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THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN

BASKING RIDGE, N. J.

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A HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY THE PASTOR

REV. JOHN C. RANKIN, D. D.

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AUGUST 11th, 1872.

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WITH SUPPLEMENT

MARCH 24th, 1892.

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WITH REVIEW OF LATER HISTORY

BY

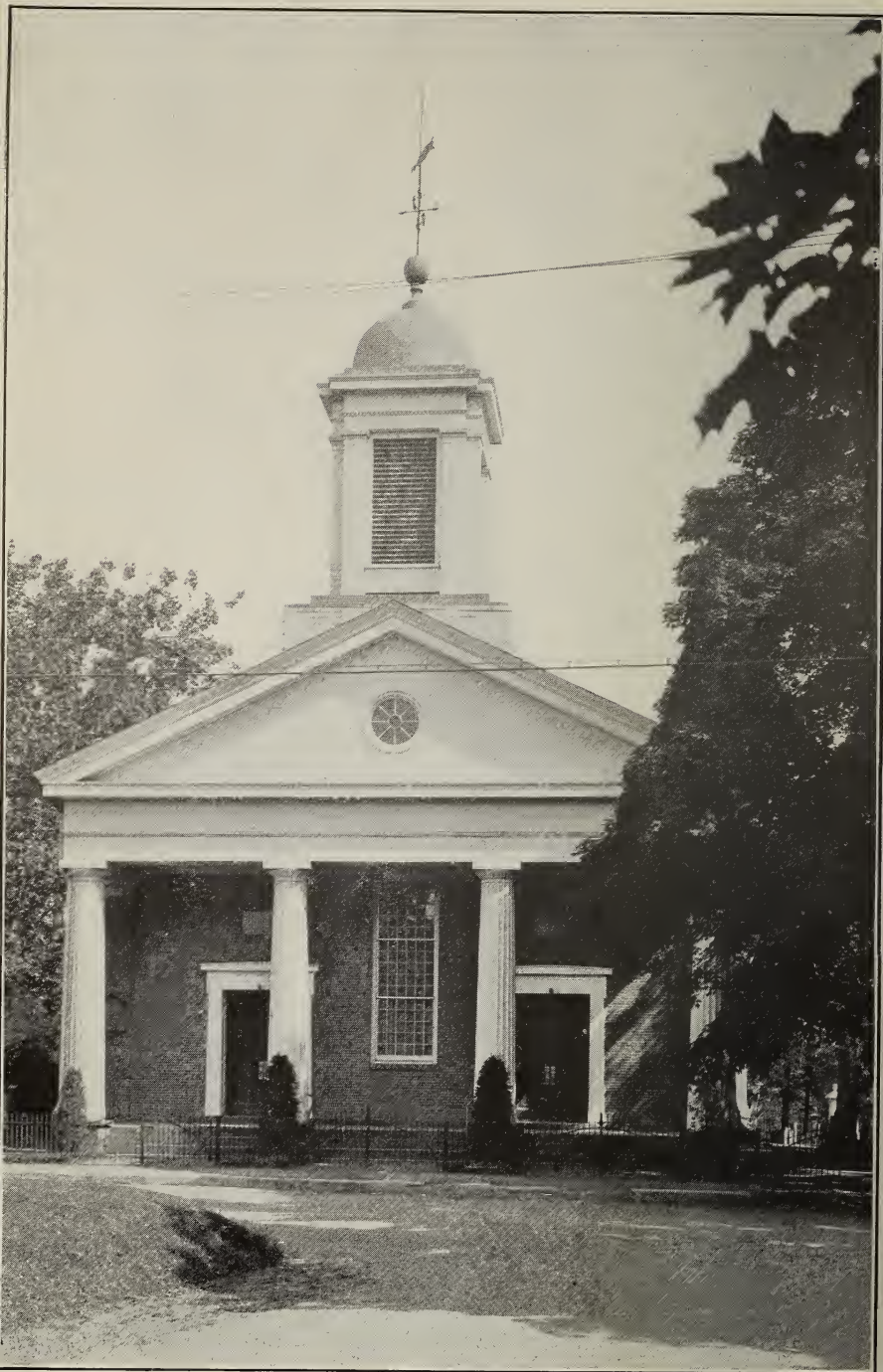
REV. LAUREN G. BENNETT.

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Gift  
Nettie Allen  
Nov. 9, 1929







Church founded in early part of eighteenth century.  
This building erected in 1839.

## Historical Discourse.

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“REMEMBER THE DAYS OF OLD, CONSIDER THE YEARS OF MANY GENERATIONS: ASK THY FATHER AND HE WILL SHEW THEE; THY ELDERS AND THEY WILL TELL THEE.”—*Deut.* 32:7.

The duty of learning from the history and experiences of the past is often presented in the Scriptures. It is as reasonable too as it is scriptural; and on its observance the progress of the human race largely depends. No picture is more beautiful, no exercise more profitable, than that of the “fathers and elders” instructing the young in the things which have come to pass. Without this every age would begin the world afresh, and the human family remain forever in its infancy.

Convinced, as I am, of the great importance of the study of history and of its intrinsic interest to the thoughtful mind, it is yet with no little misgiving that I attempt to lay before you a somewhat detailed account of this church and congregation. The strong conviction that something of the kind is due alike to our forefathers, to ourselves and to posterity has long rested on my mind; but the assurance that much time, expense and patient labor would be required in collecting and arranging such materials as are available, long deterred me from the undertaking. Had the full tax in this respect been foreseen, this production had probably never been inflicted upon you. It is but proper, also, here to add that the most painful thing connected with these labors is the fact that, after all, the information obtained in regard to our early history is so incomplete. Still there is no little satisfaction in feeling that a faithful effort has been made; and that about all of our early history that can be rescued from oblivion is now discovered, and may be put in shape for easy preservation and reference. As the distance grows greater between the founders of our Zion and their descendants, the latter would never forgive us should we suffer the glimpses of light which at this day might be gathered to a focus entirely to vanish away.

As to the materials available for such a history, I am sorry to say that the Sessional Records (the first and most authentic

source of information, to which we look most naturally), as far as they were kept at all, prior to the settlement of Dr. Finley, 1795, have absolutely perished. His immediate predecessor was a physician as well as a preacher; and, according to tradition, kept his medical and ministerial accounts mingled up on the same pages of his day-book. Our lately departed friend, Dr. S. S. Doty, whose memory was very remarkable, has often told me that during his early life in the family of Judge Southard, his father-in-law, he had seen one of these old manuscript volumes lying about, out of which a leaf was now and then torn to wipe a razor! Such a deed should render the perpetrator immortal, and can be pardoned only on the ground that the value of the record, like passing opportunity with the young, was unknown.

And yet, even if these volumes had been preserved and handed down to us, they would not have taken us back to the point where our greatest difficulty as well as our greatest anxiety lies, *i. e.*, the origin of the church. And for the time they might have been supposed to cover, our loss is in some measure compensated by the fact that the Trustee book, for that period, is in our possession. It bears on its cover the following inscription: "The Book of the Congregation of Bernardstown, A. D. 1763, 1815." This is the first and oldest of our church records now extant. The earliest date in this musty old volume is Nov. 12th, 1764; and though for many years thereafter the entries are very brief and very irregular, still, as will be seen in the sequel, they afford considerable light on this part of our subject. In going further back than this, we depend entirely on traditions and on outside records, mainly those of the New Jersey Historical Society, in Newark, and the minutes of the old mother synod of Philadelphia.

Among the floating statements as to our origin, that which assigns to us the greatest age is in the New Jersey Historical collections (new edition of 1852, page 442), and is in these words: "Baskingridge was early settled by Scotch Presbyterians and a log church erected about the year 1700." The next is in a "History of the Presbyterian Church of Madison, N. J.," drawn up some years ago by the Rev. Mr. Tuttle, then the pastor of that people. He says (pp. 10, 11): "The first church ever organized in what is now the County of Morris was the old Presbyterian church in Whippany, which was formed about 1718. . . . In Baskingridge, some Scotch Presbyterian families, who had settled

there, were worshipping in a log meeting-house which they had erected a year or two previously." Where the data on which these statements rest are to be found I have not been able to discover. I am convinced, however, from evidence that will be presently adduced, that the first is entirely incorrect, and that the second, though not very far astray, yet gives us a few more years of ecclesiastical life than we can justly claim.

There could have been no church here, of course, before there were Christian inhabitants, and the earliest definite account of the settlement of this neighborhood (no doubt the true one) places it in A. D. 1717. If there were settlers here prior to that time they must have lived among the Indians, simply occupying, without owning, the land. For in that year "John Harrison, of Rockie Hill," who seems to have been a large dealer in real estate, bought of an Indian chief, whose name was Nowenoik, the whole tract which has ever constituted a large part of this congregation, including the site on which the church stands. Harrison's deed from the Indian chief is dated June 24th, 1717, and calls for about three thousand acres, bounded on the east by the Passaic river, on the south by the Dead river, on the west by Green brook, and on the north by Penn's brook, and a short line uniting it to the headwaters of Green brook, These two brooks rise very near each other on the northwest corner of the old Parsonage farm, now owned by Dr. Minnard, and flow, the one (Penn's brook) into the Passaic river, through the farms of Messrs. Heath, Gidney, De-Coster and Cross; the other into Dead river, below Liberty Corner.

