animosity and rancor existing at that time, and which was exhibited by so-called Christian people. These hesitated not at any effort that malice could devise, by which might be ruined, not their enemies, but preachers of the Gospel, and members of the same household of faith.

For a very singular reason, Rowland was once arrested as a horse thief, and came near suffering the penalty in that case made and provided. It seems that a noted scoundrel of this type so resembled in physical appearance the reverend gentleman, that people could not readily distinguish between them. The horse thief was in the neighborhood of Freehold, N. J., when the landlord of a hotel where he stopped, addressed him by the name of Rowland. The man was not slow to take the hint, that here was an excellent opportunity for profiting by their mistaken identity. He may not have been acquainted with Rowland, but had doubtless heard of him. Assuming his name and title, and gifted with facile address, he easily imposed himself as the preacher. He was soon afterward at the house of a deacon, a leading member of a church, and had been appointed to preach on a Sunday morning. With his household they rode toward the place of worship. But a member of the family rode behind the wagon, astride a splendid horse. We may be sure that the sight of the superb beast was quite too tempting to the would-be preacher, and he instantly formed a plan to make him his own. He suddenly pretended that he had forgotten his sermon at the house. The horseman politely offered to go back and get it for him, but the false Rowland said no one could find it so readily as himself. If the other would but take his seat in the wagon, he would mount the horse and go back himself. This was unsuspectingly complied with, and it is needless to state that the congregation vainly waited for the preacher to appear that morning, and the good deacon never saw his handsome steed again.

When this took place, Rowland was many hundred miles away in Virginia preaching, in company with Tennent and Anderson. When they came back, Rowland was quickly arrested as the thief. Of course Anderson and Tennent were able to swear to an alibi, and he was soon acquitted. But the animosities of the "Old Lights," who had instigated Tennent's arrest, thus baffled at one point, took revenge at another. They had Tennent and Anderson arrested for perjury. Unable to find confirmatory proof, and surrounded by their foes, their trial came on at Trenton, and Anderson was first convicted. As part of his punishment, he had already stood in the pillory. But Tennent was most providentially acquitted by the arrival of a man and his wife from Virginia, who knew them both, and had been forewarned of their peril. On three successive nights he had been warned in a dream of the danger in which these preachers stood, and so vividly had it impressed his mind, that he determined to go to their rescue with his testimony. It is said that Tennent had all the while declared, that some unforeseen interposition of Providence would save him and his companion, so great was his faith and trust that his prayers would be answered. Of course the man's testimony established their innocence, and the release of both resulted.

Rev. John Rowland died in 1747. Then Rev. Richard Treat, of Abington, took charge of the Providence and Charleston churches, Rev. David Brainard acting as assistant pastor.

In the autumn of 1747 Rev. John Campbell was ordained and installed pastor of the Providence and Charleston churches, and remained until 1753. His call from life and duty was sudden. He was in the act of giving out the 116th Psalm, to sing these words, when instantly stricken with palsy in the pulpit:

"Dear in thy sight is thy saint's death,
Thy servant Lord am I."

He was buried at Providence grave-yard, and on his tomb may be found this inscription:

"In yonder sacred house I spent my breath;
Now silent, mouldering here, I lie in death.
These silent lips shall wake and yet declare
A dread Amen, to truths they uttered there."

Then followed Rev. Benj. Chestnut, who resigned in 1763. His wife Judith lies buried in the Providence cemetery, adjoining the church.

After the reunion of the Presbyterian church in general, in 1758 (following the schism of 1741), the name of the Norriton and Providence churches was assumed, and by a renewed amicable arrangement, they worshiped for many years after, alternately, in the two churches.

Rev. Richard Treat, of Abington, took charge in 1763, and continued until 1772. Then Rev. David McCalla followed for eight years.

Later, in 1782, Norriton, Providence and Abington all united in securing as pastor Rev. Wm. M. Tennent, D. D., who continued with much favor and marked success to minister to these churches for thirty years until 1810.

Pursuing my investigations between 1845-'55, I was several times entertained by Mrs. Margaret Knox, widow of Robert Knox, who was the oldest son of Capt. Andrew Knox. The latter was somewhat renowned in his day, from the circumstance that an unexpected assault was made upon him by some Tories one night (February 14, 1778) during the Revolutionary War. While there appeared to be threatenings on the part of these evil disposed men, they were unsuccessful, and were driven off, Capt. Knox holding the fort. His son Robert, above alluded to, was married to Margaret McNeely, April 6, 1800, but he was a witness and present when the affray occurred, and lived for many years after, to recount the hair-breadth escape of those dangerous night prowlers.

During our interviews, Mrs. Knox would often expatiate with much earnestness in describing the eventful scene, exhibiting to me the front door of the farm house, that had been pierced with a number of bullet holes, and which door, subsequently, was given to Independence Hall, Philadelphia, as a relic of those troublous times.

Among other items of the by-gone years, the old lady called my attention to what was left of an old, decayed willow tree, nigh to the old spring-house, and stated that General

Washington, upon an occasion of making a visit, having come from near Germantown, after alighting from a handsome white horse that he rode, himself took the willow switch which he had used as a whip, and planted the same, that for over a half century or longer, was the well-known thriving, luxurious, shady Washington tree.

Our conversation usually led to the old Norriton church, about which she loved to talk, reverting to the old-time Sabbath days, as days of privilege, as well as a time of social greeting.

Vividly she would refer to the congregation, naming numbers of those who were active and conspicuous in the church, mostly persons living in the vicinity as neighbors and familiar friends; and then, often with a sigh exclaiming, "but they are all gone, and I am left alone!"

I recall with much satisfaction my visits to the old farm, and remember well her personal appearance, cheerfulness of manner, and her readiness to communicate.

