

6739

37-2

ANNALS

OF

STATEN ISLAND,

From its Discovery to the Present Time.

BY

John
J. J. CLUTE.

"2"

"If we look for a spot which forever is blest
By Nature with her perennial smile,

• • • • •

We never need leave our own green isle."

ANON.

NEW YORK:

PRESS OF CHAS. VOGT, No. 114 FULTON STREET.

1877.

THE MORAVIAN CHURCH.

So far as is now known, the first of the denomination of Christians called Moravian, or United Brethren, on Staten Island, was Captain Nicholas Garrison. It is said that the ship which he commanded, while on a voyage from Georgia to New York, was overtaken by an exceedingly violent storm. Among the passengers on board was the Bishop Spangenberg, who remained calm and undisturbed amidst the confusion and terror which prevailed on board, spending most of the time in earnest prayer. The vessel survived the tempest, and reached the port in safety, but ever after a very warm friendship existed between the Bishop and the Captain, who was a pious man. In 1742, David Bruce, a very zealous servant of God, was sent to visit the scattered flocks in New York, and on Long and Staten Islands, and he was probably the first Moravian preacher who ever officiated as such on Staten Island.

The ship or snow, alluded to above, was built for the service of the Moravians, on Staten Island, between the year 1745 and 1748, under the direction of Abraham Bœmper and Timothy Horsfield, agents of the Moravian Church in New York; she was launched on the 29th day of May of the last mentioned year, and registered in the name of Mr. Henry Antes. The cost of her building was defrayed almost entirely by Bishop Spangenberg from a legacy left him individually by Thomas Noble, a merchant of New York. This vessel was in the service of the Moravian Church nine years, in the course of which she crossed the Atlantic twenty-four times, sailing between New York and London, or Amsterdam, and made one voyage to Greenland. She had the reputation of being an excellent sailer. The largest colony she ever carried was that led by John Nitschmann, which landed at New York City in May, 1749, and numbered one hundred and twenty-five souls. She put to sea on the 8th of September, 1748, for the first time, and for the last time on the 20th of

November, 1757, in command of Capt. Christian Jacobson. Ten days thereafter, in latitude 37° North, and longitude 60° West, she was chased by a French Privateer, the Marguerite, captured, and given to a prize crew to be taken to Louisburg, but owing to ignorance of navigation on the part of those to whom she was intrusted, was totally wrecked on the 12th day of January, 1758, off the coast of Cape Breton; her passengers barely escaped with their lives.

Count Zinzendorf, during his sojourn in America between December, 1741, and January, 1743, extended the influence and enlarged the membership of this denomination in New York, and also on Long and Staten Islands. From that time religious intercourse was maintained unbroken between those places and Bethlehem, and after the arrival of the first colony of Moravians in June, 1742, the above named three places were jointly constituted one of many fields in which the brethren sought to labor for the furtherance of gospel truth. It was without delay entered by their evangelists, or itinerants. Among these were the brethren Bruce, Almers, Gambold, Neisser, Utley, Rice, and Wade.

Between 1742 and 1746 the Moravian Society in New York met for worship at Thomas Noble's; after that time at Henry Van Vleek's, in whose house also the ministers were accustomed to lodge during their sojourn in the city. In the spring of 1748, at which time there were upwards of fifty persons attached to the Brethren in the city and on the adjoining islands, an ineffectual effort was made to secure the use of the Lutheran Church in New York for public services steadily. Thereupon a hall was rented for holding meetings, and apartments for the residences of ministers. In the former there was preaching both in English and German once on the Lord's day, and public and private worship on several evenings of the week.

Abraham Boemper, Henry Van Vleek, William Edmonds, John Kingston, Jeremiah Burnet and Jannitje Boelen, of New York; Timothy and Mary Horsfield, William and Charity Cornwell, and Jaques and Jacomyntje Cortelyou, of

Long Island; and Jacobus and Vettje Van Der Bilt, of Staten Island, are mentioned in September, 1747, as being the most active members of the triple Moravian Society in the province of New York.