As early as A. D. 1701, Harrison had been appointed by the Governor and Proprietors of East New Jersey, then resident in England, to purchase the claims of the aboriginal owners to certain tracts of lands of which this must have been one. Though claiming to hold the entire State, by virtue of the King's grants, which they had purchased of the original receivers, still they thought it best to buy off these Indian claims; hence Harrison's transactions, which were very large.

He paid \$50 for this three thousand acres, and the validity of his title was recognized in all the subsequent changes. From his name, and the shape of the tract, it was long known and spoken of familiarly as "Harrison's Neck." The original deed of Nowenoik, and a map drawn about the same time, are on file in

Newark, among the papers of the New Jersey Historical Society. No deed in the township, it is believed, runs farther back.

After the death of Harrison, his son Benjamin sold the whole purchase to Daniel Hollingshead and George Rissearick, who again sold one-half of their interest to Col. John Parker, of Amboy, and James Alexander, of New York. By these four it was regularly surveyed in 1727, and laid out in lots or farms of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred acres each. These were drawn for, in lottery fashion, by the four joint owners at the spring term of the Supreme Court for 1728, held in Perth Amboy. The respective parties were then left to dispose of their lots on their own terms. James Alexander (the father of William Alexander—Lord Stirling) seems to have drawn what has since been known as "the Stirling property," some six or eight hundred acres, in beauty and fertility unsurpassed by any land in the township.

Up to the time of Harrison's purchase, therefore, there could have been no actual freeholders settled on this tract. There were, however, some scattered families in the vicinity occupying lands to which they had no legal title; a mode of settlement that has been more or less common ever since, in new parts of the country. In 1720 Cornelius Brees, of Staten Island, bought land of James Alexander, "on the east side of the north branch of Dead river, at the southwest corner of the Parker and Alexander purchase, said land being *now in the occupation of James Pitney.*" James Pitney then, the *first* actual English settler whose name has been found, and who, as we shall see, was one of the original Trustees of this congregation, was living in this region, somewhere near where Halsey Dunham now lives, one mile south from Liberty Corner, in 1720. So also was Henry Rolfe, whose name occurs in the same year, and one of whose family, probably his son Samuel, was another of our original Board of Trustees. Others, also, were probably here in the same way. Several complaints against "squatters" are found about this time. In 1729, a few years later, James Alexander directs his agent, Daniel Shoemaker, to dispossess certain parties then occupying his lands, and give the right of possession to others. John Ayers is known to have settled in this county in 1717, probably somewhere on the Millstone river. In 1727 his son, Obadiah Ayers, is mentioned as having lands in this vicinity; the father, apparently, either having

removed here himself or bought lands for his children in this neighborhood.

There were then actual settlers here as early as 1720, who subsequently were active and prominent in the movements of the church. Among these were Pitney, Rolfe, some of the Ayers family, perhaps, and probably others whose names are not given. In 1728 John Budd, an elder in the Presbyterian church, in Philadelphia, in writing to his agent here, speaks of "the hundred acres I lately gave away"; and in 1737 specific mention is made of his conveying one hundred acres (probably the same before alluded to) "for the use of a meeting-house."

Here we see then the source from which the old parsonage farm came, and at the same time that at least from 1720, or a little before, the elements which constituted our church and congregation at the beginning were gathering together in the neighborhood.

Precisely when and where they first assembled for worship cannot be determined. It is morally certain, however, that they were not long without some place, and the probability is that at least as early as 1725 there was a nucleus of praying men and women who came together somewhere near this spot, for the worship of Almighty God. At the same time that Harrison's purchase was being divided up and settled, Penn's agents and others were at work all around us in laying out and disposing of lands. *Penn's Brook* is a boundary line for Harrison, in 1717, and inasmuch as Basking Ridge was unquestionably the first religious centre of the neighborhood, this fact tends to give additional plausibility to the statements above.

Passing now from these probabilities and conjectures, the first authentic date in our history is on the original deed of John Ayers, conveying a certain plot of ground to Obadiah Ayers, Mordecai McKenne, James Pitney, George Pack, Samuel Rolfe, Daniel Morrice and Thomas Riggs. This document is dated February 8th, 1731, and conveys to said trustees one and one-half acres of land, "on or near the middle of which now stands a house built and intended for the exercising of religious worship in." This was, no doubt, the old log meeting-house of traditionary notoriety. One hundred and forty-one years ago it stood on this spot, with a thickly wooded grove around it. Whether it had been standing some little time before the deed was given (which

is not improbable), or whether they had before worshipped in some other building—the school or session house which always preceded or accompanied the church in those early days; or whether there had been any public worship here anterior to that date, cannot be positively determined. In all probability, the first work of our sturdy ancestors as they began to form a community her was the erection of a school-house, where some of them taught the children of their families in winter, and where the parents assembled for prayer before they had either church or minister. The known habits of the age, as well as the language of the deed, which speaks of “houses” as being on it at its date, point in this direction. The same circumstances that made this the religious centre, must also have made it the educational centre even earlier. The school or session house therefore probably went up from 1720 to 1725; the church soon followed, from 1725 to 1730, and was made secure to trustees as above, February 8th, 1731.

In 1733 the name of Basking Ridge first appears on the pages of our ecclesiastical records—(spelled uniformly in all early documents as here written; which shows the purely English origin of the name, and that it grew out of the fact that the wild animals of the adjacent low lands were accustomed to *bask* on our beautiful ridge). There was as yet no church at Morristown. There was, in fact, no such town. That place was then known as West Hanover; and its scattered inhabitants had been connected in worship with Hanover up to this date. In the widespread congregation a disagreement arose about locating the church building and especially as to deciding the point by casting lots. The dispute became so earnest that a division of the congregation was threatened; to prevent which, if possible, the pastor, the Rev. Jno. Nutman, brought the matter before the Synod, for settlement. After repeated hearings, the Synod advises the West Hanover or Morristown people not to separate, but to continue their connection with Hanover, or, if any of them found it more convenient to worship at Basking Ridge “until they, as well as the said neighboring congregations, be more able to subsist of themselves separately.” This was in September (21st), 1733, and shows that at that time a congregation, known to the Synod as not very well able to subsist of itself, was here and had doubtless been forming here for several years.



The oldest grave-stone discovered in our yard is that of Henry Haines, who died June 9th, 1736; but there certainly must have been interments here before that date. Tradition says that the late Col. John Brees is known to have spoken of seeing a stone with the date 1719, though it cannot be found now.

The first minister of the gospel known to have labored here was the Rev. John Cross, who became a member of the Synod of Philadelphia in 1732, and seems to have begun his labors in that year. It is not known that he was ever installed as a regular pastor over this church, but it is certain that he preached here, with more or less regularity, from 1732 to 1741. He seems to have been rather a self-willed man, who followed his own course, without much regard to ecclesiastical law and order. On the next day after his reception as a member of Synod he withdrew from the meeting without permission, and was censured for his conduct. Three years later complaint was made to Synod against him by his Presbytery, "that he absented himself from their meetings and removed from one congregation to another without the concurrence of Presbytery." For this he was again censured, and admonished "to be no more chargeable with such irregularities for the future."

He was not here, therefore, all these years. The reason may have been that the congregation was still too weak to "subsist" alone, so that he was compelled to seek elsewhere for support. How much of his time was thus taken up, or how much was spent here, it is impossible now to determine. This whole region was now rapidly filling up with inhabitants, and, no doubt, as the size and strength of the congregation increased they gave him a better support, and he gave them more labor. After a time this became his permanent home. When the celebrated Geo. Whitfield visited this place November 5th, 1740, he stayed at Mr. Cross's house, two miles from Basking Ridge, probably the house owned by the late Judge Goltra, near Liberty Corner.

Whitfield speaks of a wonderful work of grace as then in progress, the first great revival, no doubt, that had occurred in this part of the country. As many as three hundred persons are said to have been awakened at one time under the preaching of Mr. Cross. "When I came to Basking Ridge," says Whitfield, "I found that Mr. Davenport had been preaching to the congregation. It consisted of about three thousand people. In prayer

I perceived my soul drawn out, and a stirring of affection among the people. I had not discoursed long, but in every part of the congregation somebody or other began to cry out, and almost all were melted to tears. At night also there was preaching to an immense audience in Mr. Cross's barn, when God was present in great power. One cried out, He is come, He is come; and could scarce sustain the discovery that Jesus made of himself to his soul. Others were so earnest for a like favor, that their eager cries compelled me to stop. Most of the people spent the remainder of the night in prayer and praise. Oh, it was a night much to be remembered! Next morning, I with pleasure took my leave of them, and rode agreeably in company with many children of God to New Brunswick, twenty-three miles from Basking Ridge."

Mr. Cross could not have continued to labor here much longer, as his successor came in 1741. The last mention of his name, in Presbytery or Synod, occurs in 1746; but the time of his death and the place of his burial are unknown. His death must have occurred between 1756 and 1750, as in this latter year, his wife, "Deborah Cross, widow," is mentioned as buying certain land from James Alexander. His grave, too, is probably in our yard, though marked with no stone, as this was the resting-place for the dead at that time, and he probably died at home. His farm, which embraced several hundred acres, was one of the finest sections of the township, and descended to his heirs. His deed to it was obtained in 1741. During his ministry, in 1737, the parsonage farm of 100 acres was given by Jno. Budd, of Philadelphia, though it is not probable that Mr. Cross ever occupied it.