She departed this life about 1861, and was interred in the cemetery of the First Presbyterian Church, Norristown. She was the aunt (by marriage) of the late Col. Thomas P. Knox, of Norristown.

Considering her advanced age, Mrs. Knox's memory was excellent. The acquaintances of her early years, together with certain scenes attaching to the old Norriton church, had made a lasting impression upon her mind.

When quite a young woman, she remembered the Rev. Dr. Wm. Tennent, who she described as a fine-looking, portly man, with a pleasant countenance, gray hair, and with manners always dignified, yet proverbially cheerful and social. While the older persons had an intense admiration for the minister, at the same time, the young people clung closely to him.

She remembered distinctly of his coming from Neshaminy to Abington, some twenty miles, usually on horseback, and preaching stately about once a month, and during the summer oftener. She loved to describe the venerable and solemn

preacher as he stood in the quaint pulpit, closely shut in, speaking under the old sounding board.

In 1812 the labors of Dr. Tennent, including his long miles of travel, became too severe for his endurance, and he resigned the pastorate, greatly to the regret of the congregation.

For the two following years, the church was supplied by occasional preaching by neighboring ministers, some of them coming from Philadelphia, until 1814, when Rev. Joseph Barr was called, and remained for three or four years.

Another old lady, a Mrs. Shannon, far advanced in years, yet with faculties unimpaired, took delight in calling my attention to the congregational singing in those old days. It was before the professional singer was born, before the quartette had any existence, and before the pipe organ was granted permission to sound in any Presbyterian church.

William McGlathery was the excellent precentor, or leader, of the singing. He stood immediately in front of the pulpit, facing the congregation, and who, being in his prime, having a good physique and strong, clear voice, carefully beating the time with the accuracy of the metronome, he made the welkin ring.

The old tunes of Norriton church were St. Martin's, Duke Street, Wells, Shirland, St. Stephen's, Arlington, China, Peterboro, Warwick and Old Hundred.

Mr. McGlathery was also a genius in his way. To assist him in leading the singing he had invented and made with his own hands a small, neat, wooden mouth organ, which, by placing to his lips, he could at once obtain the pitch or proper sound. This he carried with him to the church as carefully as he did his hymn book, and which, too, he found to be helpful in raising the songs of Zion. Robert Stinson, John Mc-Crea and Joseph Armstrong, assisted in leading the singing.

I may add, that I had the pleasure of conversing with Wm. McGlathery and some of his family with reference to the Norriton church many years ago, when they resided near Washington Square, northeast of Norristown.

William McGlathery, just referred to, was the father of Mehelm McGlathery, a worthy and respected citizen of Norristown. The latter is still living, with mind and memory in healthful exercise, genial and communicative, at the advanced age of ninety-one years, having been born November 2, 1803.

It should be mentioned, that John McGlathery was among the early settlers in this county. He came from Scotland, doubtless with those worthies who sought a refuge from persecution, and brought with him the established principles of the Christian religion, as held by Calvinistic Presbyterians. He was born in 1693 and died in 1784.

Isaac McGlathery, son of John, became distinguished as a lieutenant in the Revolutionary War. He was born in 1749 and died in 1834.

William, alluded to in the above paragraphs, was the son of Isaac. He was born in Norriton in 1775, died in 1850; and had six children, viz., Mehelm, Samuel, John, Ann, Martha and Rachel.

An incident may be introduced here. During the Revolutionary War this old church was used by the soldiers for quarters, and later, in 1777, for the purposes of a hospital. It was currently reported that Gen. Washington, while tarrying at the Peter Wentz Inn, located on the Skippack road, in October, 1777, made one or two visits to the church.

In consequence of the damages that said church suffered during the war, the Assembly passed an act in 1785, on September 17th, allowing a lottery, to raise money to pay for necessary repairs to the church.

The writer has also a clear recollection of several conversations with some of the older residents living near the church, about 1833 to 1838. The grand-parents of these persons were the first white settlers of Norriton. They had communicated to their children the fact of the Rev. Geo. Whitefield having preached in the church in 1743.

Thirty years before, Rev. David Evans, and a little later, Rev. William Tennent, preached there; also, the name of Rev.

Richard Treat and Nathaniel Irwin, were familiar as among the useful ministers.

From their own memories, going back to 1780-'85, they assured me that they could distinctly recall the presence of Benjamin Franklin in attendance at the church, both before and after his return as Minister to France. He was accompanied each time by the astronomer, David Rittenhouse, who enjoyed the friendship and companionship of Franklin, as his guest.

The grave-yard was on the extreme western corner of the Rittenhouse farm. The oldest histories of Pennsylvania extant, as well as Watson's Annals, briefly refer to this ancient church and cemetery.

The old church property adjoined, and was once part of the Matthias Rittenhouse farm. He purchased the place in 1734, and evidently found the place of worship already located there, and conveyed the property three years later, although himself a worthy member of the Mennonite denomination. David Rittenhouse was at that time but two years old, having been born in 1732 in Germantown. In 1764 Matthias conveyed to his son David this same farm.

The ancient, time-worn deed is dated March, 1737, and recites that this property is a part of 7.482 acres of land, coming from William Penn, proprietor and Governor of the province of Pennsylvania, made to John Penn, Jr., which the latter sold to Isaac Norris and William Trent. Subsequently, Isaac Norris became the owner, and conveyed about one hundred acres to Matthias Rittenhouse in 1734.

