

HISTORY
OF THE
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF PISCATAWAY
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF ITS
BI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
JUNE 20th, 1889,
AND SKETCHES OF
PIONEER PROGENITORS OF PISCATAWAY PLANTERS.

STELTON, N. J.

1889.

OUTLINE SKETCHES

—OF THE—

PIONEER PROGENITORS OF THE PISCATAWAY PLANTERS

1666—1716.

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PLAINFIELD, N. J.

THE names of the first pioneers to settle on the Raritan were Hugh Dunn, John Martin, Hopewell Hull and Charles Gillman, with their families. On the 21st of May, 1666, they were granted the right as associates of the Woodbridge patentees, and December 18, following, were deeded by these New England neighbors from Newbury, one-third of their purchase obtained the week before. During the next year there came other members of the Gillman and Hull families, also Robert Dennis and John Smith. So cheerful were the prospects and complete the liberties established; so peaceful the plantation and so generous the inducements offered, that additional emigration soon followed by friends and neighbors of the original pioneers. Before the year 1670 passed, the settlement of Piscataway had been increased by many new arrivals of associate planters from New England. Among them were Francis Drake, Benajah Dunham, Henry Langstaff and John Martin, with their families, from New Hampshire; John Fitz-Randolph, with his brothers, Thomas, Joseph and Benjamin, and sisters Elizabeth and Ruth, with their parents; Geoffry Manning, Nicholas Bonham, Samuel Walker and John Smalley, with their wives and children, from other New England districts, where the intolerance of the established Church order had restricted and restrained the exercise of free conscience and subjected them to many indignities and deprivations.

But the required number of actual settlers had not yet purchased land in Piscataway and made such improvements as were contemplated and specified by the Woodbridge grant of 1666, and the previous charter of 1664 to the Elizabethtown colony. Four years had now intervened without realizing the necessary accessions to the population or the required development of the territory. On the 20th of October, 1670, Governor Carteret made a public proclamation waiving all objections that might be made against the Piscataway settlement "on account of their not having come in exactly according to the time limited." Stimulated by this official concession, renewed efforts were immediately made resulting in the greater improvement of the country and an increase of emigration thither. By 1675-6 Piscataway had attained a notable prominence in the civil affairs of the province, and that year sent for the first time two deputies to the General Assembly, which had been held but twice before, (during the

Spring and Winter of 1668). The few accessions made during the five years succeeding—1676-81—may have been caused by the disputed title of boundaries between Piscataway and Woodbridge, and the division of ownership in the colony and the unsettled condition of proprietorship, which was not definitely determined till 1682.

QUAKER GOVERNMENT.

At this date additional impetus was imparted to emigration thither. William Penn, at the head of a real estate syndicate of Friends, purchased all of the unoccupied land of East Jersey at an auction sale in London, on the 2d of February, 1682. These Quaker proprietors were not slow in making known in England and Scotland the remarkable advantages of this new country. They gave reassurance that the liberal terms of the Constitution formerly granted, would be assiduously maintained, as well as the unrestricted rights of all settlers in matters of religion.

By this time—1682-'89, the date of the organization of the Piscataway Baptist Church—the limits of the township had been enlarged, and fully eighty families were occupying the territory. The following names are then found among the prominent freeholders as recently arrived citizens, whose religious affiliations were with the Baptist people: Vincent Runyon, Nicholas Mundy, James Giles, Andrew Wooden, and representatives of the Suttons, Holtons, Dayton, Mollisons, and others. Up to this period nearly all the planters had come from plantations in New England or Long Island, and been under the influence of instruction tending to Baptist doctrines. Most all of the first original settlers in Piscataway were imbued with religious principles of this denomination, which had been discernable among the earliest adventurers to New England, and been preached by Hanserd Knollys in New Hampshire and taught by Roger Williams in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and advocated by William Wickenden among the towns on Long Island.

By the time the government of East Jersey passed into the hands of the Crown—1702, and a few years thereafter at the distribution of the back lands—local history of Piscataway becomes familiar with the names of the Stelles, Blackfords, Clarksons, Piatts, Coriells, Brokaws, Boices, Bishops, Fords, Merrells, Higgins, Hendricks, Slaters, Fields, Laings, Websters, Pounds, Clarks, Thorns, Lupardus's and others.

THE DUNNS AND DUNHAMS.

with the Drakes, shortly after them, came to this township from the Piscataqua district in New England.