Within the decade from 1730 to 1740 the population of this section of the county had greatly increased. The congregation too had, within this time, assumed definite shape and standing. It will be proper, therefore, at this point, to notice a little more particularly a few of the important families who were very prominent in our early history. Among these the first place is undoubtedly due to the Ayers family, whose progenitor, John Ayers, moved from Woodbridge, N. J., into Somerset County, in the same year that Harrison bought this tract from the Indian chief. He died in 1732, at the age of sixty-nine; but, if buried here, his grave is not to be found. He left seven sons, John, Thomas, Obadiah, Nathaniel, Benjamin, Moses, and Aaron, all

of whom lived in this neighborhood and one of whom was the great grandfather of the late David Ayers, of this place. Most of these had large families, and together were the most numerous and influential of our ancestors. John gave the site of the church for a nominal consideration; Obadiah was the first-named trustee on the list; and for one hundred and twenty years the family lasted among us. But, alas, as with all things in this changing world, time has done its work with them. The very name has passed away from among us, though many of the descendants are doing good in other places. We owe them a debt of gratitude which should never be forgotten.

Next to this was the family of the first preacher, who left one son (it is believed that Mr. Cross had more than one son) and two daughters. The son, Robert, was the father of eleven children, of whom the late James Cross was the youngest. Among them were eight sons and three daughters. Their descendants are very numerous and widely scattered, one of whom is the Rev. J. B. Cross, of Baltimore. Of the two daughters of the Rev. Jno. Cross, one married a McEowen, and was the grandmother of the late Alexander McEowen. The other married Daniel Cooper, and was the grandmother of William and Alexander Cooper, of Long Hill. The descendants of both the daughters, as well as of the son, have been very prominent and useful in the congregation. Mrs. Gertrude Cross (relict of James, grandson of Rev. John) has yet in her possession a treasured article of silver, marked "John and Deborah Cross."

About the same time (1732) came the Cauldwell, Carle, Cooper, Boyle and McEowen families to Long Hill; the Annin family to Liberty Corner (formerly called Annin's Corner), and, to other parts of the congregation, the Riggs, Conkling, Alward, McCollum, Dayton, Doty, Boylan, Heath, Hall, Lindsley, Rickey, Lewis, Anderson and Hand families, into the particulars of whose history we have not time to enter, but all of whom became numerous and influential. Among these patriarchal ancestors was John Annin, great-grandfather to the late William; Solomon Boyle, great-grandfather to Augustus A., now living on the ancestral farm; John Hall, great-grandfather to Samuel, lately removed from our vicinity; William Conkling, great-grandfather to Isaac, lately deceased; Henry Alward, great-grandfather to the late Jonathan; Daniel Cooper, great-grandfather to William

and Alexander; Jacob Carle, grandfather to the late Daniel; Daniel Heath, grandfather to Mrs. Barclay Dunham; and John McCollum, believed to be the great-grandfather of our present elder, A. B. He died April 18th, 1760, at the venerable age of one hundred and three years. Another family worthy of particular mention was that of Alexander Kirkpatrick, who came into this neighborhood in 1736, and settled on Mine Brook, on the farm lately owned by Henry Baird. In reaching that point, his company traveled on foot from Bound Brook over an Indian path—no road having yet been opened. On their way they saw a land tortoise in their path, and taking it to be a *rattlesnake*, they kept at a respectful distance by a circle through the woods. Mr. Kirkpatrick was a staunch Presbyterian, and for a hundred years his family stood prominent among us. His son David, who was twelve years old when his father came to this country, is said to have planted walnut trees on the Mine Brook Farm, out of which, some time previous to his death, he caused the boards to be sawed and laid up to dry, that were to be (and were) used in making his coffin. The late Rev. Jacob Kirkpatrick, D.D., of Ringoes, and his cousins, Walter and Hugh Kirkpatrick, whose remains lie in our yard, were the great-grandsons of the first settler, Alexander. Like many others, this honored name has passed from among us!

To finish these family notices, it may be stated here, though a little out of time, that in 1755 came the father of Henry Southard, when the son was but eight years old. The position and influence of this family in the neighborhood and in the nation for the next hundred years is too well known to require further notice. About the same time must have come the Guerin, the McMurtry and other families, whose descendants are yet with us. Such were some of the substantial materials occupying these beautiful hills originally, and gathered, most of them, into our first congregation by the Rev. Jno. Cross.

In 1742 Basking Ridge and Staten Island asked for the ministerial services of Mr. Charles McKnight, the son of a Presbyterian clergyman in Ireland, and supposed to have come to this country, a young man, about the year 1740. He was taken under the care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, June 28, 1741, and ordained on the 12th of October of the next year. He probably served both congregations. Either for the excellence of his gifts,

or from the scarcity of ministers, he seems to have been much in demand among the churches, as several other congregations desired his services at the same time. He remained here only about two years, and in the autumn of 1744 was installed pastor of Cranberry and Allentown. During the revolutionary struggle we find him preaching at Middletown Point, Shark River and Shrewsbury. He was captured and imprisoned for a time by the British, and soon after his release died, January 1st, 1778, having been a trustee of the College of New Jersey for more than twenty years. Of the churches to which he last ministered one became extinct, and the others were vacant, one thirty-two and the other forty years.

Mr. McKnight's successor here was the Rev. Joseph Lamb, who was graduated at Yale College in 1717, and ordained by the Presbytery of Long Island on the 6th of December of the same year. The scene of his first labors was Long Island, but in 1744, having been called to Basking Ridge, he removed to this place, and became a member of the Presbytery of New Brunswick. No particulars of his pastorate here are known. Dr. Brownlee speaks of him as "a Scottish worthy"; but he was probably a native of Connecticut, though of Scotch descent. He is the first of the pastors of this church who died in her service. His sepulchre is with us, and his tombstone bears the following inscription, here transcribed for the double purpose of throwing light on the character of his preaching, and as a specimen of the obituary literature of the age. "Here lies the remains of the Rev'd. Joseph Lamb, who departed this life, July the 28th, A. D. 1749. Etatis Suae 60.

The terrors dire from Sinai's Mount,  
 Thy mouth did once proclaim,  
 As well as messages of grace  
 In thy great Master's name.  
 But with pure ethereal fires,  
 With Seraphim above:  
 We hope and trust thou now dost sing  
 The wonders of his love."

The congregation has so grown under his ministry that the original log-house was no longer large enough to contain the audience. It was, therefore, taken down, and the venerable frame building which stood for ninety years, and was then superseded by the present house, was erected. According to a well-authenticated tradition, the frame of that building was put up on the very

day of Mr. Lamb's death. A brief description of it will be given at another point in the narrative; but it was doubtless, in size and comfort, a decided improvement on the old log-house. With Mr. Lamb, the days of our juvenility may be said to have passed away. We now became firm and strong.

Following him came the Rev. Samuel Kennedy, M.D., who was born in Scotland, in the year 1720, and received his education in the University of Edinburgh. His theological studies were pursued in this country under the care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, by which he was licensed to preach in 1748 and ordained in 1750. His settlement here took place in June, 1751, and lasted thirty-six years, *i. e.*, until his death, August 31st, 1787. The character and fate of the records he kept have been mentioned above. For a little more than half the time of his ministry, however, *i. e.*, from 1764, we have the Trustee book already described, containing more or less full accounts of the proceedings of the congregation. From this time, therefore, we come into clearer light, though for many years still the record is very meagre. The first record in this volume is in these words: "The following is the account and proceedings of the committee appointed by the Presbyterian congregation of Bernardstown (formerly called Basking Ridge) to receive and dispose of the money left to said congregation by Mr. Samuel Brown, in and by his last will and testament, which bears date the 17th day of June, 1763." This committee consisted of Edward Lewis, John Carle and Nathaniel Ayers, who were chosen on the 12th of November, 1764. The money bequeathed was £200, the interest of which, according to the terms of the will, was "to be yearly, every year, from generation to generation forever, paid unto the regular Presbyterian minister of the congregation for his support."

Many items of interest might be extracted from this book. Among the first things found in it is a plan of the house of worship as it then stood. It contained fifty-two seats on the floor, and twenty-six in the gallery—seventy-eight in all. This is the frame building which in 1749 had superseded the original log-house. It seems to have been about fifty-five feet long by thirty-five wide, having its length east and west, with pulpit in the north side, and the greater part of the seats running lengthwise of the house, with the inevitable "sounding-board," no doubt, over the minister's head.



The Pride of the Community.





Among the earliest entries these statements occur: "It was agreed that the congregation shall take the parsonage place in its own care, and instead thereof, pay Mr. Kennedy £20 yearly as an addition to his salary"; for the first year thereafter, it was rented for £9, and for several succeeding years for £12. This arrangement, with a salary of £110 above the parsonage rent, seems to have lasted many years. In 1786 a new contract was made with Mr. Kennedy, whereby he was to receive £120 yearly and the "benefit of the parsonage free, the house and land kept in repair and fire-wood cut and delivered without any of his expense." The sexton's salary at this time was fifteen dollars per annum, and, as a sample of the thorough democracy of the age, it is stated that the parish meeting of the same year, "appointed Joseph Roy and Joseph Annin, to give out the lines, and John Annin and Jeremiah Sutton, clerks, to sing."