The contract is made between Matthias Rittenhouse and Elizabeth, his wife, of the township of Norrington, county of Philadelphia, and "ye said Presbyterian Profession of ye township, aforesaid, conveying seventy-two poles of land" (giving the boundaries) "for a meeting-house and grave-yard for ye use of ye said Presbyterian Profession of ye township aforesaid," adding, "Now this indenture witnesseth by ye said Matthias Rittenhausen and Elizabeth, his wife, for and in consideration of one silver half crown, current money of England,

to them in hand paid by ye said Presbyterian Profession, that they do hereby convey and confirm," etc., etc.

The probability is, that Matthias Rittenhouse, having found the meeting-house and old grave-yard upon the corner of his farm, and having been located there before Wm. Penn's purchase, was prompted by generosity, as well as honorable motives, to convey the ground to "ye said Presbyterian meeting-house," as the above deed defines.

In his boyhood days, upon this farm (then owned by Samuel Gouldy, who purchased it in 1811), the writer remembers what was left of the old frame observatory, together with its foundation of stone, which had been built and used by David Rittenhouse in his astronomical researches; and, also, an English box-wood tree, that had been brought by Franklin, from London; and was growing and flourishing near to the dwelling house, on the farm of his familiar friend Rittenhouse.

Although nearly a hundred years have passed since the death of David Rittenhouse, it may be recorded truthfully today, that in scientific research and astronomical ability, he has not been excelled since. And, while not designing a biographical sketch of the deceased, the circumstance of his home and surroundings being contiguous to the old Norriton church, and the same having been the gift of his parents, will explain the reason, for the following additional paragraphs.

The farm house is still standing on the opposite corner, about two hundred feet southwest from the church, where Rittenhouse, at seventeen years of age, made his first wooden clock. Here, also, he attempted his first astronomical observations; having a superb view of the heavens, especially looking north and south, from this point of Fairview. For many years this farm was owned by Jacob Harley.

As I remember this house, in 1835, on its west end Philip Harley kept a country store. He took delight in calling attention to the above, and showed me the identical second-story front room, which still retained some memorable marks, left by Rittenhouse. Later, as I was informed, in the same house, he manufactured the first large eight-day clock, termed

his Astronomical clock; exhibiting the changes of the moon, with moving calendar; which in these modern years have been sought after, simply known as the David Rittenhouse grandfather clock.

The year 1769 is memorable in the annals of astronomy. During that year, his successful observations and subsequent reports, pertaining to the transit of Venus, made him world-renowned. The same year there was also a transit of Mercury; when along with such names as Dr. Smith, Lukens, Owen Biddle, and others, he rendered his observations, which were published by the American Philosophical Society; when again, David Rittenhouse, of Norriton, equalled them all.

In 1770 he conceived the idea of endeavoring to report by machinery the planetary system. The relative situations of the members of the solar system, at any period of time, for five thousand years back, could be shown in a moment.

This was pronounced a great success. President John Adams extolled him. Rev. Dr. Samuel Miller, of Princeton College, spoke in high praises concerning his invention. Dr. Gordon, the English historian, said: "There is not the like in Europe." Dr. Morse, the geographer, eulogized him.

His friend Thomas Jefferson said: "Surpassing in ingenuity, contrivance, skill, accuracy and utility, any thing of the kind, ever before constructed. * * * He has not, indeed, made a world; but he has by imitation, approached nearer his Maker, than any man who has lived, from the Creation, to this day."

For this wonderful instrument, the Orrery, two universities vied with each other to obtain it; the University of Pennsylvania, and Princeton College; while the former, Dr. Smith, desired to have it, yet, Dr. Witherspoon, of the latter institution, secured it by the payment of £300.

These facts lend interest to the spot, made memorable by the works, and inventive faculty of David Rittenhouse at Norriton; with the near prospect of the old church, being always in sight from his country home, and the attractive for-

est-covered Mehacton Hill (usually pronounced Methatchen), lying in the near south-west.

He was born April 8, 1732; retained this place as his rural residence, until 1796, being 62 years; and departed this life in Philadelphia, June 26, 1796; aged 64 years.

Another family name, more intimately associated with the early years of the old Norriton church, was that of Armstrong.

The writer is favored as the recipient of an old manuscript, giving many interesting items.

The Armstrong family were of the Scotch-Presbyterian persuasion. The possibility exists that the elder Armstrong came over with his family about the time of Penn's landing. This record has been lost. Joseph Armstrong, Sr., the son, was born in 1686, died 1766, aged 80 years. Ephraim Armstrong, son of Joseph, was born 1730, died 1804, aged 74 years. Joseph Armstrong, son of Ephraim, was born 1762, died 1844, aged 82 years. Benj. E. Armstrong, son of the last named Joseph, was born 1798. He removed to the state of Ohio, from Pennsylvania, in 1849, and died there, about 1876. All the above (excepting only Benjamin) together with some thirty members of the family, all lie buried in the old Norriton church ground.

Ephraim, inherited the old farm from his father in 1767; who had settled upon the land, about 1710.

To encourage rapid settlement, this land was not sold; but was let out on perpetual lease, at the low price of ten bushels of wheat per year, as a consideration for each 160 acres; said wheat, to be delivered at Robison's mill, on the Wissahickon, five miles north of Philadelphia. Then, there were no surveyed roads; and the delivery was by pack horses. In 1815, the lands were relinquished from the leases, and a fee simple deed issued, in its stead.

Ephraim was father to eleven children; five sons, and six daughters. The Revolutionary war found him with this large helpless family.

He was in comparatively easy circumstances; but the

fortunes of war, during the severe winter of 1777-8, palced him, as it were, just between the winter quarters of the contending armies.

Washington's suffering and almost starving troops at Valley Forge, four miles distant, and the British outposts being only eight or ten miles distant on the Philadelphia side, made him subject to the frequent visitation of the enemy's marauding parties, while distressed also, at the famishing wants of the American army. This state of affairs continued for more than six months; and the surrounding country, as a consequence, was not only reduced to a state of actual destitution, but many lacked even the necessary comforts of life.

