

History of the

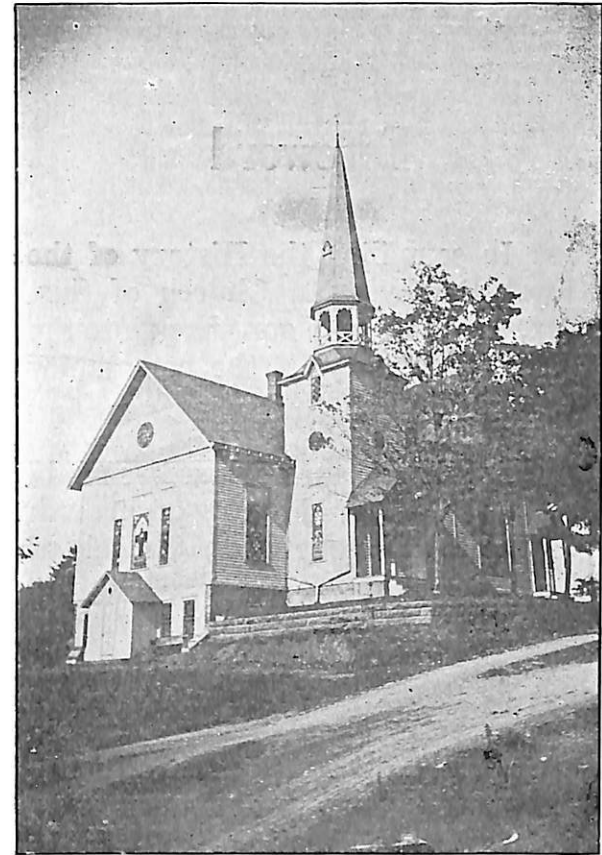
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sussex, New Jersey

One Hundredth Anniversary

1839 1939





First Presbyterian Church

Sussex, New Jersey

1939

Foreword

In compiling the History of the First Presbyterian Church of Sussex, N. J., we have gone back into the religious history of the community to its beginning.

Particular stress has been laid upon the hundred years of growth of the 3rd Presbyterian Church of Wantage, now the 1st Presbyterian Church of Sussex.

As the bibliography shows we have sought many available sources of information. Our thanks are due many of our church and community for helpful information.

AMELIA S. DECKER (*Mrs. Ralph*)
RALPH DECKER,

Historians.

HISTORY

First Presbyterian Church at Sussex, New Jersey 1839—1939

May 1, 1939—Just 100 years since the organization of the church known now as the First Presbyterian Church of Sussex.

Truly a century of activity. Today we are standing, as it were, upon an eminence, looking back into the striking events of the past, and peering forward into the years, striving to imagine the future of this church and congregation.

Early History of First Churches

In order to understand the establishment of Presbyterianism in Wantage Township, Sussex County, we must journey back into the religious activities prior to the date of the founding of this house of worship.

As early as 1737, Dutch settlers along the Delaware River in Sussex County had organized four Dutch Reformed Churches, these being served by able preachers. Finally, May 11th, 1785, Rev. Elias Van Bunschoten was called by three of these churches: Machackemack (Port Jervis), Minisink (Brick House), and Wallpack (near Flatbrookville). The church near Shawnee, Pa., had withdrawn from the group.

Mr. Van Bunschoten

Mr. Van Bunschoten was born in New Hackensack, Dutchess County, N. Y., October 26, 1738. He was graduated from Princeton College, 1768, and studied theology with Dr. Hermanus Myer, of Kingston, N. Y.

An earnest and devoted worker, Mr. Van Bunschoten labored under difficulties. The influences of the American Revolution were

disastrous to the churches because of the diversion of thought into different channels, and because of the spread of infidelity. In an article published many years ago in the New Brunswick Review, a writer says: "The traditions of the barbarism of some of Mr. Van-Bunschoten's people would almost exceed belief, were there not still living at a great age, some credible witnesses of the facts. Thus it is related that it was not an uncommon practice to race their horses on the way to church, that the men would be playing ball outside the house of God, while the pastor was preaching to a few people within, and that they would sometimes enter the humble sanctuary, and sit throughout the service with their hats on in sheer bravado."

Organization of Church in the Clove

However, Mr. Van Bunschoten was a persistent and ardent worker, and April 16, 1788, organized the descendants of the Dutch and Huguenots of the Clove into a Dutch Reformed Church in response to a petition signed by 55 residents of the Upper Clove neighborhood.

The petition stated that "a few members of the Dutch Reformed Church had settled in the county some 40 years before, since which time, the Rev. Thomas Romeyns had preached for them occasionally," tradition says, "principally in Helmas Titsworth's barn in the Clove." Rev. John Casparus Fryenmuth had preached occasionally to these faithful people even before Rev. Romeyns. In inclement weather, these services were probably held in farm houses.

Other Church Activities

Some activity in religious life had already been inaugurated in Deckertown. A faithful group of New Englanders had organized, 1744, a Congregational Church called the Beemer Meeting House, located near the old Blooming Grove school, and which was the first and only Congregational Church in Sussex County. The first pastor was Rev. A. Augustine, and the second was Rev. Jabez Colver. Mr. Colver owned a large tract of land around Culver's Gap, the lake and Gap still bearing his name. He was pastor for thirty years but was loyal to England and moved to Canada, dying in 1812. The English called him "The United Empire Loyalist;" Americans called him "Tory." The Governor of Canada gave him a grant of 1,000 acres of land, also 400 acres to each of his married children, and 200 acres to each single child.

Then the Baptist Church had built, 1830, a meeting house at the present location of the Deckertown Union Cemetery, although they had been active at Hamburg since 1751.

Mr. Van Bunschoten divided his services between the churches on the Delaware and the Clove Church, serving those to which he had been called until 1800, but removing to Wantage in 1792. He continued his duties to the Clove Church until 1815, dying somewhat later after a painful illness. He was the first and only pastor of the Clove Church under its organization as a Reformed Church, for nearly thirty years, also the last pastor to serve the United churches in the Delaware Valley.

