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HISTORY

First Presbyterian Church

WOODBIDGE, NEW JERSEY

300th Anniversary

MAY 25, 1975

1675

1975

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Preface

“The history of a nation,” Woodrow Wilson once said, is “the history of its villages.” Since the church was the very heart of village life, the early history of a settlement is inseparable from that of its church.

During the period of colonization, church and state were not separate entities as we know them today. The church, often referred to as “The Meeting House,” was indeed the place where town meetings were held and in which the townspeople assembled to both worship and govern. In this, Woodbridge was no exception.

In reviewing the “Old Town Book” in which is recorded the proceedings of town meetings of the 1660’s and 1670’s, we find land grants, court business, calls to clergymen and plans for building a meeting house all commingled. The Charter of Woodbridge, 1669, provided that 200 acres of land be set aside for the Kirk, the Kirk green and the use of the minister and that a tax be levied to pay the salary of the minister. In 1676, the town was assessed to defray the cost of building a meeting house, which was to become the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge.

So thus it is that one publishes little volumes such as this to show the genesis of a village and the heritage of a people. We do so not without pride and satisfaction, pointing to 300 years (1675-1975) of continuous service to this community; saying with Wordsworth, We “seem of cheerful yesterdays and confident tomorrows.”

The Editors

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Pastors

1670 (six months)	Rev. Samuel Treat ²
1674 (three months)	Rev. Benjamin Salisbury
1680-1685	Rev. John Allin ³
1686-1689	Rev. Archibald Riddell ⁴
1695-1707	Rev. Samuel Shepard ⁵
1707-1711	Rev. Nathaniel Wade
1714-1752	Rev. John Pierson
1755-1760	Rev. Nathaniel Whitaker
1763-1815	Rev. Azel Roe
1816-1821	Rev. Henry Mills
1822-1852	Rev. William B. Barton
1852-1863	Rev. William M. Martin
1863-1873	Rev. George C. Lucas
1874-1906	Rev. Joseph M. McNulty
1907-1918	Rev. Robert W. Mark
1918-1925	Rev. Leonard V. Buschman
1925-1927	Rev. Leroy Y. Dillener, Sr.
1927-1933	Rev. Ernest A. Abbott
1933-1959	Rev. Earl H. Devanny
1959-1967	Rev. Alex N. Nemeth
1967-	Rev. Lewis E. Bender ⁶

1. Names and dates compiled from primary sources.

2. The list is comprised of those who contracted to be the "Minister" of the Church. There were many others such as Rev. George Gillespie (1712), Rev. Howard Augustine (1932), and Rev. Kenneth M. Kepler (1942-1945) who served as "Interim" or "Supply" Pastors.

3. Sometimes incorrectly spelled "Allen".

4. Sometimes incorrectly spelled "Riddle".

5. Sometimes incorrectly spelled "Sheppard".

6. The list was compiled by Rev. Bender.

Chapter 1

1675 - 1775

“Established 1675” reads a sign on the front of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge. This is a matter of some pride and satisfaction to many who invest antiquity with all things good and wise. A more practical value can be put on an existence of some 300 years. The useful, continuing service to this community which has grown to a population of near 100,000 cannot be measured.

Although the history of a church normally begins with the start of regularly held services under the leadership of an ordained minister, our church has several alternate options. We might have selected the year 1667, the date when the articles of agreement were confirmed which included provision for the building of a church and the allotment of land for the minister. Or we might have chosen June 8, 1669 when two citizens were commissioned at a town meeting to secure a minister. However, May 27, 1675, the frame of the meeting house was erected; and it is this date which has been chosen as the real beginning of our church. In 1676, the town was assessed to defray the expenses of the building.

The attainment of a minister met with many an obstacle and it was not until September, 1680, that the services of Mr. John Allin were procured. At this point it might be well to note the very close relationship between church and state; church matters and secular matters were truly one. A voluntary subscription plan, adopted in 1680, was discarded the following year when it was ordered that the minister's salary be raised in the same manner as other taxes. In January, 1681, it was voted that Mr. Allin be their choice of permanent pastor and that he be made a freeholder if he would stay. The next November he was presented with a house and ten acres.

“This is a fair place set in green meadows beside clear sparkling water with a good stand of timber nearby, with excellent protected water for shipping.” Thus wrote an early promoter to folks back home in England early in the development of the New Jersey colony in an effort to entice more settlers to cross the stormy seas.

However, the desire to cast their lot in the New World may have sprung not so much from the "green meadows" as from the religious oppression and persecution widespread in Europe during the Seventeenth century.

In 1665, James, Duke of York, heir to the throne of England, granted title to the province of New Jersey and the right to govern it to Lord John Berkeley and Sir George Cartaret. They appointed Philip Cartaret as Governor who sent agents to New England to seek settlers for the New Jersey colony.

A number of willing emigrants were found in Newbury, Mass., presumably through the efforts of John Woodbridge, an original settler of Newbury and a man of long standing influence in that community, having served in many capacities including surveyor, teacher, town clerk, magistrate and at that time Assistant Pastor of the church. The admiration and affection held for him was made abundantly clear when the emigrants named their new settlement Woodbridge, New Jersey, in honor of this great man. Articles were drawn up on December 11, 1666. "The contract was between Capt. Philip Cartaret, Governor of the Province of New Jersey, John Ogden, and Duke Watson of Elizabethtown of the first part and Daniel Pierce of Newbury, Massachusetts and his associates of the second part." Daniel Pierce paid to the party of the first part the sum of four score pounds sterling, being in full for said tract of land known by the name of Arthur Cull or Amboyle, or any other name it may be called by. This land was purchased from the natives or Indians by John Bayly, Daniel Denton, and the said Luke Watson as by said bill of sale from the natives, bearing date of October 28, 1664; which same then made over to Philip Cartaret and John Ogden. Daniel Pierce made choice of as his associates Joshua Pierce, John Pike, John Bishop, Henry Jacques and Hugh March of Newbury; Stephen Kent of Haverhill; Robert Dennis of Yarmouth; John Smith of Barnstable in New England.

The articles of agreement were confirmed by a deed dated December 3, 1667, on which day Daniel Pierce was commissioned to be Deputy Surveyor to run boundary lines and lay out lands to the different associates. These articles gave permission to settle one or two plantations consisting of forty to one hundred families in the area between the Rahway River and the Raritan River. Provision was made for making land grants to settlers, for choosing magistrates and military officers, for electing deputies to the colony's General Assembly. Land was specifically allotted for the ministry and for the building of a church. About one third of the tract was sold to emigrants from New Hampshire, which became the township of Piscataway.



Rev. John Woodbridge

The following persons received patents from the Proprietors principally in the year 1670 for lands within the township of Woodbridge, and were all, it is believed, actual settlers. The nine original associates were allowed to retain two hundred forty acres of upland and forty acres of meadow land in addition to the regular allotment to each Freeholder, but the first division is not recorded.

The nine associates are:

John Bishop	Joshua Pierce
Robert Dennis	John Smith "Wheelwright"
Henry Jacques	Hugh March
John Pike	Stephen Kent
Daniel Pierce	

Additional settlers for that year are:

Daniel Robins	Jonathan Bishop
Isaac Tappan	James Clawson or Clarkson
Robert Rogers	Jonathan Dennis
Thomas Adams	Hopewell Hull
John Averill	Thomas Pike

As the settlers arrived, the land was divided, roads laid out, and the community established. The life of the town was quiet, principally agricultural. John Smith, wheelwright, was moderator of the town meetings which were held in his home. Township court named John Pike, Samuel Moore, and John Bishop as constables between 1671 and 1693. Samuel Hale was marshal; and the clerk was Jonathan Dunham. Many trades and vocations were present among the early Woodbridge inhabitants. There were carpenters, masons, wheelwrights, a dealer in bricks, a blacksmith, a shoemaker, two doctors.

Charters were asked for by both Woodbridge and Piscataway in which the residents were to have the privilege of choosing their own magistrate and military officers. They were empowered to hold courts for trial. This early Woodbridge charter, dated June 1, 1669, stated that liberty of conscience in religious worship was to be allowed and two hundred acres of land were to be set aside for the perpetual maintenance of the ministry. Provision was made for a church and the churchyard to be exempt forever from tax of any kind. The Governor, Council, and General Assembly were the joint authority for levying tax, but were to do it only for the public good. The yearly rent of half-penny per acre to the Lords-proprietors was to begin March 25, 1670, thus giving the inhabitants nearly four years of exemption. All

land patents were to be recorded within a year of the time of surveying. In case of war, Woodbridge and Piscataway men agreed to combine with other towns in the Province against the common foe. All freeholders were to have a "free voice" in the election of Deputies to the General Assembly. They swore allegiance to the King and pledged their fidelity to the Proprietors. They claimed the privilege of moving when and where they pleased and of selling their land to the best advantage. They were to have the necessary authority to impose fines upon criminals and to inflict punishment. Seven years possession of the land was to secure the same to the settler, his heirs, or assigns forever. The democratic doctrine of a ruling majority is set forth in the document.

In spite of a lovely setting and a potentially prosperous community, it was very hard to persuade a minister to come to live among the early settlers.

At a town meeting, June 8, 1669, Geo. Little and Samuel Moore were directed to go to Newark to interview 'young Mr. Pierson' and "endeavor to get him to be our minister." The elder Mr. Pierson was pastor of the Newark congregation and the freeholders of that community had decided to install the son as an assistant.

In July, a committee approached a Mr. Peck of Elizabethtown; but he, too, proved uninterested. Mr. Samuel Treat was offered twenty one pounds sterling for preaching the next six months.

The 7th of February, 1671, it was ordered a house lot and "other accommodations equal to those of other inhabitants be reserved for the use of a minister." Permission was given Jonathan Dunham to mow the grass on the parsonage meadow for four years or until a minister should come."

December, 1671, saw the selection of yet another committee of eight members to decide what must be done to obtain ministerial services. It was decided they *must* have a settled ministry. They approached Mr. Samuel Treat to secure his services permanently but were unsuccessful.

Mr. Benjamin Salisbury accepted the offer; but after one month, the town voted to dismiss him.

Hoping to improve their luck, they voted to build a meeting house, which was to be thirty feet square, and appointed a committee to contract for the suitable complement of carpenters.

It was also arranged that a room be fitted in the home of Mr. Samuel Hale or Samuel Moore to be offered to the minister whenever he should come.

Lots were drawn and Samuel Dennis was designated to "go Northward to seek a minister." Since money was not abundant, 3000 pipe staves were made to defray the expenses. These staves, which were made in some quantity in Woodbridge, were used in making barrels and kegs. Unfortunately, the staves were sold, but no record exists that Samuel Dennis went anywhere.

A number of years later, the town asked Capt. Andrew Bound, a ship's master of a vessel sailing between England and the Colonies, to carry letters to clergy in England. He was authorized to seek out a minister in case the letters drew no response and to offer fifty pounds a year and the use of two hundred acres of parsonage land.

The raising of our first building occurred, as already stated, on May 27, 1675. There seems to have been a cessation of operations as to "internal improvements" for about five years. Not until 1680 or 1681 was the floor laid and the interior was ordered to be plastered on all but the south side over the clapboards. Why this singular omission in plastering is not explained. About a year later a determined effort was made toward completion. It was ordered to be daubed, lathed and plastered. Two doors were made and fitted with locks. This early building was described by McNulty as "a building about thirty feet square, unpainted inside or out with no steeple or bell without, and no stove within. At one side a long pew for the accommodation of the public officers of the place, and on the other, similar pews running parallel with the walls, which, it was said, were much sought after, as one eye could be directed toward the minister, and the other to anything that might require attention in the other part of the house.

In 1697 the "galeries were finished." In 1698 "the walls of the building were to be whitewashed by John Pike, member of the assembly and clerk of the corporation." Ezekiel Bloomfield was also "to build a new pulpit forthwith." This circular pulpit supported by a pedestal placed the minister above the congregation, beneath the time-honored sounding board. Ezekiel Bloomfield was ex-assemblyman and, a little later, keeper of the pound. So it must be noted that public functionaries, in those days, did not consider that any honorable employment, however humble, would compromise their dignity.

Two pillars supported the roof from the center, which went up on four sides ending, at this time, in a small steeple. The sexton, in ringing the bell, stood in the middle aisle, winding the rope around one of the pillars during the service.

The church was never desecrated with stoves, but in the midst of winter the good people kept up what heat they could by an occa-

sional stamp on the floor, and tradition says the “dominee would keep warm by an extra amount of gesture.”

This building stood until 1802, when it was taken down to give way to a new place of worship.

Some time in 1685, the good Mr. Allin severed connections with the Woodbridge congregation. Perhaps his health suffered; the records do not say. He lived in Woodbridge until he died in January, 1715. He was married three times; his last wife was Deliverance Potter.

In October, 1686, Mr. Archibald Riddell, of Scotland, was encouraged to settle here and to be the minister. He was granted eight acres of land “adjoining the meeting house and fronting on the highway that runs west from the kirk green.” He was admitted as a Freeholder and granted one hundred twenty acres of upland for a farm and ten more for planting, all of which he enjoyed tax free. Upon his departure in 1689 he returned to the town the eight acres and a house he started to build. In 1700 he disposed of his Woodbridge land to Thomas Gordon. In the deed he is referred to as the minister of the gospel of Kirkaldie in county Fife.

After several years of searching, the Woodbridge congregation was able to secure the services of Mr. Samuel Shepard as their minister. Spiritual affairs seem to have greatly prospered under his leadership. His salary was fifty pounds per annum, or its equivalent, which could have been pork, peas, wheat, or the like. This was raised by direct tax on the townsmen, Mr. Samuel Dennis and Jonathan Bishop being appointed to receive it.

About this time we read in the town records a freeman of the town, William Webster, objected to the tax for the minister’s salary on grounds of conscientious scruples. Whereupon Capt. John Bishop assumed the man’s share of the annual rate during his (Bishop’s) lifetime. Although this is the first record of a decided stand against the tax, it, no doubt, had been a matter of private discussion for a time. There would eventually be a division of civil and religious matters with the church shouldering the cost of its ministry.

The situation in New Jersey was different from that in Scotland or England, or even *New England*. The original proprietors of the colony were Anglican, but as landlords they needed settlers to make the colony prosper. So all the early agreements and charters provided that no one would be persecuted for his religious belief as long as there was no civil disturbance. The colony of New Jersey was not to have an established church — there were Baptists at Middletown and

Piscataway; Quakers at Shrewsbury; Reformed at Bergen; Puritans at Elizabethtown, Newark, and Woodbridge; and Presbyterians at Freehold. Although each settlement had its own church supported by public taxation, the passage of time brought the founding of different churches within the same community, and the financial support for the ministry came to be based not on public taxation but on subscription of the members.

May, 1696, saw Mr. Shepard determined to go to New England to visit. The town offered him a house, which had been started by Mr. Riddell, and thirty acres of land on condition he should return. Return he did. We find him preaching in Woodbridge for some years.

In 1701, a committee was directed to confer with him on the matter of his being ordained as minister of the town. However, at this point, his wife flatly declared against settling permanently in Woodbridge. He told them there was no possibility of her changing her mind and they best look out for a new pastor.

In 1707 Nathaniel Wade came to Woodbridge and began a rather stormy ministry. He was a Boston Congregationalist whose decided opinions and imperious bearing stirred up considerable conflict within the congregation.

The first entry in the church record, written by Mr. Wade himself following his ordination and installation in January, 1708, read thus:

“January 29th, 1707/8, Was gathered the Church of Christ in Woodbridge by Nathaniel Wade, pastor. Present there were as Messengers, two from ye church of Newark, and one from the Church of Elizabethtown: Theophilus Pierson, Jonahs Wood, Benjamin Price. The foundation of ye church was laid first upon three persons who had been Communicants in other churches, viz: Sam’l Hail, John Pike, and Noah Bishop.”

It became clear that Mr. Wade had organized the church according to the pattern of the Congregational Church. Included among the church members at this time was an increasing number of Scotch-Irish immigrants who were confirmed Presbyterians as well as others who leaned toward the Church of England.

The congregational convictions of Mr. Wade so angered some of the parishioners that an appeal was made to the Presbytery of Philadelphia for aid in the matter.

The earliest extant records of Presbytery, which had been founded in 1706, include Woodbridge as a church under its jurisdiction and

show that in May 1708, efforts were being made to resolve the differences between Mr. Wade and the people of Woodbridge.

The church rolls at the beginning of Mr. Wade's pastorate showed forty-seven members, increasing to sixty-seven in 1709, and to seventy-five in 1710. This increase in membership, undoubtedly of Presbyterian faith, served to augment the battle which raged on, with the Presbytery keeping their hands in the furor. Even though Mr. Wade became a Presbyterian in September 1710, his effort did not settle the dispute.

In 1711 the differences between Mr. Wade and one segment of the congregation reached a climax, causing a secession from the church. These people sent to Elizabethtown for a Rev. Edward Vaughan to help them establish an Episcopal church.

The Presbytery at this time, in order to resolve the various disputes, suggested Mr. Wade sever ministerial relations with Woodbridge; however, his name appears on town records until January, 1714.

When the Presbytery of Philadelphia was founded in 1706 under the leadership of Francis Makemie, a Scotch Presbyterian missionary, who came to America in the 1680's, the New Jersey and Long Island churches rapidly sought admission. By 1716 the Presbytery had forty churches claiming 3,000 members. Increasing migration of Scotch-Irish confirmed the trend toward Presbyterianism.

In 1729 the Synod (organized in 1717) adopted as its standard of doctrinal belief, the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647, with the statement that ministers were to subscribe to its "necessary and essential articles."

Since neither Presbytery nor Synod had any connection with the church in Scotland, this action established an exclusively American church authority, completely separate from Europe and long before this occurred on most other denominations.

The Reverend John Pierson succeeded to the pastorate of the Woodbridge church in 1714. He was the son of Reverend Abraham Pierson of Killingworth, Connecticut, the first President of Yale College, and the grandson of John Pierson, the first minister of the Newark Church. It is supposed that Reverend Jonathan Dickinson, his close friend, who was the celebrated Independent preacher of Elizabethtown, introduced young Pierson's name to the Woodbridge congregation. Mr. Pierson was married to Ruth Woodbridge, daughter of Reverend Timothy Woodbridge of Hartford, Connecticut, and granddaughter of John Woodbridge of Newbury, Mass. She died in 1732.

Mr. Pierson's arrival rapidly smoothed over the quarrel that had occurred over Nathaniel Wade. John Pierson in his years at Woodbridge, until 1752, became one of the colony's outstanding ministers, taking a leading role in Synod affairs, sympathetic to the ideas of the Great Awakening, and active in helping the church to solve the problems that the revival raised. He was instrumental in founding the College of New Jersey for the training of Presbyterian ministers, and effective in furthering the process of Americanization through his ability to relate his theological training to the conditions of colonial society. Within his congregation, he acquired a reputation of being a strict disciplinarian.

It was some time in the early years of Pierson's ministry that the first meeting house was built in Metuchen. The first entry in their Session Book reads:

"A.D. 1717. There was a small church built in the north west part of the township of Woodbridge called Metuchen for the purposes of preaching lectures in every fourth week on week day by the Rev. Mr. John Pierson then minister of the First Presbyterian congregation in the township aforesaid to which congregation we were then united."

In the first half of the eighteenth century, because of expanding population, the absence of an established church, and the influence of the religious upheaval known as the Great Awakening, many new churches began to be founded as new centers of rural population began to form. So the Rahway Church was founded in the 1740's by Woodbridge communicants, and Westfield split off from Elizabeth in 1727. With this growth the church as a whole underwent periodic reorganization. In 1733 the Presbytery of East Jersey was created; and in 1738, six churches in East Jersey, including Woodbridge, and eight on Long Island united to form the Presbytery of New York, which was soon to become one of the Synod's leading Presbyteries.

The Great Awakening of the 1730's and 1740's was an important influence leading to the establishment of new churches and the revitalization of old ones. After the first impulse of new colonization in the seventeenth century, a widespread indifference to the church as a moral force in colonial life set in. Frontier life was hard and unrewarding; there were no educational institutions, little social activity, frequent competition and disputes over land ownership, much callousness, and little kindness. Many ministers, clinging to old ideas, did not adapt themselves or their ideas to American conditions. The Revival was an appeal to the individual on the need for an active faith,

the leading of a holy life, and working to realize the kingdom of God. It emphasized man's sinful nature, tried to make understandable the terror of not being a True Christian, and preached the need for repentance and regeneration by the divine spirit. It was critical of out-moded orthodoxy and irrelevant formalism, and it deplored the moral degeneration it found everywhere. Revival preaching was confined to established church services, usually Sunday morning and afternoon and one weekday afternoon, and it emphasized not immediate conversion but the need for individual struggle with conscience, aided by frequent pastoral visiting and counsel. Only by a mighty struggle within himself could sinful man know repentance and true faith.

Some of Gilbert Tennent's sermon titles were: "The Danger of Forgetting God;" "The Necessity of Religious Violence;" "A Solemn Warning to the Secure World." It was a movement to make the role of religion a real and vital thing in the life of the individual. It was another important step in the Americanization of Christianity, and in New Jersey, particularly, of the Presbyterian church.

The strongest center of the revival was the Presbytery of New Brunswick, where three of the sons of William Tennent were all active. John and William Tennent Jr. at Freehold, and Gilbert Tennent at New Brunswick. Gilbert's sermons were designed to change the smugness of self-satisfaction into new dedication to do God's work. Jonathan Dickinson of Elizabeth was another exponent of the new way. Both Dickinson and Tennent preached at Woodbridge, where Pierson and his congregation were receptive to the revivalists.

The activities of these men flung a challenge at established ways that was bound to evoke controversy. At least three major issues emerged that were to cause serious division within the church.

One was the fact that many of the revivalists wanted to preach in other pulpits than their own, where they could stir up the people even if their own minister was unsympathetic. An outstanding example of this itinerant preaching was set in New Jersey by George Whitefield, the great English evangelist, who came to the colonies in 1739 and on Pierson's invitation, preached in Woodbridge on April 28, 1740, to an open air congregation of about 2,000 people outside the church. His powerful voice and dramatic appeal for a new birth in Christ were to influence deeply many congregations throughout the middle colonies.

A second issue revolved around the need for liberalization in the training of candidates for the ministry, in particularly the need to examine candidates as to their experimental acquaintance with religion. It was largely to meet this need that William Tennent Sr. founded Log

College in Pennsylvania. Some of the ministers trained there were preaching in other parishes than their own. This issue implied a strong criticism of many ministers with orthodox education and training; that is, that they did not fully commit themselves to their calling. Gilbert Tennent's famous sermon in 1739, "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry," charged that opponents of the revival had training and orthodoxy but were dead in heart; they were not true shepherds for their flock. Tennent's flamboyant mannerisms and raving sermons on hellfire and damnation brought him much criticism from more conservative clergymen.

A third and related issue arose over whether Presbytery or Synod was the proper judge of the qualifications of ministerial candidates. The revivalists, particularly in the Presbytery of New Brunswick, strongly emphasized the authority of the Presbytery in the licensing of preachers, being thus able to allow those whose training had been at Log College to practice the ministry.

Naturally these challenges did not go unanswered. In 1737 and 1738 the Synod made two decisions to control these developments. It prohibited members of one Presbytery preaching to congregations of another without an invitation. And it decided that candidates for the ministry must have a diploma from either a European or a New England college or apply to Synod for examination before a committee. These decisions were followed by a dispute over the licensing of a member of the New Brunswick Presbytery, which led to the expulsion of that Presbytery from the Synod of Philadelphia. Other advocates of the new way eventually withdrew from the Synod and in 1745 formed the rival Synod of New York, with thirteen ministers from the Presbytery of New Brunswick, and nine from the Presbytery of New York. John Pierson played a prominent role in helping to form the new Synod; he was later to be instrumental in bringing about the reunion that occurred in 1758.