But this was not all. During the horrors and desolation of the war, in addition to the trial of being despoiled of a means of subsistence, Ephraim was drafted in the army which Washington was recruiting with a view of dislodging the British from Philadelphia.

This was an emergency; a condition of things to try one's soul.

To leave his family in an unprotected condition at such a time, was to leave them to perish.

Joseph, his first born son, was then in his sixteenth year, A recruit, particularly as a substitute, was required to be eighteen.

In this dilemma, Joseph, who was of large stature and manly appearance for his age, resolved to use the pardonable deception of passing himself for eighteen years, and taking the place of substitute for his father, in which plan he succeeded, and thus entered the army.

He was subsequently in the battle of Monmouth, N. J.; which was fought on the 28th day of June, 1777, ten days after the evacuation of Philadelphia. He stood faithfully to his duty, in skirmishes, and battles, throughout the war; and to the admiration of the officers, established his well earned military reputation.

When peace was restored he returned to his father's farm, where he remained until he was married; except a period

of two years, spent in the employ of the Commissioners, David Rittenhouse, of Pennsylvania, and DeWitt Clinton, of New York; appointed to settle the boundary lines of those two states.

Joseph Armstrong had five sons and one daughter. One son only, B. E. Armstrong, survived him. He lived with this son, for the last fourteen years of his life on his farm, located in Upper Merion township, Montgomery county; there Joseph Armstrong died in 1844, aged 82 years.

His remains repose in the Norriton church graveyard.

Returning to Ephraim Armstrong, father of Joseph, it was said, that he lived about twenty-six years, after the close of the Revolutionary war, and was held in high repute, as one of the community in which he dwelt. He was a strict Calvinistic Presbyterian, uncompromising in his religious convictions, decided in his actions and purposes, yet thoughtful and charitable towards those who differed with him.

Withal, he was kind and benevolent at heart, as he had opportunity, yet regarded as rigid and austere in the training of his family.

As was customary with old men of that time, he wore a red and white striped cap, manufactured out of silk; from the crown of which hung a large tassel.

He died at the old family homestead, Norriton, November 6, 1804, aged 74 years. Much respected and lamented, he was buried in the old Norriton Presbyterian graveyard.

To his memory it may be added, that he was one of the most devoted and useful members of this church. The writer long years ago, listened to commendatory words from an aged lady, who spoke of him, as the faithful Elder, always ready to extend the kindly smile, and the friendly grasp of the hand, at the services upon each recurring Sabbath. He also contributed generously to support the church, and willingly gave his services as precentor, or leader of the singing, for many years.

The location of the old Armstrong farm, containing about 100 acres, was near the church, on the southwest side of Manatawny road; now, Germantown and Perkiomen turnpike, opposite to the renowned David Rittenhouse farm.

This place was owned, 1835-45, by one Woodley; later Wanner, Anderson, Freas, Bean, Miller and now Jos. Cassel.

The Thompson family evidently were early associated with the old Norriton church. Occasionally, we find the name printed Thomson.

William Penn by his deed, as the first proprietary of Pennsylvania, on the 20th of April, 1689, conveyed to Major Robert Thompson 10,000 acres of land in Chester county, Pa.; covering a large part of Vincent and Coventry townships. By his will 14th April, 1691, he devised all the said land to his son Joseph Thompson, the son of his son Joseph, for life, etc.

It is thought that some near of kin (perhaps a brother of Major Thompson) about the same time chose Montgomery county and Norriton as his future home. They came from the north of Ireland, and were distinctively old stock Presbyterians.

The graveyard gives evidence that of the Thompsons there were several in Norriton, as residents, during the eighteenth century. The families of Archibald, Samuel, Robert, Joseph, Moses, and again Archibald, were in their day and generation well known. Their farms were chiefly in Norriton, and perhaps one in Worcester township. James Thompson, who came from Ireland, about 1755, died in Pottstown, Pa., in 1782, aged 65 years.

A distinguished citizen was the Hon. Charles Thompson. He was born in Ireland in 1730, came over in 1741, and lived in Lower Merion, where he died in 1824, aged 96 years. He was a strict Presbyterian, and his remains were interred in the Presbyterian graveyard, near his residence; but afterwards, removed to Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia.

His life, and the active part he took in the American Revolution, not only exhibited the manliness and courage of the Irish character, but he became conspicuous in our national councils; having been the Secretary of nearly all the sessions of our Revolutionary Congress.

The following paragraphs will furnish items of much interest, referring to the Norris family, also to one Archibald Thompson.

The first of the Norris family, distinguished as among the early settlers of Pennsylvania, and of whom any record has been preserved, was Thomas Norris, a merchant, of London, England, who had gained the Society of Friends, soon after the rise of that sect.

He emigrated about 1678, with his wife and large family, to the island of Jamaica, West Indies; and perished in the great earthquake, which destroyed Port Royal, on the 7th of June, 1692.

Isaac Norris (said to have been the ninth child of the above named Thomas Norris) and founder of the family in Pennsylvania, was born in the city of London, July 26, 1671, and was about seven years old, when the family removed to Jamaica.

In 1690 his father sent him to Pennsylvania by a sailing vessel, to examine the country, preparatory to the family settling there.

He returned to Jamaica, to learn the distressing fact, that his father and many others had perished in the earthquake. In 1693 he came back to Philadelphia (then only about ten years settled) with a fortune scarcely more than, £100, and entered into mercantile business; rising rapidly to be one of the colony's wealthiest and most successful merchants.

