First Presbyterian Church, Cranbury, N.J.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, BY THE REVEREND

GILBERT T. SNOWDEN (IN THE 1790'S)

In drawing up the history of the Con=
=gregation of Cranberry, there are peu=
=liar difficulties. Either thro' gregrious
irregularity & negligence in the ma=
=nagement of both the spiritual & tempo=
=ral concerns of this Church, or very
great carelessness in preserving the
Records of the Church, or both — there
are no documents to be had from
whence to state any facts, in order
to the forming of the History. What
is now offered is far short of what
it would be, if the Church had here=
=tofore been completely organized
& its affairs regularly ad=
=ministered — its public proceedings

accurately recorded, its records carefully preserved. Then being, if not a total, yet sometimes bordering on a total deficiency of positive records — the history of the Church of Canterbury is founded almost entirely upon the information of a very few individuals. As their memories & recollection may not be in every instance exact, & as their sentiments & observations may have been influenced by ~~prejudices~~ prejudices & peculiarities, to some of which we are all liable, ~~a perfect information~~ ~~with placed on what follows. Yet~~ ~~the information~~ there may be

found in what follows some misstatements. Yet on the whole, as much dependance may be put upon it, as upon common human testimony by seeing that care was taken to admit, only what was spoken of with certainty, by ~~persons of~~ prious & judicious ~~superior~~ characters —

II. The formation of this Congregation seems to have been effected chiefly if not entirely by ministers & other out of & around it, no person being mentioned who on the spot had real or influence to encourage & promote so valuable & important a business. In such cases the organizing of congregations will be best done under other circumstances conspire to promote. That lay man, who not only possessed of lively faith & sound understanding & public influence, may not only cooperate with ministers, but almost equal them, in advancing Christ's kingdom in the world - is sweetly remembered - & sufficiently evident from the existence of the most efficient of & most esteemed Mr Walter Ray of Freehold, whose character by the Minutes of Freehold in his will no doubt be carefully delineated

Relations

Of its Formation & History.

The Congregation of Cranbury derives its name from a ~~town~~ small village in the state of New Jersey ~~which lies 18 miles South East of Princeton~~ which is pleasantly situated at an equally long distance almost in the centre of the Congregations of Princeton, New Brunswick, Freehold & Allentown, being but 10 miles from Princeton the nearest & 15 from Brunswick the most distant of these places. All these congregations were formed many years before that of Cranbury; & probably from the following cause. The land at & near this village is naturally very light & for the fertile that what is found at the other places, two of which enjoyed under more favorable circumstances from lying on the main stage road on the Northward. Their property & soil rapidly increased & consequently attended the settling & cultivating of the

ground. Hence the population of other places had long afforded materials for forming congregations, while the population here did not amount to a transient visit or occasional exhortation. In the minutes of the first proprietors meeting of proprietors there being also no men of property, or influence to forward ~~the~~ ~~land was settled~~, it was settled entirely by persons low in life, low circumstances, who were never able unless peculiarly assisted by other cities they fully to forward any public measures. In process of time, these circumstances were in part removed. & the neighbouring ministers Mr Wm Tennent, Mr Finley Mr Samuel Blair & Mr Jas Brainerd visited the place from time to time lecturing & preaching to the people, until they were formally organized into a congregation. This would take place about the year 1736

1737, & a house of worship was built in the year 1741. The first minister who settled among them was Mr Benedict Chauncey who was installed to the charge of the congregation July 18th 1744. It does not appear whether he was then ordained. But he was ordained before he came to Branford. He was the first tutor. Only half his time was devoted to Branford, as he still was before, tutor at Milford, or rather of the house installed to the charge of both places. From one circumstance it would seem, that both people were considerable associate only on shipping in the place. For the Milford congregation had authority in both societies, as appears in a deed or a paper, in which the people were mentioning of the transactions of the day the place of preach

Cranberry branch of said Congregation". Mr. McKnight had resided at Cranberry long time [illegible] the distance to the [illegible] was 12 miles. Then in the year 17[illegible] [illegible] a violent [illegible] contest between the two branches, Allentown insisting on Mr. McKnight removal to that place — Cranberry contending for his continuance where he had dwelt. After several meetings, they were compelled to go to Pres[illegible] with the dispute, who by a [illegible] Committee, determined that Mr. McKnight should stay at Cranberry, & with leave of its [illegible] permitted Allentown to get a [illegible] to [illegible] they would.

In the year 1755, Mr. McKnight [illegible] with some of Presbytery, which the holy [illegible] with [illegible] & the

Particular was appointed to [illegible] of [illegible] visited him & called on the [illegible] the place; but was soon made [illegible] the of their [illegible] in Appearing [illegible] a public [illegible] confession made in public by one Thomas Dumas.