The new Synod, representing a union of the Tennents and their supporters and the New England trained men, held what was to become the prevailing view. To them, the revival was the work of God, and a minister of the word should be not only versed in doctrine but Christian in conduct. Their goal was not to transplant a European church to America but to adapt the church that they knew to American life. The two rival Synods were about equal in the number of their ministers in 1745, but by the reunion of 1758, the Synod of New York had grown from twenty-three to seventy-three ministers, and the orthodox Synod of Philadelphia had remained stationary. The largest Presbytery was New York (to which Woodbridge belonged), with twenty-

three ministers, of whom sixteen were graduates of Yale, and four of the College of New Jersey. In the reunited Synod as a whole, only fifteen of the seventy-eight ministers were graduates of universities in Scotland and Ireland — another mark of the process of Americanization.

Before this reunion occurred, the Synod of New York realized the immediate need to establish a new college for the training of ministers. The calls for ministers far exceeded the available supply, and statistics relating to the period all showed the number of vacant pulpits almost as large as the number of filled ones. Log College had not proven sufficient to fill the need. Accordingly in 1745, four prominent ministers of the Synod, all favorable to the Great Awakening, petitioned the governor of New Jersey, Lewis Morris, to found a college. The four were John Pierson, thirty years at Woodbridge; Jonathan Dickinson, already thirty-six years at Elizabeth; Ebenezer Pemberton, at New York for eighteen years; and Aaron Burr, at Newark for nine years. Because of traditional Anglican hostility, Morris refused; but an interim governor, John Hamilton, granted a charter in 1746, and a revised one was granted in 1748 by Governor Jonathan Belcher. The College of New Jersey first met in Dickinson's parsonage in Elizabeth, then in Burr's in Newark, and finally in 1756 moved to the town of Princeton. All but one of the clerical members of its Board of Trustees were members of the Synod of New York.

So it was that John Pierson, minister of the Woodbridge church from 1714 to 1752, grandson of a Massachusetts Congregational minister, son of the Harvard trained minister of the Newark church who was unsuccessfully sought for Woodbridge in 1669 and who later became a founder and first president of Yale, graduate of Yale, became instrumental in the founding of Princeton, and for nineteen years on its Board of Trustees. So much has one family in one church contributed to the cause of higher education. Mr. Pierson left Woodbridge in 1752 to preach in Mendham, New Jersey where he died in 1770, at the age of 81, having preached the Gospel for fifty-six years.

By 1760, the separation from Europe was complete. The Presbyterian church had begun in the colonies under conditions lacking an established church; in its Presbyteries and Synod it had created an exclusively American authority; its outlook had been revitalized by the Great Awakening; it had founded its own educational institution to train its ministers, and the great majority of its ministers were graduates of the colonial colleges. In short, well before the American Revolution, the Presbyterian church had become an American institution. Symbolically perhaps this was marked for Woodbridge by the decision

of the freeholders in 1754 to appoint a committee to seek a charter for the church, in order to preserve in perpetuity the uses of the land according to the intent of the original inhabitants, i. e., the ground on which the meeting house stood, the burial ground, and the parsonage land.

Rev. Nathaniel Whitaker, a licentiate of the Presbytery of New York, succeeded Mr. Pierson; he was ordained and duly installed December 10, 1755. The congregation applied for and received a royal charter from George II of England in 1756. This action resulted largely from the influence of Mr. Pierson. The charter gave the trustees legal possession of the land which had been granted to them by the Lord's Proprietors. It was conveyed to them by the Royal Governor Jonathan Belcher. The Church was thus incorporated as 'The First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge.' Rev. Whitaker asked to be dismissed five years later, and very little more is known of him.

The original charter is still in the possession of the Woodbridge church, having been lost for a time but came to light in 1922 in an old safe, which was put up for sale at a local auction.

In 1763, Azel Roe, the famous rebel clergyman of New Jersey, came to Woodbridge as its minister, a post he was to hold fifty-two years until his death in 1815 at the age of seventy-seven. A Long Islander by birth, he graduated from the College of New Jersey in 1756 at the age of eighteen, was ordained to the ministry a few years later, and in 1800 received a Doctor of Divinity degree from Yale.

His style of preaching is said to have been argumentative and very effective. He was a man of excellent address and commanding presence. A zealous man, he rode frequently over to Metuchen to hold meetings at private homes. The Metuchen Presbyterians had for several years prior to this effected some sort of an organization, holding meetings for religious worship by the courtesy and with the assistance of neighboring ministers. On the 5th of August, 1767, the Metuchen congregation united with that of Woodbridge, arrangement being made to share Mr. Roe's services equally. In Roe's Manuscript Church History we find it stated that these churches were to be considered as one in all things of an ecclesiastical nature; in their government and discipline to have but one Session, but separate in their temporalities. Until 1793 the Metuchen society was known, after the union, as the "Second Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge;" frequently it was distinguished as the "upper congregation." Dr. Roe's Manuscript states further: "Sometime near the year 1790, the old congregation of the First Church became uneasy with their situation, not

satisfied with their union with the Metuchen or Second Church that they should have an equal share in the labors of their minister, but wished for the whole of his service which they were willing and thought themselves able to support. They therefore applied to the Presbytery to have the union dissolved, which after repeated applications were effected though with some difficulty, being warmly opposed by the Metuchen Congregation. They have since obtained a minister by themselves and become respectable as a church. They have since put in a claim to be a part of the great Parsonage given as has already been mentioned by the original proprietors of the Town for maintenance and support of the Gospel Minister. They have had their claim or right to said Parsonage tried in Court of Chancery and in the Court of Appeals and have lost in both these courts." The above dispute refers to the disposition of the two hundred acres of land allotted the church by the original charter.

Chapter 2

1775 - 1875

The second century in the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge was the period in which it developed from being the community church, independent in nature, though already Presbyterian in government, into a distinctly denominational church, conservative in character. While the Woodbridge Congregation became Presbyterian early in the eighteenth century and secured a royal charter in 1756 incorporating it as the "First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge," as late as December 30, 1801, a special Town Meeting was called "for the purposes of choosing a Minister or Ministers of the gospel for the Township, and taking the opinion of the inhabitants on the propriety of dividing the Great Parsonage Lands . . ."

Important to the development of the character of this church was its geographical location. William A. Whitehead in his "Early History of Perth Amboy," published in 1856 writes, "At the period of the Revolution the position of Woodbridge among the other towns of the colony was far more important than at present, exceeding greatly in influence many which now are far ahead in the great race of progress . . . The town was then on the great thoroughfare between New York and Philadelphia and the road which was traveled over by the worthies of that day retains for miles the characteristics it then possessed."¹ To quote Rev. Dr. Wallace N. Jamison, from the inside cover of his book, *Religion in New Jersey: A Brief History*: "Perhaps the greatest single influence on New Jersey's religious history, however, is the state's geographic position between traditionally liberal New York City and conservative Philadelphia. An inevitable tug-of-war between these conflicting spheres of influence prompted the state's religious factions to try to resolve for themselves the basic theories and questions that arose. It is this very struggle which forms the story of how people of one state, New Jersey, have sought to discover their religious identity." The Woodbridge Church, situated enroute between the two cities was in position to be influenced by every trend ecclesiastical and political. Although communication was slow, travel by stagecoach and horseback and boat was via Woodbridge, and the Inns were popular for rest and refreshment, and news centers as well. Even such impor-

tant men as George Washington and Lafayette were here. News of bloodshed at Lexington came by messenger on way to Philadelphia, April 23, 1775.

Presbyterians were second to none in their patriotic devotion to the cause of American independence. This was true in the Woodbridge church. "Religious as well as economic and political causes underlay the American Revolution. Many non-Anglicans, especially the Presbyterians, were alarmed at the desire of the English Church to send a resident bishop to the American colonies . . . Presbyterians could not forget that many of their immediate ancestors had come to America to escape persecution from government supported Anglican prelates in England, Scotland and Ireland. They had no desire to see similar calamities overtake them in their new home, and were ready to resist with sword, if necessary. On the other hand, most Episcopalians outside of the South favored the 'loyalist', or British side, in the Revolution against the 'patriot', or American side."² Woodbridge was a typical example. Woodbridge was occupied by the British, December 2, 1776 to June 22, 1777.³ According to tradition, the Episcopal Church, situated in a portion of the original kirk green just beyond the Presbyterian burying ground was used as an English barracks and the Rectory as the English Fort. At this time a long list of Presbyterian men were volunteers in the American Army.

"Woodbridge, during 1776, was the scene of the greatest excitement. Troops were constantly passing and repassing through the town. In the latter part of the year the British had collected about four hundred head of cattle and two hundred sheep in the place, intending that these should feed their troops during the cold weather; but a company of impudent American militia entered the town on the night of the 11th of December and quietly drove John Bull's beef and mutton into the other camp."⁴

Skirmishes between British and American troops were common events, and farms and homes were raided, often deprived of their most prized possessions. Rev. Azel Roe, whose pastorate extended through the Revolution and post-war period, was a devoted patriot. "By word and action he urged the cause of liberty. On one occasion he incited some of his people to assist the Continental troops against the British at "Blazing Star" landing, and took part himself. He was taken prisoner at a subsequent date, and came by experience to know the horrors of the 'Sugar House Prison' in New York City."⁵ Blazing Star Landing is in Carteret which was once part of Woodbridge.

Difficult times reached into homes of church members. British soldiers ravished the neighborhood. Striking instances are told by Mr.

Dally in his *Woodbridge and Vicinity*. For example: "Smith and Timothy Bloomfield were both away in the Continental Army, and the old homestead and farm were open to the predatory raids of the enemy. Among other things stolen were the old family Bible and a brindle cow. The precious book could not be readily given up. Eunice, the daughter of Timothy Bloomfield, concluded at length to appeal to the British Commander on Staten Island for the restoration of the priceless volume. In company with another girl, residing in the family home, Eunice started from home, walking to the river. Reaching the shore they were non-plussed. How should they reach the other side? Not far off they espied an old scow. Pushing it into the water they paddled across." ⁶ A guard on the other side conducted them to the officer in command, who listened to their complaint and not only restored the Bible, but also the cow. A guard of soldiers escorted the girls toward home.

Dally tells also about an ancestor of his, left alone to care for her children and home, watching a skirmish on the road to Perth Amboy from her dormer window, moved back barely in time before it was blown out.

Daniel Moores was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and led the singing for many years. The following story is a good illustration of how the war reached into the very homes of the church people.

"Britain Moores, son of Daniel, was a sturdy friend of the American cause and suffered for it. The Tories visited the house in which he lived in Woodbridge and carried him a prisoner to New York, where he was kept, 'in durance vile', for six weeks. James, his brother, was also abused for his patriotism. The mother, Mrs. Moores, was very sarcastic in her conversations with the Tory neighbors and sometimes openly hostile to them. One of these, Isaac Dunham, would drop over to see the Moores occasionally, and appeared covertly pleased with the evidences of misfortune he saw at the old homestead. He always seemed to know when a raid had been made and availed himself of the first opportunity to call on the afflicted household to rejoice in its sorrows. An emphatic protest by Mrs. Moores, on one occasion, accompanied by vigorous demonstrations with various loose articles near at hand, caused Isaac to put his long legs in rapid motion, with a mental resolution never to go near that dangerous woman again. He suspended his neighborly visits for an indefinite length of time." ⁷

Almost all of the able bodied men of the church were away from home in the service of the Continental army and many stories of their heroic exploits have been told. In a paper on "The Revolutionary

Heroes" by Ellis B. Freeman, printed in the 225th Anniversary booklet "Celebration," the names of more than fifty are listed. Some families are represented by father and son, some by several brothers. Many are buried in the church cemetery. Among those mentioned by Rev. Joseph M. McNulty in his historical sermon on the occasion of the 200th Anniversary are Capt. Nathaniel Fitz Randolph, the brave and dashing Chieftain (whose daring exploits are described in Dally's History), Capt. David Edgar, the spirited Cavalryman; Lieut. James Paton, the courageous Scotch patriot; Major Reuben Potter, the faithful friend of liberty; Col. Sam'l Crowe, Col. Benj. Brown, Capt. Ellis Barron, Capt. Abraham Tappen, Gen'l Clarkson Edgar and Capt. Mathias Edgar of Revolutionary fame. Capt. Asher Fitz Randolph was a leader under whom several Woodbridge men served.

In all the histories of the church, special honor is given to Dr. Moses Bloomfield. He was a man of more than ordinary culture and ability. His patriotism was fervent and he offered his services to his country at a very early period of the war and became Senior Physician and Surgeon in the hospitals of the United States. He was a Representative in the Provincial Congress and General Assembly and an Elder of the Presbyterian Church. He served forty years as Physician and Surgeon.

As an elder, Dr. Moses Bloomfield set a fine example for the congregation. The following is quoted from *History of Woodbridge Township*, adapted from Leon McElroy's materials.

"What may be said to be the first anti-slavery meeting ever held in the United States was held in Woodbridge on the 4th day of July, 1783, seven years after the Declaration of Independence and six years before George Washington was inaugurated as President of the United States. This meeting was held on the farm of Moses Bloomfield, a surgeon in the Continental Army, located north of Freeman Street where Barron Avenue runs through Prospect. Great preparations were made for the event which had been freely advertised in the neighboring communities. An ox was roasted whole and a vast crowd assembled to listen to the orator of the day, Dr. Bloomfield. At the appointed time, Dr. Bloomfield mounted the platform followed by his slaves, fourteen in number, who took their places on each side of him, while he addressed the multitude on the evil of slavery. At the close of the speech, Dr. Bloomfield turned to his slaves, stating that inasmuch as we as a nation had declared that all men had the right to freedom, he could not consistently undo the principles of the Declaration of Independence by holding slaves. He ended his speech with the announcement, 'From this day they are free'. Tradition has it that each of the

slaves freed that day continued to labor for the venerable doctor but for adequate compensation.”⁸ This meeting was within sight of the church and much of the congregation must have been gathered there.

During and immediately following the Revolution the people were more concerned with establishing new independence of the country, less with the local church. Most of the active men of the church were away much of the time which may be one reason there are no minutes of session meetings for the first twenty-eight years of Dr. Roe’s ministry. However, Dr. Roe kept a record of baptisms and new members and session minutes resumed in 1793. There was general impoverishment after the war and the minister’s salary was paid in wood and food, and he was given the privilege of letting his cows graze in the cemetery. It is interesting to note that Dr. Roe’s records register baptisms of blacks as well as whites, and also blacks as members, some of whom had only first names, for example, “Hannah, a black” and “Joe, a Negro.”

The session minutes deal at length with the discipline of individuals in moral matters, even drunkenness. The 225th Anniversary Booklet gives this report. “In the early days of the century discipline in the Presbyterian Church was not a dead letter. The church’s authority was respected and enforced. The minutes contain the records of many citations and trials. Elders were appointed to endeavor in love to restore the erring one, and we read of confession, contrition and restoration. These occasions, and the results, gives us a glimpse at the character of the Elders. Ever zealous of the reputation of church members, the Elders in a number of instances cited their associates to answer charges brought against them personally, or by common report, and they were even asked to stand aside from the Communion Table until the charges could be investigated.”⁹ This assertion of discipline by the session may have been an effort to counteract the alarming moral and spiritual decline throughout the land following the war.

At the close of the eighteenth century a revival started in Kentucky and spread north. It was known as the ‘Great Awakening’, and it developed into the beginning of missions and expansion of the churches into new territory being opened to the west. This revival was reflected in the local church and gladdened the heart of Pastor Roe toward the end of his ministry.

Dr. Roe’s Historical Sermon records that “in April, 1803, the people set about building them a new house of worship, their present house being old and going to decay, having stood for about a century. They undertook the building of the house with great unanimity and

spirit and had it almost finished by fall. So that it was opened and consecrated in the beginning of December and is a very decent and convenient house, sufficiently large and spacious.”¹⁰

Dally’s history gives a few more details, but states that there was little need to describe the building since when he was writing in 1873 “the structure still stands, with but slight alterations, on the old Meeting-House Green.” Dally records that a paper was circulated in April, 1802, with the understanding that a fourth part of the amount each man subscribed was to be paid in August; a fourth in January, 1803; a fourth in July and the remainder in January, 1804. The money was to be applied to the erection of a Presbyterian Church, as the paper states, ‘nearly where the old one stands’, to be sixty-six by forty-six feet, with posts twenty-four feet high and enclosed with shingles. Dally gives the list of subscribers and the amount each pledged, the total \$3,522.¹¹

Elder Jonathan Freeman, the father of Dr. E. B. Freeman, was the architect and builder. He was the great-great-grandfather of the wife of Rev. Joseph McNulty, who served the church beginning in 1874. McNulty writes that Freeman “looked in vain among other church edifices of the time for something that suited him as a model, hence its design differs from most others of the period.”¹²

Some excerpts from Book 6, Session minutes for 1802 and 1803, give a glimpse into the time when the building took place. Quote: “That David Edgar be requested to ask the parish generally to turn out with their teams to assist in hauling timber for the new meeting house and that there be a refreshment provided.” Next entry: “At a special parish meeting held on the ground where the old meeting house stood by advertisement of regular notice, for the purpose of concluding where the new house is to stand.

Maj. Wm. Edgar, moderator June 1, 1803

1. Voted that the new house stand facing the west.
2. That there be a door to the south.

Attest by
James Paton, Clerk

“At a parish meeting held at the new meeting house”

October 15, 1803

1. Voted that Maj. Wm. Edgar present the subscriptions to the people within the congregation that have not subscribed.
2. That a committee be appointed to approve the seats of five persons, Ichabod Patton, Esq., John Brown, James Edgar, Jos. Barron, General Clarkson Edgar.

3. Be the committee to assess the sum of \$3.00 immediately.
4. That the assessments on the seats commence 1st of Jan. 1804.

James Paton, Clerk

From the picture of the 1803 church published in the 225th Anniversary book it would seem the exterior was very simple, with no windows on the sides, five multiple paned windows on the front, plus windows in the tower and steeple, two doors with transoms on the front. Joseph McNulty wrote, "It stood out in its plainness and simplicity and whiteness, firmly and substantially constructed, a very expressive image in these epithets of the character, for the most part, of those who originally erected and worshipped in it. The external shingling is suggestive of its antiquity."¹³

The bell for the spire was bought in 1825 by popular subscription.

In connection with church property it should be noted that the Sexton's house was built in 1839; in 1841 it was voted to build a new parsonage (manse); 1868-1869 the Sunday School room was built on the rear of the church, a Sunday School or lecture hall near the parsonage having been used previously.

Mr. Thos. Barron presented to the church its first musical instrument, a melodeon, to supercede the old tuning fork. An organ, which may have been given as early as 1865 was presented by Mr. Henry Morris, who also is reputed to have given the chandelier sometime before the 200th Anniversary.

Before the celebration, the pulpit was removed from its position high upon the wall and placed more nearly on a level with the congregation, and a new system of pews was installed.¹⁴

The Woodbridge Church was blessed with fine ministers during this formative century of American Christianity and the new and expanding nation. None was more illustrious than Dr. Azel Roe. Not only was he an ardent patriot, "a devoted Pastor and forcible preacher, he was a trustee of Princeton College for twenty years, and Moderator of General Assembly in 1802, the only minister of this church to have been so honored. Dr. Roe died in 1815 at the age of seventy-seven, fifty-three of which embraced his ministry. Dr. Roe is spoken of as a man of commanding presence and excellent address, energetic and zealous in the Master's work."¹⁵

The Pastorates which follow Dr. Roe's were shorter and less eventful. June 11, 1816 the Presbytery of Jersey met at Woodbridge and ordained Dr. Henry Mills, who became pastor of the church. Most important during his pastorate was the organization of the Sunday



The Old Manse



Sexton House

School in June, 1818, by three women — Sally Potter, Jane Potter and Mrs. Harriett Paton, one of the first, if not the first, organized in the state. This was a period when the climate was that of union, when Congregationalists and Presbyterians and other denominations worked together to establish missions, Bible societies and Sunday Schools throughout the land. New seminaries were also founded and Dr. Henry Mills was called to Auburn Theological Seminary in 1821, where he became one of the leading professors.

Henry Mills was an educator. Before he was ordained as a minister he was principal, in 1802, of the Elizabethtown Academy. It is not surprising that the Sunday School was organized while he was the preacher. Dally records, "He was a man of scholarly attainments, and the degree of D.D. was justly bestowed upon him." ¹⁶

"Dr. Mills is remembered as a scholarly and refined man, an earnest and evangelical preacher, much beloved as he went in and out among the people." ¹⁷

"In 1822 Rev. William B. Barton was ordained and installed as pastor, then 29 years of age. For nearly thirty years he discharged his duties as the shepherd of the flock with fidelity and earnestness." ¹⁸

"Rev. Barton served as Sunday School superintendent also. It was through the efforts of his wife that a society of young ladies was organized and known as the Sunday School Society. They met afternoons at different houses to sew and the proceeds of their labor were used to purchase the child's paper for the Sunday School." ¹⁹

". . . He was a Godly man and a good preacher. During the latter part of his ministry the Spirit of God was specially poured out. The Church experienced a revival in 1843 and following. Death claimed him on the 7th of April, 1852." ²⁰

"During that same year a call was extended to Rev. William M. Martin. He accepted it and remained the zealous and enterprising pastor for eleven years. With a heart full of love to the Master, he overcame many 'obstacles' in his path, and his ministry was characterized by ability, earnestness, and industry until Providence called him to California. A spirit of revival accompanied his efforts during most of his ministry." We are not told what the 'obstacles' were, but we know that Presbyterians of this period were torn between the 'Old School' and the 'New School', slavery and anti-slavery. Churches and missions were becoming more strictly denominational, and it was the era of greatest geographical expansion in American history. The Gold Rush was on, The Homestead Act was passed, there was much to

distract young men from local church interests, and Rev. Martin himself seems to have been drawn to where the action was.

It was during Rev. Martin's pastorate that the First Presbyterian Church Aid Society was first formed in December, 1858, its purpose being "to aid in defraying the expense of the church. Members consisted of anyone who contributed at any meeting any amount of work or money. The society dwindled and was reorganized in 1873. Fairs, Strawberry Festivals and Harvest Homes were among the favorite ways of raising money."²¹

"Rev. George C. Lucas became pastor in 1863 and continued in the discharge of the pastorate for ten years. He was a fine sermonizer and a scholarly man."²² Leon C. McElroy's notes refer to him as Rev. George C. Lucas of Jersey City, who had been called from the Allen Street Presbyterian Church in New York City. McElroy also notes: "Mr. Lucas had been called to the local church by unanimous vote but it was charged by some that his ministry was not successful, the membership not being so good at the end of ten years of his occupancy as it was at the commencement. This claim was refuted by statements that the cause of diminished attendance was due to the removal from the neighborhood of a number of families whose places were not made up by others and not from any want of ability or congeniality in the Pastor, Mr. Lucas having played a very important part in the life of the community." Loss of members may have been partly due to the general westward migration at this time.

After Rev. Lucas left, the church was without a pastor for a time. Then Rev. Joseph M. McNulty seems to have occupied the manse by some arrangement other than a call by the whole congregation. This caused dissention and a group including elders decided to resign and form a Congregational Church, claiming their objective was to "go back to the good old ways." The incident which brought about the break may seem small in retrospect, but it must be remembered that decision making by the congregation rather than by representatives is paramount to Congregationalists. Systems of government rather than doctrine divide Congregationalists from Presbyterians. There was the heritage of Congregationalism in the Old White Church since its founding by Independents from New England. The key to the situation in this particular church during its second century may be found in Leotacher's *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*. He writes, "By the opening of the nineteenth century, there was becoming visible a distinctly "American" type of Christianity. It had a common heritage from English Puritanism and had been further shaped by common American experiences like frontier life and revivalism. It included such

groups as Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and, in part, Low Church Episcopalians . . . A new American patriotism was greatly strengthening the forces of heritage and religious environment that were working for Christian unity at this time . . . Co-operation between Presbyterians and Congregationalists came with particular readiness and formed the nucleus of the growing unity. Relations between these two bodies had been cordial during the colonial period and since. Both accepted the Reformed or Calvinistic doctrines and both used a simple Puritan type of worship. The chief differences were in church government, the Congregationalists having no presbyteries over the local congregations. But even at this point the Congregationalists, with a General Association in each New England state, seemed to be coming somewhat nearer to the Presbyterian practice.”²³

In 1801 a ‘Plan of Union’ was adopted by both the General Association and the General Assembly. “The Plan of Union was an ingenious arrangement making it possible for congregations to be connected with both the Congregational and the Presbyterian denominations at the same time, and to be served by pastors of either.”²⁴ Under these circumstances, those with Congregationalist backgrounds or leanings were contented members of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge during the early years of the nineteenth century and through it gave support to the ‘nondenominational’ voluntary societies formed during the first quarter of the century on behalf of Foreign Missions, Home Missions and Christian education in the form of the American Bible Society and the founding of seminaries. The Old White Church has had close ties with Princeton Seminary which opened in August, 1812. The Plan of Union eventually proved impracticable.