HUGH DUNN, the founder of this family name in New Jersey, was devoutly religious, and encouraged the early settlers by exhorting them to a holy living. His advocacy of an untrammelled conscience in the worship of God, greatly aided in the enjoyment of the Gospel in purity and peace. He lived through all the trying times of establishing a new colony, and died in 1694. This was five years after the public organization of the Baptist Church, of which he was a constituent member, and for the realization of which he toiled and prayed. His descendants have always been prominent members in the faith of their mother Church, and that of the sister branch observing the seventh day as their Sabbath.

The Dunhams, of Piscataway, (for there was a different lineage of same name at Woodbridge), had as their progenitor a worthy sire in the person of BENAJAH DUNHAM. Their family tradition asserts that he settled in this vicinity several years previous to its formal occupation by any other Englishmen. His first child born was Edmund, whose birth in 1661 was the earliest of any white child born in the township. Edmund Dunham grew to be an influential member of society, and became a lay preacher, helping to mould the tender consciences and direct the religiously inclined of the pioneer community. In 1681 he married Mary, or Elizabeth Bonham, a member of another early planter's family. Their son, Jonathan, in after years, succeeded his father in the ministry of the Seventh-Day Baptist Church, of Piscataway, of which the father may be said to be the founder in 1705-7.

THE DRAKES.

The Drakes of this part of New Jersey are the direct descendants of Francis and Mary Drake, who moved into this township about 1667-8 from the New Hampshire district of same name. The ancestors of Francis Drake had lived there on the banks

of the swift-flowing Piscataqua River since 1635. Among the first of this name to settle in the new world in that New England locality was Robert Drake, a man of eminent piety. At his death in 1667 two or three sons survived him—Nathaniel, Abraham and probably Francis, the progenitor of the New Jersey line. By some it is claimed that Francis, last named, was the grandson of Sir Francis Drake's brother Thomas, to whom the Admiral left his valuable estate, by others he is believed to have been his nephew. Robert Drake, first mentioned, was co-temporary with Sir Francis, his birth occurring in 1580, the same year the great navigator sailed around the world, in honor of which marvellous circuit of the globe at the age of thirty years, Queen Elizabeth knighted him. Both Robert and Sir Francis belonged to the original family of Devonshire, Eng., where the Drake estate was established shortly after the conquest of William of Normandy.

In 1556 there was a Robert Drake living, who suffered as a martyr-minister in a neighboring county for conscience's sake, and was burned at the stake April 23 of that year. It is recorded of him that he said, when exhorted by the priest to renounce his faith: "As for your Church of Rome, I utterly deny its works and defy its power, even as I deny the devil and defy all his works."

FRANCIS DRAKE, who was the founder of the family in New Jersey, was a petitioner in 1665 at Dover, N. H., for protection to his property and religious rights. But the province being settled entirely as a trading interest, all laws were disregarded and a permanent residence there by peaceful citizens became unendurable. This same year the liberal concessions by the East Jersey proprietors were proclaimed in that region and Francis Drake, with others, shortly afterwards availed themselves of the generous invitation and moved to these quiet fields, where he spent the rest of his life till 1687, the year of his death. His sons Francis, George and John, born in New England, came with him; and their posterity has materially assisted in peopling this province for generations past. Of George, it is known that he married, in 1677, Mary Oliver, of Elizabethtown, and was a useful public servant of the township and colony. He was appointed supervisor of many important local matters and served as a legislator in the General Assembly for 1684 and several successive years following. From his sons George and Andrew many useful and industrious citizens have descended who helped to make the Church and community an honor and a blessing. The Rev. George Drake and Simeon J. Drake were descendants of this line.

JOHN DRAKE, the most distinguished son of Francis, became a lay preacher in the early days of the settlement, and in after years, as is generally known, was the regular pastor of this Church. He married, in 1677, Rebecca Trotter, his first wife, daughter of one of the original associates of Elizabethtown, who came from Newbury, Mass. Pastor Drake had, by this and two other marriages, thirteen children, whose names are recorded as John, Francis, Samuel, Joseph, Benjamin, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Ebenezer and Ephraim. These and the children of George and Francis Drake have left numerous and worthy descendants whose many virtues of mind and heart have always endeared the name to this and every locality where they have taken up a home. Time will not permit even an allusion to the honorable and eminent positions of usefulness attained by them in the different professions, and the progress made in the arts and sciences through the influence of those who have borne the name.