Passing from this old volume to other sources of information, it is known that Mr. Kennedy was, for a considerable time, at the head of a classical school in this place. Being a highly accomplished scholar and possessing great wisdom and energy as a disciplinarian, his school was extensively patronized and sent many of its pupils to the College of New Jersey. He was distinguished for the purity and elevation of his Christian character, and made it manifest to all by his daily conversation, that he walked with God. For the following incident touching his ministry, we are indebted to the Rev. Samuel Kennedy Talmadge, D.D., whose father was an elder of this church at this period, and named his son after his pastor, as a token of his high regard for him. "There had been a season of unusual coldness in the church, and the pastor had become not a little discouraged in view of the apparent fruitlessness of his labors. On a certain Sabbath, at the close of public services, he resolved to spend the whole of the following week in earnest prayer and devout study, with a view to prepare a sermon that might rouse the congregation from this spiritual torpor. He fulfilled his purpose—immediately selecting his text for the next Sabbath, and devoting the whole of the intervening week to maturing and arranging his thoughts. When the Sabbath came he felt strong in the belief that he had produced a sermon that would move his people; and confidently expected to witness some special tokens of the Divine presence. After singing and prayer, he gave out the second hymn, and took his

Bible to open to the text. But, strange to tell, he could not call it to his mind—text, chapter, book, even subject, had deserted him. The congregation had finished singing, and in a half-bewildered state he rose and gave out another hymn. He turned over the leaves of the Bible, hoping to find some passage on which he could found an extemporaneous discourse; and his eyes lighted repeatedly on one text upon which he thought he might say something—if my memory serves me, it was—“The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God.” The singing being again concluded, he rose, overwhelmed with agitation and distress, and preached a sermon which melted down the whole congregation and was the commencement of a wonderful revival of religion. He said he had never in his life before enjoyed so much freedom or exercised so much power in the pulpit. He went home weeping and rejoicing; saying that God had answered his prayers in a manner fitted at once to humble the unworthy instrument and to exalt the riches of his own grace.

Of this revival I find no other record, but cannot doubt its reality. In his “Annals of the Presbyterian Pulpit,” Dr. Sprague says: “Mr. Kennedy was very diligent in the discharge of his pastoral duties, and his labors among his own people and elsewhere were eminently successful. Several extensive revivals of religion occurred under his ministry, in consequence of which his church greatly increased in both numbers and strength. His influence was by no means confined to his own congregation, but extended to the whole surrounding region, and operated nowhere perhaps more powerfully than in the judicatories of the church.”

Living as he did during the turbulent times of the revolution, it is not uninteresting to remember that one of his parishioners during the whole of his ministry was William Alexander, familiarly known as Lord Stirling, an intimate and trusted friend of Washington; and also that while he was here that self-conceited and much overestimated man, Gen. Charles Lee, was, on the 13th of December, 1776, captured by the British dragoons, from the house now occupied by James H. Thompson, Esq.

The grave of Mr. Kennedy is with us, and also that of his wife, who, by seven months, preceded him to Heaven. The poetry of his epitaph is an improvement on that of his predecessor.

“God’s holy law thy mouth proclaimed,  
 Pure Gospel flowed through every vein,  
 To dying men thy lips proclaimed  
 The glory of thy Saviour’s name.  
 Sleep then beneath this earthly clod,  
 Thy flesh shall see its Saviour—God,  
 Till the bright morning shall appear,  
 And thou thy Saviour’s image bear.”

For nearly eight years after his death the pulpit of this church was vacant; but in the winter of 1795 Mr. Robert Finley, a young licentiate of great promise, was sent by the Presbytery of New Brunswick to preach for a few Sabbaths. The attention of the congregation was soon fixed upon him as a pastor. During this long vacancy they had become divided and distracted, but with singular unanimity and high hopes all parties united in the call for his services. It was accepted and his installation took place on the 17th of June, 1795.

From this date begins the brightest period of our history. Mr. Finley was young (24), healthy, ardent, judicious, highly educated and eminently pious. A volume might be written respecting his labors here if time permitted. With his pastorate our Sessional Records begin and are thenceforward complete. The first recorded meeting of the session was held in September, 1795, when, with the Pastor, the following Elders were present, viz.: John Carle, Hugh Callwell, Henry Southard, Thomas Kirkpatrick, Philip Lindsley, Jacob Rickey, David Lyon, Jno. Annin and Robert Dayton—9. These, it is believed, were all the members of session at that time.

The first roll of church members that has reached us was formed in 1804. There were then two hundred and twenty-seven communicants of, whom seventy-four were in membership before Mr. Finley’s settlement; and one hundred and twenty-seven had been received within the preceding twelve months. This large ingathering was part of the great work of grace which spread with such wonderful rapidity and power over the whole country about that time. The preceding seven years of Mr. Finley’s ministry had not been particularly successful, only twenty-five persons having been added to the roll of communicants within that period. But now a blessed harvest was granted, and many precious sheaves were gathered. Among these, and probably the last survivor of them all, was Sally Lewis (Mrs. Sarah Dayton), who, in the eighty-eighth year of her age, left us but a few months

ago for her heavenly rest. It ought to be recorded here, also, that during this precious ingathering of souls our Friday evening lecture and prayer-meeting was instituted, and that it has never been intermitted since, not even when the pulpit was vacant. May it ever be appreciated by all who are within the reach of an easy attendance, as an important means of grace both to their own souls and to the general interests of the congregation!

The remaining years of Dr. Finley's ministry were accompanied with accessions to the church of from one to twenty-four each year, by which the church was still more enlarged and strengthened. In 1815 especially a very precious work of grace occurred, the influence of which is felt to this day. The celebrated classical school, which he conducted with so much ability, shared largely in the blessing, and nearly every member in the advanced class for that year was hopefully converted. Some nine or ten of them became preachers of the gospel, of whom the Rev. B. C. Taylor, D.D., pastor of the Reformed church in Bergen, still survives. His recollections of the scenes of that revival are of thrilling interest.

Dr. Finley was a man of commanding influence, who swayed the mind of his people, and largely of those around him wherever he went, almost at his pleasure. Bad boys were not unfrequently sent to his school with special reference to this trait of his character; and in some places this circumstance gave to our beautiful village the unenviable soubriquet of Botany Bay. Not all, however, of his pupils were of the class just named. Many were most exemplary in life, and in subsequent years took high rank among the most distinguished men of the country, of whom may be named, Theodore Frelinghuysen, Samuel L. Southard, Commodore Stockton, David Kirkpatrick, Wm. L. Dayton, and others.

The pastor of this church was one of the first, if not the very first, who introduced into his school and congregation the system of Bible class instruction, which has since become such a mighty engine for good. Through his influence mainly it was endorsed and recommended to all the churches, first by his Presbytery, then by the Synod of New York and New Jersey, to which he belonged, and then by the General Assembly. Through his instrumentality undoubtedly, more than any other man, was established the American Colonization Society, which has done so much for the colored race, both in this country and in Africa. He visited the City of

Washington, conferred with President Madison, Henry Clay, John Randolph and other leading men, and arranged and was present at the public meeting, on Saturday, the 28th of December, 1816, when it was organized, with Bushrod Washington as its first President.

His mind seems ever to have been on the stretch for measures of usefulness. Early and late, within and without the boundaries of his own parish, he was ever at work. So busy was he that on one occasion, having taken an early breakfast, he was about to leave home without observing the usual form of family prayers. His foot was actually in the stirrup to mount his horse, when the good elder at whose house he was staying reminded him of the omission, quietly remarking, "you may have need of them before night." The gentle rebuke was accepted, the duty at once attended to, and the order of the family never neglected afterwards. In 1801, in addition to his other labors, we find that the parish meting actually appointed him general collector of his own salary, in connection with several assistants. In most of the local improvements of the village and neighborhood he was *first* to see and advise, and then foremost to carry out.

As a preacher he was gifted with unusual powers both of speech and of action. Would that I could reproduce one or two of the scenes connected with his ministry! During the great revival of 1803, after unfolding the atonement of Christ, its wonderful fullness, freeness and efficacy, he came at the close to warn his hearers against the sin and danger of slighting such an amazing provision. He represented the *wrath* of God against such conduct as a boiling gulf, toward which sinners were rapidly floating, and when they were just ready to fall over the precipice into the abyss below, by a bold stroke which only a master could give, he seemed at once to throw himself between them and their awful doom, exclaiming, "Stand back! stand back! Oh, sinners, let me push you away from this fiery deep"; when the whole assembly, as if moved by an electric impulse, assumed a half-rising posture as though they would recede from the fearful doom. On another occasion, in preaching his farewell sermon, he fell upon his knees, and delivered the latter part of his sermon in that posture, without in the least suggesting the idea that his action was overwrought or affected.

Before dismissing his ministry, it should be stated that immediately after the great revival of 1803 the house of worship was found too small for the congregation, and was, therefore, enlarged by adding twenty-eight pews on the floor and twelve in the gallery, making one hundred and eighteen pews altogether. It is a little singular that this addition on the floor was almost exactly what was repeated in our late enlargement, and that it made the house then precisely what it is now, as to the number of seats. The number of pews then rented was one hundred and one, and the highest rent paid was \$14.74, the seats on the right and left of the pulpit being valued considerably higher than those in other parts of the house.