On the 27th of December, 1748, Bishop de Watterville organized a Moravian congregation in New York from members of the society, in connection with the Brethren, since 1741; George Neisser was installed as pastor. In 1751 a church was built on Fair Street, now Fulton, between Nassau and William Streets, and dedicated to the worship of God by Spangenberg and the brethren Owen Rice and Jacob Rogers, on the 18th of June, 1751. Before the close of the year, a parsonage also had been erected on the line of the street in front of the church. It was first occupied by Owen and Elizabeth Rice. Abraham Reincke was settled in New York in 1754.

Between 1742 and 1763, about a dozen different clergymen of the denomination came occasionally to the Island to officiate. In 1756 there were only three communicant members on the Island, viz.: Jacobus Vanderbilt and his wife Vettje or Neiltje, and the widow Elizabeth Inyard.* The religious services were usually held in a school-house, which, as some say, stood upon or near the site of the present church, but as others say, with more probability, at the corner of the roads at what is now called Egbertville. In 1762, Richard Connor, Stephen Martino, Jun., Tunis Egbert, Jacob Vander Bilt, Aaron Cortelyou, Mathias Enyard, John Baty, Cornelius Cortelyou, Cornelius Vander Bilt, Cornelius Van Deventer, Stephen Martino, Mary Stilwell, Cornelius Martino and Peter Perine, applied to the church authorities at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for the establishment of a Moravian Church upon Staten Island. On the 7th of July, 1763, the corner-stone of a church and parsonage was laid, and on the ensuing 7th of December the church was consecrated. The identical building is still standing, and continues to be occupied as a parsonage.

* Vide App. N. (35.)

The first regularly settled pastor of the church was Hector Gambold, in 1784; he was succeeded the same year by James Birkly, and he by E. Thorp; then followed—

Frederick Moehring, from 1787 to 1793.

James Birkly again, from 1793 to 1797.

Frederick Moehring again, from 1797 to 1803.

Nathaniel Brown, from 1803 until his death in 1813.

John C. Bechler, from 1813 to 1817.

George A. Hartman, from 1817 to 1837.

Ambrose Rondthaler, from 1837 to 1839.

H. G. Clauder, from 1839 to 1852.

Bernhard de Schweinitz, from 1852 to 1854.

Amadeus A. Reinke, from 1854 to 1860.

Edwin T. Senseman, from 1860 to 1862.

Eugene Leibert, from 1862 to 1867.

Francis F. Hagen, from 1867 to 1870.

William L. Lennert, from 1870 to 1876.

William H. Vogler from 1876—present incumbent.

The early dates and events given above, have been derived chiefly from denominational sources, the records of the church having been destroyed during the Revolution, when some British soldiers forcibly entered the parsonage at night, and after wantonly destroying furniture and other articles belonging to the occupant, carried off the archives of the infant church. About the same time, probably on the same night, the house of Capt. Christian Jacobson, in the vicinity of the church, was also entered, and he was killed by being shot. He was an eminently pious man, and captain of the Moravian ship, "Irene," after the retirement of Capt. Garrison.

The society was incorporated April 15th, 1808.

The present church edifice was consecrated May 15th, 1845.

The first conveyance of real estate to the church was by a document endorsed "Lease and Release" here given entire, *verbatim et literatim*.

"This Indenture, made the Eighth day of June, in the third year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third, of Great Britain, France and Ireland King, Defender

