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REPORTS UPON THE EARLY HISTORY OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES.

[The origin and character of the sketches of the early history of local Presbyterian churches, whose publication is here begun, are set forth in the editorial contained in this number of the JOURNAL. In printing them the effort is made not only to be accurate, but also to reproduce in each case the original peculiarities of the manuscript. In regard to the two now appearing, it may be remarked that they are unsigned and undated, but they are written by the same hand, and by a comparison with a signed document of the Rev. Nathaniel Irwin belonging to the Taylor collection,¹ it is placed beyond question that both of these Memoirs were written by him.]

Memoirs of the Presby^{tn}. Ch. of Neshaminy.

The Presbyterian Church of Neshaminy is so called from its situation on the South branch of the Neshaminy Creek. It has also been called "the Forks of Neshaminy," as the building is situated, and the worshippers generally reside, in the forks of that Creek—The house of public worship is in Warwick Township in the County of Bucks about three miles distant from the line of Montgomery County & about twenty miles nearly due North of the City of Philad^a. A religious Society was first

¹ See the JOURNAL, vol. ii, p. 218.

formed in this place about the year 1724 by the occasional preaching of the Rev^d. W^m. Tennent, [the oldest of that name.]¹

This venerable Patriarch had been a regular Minister of the established Church of Ireland; which he left & came to America about the year 1715. His first permanent residence was at Bedford in the State of New-York, where he continued about three years directing his attention chiefly to farming. In the year 1718 he appeared before the Synod of Philad^a. then the highest Court of Judicature in the Presbyterian Church of America, & expressed his desire to join that body. The Synod after examining his credentials & receiving a profession of his faith & the reasons which induced him to renounce the Episcopal Church (which last are on record) received him as a Member.* Soon after this he was settled as stated Pastor of the Church of Bensalem near the Mouth of the Neshaminy Creek. Being thus naturally led to explore the sources of the Stream on which he resided, he came at length to minister occasionally in the *forks* & the vicinity. In the year 1725 (whether by private contract or presbyterial settlement does not appear) M^r. Tennent undertook to preach stately to the people collected there, every other sabbath. For two years & an half he continued thus to officiate at M^r. James Cravens about three Miles and an half South East from the place where the Church now stands: using the Barn in the summer, the dwelling House in the Winter.

M^r. Craven was a low Dutch man late from long Island & had been connected with the Dutch Ch. subordinate to the Classis of Holland. Having now had "the Church in his house" for so long a time, he became a zealous Member of ² the Presbyterian Ch. & his descendants & connections have formed a small but respectible branch of this Society ever since.

In 1727 the foundation of a House for public worship was

* It is supposed that his wife who was a Presbyterian & descended from a long line of Presbyterian Minister's had considerable influence in bringing her husband to embrace the Presbyterian faith.

¹ Erased.

² Repeated.

laid a few poles distant from the place where the Church now stands—So vigorous did this Society appear, even in the Cradle, that this their first Church was an elegant stone building 40 feet by 30 fitted for galleries & the front of hewn stone*—It was finished so that divine service began to be stately performed in it in the summer of the year 1728—M^r. Tennent at this time lived on a farm which had been given him by his friend M^r. [Growden]¹ Logan—about equidistant from Neshaminy & Bensalem. But as he was now advanced in years & found the supplying two churches 14 Miles distant from each other too much for his diminished strength, he resigned the Charge of Bensalem & devoted his whole attention to the favourite Child of his gray hairs—the infant Ch. of Neshaminy. Suited to this plan, his generous friend [Growden]¹ Logan accommodated him with a new Plantation (in lieu, of the former) situated on the old York Road in Warminster Township about one mile & a quarter South East of the Church. This spot became famous as the Seat of an Accademy called by some the Log College erected there by M^r. Tennent [about ye year]¹ in or near ye year 1730.² [This]¹ Such an Accademy [which]¹ would scarce be *known* at this day; but it was justly celebrated at a time when there was hardly its superior South of New-England.

M^r. Tennent was a Master [of]¹ in the latin & Greek languages & had some acquaintance with the liberal Arts & Sciences. These he taught in person for a time: As the School increased he employed one or more assistants. Many of the Scholars after compleating at this Accademy such a course of liberal learning as the place afforded & the day required, studied divinity with M^r. Tennent or others & became eminent in the Church, especially as instruments in the Revival of religion which succeeded. Among these were a Robertson, a M^cKnight, a Campbell, a M^cCrea, a Laurence a Roan a Rodgers

* Considering the numerous wants of the people & the general state of building at this day, such a Ch. was noble for the first effort of a Society scarcely formed.

¹ Erased. ² Originally written 1732 and subsequently altered to 1730.