The liberality of the congregation at that date, and the general spirit of the age as to benevolent contributions, may be judged of by two receipts carefully filed among the papers of the trustees, and on which a venerable name, very familiar to some of us, is found. David Comfort, treasurer of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, acknowledged \$18, as given in 1809, and \$27.75, in 1811, for benevolent purposes. These figures probably express all that was done for outside objects in those years. Last year our aggregate was \$705—more than twenty-five times as much, with a membership about equal.

Dr. Finley's pastoral relation with this church was dissolved April 22, 1817, having lasted about twenty-one years. He was released, with great reluctance on all hands, that he might accept the Presidency of the University of Georgia which had been tendered him. He went thither (Athens, Georgia) at the advice of his brethren, and entered at once with great earnestness into the labors of his new field, but was soon arrested by a fatal disease, and died on the third of November of the same year. His widow and family returned to this place, and remained here a few years. Of his nine children, four were sons, all of whom were graduated at the College of New Jersey, and all became ministers of the Gospel except the youngest, who died while pursuing his theological studies. Mrs. Finley died September 23, 1844, in Lebanon, Illinois, while on a visit to her eldest son.

The successor of Dr. Finley to the pulpit of this church was the Rev. William C. Brownlee, D.D., who began his labors on the 30th of April, 1818, and was installed as pastor on the 9th of June following. The congregation was now large and strong, covering

the whole township of Bernards, and running over almost an equal territory in the adjoining county of Morris. The people came mostly on foot or on horseback, or in an occasional farm wagon, from New Vernon, from Long Hill, from Stony Hill, from Liberty Corner, from Mine Brook, and from the Mountains toward Mendham. No other church as yet existed in all this space. Now there are eleven congregations besides our own in the same territory.

One of the first works done by the new pastor was to visit the entire congregation, and take a complete census of his parishioners. This was done in about three months, beginning in the autumn after his settlement. As the result, he records the names of two hundred and sixty families, comprising in all seventeen hundred individuals, whose names, with the ages of many, are given with scrupulous exactness. This list is interesting and instructive in several ways. It shows the size and strength of the congregation, with the large field in which the pastor was called to operate. It shows, moreover, that families had not learned in these early days to scatter abroad as they have done since. Among the heads of families, seven bear the name of Doty; six each the name of Lyon, Lewis and Saunders; five each the name of Cooper, Southard, Cross, Hand and Miller; four of Ayres, Riggs, Boyle, Lindsley, Kirkpatrick, Annin, Heath, McMurtry, Guerin and Wilson; and more than a dozen other names have three families each to represent them. The size of families, too, is another impressive feature of this list; from eight to twelve olive plants around the table was the common size of the household. In one instance, the good pastor, after recording the names of twelve living children, adds, "and three dead," without giving their names. In another instance he chronicles the fact that a certain woman was the mother of eighteen children, nine sons and nine daughters. Undoubtedly the average family was much larger then than it is at present. How are we to account for the difference? Still another impressive lesson from this list is as to the rapidity with which congregations change and names pass away. The two hundred and sixty families then numbered, comprised one hundred and forty-one names. Of these only fifty now remain among us. Ninety-one names have become extinct in the congregation in fifty years. Others have taken their places, but these, where are they? Gone, not only from here,

but many of them from history altogether! Oh, hand of time—what a blotting out dost thou make as thou sweepst over the face of society!

Dr. Brownlee began his labors here under very favorable auspices. In the prime of life (about 35), in a large field where good seed had been sown, with a flourishing academy, we might reasonably look for the most favorable results. Nor are we disappointed; each year of his ministry was a year of ingathering, but especially so was the year 1822. During the whole summer of that year the Lord was pleased to pour out His Spirit upon the congregation, and in October one hundred and four persons were added to the membership of the church, on profession of their faith in Christ, the largest addition ever made at one time. Thirty-eight were baptized at the time of their reception. From this large accession, fifty years ago, only two are now left among us.\*

The record of their admissions is careful to state that “they were all examined:

\* “1. On personal religion, the state of their exercises, feelings, etc.

“2. On the doctrines of God’s Word, taken up systematically; on the being of God; on the Scriptures, divine decrees, election, *limited atonement, etc., etc.*

“3. On the nature, authority, uses, ends, etc., of the holy sacraments.”

Surely nothing but true and intelligent piety could undergo all this.

Dr. Brownlee was a broad-shouldered, large-headed, round-faced Scotchman, with resolution and thoroughness written on every feature and expressed in every tone. He must have been a very rigid disciplinarian, or the members of his church, many of them, notwithstanding their examination, must have been very loose in their deportment, for at almost every meeting of the Session some one was under trial, often three or four, and sometimes half a dozen at once. Not having their children baptized was an offense calling for discipline in those days, though most of the charges preferred were of a more criminal nature. His pastorate closed in October, 1825, having lasted seven and a half years.

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\* One of this number, Mrs. E. R. Fairchild, still lives (March 24th, 1892).



He was called from here to the professorship of languages in Rutgers College, New Jersey, as his predecessor had been to the presidency of Athens College, Georgia. From there he was called to be collegiate pastor of the Reformed Protestant Church in the city of New York, in June, 1826. For nearly twenty years thereafter he was among the most prominent men of the country as a scholar, a preacher, a pastor and a controversialist. Few then gave to Romanism harder blows than he. But, alas! while in the prime of his life he was stricken with paralysis, from which, after lingering more than sixteen years, he died February 10th, 1860, leaving a fragrant memory and an enviable reputation. It may probably be unknown to many present that soon after leaving here he wrote two tracts of considerable size having their scenes in this field. "The General's Widow" and "The Spoiled Child" were their titles. They were published by the American Tract Society, and may yet be had at its depository.

Dr. Brownlee's successor was the Rev. John C. Van Dervoort, who was installed in September, 1826. From this time onward the events of our history are so recent, and there are so many living witnesses to all that has transpired that a few sentences will serve to convey all that need now be said. Mr. Van Dervoort was an earnest, warm-hearted, evangelical preacher, whose labors were blessed and crowned by the ingathering of many souls into the church. In 1829, especially, there was an unusual work of grace, in which fifty-six persons were hopefully converted and enrolled as members. On the whole, however, the strength of the congregation rather declined during the ten years of his ministry. The classical school, though continued, was not as flourishing as formerly. New Vernon organized a church for itself, and took away considerable strength on that side. A little later Liberty Corner followed in the same action on another side. In the meantime the agricultural resources of the neighborhood had suffered very materially by unwise husbandry, and emigration of families and young men had set in as the necessary consequence. All this was loss to our congregation in particular, though not to the church of Christ as a whole.

Mr. Van Dervoort was released by the Presbytery, to accept a call to another field, in the spring of 1834; and in the autumn of the same year was succeeded by the Rev. John Anderson, a foreigner (from the North of Ireland!), who, after trial of one

year, was ordained and installed on the 28th day of October, 1835. With the brogue and some of the eccentricities of his country, he still seems to have been abundant in labor, and to have given general satisfaction to the congregation. In the report of his first and only family visitation, which is very full and minute, he gives "308 families, comprising 1,672 individuals, of whom 258 are members." In less than a year after his installation (August, 1836), he was, at his own request, released from his pastoral charge, that he might accept a call to the Canal Street Presbyterian Church, in the city of New York. When consenting to his removal, the congregation adopted the following minute, the first and only record of an opinion or feelings, touching the death or removal of a pastor: "We feel that we shall loose the labors of a truly pious and talented divine, and the society of a man whose gentlemanly deportment has ever justly secured for himself a grateful remembrance in our recollections."

After a vacancy of nearly two years, the Rev. Oscar Harris was installed as his successor, on the 27th of March, 1838. He was a ripe scholar, a fine theologian, a modest, retiring, gentlemanly man, who commanded the respect of all who knew him. The causes already reverted to continued to operate, however, and the classical school went down entirely, so that the congregation gained no strength, to say the least, during his ministry; but for this he ought not to be held responsible. It would have been true under almost any preacher. The neighborhood had been declining for several years; and yet, to the credit of all, it should be said, that during this pastorate, and almost immediately after it began, in 1838, our present commodious and comfortable house of worship was erected. About this time a gradual improvement in methods of cultivating the soil began to take place, and the neighborhood began to rise in strength and resources. The coming of the railroad recently has greatly accelerated this upward movement.

This pastorate ended in the spring of 1851 by the resignation of Mr. Harris, whose health had been very infirm for one or two years. On the 4th of September, of the same year, the present incumbent, who is the tenth in the line of pastors, was installed. In extreme bodily weakness, and with many fears, he came among you, and, by the grace of God and your clemency, has continued until the present time, twenty-one years. His predecessors have

all gone to their reward. He, too, must soon follow. Oh, for grace to be found faithful! It is no credit to him, to claim that some advances have been made within this period. The whole neighborhood has advanced not a little during this time, and it would be greatly to our disgrace if we had not made some progress, also. The old parsonage farm was long ago sold, and its proceeds used in part to build the new church, and in part to meet annual deficits. But within this twenty-one years we have built a commodious parsonage, erected a new and comfortable lecture and Sababth school room, which is already too strait for us; once refitted and then enlarged and ornamented the church, until it is now as large and as handsome as the congregation can desire. With this, the membership, which had declined to one hundred and seventy in 1851, has again advanced to two hundred and sixty, and the benevolent contributions have increased many-fold. While mentioning these things with gratitude, beloved brethren, let us still feel that we have been unprofitable servants.

