

Historical Sketches

OF

Parishes Represented in the Conventions

OF THE

Protestant Episcopal Church

IN NEW JERSEY,

1785-1816,

AND

Biographical Notices

OF

LAY-DELEGATES IN THOSE YEARS.

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Trinity,  
WOODBIDGE.

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(The following is compiled, in the main, from a sketch furnished by the Rev'd L. H. Lighthipe (at present Rector), with some additions from the sketch written by the late Wm. A. Whitehead, and from other sources.)

Lewis Morris, in his Memorial (Anno 1700) concerning the state of religion in New Jersey, says: "Woodbridge was settled from New England, and were generally Independents till about 16 years since, "there was a number of Scots Presbyterians amongst them; the People "are divided mostly into Presbyterians and Independents, and there "is mixt amongst them Baptists, Quakers, Ranters, *cum multis aliis.*"

The place was named after the Rev'd Thomas Woodbridge, an Independent preacher of Newburyport, Massachusetts, whence its first settlers came. Jeremiah Bass says of Rev'd Edward Portlock (or Perthuck), who is known to have been here as early as 1698, that "he preached some time in Woodbridge." It is known, however, with certainty that Rev'd George Keith held a service in Woodbridge Thursday, Dec. 30, 1703, and Rev'd John Brooke, who in 1705-07 officiated at Elizabeth-Town and Perth Amboy, would probably have officiated at a place half way between the two; but there is no record of such services. No regular services were held until 1711; when Rev'd. Edward Vaughan and Thomas Halliday, the Missionaries at Perth Amboy, began to visit and hold services there. From 1711 to 1725; services were held within a barn which Benjamin Dunham offered for the purpose. A frame building was meantime put up and enclosed; but the death of Mr Dunham on Dec. 31st, 1715, and the transfer of Mr Vaughan to Elizabeth-Town brought matters to a standstill for a while. The ground upon which this Church stood was part of two acres which the proprietors had set apart for parsonage lands. Mr. Halliday continued to officiate occasionally; but in 1717 the Church was still without floor or glass. Although service was afterwards occasionally held in it, it was never finished; and it fell down in ruins. From 1722 to 1752 Rev'd Wm. Skinner, of St. Peter's, Perth Amboy, held services at long intervals.

In 1751 James Parker established the first printing press in New Jersey at Woodbridge. He was an earnest Churchman, and through his efforts the services were revived. In 1752 Rev'd Thos. Bradbury Chandler began missionary efforts there. He wrote to the Society at the time that "they had not been visited by any of our "Clergy for upwards of twenty years." Some few of the congregation had, during this period, attended service at Perth Amboy. "Appearances now are much in favour of the Church there, and I have "seldom had less than 200 hearers." (The good Rector there would be glad of such an audience even now.) He continued his visitations monthly. In November, 1752, he wrote that the Presbyterians had dismissed their Minister, who had been there more than thirty years, because he was too feeble an antagonist of the Church, whose growth disturbed them much. Thus matters went on for several years. On the Sundays, when Mr. Chandler was elsewhere engaged, James Parker officiated as lay-reader, to the general satisfaction of the congregation. He, in September, 1764, complained in a letter to the "Society" of the hostility of the dissenters. "They claim," said he, "that liberty of conscience for themselves which they dont seem "willing to allow to others. We do not trouble them, but they will "not eat their bread in quiet with us." "It pleased Providence to "have given me ability to perform the service. I cheerfully under- "took it. I have continued it as well as my poor ability would per- "mit, and I can say for myself it has been a real pleasure to me to "see any of my endeavours acceptable or any way apparently "useful in propagating true religion and piety. I neither wish nor "hope for any other reward in this life—as it will be more than a "compensation if I meet with any in the next—for though I can "trust to the promises of the blessed Jesus, yet I at best fall far "short of my duty. It hath pleased God to gather and increase the "Church here a little, though the chief of us, being old, can't hope "long to continue; notwithstanding, our children, we hope, are "growing up in the same path." Mr. Parker was for several years Post-Master at New York; and at the time of his death was Comptroller and Secretary of the Post Office for the Northern District of the British Colonies. He was a son of Samuel Parker of Woodbridge, where he was born in 1714. He had been an invalid, and had been obliged to retire from business, in a great measure, for some time prior to his death, which took place at Burlington July 2, 1770. His remains were attended for five miles out of Burlington by a considerable number of gentlemen of that place, and at Perth Amboy met by a like number, who attended the corpse to Woodbridge,

where a numerous congregation assembled at his house, and about six o'clock he was buried near his parents in the Meetinghouse yard. The service was performed by the Rev'd Mr. Preston, Minister of the Church at Perth Amboy. He left one daughter, *Janet*, who married Gunning Bedford, Governor of Delaware in 1796.