“Seeds of disunity were implanted in the Woodbridge Church by the division of the religious body of the Presbyterian Church. During the years of division, 1837-1869, the two churches were popularly known as Old School and New School.”²⁵

“But for some years before 1837 there had been ominous rumblings of controversy between ‘Old School’ and ‘New School’ parties within the church on questions of church government and doctrine. The Old School, reflecting its ‘churchly’ tradition and interest, was dissatisfied with the Plan of Union of 1801 with the Congregationalists, charging that the churches erected under the Plan were not truly Presbyterian at all, and that adequate control and discipline of them by the church courts was impossible. The Old School also felt that the Presbyterian Church should have its own denominational church boards, responsible to the General Assembly, rather than work through such nondenominational agencies as the American Board and the

American Home Missionary Society. On the other hand, the New School, many members of which were of Congregational background and training, were quite satisfied with the Plan of Union and the non-denominational voluntary societies.

. . . “The Old School and the New School also disagreed on certain matters of doctrine. Jonathan Edwards, one of the leaders of the Great Awakening in the eighteenth century, had restated — his followers said ‘improved’ — some of the doctrines of Calvinism. Samuel Hopkins carried these innovations farther and Nathaniel W. Taylor farther yet. ‘Hopkinsianism’ and ‘Taylorism’ were types of doctrine popular in the New School party.

“In 1835 some members of the Old School Party, becoming alarmed, circulated through the church an ‘Act and Testimony’ over their signatures warning of ‘the prevalence of unsound doctrine and laxity in discipline’. Finding themselves in a majority in the General Assembly of 1837 the Old School men felt that the time for drastic action had arrived. They voted to abrogate the Plan of Union of 1801. They then took action stating that this abrogation was retroactive and that the four Synods . . . organized under the Plan of Union were no longer a part of the church. This definitely removed the New School party from the church.

“The next year the commissioners from the excinded presbyteries presented their credentials, but were refused seals. They organized themselves as a General Assembly and adjourned to another building . . . The Old School contained about five ninths of the original membership, and was declared by the civil courts to be the legal successor of the undivided church.”²⁶

The Old White Church was officially ‘Old School’ but some of its members were ‘New School’ at heart and became potential Congregationalists.

The conservative influence of the Old School is evident in the almost total absence of reference to the issue of slavery and the Civil War in church records. The situation in the country must have been disquieting to the church. Lefferts A. Loetscher writes: “From 1830 to 1860 the all-absorbing political question in the nation was that of slavery. Most of the churches, by their official utterances, became, to a greater or less degree, involved in the problem. The Presbyterian Church, true to its Scotch-Irish conservatism, was cautious in its handling of the issue.

“The first official utterance of the church came from the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1787. They (the Synod) recom-

mended to all their people to use the most prudent measures, consistent with the interest and state of civil society, in the counties where they live, to procure eventually the final abolition of slavery in America. This action was reaffirmed by five General Assemblies.

“In 1818 the General Assembly adopted an unusually strong utterance: ‘We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another . . . utterly inconsistent with the law of God . . . and . . . totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ.’

“After 1832 the discussion of slavery had become so embittered in the nation as a whole that the General Assembly of 1836 voted: ‘Resolved that this whole subject be indefinitely postponed.’

After the division of 1837, the New School Church, with more than seven eighths of its membership in the North, took a more pronounced stand against slavery; while the Old School Church, with over one third of its members in the South, maintained a more conservative attitude. As a result, the relatively small Southern section of the New School Church withdrew in 1857 to form the “United Synod of the Presbyterian Church.” In the Old School Church, on the other hand, men of North and South continued in fellowship until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.²⁷

Shortly after the bombardment of Fort Sumter, the Old School Assembly met in Philadelphia and after some hesitation and pressure from the North expressed their ‘devotion to the Union of these States’. This action resulted in the separation of the Old School Church in the South, which merged with the New School Church in the South after the war was over. This merged Southern church changed its name to the ‘Presbyterian Church in the United States.’ The Woodbridge Church seems to have followed the counsel of the Old School General Assembly through these years. Locally, slavery was no big problem. Early in the nineteenth century New Jersey had acted for the gradual abolishment of slavery. In 1846 it was abolished by law and those remaining were known as apprentices. By 1860 only eighteen apprentices were left in Woodbridge. During the Civil War many members of the Old White Church served in Col. Isaac Inslee’s regiment, Co. F. 28th, it is recorded. It is quite understandable that so little mention of the Civil War is made, if it is remembered that most church participation was through voluntary societies, which made efforts to minister to the spiritual needs of the soldiers.

In 1861 the Christian Commission was organized in New York to send preachers, nurses, libraries, religious literature and comforts to

men at the front. The American Bible Society, too, was very active, giving Bibles and Testaments to both Union and Confederate armies. In working for these mutual objectives, forces for closer unity were at work in the Presbyterian Church in the North. There were other factors bringing the Old School Church and the New School Church together. They reunited in 1869 under the name of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America — the name before the division and the name that each of the branches held during the division. The discipline and doctrine of the Old School and the New School had grown more similar. There were, however, root level splits that were hard to heal, and the division of the New and Old School Churches may have been an underlying cause for a group to leave the First Presbyterian Church in Woodbridge to form a Congregational Church in 1874, though not the immediate cause.

The shock of division within the local church seems to have stirred a perhaps slightly apathetic church (membership had fallen off some) to action. The faithful rallied under the leadership of Rev. Joseph McNulty and prepared to celebrate the two hundredth Anniversary.

It is interesting to study the table of church members compiled by Whitehead and completed by Dally, and try to understand why the numbers built up, reaching a peak in 1843, a time of revival and then dropped off. In 1787, 82 members; 1830, 160; 1831, 157; 1832, 170; 1833, 181; 1834, 184; 1835, 211; 1837, 196; 1838, 206; 1839, 198; 1840, 201; 1841, 194; 1843, 242; 1845, 233; 1847, 213; 1850, 200; 1853, 163. Dally adds from later church records 1863, 179, and in 1873, the year he was writing, the number was only 125. This would be before some left to form the Congregational Church in 1874. In 1873 the Sabbath-school numbered over 100 scholars in actual attendance, up to 200 on the rolls. This indicates a larger attendance at Sunday School than at church worship services.

It is interesting to note that during the period 1787 to 1830, the membership almost doubled. Following the devastation of the Revolution and under the dedicated leadership of Dr. Roe, the Church became first in importance in the lives of its members. They had courage and foresight, and literally worked together to build a new church building, sturdy and large enough to serve the congregation more than a century. Shortly after the new church was built, while Dr. Roe was still active, the church experienced a revival which augmented its membership.

After Dr. Roe's death, during the pasorate of Rev. Henry Mills, the church seems to have enjoyed a tranquil period of quiet growth

and expansion into new fields, especially religious education and a start toward missions.

The peak in membership was reached in 1843, which was the year there was a revival during Rev. William Barton's ministry. After 1843 there was a gradual falling off in the membership for the next twenty-five years or so. While there was dissatisfaction stirring among the members at this period, there were other influences inhibiting the growth of the Church. The disturbing influence of the conflicts in the General Assembly, especially between the Old School and the New School, the disruption of interest in the church caused by the Civil War and its aftermath and the lure of the West have already been mentioned. The publishing in 1859 of Charles Darwin's "Origin of Species" and rumors of so called "higher criticism" being applied in the field of Biblical studies may also have raised questions in the minds of some young people which deterred them from joining the church. Another important factor, however, was the change in Woodbridge itself. From a country village, a hospitable stopover station for the stagecoach and horseback traveler, it was becoming a town with a thriving industry — clay-mining, manufacturing and exporting. Moreover, there was the beginning of commuting to New York City, first by boat and then by 1864 rail service came to Woodbridge. Some industrialists, seeing a future in the clay business, moved in. Woodbridge was also becoming something of a summer resort, especially in the Sewaren section, until fishing and bathing were spoiled by industry.

It was not easy to interest the newly arrived industrialists or the summer visitors in the support of the Old White Church. Meanwhile, tales of adventure and gold were drawing the youth and sometimes whole families, whose forefathers had been the mainstay of the church, westward. They were inspired, for example, by stories of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, who spent his boyhood in Woodbridge and was the son of Col. Zebulon Pike. The younger Pike explored the southwest and is credited with having discovered 'Pike's Peak'. Discovery of gold in the far west drew others. Young men were attracted to dig for wealth in new territory, rather than dig clay in their own backyards. The clay industry did bring an influx of laborers, but they settled mostly in the southern section near the brick works and the clay pits, a long way from the church for those without horses. Moreover, many were German and Irish immigrants who were Lutheran, Methodist and Catholic and wanted no part in a Presbyterian Church. Records suggest there was some effort to serve the newcomers. Rev. Lucas is mentioned for his civic work and children were recruited for the Sunday School. Per-

haps the plan to hold the big supper in celebration of the 200th Anniversary at the "House of Hampton Cutter, Justice of the Peace, on Strawberry Hill, opposite ye Clay Banks" was a gesture of hospitality, as the invitation is said to have been circulated throughout the village.

The Old White Church can be proud of its second hundred years. It has a glorious record of service during the Revolution and a part in the establishment of federal government in both church and state. In spite of hard times following the war, it built a new sanctuary during the same ministry and generation. It reflected its country's pioneering spirit by establishing the first Sunday School in the State and taking an interest in missionary projects. The Great Awakening and other revivals had their counterpart in the Old White Church. Divisions and controversial issues such as slavery, domination of Old School or New School in church doctrine had to be dealt with. The Church also had to adjust to its role in Woodbridge, which changed from a rural village to a town with a thriving clay industry. Through it all, the Church honored its heritage, and approached its 200th birthday in a spirit of celebration and faith in the future. It was definitely Presbyterian in doctrine and government, and undaunted in spirit.

FOOTNOTES

1. Whitehead, *Early History of Perth Amboy*, p. 398.
2. Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, p. 62.
3. *History of Middlesex Co.*, Vol. 1, p. 93; Vol. 2, Chapt. 29, p. 418.
4. Dally, *Woodbridge and Vicinity*, p. 243.
5. *Celebration of the 225th Anniversary*, p. 17.
6. *Celebration of the 225th Anniversary*, p. 22.
7. Dally, p. 284-285.
8. McElroy, *A History of Woodbridge*, p. 5.
9. *Celebration of the 225th Anniversary*, p. 38.
10. Dr. Roe's Historical Sermon, copy of original manuscript.
11. Dally, p. 30.
12. *Celebration*, p. 14.
13. *Celebration*, p. 15.
14. "Church Founded With Township" article in Perth Amboy Evening News.
15. Two Hundredth Anniversary, p. 13-14 (See McNulty).
16. Dally, p. 233.
17. Two Hundredth Anniversary, p. 14 (See McNulty).
18. Two Hundredth Anniversary, p. 15 (See McNulty).
19. *Celebration of the 225th Anniversary*, p. 31.
20. Two Hundredth Anniversary, p. 15 (See McNulty).
21. "Church Founded With Township" article in Perth Amboy Evening News.

22. *Celebration of the 225th Anniversary*, p. 34.
23. Loetscher, pp. 69 and 70.
24. Loetscher, p. 70.
25. Loetscher, p. 77.
26. Loetscher, p. 78.
27. Loetscher, p. 81.

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Chapter 3

1875 - 1975

To ascertain in any degree the truths of any history one must strive to be objective, and to have some knowledge of the subject in question. One must also have the ability and insight to view a particular subject as a whole — as one story that continually unfolds. This is especially true of church history which reveals the complex patterns in the life and organization of a church. The story of a church, as it discloses the dreams and aspirations of people, is often a tale of hope, dedication, and unbelievable sacrifice.

In attempting to tell and evaluate the “one story” of the third century of the life and work of “The White Church,” one is most fortunate in having the complete minutes of the Session and Trustees, plus those of many organizations. The voluminous minutes make the task most arduous, yet worthwhile and even humbling.

A storm of division was beginning to subside as our Church staggered into the year of its 200th birthday, 1875. This division had surfaced in October, 1873, when the Session and the Congregation reluctantly agreed to dissolve the relationship with their Pastor, the Reverend George C. Lucas.

At the root of this division, and the subsequent problems encountered in the selection of a new minister, was the lack of communication between the Session and Trustees. The appointment of a committee of Presbytery to moderate the Session following the dissolution of the pastoral relationship only further aggravated the situation.

Even with the calling of a new pastor, the Reverend Joseph McNulty, July, 1874, there was to be no reconciliation between the dissenting parties. In October, 1874, the Session granted letters of dismissal to 38 members, thus giving birth to the First Congregational Church of Woodbridge.

Due to the dissension the Bicentennial Celebration was delayed until late in '75 and early '76. In those years, even though the finances were in a deplorable state, a major renovation of the sanctuary and

the construction of a Sunday School Building was undertaken. The renovation included a new organ, new pews, the lowering of the pulpit, and for the first time, a vestibule. In late 1875 a magnificent gas chandelier, now electrified, was installed. This object of great beauty became the central subject of much conversation.

Admiration must be expressed for the faithful few who at that time undertook a program of renovation and building for which literally there were no funds, due in part to the secession of one fourth of the membership. The critical financial picture is shown by the fact that the Trustees moved in October, 1877, to dispense with the services of an organist. The Church Sinking Fund, appropriately named, showed a balance of \$10.00 in June, 1878. The organist was rehired in 1878 for the annual salary of \$65.00, with the stipulation that he pay for the services of a blower.

New hope and life was beginning to emerge. Beginning with 1877 new members were received at almost every Session meeting, and from the same year, and during the remaining years of Dr. McNulty's ministry, baptisms are recorded on almost every page of the Session's minutes. Special "Prayer and Conference" meetings were held. The subject of benevolence and mission giving was frequently discussed with action taken. In 1883 Summer Union Services were commenced with the new Congregational Church. This practice continued well into the 20th Century.

Furthermore, the various women's organizations began to assume a definite leadership role. The work of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (1856) and the Church Ladies Aid Society (1862) was augmented in 1872 by the creation of an Auxiliary Society connected with the Elizabeth Presbyterial. In 1874 the "Lilies of the Field" Mission Band was established. This was an attempt to interest young women in the work of Foreign Missions. In 1881 a Home Missionary Society was formed. This Society merged with the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, in 1884, to become the Ladies' Missionary Society. In 1891, with the exception of the "Mission Band," the various women's organizations united to form the Ladies' Aid Society.

A further indication of the new spirit at that time, is seen in the formation of youth organizations. In 1887 the Young Peoples Society of Christian Endeavor was organized, primarily a senior age group. In 1895 a Junior Christian Endeavor was formed. One wonders whether the new emphasis on the importance of youth was the result of the excellent work of the Reverend Dr. J. T. Mills, Evangelist from California (1886), or a constructive attempt to counteract the rebel-

liness of the young people during the services of worship. Giving rise to the question are the minutes of the Trustees which read: "that Mr. Benj. Drake be a committee of one to look after the disorderly boys in church during service."¹ Whatever the reason it is obvious that the youth had moved into the mainstream of the church's life as evidenced in the report of the Y.P.S.C.E. Treasurer in 1896.²

Expenditures

April 21, 1895, Dr. Jessup	\$20.00
April 29, Ernest Keorlin	20.00
April 29, Jr. C. E. Society	2.24
June 21, 1895, Ernest Keorlin	10.00
July and September, Miscellaneous	6.00
Nov. 10, 1895, Ernest Keorlin	10.00
Dec. 13, Topic Cards and Lecture on Pledge	4.25
Dec. 29, 1895, Armenians	3.50
Feb. 23, 1896, for Help	1.75
Ernest Keorlin	20.00
Rail Fare for Speaker50
	\$99.49

In the area of proclaiming and extending the Gospel to the surrounding communities the Church did itself proud in those years:

A petition, numerously signed by the people of East Woodbridge, desiring the Session to appoint Elder Prall to the position of Superintendent of the "Blazing Star School House" Sunday School, was received. It was approved and placed in Mr. Prall's hands, urging his acceptance, and his entrance upon the work of resuscitating that School.³

The establishment of a Presbyterian Church in Carteret in 1893 was the direct result of the above mentioned work in conjunction with the ministry of Dr. McNulty.

The position of the Church in the community in the last quarter of the century in question may well be determined by the following comment, "On motion it was resolved to allow the use of the Church on March 4, 1887 to the Graduating Class of the Public School, for this year in view of the fact that all members of said class, with one exception are either members of our church or congregation."⁴

Despite the many difficulties, Reverend McNulty in evaluating the 19th Century wrote in his "Commemorative Sermon" for the Two Hundred and Twenty Fifth Anniversary: "The Century, let me say in closing, during which this Church building has held its place, marks

the grandest era in the Church's history since the Apostolic Century. We are impressed with this the more as we stand consciously on the border line of the twentieth century." ⁵

From a more objective viewpoint one would have to claim that the good Reverend was guilty of hyperbole. One should not minimize the dedication and hope — the living thread of the one story — but neither should the assumption be made that all was "positive" as the Church moved into the twentieth century.

The Treasurer on March 5, 1900 reported a balance of 10 cents. In order to end the church year, April through March, in the black, a special appeal was made from the pulpit for \$360.00. The Congregation responded; balance at the end of the year, \$1.79.

A practice that existed at that time, and well into the 20th century, makes it rather difficult to determine the true financial picture. We refer to the assumption of mortgages by the Church. In the time period, 1890-1930, almost every prominent family of the immediate area, including Carteret and Perth Amboy, borrowed funds from the Church. The extensiveness of this procedure raises the distinct possibility that monies may still be owed.

No matter how you cut it, the financial picture was a dismal one. The Session minutes of March, 1896, reveals that while there were almost 200 members on the roll, there were only 29 regular contributors.

Attendance at the worship services, particularly when Communion was celebrated, left much to be desired. Growth in church membership was practically at a standstill: 1894, 171; 1899, 182.

It also appears that much energy and time was wasted in opposing the inevitable. A battle raged, for example, for 25 years over the placement of telephone poles. As late as January, 1901, an application from the Carteret Light and Power Company for permission to erect poles along the church property was denied.

Still, the positives outweighed the negatives. With literally no funds, and very few members, the Church decided to pull out all the stops in respect to the 225th Anniversary. The resolution by the congregation tells, in part, the amazing story:

"Whereas God in his good providence has allowed us as a Church to complete Two Hundred and Twenty Five years of history on the 27th of May of this year, and our present Church edifice to be nearly one hundred years old;

Therefore, Resolved, That we should appropriately celebrate that remarkable era in our history in any method deemed best by the Pastor and Officers of the Church, and we hereby endorse the movement and method to do so already inaugurated at a joint meeting held a short time since by the Elders and Trustees, and we wish it will strive to give it, the utmost success.”⁶

The celebration held on May 27, 30 and 31, 1900, included three excellent Sabbath services; a Midweek Service, a Banquet and Program on Thursday evening, and the publication of an Anniversary Book — which included Dr. McNulty’s outstanding “Commemorative Sermon.” The highlight of the entire endeavor was the presentation by Mr. William H. Cutter of a very beautiful silver Communion Service, which was added to by Mr. Hampton Cutter in 1919. This service is still very much prized by the congregation.

One notes that no former pastor took part in the Celebration. The two immediate predecessors of Reverend McNulty, Reverend William M. Martin and Reverend George C. Lucas had both died in 1898.

In the first decade of the 20th Century the Church bowed to the advances in technology. First of all came the telephone poles, 1902, and in the same year electricity for the Church. Mr. McNulty did not have, however, a lamp for his desk until 1906. In 1903 came the Trolley Cars and a Water Motor for the organ; no more hand blowing. In 1907 steam heat was provided for the Sanctuary and the Sunday School rooms, and in 1908 the residents of the Parsonage enjoyed similar luxury. Major repairs to the facilities were financed by the Ladies Aid Society.

However, the convenience of an electric lamp was not to be long enjoyed by the gracious Pastor. Dr. McNulty died December 24, 1906.

The Session minutes tell, in some degree, what his death meant to the Congregation and to the Community:

“Rev. Joseph M. McNulty, D.D., the Pastor of this Church for thirty-three consecutive years, an energetic worker, a scholarly man and an earnest and effective preacher and a faithful Pastor, passed away after a brief illness on the twenty-fourth of Dec. 1906.

Universally beloved by his own people, and respected and esteemed by the entire community, he is sincerely mourned by all who knew him and has left behind a record of good words and works that will prove a lasting monument to his memory.”⁷

The Reverend Mr. Buschman puts it quite succinctly: “After thirty-three years of service he was laid to rest in the adjoining church yard, leaving a whole community to mourn his going.”⁸

Poor, but harmonious, the Church proceeded to look for a new Pastor. Turning her eyes in the direction of Princeton Theological Seminary she extended a call to an athletic son of Erin, Reverend Robert W. Mark. While still a Senior Student he accepted the call at an annual salary of \$1,200. Dr. McNulty had been receiving \$1,500.

With Reverend Mark's ministry the Church began to consider the need for more social and recreational activities. This need culminated with the erection of the Parish House in 1911. This house, constructed at an approximate cost of \$7,300, was located almost directly behind the former Rahway Avenue manse on a very large tract of ground which extended all the way to the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks. A very large portion of the tract was used for many years by the Church and community as an athletic field which was sold to York-Jersey Homes, Inc., in 1942 for the sum of \$6,000.

The Parish House project initiated a ministry for which, in the long run, neither the Church nor the community was ever fully prepared. Just about every organization of the Church and the community had a "go" at it. A hundred attempts were made to sell it. Elders and Trustees prayed and argued about it. Community groups vied with one another as to who was going to use, or more properly, abuse it. In October, 1971 the building was razed, along with the Rahway Avenue manse. There had been basketball games, dinners, minstrel shows, tennis, and bowling. The bowling alleys had found their way to the recreation room of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in 1935. Although it had had its moments of glory, few tears were shed with its passing.

One should not be left with the impression, however, that for sixty years, the Church was concerned only about the Parish House. Many of the years of Reverend Mark's ministry, 1907-1917, were the years of World War I, with the subsequent strain and stress on the local Congregation which was not lessened by a very serious fire that extensively damaged both the sanctuary and the Sunday School Building. While the flames of war threatened all of Europe the flames of hope and dedication burned low in The White Church. The treasurer reported in December, 1914, the month of the fire, a balance of 3¢. Bills totalled \$491.06. Bids were received in January and February for repairing the fire damage, but most of them were rejected — there were no funds for contracting out the work. So, the men and women purchased the necessary materials and supplies and did the work themselves. By the end of February, 1915, most of the work had been accomplished — another amazing chapter in the Church's long history.

In connection with the repairs to the Church in 1915, it is important to note that the men of the church were beginning to organize into an effective and aggressive entity, over and above the work of the official judicatories.⁹ Though the Men's Brotherhood did not officially organize until 1919, the Trustees minutes of April, 1910, state that the President and Vice President of the Men's Bible Class were to serve on the Building Committee of the Parish House. The Session minutes of September, 1910, indicates that there were other men's organizations: "the matter of the federation of the men's organizations of the Church as proposed by the Men's Bible Class was discussed and it was agreed to postpone action until the next meeting."¹⁰

This discussion was pursued for we find in the November minutes a motion to call together the men of the church in order "to discuss and devise some method of aggressive work."¹¹

Even though the various men's organizations remained fragmented during the ministry of Reverend Mark there is ample evidence to indicate that the men played a major role in the planning and subsequent supervision of the Parish House, in repairing the sanctuary and Sunday School Building following the 1914 fire, and in taking a greater interest in the larger ministry of the Church. One of the social concerns of the men, particularly in the second decade of this century, was to whether or not to give the Anti-Saloon League an opportunity to present its case.