And now, with such a history; with so many personal and family hopes identified with this church, with such a door of usefulness open before us in the neighborhood and in the world, shall we not, with redoubled energy and devotion, consecrate ourselves to our God, the God of our fathers, and, above all, The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? And "Unto him that hath done all things for us, and is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

BASKING RIDGE, N. J., March 24th, 1892.

A new edition of the foregoing discourse being called for, it is but proper that a brief sketch of the twenty years that have elapsed since its publication should be added by the writer. Within this period extensive and important changes have taken place in our geographical borders. The building of the railroad seemed to develop the nucleus for a new congregation at Stirling; and, accordingly, a church was organized there in 1873. This was done with the cordial approval of the Pastor and Session of the parent church, and into the new organization several of our important families entered. This diminished our numbers and

contracted our borders very materially in that direction. At the same time the advent of the railroad brought into prominent notice the beautiful hill or mountain district to the north of us. This soon attracted the attention of several wealthy gentlemen of New York City, as affording attractive sites for country residences. The earliest among these were A. V. Stout, Geo. B. Pos and Geo. I. Seeney, each of whom erected a handsome mansion and became an extensive owner of real estate. Largely through their presence and influence others have followed in the same course, until most of the farms on these beautiful hills, originally belonging to the Basking Ridge congregation, have passed into their hands, and the families that occupied them have removed to other localities, many of them beyond our boundaries. This has resulted necessarily in great changes in that direction also. It is matter of congratulation, however, that these gentlemen, with their families, have largely and generously identified themselves both with our churches and our general local interests.

In 1887 our Lecture and Sabbath School room having become too strait for us, a new and commodious chapel was erected, and furnished with carpet and chairs, at an expense of about twenty-three hundred dollars. In the previous year a new organ had been purchased at an outlay of more than one thousand dollars. At this date (1892) arrangements are complete for the thorough renovation of the interior of the audience-room of the church, the cost of which will be about twenty-five hundred dollars. This is probably the last work, in the way of material improvement, that will be attempted under the present pastorate. When completed, there will probably be little more to desire in that direction for many years to come.

The spiritual history of the church during these forty years is, of course, its most important and interesting feature. All else has been subordinate to this one great end. During all these years divine service has been held every Sabbath in church or chapel. The attendance of the people upon the ordinances of God's house has been general and uniform. There have been many seasons of special religious interest, the most remarkable of which were in 1874 and in 1883. In the former year forty-nine persons, and in the latter fifty-one, were added to the church on profession of their faith in Christ. Another of these refreshing seasons has just passed, as the result of which fourteen per-

sons were for the first time admitted to full membership. In all these spiritual movements there has been a quickening of God's people which has been most gratifying. This is particularly manifest in the one last referred to, and especially so in the impulse given to our beloved young people. Never before have they been so well organized or animated by such a hopeful spirit as at present.

Amid all the changes by deaths, removals and curtailment of boundaries, it is a matter of thankfulness that the number of communicants and the average size of the congregation remain very much the same. Since September 4th, 1851, six hundred and ninety names have been added to our roll, of whom four hundred and fifty-two were received on profession of faith, and two hundred and thirty-nine on certificate from other churches. The membership at present is two hundred and forty-five. There have been four hundred and eighty-eight baptisms, two hundred and ninety-one marriages, and three hundred and forty-five funerals. The liberality of the people, both in self-support and in contributions to benevolence, if not all that it should have been, has yet been gratifying and encouraging. Never has such cheerfulness in giving been manifested as in the subscriptions to the improvements now in progress. For the spirit of harmony that has always prevailed, and for the encouraging prospects before us, let us be grateful to God and faithful to duty.

## Pastors.

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Rev. JOHN CROSS, pastor . . . . .	A. D. 1732 to 1741.
“ CHARLES MCKNIGHT, pastor . . . . .	“ 1742 “ 1744.
“ JOSEPH LAMB, pastor . . . . .	“ 1744 “ 1749.
“ SAMUEL KENNEDY, M.D., pastor . . . . .	“ 1751 “ 1787.
“ ROBERT FINLEY, D.D., pastor . . . . .	“ 1795 “ 1817.
“ WILLIAM C. BROWNLEE, D.D., pastor, . . . . .	“ 1818 “ 1825.
“ JOHN C. VAN DERVOORT, pastor . . . . .	“ 1826 “ 1834.
“ JOHN ANDERSON, pastor . . . . .	“ 1834 “ 1836.
“ OSCAR HARRIS, pastor . . . . .	“ 1838 “ 1851.
“ JOHN C. RANKIN, D.D., pastor . . . . .	“ 1851 “ 1895.
“ EDGAR C. MASON, pastor . . . . .	“ 1895 “ 1899.
“ JOHN T. REEVE, D.D., pastor . . . . .	“ 1900 “ 1912.
“ LAUREN G. BENNETT, pastor . . . . .	“ 1913 “ ———

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## Roll of Officers in 1872.

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### PASTOR.

REV. JOHN C. RANKIN, D.D.

### ELDERS.

PETER D. CROSS,	JAMES I. HILL,
JOHN V. STEVENS,	ABRAM B. MCCOLLUM,
ALEXANDER COOPER,	CALVIN THOMPSON.

### TRUSTEES.

JOHN H. LYON, <i>Pres.</i>	IRA B. PRUDEN, <i>Treas.</i>
EDWARD A. WEBSTER, <i>Sec.</i>	
BENYEU DUNHAM,	JOHN L. VAN LIEW,
JOHN H. ANDERSON,	THOMAS LEWIS.

### SEXTON.

DAVID B. HEATH.



Historic Oak as seen from the street.





## Roll of Officers in 1892.

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### PASTOR.

REV. JOHN C. RANKIN, D.D.

### ELDERS.

ABRAM B. McCOLLUM,	CAVIN D. SMITH,
CALVIN THOMPSON,	JAS. H. McCOLLUM,
WM. DEMUN,	C. B. DUNHAM,
STEPHEN C. DAYTON.	

### TRUSTEES.

P. C. HENRY, <i>Pres.</i>	
JOHN L. VAN LIEW, <i>Sec. and Treas.</i>	
C. D. SMITH,	JOHN V. BUNN,
S. C. DAYTON,	WM. DEMUN,
THOMAS LEWIS,	WM. R. BROMFIELD,
A. IRVING.	

### SEXTON.

DAVID R. MOFFATT.

## Review of the Later History of the Presbyterian Church.

PREPARED BY THE PASTOR, LAUREN G. BENNETT.

During the seven years of my pastorate in Basking Ridge there have been many requests for a new edition of Dr. Rankin's HISTORICAL DISCOURSE and SUPPLEMENT. There have been so many changes in the congregation in recent years that it is probable a majority of those now worshipping here are not familiar with what is beyond all question the best, in fact so far as I am able to learn, the only complete history of our church. With the approach of our two-hundredth anniversary these demands for a new edition have become more frequent and insistent, indicating a general and commendable desire on the part of the congregation for a better acquaintance with the history of the church we love. Since it seems a most appropriate time for the refreshing of our minds in the achievements and lives that have entered into the making of our history, I am undertaking, upon the urgent request of many to whom this church is very dear, to add a short survey of her more recent life. It is my purpose to center these comments about the lives of those who, in the Providence of God, have had the privilege of laboring here as pastors. I shall, therefore, without going too much into detail give some personal impressions of the pastorates of Dr. Rankin, Mr. Mason and Dr. Reeve, together with a few facts having to do with my own work.

In Dr. Rankin's HISTORICAL DISCOURSE and SUPPLEMENT he modestly disclaims holding any large place in the life and work of our beloved church. He refers with great generosity of spirit to the services of those who had gone before him in this pastoral office, but with regard to his own work his comments are few. I never knew Dr. Rankin. He went to his eternal reward thirteen years before I came to preach the Gospel in the pulpit which in forty-four years of unremitting labor of love had come to be a part of the very life of this great man of God. He had retired from active service five years before his death, and two pastorates of four and twelve years had intervened between the ceasing of his work and the beginning of my own pastorate. Now after these seven years in which I have had the opportunity of forming

a deeper acquaintance with the life of this community, I look back on the life of this man and count it a joy to join my voice with the great multitude in this vicinity who to-day rise up to call him blessed.

It is impossible to speak in extravagant terms of his life and work. Mere words can never do justice to such a life. Now after the lapse of all these years the impress of his life upon the church he loved, and the community in which he lived, remains as a glowing tribute to the man in whose footsteps we could well desire to follow. He preached the Gospel in great earnestness and vigor, and in his pastoral visitation his faithfulness was unflinching. The secret of his great usefulness, however, was in the life he lived with God. His prayer life and his diligence in the study of the Word of God receive frequent comments from those who knew him as pastor.