Purchasing, together with Trent, the manor of Williams-tadt in 1704, and later, having renounced political distinction, in 1709 called to a seat in the Governor's Council, 1712 elected Speaker of the Assembly, holding also many conspicuous official positions, he died suddenly, while attending Friends meeting in Germantown, Philadelphia, June 4, 1735, in his 65th year.

Charles Norris, son of the Councillor, and who married Eunice Gardner, at Nantucket, Mass., July 4, 1793, died on the farm, Norris Hall, Montgomery county, Pa., Dec. 24, 1813.

He and his wife, together with their children and children's children, are interred in the old family burial ground attached to said farm.

This property (1894) is now in possession of John Schrack, son of the late Charles Norris Schrack, and great-grandson of the last named Charles Norris.

John Schrack, Sr., born in Upper Providence, November 10, 1787, and who died, July 21, 1872, married Mary, daughter of Charles Norris last named; and who was a lineal descendant of the family named Norris, after whom both Norriton township and Norristown are named.

The old farm, with continental stone buildings, about 100 years old (which stands in the place of the log house of two centuries ago) has long been known as "Norris Hall;" and is a part of the patrimonial estate, which comprised several hundred acres on the west side of the Schuylkill river, south of Jeffersonville, and extending to Port Kennedy.

In bygone years, conversing at sundry times with John Schrack, Sr., and his sons David, Charles Norris, and John Schrack, Jr., M. D., many interesting items were recited, referring to the days long gone by.

A little north of the land mentioned above, about 1730, and originally owned by them, was a tract, also, called "the Norris farm."

In 1758, this Norris farm house, a roomy house, built of stone, had been converted into a tavern. It was leased subsequently to different tenants, and became a convenient stopping place for the increasing travel on the main road to Reading. It stood at a point of land, being the junction of the old Egypt and Ridge roads, and for a time was commonly called the Egypt Inn. In later years, it was called the Jeffersonville tavern; by which name it is known, up to this writing. As a traditional item, it was currently reported, that a District Court was held here, and a secure lockup was built in the basement for temporary convicts; the remaining cell walls of which were to be seen there in later years.

In 1766 Archibald Thompson was the landlord; and in his day was respected for his accommodating spirit as well as his family antecedents.

In 1776 said Thompson was assessed for eighty acres of land. This was during the exciting period of the Revolutionary war; but he continued as the owner and host of this public house, while at the same time he was on duty as an esteemed

Colonel, in the patriotic army, assisting most devotedly in defending American principles.

On the 1st of November, 1779, Archibald Thompson died. He was comparatively a young man, and formerly of a strong physical frame; but his arduous and earnest personal efforts, during the war, were often days of danger, exposure, and sacrifice; and it was thought these things possibly hastened his death.

His lineage was of Presbyterian Scotch-Irish stock; and probably he was the son of Archibald Thompson, Sr., who died in 1745; they both lie buried in the old Norriton Presbyterian church ground.

After 1779 Archibald Thompson's widow, Hannah, continued to keep the Egypt Inn (now Jeffersonville) for a number of years; for in 1784 she is still recognized as the proprietor.

Returning for a moment to "war times," one beautiful autumn day, September 7, 1777, a company of British soldiers appeared, and without any notice, yet with the display of huzzas and apparent malice, they deliberately set fire to the property, and burned the hotel and its contents, leaving only the blackened stone walls. As a miserable and most unsatisfactory plea, it had been reported that a certain noted rebel was interested in the ownership of the property.

As a result of this disaster, in after years, the widow, Hannah Thompson, received £870 from the State, as compensation for her loss.

A public vendue was extensively advertised to take place, at Archibald Thompson's Hotel, in February, 1777. It is not known with certainty whether at that time any sale took place. But the following September 17th the whole plantation, consisting of five hundred and forty-three acres, including and reaching southward from the tavern property just named, all the way to the site of the present Norristown, was sold by Charles Norris to John Bull. The latter was formerly a native of Providence township, having near family connections in Chester county.

He was likewise a colonel in the Revolutionary army; had been a justice-of-the-peace; and was considered in his day a brainy, intelligent man, of marked executive ability. Benjamin Thompson was doubtless his only son, who died April 6, 1829, aged fifty-three years. His wife, Elizabeth, also died in Norristown, December 28, 1878, aged a hundred and two years, one month and fourteen days.

In 1779 Colonel Bull sold the plantation to Dr. William Smith, Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, for £6,000.

Soon after, Colonel Bull removed from Pennsylvania, and purchased lands in Berkely county, Virginia. He lived there with his family for a number of years; and report has since confirmed the statement that he died there.

The fact is well known, that Montgomery county was erected in 1784, out of Philadelphia county. William Moore Smith, son of Dr. Smith, had a town site laid out on part of this plantation in 1785; and later, public buildings were erected. The growth, and subsequent history of Norristown, reveals the excellent judgment and forecast of Dr. Smith.

It seems relevant to our narrative, to relate some items pertaining to others, who were early interested in the Norriton church. Of such were the Knox family.

David Knox, was born in County Antrim, Ireland, 1700; and died 1780. He emigrated in 1732; and settled on a farm, located on the township line, west of Washington Square, in Whitpain township. This farm remained in possession of the Knox family, until 1862, one hundred and thirty years. Captain Andrew Knox, son of David, was born in County Antrim, as above, 1728, emigrated 1732, and died in 1807. Andrew Knox, the second, was born August 13, 1773, died October 3, 1844. He had two sons, Thomas P. Knox and Andrew Jackson Knox, now both deceased. The former resided in Norriton, the latter in Plymouth township.