THE GILLMANS.

The Gillmans of New Jersey are descendants of John and Charles Gillman, two of the original patentees of Piscataway plantation in 1666-8. They came from the Piscataqua district of New Hampshire, where their ancestor, Edward Gillman, of Norfolk County, England, had settled shortly after his landing in 1638, in Massachusetts. The father had been a near neighbor of godly old John Robinson, of dissenting notoriety before separating from the Church of England, and was heartily in sympathy with non-conformists.

THE HULLS AND LANGSTAFFS

came to Piscataway from the district in New Hampshire of the same name. In the pioneer days of that early New England settlement Benjamin Hull was a preacher of the gospel there. Whether he is the same person as the Piscataway patentees of that

name who settled on the Raritan, the writer cannot say. From the earliest colonizations in New England the name has been prominent among the intelligent and outspoken freemen of the New World. A full generation before any of the family moved to New Jersey, Rev. Joseph Hull is mentioned as an original patentee of the town of Barnstable, Mass., where the Fitz-Randolphs, Bonhams, Smiths, and other Piscataway settlers came from. The pastor of the old First Baptist Church, of Boston, in 1675, was Rev. Isaac Hull, the same church whose meeting house doors were nailed up in 1680 by order of the Court of that colony. But few families can produce a longer list of remarkable ministers of the Gospel extending through colonial times to the present.

HOPEWELL and BENJAMIN HULL were the worthy founders of this family in New Jersey, which furnished in subsequent years some of the most influential personages of the local township government. In the peaceful pursuit of industry as well, their name is always found in honorable relations.

HENRY LANGSTAFF, the founder of the family in New Jersey, was the son of Henry, who emigrated to New Hampshire with the colony sent out by Mason, the patentee, in 1630. He lived on the Piscataqua River up to the time of his removal to Piscataway township in 1668-9. Through his son John, born in New England in 1647, the name has been handed down to posterity in this latitude. The marriage of many of the female members into other pioneer families, has given some of the best representatives of this mother Church. The original male line was distinctly identified with the Episcopal Church.

THE MARTINS.

Among the brave and bold passengers of the "Mayflower" was a representative of the MARTIN family, who sought "the wild New England shore for freedom to worship God." One of this familiar name was among the first planters to make a permanent settlement in this colony of conscience. John Martin, a Piscataway grantee of 1666, came here from the Piscataqua district in New Hampshire, where he lived as early as 1648 with the ancestors of the Dunns, Drakes, Langstoffs, and other old and respected families of that locality. The Martins came to stay, as a numerous line of descendants testify from that remote day to the present.

THE SMALLEYS

JOHN SMALLEY, of Plymouth, old England, came over to America in the vessel "Francis and James," 1632, with Edward Winslow and others. His native home was in the same shire of the Drakes, who had lived there from the days of the Norman conquest. Descendants of this name soon found a congenial place with the Baptists in Rhode Island. From that colony of liberty-loving people John Smalley came to Piscataway during its early infancy. His descendants have always held to the views of Christian truth as believed and practiced by the Baptists. The family gave to this denomination and trained in the doctrines by this Church, one of the most useful ministers of the gospel that ever labored in New Jersey—the Rev. Henry Smalley of blessed memory.

THE DENNIS'S.

ROBERT DENNIS, though a Piscataway patentee, lived in the adjoining settlement of Woodbridge, was descended from Thomas Dennis, an emigrant with Winthrop, who came to Massachusetts in 1630. The home of this pioneer before coming to New Jersey, was at Yarmouth, on Cape Cod, not far from the residence of other planters living in Barnstable. Several of the female members were united in marriage with the Fitz-Randolphs, Mannings, and others connected with the Baptists.

THE DAYTONS,

of New Jersey, are of New England origin, settling first in Massachusetts colony as early as 1637, and thence to Long Island. Their English ancestry occupied for a long time a homestead on the east bank of the Midway River, in Kent County. The settlement of this family in old Piscataway about the close of the pioneer days—1716-26—added a valuable element to the agricultural population. Some of their best representatives have had their names on the church roll of this and other neighboring Baptist churches.