It is a remarkable tribute to Dr. Rankin's zeal and influence as a preacher and pastor that even with his advancing years the work of the church did not falter. The largest ingathering of souls during his pastorate came after thirty-two years of service. What an evidence of the worth of the long pastorate! He kept pace with the changing times and was not slow to recognize the necessity of some changes in method. It was during his pastorate that the Woman's Missionary Society and the Christian Endeavor Society were organized, and these societies have contributed greatly to the spiritual life of the church. His life has left a wonderful impress on the community.

Finally the burden of advancing years became so heavy that he was compelled to give up the active pastorate. With great reluctance his beloved congregation acquiesced in his desire and he retired July 28, 1895. He continued to live in the village until his death April 24, 1900. He died as he had lived, strong in the faith, beloved by his own church, respected and esteemed by all who knew him. Few churches have had such a pastor. Few pastors have had such an influence. Truly it can be said of him "Though he die yet shall he live." His picture or his autograph may be found in many of our homes, but what is of vastly greater importance his memory lives in the hearts and lives of those to whom he ministered.

He was buried beneath the old oak. What a fit resting place for the earthly tabernacle of the man so intimately identified with

our church! A tablet was placed in the rear of the church by the congregation bearing this inscription: "And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

It was in April, 1895, that Presbytery dissolved the pastoral relation of Dr. Rankin with the understanding that he was to continue until his successor was chosen. With commendable promptness the congregation set about securing a new pastor. On July 28 Dr. Rankin preached his last sermon, and with him in the pulpit was Rev. Edgar C. Mason who had been chosen by the congregation as the new pastor. Mr. Mason began his pastorate the following Sabbath, and again we point to an example that should be held up to other churches. There was no long interim which is always so harmful to the spiritual life of a church.

The new pastor brought a vigor, earnestness and vision that gave a great impetus to the work and forward step in the church activities. There are several things in this short pastorate of four years that deserve special mention, and as I look back to them it is with a feeling that I am able to appraise them at their true worth.

When Mr. Mason began his work the church membership was 226; when he closed his work, October 15, 1899, there was a membership of 283. In a community having little or no growth this must certainly be considered a creditable advance. But the interesting thing about it is that during his pastorate the church had one of the greatest additions by profession of faith in her long history. On December 5, 1897, fifty-nine persons were received into the membership, forty-six of whom came by profession of their faith in Christ. Many of these persons are today among our most faithful members. It was a day not only of unusual significance because of the large number uniting, but a day in which many useful lives were dedicated to Christ. I believe there have been few days of equal significance in this church. So far as I am able to learn it is the largest addition in one day since the great awakening during the pastorate of Dr. Brownlee in 1822. The Sessional Records indicate that the spiritual condition of the church had frequently been a matter of discussion and prayer, so we know beyond any doubt that this notable day was not a mere coincidence but a definite fruit of the spirit.

There were other advances of scarcely less significance during the days of Mr. Mason's leadership. The Sunday School made a remarkable gain in membership, being more than doubled in numbers between 1896 and 1898. A Home Department and Cradle Roll in the Sunday School and a Junior Christian Endeavor Society were organized, and in every way there is an evidence of an earnest effort to make all activities of the church measure up to their greatest opportunities.

The thing which to us is the most constant remembrance of Mr. Mason's work, aside from the presence and help of those whom he was instrumental in leading to Christ, was the assuming the support of a foreign missionary, Rev. W. T. Mitchell. We must not forget that in large measure the pastor was building on the foundation of those who had gone before in his office, particularly Dr. Rankin, who was most zealous and earnest in preaching a gospel for the whole world; but it is of lasting credit to Mr. Mason that he had the vision and courage to lead his congregation to this very definite work outside the immediate neighborhood. It was in November, 1898, that the congregation undertook this work, and Mr. Mitchell has continued during these twenty-two years the faithful, devoted missionary of this church in Mainpurie, India. No single undertaking of the church has been more fruitful in a spiritual way. There are many in our membership to-day who can trace their world vision of the world for Christ to a personal interest in Mr. Mitchell as our representative. At various times there has been a generous response in the congregation to urgent appeals from Mr. Mitchell which could not be met by the Board, and it has always been with great profit to the givers. When on furlough Mr. Mitchell always visits the community, and in 1915 he, with his family, occupied the manse during the pastor's vacation.

Mr. Mason's pastorate closed October 15, 1899. The congregation was then without a pastor until the following spring, the pulpit being supplied by visiting ministers during the interim.

On June 6, 1900, the congregation called by unanimous vote Rev. John T. Reeve, a young man who had just finished his course in Princeton Seminary. There have been many times when God's leading has been apparent in our church, but never were the evidences more unmistakable than in this call. While the community was not growing to any marked extent many changes had taken place and many other changes were soon to follow.

It was the time when the typical rural aspect was being given the color of a semi-suburban community. Many improvements had been or were about to be made. Good roads, commuters' trains, electric lights, water system, better schools, are but a few of the many influences that were helping in this transformation. If our church was in any way to face these new conditions without losing ground she must have as a pastor a man of vision, courage, sound judgment, and willingness to work as well as the always necessary qualities of piety and knowledge of the Scriptures. The choice of pastor could not have been more happy or fortunate. It was the hand of God. Doubtless many felt this at the time, but now, after twenty years, the evidence of it is unmistakable. The young pastor took up his work with an energy and in a power that were prophetic of great usefulness, and the church entered upon what is unquestionably one of the greatest periods of her development. Dr. Rankin, in his HISTORICAL DISCOURSE, calls attention to what he considered the brightest part of our church's history in the pastorate of Dr. Finley. The pastorate of Dr. Reeve was certainly one of equal achievements, though by the very necessity of the case the two were not alike.

The beginning of Dr. Reeve's pastorate was not easy. There were circumstances and conditions that required the greatest tactfulness. There were new people to be attracted and held by our church, people whose early environment had not been that of a community similar to ours. There were improvements to be made in church property, for nothing the church owned was in good repair. There were new methods to be introduced, for, after all, Christ fitted His work and His methods into the times in which He lived, and this was His evident purpose for every apostle and minister who should preach His gospel. The old standards of organization, equipment, finances, had to give way to the more modern standards. All this had to be done without losing the essential emphasis, that of the Christ working in the hearts of men. It is doubtful if a man could be found in the whole Presbyterian body who could have done all this better than the man chosen by the congregation.

Dr. Reeve began his work undaunted by any difficulty, and these were many, any one of which might have broken the spirit of a man less earnest in purpose. The thing that impresses me as I attempt to review this pastorate is the permanent quality

of the things accomplished. This applies not only to the material improvements but to the spiritual work around which all our energies should center.

In the changes made in the church property a new idea seems to have been emphasized. What has been done has been done well. No longer is there any mere make-shift in alterations that have become necessary. From the laying of the new floor of the church porch, to which Dr. Reeve refers in his historical sermon as one of the first improvements of his pastorate, to the crowning achievement in a material way, the rebuilding of the church, this idea of permanence stands out. Repair bills have been small, and will continue to be small for many years, all because those who builded were looking not to the present alone but to the future.

I shall probably not be able to tell of all that was done in a material way during the twelve years of this pastorate, but by depending on the historical sermon of former reference and by calling upon my own observation I shall attempt to call attention to some of the outstanding features.

The building now occupied as a Public Library was at this time our chapel, and it seems to have occupied much of the earliest thought of the new pastor. First it was painted, then a new front was added, and the grounds about it were made more attractive. The unsightly hitching-posts about the church were removed and the gutters laid and the roads improved. At about the same time the carriage sheds were built on a strip of land that had been purchased adjoining the old cemetery on the north. This improvement was one that meant much, especially in stormy weather, for it provided for the comfort of the horses. Within the past year about two-thirds of these sheds have been removed, for with the coming of the automobile their usefulness is not as great as once it was.

The manse, while comfortable in some ways, was most inconvenient and by no means modern. In 1903 it was rebuilt, giving us what is unquestionably one of the most comfortable, convenient and pleasant manses in the country. It is in excellent repair, and we have every reason to believe it will for many years be a great comfort to the families of pastors who may succeed to this office.