While serving the Clove Church, Mr. Van Bunschoten endowed Queens College, now Rutgers, with a gift of \$14,600, said to be the first endowment for Theological education in America. He later increased that bequest, through his will, to \$17,000, the money to aid worthy young men to study for the ministry. The fund, through wise management, in 1886, had reached more than \$20,000, and over 150 ministers had been aided in studying the gospel.

The Clove Church

After the organization and incorporation of the Clove Church, as the First Presbyterian Church of Wantage under an act passed (March 10, 1786) by the New Jersey Legislature, the first of its kind to legalize the incorporation of religious bodies in our state, a log church was built above the present old stone house in the Clove and opposite the old Clove Cemetery. Mr. Van Bunschoten became its pastor (in 1788), 50 members, 25 male and 25 female, participating in the life of the church.

At first, being unable to pay their minister one-half of a very small salary, they united with Westtown in his support, and he served that church also, but membership so increased in the Clove church that soon they could assure their minister a full salary, and he withdrew from the Westtown Congregation.

Soon after the death of Rev. Van Bunschoten, the Clove Church, was dissolved by vote of its members and November 24, 1817, was merged in the First Presbyterian Church of Wantage, organized under the New Jersey Presbytery August 11, 1818, with 25 members, 12 males and 13 females.

Rev. Gershom Williams was the first pastor. During his ministry 64 members were received on Confession of Faith and 44 on certificate.

When they ceased to be a Reformed Church in 1817, the trustees were authorized to employ a minister to preach one-third of the time at the Clove, one-third of the time at Deckertown and the residue of time between Beemer Meeting House and the Log Meeting House. (Probably Beemerville).

A New Church

This small membership mentioned above, from so large a congregation, leads us to believe that a number of members from Deckertown formed a branch organization because they found it difficult to attend the Clove Church at all seasons.

Exactly when they erected a church home is not known, but it is certain that a frame structure was put up on the hill overlooking the village, and used as a union church, although Josiah Wickham who lived to be very old declared that it was Presbyterian.

Rev. Enos Osborn was the first pastor of this church, not as a regular supply at first, but as assistant to Rev. Mr. Williams of the Clove. Among the papers left by Rev. Edward Allen occurs the following: "Friday, December 18, 1818: Arrived at Newfoundland and preached in the evening at the house of Major Sutton. The attendance was good. Had the pleasure of seeing Bro. Enos A. Osborn on his way as a missionary to Deckertown to assist Rev. Mr. Williams. The Lord is reviving His work in that region." Records show that services were held during 1818-1820; in the morning at the Clove and Deckertown at night, or Deckertown in the morning, and Log Church at night, or Log Church in the daytime and Clove at night. (Log Church probably Beemerville).

Again Rev. Edward Allen said: "Wednesday, June 9, 1819, Brother Enos A. Osborn laboring at Deckertown called on me (at Mr. Linn's in Hamburg) and spent the day. We examined the points on which he expected next week to be examined by Presbytery for ordination."

Growth of Presbyterian Church

The growth of the Presbyterian Church especially from 1815 to 1826 was very marked. The "Presbytery of Jersey" which included the Churches of Northern Sussex, speaks in its report of "Wonders of Mercy," 1,500 conversions said to have occurred within its bounds.

Robert Ogden, a Ruling Elder of the Sparta Church, writes in his diary: "Tuesday, August 25, 1818: After breakfast, sett off with Mr. Crane to go to a General Meeting at the Beemer Church; about 100 attended. They had prayer at sunrise with 50 present. At nine the service began, and lasted until noon, then resumed at 1 p. m. continuing until 4 p. m. It was thought the attendance amounted to at least 1,500."

"Another minister, Rev. Edward Allen, stirred the hearts of the people with his eloquent preaching." He says "that on August 26, 1818, in a gig with Judge Linn, he rode to Beemer Meeting House.

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There were assembled five Presbyterian ministers, two of the Baptist faith, one Methodist preacher and one independent."

"Public worship began at 10 a. m. and the audience was so large that it could not half get inside the church. In the afternoon, the preacher stood at the door, and it was judged that nearly 2,000 persons were present, but the order and solemnity were as great as if it had been on the Lord's Day."

Rev. Edward Allen became pastor of the Clove Church, beginning his service there early in 1821. During this time the Deckertown congregation united with that of the Clove and Rev. Allen preached alternately in the two churches.

Church at Beemerville

The great revival of 1824, when Allen was pastor of the First Wantage Church, indicates that a congregation had been assembling at Beemerville.

Robert Ogden's diary has again left a most interesting record. He says: "Saturday, October 23, 1824. Lodged at Mr. Allen's. Sabbath, 24th. Attended the communion at the new meeting house below the mountain in Wantage (Beemerville) under the pastoral care of Rev. Edward Allen. A powerful and extensive revival of religion has taken place in that Congregation, and the Congregation of the Clove and of Deckertown, now united under the care of Mr. Allen . . . 122 members were received into the church, of whome more than fifty received baptism. . . . The house, although large was crowded to overflowing." 342 members were added to the three congregations under the leadership of Rev. Allen who labored until 1830, resigning because of ill health.

Rev. Edward Allen should always be held in loving remembrance for the great work accomplished by him for the church and congregation of Wantage. It is said he was the first to arouse special attention in classical education; a pioneer along that line.

The Stone Church at Beemerville

Soon the three congregations determined they were too large and July 13, 1834, those at Beemerville withdrew and erected the beautiful stone church there. Rev. Allen became the stated supply of the Second Presbyterian Church of Wantage, serving until 1841.

The Congregational Church with meetings at the Beemer Meeting House was dissolved by the vote of its members in July, 1844, and the Clerk of the Congregation was directed to give them letters to the Second Presbyterian Church of Wantage. (Beemerville).

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Third Presbyterian Church of Wantage

Then on May 1, 1839, Rev. George Pierson, pastor of the Clove Church, at the request of several members of his congregation residing in the village of Deckertown, organized the Third Presbyterian Church of Wantage, with 28 members, few in number, but with fervid enthusiasm.