The true spirit of the Congregation as it tried so hard to keep things going is clearly revealed in the minutes that tell of the leaving of the Pastor:

"... reported that after a house to house canvass, all the Church people were on their knees asking God that Mr. Mark might see his way clear to remain with us as pastor, however not our will but God's be done, and that to be in accord with the church people asked that those present kneel for fifteen minutes (in) silent prayer.

After this everyone expressed themselves and the unanimous expression was one of unqualified loyalty and love for Mr. Mark and the hope that he would stay with us until the unsettled conditions, due to the war, were over."¹²

In January, 1918, the Presbytery moved to receive Reverend Mark's resignation. Looking once again toward the ivy covered walls of Princeton Seminary a call was extended to another young man who showed great promise, Mr. Leonard V. Buschman. He was licensed to preach on April 16. On May 9, he was both ordained and installed as pastor in the Woodbridge Church.

The years of Mr. Buschman's ministry may properly be described as a "Love Story" between Pastor and People. Fresh out of Seminary and quite anxious to prove his ability, the young, aggressive cleric quickly captured the hearts of the Congregation. The Manse was practically "done over" for the newlyweds. Their marriage took place in October in Fulton, Missouri. To insure that the Pastor would be "free from wordly care and avocations"¹³ Mr. Buschman's salary more than doubled during his pastorate increasing from \$1,500 to \$3,600, with a goodly number of bonuses. The affection was not limited, however to increases in salary. Parties and celebrations for the Buschmans were the thing. Celebrations held for their fourth and fifth wedding anniversaries were truly occasions of love and generosity.

To all of this the Buschmans responded most generously with their time and talents. A Boy Scout House, a project that was enthusiastically supported, was constructed in 1921 near the Parish House.



Parish House and Boy Scout House

Most of the materials came from the Church's horse sheds. While the Parish House and the cemetery (extensive damage was done to the latter in 1921) continued to present problems, almost every other facet of the Church's ministry was at its peak in the Buschman years. Church membership more than doubled (250-602). A Board of Deacons was organized in 1919. In the same year The Men's Brotherhood received its charter. In 1920, Reverend Ralph B. Nesbitt, a Seminary roommate of Mr. Buschman, was chosen as the Church's special missionary to India. The Sexton's House, located on the cemetery property, was electrified in 1923. From 1921-1925 in preparation for the 250th anniversary major repairs and renovations were made to the sanctuary and the Sunday School Building. The celebration was held on May 25, 26, 27 and 31, 1925.

It was a great Anniversary. The congregation paid \$1.00 a plate for the Anniversary Banquet. The President of the United States in response to an invitation "regretted that it would be impossible for him to take part."¹⁴

Following the celebration the undesired, but not unexpected, resignation of the Pastor was announced. Again the difficult task of finding a new minister was begun. The Pulpit Committee got right down to work, but it was impossible to disguise the "let down" attitude. By October, however, the Committee was prepared to recommend to the Congregation the name of the Reverend Leroy Y. Dillener, Sr. Mr. Dillener, a former classmate of Mr. Buschman, had just returned to the United States after a five-year stint as a missionary in Iran. Mr. Dillener's pastorate here was only a year and one half in duration. The fairest critique of that pastorate might be that the Congregation, greatly disappointed with the leaving of Mr. Buschman, was not inclined to exert the necessary effort to understand the Dilleners. The Dilleners, for their part, experienced some difficulty in relating to their first pastorate in America.

The Session commented in January, 1927, that "It was felt that the Church was slipping." In April it moved to call a meeting of the Congregation to consider the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. One would have to comment that the Church had reached another "low" point. No Session or Parish minutes are available for the period from April 6 to November 3. The Session minutes of Nov. 7, simply state that the Reverend E. A. Abbott of Aurora, Missouri, had been called on November 3, to be the new minister at a salary of \$3,300 a year.¹⁵ Strange things happened in the Church in those years as indicated by the fact that the January, 1928, minutes of Session record that the Church had celebrated Communion on the previous October 16, and that the Service was "conducted by Reverend E. A. Abbott who was spending a week in town."¹⁶

During the ministry of Reverend Abbott there was a decided deepening of the spiritual life of the Congregation, with much time being spent in seeking to reactivate the inactive members. During his ministry the Church played an integral role in the organizing of a Presbyterian Church in Avenel in 1927, and in Iselin in 1933. In the Abbott years a number of the members of the Congregation, along with the Pastor, were deeply involved in the First Century Fellowship (Moral Rearmament), an involvement which was not fully supported by the Session.

The very fine work on the part of Mr. Abbott was hindered, particularly in the closing years of his ministry in Woodbridge, by poor health. In April, 1932, Reverend Abbott was appointed a commis-

sioner to the General Assembly which was to meet in Denver. He was also given permission by the Session to attend the Pre-Assembly Conference on Evangelism. He did not return to the Woodbridge Church. Reverend E. A. Abbott died in Kerrville, Texas, on May 12, 1933.

The Church labored through some very difficult moments and decisions in the interim between Mr. Abbott's departure for Denver in May, 1932 and the calling of a new Pastor in June, 1933. There was that hope and expectation that he would be able to return. In August he was given a six months leave of absence. This was later extended. Realizing the seriousness of his illness he wrote a very moving letter of resignation in December. The letter of resignation was not officially received until March 15, 1933.

In the passing of Mr. Abbott the Church lost an extremely sensitive spiritual leader. His sensitivity is indicated, in part, in the minutes of the Trustees as they worked for the Church's survival in the severe depression of the Thirties. The following is part of a letter addressed to the President of the Board of Trustees, April, 1932: "I shall be pleased to accept any reduction in my annual salary which the Board deems necessary to make at this time."¹⁷ The Board, out of sheer necessity, reduced the annual salary by \$250.00. Those were very difficult days and hours.

The Reverend Mr. Howard Augustine served as the "Acting Minister" from September 1932 through March, 1933. A number of the Congregation apparently desired that Mr. Augustine be the Pastor, but it is apparent from the records that he was never seriously considered.

On June 7, the Congregation called the Reverend Earl H. Devanney, the annual salary to be \$2,700. An indication of the lack of interest on the part of the Congregation is seen in the fact that only fifty-five members voted.

Under the leadership of Mr. Devanney, who had had two fine pastorates at the Mattituck Presbyterian Church in Long Island, and the Covenant Presbyterian Church in Buffalo, N. Y., the Church did more than simply survive the remaining depression years. Church membership gradually increased to 637 by 1938. The sanctuary was recarpeted in 1936. The manse got a new furnace in 1937. There is some indication that the Church was taking a new interest in the affairs of the world as evidenced by the opposition to the Race Track Referendum in 1938. The Pastor's salary was back to \$3,000 in 1939.

In the same year we note the first inklings of the attitude of a minority of Presbyterians to the War which was aflame in Europe. The Presbytery of Elizabeth discussed the feasibility of changing the Constitution of the Church to have it "similar to the Friends making

all Presbyterians conscientious objectors to all war.”¹⁸

In 1940, though there were many active organizations and the attendance at the worship services was quite steady, there were indications that things were not quite as they should be. The Session called for a detailed report of the Minister’s activities for the month of December. Mr. Devanney made the report but let it be known that “he would not present another in such detail.”¹⁹

In 1941, ’42, the War began to have adverse affects on the Church. Men of the Congregation were enlisting and being drafted. Contributions and attendance decreased. There was a general apprehension over the welfare of the Church.

In April, 1942, Mr. Devanney was granted a “leave of absence” for the duration of the war in order that he might serve his country in a more direct way as a Captain in the U. S. Air Force. This action, which was certainly commendable on the part of the Congregation and the Pastor, was to lead to some very serious repercussions.

The Interim Pastor was the Reverend Kenneth M. Kepler who had been serving as a Missionary in China. During his ministry the evangelistic arm of the Church was greatly strengthened. The Women’s Association was organized and the men’s work was revitalized. The Men’s Club replaced the former Men’s Brotherhood. Mr. Robert Vogt, a student at Princeton Theological Seminary, was employed in January, 1944, to assist with the youth work.

Even with the many “positives” the effects of the war worked against any kind of a “normal” ministry. Indeed, every Service reminded the Congregation of the war’s presence. The Session minutes of June 5, 1944, read: “Out of 160 present at last Sunday’s service in the morning only 16 men were present.”

Wars have a way of ending, after awhile, and so do “leaves of absence.” Mr. Devanney had been away for approximately three and one half years. Many had joined the Church who did not know him. Others found the particular life style of the Interim Pastor more to their liking. The inevitable result was that there were those who thought that it would be more prudent for Mr. Devanney not to return as Pastor. The very serious problems were alleviated, in some degree, when Mr. Kepler announced that “he would leave Woodbridge on November 20, as he had been called back to China.”²⁰

Reverend Devanney was back to work in February, 1946, fully aware of the division in the Church and the difficulties involved in leading the Congregation in a post war era.

The division culminated in 1947 with the creation of the Gospel Church on Prospect and Ridgedale Avenues. Its primary negative

effect was to weaken the ministry of the White Church at a time when the community was rapidly expanding. The very rapid growth of both the Avenel and Iselin Churches in the Forties and Fifties is concrete evidence of this fact. The Session minutes of May, 1948, further substantiate this conclusion: "It was brought to the attention of Session, that all officers of the newly organized church on Edgar Hill, were from those who had been dropped at their own request, from the roll of this Church . . ." ²¹

With Mr. Devanney's return the women's work assumed the organizational pattern essentially as it is today: Women's Association — now United Presbyterian Women, White Church Guild and the Ladies Aid. The Men's Club, sometimes called "Association," reverted to the term "Brotherhood."

The Church continued to show a concern with social problems. Alcoholics Anonymous began holding meetings here in May, 1949.

In preparation for the 275th Anniversary of 1950 the interior of the "Chapel" was painted, the chandelier was "renovated" — including the installation of an electrical hoist, and major repairs were made to the organ. The 275th Anniversary Banquet was held at the Colonia Country Club with Governor Driscoll as the principal speaker. Late in the Anniversary Year because of the undeclared war in Korea it was decided "to have a service flag in the Church again." ²²

In 1951 the official judicatories began to seriously discuss the need for additional facilities to accommodate the needs of the expanding Sunday Church School. By 1953 the discussion focused on the erection of a "new building." In October, 1954, all things were "go." Ground breaking services were held on May 22, 1955. The cornerstone was laid on April 1, 1956. The very attractive Fellowship Hall, completed at a rounded out cost of \$110,000, was dedicated on May 27

In 1954 the Session and Trustees began to give serious consideration of the need to employ a full time Assistant Minister. Seven years later, September 1961, the Church employed the Reverend James M. Marsh to fill this position. Mr. Marsh had been serving as the Youth Director, on a part time basis.

In October, 1956, the Congregation adopted the Session Rotary System and the new system for the Election of Church Officers, as mandated by the General Assembly.

The Session minutes of September, 1958, indicates the recognition that the official name of the denomination should now include the word "United."

On January 7, 1959, the Congregation acted upon the request of Mr. Devanny to retire, thus another long and productive ministry

to the White Church had come to an end. Desiring to honor one who had served for twenty-six years, the Congregation changed the name of the Deacons Student Loan Fund to the Earl H. Devanny Student Loan Fund, and at the same meeting moved to confer upon him the title of Pastor Emeritus. Then they sang, as so often the Church had sung before, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."

On May 24, 1959, the Church called as its next Minister the Reverend Alex N. Nemeth. Mr. Nemeth, before coming to Woodbridge, had a very productive ministry in the Church in South River, New Jersey. In the Nemeth, and we should add "Marsh" years, 1959-1967, the Church became more aware of its role as a "steward" and "servant." Giving to both Local and General Missions increased significantly. Going the second mile the Church, in 1966, enthusiastically supported the financial campaign known as the Fifty Million Fund — this was a campaign to collect funds across the denomination for capital needs. The original pledge of the White Church was \$23,458.00. Gifts sent to the Fund totaled \$21,688.84.

Mr. Nemeth and Mr. Marsh labored most diligently to create a spirit of harmony and cooperation. They continued to stress the need for a unified ministry in the service of the Lord. The unification was realized in a very practical way, in January, 1961, with the adoption of the Unicameral System. The essence of this system is that the offices of the Trustees and Elders are merged into one judicatory.

Even with more unity and cooperation along with increased giving, the Church continued to experience financial problems. The sanctuary and the Sunday School Building cried out for repairs. Specific items of all facilities demanded attention. The razing of the Cemetery House in March, 1960, solved one of the problems. Another need was met when the organ was completely rebuilt in the spring of 1963 at a cost of \$11,800. In November, 1965, a complete new heating plant was installed at a cost of \$8,650. But, in truth, there just wasn't enough money to do all the needed repairs while maintaining a multiple staff ministry.

In February, 1967, Reverend Nemeth announced that he had accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church of Cumberland, Maryland. In April, Reverend Marsh "requested the Session to concur with him in requesting the Presbytery of Elizabeth to terminate" the relationship between himself and the White Church.²³

To quote a phrase used by Reverend Buschman, "the present Pastor took up the work"²⁴ in July, 1967: moving into the newly purchased Manse at 22 Dixon Drive in August. The fate of the old manse had been sealed when the Congregation on April 16, 1967 moved to

"sell its property located at 555 Rahway Avenue, Woodbridge, New Jersey, including the Manse and Parish House . . . The minimum selling price shall be \$100,000."²⁵ The property, minus the buildings which were razed in October, 1971, was eventually sold in April, 1972 to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for \$100,000.

The primary task which confronted the Congregation and Minister centered on what to do with the Sanctuary and the Sunday School Building. The task was greatly complicated by the mixture of sentimentality, practicality, inertia, indifference, and the overwhelming magnitude of the problems.

After two years of labor, prayers, and meetings, the congregation convened to act upon a recommendation that was designed to determine how much money the congregation was willing to spend, rather than the issue of what to do with the facilities. The motion which was adopted read: "That the Congregation adopt the sum of \$350,000 to restore the present church or to build a new church."²⁶ The meeting opened the door for the very important decision that was made in October: "That the congregation proceed with a program of restoration and renovation within the limits determined"²⁷ at the previous Congregational Meeting.

Once this decision was made there was no lack of dedication. The campaign for pledges in 1970 did not go as well as anticipated. Only \$200,000 was pledged, but that was not due to the lack of dedication and determination. When it was realized in 1971 that \$350,000 would just about take care of the restoration and renovation of the sanctuary, the Congregation aware that something had to be done with the Sunday School Building, voted on October 20 to "approve an additional expenditure of \$150,000."²⁸ This was \$50,000 more than the Session had recommended.

\$150,000 provided only a "skeleton" Christian Education Annex. Not to be denied an adequate facility, the congregation, men, women, and children, went to work to complete the structure as desired: Thus providing another great chapter in the long history of dedication.

What a proud people gathered that blustery "Reentry Sunday," October 15, 1972, to admire for all practical purposes a "new facility," yet one that did not break continuity with the past. They were an even prouder people as they gathered for worship on "Dedication Sunday," October 29. Surely the angels rejoiced.

The total cost of the Sanctuary and Christian Education Annex was in excess of \$560,000.

The Church, however, is always more than wood and stone. The

Congregation has never lost sight of this truth. In the last several years, for example, the "Benevolence Mission" has taken on new dimensions with the assumption of direct financial support of specific missionary personnel. A revival of the "Ministry of Healing" has resulted in a deepening of concern and compassion.

The White Church, which in the last decade has suffered through the longest undeclared war in the nation's history, the assassination of one President and the resignation of another, and now caught in the throes of an unbelievable economic inflation, finds itself preparing for its finest hour, the celebration of its 300th Anniversary. "A" Day will be May 25, 1975.

In this cursory presentation of the "one story" of the last one hundred years the medium of continuity has been primarily the names and contributions of particular ministers. The lack of space and time literally prohibited the use of any other medium, resulting in the exclusion of the names and contributions of a great host of lay people who have shared the burden. Omitted also have been other particular areas of ministry essential to the life of the Church, especially the "Ministry of Music and Song."

God has truly blessed the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge, New Jersey.

FOOTNOTES AND SOURCES

1. "Minutes of Trustees," April, 1883.
2. "Minutes of Parish Meeting," 1896. Note that the published total is incorrect. A specific item was probably omitted.
3. "Minutes of Session," April 11, 1884.
4. "Minutes of Trustees," Feb. 19, 1887.
5. McNulty, J. M., "Historical Sermon," 1900.
6. "Minutes of Parish Meeting," April 4, 1900.
7. "Minutes of Session," undated, but probably in January, 1907.
8. Buschman, Leonard V., "Historical Sermon," 1925.
9. Filer, James, *Two Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary*, p. 52.
10. "Minutes of Session," Sept. 10, 1910.
11. "Minutes of Session," Nov. 30, 1910.
12. "Minutes of Session," Dec. 1, 1917.
13. These are the actual words of the "call," then and now.
14. "Minutes of Trustees," Feb. 8, 1925.
15. "Minutes of Session," Nov. 7, 1927.
16. "Minutes of Session," Jan. 3, 1928.
17. "Minutes of Trustees," April 24, 1932.
18. "Minutes of Session," Feb. 6, 1939.
19. "Minutes of Session," Dec. 2, 1940.
20. "Minutes of Session," Oct. 1, 1945.
21. "Minutes of Session," May 4, 1948.
22. "Minutes of Session," Sept. 12, 1950.
23. "Minutes of Session," April 11, 1967.
24. Buschman, Leonard V., *Two Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary*, p. 20.
25. "Minutes of Congregational Meeting," April 16, 1967.
26. "Minutes of Congregational Meeting," April 30, 1969.
27. "Minutes of Congregational Meeting," Oct. 15, 1969.
28. "Minutes of Congregational Meeting," Oct. 20, 1971.



Meeting House 1675



1803



1875



1972

Chapter 4

Cemetary

Section 1

Puritan Funerary Art

A dear kindly lady, a member of our church for many years and whose remains are interred here, always, during her adult life, referred to our burial ground as, "God's Half Acre." This is a fitting description of this consecrated, hallowed ground.

Actually, our burial ground covers about five acres. As of October 1, 1972, about three thousand burials have been made.

Our burial ground, which is one of the oldest in our state of New Jersey, contains not only the remains of many of the earliest settlers of our Township, but also many of those who fought for our freedom as noted worthies in the Revolutionary War, and in our nation's subsequent wars.

The oldest monument in our burial ground is dated 1690 (Fig. 1). This field-stone monument is in an excellent state of preservation in spite of the passing of almost three hundred years. This stone bears no name, only the initials, "E.F.B.F. 24, 1690."

This interment may possibly be a member of the Bloomfield family inasmuch as the adjoining stone to this 1690 one is plainly marked "Moses Bloomfield."

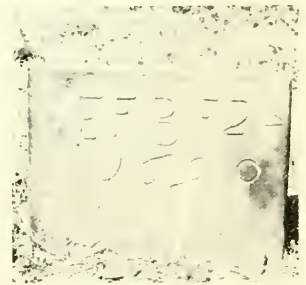


Fig. 1

It is highly probable that numerous interments were made prior to 1690, since Woodbridge was first settled in the 1660s. If however, any monuments were placed prior to 1690, they have long since vanished. A survey made in 1849 of the cemetery showed the above mentioned monument to be the oldest at that time.

As early as September 29, 1703, Samuel Hale and Adam Hude were appointed to repair the meeting house and hang the gates of the "Burying Place." In 1705 a sum of money was levied for repairing the graveyard fence.¹

Three to four hundred red sandstone monuments still standing, and an unknown number vandalized and/or destroyed by erosion are existing proof of the influence of the New England Puritan Funerary art in our burial ground.

The writer has been told by an eminent genealogist that some of the red sandstone monuments which will be discussed in more detail were carved in New England and brought down to Woodbridge.

Puritan funerary art shows a deep strain of passion and a naive delight in mystical symbolism. The Puritan was a stern, unpretentious character with no desire for show or ostentation of any kind.

Even their homes and churches were plain with no decoration, fancy work or embellishment.²

History informs us that as early as 1550 in England whole ship-loads of religious statuary were exported to France by the Puritans. In 1559 two great bonfires in London consumed even the wooden cross images from St. Peter's Cathedral and elsewhere.

Almost a century later in 1642, during the English Civil War, Puritan troops destroyed graven images. Even the great cathedrals of Exeter, Canterbury, and Winchester felt the relentless hammering of the Puritan iconoclasts. These same prejudices regarding ostentation were brought to New England by the Puritan settlers.

We may assume from the foregoing that when death claimed a member of a Puritan family, the grave would be marked by the plainest of stones, devoid of any form of engraving other than the name, dates of birth and death, or there might be an epitaph with Puritanical overtones.

Not so! The family was not content with the lengthy words of condolence, sympathy and scripture readings by the minister at the grave side. Their love for the deceased and the unexplained, unfathomable quirk of the Puritan mind required that what today we consider symbols be engraved on the monument to show their fears and hopes that surround the mysteries of Death and Resurrection.³

Between 1668 and 1815 the Puritans utilized engravings which appear to be almost mystical in appearance and interpretation. There

is little, if any, historic precedent for use of the symbols which appear to depict the voyage of the soul through death toward salvation and eternal glorified Life.

The New England stone carver and his local imitators doubtless, on instruction from Puritan leaders, spoke in the language of paradox when over a period of years they transformed the symbol of the death's head into the symbol of the soul image. No grouping of New England symbols has aroused more controversy than these symbols of transformation which purport to change grim death into sweet conceptions of the soul. They are not complex enough to sense that the soul can abide in heaven only by first becoming lost in death. ⁴

Like other early colonists the Puritans generally followed English custom by placing their common burying grounds adjacent to their meeting houses, in full ominous view of the worshipper.

The Puritans came to Woodbridge from New England in the 1660s in hope that by moving to the freer environment they would not only be able to recover a stricter practice of church membership but also escape the encroachment of the English crown which was whittling away at the traditional freedom of the New England colonies.

It thus is not difficult to understand how extensively the early Woodbridge settlers coming from New England were influenced by the Puritan funerary art as shown by their local burial ground.

As mentioned above the symbols of transformation seem to depict the voyage of the soul through death toward new life in terms of becoming rather than of being. As soul image after soul image voyages through the gray voids of becoming the imagery slowly reveals a branch of theology that treats of death, judgment, and the future state of the soul conceived in motion intellectually, but pictured stylistically in static movement. At the harbor of death and life, the beginning and the end of the symbolic voyage, the imagery crystallizes first into the form of the winged death head and then into the equally clear effigy of the glorified soul. ⁵

Fig. 2 shows the engraving of the so-called Death's Head. To the Puritan mind this symbolized the transporting of the soul into Paradise. The empty eye sockets, tapering jaw, splayed nose, serated closely shut teeth of both jaws, are typical of this particular style of engraving.



Fig. 2

By actual count there were, on September 1972, approximately 260 red sandstone monuments in our burial ground which conform to this type. No doubt many other similarly engraved stones have eroded away or been vandalized beyond recognition. The oldest identifiable monument at this writing, in this particular category is dated 1732 in area 5-6; B-C.



Fig. 3

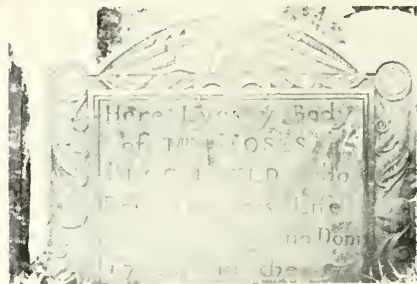


Fig. 4

Fig. 3 and 4, dated 1740 and 1724 respectively, show the winged death head but with the "crown of righteousness" over the head. This particular type of engraved stone is not nearly so numerous as the type shown in Fig. 2. The wing engraving of Fig. 4 is much more elaborate than any previously shown. The "crown of righteousness" was engraved in pointed, fluted and other variations; but in whatever form it appeared, it proclaimed the same message when associated with the soul—Resurrection in Christ. ⁶

2 Timothy 4:8 reads:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

1 Peter 5:4 reads:

"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of Glory that fadeth not away."