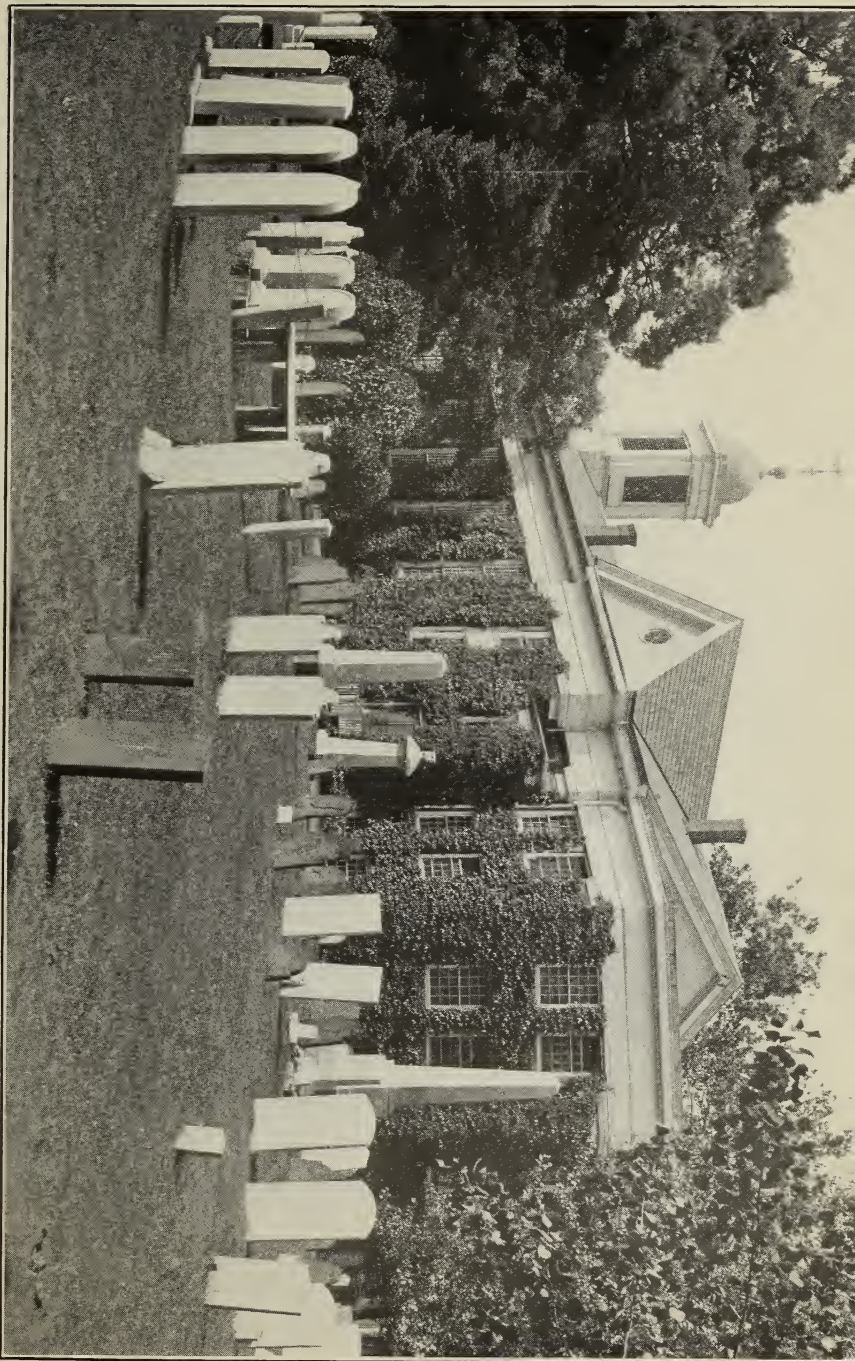
The grounds were receiving more attention every year, and the old cemetery was about this time redeemed from what had been an almost impenetrable wilderness, and given its present attractive appearance. The planting of shrubbery has helped to no inconsiderable degree in this transformation. To-day these grounds are regarded by all visitors as among the most attractive to be found anywhere, and many expressions of admiration are to be heard on almost any occasion.

All this time it was constantly being held in mind that something must be done with the church building. The interior had grown dingy, the east wall was considered unsafe, the detached chapel was not satisfactory. Finally, in October, 1907, the actual work was begun. The first Sunday in July, 1908, the building as we now have it was opened for use. These twelve years of constant service have not robbed our church building of its attractiveness, and to-day it stands as a monument to the far-reaching vision of the pastor, the skill of the architects, George B. Post and Sons, and the generosity and devotion of the congregation, who by their gifts of more than \$27,000 made it all possible. We are told by those who have visited many churches that ours compares favorably with the most attractive. There is an atmosphere of worship about it that has been helpful not only to the worshipper in the pew but to the preacher in the pulpit. It is our earnest hope that no disaster may overtake it, and that it may be preserved in its present form for many years.

The Italian church at Bernardsville, made necessary by a flourishing work that had been going on several years, was erected. A little later the Italian manse was erected and the grounds beautified. Then the cemetery was enlarged, a new roof placed on the church, the old barn on the manse property turned into a convenient garage, and many other changes and additions that have resulted in giving us what is without doubt one of the best of church properties.

But we must not lose sight of the spiritual work during this pastorate, for it was here the greatest progress was made. At the beginning of Dr. Reeve's work there were 277 members; when he closed his work in the autumn of 1912 the membership, including that of the Italian Mission, was 445. The Sunday School, which had fallen away somewhat a year prior to his coming, was reorganized and the membership and attendance





Chapel erected in 1908.



steadily increased well beyond any previous record. All organizations in the church were greatly stimulated and new societies were added, notably the Ladies' Aid Society and the Men's Brotherhood. A greater frequency of meetings of the Session and more businesslike methods in the Board of Trustees are other evidences that a new day had dawned in the life of our church.

Every year there were added to the church many new members by confessing Christ as their Saviour. The total received in this way during the twelve years was 286, while 118 united by certificate from other churches. There were on several occasions special evangelistic services resulting in a deepening of the spiritual life and the winning of souls, but as I read the records I am impressed with the fact that this large addition to the membership was the result of faithful pastoral visitation and personal work rather than a spasmodic effort at infrequent intervals. The attendance upon all services greatly increased, the gifts to benevolent and missionary purposes advanced by leaps and bounds until our church became the leader of the Presbytery in per capita gifts, a position which it has held ever since.

One of the outstanding features of this pastorate was the work among the Italians. The changing conditions, before referred to, had brought into the community a large number of foreign-speaking people, among whom the Italians predominated in numbers. Nothing had been done for these people in the way of social or spiritual uplift. They were in the community but not of it. They had no more than nominal allegiance to any church, and in many cases not even that. Dr. Reeve led the way in a new and vigorous work among these neglected people. At first it was the bringing an Italian preacher from New York, Newark or Bloomfield Seminary, and the holding services at various points in the township. A Sunday School was organized in Bernardsville, and the attendance of the children was large. It became apparent that something more permanent must be done, so a resident minister was secured and plans laid for a church. These plans were rapidly carried out and a beautiful and substantial stone church was erected. This proved a great stimulus to the work and an enthusiastic and earnest congregation was soon worshipping regularly, being ministered to by Rev. Tommaso Barbieri. The Sunday School continued to

flourish. With the completion of the church and manse we today have what in many ways is one of the best established and organized Italian Missions in the Eastern States. The buildings and equipment are among the best, and only the limited population keeps this work from taking rank with that in the larger centers.

Many other evidences of vigorous leadership are to be found in the records of these twelve years. Whatever divisions there may have been were entirely lost to view and memory. For harmony and unanimity of action the church became almost a model. The result was a new prominence, not only in the community but in the larger ecclesiastical relationships. It is a time long to be remembered by those who were active participants in it, and to which future generations will look with grateful appreciation.

Dr. Reeve had many opportunities to go to other fields of labor, but he resolutely refused all such invitations until 1912. In this year he was called to the pastorate of the Fourth Church in Philadelphia, and with deepest regret the congregation acquiesced in his request for a dissolution of the pastoral relationship. He preached his last sermon late in September.

The present pastor was installed March 26, 1913, after having supplied the pulpit about two months. The events of this pastorate are too fresh in the memory of the congregation to merit a review. We leave to those who may come after us the summing up of whatever we have failed to do or what in the grace of God we may have accomplished.

When I began my pastorate the total membership was 436, several having been dismissed in the interim before my arrival. Since that time we have received 141 by profession of faith in Christ and 85 by certificate. There have been many deaths and removals, so the total membership now is 476, of which number 60 belong to our Italian Mission. We reported a membership of 297 in our Sunday School at the beginning of the present church year and 35 in the Italian School. The Home Department and Cradle Roll are not included in these numbers. The membership in the Church and Sunday School is for the most part loyal and faithful, and there have been many gratifying responses when the call has come to make some new sacrifice or take some forward step. I have felt many times that whatever

has been accomplished during these seven years has been the mere building upon foundations which others by forethought and devotion had laid, and I may say in the words of Dr. Rankin, "It would be greatly to our disgrace if we had not made some progress."

We should here record the contribution our congregation made to our country's defense in the great world conflict. When the foundations of liberty were threatened forty-nine communicant members of our church entered the armies defending the right. Of these three young men in the prime of young manhood made the supreme sacrifice. William B. Neill, James Forrester and Joseph Labadia were killed in battle. With solemn hearts we reverently record their names and their deeds, and, that they may not have died in vain, we prayerfully renew our covenant of devotion to our God and our country.

Our beloved church looks hopefully to the future. We are determined to let no achievement of the past dim our eyes to what ought to be and can be her future glory, the glory of increasing usefulness as a faithful servant of the Christ whose name we bear. United heart and hand in the work made dear to us by so many sacred memories, we lift our eyes to our Lord and offer our prayer of dedication:

"Lead on, O King Eternal:  
 We follow, not with fears;  
 For gladness breaks like morning  
 Where'er Thy face appears;  
 Thy cross is lifted o'er us;  
 We journey in its light:  
 The crown awaits the conquest;  
 Lead on, O God of might."

## Roll of Officers in 1920.

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REV. LAUREN G. BENNETT.

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SAMUEL A. ALLEN,	LLOYD H. NELSON,
CHESTER C. BROWN,	DR. C. M. HENRY,
HEMAN CHILDS,	ULRICH EBERHARDT.

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FRED MCMURTRY, <i>Treas.</i> ,	H. O. COURTER,
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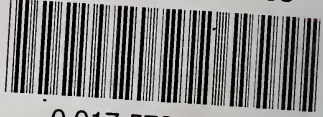
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