About the same time John McCrea settled in Norriton, three-fourths of a mile southeast of the church, on the turnpike. Adjoining this, north, he also had a farm. He died March 3, 1823. On the first, for many years afterward, Fran-

cis Burnside resided. The place is now owned by Albert Pawling. On the second farm, many years ago, was a pottery; and Joseph McCrea lived thereon. Some of the family settled in Norristown; a son, named William H. McCrea, lived in Philadelphia, as did his aged mother, Catharine McCrea, who died in Philadelphia, September 5, 1856. They lie buried at Norriton grave-yard.

About 1798, when strife and turbulence prevailed in Ireland, John Patterson came to this country in the same ship with Robert Hamill, and together settled for a while in Norristown. They alike came from County Antrim, Province of Ulster, North Ireland. They were each descended from genuine Presbyterian parentage, having an excellent family record, and lived useful lives. The two united in a business partnership for two or three years in Norristown. After that, Mr. Patterson removed to Philadelphia. The writer, as a school-boy, remembers him very well. His place of business, as a wholesale grocer, was at the southeast corner of Fourth and Race streets; and also, recalls his regular attendance at the services in the Second Presbyterian Church, which stood, in 1835, at northwest corner of Third and Arch streets. John Patterson married the daughter of Colonel Christopher Stuart, of Norriton; and Robert Hamill married the daughter of Colonel Andrew Todd, of the Trappe, Upper Providence. Colonel Todd was a soldier of the Revolution. John Patterson died in Philadelphia, August 20, 1850, in the eighty-second year of his age.

Joseph Patterson was the eldest son, long well-known and highly esteemed in Philadelphia, where for years he was the competent and much respected cashier of the Western Bank of that city. His residence was at Chestnut Hill. Our school-days recall pleasant memories of another son and brother of Joseph, viz., Henry Stuart Patterson, who became a successful physician in Philadelphia. He died comparatively young, and was buried in the Norriton grave-yard; but some years afterwards his remains were removed and interred in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia.

About 1720-'30, much earlier than those preceding, one Robert Porter, emigrated from the north of Ireland, and settled in Worcester township, near the Norriton line.

General Andrew Porter was his son, born in 1743. On the breaking out of the Revolutionary war he offered his services to Congress, received a commission as Captain of Marines, and was later engaged in the battles of Trenton, Princeton and Brandywine.

At the dreary, suffering encampment at Valley Forge, during the winter of 1777-'8, he was major of a regiment of artillery. Several of his sons became distinguished; David R. Porter, governor of Pennsylvania, and General James M. Porter, a member of the Assembly, and Secretary of War, under President Tyler.

Judge Thomas Burnside, afterwards of Centre county, and Francis Burnside, of Norriton township, were sons of William, who came from Scotland, about 1780-'90, and settled on a farm near Fairview, in Lower Providence township. He adhered to the old continental costume of looped-up hat, straight coat, buckskin breeches, with long stockings, and large silver shoe buckles. At Judge Burnside's residence, in Bellefonte, Centre county, the writer spent many pleasant visits, in 1842-'3. While at times, brusque and outspoken, he was remarkably penetrating, and as a conversationalist, exceedingly entertaining. Governor David R. Porter, in 1841, appointed him judge of Montgomery county, and by the same governor, in 1845, he was set apart to the bench of the Supreme Court.

The writer is in possession of a manuscript, giving a partial genealogical history of Daniel Evans, who married Eleanor, daughter of David Rittenhouse.

Daniel Evans, was among the first settlers in Norriton, after the Penn grant. While of Quaker proclivity, and a model man, yet Evans was not of the strictest of the sect; exhibiting much liberality and charity, as to his religious opinions.

The writer has also a number of interesting items concerning John Baker and his descendants. He was an ingeni-

ous worker in iron, steel, and other metals, and was a resident of Lower Providence township. His farm lay adjacent to that of Ephraim Armstrong, previously referred to; although in a different township; both bounded on the same line, about a mile apart. His father was a native of Germany; and a very early settler in this vicinity.

During the Revolutionary war, Mr. Baker rendered very efficient aid to the Whig cause, by his handicraft, in the work of making and repairing suitable fire-arms. Mr. Baker lived to a great old age; being nearly a centenarian; and died about 1820. His wife was a Roberts of Welsh extraction, whose parents resided in the neighborhood.

Their children were Samuel, John, Arnold, Catherine, Mary, Hannah, Rebecca and Elizabeth.

Arnold died at the old homestead on the Germantown and Perkiomen turnpike, near the present Hartranft station, Stony Creek railroad, about 1858.

Justly and deservedly (did our space allow), we might also refer to Colonel Christopher Stuart, Dr. James McFarland, Abraham Lefevre, Dr. Robert Shannon, Andrew Supplee, Archibald Darrah and others, all of Norriton, and among the early settlers.

Following in later years were the Hamills, Stinsons, McEwens, Keyzers, Craigs, Shearers, Gettys, Heisers, Taneys, McHargs, Bosserts, Powels, Snyders, and other names, representing reputable families, of whom the present generation give abundant evidence of their honorable lineage and usefulness as worthy citizens.

“What a changing world is this,
Void of all substantial bliss;
All we see beneath the sun,
In successive changes run;
But, our Jesus, proves the same;
Endless blessings on His name.”

A final reference to the old Norriton church is made in the following paragraph. In 1893, quite extensive, yet needful repairs were again made to the building. A new shingle roof, new floor, new ceiling and some new pieces of furniture,

were added, making substantial improvements for a generation to come. Beside, the stone walls of the house as well as the walls of the burial ground, were pointed and put in good condition. The cost was \$301.68; contributed willingly by friends of the institution.

Occasional religious services are held by Rev. C. R. Brodhead, and a summer Sabbath School convenes, having about one hundred scholars.