The minutes of those first meetings to organize, held 100 years ago, are still well preserved and are very legible even after a century. Let us read the opening paragraph of those records.

“By the appointment of the Presbytery of Newark, a committee consisting of the Rev. Barnabas King, the Rev. John Ford, the Rev. Joseph Vance, and Messrs. Joseph Jackson and Daniel Haines, Elders, met in the village of Deckertown to hear and decide upon a request of several individuals residing in the village and its vicinity to be organized into a Presbyterian Church. The committee met on the thirtieth of April, 1839, and on the following day proceeded to organize a new church under the name of the Third Presbyterian Church, and consisting of 28 members.” This number was increased on June 3 by seventeen other members presenting certificates from the First Church so that when the pastor entered the work in December, 1839, the total membership was forty-five.

Those members, the 28 who so courageously set out to carry on this important church work were: Lewis Whitaker, Jacob H. Beemer, John S. Smith, Anna Whitaker, Catherine Smith, Charlotte Hopkins, Eliza McCarrick, Elizabeth Brink, Elisa Decker, Esther Post, Horton Beemer and Mary, his wife, Halory L. Beemer, Hulda Decker, Henry Casky, James McCarrick, Jonathan Chrystie, James A. Post, Wm. Rankin and Lydia, his wife, Lewis L. Smith, Margaret Whitaker, Nelson Decker, Nancy Decker, Sarah Ann Adams, Thomas Chamberlain, Wm. Post and Zillah Beemer.

Lewis Whitaker became the first Ruling Elder of the newly organized church, having sustained a reputation as an Elder elsewhere. Jacob H. Beemer and Horton Beemer, also chosen as elders, were to be ordained later, their ordination deferred that they might have time for consideration.

Of this first board of Ruling Elders, two served until their death, Mr. Whitaker for 34 years, and Mr. Beemer for 30 years. From 1869 to 1876, the church lost by death six elders: Jacob H. Beemer, Wm. W. Dekay, Ephraim Sanford, Lewis Whitaker, Jonathan Whitaker and Simon Buckley.

During the first meetings for organization, Rev. George Pierson we find acting as moderator on June 3 and on June 12, 1839, but at

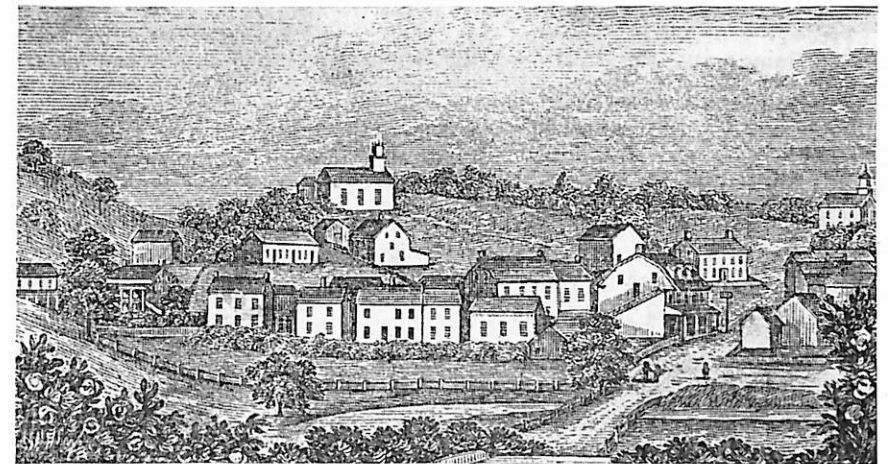
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the next session December 25, 1839, Rev. James W. Wood, the pastor chosen in October, 1839, as the first preacher for the new church, took his place as moderator.

First Pastor

Rev. James W. Wood was born at Florida, N. Y., October 25, 1813, was graduated from Lafayette College, 1837, and from Union Theological Seminary, 1840. He served the church at Deckertown from October, 1839, to October, 1845. Afterwards for seventeen years he preached at Chester, N. Y., later at Allentown, Pa., where he died May 5, 1884, having served in the ministry for forty-four years.

Rev. Wood was not only a preacher but a traveler and lecturer, frequently delivering lectures on his journeys to Egypt and Palestine. He was the author of a chronological chart, several published sermons and addresses, one, “The Living Word,” preached in this church before the Sussex County Bible Society, June 8, 1861. 122 persons were added to the membership while he was pastor.



Southwest View of Deckertown

Barber and Howe History—Published 1844

This picture was taken near the residence of Matthew H. Cooper at the Southwestern entrance to the village. The Presbyterian church is seen on the left and the Deckertown Academy on the right. The village contains 4 stores, 1 fuling, 1 clover, 1 saw, and 2 grist mills, a variety of mechanic shops, about 50 dwellings, and a population of near 500.

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Church Built

During the latter part of Rev. Wood's six years of service money was contributed and arrangements were made for erecting a church edifice said by some to have been completed in 1845, although the accompanying picture was printed in Barber & Howe History-1844. At the building of the new church, the old frame Union Church on the hill was abandoned, and remained idle until taken over by William Rankin for his academy.

The land upon which the new church home was erected was donated by Elder Lewis Whitaker, the first Ruling Elder, who was the generous contributor later of land upon which a parsonage was built.

Following the example of their forbears, the Whitaker family and their descendants have taken a prominent part in the life of the church and community during the century just completed.

Second Pastor

Rev. Alonzo B. Rich, D. D., the second pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church of Wantage, but the first to preach in the new edifice, was ordained by the Presbytery of Rockaway in 1846 and served as pastor at Deckertown 1846 and 1847.

He was a native of Vermont, being born at Grand Isle, November 10, 1814, being graduated from the University of Vermont in 1842 and Union Theological Seminary in 1845.