In the years 1754-6 a small frame Church was built, and remained until it was burnt in 1858. October 31, 1756 Rev'd Mr. Chandler, the Missionary at Elizabeth Town, wrote: "The Church at Wood-bridge is finished and the Society hath given a Folio Bible and "Common Prayer Book for the use thereof." From 1764 to 1767 Rev'd Robt. McKean, Missionary at Perth Amboy, officiated; after him Rev'd Mr. Preston, who was Chaplain of the 26th Regiment, officiated until the Revolutionary war put a stop to the services. A Christmas gift, a Silver Chalice, inscribed "The gift of Mary "Dennis, widow, to Trinity Church in Woodbridge, December ye "25th, 1760," was presented on that day.

The Parish was incorporated December 6, 1769, by Royal Charter, signed by Sir Wm. Franklin, then Colonial Governor of New Jersey. The Corporators were Samuel Jaquess and Samuel Tingley, Church Wardens; David Alston, Esq., Thomas Hadden, Joseph Dunham and Ebenezer Foster, Vestrymen. The parish is still operated under this Charter.

From the close of the war there was an almost entire cessation of services until 1810, though the Parish sent lay-delegates to nearly all the Conventions 1789-1816. The people must have kept up a lively interest in the Church, because in 1789 they subscribed for 10 copies of the Journal. Burlington only took 15 and Newark 20 copies. Rev'd Dr. Ogden reported at the Convention of 1802 that he had preached there during the previous year; also in 1803. At the Conventions of 1804, and succeeding years, regular assignments of Clergymen to act as Missionaries to the vacant Church were made. It is to be presumed that they performed their duties.

In 1810 the old Church was again put in order, mainly through the efforts of Mr. Daniel Terrill, who was a Vestryman of the Parish. On pages 402-403 will be found the Report of a Committee in which his zealous efforts in the matter are most highly commended and the Convention: "*Resolved*, That the thanks of the Convention "be presented to Mr. Daniel Terrill for his laudable exertions and "assiduous labours in re-establishing Trinity Church at Woodbridge." It was re-opened on St. John the Evangelist's Day, 1810, Rev'd. James Chapman of Perth Amboy, and Rev'd John C. Rudd of Eliza-

beth-Town officiating, Mr. Rudd preaching. Mr. Chapman continued to officiate there occasionally until his death in 1857.

Of the Laymen who were delegates from the Parish to the Convention only one is known to be buried in the old Churchyard. On his grave-stone is the following:

"In memory of Samuel Jaques, Senr., who deceased Sept. 2d, 1803, "in the 65 year of his age."

He was probably a son of the Samuel Jaquess named as Senior Warden in the Charter, who died in 1780, and is also buried in the Churchyard.

*Francis H. Cumming* (1815). In 1816 he became candidate for Holy Orders, and was licensed as lay-reader; April, 1818, was ordained Deacon by Bishop Croes in St. John's Ch. Elizabeth-Town; after a temporary service at St. Michael's Ch. Trenton, he went as "Missionary to the States West of the Mountains, but returned that same fall, and officiated as Missionary in New Jersey, and Deacon in charge of St. Peter's, Morristown, for about a year, when he was transferred to the Diocese of New York; was ordered Priest in 1820 or 1821, by Bishop Hobart; after a short Missionary service at Binghampton he became Rector of St. Luke's, Rochester, in 1822-23, and so continued until about 1831; in 1835 was Rector of Immanuel New York City, and Secretary of the P. E. S. S. Union.

*William Hanham* (1816). Was an Englishman, who owned a large stock farm near Woodbridge; he imported a large number of fine animals, but after a while he sold out, and went back to England.

*Thomas Heath* (1790-1808). Of him nothing could be learned.