As it has been necessary to refer largely to the Providence church in this paper, the narrative would not be complete without furnishing a brief history of the Jeffersonville church, which was directly an outgrowth of the former.

The old Norriton, Providence and Jeffersonville churches were located within about two miles of each other, and while it is true that nearly all the Presbyterian churches of Eastern Pennsylvania have legitimately descended from the old Norriton, yet, in a peculiar manner, this trio of churches bears a close relationship to each other.

Immediately following the unfortunate division, which occurred in the Presbyterian body in 1837, the rural churches soon partook of the spirit manifested by the city congregations; some taking sides with the Old School, while others leaned towards the New School parties.

At once the Presbyteries were known as "New" and "Old School," in their tenets, theology and teachings.

A strange coincidence may be mentioned, that it was about one hundred years since a similar and most memorable division crept in, and separated the Norriton and Providence congregations.

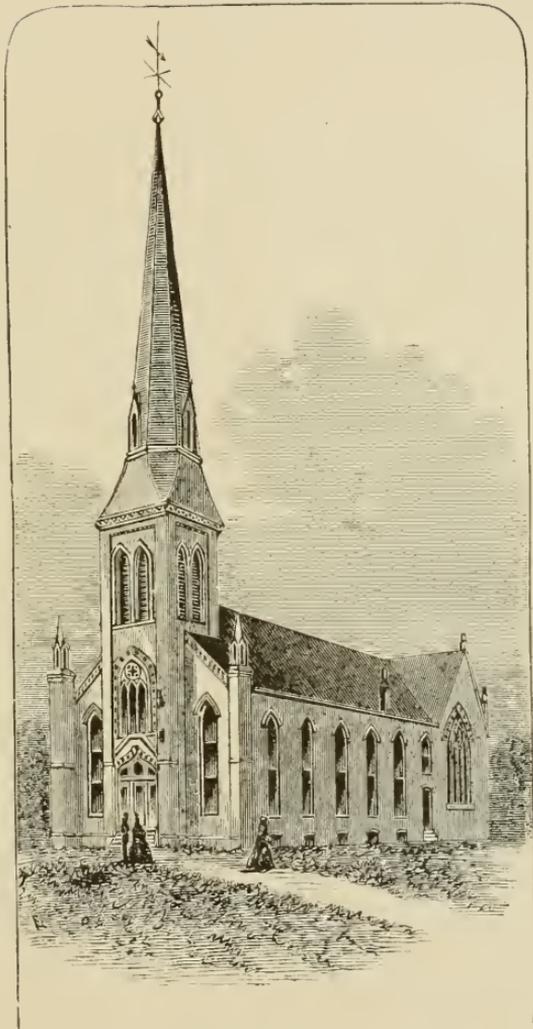
Now, the division takes place in the Providence church. For several years strife, complainings, bickerings and bitterness fanned the embers of suspicion and dislike, lurking in the minds of the membership, until April, 1843; when the hidden fires broke out into a conflagration, and the eruption was heralded abroad. Persistently a division was called for. Rev. Sylvanus Haight was the pastor at the time. A man in the prime of life, of good attainments as a scholar, and of excellent

repute as a minister, he used all reasonable means to re-establish peace and good will, but failed. The predilections of Rev. Haight favored the New School system; in company with such distinguished men as Revs. Albert Barnes, Ezra Stiles Ely, Anson Rood, Adair, Brown, Emerson, John Patton, Joel Parker and others; and indeed for two or three years preceding, many who were prominent in the congregation accepted the New School theology. Later, however, the majority of the Providence congregation decided peremptorily to adhere to the Old School Presbytery, which at once instigated a separation of friends and kindred, resulting in the founding of the Jeffersonville church, whose membership allied themselves with the Third (New School) Presbytery of Philadelphia.

In October, 1843, the Jeffersonville Presbyterian church was organized, comprising in its membership those who had withdrawn from the Lower Providence church. In 1844, the year following, a stone building, rough cast 36 by 54 feet, was erected, having a basement Sunday School room. Rev. Charles F. Diver was the first pastor. It stood on an ineligible place on the north side of the Ridge turnpike on a flat, wet piece of ground, about three-fourths of a mile west of the village. It was regarded as an unfavorable, isolated situation, and, becoming somewhat dilapidated, was taken down in June, 1875. In the autumn of 1874 a new location for a new church was sought for, and prudently selected in the centre of the village, and by a unanimous vote of the congregation, May 17, 1875, the name of the congregation was changed to the "Centennial Presbyterian Church, of Jeffersonville, Pa.," and a charter accordingly obtained. The eligible lot on which the church is built, was purchased from Benjamin and Elizabeth Custer on very favorable terms.

The entire beautiful plot of ground on which the church building stands, including also the cemetery lot, comprises about three acres. This, in addition to other beneficent gifts, was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Francis Whiting, of Jeffersonville.

On the 1st day of June, 1875, ground was broken for the foundation of the building. On July 3d the corner-stone was



CENTENNIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
JEFFERSONVILLE.

laid, and on the following day, July 4th, Sunday afternoon, suitable religious services were held recognizing the event.

On Sunday, January 2, 1876, the chapel was formally dedicated to the service of Almighty God. The pastor, Rev. Charles Collins, who began his work in said church, November, 1866, preached a dedicatory sermon from Psalm 122, first verse.

The new church building is of gray sand-stone, pointed work, gothic style, 50 by 110 feet, having a stone tower 70 feet in height, with handsome spire reaching nearly one hundred and fifty feet, and cost about \$25,000, being free of debt.

In point of location, it is unexcelled, and in beauty of architecture, as well as furniture and all the modern appointments, it is not surpassed in the county.