After leaving Deckertown, Mr. Rich went into the Congregational Church, spending five years in Connecticut, 15 years in Massachusetts, and nine years in New Hampshire. He lived to be 78 years of age, dying 1892 at Short Hills, N. J.

Trials in the Church

Today, with our freedom of church attendance, and with the liberty of thought and action, we can hardly believe that as early as this in the history of the new church, trials for all sorts of misdemeanors were carried on before the Ruling Elders.

Various members were brought before this tribunal to be tried by the church for intoxication, the possession of liquor, lack of reverence, lack of church attendance at the services and communion, for getting up promiscuous bills to the discredit of the church, for keeping notoriously wicked company and for profanity.

If the accused was repentant, he was compelled to appear at a Sunday Service before the congregation, where the charges were made public with the action of the session. If unrepentant, he was ex-

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Other Pastors

communicated until such time as he might be willing to consent to the strict demands of the church.

Following Rev. A. B. Rich we find Rev. Bethuel Farrand accepting a call to this church. Mr. Farrand was born at Bridport, Vt., May 27, 1812. He was graduated at Middlebury College 1839, then studied theology with private instructors. He preached at Augusta 1842-1847, then in 1848 began at Deckertown remaining until 1854 when he resigned because of ill health. After resigning he taught for some time at Deckertown, then in a classical school at Newburgh, then at Port Jervis. From the last place he went to Indiana as pastor of the churches at Lima and Ontario, where he continued preaching until his death at Lima, May 7, 1866. A sermon preached by him while at Deckertown on "The True Position of Woman," was published in pamphlet form at the request of the congregation.

In 1854 Rev. Wm. H. Babbit acted as stated supply, then being ordained by Presbytery became in 1855 the regular pastor, remaining until 1856.

Mr. Babbit was born at Mendham, N. J., June 5, 1825. He was graduated at the College of New Jersey 1846, and from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1853. After leaving Deckertown he was pastor at Hoboken for eleven years and afterward went to Glendale, Ohio, where he was pastor and for several years preached at Tecumseh, Michigan. He passed into the Great Beyond in 1892.

Rev. Peter Kanouse

Rev. Peter Kanouse commenced his duties in the Third Presbyterian Church of Wantage on June 15, 1856, and continued until failing health and infirmities of age caused him to cease active service. His was such a remarkable life that we give a more extended review of it.

He was born in Rockaway Valley, August 20, 1784, and died at Deckertown, May 30, 1864. He united with the Rockaway Church in 1807 at the age of 23 and became a Ruling Elder in 1809.

Peter Kanouse had no opportunity for a liberal education, but had much natural ability, and desiring to go into the study of the ministry he set himself resolutely toward that goal. He pursued a classical course in the Bloomfield Academy, and the study of theology under the direction of Rev. Dr. James Richards, of Newark, and in 1821, at the age of 37 years, was licensed by the Presbytery of Jersey. In 1822 he was ordained and installed over the church at Succasunna. In 1830 he was called to the First Church of Wantage (Clove), where during two revivals, 163 members were added to the church roll.

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After a ministry of four years he was called to the Free Presbyterian Church of Newark, but came back to Wantage to the Second Presbyterian Church (Beemerville) in 1842.

After several years of successful service there he removed to Wisconsin, and in his old age came again to Wantage, this time to the Third Presbyterian Church (Deckertown) where he did untiring, splendid work for six years.

Mr. Kanouse's historical sermon of 66 pages preached in the Second Presbyterian Church on January 7, 1844, was, without doubt, a most valuable document relating to the early history of Wantage, and the life of those settlers and founders of this township.

He died May 30, 1864, and is buried in Fairview Cemetery.

Rev. Deyo Rev. Timlow

In 1864, Rev. O. H. P. Deyo was engaged for one year, and was followed by Rev. Phillip J. Timlow who acted as stated supply for four years or until 1868.

Mr. Timlow was born at Amity, N. Y., in 1808, graduated in medicine, then entered Lafayette College for a time, afterward graduating from Union College in 1837. He was ordained at Bellevue, Lancaster County, Pa., in May, 1839, was the son of a Presbyterian minister, and one of four brothers who entered the ministry. He was considered a very able preacher. He lived in his old age at Gap, Pa., where he died in 1895.

Rev. Nathaniel Elmer

On the retirement of Rev. Mr. Timlow from the church, Rev. Nathaniel Elmer supplied the pulpit for several months. He was born in Wantage, Sussex County, January 31, 1816. He was graduated from Union Theological Seminary. He died at Middletown, N. Y., July 11, 1884.

Rev. James McWilliams

1869 to 1872 found Rev. James McWilliams preaching in this church as a stated supply. He was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, July 21, 1817. Receiving his classical education in his homeland, he came to the United States, graduating from Princeton Seminary in 1841.

Mr. McWilliams was first licensed and ordained by the Presbytery of Newton, and was pastor of First Oxford from 1842 to 1853. He then acted as stated supply at different periods to churches in Pennsylvania. He was a man of excellent scholarship and was for several years principal of the Parochial Academy at Towanda, Pa.

While still a member of Newton Presbytery, and preparing to move to another field of work, he was called to his reward September 21, 1873.

Rotary System of Eldership Adopted

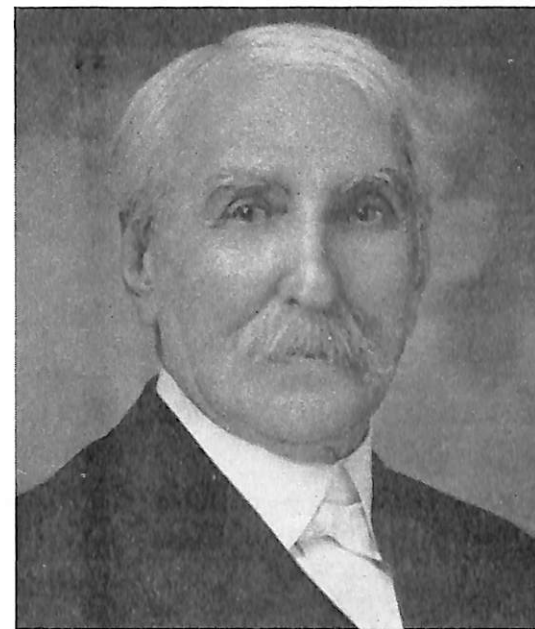
In October, 1870, during Mr. McWilliams's ministry, the Rotary System of Eldership was adopted by the session of the church. For some time prior to that date there existed a "want of active and cordial cooperation and harmony among the members in maintaining gospel ordinance," therefore the change was made. More Elders were elected and the system adopted. Rev. Andrew Tully, a member of the Presbyterial Committee, preached at that time and counseled with the Elders.