of the Faith, and in the Year of our Lord, 1763, Between John Baty, of Richmond County, Province of New York, Yeoman, of the one Part, and Thomas Yarrell, Minister of the United Brethren of the City of New York, Henry Van Vleek, of the City aforesaid, Merchant, Cornelius Van Deventer, Yeoman, & Richard Conner, Esqr., both of Richmond County of the other part, Witnesseth that the Said John Baty, for and in Consideration of the Sum of five Shillings Current Money of the Province of New York, to him in hand Paid by the said Thomas Yarrell, Henry Van Vleek, Cornelius Van Deventer and Richard Conner, the Receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, he the said John Baty hath Granted, Bargained & Sold, and by these Presents doth grant Bargain and sell unto them the said Thomas Yarrell, Henry Van Vleek, Cornelius Van Deventer and Richard Conner, all that Certain Peace or Parcel of Land Scituate lying and being on the South side of Statten Island, Richmond County, Province of New York, Beginning at the North East corner of the Land of Cornelius Cortelyou, thence running on a Course North twenty-Seven degrees West Three Chains, thence North Eight degrees West five Chains & forty Lincks, thence North forty degrees East five Chains and twenty-two Lincks, thence South forty-Seven Degrees East seven chains & forty-four Lincks to the Place of Beginning, Containing five & a half acres more or Less, Bounded South West & South South West by Land of Cornelius Cortelyou, and North West and North East by the Land of the above said John Baty, & South east by the King's Hey Way. Together with all and Singular the Reversian & Reversians, Remainder & Remainders, Rents and Services of the said Premisses above mentioned, and every Part and Parcel thereof with the appurtenances, To have and to hold the Said Peice or Parcel of Land, Hereditaments and Premises above Mentioned and every part and parcel thereof with the Appurtenances unto the Said Thomas Yarrell, Henry Van Vleek, Cornelius Van Deventer & Richard Conner, their Executors, Administrators and Assigns, from the day of the date of these Presents,

for and during and untill the full End and term of one whole year from thence next and immediately ensuing and following fully to be Compleat and ended, Yielding and Paying therefore one Pepper Corn on and upon the feast of St. Michael the Arch Anhel, (if Demanded) to the Intent that by virtue of these Presents and by force of the Statute for transferring of uses into Possession, they the said Thomas Yarrell, Henry Van Vleek, Cornelius Van Deventer & Richard Conner may be in actual Possession of all and singular the Said Premises above Mentioned with the Appurtenances, and be thereby Enabled to accept and take a grant and Release of the Reversion & Inheritance thereof to them & their heirs, to the only Proper use and behoof of them the said Thomas Yarrell, Henry Van Vleek, Cornelius Van Deventer and Richard Conner, their heirs and Assigns forever.

In Witness whereof, the Parties first above named have hereunto sett their hands & Seals the day & Year first above Written.

Sealed & Delivered
in the Presence of us,
JACOB VANDERBILT,
JOHN HERTTELL.

JOHN BEATY (L.S.)

On the succeeding day, June 19th, 1763, John Baty and Hannah his wife conveyed the same premises to the same parties in fee, in consideration of twenty-five pounds, ten shillings (\$63.75.)

On the second day of March, 1790, Edward Beattey, as executor of the last will and testament of his father, John Beattey, in consideration of five shillings, conveyed the same property, with slight variation in the courses, to John Ettwein Bishop, Hans Christian Van Schwein, and the Rev. Jacob Van Vleek, of the town of Bethlehem, and State of Pennsylvania, the Rev. Frederick Moehring, Richard Conner, John Dorsett and Lewis Ryerss, of the county of Richmond, for the reason given in the following extract therefrom :

“ Whereas, the late John Beattey, of the County of Richmond & State of New York, in the year of our Lord one

Thousand Seven Hundred & Sixty-three, did give & sell a lott of Ground to a religious Society in Union with the Episcopal Church, known by the name of Unitas Fratrum, or United Brethren, on which by divers Contributions & Donations by a number of said Society & other Friends, a Church or House of Worship with a dwelling House for the Minister, has been built and to this day Upheld and kept in repair; And, Whereas, the Deed of Conveyance of said John Beatty — has been in the time of War mislaid or somehow lost.”

The deed alluded to, in the above extract, was not lost as was supposed, but had been sent to the church authorities at Bethlehem, in accordance with the custom of the church, with congregations which were not self-sustaining. Years after the execution of the executor's deed, after the church had become self-sustaining, it was returned.

On the 31st day of August, 1873, the Chapel and Sunday School building at the Four Corners was dedicated. It was built upon land donated for the purpose by Mr. Cornelius Du Bois; the lot is one hundred feet square. The whole premises is estimated to be worth over seven thousand dollars.

The donations of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt to this church of his forefathers, have been munificent. When the present church edifice was erected, he contributed the sum of one thousand dollars towards its completion. On the 20th day of December, 1865, he gratuitously conveyed to the Trustees of the United Brethren's Church on Staten Island, eight and a half acres of land on the East side of the original five and a half acres, and on the 30th day of October, 1868, about forty-six acres more on the north and west sides thereof.