THE CLARKSONS,

of East Jersey, trace their pedigree through Matthew Clarkson, who was Secretary of the province of New York from 1689 to his death, 1702. The founder of this American line was Rev. David Clarkson, of Bradford, York County, Eng. Many of this family were early identified with the Baptists by their marriage into families of the Stelles, Mannings, Randolphins, and others distinctly connected with this denomination. They removed from the province of New York into this township about the same time the Daytons' settlement here.

THE SUTTONS,

also, came from Long Island, descending from an honorable ancestry in the county of Nottingham, Eng., where the progenitor of Fitz-Randolphs lived before emigrating to this country. This family furnished to New Jersey many excellent Baptist preachers during the Colonial and Revolutionary times, one family had four distinguished sons in the ministry. Some of them were among the first to push into the interior to develop the Passaic valley and the hill country beyond, and at a later date moved to the western part of Pennsylvania.

THE WALKERS,

of Piscataway, were intimately associated with the religious interests of the Baptist denomination several years before the principles were crystalized into church form here. Samuel Walker, Isaac and Francis Walker, are early mentioned among the landholders of the township. Samuel was a prominent citizen in the province at the time of the constitution of this Church, and after the government of the Proprietors was surrendered to the Royal control, he became an influential member of Lord Cornbury's Council. The name has always furnished honorable and useful members in this and neighboring Baptist churches.

THE BONHAMS.

NICHOLAS BONHAM came to Piscataway from Barnstable, Mass., about 1669, being a neighbor there of the Fitz-Randolph family. He was married January 1, 1658, to Hannah Fuller, the oldest child of Samuel Fuller, one of the original passengers in the "Mayflower," and Jane Lothrop, daughter of the distinguished Puritan preacher. Their daughter, Mary, married Rev. Mr. Dunham in 1681, with whom his son, Hezekiah Bonham, about 1700, had the traditional conversation concerning secular labor on the Lord's day, which resulted in the ultimate establishment of the Seventh Day Society of Piscataway, in 1705-7, when its constituent members withdrew from the mother Church for that purpose.

THE FITZ-RANDOLPHS.

By far the most numerous representatives of any one family in the township were the Fitz-Randolphs, who descended from a distinguished Norman line settling in England with William the Conqueror, A. D. 1066. They became owners of vast estates in Yorkshire and the adjacent county of Nottingham. From the last named shire came EDWARD FITZ-RANDOLPH, the ancestor of the American family, who settled with his parents in Massachusetts about 1630, at the town of Scituate. In early manhood he married Elizabeth Blossom, of Puritan stock, and their children, born at Barnstable in the Plymouth colony, that lived to grow up and become heads of families, were Nathaniel, Hannah, Mary, John Joseph, Elizabeth, Thomas, Hope and Benjamin.

NATHANIEL FITZ-RANDOLPH, the oldest, born in 1612, became a Quaker, and one of the most influential of the sect. He migrated to Woodbridge township in 1678-9, locating near the Blazing Star ferry. He was the father of eight children, and a man of remarkable usefulness and importance in the commonwealth, filling all the local and county offices and prominent in the colonial government. His brothers, John, Joseph, Thomas and Benjamin, just mentioned, had moved to Piscataway ten years earlier—in 1668-9—and were all of the Baptist persuasion except Benjamin. The emigration of this family to New Jersey was prompted by the severe enactments of the court of the old colonies, prohibiting the free exercise of individual consciences, compelling every person to sustain by tax the established Church worship, and imposing banishment upon any who opposed infant baptism.

JOHN FITZ-RANDOLPH, the oldest of the Piscataway branch, was born in 1653, and married Sarah Bonham in 1675. He is known as a constituent member of this Church and one of the largest landholders in the township.

JOSEPH FITZ-RANDOLPH, the next oldest, born in 1656, was father of twelve children by his wife, Hannah Conger, a member of one of the Woodbridge families. None of this familiar name attained to greater usefulness in the Church and colony than their immediate descendants. To verify the statement would only require the mention of the heirs of his son, Joseph, who married Rebecca Drake; and his daughter, Hannah, who married Andrew Drake; and his son, Jonathan, whose wife was Margaret Manning; and his daughter, Prudence, who married Nathaniel Manning.

THOMAS FITZ RANDOLPH, the third son of the old patriarch, was born in 1659, and married Eliza Manning, having only six children. He was Clerk of the township and one of the first group of Selectmen to manage the affairs of the town, and served as deputy in the General Assembly.