Connected first with the Newark Presbytery, later with the Presbytery of Rockaway, the wise counsel of leaders of these groups was freely given. Today we are a member of the Newton Presbytery with which we have been affiliated many years.

Parsonage Fund

In October, 1870, it was decided that the gift of this Church to the Memorial Reunion Fund be made in securing a parsonage, and in April, 1872, the report was made that \$3,000 had been made for that purpose.

Rev. Edgar A. Hamilton



Our next minister, Rev. Edgar A. Hamilton, began his first pastor-

ate in this church in 1873, remaining ten years, or until 1883, the longest term then served by any pastor.

Mr. Hamilton was born at Hamilton's Settlement, Wis., March 8, 1842. He entered the army at an early age during the Civil War and left the service at the close of the struggle as Lieutenant-Colonel of the First New York Mounted Rifles.

Though Colonel Hamilton enlisted in the Cavalry, he once said that he saw General Kilpatrick only once or twice while in Virginia. When the G. A. R. encampment was held on Kilpatrick's farm near Sussex in 1878, a grand military parade took place from this village to the farm. Colonel Hamilton, General Kilpatrick and Colonel Davis were the three horsemen who led it.

After the war, Rev. Hamilton entered Oberlin University, graduating in 1870, then went into Union Seminary, being graduated in 1873. During his service the church building was enlarged and improved. On leaving Deckertown, he became pastor of the Second Church of Springfield, Missouri.

Mr. Hamilton first married Martha Ecob, four children being born to them, Laurens, Arthur, Grace, Eleanor. His second wife was Mrs. Carrie Rogers Tolfree who passed away a number of years before Mr. Hamilton's death.

Rev. E. A. Hamilton was recalled to this church May 1, 1893, was reinstalled on June 28th of that year. He retired in 1917 after thirty-four years of service. He died June 26, 1926, at the age of eighty-five years.

Practically the greater part of his life was devoted to the welfare of Presbyterianism in Deckertown and Sussex County. Mr. Hamilton was possessed of more than ordinary talent, and his sermons were always examples of classical literature, being delivered in a manner to command interest and attention.

In recognition of his long and faithful service he was elected Pastor Emeritus. He was especially remembered for his fidelity to the teaching of the Bible, for his loyalty to the faith and for his ministry to his people in sickness and health, in joy and in sorrow

Rev. James W. Coleman

Following Mr. Hamilton's resignation in 1883, Rev. James W. Coleman, a nephew of Dr. Timlow, a former pastor, accepted a call to this church and remained as pastor until 1887. He was born at Amity, N. Y., June 8, 1833, was graduated from Princeton in 1856 and from Union Seminary, 1861.

After being ordained by the Fourth Presbytery of New York, he

commenced preaching at Darien, Conn., in a Union Chapel, and as a result, a Presbyterian Church was organized where he remained as pastor for thirteen years.

He afterward served at New Haven, Conn., Jacksonville, Fla., and Davenport, Iowa. Feeble health interfered with his pastoral work but after leaving Deckertown he preached occasionally, dying after a long illness at Noroton, Conn., October 4, 1891.

Rev. Alexander McA. Thorburn



Rev. Alexander McA. Thorburn was installed in the Third Presbyterian Church of Wantage on June 14, 1887, and remained until February 3, 1893. He died at Deckertown, 1894.

Born in Albany, N. Y., May 6, 1836, he was educated at Union College, graduating in 1857, and from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1860. The Presbytery of Albany licensed him to preach in 1859, and in 1860 he was ordained and installed pastor of the Malta Presbyterian Church, Saratoga County, N. Y., November 21, 1865, installed as pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Ogden, Monroe County, N. Y.; November, 1882, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Marcellus, N. Y., and of the Third Presbyterian Church, Deckertown, N. J., June 14, 1887. He resigned in 1893 because of ill health, and died in 1894.

Just a few lines from the minutes of the session which met on February 3, 1893, to consider Rev. Thorburn's resignation will indicate his place among the people of the church.

He had increased the membership, had quickened and renewed the spiritual life, had caused increased interest in missions and had organized a progressive Young People's Society. The Ladies' Missionary Society had reorganized, and with the pastor's wife as the inspiring leader had made rapid growth, both in numbers and in the increase of contributions.

From the very beginning, missions had been an important subject for consideration in the minds of these pioneers in church activities. Even before the first minister was chosen in 1839, the elders had approved collections for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Home Missionary Society, and the American Tract Society.

Ladies' Society

During the ministry of Rev. Thorburn and his estimable wife, the "Ladies' Aid" took on new impetus, becoming the "Ladies' Improvement Society," with express purpose of providing for, and taking care of the church, which in 1892 was rebuilt and enlarged at the expense of \$6,000, all of which was provided for and the church rededicated without one cent of debt.

Some of the charter members of this Improvement Society were: Mrs. James H. Dunning, Mrs. Brice P. Walling, Miss Rebecca and Miss Emma Woodruff, Mrs. George Kintner, Mrs. Theodore F. Margarum, Mrs. Peter Wells, Mrs. John Moore, Mrs. W. B. Mills and Miss Mary Lawrence.

From the very beginning this ladies' organization was of material assistance in the financial support of the church, otherwise the principal methods of raising funds were the renting of pews and private contributions. On May 1, 1916, the entire system of giving was changed. The Every Member Canvass Plan was adopted, was found to be very successful, and has since been followed. From that time there was no rental of pews.