The church was finally opened and dedicated October 4th, 1876; three large congregations being in attendance morning, afternoon and evening.

The building was erected under the supervision of the pastor, Rev. Charles Collins, who would render a grateful testimony to the helpful services of James Shaw, David Schrack, M. D., Francis Whiting and others.

The inquiry has been made, why was the name of the corporation changed? We answer, primarily, because the building was chiefly erected during the Centennial year. But, there are historical reasons for the name.

In the beginning of December, 1777, General Howe surprised the American camp at Whitemarsh, Montgomery county.

The following day, that part of the army under General Washington, started to march toward Valley Forge, and owing to the severity of the weather, were seriously delayed; a portion of them tarrying on this very ground, at the time being wood-land.

Others took shelter in the ancient stone house, occupying the site of the Jeffersonville Inn, while others, of a division which had been hindered and exhausted (some of whom were suffering and sick), were quartered in the old Norriton church.

Tradition has it that some of the soldiers died at both places named.

On the 11th of December, 1777, Washington finally went into winter quarters at Valley Forge. History records the fact that the condition, as well as the prolonged sufferings of many of the soldiers, was simply indescribable.

On the march from Whitemarsh many were without shoes, their feet being bare on the hard frozen ground, and therefore were severely cut and bruised.

Upon the very spot where the new church was built, while digging up the earth in 1875, at depth of about two feet, some laborers were surprised by finding a coin of Spanish silver money, bearing date 1774, and which was probably lost by some one of the Revolutionary soldiers, while tenting there, one hundred years before.

Among other relics, this piece of money was deposited in the corner-stone of the new building.

Digressing for a moment, it is worthy of note, as a published fact, that on October 14, 1894, the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the First Christ Presbyterian Church of Hempstead, Long Island, was celebrated in an appropriate manner. This confirms that Presbyterianism had come with the pioneers, as early as 1644.

In concluding this history, which has been of intense interest to myself, it is probable that some imperfections and errors may be discovered.

It is no easy task, at this late day, to obtain the desired information; neither is it a trivial work, to arrange systematically, and narrate the incidents, of which so many have largely sunk into oblivion. But, my thought has been, that in future years it may prove useful and valuable, by exhibiting the traits of religious character, as well as the fidelity and integrity of our forefathers; and we shall hope, too, that it may awaken a zeal, and stimulate others, to grasp any and every opportunity to note the passing events, and record the same, for the benefit of coming generations.

Some may be disposed to criticise the noticeable feature—that so much of this narrative has been interspersed with correlative statements, pertaining to the first emigrants and early settlers, not directly pertinent to the old Norriton church; but it will be granted that all this is valuable, and will compensate the reader, because it furnishes a compilation of traditional and historical facts, calculated to confirm the premises we have taken, as to the Holland settlers, and the antiquity of the Norriton place of worship.

As intimated in the opening page, that although my attention was turned to this old church almost sixty years ago, yet, I desire to add, that the leading items on the Norriton church herewith published, are largely extracts, traditional and historical, from three discourses which the writer delivered in the Centennial Church of Jeffersonville, in July, 1876.

Reviewing the preceding pages, at least two valuable lessons may be learned. First: That in every age of the world's history, the true people of God have their trials. No circumstances will exempt them. Tribulations, in some form, seem to be the appointed lot of man; and, therefore, there are times when neither wealth, eminence, nor education can purchase deliverance.

Hence, our fathers had their perplexities. To them, oft-times, these things proved blessings. Trials made them heroic, enduring soldiers. They persevered, they conquered! They grew to be stalwart men, ready for any emergency.

As a result of their faith, their hardships and endurance, they have left us a rich legacy of Christian character, in testimony of their trust.

The second lesson is, that strifes and contentions are always unprofitable; but especially among Christians.

The result of the first great dissension in the Presbyterian church, alluded to in these pages, occurred in 1740, and lasted until 1758; for seventeen years. But really it was not entirely subdued until 1788, or nearly half a century.

Who can imagine the heart-burnings, the bitterness, the

separations of relatives and friends, and the lasting dishonor to the household of faith, and the cause of religion.

The results of the later division in the Presbyterian church, 1837, extended through more than a quarter of a century, before a reconciliation took place. What a dreary retrospect these statements bring before the memory!

Finally, reverting for a moment to the old Norriton church, and in imagination fixing our eye thereon, how changed the scene!

Long, long ago, the old gray-haired preacher's voice has ceased; the old hymns and psalms of praise have ended; the old elders, John McCrea and Stephen Porter, and others, have left the earth; the voices of the worshipping congregation are all hushed in silence!

The curious old pulpit, and quaint, high-back pews, have been removed. And in these later years, the surrounding forests have fallen beneath the woodman's axe; the old cedar trees have greatly diminished in number; the grand old English Lombardy poplars, once so tall and thrifty, lining the opposite side of the road, have all decayed, and are gone!

But, the old stone meeting house, stands, as it were, alone, and isolated; yet a fitting monument of the fathers; and the old grave-yard, the quiet resting place of the dead, even though many of the earlier memorial stones are obliterated or entirely gone, seem to whisper to the pilgrim traveler, that upon all things here, it is written, "passing away! passing away!"

Time *was*, is past; thou canst not it recall;
 Time *is*, thou hast; employ the portion small;
 Time *future*, is not; and may never be;
 Time present, is the only time for thee!

Philadelphia, November 1, 1894.

NEWS CHURCH

HISTORIC CHURCH DAMAGED BY FIRE

Blaze from a Defective Flue Destroys the Interior of the Ancient Presbyterian House of Worship at Norriton.

Special Despatch to "The Press."

Norristown, Pa., Nov. 1.—The old his-