James 1:12 reads:

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Along about 1750, a change took place in the symbolic carvings on the monuments. The winged death head was seldom, if ever, used. It was replaced by a somewhat cherubic face or symbol known to the Puritan as a glorified soul image having wings to speed the transporting of the soul to paradise. ⁷ There are about one hundred of this particular type of engraving still standing and legible.

Fig. 5 shows a version of the so-called soul images or cherub engraving. We would not describe it as angelic looking but it is a pleasant departure from the awesome death head engraving. The eyes and nose are quite natural, but the mouth is tight and grim in appearance. The detail work on the wings is quite elaborate.

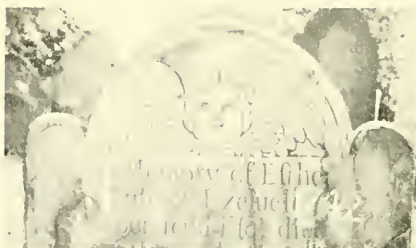


Fig. 5

Fig. 6 shows another soul image with a garland and crown above the head and a large graven heart outlined on the main body of the stone. The Puritans believed that an engraving of a heart on a monument exemplified the soul in bliss and was always in symbolic opposition to the imagery of Death.⁸



Fig. 6

Figs. 7, 8, and 9 with a slight variation in detail, are further examples of the so-called symbolic glorified soul images.

The Puritans believed when death occurred that the Spirit left the body through the mouth.⁹ Exactly when this thought came into being is not known to the writer. The manifestation of this belief is not shown in the monuments dated earlier but is very noticeable in Figs. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. The distended cheeks in these engravings leave no doubt that the spirit is escaping through the mouth.

In Figs. 10, 11, 12, and 13 the crown above the head is well defined and in some instances quite elaborate.

In Figs. 12 and 13 the additional engraving in the form of the two five-pointed stars with a circle is somewhat of a departure from any engravings previously noted. In addition in Fig. 12, we have the scroll engraving under the soul image face as is also shown in Figs. 14 and 15.

Fig. 16 shows the monument erected over the remains of Capt. Nathaniel Fitz Randolph (5-6, D-E). This monument has the typical Puritan winged soul effigy surmounted by crossed sabres. This is a most unique illustration of Puritan influence combined with a military



Fig. 7

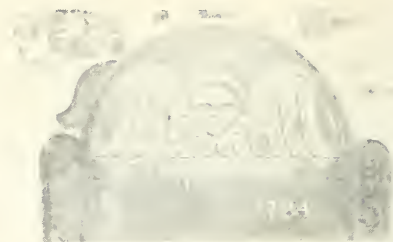


Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

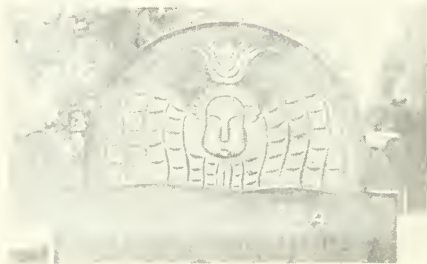


Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

motif. The top of this monument also exhibits a series of jointed semicircular carvings. The surface of this monument shows many pit marks or small craters. Did the crossed sabres inspire some vandal to discharge a firearm loaded with buckshot against this most interesting historical monument?



Fig. 16

Fig. 17, dated 1726, is unique as far as the engraving is concerned. The skull is neither the typical death's head nor the soul image; the crossed bones are rare in our cemetery. A survey revealed only one other monument with an engraving of crossed bones. The hourglass engraving, however, is repeatedly used in Puritan engravings. In Puritan symbolism, it suggests the journey of the soul from Death to Life and also symbolizes the corruption and decay of the flesh.¹⁰ The engraving around the top of the stone is unusual for the year 1726 and the engraving below and on both sides of the crossed bones challenge interpretation. Is it foliage from the "Tree of Life?" Does it represent flames of fire? Modern eyes and imagination cannot truly measure or gauge all Puritan symbols.



Fig. 17



Fig. 18

Fig. 18 is an interesting and beautiful exhibit. The engraving so prominently shown is "The Tree of Life." This engraving has had symbolic significance since at least the Sumerian times, 5000 B.C., and has been used by a number of cultures to symbolize spiritual values. It was used by the Puritans and still is so used until the present day. Note particularly the engraving of the coffin placed under "The Tree of Life." This combination of coffin under tree is symbolic of the victory of eternal Life over Death. Additional interesting secondary engravings are also seen on the right and left hand shoulders of this monument.

The Puritan influence had probably waned with the coming of later succeeding generations and the influx of other sects into the Wood-bridge area.

The winged Death head and the winged glorified soul image engravings ceased to be used after the very late 1700s.

The engravings following those of the Puritan influence had no set pattern but were quite individualistic.

Fig. 19 shows an engraving of what is called an incinerary urn. The purpose of an urn as here illustrated was to receive the ashes produced by a cremation.



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

Fig. 20 shows the evolution of the use of a scallop shell for decorative purposes. This motif is found in various forms in a number of the old red sandstone monuments.

Fig. 21 shows a composite form of engraving: the scallop shell, but with fewer flutes than shown in Fig. 20; additional shell shapes in both upper corners and both floral and unusual geometric engravings are on the main face of the stone.



Fig. 21



Fig. 22

Fig. 22 shows another example of engraving after the Puritan influence had completely waned as the year 1800 approached. This stone shows a beautiful symmetrical floral design suggested by the tulip.

The many monuments erected after 1800 are with very few exceptions the now standard granite stones. They are of a great variety of size and shape as is shown in Fig. 23.



Fig. 23



Fig. 24

The tendency in recent years has been toward a smaller, more uniform shape, roughly resembling a pillow (Fig. 24). This size is principally due to the fact that practically all recently purchased perpetual care plots accommodate only two to four interments. There have been no large (six or more) plots acquired by any family for many years.

It is somewhat surprising to learn of the frequency that new grave openings are requested by out-of-town residents connected with old time Woodbridge families who have large plots in which there are still unused burial areas.

There may be among the readers of this discourse doubts regarding the custom among the Puritans for their penchant for what may appear weird, almost frightening in appearance, graven images on tombstones. The examples of Puritan engraving in our burial ground are probably the least gruesome of any when compared with many examples of the art as it may be found in Hingham, Paxton, Bellingham, Deerfield, Hanover, and other Massachusetts towns, as well as in Peterboro, New Hampshire; Grafton, Vermont; Wiscasset, Maine, and many other New England burial grounds. ¹¹

How do we account for their strange taste in engraving on tombstones? There are no Puritans available to answer this question. If however, we delve into certain facts concerning the Puritans, we probably will agree that their reasoning or thinking was complex, yes, complicated, even paradoxical. How otherwise would we account for their system of engravings on tombstones or their belief in witchcraft?

Witchcraft is the human exercise of alleged supernatural power for anti-social, evil purpose. Witchcraft survived in England until the

18th Century — 1200 years after the introduction of Christianity and was taken to colonial America by English settlers (including the Puritans). In 1692 after a prolonged witch trial in Salem, Massachusetts, as a result of accusations by a group of teenage girls, more than 30 persons were convicted of witchcraft.¹² The usual sentence for conviction of witchcraft was death.

The reality of witches and wizards was universally assumed; witchcraft being merely another wile of that old deluder Satan himself. Evil demons and unclean spirits had to be cast out or driven into the sea, as in the New Testament. Seventeen hundred years had brought about some refinements in the “driving into the sea” method but these benefitted pigs more than people.¹³

It takes no stretching of the imagination to understand how the Puritan mind which could condone all the indignities and persecution, yes, even death upon a suspected witch or wizard could and did design, invent, and carve symbolic figures on headstones. Symbols that are far from being aesthetic or pleasing to the eye. In some instances the symbolic meaning defies our present day interpretation.

To bring this matter of symbolic carvings, witchcraft, and the peculiarities of the Puritan mind to a close but to show how fully it had immigrated to Woodbridge is illustrated by one simple “quote” from a law passed by the General Assembly in meeting at Woodbridge, New Jersey on December 9, 1675: “If any pesron be found to be a Witch, either male or female, they shall be put to Death.”

Section 2

First Families or Early Settlers Interred in Our Cemetery

In 1670 there were fifty-seven individuals who were made patent holders by the East Jersey Proprietors. This meant that they were given land, some a surprisingly large acreage, and are referred to as the First Family or Early Settlers.

“If one owned a small tract of land in those early days, it was called a farm; if it was approximately 200 acres, it was a plantation.”¹

A search of certain available records show a surprising number of this group were interred in our cemetery. We feel sure that the following short biographies regarding some of the first families or early settlers will be of interest to the reader.

Alston — Here is a family name that few, if any, readers will associate with the very beginning of the settlement of Woodbridge. This surmise will apply as well to other first family names which follow.

The early records show that John Alston, Sr. and two sons, John, Jr. and Peter, were among the first settlers of Woodbridge.²

John Alston, Sr. suffered shipwreck in Boston Bay on July 26, 1631 with two other fishermen. He later removed to Welles, Maine, where he took the Oath of Allegiance to the Massachusetts government on July 5, 1658.

There is no doubt but that with the other inhabitants of the Piscataqua region of New Hampshire and Maine who found their way to Woodbridge, also came John Alston, Sr. to head the locally prominent family by that name.³

Twenty-two Alstons have been interred here, the earliest is dated 1733.

Ayres Family

The Ayres or Ayers were from Newbury, Massachusetts at which place Obadiah Ayers, by his wife Hannah, had a son born March 2, 1663. Obadiah was probably the son of John Ayres, who was of Salis-

bury, Massachusetts in 1640; of Haverhill in 1647; and of Ipswich, Massachusetts in 1666. ⁴ The writer found no record of the exact date of the coming of the Ayers to Woodbridge but Obadiah was listed as a Freeholder in 1670. He received a grant of 171 acres of land. There is still, today, between Main St. and former Metuchen Ave., a property known as the Ayer Clay Bank.

There are nine interments in the Ayer Plot.

Barron Family

Without a shadow of doubt, one of the most interesting of the early Woodbridge families is the Barron Family.

The Barrons are descended from the Palatine Barons of Burnchurch, County of Waterford, Ireland. The patronymic name of the family was FitzGerald. The last branch of the FitzGeralds, who were Barons of Burnchurch, retained for several years a station of rank and influence in Kilkenny. When they became involved in the troubles of the times they were forced to abandon their native shire and settle in the bordering county of Waterford. To escape the rancor of persecution and elude its vigilance they assumed the cognomen of Barron instead of their patronymic, FitzGerald. ⁵

The FitzGerald family can be traced back to the Battle of Hastings and William the Conqueror to the year 1066. The earliest traceable individual member is Walter FitzOtho in 1086.

The first member of this family, who now called themselves the Barrons as apart from Baron, who came to America, was Ellis Barron. He came to Watertown, Massachusetts in 1640 with his first wife Grace and their five children.

A grandson of Ellis, Elizeus by name, born June 4, 1672 in Groton, Massachusetts, came to Woodbridge about 1690 and was considered as among the first settlers. Elizeus had a son, Samuel, born in 1711 and who died on September 1, 1801.

Thomas Barron, born in Woodbridge June 10, 1790 and died August 31, 1875, made munificent bequests to various institutions. He and his nephew, Col. John C. Barron, gave the land and money to erect the Barron Memorial Library on Rahway Avenue.

The cost of the original contract for the building, including laying out the grounds and beautifying them, was \$17,998.58. The official dedication of the library took place on September 12, 1877.

Col. John C. Barron was chief surgeon of the 69th New York Volunteers during the Civil War. He was born November 2, 1837,

in what is now the Dr. Rothfuss property at 574 Rahway Avenue. He died February 8, 1908.

There are at least thirty-one interments in the several Barron plots going back to 1744. Fig. 25 shows the monument on the Thomas Barron plot. Fig. 26 shows the family monument on the John Barron plot.



Fig. 25



Fig. 26

The Barron family is related by marriage to Calvin Coolidge, the 29th President of the United States. This relationship may be traced as follows:

1. A daughter of Ellis, Hannah Barron (born 1635) married Simon Coolidge (born in Watertown, Massachusetts in 1632) on Nov. 17, 1657/58.
2. Their son, Obadiah Coolidge, married Elizabeth Rouse on Feb. 28, 1686/87.
3. Obadiah, fifth child of Obadiah and Elizabeth, married Rachel Goddard on July 24, 1717.
4. Josiah, first child of Obadiah and Rachel, married Mary Jones on April 26, 1742. Josiah was a soldier in the Revolutionary War.
5. Captain John Coolidge, third child of Josiah and Mary, married Hannah Priest on September 8, 1779. Captain John Coolidge served in the war of the Revolution in Captain Artemas Horve's Company, hastening to the Lexington Alarms April 19, 1775. In the 1780s Captain Coolidge moved to Vermont.

6. Calvin Coolidge, first child of Capt. John Coolidge and Hannah Priest, married Sarah (Sally) Thompson (or Tompson) on Dec. 9, 1814 in Plymouth, Vermont.
7. Calvin Galusha Coolidge, first child of Calvin and Sarah (Sally), married on March 3, 1844 Sarah Almeda Brewer.
8. John Calvin Coolidge, first child of Calvin Galusha and Sarah Almeda, married May 6, 1868 Victoria Josephine Moor.
9. John Calvin Coolidge, first child of John Calvin and Victoria Josephine, born July 4, 1872, died January 5, 1933, married on October 4, 1905 Grace Anna Goodhue. John Calvin, called Calvin, became Vice President of the United States in 1921 and on the death of Warren G. Harding in 1923, became President and acted as such until 1929. ⁶

Bishop Family

John Bishop was one of the original Associates. He was from Newbury, Massachusetts where by his wife Rebecca, daughter of Richard Kent, he had a son Noah born June 20, 1658. He received a grant of 470 acres.

There are four interments in the Bishop plot. ⁷

Bloomfield Family

The name was originally French, coming to England from Caen, Normandy, and perchance is to be associated with William the Conqueror in 1066.

Thomas Bloomfield was a major in Cromwell's army. Upon the restoration of Charles II to the British throne he, Thomas, emigrated from *Woodbridge* ⁸, Suffolk County, England, with five children, Ezekiel, John, Thomas, Nathaniel, and Mary. They first settled in Newbury, Massachusetts. They then removed to Woodbridge, New Jersey in 1665. Thomas, Sr. received a grant of 326 acres; Thomas, Jr., 92 acres, and John, 90 acres. ⁹ The elder Bloomfield was a carpenter by trade. He and his son, Thomas, became Freeholders in 1670. A grandson, John, was a captain in Col. Drayton's 3rd Continental Regiment in 1776. The marriages of several of Thomas Sr.'s children are given in the Woodbridge records, but in some cases both the names and dates are partially obliterated. This is the case with Ezekiel, but it is quite certain that his wife was Hope, daughter of Edward Fitz Randolph of Barnstable, Massachusetts, and that they were married at Woodbridge, December 22, 1680.

Numbered among the members of this illustrious family was Joseph Bloomfield who served as governor of New Jersey from 1801 to 1802,

and again from 1803 to 1812. He was the grandson of Ezekiel. Dr. Moses Bloomfield, another member of this family, was a well-loved physician in the town whose monument in our cemetery bears the following inscription: "In memory of Dr. Moses Bloomfield, forty years physician and surgeon in this town; senior physician and surgeon in the Hospitals of the United States; Representative in the Provincial Congress and General Assembly; an upright magistrate Elder of the Presbyterian Church. Timothy 1:12. 'I know whom I have believed.'"

In various plots there is a total of forty Bloomfield interments.

Brown Family

Research showed that a George Brown came to Woodbridge from Scotland in 1685 in the good ship "Henry and Frances." He was banished from Scotland for refusal to take the Oath of Abjuration, August 17, 1685. There is a total of at least 124 interments with the name of Brown in numerous plots in our cemetery, the oldest bearing the date 1713, including the above named George Brown, his wife Annabel, son James and daughter-in-law, Agnes.

Clarkson Family

James Clarkson, Sr. was a First Settler at Woodbridge.¹⁰ He came with the Scots contingent in 1684-1685 directly from Scotland. It is believed that the family came from the town of Lithgow, Scotland. He lived only two or three years after arriving here. On October 12, 1687, letters of administration on the estate of James Clarkson, Sr. were granted to his son James, a yeoman of Woodbridge. Following his death, the widow of James Sr. returned to Scotland to live with her son John.

There are twenty-eight interments in the Clarkson plots; the oldest is dated 1715.¹¹

Compton Family

Compton is an old family name going back to William the Conqueror in 1066. There is no record of anyone by this name interred in our cemetery. However, William Compton, whose daughter Mary was the first child born in Woodbridge in 1668, is probably the William Compton of Ipswich, Massachusetts. He purchased land there in 1662 but soon thereafter reportedly came to Woodbridge where he was a pioneer settler and received a grant of 174 acres. His grant must have been a wooded area since the records say that he was the first man in this area to cut down timber.

Crowell, Crow, Crowes, Croel Family

The Crowells were probably from Yarmouth, Massachusetts. Among the earliest settlers were John and Yelverton Crow. John came over from England in 1635. The name was long written Crowe, sometimes Crowes, Croel, but finally evolved into the present Crowell.¹² Edward Crowell, Sr. was a first settler of Woodbridge, arriving with his wife Mary Lothrop before 1688-89. The Crowells received a grant of 630 acres. His son Yelberton was a private in the militia regiment in 1715. Edward Crowell, Jr., born in 1680, was later in his life Town Clerk of Woodbridge for a period of twenty-five years.

There are at least 55 Crowells going back to 1728 interred in our cemetery.

Coddington Family

John Coddington who, by his wife Hannah, had several children born in Woodbridge between 1677 and 1689 may have been John Coddington previously of Boston, Massachusetts.

Some forty interments under this family name are in our burial ground.

Cutter Family

The common ancestor was Richard Cutter of Cambridge, Massachusetts. William Cutter was a first settler of Woodbridge in 1685. He was a blacksmith by occupation. Ephraim Cutter, a first settler from Massachusetts was by occupation a glazier.¹³ Other, later members of this family had extensive holdings of choice, high grade clay bearing properties.

There are sixty-four Cutters interred here beginning with the year 1716.

Dunham Family

As early in the Proprietary Period of East Jersey as 1670, reference is made in the old town books to Jonathan Dunham, alias Singletary, and Mary, his wife, formerly of Haverhill in ye Massachusetts colony.¹⁴ It is recorded of him that a grant of land was made in his name in consideration of his building the first grist mill in Woodbridge 1670-1671, with his toll to be 1/16th of the grist.

In May 1670-71 Jonathan was a member of a jury sitting at Elizabeth and in 1671 he officiated as foreman of another jury. He became an influential citizen possessing sufficient acquired property holdings to entitle him to honorable distinction. He received in 1672 a grant of 213 acres. He is interred in the local Episcopal cemetery.

A descendant, Willard Dunham, is head of the contracting company that built our Fellowship Hall in 1955 and did the work of Restoration and Renovation to the church sanctuary in 1971 and 1972. Mr. Byron Dunham, a member of our Church, is also a direct descendant of Jonathan Dunham.

There are eight Dunham interments dating back to 1758.

Edgar Family

Thomas Edgar, the common American ancestor of the Edgar family of New Jersey, lies buried here. Born at Keithock, Forfarshire, Scotland, October 19, 1681, he came to New Jersey in 1703 and died June 16, 1759. He was the son of David Edgar, Laird of Keithock and Kathirine Forrester (Fig. 27).

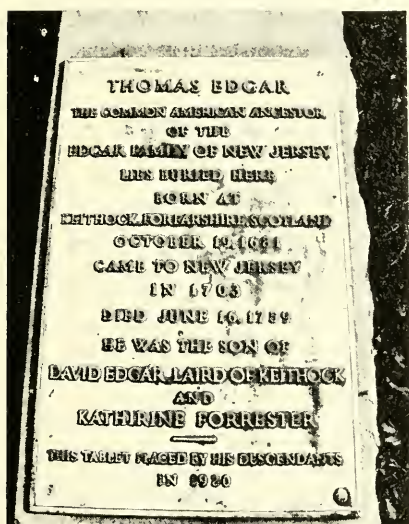


Fig. 27

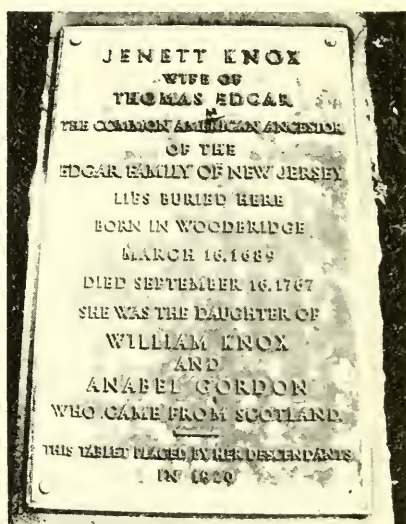


Fig. 28

Jenett Edgar, the common American ancestor of the Edgar family of New Jersey, lies buried here. Born in Woodbridge, March 16, 1689, she died September 16, 1767. She was the daughter of William Knox and Anabel Gordon who came from Scotland (Fig. 28).

A son of Thomas and Jenett, Alexander by name, married a Mary Smith whose father owned the land now called Sewaren.

The section of the township known as Edgar Hill is named after a branch of this family who lived in that area many years. This area is identified today by the Edgar Station stop of the Pennsylvania Railroad immediately north of the Woodbridge station.

There are seventy Edgar interments going back to 1754.

Fitz Randolph Family

The Woodbridge Fitz Randolphs are the descendants of Edward Fitz Randolph or Fitz Randle of Scituate and Barnstable.¹⁵ Edward was married to Elizabeth Blosson at Scituate May 10, 1637. Elizabeth was born in Leyden, Holland, in 1620, daughter of Thomas and Ann Blosson. She came to New England with her parents in 1629.

Edward removed to Barnstable in 1639, among his several children was Nathaniel born May 15, 1642. Nathaniel, the eldest son of Edward, was married November 1662 to Mary, daughter of Joseph Halley. In 1667 Nathaniel, who some years before had joined the Quakers and had in consequence suffered much persecution from the Plymouth Government, exchanged his house in Barnstable for lands in Woodbridge and removed his family there. He represented Woodbridge in the Provincial Assembly 1693-1694. He died in 1713.

A grandson of Nathaniel, Captain Nathaniel Fitz Randolph of the Revolutionary War fame, had two direct descendants now deceased who were well known to many of the readers of this report, namely, Asher Fitz Randolph, one of the most ardent, faithful workers for the Old White Church and his sister, Mittie Fitz Randolph Reynolds.

Our Township Committee in 1778 thought so much of the brave deeds of Captain Nathaniel that they ordered a sword for him as a "fitting tribute to his patriotism, vigilance, and bravery during the War."

Captain Nathaniel, while participating in attacks on Staten Island, captured a number of British. He was finally captured by the British and imprisoned in New York for about a year and a half. History records that he was cruelly treated and was finally exchanged for a Captain Jones, who was captured by Fitz Randolph's own men for that specific purpose. After release Capt. Fitz Randolph returned to active service. He died of wounds received in the skirmish near Springfield, New Jersey, in 1780 (Fig. 16).

There are some forty Fitz Randolphs interred in our cemetery.

*Force Family*¹⁶

The first Force to appear in Woodbridge records was Sarah, wife of Matthew Force. She was a witness to the will of Robert Custice of Woodbridge, dated 1696-97, March 4, and of whom an Edward Jones was made "universal heir and executer," a fact which is important, as the Jones were kin to the Forces.

Another excerpt from the old records, "Matthew Force had just married Sarah Morris, January ye 7th, 1696, by me, Samuel Hale, Justice."

A Benjamin Force was by far the most important and prominent of the Force family. He was early a leader in the Church, a member of the Town Committee, and Moderator in 1727. He was originally from Dorchester, Massachusetts.

There are five interments in the Force Plot; the oldest dated 1733.

Ford or Foord Family

John Ford, who settled in Woodbridge in 1700 or earlier, came from Duxbury, Massachusetts. He was the son of William Ford and was born in 1659. He was a deacon in our church in 1708, and elder in 1710. He later removed to Morris County, New Jersey, where he became interested in iron mines and forges.¹⁷ He died in May 1724.