The Dedication

In 1876, the church had been enlarged and repaired, nearly \$2,500 being expended on the improvements, but the greatly enlarged building of 1892 and its dedication deserves more than a line.

We quote from a newspaper article published at that time. "Thursday, March 10, 1892, was a memorable one in the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Deckertown. On that day, the enlarged and remodeled building was dedicated.

"An all day's program had been arranged and although rain greeted the guests, the exercises were largely attended. The following visiting pastors were present: Rev. George Alexander, D. D., pastor of the University Place Presbyterian Church, New York City; Rev. Alex. H. Young, D. D., Newark, N. J.; Rev. E. Clark Cline, Phillipsburg, N. J.; Rev. Charles Beattie, Middletown, N. Y.; Rev. Theron Brittain, Ridgebury, N. Y.; Rev. R. H. Taylor, Westtown, N. Y.; Rev. J. C. Cromack, of the Clove; Rev. C. C. Lathrop and Rev. W. M. Johnston, of Deckertown."

"Mr. Beattie delivered the morning sermon, his subject being,

'The Church for the Times.' Mr. A. C. Tully read a paper entitled 'Presbyterianism.' James F. Conklin read from interesting autograph letters from the following former pastors of the church: Rev. Dr. Alonzo B. Rich, of Short Hills, N. J.; Rev. Dr. Phillip J. Timlow, of Gap, Pa.; Rev. W. M. Babbitt, of Tecumseh, Mich.; Rev. E. A. Hamilton, of Springfield, Missouri."

During the afternoon exercises "Rev. C. C. Lathrop extended hearty congratulations as did Dr. A. H. Young. Rev. J. C. Cromack spoke as a representative of the Mother Church (the Clove) to which Rev. Alex McA. Thorburn responded.

"Rev. Mr. Brittain, Rev. Cline and Rev. Taylor extended congratulations, and many letters from friends were read. The address of the afternoon was made by Rev. A. H. Young, of Newark.

"In the evening the church was crowded, Rev. E. Clark Cline bringing greetings, the sermon being preached by Dr. George Alexander, D. D., of New York City.

"At the close of the meeting Mr. B. W. Decker, chairman of the building committee, reported that a debt of \$1,150 remained to be paid. An effort to raise this was made at once that the church might be dedicated free of debt.

"The spirit of giving was electrical, five \$100 subscriptions being given immediately, the rest raised by smaller subscriptions, with \$100 more than required. 'Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow' was sung with a will by the audience.

"Splendid music was furnished for the occasion of this dedication. Several bass solos were rendered by E. C. Martin, of Morristown. Mrs. J. D. Simmons presided at the organ and the choir consisted of tenors, B. W. Decker, Prof. W. H. Seeley; bass, E. C. Martin, J. H. Couse; alto, Mrs. R. J. Quince; sopranos, Mrs. W. S. Titsworth and Mrs. H. D. VanGaasbeek." (This choir furnished excellent music for a number of years.)

"Lunch and supper were served by the ladies in the church parlor and many guests lingered to admire the beautiful stained glass windows, costing nearly \$1,000, also the solid black walnut seats and pretty cushions."

"On this occasion, Mrs. Susan V. Tully presented the church with a handsome carved communion table, and Mrs. B. W. Hornbeck gave a very pretty lamp for the use of the pastor."

Just prior to this dedication on March 10, 1892, in fact February 27, 1892, by action of the trustees, the corporate name of the church was changed from the Third Presbyterian Church of Wantage to the First Presbyterian Church of Deckertown.

Rev. W. August George



Following the resignation of Mr. Hamilton's second pastorate, Mr. W. August George was chosen to succeed him.

Mr. George came from the Presbyterian Church at Washingtonville, N. Y., being received by the Presbytery of Newton September 17, 1918, from the Presbytery of Hudson, N. Y. He had been ordained by the Congregational Council of Springfield in 1898.

His pastoral relations were dissolved here June 26, 1923, when he resigned to go to Harmony, where he remained until 1928, resigning again to go to Windsor, N. Y., where he died in 1933.

Music

Music, from the very organization of the church in 1839 was outstanding in the minds of the Ruling Elders and the entire congregation. For on April 24, 1840, just about a year from the beginning of the church, the session agreed that Abraham Smith be invited to be chorister of the church. He served for many years, becoming an Elder in 1869. He died on January 4, 1888.

Another chorister was Elder James H. Dunning, who led in training the choir, having charge also of the music in the Sunday School and Young People's Society. No estimation can be made of the great value of the services of these two choristers for today our church is still music-minded, and for years has enjoyed the faithful services of an excellent choir.

The Pipe Organ

Prior to the installment of a pipe organ, Mrs. John D. Simmons, wife of Elder John D. Simmons, had been a faithful accompanist on a small organ similar to those used in churches in the early days.

But in 1913, interest was aroused in the establishment of a pipe organ. A committee composed of Ralph Decker, Ethel VanGaasbeek, and Ellen M. Dunning was appointed to canvass the congregation.

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Dr. I. B. Lowe acted as treasurer. The contract price of the organ was to be \$1,700.

In less than a week, over \$1,743 were pledged in contributions of \$100 down to \$1. Actually with work done in preparation for the organ, over \$2,100 were expended. The list of contributors to that cause is a splendid reminder of many members of our congregation who were eager and willing to advance the music of the church.

The organ first pumped with a water motor, was later modernized by the installation of an electric motor.

The church has been especially fortunate in being able to secure competent musicians to play the pipe organ, first, Mrs. W. L. Rohn, who resigned because of removal to South Jersey, then Mrs. Miles K. Wilson, who today remains our efficient and faithful organist.

Men's Club

During the year 1913 and early in 1914 a Men's Club made up of forty-six members was organized, calling themselves the Bachelors and Benedicts. For several years this lively club met every two weeks and did much to support the spirit and life of the congregation, but finally declined, and was abandoned because of lack of interest on the part of the men of the church.