BENJAMIN FITZ-RANDOLPH, the youngest, born 1663, married Sarah Dennis, and was taken in as a townsman of Piscataway in 1684 but moved to Princeton in 1696-9 with a colony of Friends whom William Penn induced to settle on a fertile plantation watered by Stony Brook, a tributary of the Millstone River.

These five Fitz Randolph brothers were progenitors of a numerous and prominent family-lineage who have produced some of the best citizens of colonial days and give to the State and country illustrious soldiers and statesmen, eminent legislators and jurists, learned professors, distinguished divines, successful merchants and valuable members of society in the more quiet walks of life.

THE MANNINGS.

The Manning surname is early found among the Saxons in the fifth century, from whence the family migrated to the counties of Kent, Sussex and Norfolk, in England. Within the first decade after the "Mayflower" landed her precious freight of human lives, the name is familiar in the Massachusetts colony at Boston and neighboring settlements. The founder of the family in New Jersey was Geoffery Manning, who, with his wife, Hephzibah, (daughter of Joseph Andrews, of Hingham, Mass.), settled in Piscataway about the time of the Fitz-Randolphs—1668-70. He was one of three commissioners to lay out the land grants in the township in 1682 and the following year was made an officer in the first County Court of Middlesex, held that year in Piscataway. His death is recorded in 1693. From his four sons, John, Joseph, James and Benjamin, came the numerous families of this name in East Jersey, especially in this and neighboring townships and the adjoining counties of Somerset and old Essex.

BENJAMIN MANNING married Ann Blackford, 1698.

JOHN MANNING, born 1670, married Elizabeth Dennis, 1693.

JOSEPH MANNING, married Temperance Fitz-Randolph.

JAMES MANNING, married Christiana Laing, and his immediate descendants became the most distinguished branch of the family during colonial times. From this last line came President Manning, of Brown University, a learned and eloquent minister of the Baptist denomination, and Jeremiah Manning, the fearless soldier of the Revolution, and Captain Nathaniel Manning, of eminent distinction in the earlier Indian wars.

From the beginning of pioneer settlements in East Jersey the Mannings have always been identified with the organization of the Baptist churches north of the Raritan. Among the first names on the record of this mother church some of the family are found. As the country developed and settlers moved inland the name is among the constituency of the Scotch Plains Church—and at the beginning of the Samptown Church its first office-bearers were selected from the family. So at the organization of the Baptists in Plainfield and elsewhere, no more efficient and energetic members enlisted in the cause than were furnished by descendants of the original progenitor of this distinguished line.

HUGUENOTS.

In the list of the early Christians who made Piscataway Township their abiding place and became identified with the mother church should be mentioned a few families of French ancestry. These embrace the names of the Piatts, Boices, Lupardus',

Coriells and Brokaws, who early joined the colony of industrious Baptists. Their forefathers had endured hardships innumerable on account of religious beliefs in native France, and barbarous severities had been inflicted upon them because of their refusal to accept "the King's religion."

RUNYONS.

Among the multitude of Christian "exiles for conscience sake" from France was also the Huguenot family of the Runyons, transplanted to America about 1665. The founders of this large and influential line of pioneers, settled in East Jersey on the Elizabeth Town Grant as early as 1668-70. His name first appears as 'VINCENT RONGNION, mariner of Poitou.' By modern orthography the family is now known as Runyon, with numerous representatives in every State of the Union. The district from which the progenitor of the the Runyons in America came was one that experienced the most cruel desolation of property, and whose consecrated people endured more inhuman abuses than any other outraged province in the Empire. These devoted Protestants manifested the most unexampled heroism under sufferings, and yet proved steadfast adherents to their religious convictions.

The most popular and diabolical measure of the Papal authorities for intimidating these "obdurate heretics" and securing enforced conversions among them in this Province of Poitou, was the military occupation by the Dragonades quartered upon their families. This system of outrages impoverished the inhabitants, paralyzed all their industries and finally depopulated whole communities. For rather than bow the knee to Baal; from this strong hold of Calvinism emigrated thousands of the faithful to Holland and England and other islands of the sea. From thence multitudes sought a refuge in this country for permanent homes. It is a reliable tradition that the founder of the Runyon family in America escaped from these cruel persecutions in his native place, to the Isle of Jersey, off the coast of France, and from there took ship to this country. The first reference to his name on this side of the waters is seen A. D. 1668, in a "marriage license" given by Philip Carteret, the young Governor of East Jersey. The document is on file in the office of Secretary of State of New Jersey, at Trenton, and reads as follows :

To any of the Justices of the Peace or Ministers of the Province of New Jersey :

Whereas, I have received information of a mutual agreement between Vincent Rongnion, of Portiers, in France, and Ann Boutcher, the daughter of John Boutcher, of Hartford, in England, to solemnize marriage together, for which they have requested my license, and there appearing no lawful impediment for the obstruction thereof, these are to require you or eyther of you, to joyne the said Vincent Rognion and Ann Boutcher in matrimony, and them to pronounce man and wife, and to make record thereof, according to the laws in that behalf provided, for the doing whereof this shall be to you or eyther of you a sufficient warrant.

