

THE PRESBYTERY
OF
THE LOG COLLEGE;

OR,
The Cradle of the Presbyterian Church
IN AMERICA.

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IN order to prevent misunderstanding, it is proper to state that this valuable history is published by the Board for the Presbytery through the author, the members of that body and Dr. Murphy defraying the entire expense. For obvious reasons the Board has acted on the rule that it is inexpedient for it to publish local histories, however interesting and valuable they might be. But for the action of the Presbytery and Dr. Murphy, this volume, notwithstanding that more than two-thirds of it relates to the origin and general history of our Church and contains much new and valuable information pertaining thereto, could not have been published by this Board.

E. R. CRAVEN, *Secretary.*

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THE ORIGINAL LOG COLLEGE BUILDING.

APPENDIX.

CELEBRATION OF THE FOUNDING OF THE LOG COLLEGE, SEPT. 5, 1889.

FOLLOWING the preparation of this volume, and growing out of it, there was held on September 5, 1889, the year which is the centennial anniversary of the organization of the General Assembly, a celebration which was so extraordinary in every respect that the author was persuaded to delay the issuing of the book until a description of that noteworthy event could be prepared as an appendix. The commemorative occasion was marked by so many favoring providences; it drew together such a vast assembly; it was so cordially advocated by the public press; it was honored by the presence of so many distinguished people; it had with it such hearty good-will from all classes, all parties and all denominations,—that it cannot but be regarded as a most remarkable and significant event. It was the more noteworthy in that such results were entirely unanticipated. In the beginning its friends had no higher purpose than an ordinarily important reunion, and all its vast proportions were developed as the work of preparation progressed.

The celebration grew out of the continued study of its history which had been undertaken by direction of the Presbytery. As that study progressed and led to the minute investigation of points in the history which had not come in the way of previous explorers, certain new and striking facts were discovered. How should these important facts be rescued from oblivion and brought to the attention of those who are interested in the cause of religion? Evidently some extraordinary thing must be done for that purpose. This was the first impulse that prompted to our wonderful celebration. What else would be so well adapted to awaken the attention of the Christian public to our strangely interesting history?

It became more and more manifest to us at every step that we were following the leadings of Providence. Plans of preparation

by the ushers to the platform, and received by the large audience standing and with cheers.

The Rev. D. K. Turner of Hartsville read a paper on "The Log College." He said :

Rev. William Tennent, Sr., the founder of "Log College," was an Episcopal clergyman in Ireland, who married Miss Catharine Kennedy, daughter of a Presbyterian minister in that country. In 1716 or 1717 he crossed the Atlantic. In 1718, being dissatisfied with the doctrines and government of the Episcopal Church, he united with the Presbyterian Synod. For more than six years, from May, 1720, to September, 1726, he was pastor in Bedford, N. Y., and in Stamford, Conn.

In the autumn of 1726 or the spring of 1727 he removed from Bedford. It is possible that Mr. Tennent did not come to Neshaminy till 1727, for he was not present at the Synod of Philadelphia, September 21, 1726. In the graveyard-wall of the Neshaminy church of Warwick there is an ancient stone, with the date cut on it "1727," which was in the old church and was carefully preserved when that building was taken down. So far as can be ascertained, that was the year when the first house of worship was erected in this neighborhood.

The precise spot at which Mr. Tennent resided and conducted his theological seminary the first eight years is unknown. September 11, 1735, he bought one hundred acres of land, on a part of which we now are, of John White of Philadelphia. During the last ten years of his life he occupied these acres now around us. His residence was on this side of the "York Road," and the building in which the young men studied and recited was just opposite on the other side, only a few rods off.