Samuel Ford and Jacob, Jr. were sons of John Ford and Elizabeth Freeman. The latter was a tavern owner and iron manufacturer and was for many years a county judge.

In Morristown the Fords built the oak-planked, ship-caulked house which became Washington's personal headquarters during the winter when the Revolutionary War troops were encamped there. Being engaged in the "blooming iron works," the Ford family manufactured shot and shell for the Revolutionary Army.

Fords Corner or Fords, as it is now known, was named after this family.¹⁸

There are five interments in the Ford Plot.

Freeman Family

Henry Freeman, a first settler, came here sometime before 1700. He was married on May 16, 1695, in Woodbridge to Elizabeth Bowne. She was the daughter of Judge James Bowne and his wife Mary Stout.

Henry, who became known as Judge Freeman, was born in 1670 and became a prominent figure in the early days of the Province of East Jersey. He was sturdy in his assertion of the rights of the Colonists against the encroachment of the royal governors, who, nevertheless, recognized his worth by long continued appointments as one of the six judges of the common pleas of Middlesex County. He was buried in the church burial ground, having died in his 94th year Oct. 10, 1763.

The descendants of Henry Freeman and his brother Edward Freeman represent a group of American citizens ever keen to both the rights and duties of State and Community.

Dr. Ellis Barron Freeman, M.D., born in 1807, died at the age of 70 in the year 1877, and his son, Dr. Samuel Edgar Freeman, M.D.,

born in 1835, died in 1904 at 69 years of age. Both served this community as highly respected physicians.

There are some fifty Freemans interred in our burial grounds.

Heard Family

John Heard, a first settler, presumably came from Salisbury, Massachusetts, and removed to Woodbridge in 1681. He was married to a sister of John Allen of Woodbridge.

John Heard, by trade, was a cooper. He died in 1720. He had a son John born in 1681 who married in 1722 Mary, a daughter of Israel Thornell. John, Jr. died on March 2, 1757, age seventy-six.

Others of this family were Samuel, William, James, and the best known and most famous, General Nathaniel Heard of Revolutionary War fame.

The General was one of the first to take up arms against the British in 1775. He raised a body of troops which he placed at the disposition of the Provincial Congress. He was first a Colonel of the first Middlesex Regiment; afterward Colonel of a battalion of Minute Men; later Colonel of a battalion named in his honor; then he was made Brigadier General in the Continental Army and continued to hold that rank in the local militia.

He suffered heavy penalties at the hands of the British. His dwelling and outside buildings were destroyed. The British also appropriated to their use, one thousand bushels of his grain, seventy tons of hay, one thousand pounds of fence, twenty-two hogshead of cider, and two horses. The whole lot valued at over two thousand pounds sterling.

The General died at age sixty-two on October 28, 1792 (Fig. 29). This stone is set horizontally on top of the ground.

The Heard name will live as long as there is a Woodbridge. Heard's Brook, which commences in the Western section of the town and which flows eastward to empty into the salt meadows and which so many times has flooded School, Pearl Streets and Rahway Avenue, is named after this family.

There are fifteen interments in the Heard Plot dating back to 1736.



Fig. 29

Gilman Family

Long before 1674-75 Charles Gilman arrived in East Jersey with two servants and purchased rights. He was one of the senior contractors of the Woodbridge Charter, of July 7, 1668, as well as an assignee there with John Martin, Hugh Dunn, Hopewell Hull and Robert Dennis.

The Gilmans came from Hingham and Rehoboth, Massachusetts. In this area they originally settled in Piscataway but some members of the family settled in Woodbridge.

There are eleven Gilman interments in our cemetery.

Hude Family

Adam Hude. First Settler, was quite a useful man in Woodbridge. He came to New Jersey from Scotland in 1685 in the good ship "Henry and Frances." In 1718 he was appointed one of the judges of the court of Common Pleas in Middlesex County and soon after became the presiding judge, a position that he held for many years.

Adam built a residence about one mile north of our church on the road to Rahway. In the old records Adam is known as a weaver by trade. He died on June 17, 1746 in his 85th year (4-5: D-E).

On the tombstone of his wife is engraved the following: "Marion Hude. She died November 30, 1732, having been wife of Adam Hude, Esq. for ye space of 46 years."

Illsley becomes Inslee Family

It is very doubtful that there was other than the original Illsley family at Woodbridge, though Inslee, Enslee and other variations were used after 1700. William Jr., Elisha, and John, all brothers, were first settlers in Woodbridge by 1674. They came from Newbury, Massachusetts. Elisha was a quit renter for 172 acres and John for 160 acres in 1684-85. There are at least twenty-five Inslee interments going back to 1736. Among these are those of two infants born in China, children of the Rev. Elias B. and Euphemia.

Jaquesh or Jacques Family

The birth of several children to Henry Jacques was recorded between 1674 and 1679. Henry was probably the son of Henry Jacques Sr. of Newbury who came there in 1640. Henry Sr. was married October 8, 1648 to Ann Knight and had a son, Henry Jr., born July 30, 1649. Henry Sr. and Henry Jr. received a joint grant of 368 acres.

In passing, and for future records, it is interesting to note that a goodly part of the New Woodbridge Shopping Center between old

Metuchen Avenue and Route 9, was for many years identified as the Jacques farm, then as the Jacques Clay Bank, and through the years was the production source of millions of tons of sand and first quality refractory clays.

There are twenty-six Jacques interments in our burial ground, going back to 1722, and there are additional members of this family interred in the Episcopal graveyard directly across Trinity Lane.

Kent Family

The Kents are descendants of Stephen Kent of Newbury, who came from Southampton, England in the ship "Confidence" in 1638 with a wife, Margery and four or five servants. He was sworn a free-man May 22, 1639. Stephen Sr. later removed to Haverhill before coming to Woodbridge.¹⁰ Stephen Sr. was given a grant of 249 acres; his son, Stephen Jr., a grant of 104 acres.

The interments in the Kent plot date back to 1761.

March or Marsh Family

Hugh Marsh, carpenter, came from Newberry, Massachusetts. He and his son George paid quit rents in 1684. Hugh Marsh received a grant of 320 acres. Both Hugh and George were mentioned in the town records as early as 1667. The name of Mary Marsh, a daughter of Hugh, was recorded in the marriage registry of March 27, 1691 when she became the wife of Isaac Tappen.

There are sixteen interments in the Marsh plot.

Martin Family

We are concerned over the origin of that illustrious John Martin, Original Grantee and First Settler of Piscataway in 1664 or thereabouts. He came from the Piscataqua section of New Hampshire where he had married Esther or Hester Roberts, daughter of the First Governor of New Hampshire, Thomas Roberts and his wife Rebecca, nee Hilton.

John Martin was the head of what became a large New Jersey descendancy; intermarriage with other first settler families made this lineage very important. To his lineage belonged in New Jersey that famous Luther Martin of the Constitutional Convention.

John Martin had been at Dover, New Hampshire 1648-1666. While first entered at Piscataway he was really a First Settler of Woodbridge 1676-1687, and as such received a grant of 255 acres.

There are fifty-two interments in various Martin plots in our burial grounds.

Moore or Moores Family

Samuel and Matthew Moore or Moores whose children's births are among the earliest of the names in the Woodbridge records, came from Newbury, Massachusetts. Samuel Moore, born 1630, died May 27, 1688, was quite a prominent man in the early history of Woodbridge and was for many years town clerk. Samuel received a grant of 356 acres and Matthew, a grant of 177 acres.

There are some sixty-three interments in the various Moore and Moores Plots.

Pain or Paine Family

Nathaniel and Peter Pain were First Settlers. Their ancestry is interesting since they are affiliated with the notable Freeman family. In 1710 Peter and his wife were members of our Presbyterian Church. One record of 1685 mentions an Anna Pain. "She had a sweet tooth and appropriated three gallons of molasses of Benjamin Hull, as his descendant served her right."²⁰

Peter died July 10, 1756. Nathaniel died July 20, 1733.

Parker Family

The Parkers of Woodbridge came from Staten Island and were probably of the same family of those who about that time settled in Monmouth County. Elisha Parker, Sr. received his first grant of 182 acres in Woodbridge in 1675. In 1694 he was appointed High Sheriff of Middlesex; represented the County in the Assembly in 1707 and in 1711 became a member of Gov. Hunters Council. By his first wife, Elizabeth, he had a son Samuel who was the father of James Parker, the Printer. Elisha's son John Sr. was a Colonel of the provincial forces and was a member of the Council 1719-1732. John Sr. had a son, John, who served with great distinction in the French-Indian Wars 1756-1759. Benjamin Parker, a joiner, a grant of 105 acres.

There are seven Parker interments in our cemetery going back to 1732.

Pike Family

Captain John Pike of Newbury came to Woodbridge early in 1665 and became the eighth of the associates and one of its most prominent men. In 1666 articles of agreement were signed between him and Governor Carteret, whereby the colony was formed at Woodbridge over which he was appointed Judge and later Governor. The records of the Pike family state that he was on Governor Carteret's staff for many years.

Far ahead of his time in his life and influence he was a man who did much to revolutionize and advance the religious thought of his day. It would be correct to say that he held every Civil office within the gift or appointment of the colony during his illustrious career. He died in January 1688-89.

No monument presently marks the grave of Capt. John Pike, but the grave of his son, Judge John Pike who died in August 1714, is marked as is those of six other members of this family interred in the Pike plots (Fig. 30).

Major John Pike of Revolutionary War fame and his son, General Zebulon Montgomery Pike, famed explorer and army officer, were of this family. Pike's Peak in Colorado is named after General Zebulon Montgomery since he discovered and mapped it in 1806. He was killed in 1813 while fighting against the British in the War of 1812.



Fig. 30

An interesting anecdote regarding Capt. John Pike came to my attention while doing the research for this discourse. "He (Capt. John Pike) filled several offices and was an active citizen of Newbury. On one occasion, in May 1638, it is recorded that 'John Pike shall pay two shillings and six pence for departing from this (town) meeting without leave and contemptiously.'" (These early settlers came from stern, disciplined, rule-abiding folks.) Capt. John Pike Sr. received a grant of 308 acres. Judge John Pike Jr. received 91 acres.

Potter Family

Marmaduke Potter was born in Stony Stratford, England in 1645. He came to America in 1664 with two brothers. One brother settled in Stonington, Connecticut and the other in Toms River, New Jersey.²¹

Marmaduke settled originally in Piscataway. He married Mary Brugley in November of 1677, and was admitted to the class of Freeholders on February 4, 1686 by virtue of purchase of land. He took the oath of allegiance and fidelity with other settlers of Woodbridge on February 27, 1667. He sold land in Woodbridge before 1684-85.

He died December 19, 1694 and was buried in Piscataway. Major Reuben Potter (1719-1799) of Revolutionary War fame was a grandson of Marmaduke.

There are some twenty-nine Potter interments going back to 1762.

Robinson Family

John Robinson, First Settler, son of the first Andrew Robinson of Woodbridge was a signer of the Concession 1685, and a member of the Assembly and Council 1685.

Andrew Robinson was, in his day, a famous surveyor. He was quit renter for ninety-two acres in 1696. "Quit Rent" price was ½p per acre per annum in nearly all cases. His original grant was dated December 28, 1694-96 for ninety-four acres.

John Robinson was a member of Reverend Wade's church in 1708; a Constable for Woodbridge 1711-1712; 1714-1716; 1718-1719.

The Robinson plot is in area 6-7; D-E with interments back to 1746.

Smith Family

It is difficult to determine whether the Smiths of Woodbridge, whose names are found in the records, are all of the same family.

One of the earliest settlers was John Smith, millwright. He appears to have been quite a prominent and active citizen.

He acted as Moderator of the first town meetings which were held in his home, was afterward a Deputy to the Assembly and an Associate Judge. He was one of the original Associates with Daniel Pierce and is named in the Agreement as "John Smith of Barnstable."

In 1643 John married Susanna Hinckley, whose brother Thomas later became Governor of New Jersey. Their children were Samuel, born April 1644 and twelve others, born between 1644 and 1668, viz. Sarah, Ebenezer, Mary, Doreas, John, Shubaal, John (2), Benjamin, Ichabod, Elizabeth, Thomas, and Joseph. Samuel, Thomas, and Ichabod Smith all had children whose births are recorded in the old Woodbridge records.

In 1677, after residing several years in Woodbridge, he returned to New England having exchanged his house and land in Woodbridge for a house and lot in Barnstable belonging to Nathaniel Fitz Randolph.

John Smith, the Scotsman, received a grant of 176 acres. Samuel Smith received a grant of 103 acres in 1676. The Richard Smith of the old records was probably a different family. Historians²² think it

probable that most of the Smiths who became so numerous in the Woodbridge vicinity descended from him.

Tappan Family

The Tappans, First Settlers, were the descendants of Abraham Tappan of Newbury, who was made a freeman there May 2, 1638. He was one of the signers of the Articles of Agreement between Gov. Carteret in behalf of the Lord Proprietors and the early settlers on May 21, 1666. Early Settler Isaac Tappan received a grant of 95½ acres in Woodbridge.

There are thirty-eight interments in various Tappan plots going back to 1748.

Section 3

War Veterans Interred

On Fame's eternal camping ground
Their busy tents are spread
And Glory guards, with solemn Round,
The bivouac of the Dead.
Rest on embelmed and sainted dead,
Dear as the blood ye gave
No impious footsteps here shall tread
The herbage of your grave.*

All around us as we stand on the consecrated ground are the unpretentious memorials of the Revolutionary War Veterans as well as to those of subsequent wars in which our nation has been a contender.

A list of Revolutionary War Veterans as compiled some years ago by the Janet Gage Chapter of Daughters of the Revolution of Woodbridge, New Jersey follows:

(The numerals and initials shown indicate the location of the various plots on our cemetery map.)

Alston, Thomas	1758	Died Sept. 9, 1850 (7-8; C-D)
Bloomfield, Dr. Moses	1729	Died August 14, 1791 (4-5; B-C)
(Fig. 31)		
Bloomfield, Jonathan	1735	Died Apr. 1, 1810 (4-5; B-C)
Barron, John	1760	Died Feb. 26, 1836
Brown, Col. Benjamin A.	1764	Died 1838 (3-4; B-C)
Barron, Capt. Ellis	1736	Died May 27, 1807 (4-5; E-F)
Brown, John	1751	Died Jan. 15, 1828 (3-4; E-F)
Brewster, Timothy	—	Died Feb. 6, 1837 (3-4; C-D)
Bloomfield, Thomas	1752	Died Sept. 7, 1830 (4-5; C-D)
Brown, William	1749	Died Mar. 31, 1782 (6-7; C-D)

*From tablet in Finn's Point National Cemetery near Pennsville, N. J.

Brown, Thomas	1727	Died Oct. 28, 1781 (5-6; C-D)
Clarkson, Randolph	1759	Died Mar. 13, 1833
Clarkson, Jeremiah	1752	Died Mar. 23, 1813
Cutter, Stephen	1747	Died June 20, 1823 (1-2; C-D)
Cutter, Campyon	1753	Died Apr. 28, 1832
Crowell, Edward	1759	Died 1800 (3-4; C-D)
Crowell, Joseph	1760	Died Mar. 18, 1834
Cutter, Kelsey	1750	Died Mar. 7, 1798 (3-4; E-F)
Crow, Col. Samuel	1741	Died Mar. 15, 1801 (4-5; E-F)
Coddington, Joseph	1754	Died Apr. 30, 1806 (3-4; F-G)
Coddington, James	1755	Died Mar. 2, 1816
Coddington, Robert	1760	Died Aug. 15, 1833 (4-5; F-G)
Cutter, Samuel	1761	Died May 1, 1805 (7-8; E-F)
Clarkson, John	1744	Died Aug. 1, 1801 (7-8; D-E)
Cutter, Deacon William	1722	Died Mar. 4, 1780 (8-9; E-F)
Dally, Samuel	1732	Died Mar. 11, 1784 (6-7; C-D)
Edgar, General Clarkson	1756	Died July 21, 1816 (5-6; F-G)
Edgar, Thomas	1746	Died July 31, 1812 (3-4; A-B)
Edgar, Capt. David (The spirited cavalryman)	1750	Died Sept. 6, 1810 (E-7)
Edgar, James	1748	Died Jan. 8, 1815 (4-5; D-E)
Freeman, Henry	1717	Died July 16, 1784 (5-6; A-B)
Freeman, Jonathan	1763	Died Nov. 10, 1843 (3-4; A-B)
Freeman, Henry	1760	Died Mar. 7, 1838 (3-4; A-B)
Heard, Gen. Nathaniel	1729	Died Oct. 28, 1792 (4-5; C-D)
Harriot, George	1720	Died Mar. 24, 1802 (6-7; A-B)
Harriot, David	1717	Died Nov. 5, 1792 (6-7; A-B)
Harriot, Ephraim	1752	Died Sept. 15, 1833 (6-7; A-B)
Hadden, Thomas	1760	Died July 30, 1803 (4-5; A-B)
Hadden, Thomas Jr.	1736	Died Sept. 1784
Inslee, John	1746	Died Apr. 23, 1791 (5-6; D-E)
Jones, William	1754	Died Apr. 6, 1839 (7-8; B-C)
Manning, John	1755	Died Aug. 22, 1832 (4-5; F-G)
Manning, Jeremiah	1736	Died June 10, 1803 (E-21)
Martin, William	1756	Died Aug. 6, 1824 (5-6; F-G)
Martin, David	1760	Died Feb. 13, 1808 (4-5; F-G)
Marsh, Capt. Christopher	1742	Died Oct. 26, 1810 (4-5; D-E)
Moore, Daniel	1728	Died Apr. 28, 1792 (4-5; C-D)
Noe, Peter	1750	Died Sept. 2, 1819 (7-8; F-G)
Noe, John	1722	Died Mar. 20, 1796 (7-8; F-G)
Potter, Major Reuben	1717	Died Mar. 25, 1799 (6-7; C-D)
Randolph, Capt. N. Fitz (Fig. 16)	1747	Died July 23, 1780 (5-6; D-E)

Randolph, Capt. A. Fitz	1755	Died Apr. 16, 1817	(3-4; D-E)
Paton, Lieut. James	1758	Died Nov. 6, 1816	(4-5; B-C)
(Known as the courageous Scotch Patriot)			
Tappen, Capt. Abraham	1756	Died Sept. 29, 1799	(5-6; F-G)

Endeavor has been made to list all those who served our nation in wars other than the Revolution, and whose remains are interred in our burial grounds. If any names have been overlooked, sincere apology is offered. After exhaustive search, the following is submitted:

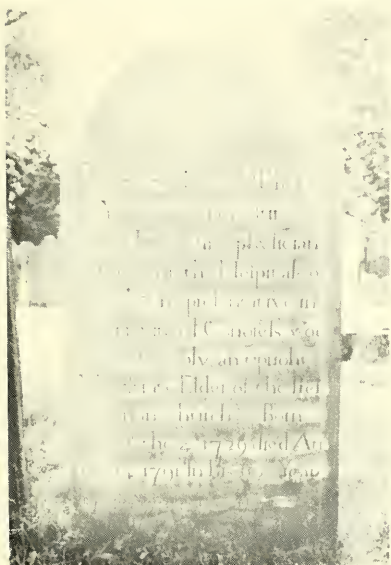


Fig. 31



Fig. 32

Barron, Col. John C.

Chief surgeon, 69th N. Y. Vol., Civil War

Born Nov. 2, 1837 Died Feb. 6, 1908 (9-10; H-J)

Brown, Abram Died 1887 (9-10; F-G)

Bellaney, Sgt. Harrison Co. F., N. Y. Eng. (8-9; F-G)

Barton, Gen. William B. (Fig. 32) (3-4; B-C)

Civil War, Brevet Brig. Gen., Col. 48th Reg. N. Y. State
Vols. Commander 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 11th Army
Corps, Army of the James; and son of Rev. William B. Bar-
ton, Pastor of the old White Church from 1822 to 1852.

Bird, William Died 1907 (3-4; A-B)

Baker, Harry J. Jr. WWI Died 1941 (4-5; A-B)

Cook, William Died 1914 (4-5; A-B)

Conway, John 1709-1765 (Sec. H, row 4)

Dally, Clarence W. 1865-1904 (7-8; B-C)

Dally, Marcus L.		1911-1953	(7-8; B-C)
Devanny, Earl H.		WWI and WWII	(9-10; B-C)
See sect. under former pastors			
Dally, Capt. Charles		1843-1926 C. War	(7-8; B-C)
Early, Edward	WWI	Died 1963	(11-12; C-D)
Edgar, Capt. Peter		Died 1831	(3-4; A-B)
Flood, Augustine		1840-1925 C. War	(6-7; B-C)
Faulkner, David		Co. G. 52 N.Y. Inf.	(3-4; D-E)
Farrell, Charles, US Navy, WWI		1896-1919	(9-10; B-C)
Freeman, Samuel E., US Navy		Died 1924	(8-9; A-B)
Gage, Thomas			(1-2; B-C)
Greiner, August F.	WWI	1893-1965	(3-4; B-C)
Gardner, Marion Lester		Died 1963	(4-5; A-B)
WWI Red Cross Nurse			
Hall, John		Died 1894	(Sec. H, Row 2)
Holmes, Teddy		Died 1919	(5-6; J-K)
Hart, E. B.		Died 1903	(10-11; F-G)
Hinsdale, Samuel B.		1847-1903	(5-6; J-K)
Co. H, 151 Reg., 3rd Inf. Vol.			
Hunt, John	WWI	1894-1956	(6-7; B-C)
Inslee, Isaac	Civil War	Died 1862	(2-3; B-C)
Jackson, J. T.	Civil War		(C-3)
Lee, John F.	Civil War	1842-1910	(8-9; H-J)
1st Sgt., N. J. Infantry			
La Forge, Jefferson		1844-1880	(7-8; E-F)
La Forge, George W.		1843-1895	(7-8; E-F)
Leber, Wendolyn	WWI	Died 1970	(Row 4, Sec. L)
Lorch, William	WWI	Died 1952	(10-11; D-E)
Lockwood, Stanley		Died 1929	(9-10; J-K)
Lewis, John		Died 1930	(5-6; C-D)
Larson, John R. Jr.		Died 1934	(11-12; G-H)
Mawbey, Frederick R.		Died 1950	(11-12; G-H)
McElroy, Thomas	Civil War		(6-7; H-J)
Marty, Charles		Died 1918	(10-11; K-L)
Meder, Louis		Died 1919	(10-11; K-L)
Mundy, Harry		Died 1949	(8-9; D-E)
Osborne, Colonel Henry		1769-1839	(6-7; F-G)
Meng, Hans		Died 1962	(8-9; E-F)
Reyder, Harry	WWI	1897-1967	(Row 6N, Sec. L)
Peterson, Peter E.		Died 1952	(5-6; B-C)
Schumarty, Charles	US Navy	1846-1889	(8-9; C-D)
Mabie, Warner, W. G.			(H-1)
Co. G, 42nd N. Y. Infantry			

Shrouds, William H.		1844-1907	(7-8; A-B)
Niebanek, Henry F.		1894-1951	(11-12; D-E)
Simonsen, Edward	WWI	Died 1923	(7-8; F-G)
Slugg, Clarence H.		1895-1944	(11-12; F-G)
Terp, Thomas		Died 1918	(5-6; A-B)
Turner, W. F.		Died 1934	(5-6; G-H)
Co. E, 14 N. J. Infantry			
Truner, H. C.		Died 1921	(7-8; J-K)
Tufts, William E.		1831-1898	(6-7; G-H)
Tappen, Capt. David		1813-1896	(6-7; G-H)
Tappen, Charles		1839-1886	(Sec. 4)
Turner, Lieut. John F.			(7-8; D-E)
Co. C, 79th N. Y. Infantry			
Trost, Edward	WWI	Died 1968	(Row 1, Sec. K-L)
Treen, Charles	WWI	Died 1951	(5-6; H-J)
Treen, William	WWI	Died 1952	(5-6; H-J)
Van Wagner, Louis A.	C. War	1842-1864	(5-6; G-H)
Co. C, 102 Reg., Ohio Vols.			
Webber, John	Civil War		(6-7; J-K)
Co. F, 28 N.J. Infantry			
Wilson, John			(5-6; H-J)
Wilson, Henry R.	US Navy	1844-1916	(6-7; D-E)
Williams, Joseph Carl			(11-12; D-E)
Captain, Co. A, 41V			
Wand, Alexander H.	WWI	Died 1949	(7-8; C-D)
Lockie, James	WWII	1917-1970	(Sec. L, R 2, 11-12)
Kilmer, Edward	WWII	Died 1970	(Sec. L, R 3-16-17)
Schumann, Leo	WWII	1923-1972	(Sec. L-M, R 5-1-2)
Anness, Charles	WWI	1900-1973	(Sec. L, R 4N 5-6)
Young, Richard H.	WWII	1929-1947	(11-12; E-F)

Section 4

Interments Having Unusual Interest Appeal

Fig. 33 shows tombstones of the DE LaFlechelle Family. Alphonse Pierre Marie DE LaFlechelle was "Deputy Consel from the Court of France." He died October 12, 1847, age fifty-six. In addition to his monument are those for his widow, Elizabeth Burton Fitzgerald DE LaFlechelle, and their three daughters. Elizabeth Burton Fitzgerald DE La-1855. Evidence of great tragedy is apparent from the death dates of their three daughters, Zelma Catherine and Elizabeth Edmire, who died on successive days, March 19 and 20, 1834, and Louise M., who died in March 1837.