Ladies' Guild

The Ladies' Guild was organized in 1909 by Mrs. A. C. Tully and Miss Grace Hamilton, elder daughter of Rev. E. A. Hamilton. Mrs. Tully became its first president.

Today the Guild is a thriving organization, assisting in the social life of the church, and in its financial support.

Sunday School

Just when a Sunday School was organized in the church is uncertain but in 1858 there was a thriving Sunday School of fifty members. It is probable that the organization of a church school took place just previous to that, when Rev. Robert Crosset came to the Beemerville church. During his ministry there he was instrumental in organizing a Sunday School, the plan being followed by other congregations. Dr. I. B. Lowe has been the efficient superintendent of our Sunday School for more than twenty-five years, resigning in January, 1939. The assistant superintendent has been Mr. Ralph Decker, serving during the same period.

In the summer of 1925 it was felt that more room was needed for

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the growing Sunday School of our own church and plans were made to add three rooms to the main assembly, also to reconstruct and improve the kitchen and dining-room in the basement. This was completed the same year and has since been of incomparable convenience to all organizations of the church.

Rev. A. J. W. Mowatt



Our present pastor is Rev. A. J. W. Mowatt who was called after the resignation of Rev. W. A. George, in 1923.

Mr. Mowatt was born in Donadea, County Kildare, Ireland, in 1884. After attending the public school he entered the Intermediate and Commercial School, and upon graduation entered the Skerry's Civil Service College in Dublin. During the years 1902 to 1907 he was a government employee of the Transvaal, South Africa.

Entering the United States in 1907, he graduated from Dickinson Preparatory School at Carlisle, Pa., in 1908, from Drew Theological Seminary, Madison, N. J., in 1912, and took special studies in Columbia University from 1912 to 1913. He was granted citizenship in the United States in 1922.

During 1910-11 Mr. Mowatt was a student pastor at Towaco, N. J., Associate pastor New Rochelle, N. Y., 1912-13, pastor at Bantam,

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Conn., 1913-14. Thornhurst, Pa., 1914-16, Stevensville and Rushville Pa., 1916-20, Andover, N. J., 1920-23, coming to Sussex in 1923. He was married to Nellie Elise Gruber June 27, 1912, four children being born to them: Wilton, Sydney, Harold, Patricia.

Mr. Mowatt has had the second longest pastorate in the history of our church, serving throughout the years of the depression, and has experienced the lack of interest and enthusiasm of the church at large, due to the diversion of thought, because of worldly influences. Against the adversities of that depression and the influences of new forces, he has struggled valiantly to maintain a high ideal of religious worship, and devotion to the church, and each year has noted additions to the membership. He was instrumental in reviving the interest in young people's work, as well as cooperation among the local churches. All truly interested members wish him God-speed in his efforts.

In conclusion: We often speak lightly of those pioneer fathers who established our churches and founded our country but today, if we are to endure we must revive much of the spirit of those men who stood fast for principles they felt were right.

“Renew their breed, Almighty God,
Those pioneers of yesterday
Who through the wilderness and wastes
Undaunted pushed their westward way.”

“New frontiers lift their rocky heights
New deserts stretch before our years.
Renew in us, Almighty God,
The spirit of those pioneers.”

Bibliography

- Minutes of the Session—1839-1938.
- Address by A. C. Tully—1892.
- History of Deckertown—C. E. Stickney.
- History Sussex and Warren County—(Snell).
- History of New Jersey—(Barber & Howe).
- Minutes Board of Trustees.

Ministers

Rev. George Pierson	- - -	May, 1839—October, 1839
Rev. James W. Wood	- - -	October, 1839—October, 1845
Rev. Alonzo B. Rich	- - -	1846-1847
Rev. Bethuel Farrand	- - -	1848-1854
Rev. William H. Babbitt	- - -	1855-1856
Rev. Peter Kanouse	- - -	1856-1862
Rev. O. H. P. Deyo	- - -	1864
Rev. Peter J. Timlow	- - -	1864-1868
Rev. Nathaniel Elmer	- - -	Supply, 1868
Rev. James McWilliams	- - -	1869-1873
Rev. Edgar A. Hamilton	- - -	1873-1882
Rev. James W. Coleman	- - -	1882-1886
Rev. Alexander McA. Thorburn	- - -	1887-1893
Rev. Edgar A. Hamilton	- - -	1893-1917
Rev. W. August George	- - -	1918-1923*
Rev. Acton J. W. Mowatt	- - -	1923-

*Installed May 21, 1919.
 Note—No former ministers living.

BROUCE R. NARDE

Ruling Elders

	ELECTED	NAMES	TERM OF OFFICE
June	3, 1839	- Lewis Whitaker	Jan. 8, 1873—Death
	12, 1839	- John S. Smith	May 2, 1844—Left
	12, 1839	- Jacob S. Beemer	May 14, 1869—Death
	12, 1839	- Horton Beemer	July 29, 1844—Left
June	5, 1842	- Braddock Decker	Apr. 29, 1848—Left
Aug.	3, 1849	- Nathaniel P. Roe	Apr. 29, 1852—Left
Aug.	3, 1849	- James Bross	Nov. 12, 1854—Left
Dec.	16, 1857	- Simon Buckley	Nov. 23, 1875—Death
June	6, 1869	- Johnathan Whitaker	Dec. 11, 1873—Death
	6, 1869	- William W. DeKay	Aug. 6, 1871—Death
	6, 1869	- Ephraim K. Sanford	May 22, 1872—Death
	6, 1869	- Alanson G. Crane	Apr. 3, 1875—Left
	6, 1869	- Abraham Smith	Jan. 3, 1888—Death
Apr.	23, 1872	- Jeremiah Layton	Nov. 5, 1893—Death
	5, 1874	- James H. Dunning	Oct. 18, 1908—Death
	5, 1874	- J. Halsey Couse	June 6, 1892—Left
	5, 1874	- Nelson W. Heater	Mar. 31, 1883—Left
Apr.	1, 1876	- Lewis H. Decker	Apr. 1, 1876—
Apr.	3, 1878	- Andrew Shorter	Apr. 3, 1881—
Apr.	1, 1879	- Joseph H. Morrison,	
		M. D.	Sept. 11, 1880—Moved
May	2, 1885	- Jacob Gould	Oct. 4, 1921—Death
May	22, 1885	- Amzi E. Wolfe	Apr. 11, 1893—
June	6, 1892	- James F. Conklin	June 7, 1896—Death
Mar.	30, 1894	- Benjamin W. Decker	Apr. 30, 1900—
Mar.	30, 1894	- John D. Simmons	June 7, 1926—Death
Apr.	30, 1897	- Frank P. Adams	Mar. 12, 1936—Death
Apr.	30, 1897	- Henry C. Hunt	Dec. 5, 1919—Moved
June	8, 1900	- Ralph Decker	
May	7, 1909	- Isaac B. Lowe	
May	1, 1923	- Robert V. Armstrong,	
		Sr.	
Apr.	1, 1923	- Parker S. McCoy	
Apr.	1, 1926	- H. D. VanGaasbeek,	
		M. D.	Apr. 20, 1929—Death
Apr.	1, 1930	- S. Royal Mills	
Apr.	1, 1936	- Benjamin D. Simmons	