The school-house was of log, about eighteen by twenty feet in size and perhaps two stories high. In it the students spent most of the day, and lodged at night with their preceptor or with families in the vicinity. The house which stands where his dwelling formerly stood may properly be spoken of as his dwelling *rebuilt*; the west end, containing a large stone chimney, is standing now much as it was when he resided here. Within the fireplace of that chimney there was, until a few years since, a wooden crane, large and strong, on which it is commonly believed the pots and kettles hung wherein the students' dinner was boiled, and their mush was cooked from corn grown on the ground under our feet. Before the logs were all decayed Rev. Robert B. Belville, for a long period pastor here, had a cane made from one of them and presented it to Samuel Miller, D. D., of Princeton College.

Besides Mr. Tennent's sons, the names of the following persons have come down to us as having been under his instruction in theology: Samuel Blair, John Blair, Samuel Finley, D. D., Hamilton Bell, John Rowland, William Robinson, Charles Beatty, James McCrea, John Campbell, John Roan, William Dean, Daniel Lawrence, David Alexander. Whitefield in November, 1739, spent a night with Mr. Tennent on this property, and wrote thus concerning the seminary: "From this despised place seven or eight worthy ministers of Jesus have lately been sent forth; more are almost ready to be sent, and the foundation is now laying for the instruction of many others."

The church-edifice in which old Mr. Tennent preached is not now standing. It was on ground which is at present included in Neshaminy Cemetery, near the house of worship of Neshaminy congregation. His remains lie in the graveyard, a few rods from the site of the meeting-house in which he held forth the word of life. On the large flat marble

slab covering his grave it is recorded that he died May 6, 1746. His will was made in February, 1745, and he died shortly after.

"Log-College Evangelists" was the title of the address of R. M. Patterson, D. D., LL.D., of Philadelphia, as follows:

The cautious Dr. Archibald Alexander has declared: "The Presbyterian Church is not more indebted for her prosperity and for the evangelical spirit which has generally pervaded her body to any individual than to the elder Tennent."

The founder of the Log College deserves that transcendent commendation because—

1. He began the movement that thoroughly Americanized and Presbyterianized the Presbyterian Church in America.

2. He insisted that the first and the essential qualification for a true minister of the gospel is vital piety.

3. He held that when God bestowed extraordinary gifts upon a man, he was not to be kept from preaching the gospel because he could not go through a college curriculum.

4. Accepting the birthright membership of the children of members of the Church, he contended that for full communion they should exhibit the evidences of regeneration in the fruits of piety.

5. He believed in revival and awakening seasons.

The "Log-College evangelists" whom William Tennent trained for the ministry leavened the whole Church with these views.

Gilbert Tennent was first a pastor in New Jersey. He then settled in the Second church, Philadelphia, and left his impress on that city, which is the metropolis of Presbyterianism in the United States.

John Tennent, spiritual and seraphic, a Robert Murray McCheyne, died when twenty-five years of age, after a pastorate of only seventeen months in Freehold, N. J.

William Tennent, Jr., through whose life one can scarcely resist the conviction that there ran a line of the supernatural and the miraculous, succeeded his brother in Freehold, and continued the influence begun by him.

Charles Tennent, at White Clay Creek, Delaware, and Buckingham, Maryland, helped quietly to mould what has ever since been a strong Presbyterian region.

Samuel Blair, profoundly learned and deeply pious, labored for four years in Shrewsbury, New Jersey, and then in Fagg's Manor, Pennsylvania, for twelve years, establishing there a classical school from which went such men as Samuel Davies and John Rodgers. He and Gilbert Tennent were the ecclesiastical leaders of their party in maintaining the Log-College principles through the unhappy internecine struggles of the Church.

John Blair, the brother of Samuel, first settled in the Cumberland Valley at the Big Spring or Newville; then followed Samuel at Fagg's Manor as preacher and teacher; afterward becoming professor of theology in and vice-president of Princeton College.

Samuel Finley, after itinerating as an evangelist through Southern New Jersey, settled in Nottingham, Maryland, for seventeen years, and instituted an academy there in which some of the most distinguished men in the Church and State were educated, and then was the president of Princeton College.

William Robinson, the son of an English Quaker, entered the ministry