& superior to all Mr. Tennent's own sons * four of whom were devoted to the service of the Sanctuary. Foremost among these stood Gilbert Tennent late Minister of the 2^d. Presbyterian Church of Philad^a. whose fame is in all the Churches. John Tennent after preaching a few years & raising the fondest hopes of future eminence was translated to the Ch. triumphant above. Nor will the names W^m. & Charles Tennent soon be forgotten by the friends of Zion.†

About the year 1740 Mr. Tennent being very far advanced in years was desirous to resign the Pastoral Office, & signified to the Church his opinion that they ought to ——¹ chuse a Minister to serve them in his place— This was not easy to do, considering the [division]¹ animosities that now [raged]¹ existed in the Presbyterian Church, in consequence of what was called the revival of religion. Neshaminy was the Nursery of the revival— Gilbert Tennent was among the first of Mr. Whitfield's admirers & successful imitators: He followed his steps; preached in his spirit & power; his crow-egg sermon † delivered at Nottingham will long be remembered as a monument of his zeal— As he, his Brothers & other Pupils of the aged Tennent (all favourers of the Revival) often preached at Neshaminy, the people in General caught ye holy fire & zealously espoused the cause of reformation. A Respectable number, however, of very respectable people favoured what was called the old side.

* Some of these, with Mr. Samuel Blair & others rec^d. their education with Mr. Tennent *before* his removal to Warminster.

† Several persons who became eminent in their secular professions rec^d their education in Arts & languages at this Academy. Distinguished among these stands Doct^r. John Redman Pres^t. of the College of Physicians, Philad^a.

‡ Text—Scribes & Pharisees sit in Moses seat² seat &c—Design—to expose certain Ministers of that day by comparing them to the Scribes and Phar^s. Having painted ——¹ the characters he said, they were as like as one crow egg—to another 'tis in print

¹ Erased.

² The word "seat" ends the 6th page of the original MS., and beneath are written the words "turn over." The note is continued at the bottom of the 7th page, the word "seat" being repeated.

Among the Ministers who occasionally supplied the [Church]¹ Pulpit at this time was the Rev^d. Francis McHenry. He came from Ireland in the fall of the year 1737— Next year he was established at Deep Run whence he came to supply at Neshaminy. [These supplies from being occasional came about the year 41 or 42, to be stated every other sabbath—]¹ Some time after he accepted the pastoral Charge of a part of this Church & was to render one half his services at Neshaminy, the other at Deep Run. When the rent took place in the Synod in the year 1741 he adhered to the old side— He was however, a very moderate and prudent man & declined signing the *Protest* that shibboleth of the party— But he did not please the warm spirits of Neshaminy, who, on the 1st day of Dec^r. 1743 settled the Rev^d. Charles Beatty as their Pastor [Soon after this the other part of the Congregation sought & obtained the said M^r. McHenry to be their Pastor to preach half his time at Neshaminy and half at Deep Run.]¹ [He]¹ M^r. McHenry continued to serve [them]¹ his flock with diligence fidelity & reputation till Jan^r. 24th 1757 when he died— The aged Tennent was already in possession of his reward on w^{ch} he entered May 6th 1746 having finished his 73^d year.

Shortly [before]¹ after the settlement of M^r. Beatty some disputes arose between the parties respecting the property of the Church— The new side were the most numerous; but discouraged by some legal decisions in similar cases they attempted no forcible entry or legal process, but proceeded to build a house more large & more elegant than the former. It was in full view of the other Church and on the same ground which is occupied by the existing house— Before the death of M^r. McHenry the Synod was reunited: M^r. Beatty unsolicited delivered a pathetic funeral discourse in the Church late of his deceased Brother. This was thought to have a considerable influence in bringing the people with a few exceptions to unite under the pastoral care of M^r. Beatty— M^r. Beatty was a man of a public Spirit & this perhaps was the chief reason of

¹ Erased.

his being much inclined to travel & being much absent from his Pastoral charge— On one of these expeditions he died in the 1772 in the Island of Barbadoes whether he had gone to solicit benefactions for the College of New-Jersey— He was succeeded [Aug]¹ October 1774 by Nath^l Irwin the present Pastor The Stated worshippers at the time—¹ of his settlement were near 200 families. They have been reduced, chiefly by migration to about 150. Of these however some are not Pew-holders— [The Church was incorporated by a Law of the State of Pennsy^a. passed Sept^r. 20th. 1782—]¹ Old & new side united with the utmost cordiality in his Call nor has the Spirit of party appeared among them ever since. The Church was incorporated by a Law of Pennsy^a. passed the 20th. day of Sept^r. 1782— The Rev^d. M^r. Gellatly a seceding Minister of talents & character [married]¹ from Scoland, married into the family of Robt^t. Bready then a Member of this Church & attached to the party of M^r. M^cHenry— This event conspiring with the death of M^r. M^cHenry which happened about the same time, made a favourable opening for the Seceders coming in & establishing an altar in this place— They embraced the opportunity, & attached a few families to them & made use of the old Church as their place of public worship. M^r. Gellatly however died & altho' M^r. Marshal* endeavoured to keep the stream running, it is long since dried up— All the seceders have returned: the Bready family only excepted—

Memoirs of the Presbyterian Church of Deep-run.

This Church is situated near the centre of Bucks County about thirty three miles [North]¹ nearly due North from Philad^a. It was founded about the year 1732 & after receiving occasional supplies for five or six years had for its first Stated Pastor the Rev^d. Francis M^cHenry. This worthy Man was licensed in the Kingdom of Ireland, arrived in America in the fall of the year 1737 & in the following year was ordained at

* Now of Philadelphia.

¹ Erased.