Given under my hand and seal of the Province, the 28th of June, 1668, and the 20th year of the raigne of our Sovereign Lord Charles the Second, of England, Scotland and Ireland, king, defender of the faith, &c.

(Signed)

Ph. Carteret.

This couple were joyned in matrimony by me the 17th of July, 1668.

(Signed)

James Bolton.

Ann Boutcher, the newly wedded wife of Vincent Runyon, may have been a descendant of the same family as Joan Boutcher, of Kent, a lady of distinction and piety, who was a Baptist and was burned at the stake May 2, 1550, within sight of the Canterbury Cathedral.

The next public notice of Vincent Runyon's name is found as owner of a piece of ground at Elizabeth Town, which he bought March 20, 1671-2. He was probably induced to make his first settlement at that place because of the national affinity of many of the early settlers. The Governor himself was of Norman French ancestry, and the Surveyor General, Robert Vanquellin, came from Caen, in France. The

Secretary of the Province, James Bolton, was also of French extraction and besides there emigrated with Gov. Carteret a number of French men and women. Mr. Runyon did not remain long among that settlement, for the stern Puritan element predominated and rendered his relations unpleasant. Disposing of his town property as soon as possible the next public notice of him was in the Baptist community at Piscataway, where ever afterward he and his descendants have lived. Here on the Raritan River, in the spring of 1677, he purchased a farm of 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres and from the homestead established there, went out the many children of this distinguished sire to become the founders of other large and influential lines of the Runyon family.

The sons and daughters of Vincent and Ann Boucher Runyon were: Vincent, Darich, Joseph, Reune, Ephraim, Mary, Peter, Jane and Sarah, all born several years before the public organization of the Piscataway Baptist Church.

VINCENT, the oldest son, married Mary Hull 1691, and had children to the number of eleven: Sarah, Martha, Rezia, Mary, Anna, Vincent, Reuben, Reune, and three dying in infancy.

PETER, the youngest son, born 1680, married 1704, Providence Blackford, and had five sons and four daughters: John, Joseph, Peter, Richard, Benjamin, Grace, Rosannah, Providence and Sarah.

The other sons and daughters married into the families of Randolph, Sutton, Holton, Webster, Cooper, Layton, Bray, Mollison, Martin and Mannings, and many of their descendants are here to-day at the roll call of their forefathers.

STELLES.

To conclude the worthy list of those who through faith, experienced trials, endured persecutions and overcame all opposition for the truth sake, let grateful mention be made of such as bear the name of Stelle.

The progenitor of the Stelles in the United States was a Frenchman named Poncet Stelle (known among his descendants in America as Pontius Stelle). He was born about 1650, and was living at the time of his emigration to this country, about 1665, in the south-western part of France. His wife's name was Eugenie Legereau, a christian woman of earnest faith and devoted piety. Both were Protestants of the "reformed religion" designated in history since the Reformation of the 16th Century as "Huguenots," a name signifying decided and faithful adherence to Scriptural injunction—hence Bible christians, the recital of whose terrible struggles and sufferings for their religious belief, forms one of the most thrilling chapters in modern history.

From the records of the French Protestant Church in New York, of which he was a member, it is learned that Poncet Stelle came from Lorieres, France. A town of the same name at the present time is near the manufacturing city of Limoge. The locality is southerly from Poitiers, which was one of the strongest citadels of Huguenot faith, and in a region almost entirely occupied by devout christians of the Protestant religion just before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Disciples of the Reformation rapidly multiplied throughout the whole kingdom of France, but especially in the provinces situated between the rivers Loire and Garonne the doctrines of the new religion found ardent advocates in great numbers.