Fig. 33

This interment of the family of a French civil servant in our burial ground has created unusual interest. Letters in reply to our query from the Department of Foreign Affairs in Paris, France, advised that Alphonse had been the chief secretary of the French Embassy in Dublin, Ireland in 1814. He was in a similar capacity in New York City in 1825, and in Boston in 1839. French records show also that he married Elizabeth Burton Fitzgerald in September 1825.

This is all interesting information but the intriguing question is still — What were the circumstances that brought the DE LaFlechelles to Woodbridge, and finally to the church burial grounds? There is a lapse of twenty-one years from the first DE LaFlechelle interment in 1834 to the last in 1855. In 1834 Alphonse apparently represented France in New York City. Did he and his family reside in Woodbridge?

The French records show that Alphonse transferred from New York City to Boston in 1839. Even so, on his death in 1847 he was interred in Woodbridge.

His widow, Elizabeth Burton Fitzgerald DE LaFlechelle, survived her husband, Alphonse, by eight years. Was there family or close friends here in Woodbridge with whom she resided during those years?

Mary Compton Campbell (Fig. 34)

She was the daughter of William and Mary Compton. On her monument is engraved the following:

“In memory of Mary, wife of Caleb Campbell who died February 15, 1735 age sixty-seven years and three months.”

“The first born child in Woodbridge.”

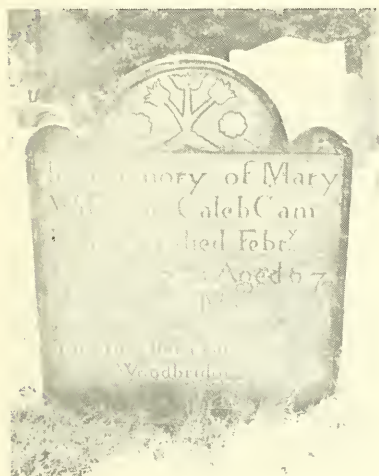


Fig. 34



Fig. 35

Ruth Woodbridge Pierson (Fig. 35)

Ruth was a granddaughter of John Woodbridge after whom our town is named. Baptized on August 18, 1695, she was the wife of Rev. John Pierson, pastor of our church from 1714 to 1754.

Engraved on her tombstone, which rests horizontally on the ground over her grave, are engraved the following words:

“Here is interred ye Precious Remains of Mrs. Ruth Pierson, wife of ye Rev. Mr. John Pierson and Daughter of ye Rev. Mr. Timo Woodbridge of Hartford in N. E. Who fell asleep in Jesus January 6th, 1732. Aetat 38.”

“Reposed to rest in this cold bed to Ly

Remains of Meekness Prudence Piety:

The best of Christian Parents Wives and friends

Grim Death to this dark Urn, remorseless sends:

Once dear to all still dear to Christ who'll make

This Dust revive and to his Likeness make.”

Inslee, (Fig. 36) (2-3; B-C)

Children of Missionaries to China. This plot is directly in the rear of the Sunday School rooms along Port Reading Road.

The one stone is engraved in memory of Alexander Charles, son of Rev. Elias B. and Euphemia B. Inslee, born in Ningpo, China, Dec. 18, 1859, died in Buffalo, New York, March 20, 1863.

The second stone is engraved, Euphemia Helen, youngest child of Elias B. and Euphemia B. Inslee, born in Song King in Kiany Su Fu, China, October 20, 1865, died in Woodbridge, October 27, 1866, having been brought to this country after her mother fell asleep in Jesus, February 10, 1866 and who remains at rest in the missionary circle at Shanghai, China.



Fig. 36

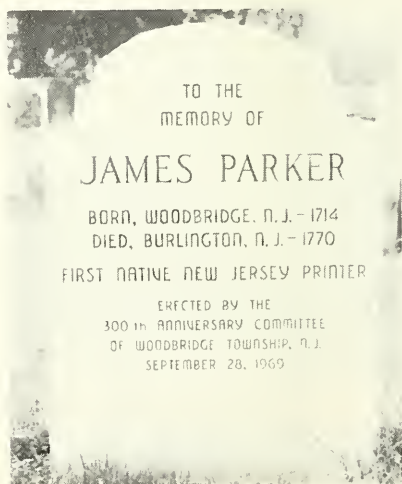


Fig. 37

Parker (Fig. 37)

James Parker, New Jersey's first native Printer, was born in Woodbridge in 1714. He was the son of Elisha Parker, Sr. who received a grant of land in Woodbridge in 1675.

James Parker entered the trade at the early age of eleven being apprenticed to William Bradford, the first printer in New York.

In May 1733 at the age of nineteen, Parker ran away from his employer. The reason for his runaway is not known nor is it known where he was for the next nine years. ¹

When he came back he revived the New York Gazette, which had been discontinued by Bradford, calling it the Weekly Post Bay and began publishing in 1742.

In 1751 Parker established his printing company in Woodbridge. Its site was at Amboy Avenue and Grove Street in a grove of tall locust trees. The St. James Roman Catholic Church now stands on the site.

He still owned the Weekly Post Bay in New York, but now lived in Woodbridge.

In 1752 he began the New American Magazine, which was published until 1761. In addition to the magazine, his press printed Woodbridge money, the proceedings of the legislature as well as many public documents and the second volume of Nevill's Laws of New Jersey.

In September 1753 Benjamin Franklin prevailed upon Parker to open a printing shop in New Haven, Connecticut. This operation did not go along smoothly and after many trials and tribulations, Parker sold out in April 1762.

Parker returned to Woodbridge where he had been appointed printer to the province of New Jersey. He became active in the Church of England, acted as lay reader in the Trinity Episcopal Church of Woodbridge.

In 1765 Parker moved his press to Burlington to accommodate Samuel Smith, the historian in the issue of the history of New Jersey, the manuscript of which is preserved in the library of the Historical Society at Newark, New Jersey. Parker then moved the press back to Woodbridge after the completion of the work.

He was soon to become postmaster of New York as well as comptroller and secretary of the postal department for the Northern District of the British Colonies. He continued his business as a printer and was working at Burlington when his health began to fail. He died in 1770 at the age of 56.

His remains were brought to Woodbridge. His funeral services were conducted by the Chaplain of a regiment of British foot soldiers, and he was interred in the White Church Cemetery.²

On September 28, 1969, as part of the Tercentenary of Woodbridge Township a monument was placed in our cemetery in honor of James Parker.

Rolph (Fig. 38)

This fieldstone monument, placed in memory of Richard Rolfe, is one of the oldest in our burial ground, being dated September 1711.

The Rolph family is a most interesting one.³

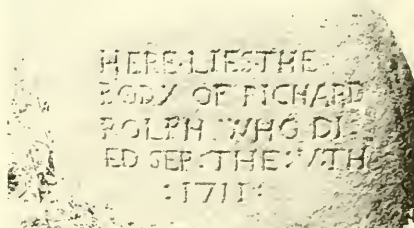


Fig. 38

A Henry Rolfe came from England to Newbury, Massachusetts in 1638. Henry's son Moses removed to Woodbridge where he changed his surname to Rolph. Moses married in 1702 the widow Higgins, nee Hale.

The Woodbridge Rolphs were related to John Rolph of Jamestown, Va., who married Pocahontas, the native Indian princess. She was presented at the Court of King James in London where she outshone all the celebrated royal beauties. She died at Gravesend, England, immediately prior to her intended departure for the plantation in Virginia.

In addition to the Richard Rolfe interment there have been several other members of this family buried in our cemetery.

Paton (Fig. 39) (7-8; H-J)

Harriet C. Cutter Paton was born 1794, died December 11, 1876, age eighty-two years. With the help of Sally and Jane Potter, she organized the Sabbath School or as it is now called the Sunday School in June 1818. This school, records show, was one of the first, if not the First Sabbath School organized in New Jersey.

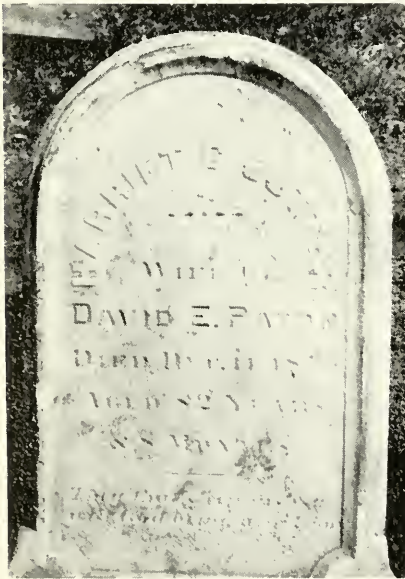


Fig. 39



Fig. 40

Roe, Rebecca (Fig. 40)

She was the first wife of Rev. Azel Roe and daughter of Isaac and Mary Foot of Branford, Connecticut, died at age fifty-five on September 1, 1794.

Of unusual interest regarding this interment is first, the excellent condition of the red sandstone monument and the clarity of the engraving. Secondly, the engraving was done at a local Woodbridge monument works. Down on the lower right hand corner of this monument is the name, "H. Osborn." Mr. Osborn is an ancestor of Miss Rae Osborn who is known to many of our readers.

Mr. H. Osborn and his successor Mr. Courtland Parker Osborn had a monument works on Main Street, Woodbridge, just slightly east of Christensens Department Store. ⁴

Other monuments also bear the names of the engravers, E. Price and Johnathan Acker about whom we have no additional information.

Section 5

Town Doctors Interred in Our Cemetery

Freeman, Ellis Barron, M.D., born 1807, died 1877 (Fig. 41).

Freeman, Samuel Edgar, M.D., son of Dr. Ellis.

Freeman, Barron, born 1835, died 1904.

On the death of Dr. Samuel Edgar Freeman in 1904 the newspaper of that day printed the following:

"A Tribute"

"To the Memory of Dr. Samuel Edgar Freeman"

In the death of Dr. Samuel E. Freeman, which occurred last Saturday evening at his home on Prospect Hill⁵ from an attack of apoplexy, Woodbridge loses a skillful physician — one who stood high in his profession, and who had practiced here for over thirty years — and a valued citizen.⁶ Dr. Freeman was born and had always resided in Woodbridge, with the exception of his years at college; of Woodbridge stock; a descendant from a union of two old Woodbridge families, whose names were identified with the early history of the old town; a grandson of the late General Samuel Edgar, a son of the late Ellis B. Edgar.

Dr. Samuel E. Freeman has always been recognized as a man of strong and positive ideas, fearless and independent in the expression of his views, not in sympathy with superficialities of society, but genial and social in his nature. His kindly nature and Christian principles as made evident in his practice, for he was as faithful and untiring in his ministrations in the homes of poverty where there was no hope of remuneration as he was in the homes of the wealthy.

Dr. Freeman was married early in life to Miss Kate F. Randolph, who only lived a few years to gladden his home. She left two little ones — a son and daughter, now grown to manhood and womanhood — Miss Mabel Freeman and Mr. Ellis Freeman. Four sisters and one brother also mourn him — Mrs. John Anderson of Elizabeth, Mrs. J. H. T. Martin, Miss Phoebe Freeman, Miss Susie Freeman and Mr. Ellis B. Freeman — all residents of town. Fu-

neral service was held Tuesday afternoon from the Freeman homestead ⁷ on Rahway Avenue. The Rev. Dr. McNulty officiated and spoke very impressively from the words: "I have finished my course." The Rev. W. H. Jackson offered prayer. Several appropriate selections were beautifully rendered by Mr. Louis Potter, Mrs. Seth Lockwood, accompanist. The beautiful flowers that covered and surrounded the casket were tributes from loving relatives and friends.

The committal service was private, attended only by the relatives.

It is a somewhat remarkable fact that for more than a century there has been a Dr. Freeman practicing in Woodbridge.

The death of Dr. Samuel E. Freeman, who was the fifth doctor bearing the name Freeman leaves Woodbridge, for the first time in one hundred years without a Doctor Freeman. ⁸

The sixth physician of the name — Dr. James Freeman — recently left here to practice in Jacksonville, Florida. ⁹



Fig. 41

Harned, Samuel P., M.D., born 1836, died 1898.



Fig. 42

Pierson, John, M.D., born 1723, died 1772. He was the son of Rev. John Pierson who was the minister of our church from 1714 to 1754 (Fig. 42). He was also a grandson of the President of Yale College, as it was known in those years. His mother, Ruth Woodbridge

Pierson, was a granddaughter of Rev. John Woodbridge, after whom Woodbridge was named.

On September 8, 1756 our Congregation obtained a Royal Charter from King George II at the hands of the then governor of the Province, Governor Belcher. It was largely through the efforts and influence of the Piersons, father and son, that the Royal Charter was granted.

Van Wagner, A. B., M.D., born 1846, died Feb. 8, 1890.

Wall, John Galen, M.D., born Dec. 17, 1729, died Jan. 14, 1798.

On his tombstone was found the following:

“In memory of Dr. John Galen Wall, thirteen years Physician of Woodbridge and Perth Amboy. Born at Middlesex, Monmouth. If Physick’s aid of friendship balm could save from death, thou shall had lived.”

This monument is no longer in existence.

Wilkinson, James, M.D., born 1670, died Jan. 15, 1749.

Section 6

Former Pastors Interred in Our Cemetery

Reverend Azel Roe was ordained and installed in the autumn of 1763 and labored in our church until his death in 1815, a period of fifty-two years. He was a Long Islander by birth. In 1756, at the age of eighteen, he was graduated from the College of New Jersey. In 1800 he received a Doctor of Divinity degree from Yale.¹⁰

Although he did not serve as a uniformed soldier during the Revolutionary War, he certainly ranks with our greatest patriots of that era.

The original monument that marked his grave has long since eroded so badly that none of the original engraving is legible; but from a survey made in 1849, the following appeared legible at that time.¹¹



“Sacred to the memory of Rev’d. Dr. Azel Roe, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Woodbridge, who after a life cheerfully, faithfully, and affectionately devoted to the services of Jehovah Jesus, his Saviour and his God, and to the eternal interests of his flock fell sweetly to sleep in the bosom of that Saviour on the 2nd day of December 1815 in the 77th year of his age and the 53rd of his ministry.”

Lord now let thy servant &c Luke 2:29, 30.

I have fought a good fight &c II Tim’y 4:7, 8.”

Rev. Roe’s remains lie near those of his first wife Rebecca Foot Roe who died September 1, 1794 and of his second wife, Hannah Bostwick Roe, who died November 28, 1815.

Rev. William B. Barton was pastor of our church from 1822 to 1852. He died at the age of fifty-nine on April 7, 1852. His remains lie next to those of his son, Brevet Brig. General, Col. 48th Reg. N. Y. State Vols.; Commander 2nd Brigade 2nd Div. Army Corp., Army of the James in the Civil War (Fig. 43).

Rev. Joseph M. McNulty was pastor from 1874-1906. On his tombstone is engraved:



Fig. 43



Fig. 44

“But in his duty, prompt at every call, He watched and wept, He Prayed and felt for all” (Fig. 44).

Rev. Robert W. Mark (Fig. 45) was pastor from 1906 to 1918; died age seventy-five on February 5, 1955. Under his pastorate the church grew in strength and number. He was largely responsible for the building of the so-called church parish house to the rear of our former manse on Railway Avenue, which for many years was a center for township athletic activities. This parish house was razed during the fall of 1971.

Rev. Earl Hannum Devanny was born April 23, 1894 — died April 21, 1962. He was a veteran of World War I; when World War



Fig. 45

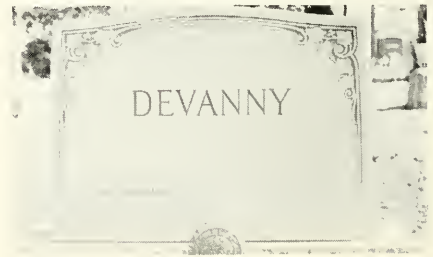


Fig. 46

If involved the United States he applied for and was granted leave of absence. He enlisted in the Armed Services and served with honor and distinction. At hostilities end he was honorably discharged with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. During his pastorate in 1955-1956 Fellowship Hall was erected and completely paid for. On his tombstone is found this engraving:

“Minister, Old White Church 1933-1959. Pastor, Soldier, Christian Gentleman” (Fig. 46).

The church bulletin board in front of the church was given in his memory by a member of our church.

The bronze plate in the brickwork at the bottom of the bulletin board reads, “In memory of Earl Hannum Devanny, Pastor, October, 1933-March, 1959.”

Section 7

Epitaphs on Tombstones in Our Cemetery

Gravestone verses reflect the feeling of the times,¹² dire warnings to the living; Biblical quotations and later sentimental renderings extolling the virtues of the person entombed. One of the most common verses in use during colonial times was some variation of the familiar, "As you are now, so once was I," which had appeared in England as early as 1376 on the tomb of Edward, the Black Prince.¹⁹

Edward was buried in the east end of Canterbury Cathedral on September 29, 1376 where his magnificent tomb, erected in accordance with the instructions in his will may still be seen.



Fig. 47

The epitaph on his tomb is identical with one found in our burial ground with a date Aug. 24, 1809 (Fig. 47).

"Look and see as you pass by
As you are now so once was I,
As I am now so you must be
Prepare for Death and follow me."

Many other epitaphs covering a diversity of moods are also found in our cemetery.

April 10, 1758 (Expressing Hope)

"The World's a Bubble, a mere show
But the next World to which we go,
Hath Joys eternal and sincere
O May she rise and enter there."

June 29, 1811 (Ode to the Great Physician)

“Affliction sore short time I bore
Physician’s art was all in vain,
Till God above did hear my moan,
And cured me of my pain.”

April 1806

“My flying years time urges on,
What’s mortal must decay,
My friend, my dear companion gone
Nor came I long expect to stay.”

1907

“Rest in peace, thou gentle spirit
Throned above,
Souls like thine with God inherit
Life and Love.

1806

“Sleep lovely child and take thy rest
Both young and old must die,
God called thee home. He thought it best
To sing his praise on high”

1889

“Their minds in death, were calm, serene,
No terror in their looks were seen
A savior’s smile dispelled their gloom,
And smoothed the passage to the tomb.”

1808

“Father, I give my spirit up
And trust it in thy hand,
My dying flesh shall rest in hope,
And rise at thy command.”

1782

“As bright Sol the equator Past,
Death cut her down as with a blast
And in Death’s fetters must lie bound
Till raised by the last Trumpet Sound.”

1758

“My heart dissolves with Pangs unknown
In Groans I waste my Breath
Thy heavy hand has brought me down
Low as the dust of death
Father, I give my spirit up
And trust it in thy hand,
My dying flesh shall rest in hope
And rise at thy command.”

1786

“Sweet sacred Dust, sleep in the Tomb
While here the World was not her home
Now she’s removed to Realms above
To endless bliss and boundless Love.”
Ye glittering toys of earth adieu
A nobler choice be mine
A real prize attracts my view
A treasure all divine.”

1761

“Our days begin with troubles here
Our life is but a span
And cruel death is always near
So frail a thing is man.”

1756

“Thus falls ye generous and the brave
A captive Prisoner to the grave
And till the last trumpets awful sound
Shall thru the rending tombs resound
Then may our moulding dust arise
Ascend and reign above the skies.”

1808

“Death like an overflowing stream
Sweeps away our life, a dream
An empty tale, a mourning flower
Cut down and withered in an hour.”

1809

“My loving friends, I bid all farewell
Prepare yourselves with God to dwell
In a few more days it will be said
That you are numbered with the dead.”

1832 (child 2 months old)

“Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade
Death came with friendly care
The opening bud to heaven conveyed
And bade it blossom there.”

1833 (child 1 month, 23 days old)

“This lovely bud, so young, so fair
Called hence by early doom
Just came to show how sweet a flower,
In paradise would bloom.”

1871

“See the leaves around ye falling
Dry and withered to the ground,
Thus to thoughtless mortals calling
With a sure and solemn sound.”

1907

“There is a blessed home
Beyond this land of ours
Where trials never come
No tears of sorrow flow.”

The spelling in the preceding Epitaphs is exactly as it appears on the tombstone.

Section 8

Miscellaneous Comments

In making a study of the various facets of our burial ground, attention is attracted to names, both surnames and Christian names.

Some surnames or family names found in our burial ground are rarely heard at all in our Township today, viz: Ashbill, Appleyard, Pain, Ryno, Mabie, Bunn, Clinch, Nightingale, Playfoot, Gallander, Dezendorf.

It is true also of Christian names, which seem to follow a pattern. In the early days of our church Biblical names influenced particularly male names.

How often today is a male child called Jothan, Gideon, Jabez, Ephraim, Ichabod, Phineas, Abraham, Eliphilet, Cyrus, Rufus, Isaac, Seth, Moses, Joshua, Azel, Adam, Jeremiah, Everts, Enoch, Zebulon, Socrates, Sebastian, Titus, or Marmaduke?

Female names seemed to have a quaintness all their own, seemingly associated with the early times. Names such as the following seem today to be passe — Jobatha, Prudence, Letitia, Indiana, Malvina, Sabra, Ursula, Phebe, Jannet, Ellie, Experience, Ezebel, Ginnet, Jaenke, Mercy, Gettie, Tabitha, Charity, Euphemia, Abigail, Sabina, Elizer, Huldah, Deliverance, Sisfal, Katurah, Mahalia.

Names, like styles in garments, change with the time.

Someone has said that gravestones with their inscriptions and imagery possess an eloquence rarely matched in literature. The monuments speak directly to all who face them, echoing of the past. On their sometimes crumbling surfaces one can trace the lives and experience of past generations, its wars, its epidemics, the opulence of certain families.

The cemetery records reveal that the then dreaded smallpox disease caused mortality back in 1709. Samuel Hale, Esq., one of the original Freeholders, who was granted in 1670 a plot of 167 acres, was one of the victims. This dreaded disease also struck in January 1732¹³ and in the winter and spring of 1774-1775.

During the early 1890s a diphtheria epidemic was experienced in the town.

The influenza epidemic in 1917-1919 struck with disastrous results. Hospitals in this area were so overcrowded that our Parish House building on Rahway Avenue was turned into a nursing center.

One of the most distressing facts read on the monuments is revealed in the number of infant and childhood deaths.

In one family plot there are seven interments of children, six sons and one daughter, all who died in infancy.

In still another plot, ¹⁴ J, born 1900, died in 1900; W, born 1902, died 1902; E, born 1890, died 1893; F, born 1887, died 1890; J, born 1870, died 1873; A, born 1863, died 1864; Ta, born 1871, died 1872; KT, 1889-1890; L, 1901-1904.

Graves of over forty children who died before reaching six months of age can be counted; thirty others before their first birthday; fifteen before age two, and about fifty others between ages three and ten.

In a number of instances two children of the same family passed away the same day.

Such happenings are unheard of today. What was the cause back then? Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, the so-called "Summer complaint," who knows?

The question is raised repeatedly as to whether or not there remains space for additional burials in our cemetery. The answer is "Yes!" There is still space for an additional three to four hundred new plots and room for many additional interments in plots already assigned to families in past years.