Whether it was the [illegible] of some measure begun — Mr. McK[illegible] was called to [illegible] in the year 1756 & 57. which ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible] between him & [illegible] of a private & temporal nature are not so [illegible] & they were not carried to the. [illegible] ostensibly, yet they were the cause of Mr. McKnight leaving the Congregation Cranberry & Allentown [illegible]

all his labours were from that time confined. This took place in the Spring of 1757. Mr Thompson, was not a man of a quiet & high temper. He lived at the town of Cranberry & had no little influence in that quarter. He was informant as well & prudent & pious child of God, tho' no blame in either, but simply we mentioned Mr McNight. But the circumstance is worth of record not only as it is a fact of considerable magnitude in the history of this society - but as affording Ministers & people many important reflections. These are drawn which from the information & comfort of the faithful ministers, may be made to us by some later & our consideration. How the ministries of good men, may be given to some of good - & therefore how much they should be cherished & their prayers & sympathies & order

they to appear - should be mutually pardoned.

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* Was effected by Mr McNight requesting of Pusbery & receiving permission to resign one of his charges & confine himself to which he might choose.

When Mr McNight removed to Allentown, Pusbery & Cranberry to be a distinct & vacant Congregation; & Cranberry continued vacant five years. In the Spring of 1762, Mr Th. Smith, an ordained Minister, from Long Island was installed to be their Pastor. He labored there 27 ~~years & upwards~~ & upwards, dying on the 23rd day of Dec. 1789. His death was sudden & remarkable. He was always infirm in his body, & some time was afflicted with fits of losing his life, by an ~~attack~~ ed

one illness, fearful to him self & terrible pro-
-to those around him. His and their apprehen-
-sions led him to make, in pathetic fervor, a spe-
-cial request that he might be removed
by some speedy method. If such was his
hope, it was not merely exactly granted
but by an answer. For on a Wednesday
~~in the evening of the~~
~~28th of Dec. which the private business~~
~~was making~~ when at a private house hol-
-ding fellowship with some of his flock. While
in the act of prayer, his voice failed, & one
~~whole side~~ side of his body ~~was~~ was entir-
-ely unnerved. He fell back into a chair
~~in the space of a few~~
after speaking & intermittently uttering
a few words, he ~~quietly~~ quietly slept in Jesus
~~this place was~~ The congregation was
again supplied with a Pastor, on Mon. Jan
9th. when Mr Geo. T. Sweden was ordai-
-ned & settled among them & in their pre-

By his measures stated, by which he ~~[illegible]~~
planted & greatly fostered the Religious
of Retsemer in those parts.

Sixth Minister.

Of the State of Religion.

These things are to be noticed under ~~the head~~
1st The doctrines maintained, 2dly The degree
of piety which prevailed, & 3dly The govern-
-ment & discipline which were exercised.
The doctrines preached have ~~all been~~ all been
full Calvinistic or what approached to
it. Mr Mr Wright ~~[illegible]~~ dwelt pretty much
on the Confession & Catechisms. & was
searching & strict in his applications.
The people received & relished not
only warm exhortations - but pious
Truths. & lived for them in the prospect

foundation of practical faith in it. Something different is discernible in his predecessor. Mr Smith, it may be, [illegible] ment in his mind, or [illegible] on the lines of our public [illegible] Confession of Faith; and in his ministrations, he took pains to avoid all topics not point any way to appeal to common minds — or in the least offend them to worldly prejudices. He has had long among the people, a very large congregation. The people generally are not in a position to understand much of the arguments for or against infant baptism, nor can they endure to hear them mentioned in public. There is a very strong opinion [illegible]

[illegible] worked. Probably in the newspapers, to the doctrines which are, at most, [illegible] the Presbyterian Church. The [illegible] are in, in fact, [illegible] from the little attention which seems to have been paid to the material [illegible] moment. For the [illegible] in public life, a [illegible] to [illegible] improvement is not [illegible] more [illegible] There is the knowledge of those things which are acquired by reading the Scriptures. Only results are [illegible] only. Our ideas on this subject are more matured by considering Dr. The Government of the Church [illegible] Without means [illegible]. Under this pious minister, habits were continually [illegible] up. In them the principles are [illegible] practices must be the Presbyterian [illegible] inspired. [illegible] were profound.

[illegible] & rules of conference spoken upon.

Cases were also taken to remove offenders & purge the society by the exclusion of obstinate offenders - of which several instances remain on record. The records now in being are only for a great number of years, with some notes in them - but the meetings of leaders were off & their proceedings were recorded. But most of them have gone by last. The children &

On the subject of baptism - all were admitted who regularly worshipped with the Congregation - & applicants for communion were examined by the Ministers & after the manner of some of the leaders.

Under Mr Smith's societies seem to have prospered - Neither the people nor children ~~and people were~~ catechised or ministerially visited, & consequently they had not public worship. There were not omission they were misfortunes, which people & ministers mourned - but which could not be avoided thro' the peculiar infirmities of body with which Mr Smith was very exercised. There he has been seldom told me robbed his mind of energy & carry them to the opposite point of carelessness & severity.

When Mr Smith settled at Cranbery, a small Society, who had the house of worship 6 miles to the west of Cranbery joined in his call. This place was ~~known by the name of~~ called the Dutch neck people, & is the same with that branch of Mr Stephen's Churches present charge, which is the bell lately put into their hands in