Note—No former Elders living.

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Trustees

First available records begin with 1906.

F. W. Margarum	1906	Resigned 1913
I. B. Lowe	1906	Resigned 1913
F. P. Adams	1906	Resigned 1911
George W. Sutton	1906	
Amzi E. Wolfe	1906	Resigned 1918
Jacob Gould	1906	Resigned 1915
B. D. Simmons	1911	Resigned 1936
Marshal Hunt	1913	
Frank P. VanInwegen	1914	Moved Away 1932
R. V. Armstrong	1915	Resigned 1921
Manley E. Clark	1915	Moved Away 1917
Clarkson A. Potter	1918	
Dr. H. D. VanGaasbeek	1921	Resigned 1926
Jacob Leport	1922	
Hugh C. Baldwin	1924	Expired 1927
Naamon Sutton	1928	
S. R. Mills	1928	Resigned 1930
Ralph P. Adams	1928	Expired 1936
Albert Compton	1928	
R. V. Armstrong, Jr.	1930	
John D. Simmons	1936	
Robert Lee	1936	

Organization

May 1, 1939

Church Membership	- - - - -	207
Minister	- - - - -	Rev. A. J. W. Mowatt

RULING ELDERS

Rev. A. J. W. Mowatt	- - - - -	Moderator
Dr. Isaac B. Lowe		S. Royal Mills
Robert V. Armstrong, Sr.		Benjamin D. Simmons
Parker S. McCoy		

Ralph Decker—Clerk of Session

TRUSTEES

Robert Lee, President.	Naaman Sutton, Secretary.
John D. Simmons, Secretary of Church.	
Jacob B. Leport	George W. Sutton
Albert Compton	Robert V. Armstrong

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Sunday School

Superintendent - - - - - John H. Whitfield
 Assistant Superintendent - - - - - Mrs. Laurens Hardin
 Secretary - - - - - Frank Roy
 Treasurer - - - - - Miss Elsie Roy
 Pianist - - - - - Miss Elizabeth Simmons
 Assistant Pianist - - - - - Miss Ida Louise Swarts

TEACHERS

Ralph Decker Mrs. R. D. Ayers
 John H. Whitfield Mrs. Marion Moore
 Mrs. Laurens Hardin Miss Elsie Roy
 Miss Janet Struble

Choir

Organist - - - - - Mrs. Miles K. Wilson
 Choir Leader - - - - - Mrs. Melvin Shook

Sopranos
 Mrs. Melvin Shook
 Mrs. Harvey Rannels
 Mrs. John D. Simmons
 Miss Elsie Roy
 Miss Elizabeth Simmons
 Miss Ida Louise Swarts
 Miss Ruth Simmons
 Miss Patricia Mowatt
 Miss Dorothy Haggerty

Altos
 Miss Frances S. Dunning
 Mrs. Laurens Hardin
 Mrs. Naaman Sutton
 Mrs. Ford Ewald
 Elizabeth Haggerty
 Anna Simmons
 Margaret Hunt

Tenors
 Naaman S. Sutton
 Robert Lee
 Harry Beemer

Basses
 Harvey Rannels
 Melvin Shook
 Harold Mowatt

Christian Endeavor Society

President - - - - - Frank Roy
 Vice President - - - - - Gerald Southard
 Secretary - - - - - Elizabeth Simmons
 Treasurer - - - - - Margaret Hunt
 Advisers - - - - - Rev. A. J. W. Mowatt, Mrs. R. V. Armstrong, Jr.

Ladies' Improvement Society

President - - - - - Miss Margaret Stoll
 First Vice President - - - - - Mrs. A. J. W. Mowatt
 Second Vice President - - - - - Mrs. W. L. Geddes
 Secretary - - - - - Mrs. B. D. Simmons
 Treasurer - - - - - Mrs. Naaman Sutton

Ladies' Guild

President - - - - - Mrs. Howard Platt
 Vice President - - - - - Mrs. Lester R. Eddy
 Secretary - - - - - Mrs. Hugh C. Baldwin
 Treasurer - - - - - Mrs. Frank Simon

Ladies' Missionary Society

President - - - - - Mrs. B. W. Roy
 Vice President - - - - - Mrs. Ralph Adams
 Secretary - - - - - Mrs. David Everett
 Treasurer - - - - - Mrs. I. B. Lowe

Anniversary Committee

Ralph Decker, Chairman
 Rev. A. J. W. Mowatt, Secretary

Mrs. C. A. Potter Mrs. R. D. Ayers
 Mrs. M. K. Wilson Mrs. L. M. Hardin
 Mrs. Ralph Decker Mrs. S. R. Mills
 Frank Roy Jacob Leport