In going through the old cemetery records one will come across items of a tragic nature, viz:

"Henry Clay Smith, son of Edgar R. and Phebe Smith, lost his life at Rahway, January 22, 1833 in his efforts to rescue his playmate from a watery grave. Henry was in his fourteenth year."

Another example:

"Timothy Bloomfield, son of Timothy and Sussanah Bloomfield, lost at sea by falling overboard from his ship, "America" on a passage from New York City to Batavia, Indonesia, in the Pacific Ocean on the 21 of July 1819; age eighteen years, one month, four days."

In the first paragraph of this chapter we termed our Burial Ground as "consecrated and hallowed." We would also hope that the reading of this discourse would engender a greater appreciation of our cemetery as a truly historical site knitting our church to the life and work of our Community, State, and Nation. It has often been said that the history of America is here.

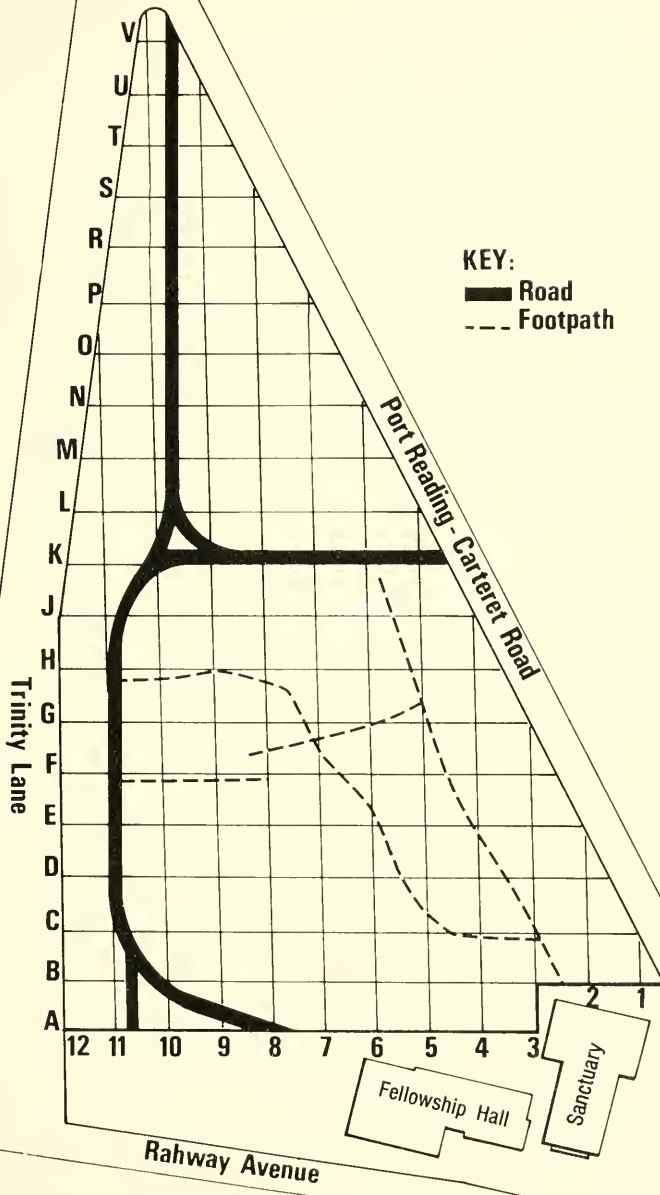
Fig. 48 shows the author gathering data from one of the old red sandstone monuments.

The author gives deserved thanks to Mr. Clyde Williams for the generous amount of time given by him in taking the many photographs and for his recording the many epitaphs shown herein. Also, thanks to a quartet of our teenagers, Charles and Mat Barany, Dan Natale, and Bill Gardner who saved the author many steps in gathering data.

John M. Kreger, Author



Fig. 48



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4. Savage, *General Dictionary of New England*.
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6. Bryant, Blanch B. and Baker, Gertrude E., Compilers, *Geneological Records of the Founders' and Early Settlers of Plymouth, Vermont*.
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8. The late Mr. Leon McElroy, attorney and historian of Woodbridge, was one of a group who claimed that the town of "Woodbridge" was not named in honor of Reverend John Woodbridge of Newbury, Massachusetts. Mr. McElroy stated that there was no record that Rev. John Woodbridge had ever visited Woodbridge, New Jersey. He claimed that Woodbridge was named after a town in England. The writer takes no sides in this issue. It is, however, purely coincidental that Thomas Bloomfield, who came to Woodbridge as early as 1665 and who was one of the most influential of the first settlers, came from Woodbridge, England.
9. Monnette, *op. cit.*
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21. Potter, Frank D., a descendant.
22. Whitehead, William A., 1856.

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1. Evening News, Perth Amboy, N. J., June 30, 1964.
2. Parker, Captain James, *History of the Parker and Kearney Families of Perth Amboy*, 1896.
3. From Correspondence with Mr. Barbour Rolph of West Union, Ohio.
4. Breckenridge, Amy E., *Disappearing Landmarks of Woodbridge*.
5. This home is presently 123 Prospect St. The writer and his family resided in this home from December 1930 to October 1957. This home since 1957 has been the manse for the Woodbridge Gospel Church.
6. Dr. Samuel Freeman also operated a drug store and was also at one time the town postmaster.
7. The so-called Freeman Homestead was the Thayer Martin home on Rahway Avenue since razed to make room for the apartment complex, corner Freeman Street and Rahway Avenue.
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Chapter 5

Church Organizations

The women of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge, which is affectionately known as "The Old White Church," first organized in 1856 under various names and for various projects.

At the present time the women of this church have the privilege of deciding in which of three organizations they will be most useful to the Lord in His work. Just as there were Martha and Mary long ago, each with her own particular talent, so in our church there are many Marthas and Marys who are fortunate in being able to choose the organization in which they can best use their particular talents. There are a few women who have chosen to work in two organizations, but most concentrate their efforts by working in just one.

A short description of the goals and accomplishments of these three groups will be found on the following pages.

White Church Guild

In May of 1946, eighteen of the young women of the church organized the White Church Guild with the goals of working for the Old White Church and of helping the minister. Because this group was comprised of young mothers and career women, the meetings were held in the evenings semi-monthly.

The first officers were President, Mrs. Andrew Lockie; Vice-president, Mrs. Russell Demarest; Secretary, Mrs. Oakley Blair, and Treasurer, Miss Lorna MacCrory. In 1948 when Miss MacCrory married and left the United States to be with her husband who was in foreign service, Mrs. Wesley Heiselberg became treasurer, a position which she has filled ever since with painstaking care and devotion. Mrs. Earl H. Devanny, our pastor's wife, accepted the position of Counselor, a post which she had held in the Lillian Buschman Guild, to which a majority of the members of the newly organized group had belonged prior to 1942. For a short time meetings were held at the

home of Mrs. William Gardner, the Assistant Counselor. However, due to her failing health, she was forced to relinquish her active part in the organization. After this the Guild meetings were held, at Mrs. Devanny's invitation, at the manse, until Fellowship Hall was available in 1956.

Mrs. Devanny's indomitable spirit, combined with her love for the church, proved an inspiration to many of the Guild members and helped to strengthen their two-fold purpose for being part of this organization. Mrs. Devanny had two maxims by which she and the Guild were governed: the first, "Nothing for the Lord Is Impossible," and the second, "A Guild Girl Never Says, 'No!'" If one were in doubt about her ability to accomplish what seemed to her an impossible task, she thought of Mrs. Devanny's maxims and accomplished it! This gallant and beloved lady was Counselor of the Guild until 1959 when Mr. Devanny and she retired to their farm at Cream Ridge, N. J. Upon Mrs. Devanny's retirement Mrs. Andrew S. Lockie Sr. became Adviser to the Guild.

The general program for the year is the responsibility of the Program Chairman and her committee. These women plan the year's activities and present a year book which contains the program, names of hostesses and devotional leaders, members' names and addresses and duties of each member. The Vice-president is also Ways and Means Chairman. Her duty and that of her committee is to present ideas which, when put into action, will increase the amount in the Guild treasury, thus enabling the Guild to be of greater service to the church. Since 1956 one of the highlights of the Guild year has been the Spring Auction and Cake Sale. The distribution of "Talent Dollars" every few years causes temporary dismay among the members but usually results in a sizable increase in the Guild coffers when the members return their dollars generally increased many fold by using their "Talents." These talents have varied from having clam chowder sales to making book marks.

The activities for the year vary, but each year one evening is set aside to work on table favors or gifts of some kind for the residents of our Synod Homes. Each Christmas the Guild gives a cash gift to each of the four people whom our church sponsors in the Synod Homes. The Woman's Auxiliary of Synod Homes also receives a contribution toward their projects for the Homes. In 1974 in addition to the usual gifts the Guild gave a subscription to "Guide Posts," the publication sponsored by Rev. Norman Vincent Peale. This edition is one in large print, a special boon to those with failing sight at Madison House and at the Haddonfield Home.

The responsibility of the Church Nursery is one of the tasks assumed by the Guild. The Nursery Chairman compiles the schedule of nursery attendants for the year and each week reminds the person whose turn it is to serve in the nursery, of her duty. If the scheduled person cannot serve and a substitute is not available, the Chairman finds herself in charge of the nursery. The Guild, in conjunction with the Ladies' Aid, has accepted the responsibility for having fresh flowers in church every Sunday. Mrs. Joseph Husk has served most faithfully as Flower Chairman since 1965. Several members of the Guild also help the church secretary with special mailings and each month prepare the "Spire" for mailing.

The funds spent on material for the necessities and beautification of church property have varied through the years starting in 1947 with a purchase of Christmas tree lights for \$18.30, repairing the church chandelier in 1972 at a cost of \$1261.00, and climaxing in 1973 with the paving of the church parking lot at a cost of \$7020.00. Whether it was \$503.50 for the electric typewriter for the church office, \$10.00 for nursery supplies, \$462.00 for pulpit chairs or \$13.85 for kitchen curtain material for Fellowship Hall, the money for these items was raised with zeal and given with love. From the time of its organization until early in 1974 the Guild has been privileged to spend more than \$13,000.00 on necessities and beautification of church properties and to give as donations to the church for current expenses and pledges over \$14,000.00. Of the latter figure, \$4,223.97 was specifically earmarked for the Renovation and Restoration Fund.

All of this has been made possible, not because of one person or of one committee, but through the efforts of a group of dedicated women, working cheerfully together, guided by the maxims which the early members had thoroughly imprinted on their minds and hearts—"Nothing for the Lord Is Impossible," and "A Guild Girl Never says, 'No!'"

Ladies Aid

In 1946 the only woman's organization in our church was the United Presbyterian Women, a national organization whose primary concern was missionary work. At that time many women felt the need for a second woman's organization whose primary purpose would be to provide financial help to the local church and to aid the pastor in his duties. The end of World War II brought the return of Reverend and Mrs. Earl Devanny. With the return of Mrs. Devanny, a group of about forty women called together by Mrs. Whitney Leeson and

Mrs. Devanny, met to discuss means to fill this need. As a result of this meeting held in May 1946, the Ladies Aid Society was born.

The first officers elected were: President, Mrs. John Kreger, who served for ten years; Vice-president, Mrs. Albert Bowers, Sr.; Secretary, Miss Louise Brewster; Treasurer, Mrs. George Fullerton, who was their beloved treasurer, Key Woman to the Belvidere Home and Sunshine Chairman from this time, 1946, until her death in 1963.

The first project was to raise \$1000 in four years for the 275th Anniversary Celebration of the church in 1950. Since that time, the Ladies' Aid has raised money for kitchen needs including a new refrigerator, cooking utensils, table silver and other articles.

Two beautiful silver services and two fine lace tablecloths were purchased. These are at the disposal of any group wishing to use them. The tray of one is engraved to honor the memory of our deceased members, and the other to honor Mrs. Devanny, who worked so tirelessly for the Society.

Several hundred dollars are given to the trustees each year, and special funds are raised for such needs as church carpeting, choir gowns, lights, etc.

The meetings average about twenty-five members and are held twice a month. At first meetings were held in the homes of the members, but after the completion of Fellowship Hall in 1956 the group has met there. Each of the three women's groups shared in the expense of furnishings the "Ladies Lounge or Parlor," contributing \$800 each.

Funds are raised each year by an Annual Fall Bazaar, by rummage sales and by projects at regular meetings.

The presidents following Mrs. Kreger were: Mrs. Edwin Earley, Mrs. William Bowen, Mrs. Fred Baldwin, Mrs. John Jelicks, Mrs. Andrew Simonsen, Mrs. Albert Bergen and Mrs. Hans Stockel.

A fine celebration of our 25th Anniversary was held in May 1971 with a luncheon served and donated by the White Church Guild.

Our pastor, Reverend Lewis Bender, visits us often with words of praise for our works and prays for our continued success and co-operation with the church.

The Ladies' Aid have made the following gifts to the church: Silver services, refrigerator, shrubbery, 275th Anniversary Fund, choir gowns, carpet for the church, furniture for the parlor, dishes, carpet sweeper, Communion table and pulpit, tablecloths, money gifts and donations to the trustees amounting to \$11,264 and total gifts of about \$20,000.

We have an active Sunshine Chairman, Mrs. Edwin Potter, who sends out cards, flowers, and money gifts to the sick and bereaved as well as to the four people sponsored by our church at Synod Homes.

A Hostess Chairman and a Devotional Chairman see to it that each meeting is well planned. We share with the Guild the expense of pulpit flowers.

An Entertainment Chairman plans games, quizzes, etc. for several meetings a year. We open and close the year with a Covered Dish Luncheon.

We all enjoy the work and the fellowship and pray that this organization will continue for many years.

United Presbyterian Women

Upon the recommendation of the Elizabeth Presbyterial, the "Guild Circle System" was presented to the Women's Auxiliary at a meeting held March 19, 1943. After two organizational meetings, the Session called all the women of the church to a meeting on April 16, when a constitution and a budget were presented and accepted. The name "Women's Association of the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge" was chosen.

At this time, the movement toward having one women's organization in a church instead of several, was being launched throughout the United States by the Presbyterian Church. The theory of the system was that each woman in a church would belong to the organization and all would work together to accomplish that which they had been aiming toward separately. The organization would be divided into circles, to nurture fellowship and give more opportunity to express individual needs. Circles would meet once a month, usually at the home of a member, and the entire membership would meet together once monthly at the church to conduct business and take part in special programs.

In order to keep each circle from becoming a club unto itself, names of all members were to be put in a bowl and redrawn each year for circle membership. The only division made, was membership for afternoon and evening groups. This is still the practice of UPW.

The formation of such an organization in our church was not done without sacrifices. The Lillian Buschman Guild, organized in March 1929, and the Women's Auxiliary which had received its new

name that same year, disbanded. The Amy Breckenridge Chapter of Westminster Guild, organized in 1920, continued to meet for quite some time, until, due to a changing world, they ceased to meet.

On May 7, 1943, in the sanctuary, the interim pastor, the Rev. Kenneth M. Kepler, installed the following slate:

President	Mrs. Kenneth Kepler
1st Vice President	Mrs. Edward H. Kinsey
2nd Vice President	Mrs. George Battman
3rd Vice President	Mrs. Edwin Plueddemann
Recording Secretary	Mrs. Grace Von Bremen
Corresponding Secretary	Mrs. Eugene Burns
Treasurer	Mrs. Emerson White
Historian	Miss Louise Brewster

Twelve circles were formed with the following chairmen:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1—Mrs. John M. Kreger | 7—Mrs. Whitney C. Leeson |
| 2—Mrs. James Reid | 8—Mrs. Kenneth Manning |
| 3—Mrs. M. H. Keneston | 9—Mrs. Fred G. Baldwin |
| 4—Mrs. Clifford Blair | 10—Miss Kathryn Holland |
| 5—Mrs. Bertha Brewer | 11—Miss Bess Donnelly |
| 6—Mrs. Edwin F. Earley | 12—Mrs. F. Ward Brown |

Projects undertaken in the first year included redecorating the church basement (then the Primary Department). This cost \$50 for paint, brushes and curtains. Labor was volunteered. The pastor's study was refurbished for \$40, under the same conditions. Blackout shades were purchased for the church basement; it was, after all, 1943, and a service flag with a star for each son of the church in the armed forces was purchased and hung in the sanctuary.

Other activities carried out during the early years included: inauguration of a nursery during church services, care of the kitchen (its list of problems are the same as today's); installation of a ladies' room in the Parish House, installation of a downstairs lavatory in the manse, and organization of a flower committee for the church. Because of the faithfulness of Mr. and Mrs. George Rowe who placed flowers from their garden on the altar of the church each Sunday for so many years, this committee's work covered only a few winter Sundays.

Sewing for mission stations from Arizona to Africa and points beyond was a giant task cheerfully assumed. Dozens of garments were made annually for many years until the economy changed in the countries where the stations were located. It then became more charitable

to send money which could be used to pay native workers to make the needed articles. This served a two-fold purpose of supplying the hospitals, schools, etc., with many articles and providing the workers with the self-esteem of earning a living. During World War II, it is also noted, the women knitted hundreds of articles for the American Red Cross.

During the post-war years, well into the 1950's, the activities of the Association were shaped by the times. Boxes of clothing without number were collected and delivered to the Newcomer's Christian Fellowship in New York City where the Rev. and Mrs. Frederick Forrell clothed a great flow of refugees. Many of these came from refugee camps with few, if any, possessions to start a new life.

At this time also, some circles adopted families whose life in impoverished Europe was desperate. Boxes of food, clothing and necessities, impossible to purchase even if one had the price, were sent regularly. Touched by the stories of German Christians behind the Iron Curtain whose faithfulness to God kept them in miserable poverty, as well as physical danger, the women responded with more gifts and CARE packages for several years.

In the United States, partial support of the Rev. and Mrs. William Isette, missionaries to the Papago Indians in Arizona, was part of the UPW budget over a long period of time. Under the auspices of the Association, "Papago Christmas" was held each year at which time the Sunday School children donated gifts and candy for their counterparts on the Papago Reservation at Sells.

By 1946 upon the conclusion of WW II and the return of Rev. and Mrs. Earl H. Devanny, as the aspect of women's organizations in our church changed and the Ladies' Aid and White Church Guild were organized, they assumed many of the local activities which formerly came under the Association's committee structure. The "Second Mile Giving" of Presbyterian women which is still vitally necessary to the support of many mission activities at home and abroad continues to receive loyal backing from the Association's free will offerings.

Woman's changing role in our society has been reflected in the UPW programs. There are modifications, but the basic features of the following activities have not changed through the years:

Circle friends — Each circle adopts two or three shut-ins each year and remembers them throughout the year with cards, gifts and visits to let them know someone cares.

Christmas boxes — Besides remembering the guests at the Presbyterian Homes, November finds UPW members donating gifts for a

previously selected recipient, sometimes far away, but with the costs of postage rising, it is more often some group near at hand.

Bible Study — Probably the heart of the UPW program is the Bible study conducted at circle meetings. With few exceptions, the members take turns in leading the study — not without fear and trembling. There is a hymn which goes, “Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine, with jewels rich and rare . . .” Many a jewel has been unearthed as circle members seek together for the riches of the Word.

The official purpose of the UPW reads:

Seeking to be obedient to God’s call in Jesus Christ,
we unite:

To support the mission of the United Presbyterian Church
in the U.S.A.

To help one another grow in Christian faith and
understanding, and

To act in Christian concern in the company of God’s
people everywhere.

Hoping to abide by this goal in the future, we look forward to where the Lord will lead us. Our group embraces women of all ages which span more than 60 years. Each age has its own special contribution as we remember the motto chosen for the group in 1943: “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.”

Sunday Church School

In an historic pageant written for the 250th anniversary of our church Mrs. L. V. Buschman writes that the men and women of our early church, “were people of great faith and vision. Religion to them was no mere incident but a vital part of their lives.” They devoted almost the entire day of Sunday to the worship of the Lord and they took their children with them. So far the first 143 years of our church’s history there was no Sunday School. The children worshipped with the adults and learned their Bible lessons at home. Apparently some parents were not doing their job and the children’s religious education was being neglected. During the pastorate of Dr. Henry Mills, a group of women petitioned the elders for permission to “gather the dear children of the community together and teach them the great truths of the Holy Word.” On the third Sunday of June in the year of Our Lord, 1818, the first Sunday School classes were held.

Most of the work of establishing the first Sabbath School was done by Sally Potter, Jane Patton and Mrs. Harriet Potter. Classes were held on Sunday afternoon and consisted mostly of singing hymns, hearing Bible stories, and memorizing Bible verses. The Church records for the early years of Sabbath School no longer exist but apparently the classes were held in a private residence until school rooms were added to the church in 1868. Miss Potter conducted one of these classes near Metuchen because "it was quite impossible for the children of that section to reach the town."

The second superintendant was Dr. William Barton whose wife established the Sabbath School Society to benefit and help finance the work of the school. The Society bought paper supplies for the children and books for the Library which by the year 1900 had some 600 volumes. This library was very important and the Sunday School Committee had many lengthy discussions over each and every book that was purchased for it.

The minutes of the monthly Sabbath School meetings indicate that various "entertainments" were arranged for the children of the Sabbath School. The records of August 19, 1877 state that a picnic was going to be held at Boynton Beach on Tuesday, the 27th. The committees for this picnic included one for the "procuring of wagons and teams." In July 1883, our church families joined several other area churches on the first of a yearly excursion to Asbury Park. Other "entertainments" included a Christmas Festival where a tree was provided, a church supper was held and prizes were awarded to the children who attended most regularly, who learned their lessons well or who "brought the most souls to class." These three activities were continued, in one form or another, well into the 1900's.

But the members of the committee did not just concern themselves with the work of providing "entertainments;" they had long discussions on the problems of raising funds (the Sabbath School tried to be self-supporting), the difficulty of keeping the "little one's minds on the task at hand," the best ways to increase attendance, and sometimes even, on the behavior of some of the teachers.

The members of the committee were indeed people of faith and service. Many people were involved in the work of the Sabbath School and much labor, time, and effort was put into the work of the Church. Because they were disappointed in the School attendance, which on Rallying Day was about 150, they established the Home Department, a program for taking the School into the homes of the people.

The Sabbath School also encouraged the children to donate to the work of missions. The offering on the last Sunday of each month was used for the work of the church World-Wide.

The Sunday School records for 1908-1909 state that the school had twenty teachers, nine officers including a librarian and an average attendance of one hundred thirty to one hundred forty children. The record attendance for 1909 was 370 on Rallying Day. The curriculum used was the Westminster Quarterly. Children's Day and the Anniversary Exercise was a combined annual celebration which was held in June. It must have been a very special affair for special programs were written and invitations were sent to all the churches in the area.

The attendance records for February 8, 1921 proved that the Sunday School continued to develop. It had seven different sections — a Cradle Roll, Beginners, Primary, Junior, Intermediate and Senior Departments. By the time of the Sunday School's 110th birthday, the committee had 44 members. The activities included not only Sunday morning classes and all of the activities already mentioned, but also Daily Vacation Bible School, Rally Days, Special Sunday Worship Services, Mission Projects, The White Gift Program, teacher training courses and conferences and a Sunday School Orchestra.

Through the years, the activities of the Sunday School continued to grow. The activities changed with the times, the facilities were expanded by the building of Fellowship Hall and curriculum materials were constantly updated and revised but the problems facing the committee for the Sunday School remained the same — how to increase attendance, how to finance a growing church school and how to find devoted and capable teachers who would help our young people to develop into active, committed Christians.

In 1972 when our church was renovated a new Christian Education building was constructed. The Sabbath School which over the years had met in private residences, in basements, in overcrowded conditions in Fellowship Hall, finally had adequate facilities in which to conduct its very vital task, the job of educating its young children in the faith of its forefathers. Hopefully, they will become the kind of people to whom religion is not a mere incident but a vital part of their lives. The people who have served our Sunday School have been numerous and dedicated. There would be no Sunday School today if it had not been for those men and women of "faith and vision."

To our youth, who at times are impetuous and demanding, yet who constantly remind us that we must not become weary or discouraged in the Master's Service, we dedicate this book.