Poncet Stelle came from one of these provinces where the Reformers' followers were numerous. It was because the population of this portion of France was largely Protestant that the Papal authorities inflicted such direful persecution, and enforced such satanic schemes for their extermination or their acceptance of the doctrines of the Romish Church.

Among the Protestant exiles from France, by way of Holland, to settle in the vicinity of Hudson River was the founder of this family in America. It is a traditional statement that Poncet Stelle was one of the early French settlers on Staten Island, afterward removing to New York. About 1660 a colony of Huguenots had located on the south-east side of Staten Island and were ministered to occasionally by the pastor of the French Protestant Church in the present City of New York. About the time that several Huguenot families removed from Staten Island and settled in the Hackensack Valley in 1678, others of their co-religionists moved to New York City, and among them "Sieur Poncet Stelle des Lorieres" as he is best known in public print. He was the sole progenitor of this family name in the United States.

unless others of his same lineage emigrated to this country under a different name. For example his sister Catherine was known by the name of the town she came from in France, viz : Catherine de Lorie, though she signed herself Catherine Stelle.

In the list of Baptisms performed during the early days of this French Church in New York City are the names of the children of Poncet Stelle, all of whom were born after 1680 and not later than 1695 : Benjamin, born, 1683 ; Gabriel, born 1685 ; Ambrose, born 1687 ; Madelaine, born 1689 ; Isaac, born 1690 ; John, born 1693, and possibly Eugene the last.

It would be interesting to trace the outline of Gabriel Stelle who became a large landholder in Monmouth County and a very wealthy man. He was a prominent member of St. Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church, of Amboy, in which city he died 1738, leaving a valuable estate to his wife Margaret.

No less interesting would it be to refer to the other Monmouth families of Ambrose, Isaac and John Stelle, all of whom were valuable citizens of that same rich county in the early days preceding the Revolution. But the Baptist denomination is indebted solely to BENJAMIN STELLE the oldest son and the founder of the Piscataway family, for the many steadfast christian examples of generations past and present bearing the Stelle name.

BENJAMIN STELLE was born in New York, A. D., 1683, and settled among the Piscataway people in early life just after colonial affairs were transferred to the Crown. By his marriage in 1708 to a member of one of the pioneer families of the Baptist Church (Mercy Drake it is supposed) the following six named children were born :

SUSANNAH, who became the wife of Joseph HULL.

BETSEY, who died young.

BENJAMIN, who married Hannah Dunn, 1739, the year his father assumed the pastorate of this church—and had four sons and four daughters. Asher, who married Mary Drake. Isaac, whose wife was Margaret Manning. Benjamin, who did not marry, Samuel, who married Elizabeth Bishop, and the daughters were Mary, who became Andrew Manning's wife ; Mercy, who married Ephraim Piatt ; Elizabeth, who married Joseph Stelle, and Rachel whose husbands were Ephraim F. Randolph and afterwards Samuel F. Randolph.

JOHN, the second son of Rev. Benjamin Stelle, married Rachel Thompson and was a mariner. Their children were Charity, Experience, Thompson, Lewis and Phoebe.

ISAAC was the youngest son of Rev. Benjamin Stelle, who succeeded his father in the pastorate of the church, 1759. He married Christiana Clarkson and had seven sons and two daughters, Benjamin, Ambrose, John, Abel, Joseph, Oliver, Samuel, Mary and Mercy.

RACHEL, the youngest child of Rev. Benjamin Stelle, married in 1734 Ephraim F. Randolph and had two sons and four daughters.

These children of Rev. Benjamin Stelle, with the offspring God gave them, have always been among the chief supporters of the Baptist Church in Piscataway and in many other communities where their lot has been cast.

To enumerate the many excellent virtues and christian graces which have characterized this family for two hundred years and more, would require another day's celebration. Such an event as the gathering of all the living who are the children and heirs of the distinguished Poncet Stelle would afford a suitable opportunity to consider the deeds of many generations, and record the wonderful experiences which link the present with the past.

CONCLUSION.

The roll-call given includes the names of most of the men, who with their wives, laid the foundations of society in this locality and established its social, moral and religious character. Piscataway was from the first a plantation of christians—a colony of conscience. The original settlers came here to escape religious persecution elsewhere and establish a permanent home here where they might enjoy the liberty of the gospel and the free exercise of their own spiritual convictions. May their descendants never lower the standard of religious living as set up in those pioneer days, nor manifest an indifference for such conscientious motives as actuated the early forefathers of this community.