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## Sketch of the Life of Rev. Thomas B. Montanye.

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(Southampton Meeting, July 22, 1884.)

The ancestors of Rev. Thomas B. Montanye were Huguenots in France. They belonged to that noble class of the French population, who endured persecution for their attachment to the Protestant faith, and who by the revocation of an Act of Toleration were compelled to flee from their native land to preserve their lives. Some went first to Holland and subsequently came to this country. Among them was Count or Sir Jean De La Montaigné. Both titles are given to him in different papers and in ancient records. La Rochelle was the last stronghold of the Protestants in France, and when that city after an obstinate defence surrendered to Richelieu in 1628, he crossed the wide ocean in search of freedom of conscience and of worship, and located in New Amsterdam, now New York City, then under the control of the Dutch. Not long after his coming a large grant of land on Manhattan Island was made to him, and he became a member of the Council and one of the Directors General of the town. As immigrants frequently came from the Old World, many settled upon his land, and claimed ownership by right of possession. After his death in 1661 a petition was presented to the Council, signed by his children, asking to be put in possession of the lands given to their father, and which had been occupied by unauthorized strangers. The request was refused on the ground, that it would cause great harm and detriment to the village of New Harlem. If this extensive tract with all the elegant houses, stores and manufactories, which are now upon it, could be recovered to the heirs of Sir Jean, the wealth of one of our Bucks county families would be counted by tens of millions of dollars.

Count Jean De La Montaigné had two sons and two daughters. One of the daughters was stolen by the Indians when a child and never recovered. One of the sons, Jean, Jr., married and had five children, one of whom was Vincent. His son, Thomas,

married Rebecca Bryant. One of his sons, Benjamin, born June 16, 1745, was the father of Rev. Thomas B. Montanye, who was born in New York City, January 29, 1769, and was in the fifth generation from Count Jean, one of the earliest inhabitants of New York City. His father, Benjamin, in the first part of his manhood was a member of the Dutch Reformed church, in N. Y., but after his son, Thomas, and a daughter, much against his wishes, had united with the Baptist church, he himself examined the doctrines of that religion with more care, and at length followed the example of his children, and became connected with the same church. It was quite customary with the Baptists in former times to license and ordain private members of the church, who displayed ability and popular gifts, and Benjamin Montanye after a time was called to the ministry and with a few others originated a new organization, which subsequently became one of the strongest churches in the denomination in the United States. He served this charge for a time and was then called to the congregation in Deer Park, Orange county, N. Y., "where he labored with great success till his death, which occurred in December, 1825, in the eighty-first year of his age." It is said, that he often rode on horseback from his home in New York to Southampton to visit his son and preach in his church.

Thomas, the principal subject of this sketch, though brought up in a Dutch Reformed congregation, was led, under the preaching of Rev. John Gano, an able and celebrated Baptist minister of New York, to abandon the faith, in which he had been educated, so far as baptism was concerned, and become a member of the first Baptist church in that city, in 1786, when he was 17 years old. He displayed such native talents, that he was licensed to preach at 18 years of age, though he had not enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education, and the following year, Nov. 20, 1788, when less than 20 years old, he was ordained by Rev. Elders Waldo, Gano, Jayne and Southard, and became pastor of the church in Warwick, Orange county, N. Y. At the ordination Elder Waldo preached the sermon and Elder Gano gave the charge. Previous to his settlement there spiritual religion had been in a low state among the members, and skept-

ticism and indifference had extended widely in the community. But he began his labors with confidence in the power of the truth, and continued them with zeal, industry and success for twelve years and a half. During one year of his residence there more than 150 were added to the church, as the fruits of a powerful work of Grace. His influence and reputation spread into the surrounding region. He was regarded as an able and eloquent preacher of the Word, and his presence and assistance were sought at meetings of associations, ordinations, and religious conventions, at which a prominent part was usually assigned him. In 1800 he visited the association in Philadelphia, and was invited to preach at the church in Southampton, Bucks county, which was then without a pastor. His services were so agreeable to the people, that he soon received a call to be their spiritual guide, and the indications of Providence seemed to point it out as his duty to accept it, which he did in May, 1801. The Warwick church regretted his leaving them, and in their letter of dismission they say: "He stands high in our esteem, and we are extremely loath to part with him, but not willing to hold him without his pleasure of mind, we give him up at his request, though not cheerfully, but with sorrow of heart and many tears." They were unable to unite in the choice of a successor, and in 1803, two years after his removal, a meeting of the congregation was held, at which it was unanimously resolved to recall him. But he replied, that he was comfortably established at Southampton, and it seemed the Divine will that he should remain there. For a year or two after that they still vainly entertained and expressed the hope, that he might be persuaded to change his mind and accede to their request. At Southampton he was eminently useful in building up the church, confirming and instructing Christians in their faith, and gathering in converts to the fold. The people almost universally were attached to him. They had confidence in his talents and piety, and found him a judicious counselor and disinterested friend. He was industrious, and labored diligently for their good as well as his own temporal support. He resided several years upon the parsonage farm, (which has been sold within a few years past,) and cultivated it to a considerable extent with his own hands. He used every week or two to go to market in

Philadelphia with produce, and would arrange his trip in such a way as to stay at the Fox Chase over night. Reaching there in the last part of the afternoon he would hold a meeting for preaching in the evening previously appointed, and the next morning proceed on his way to the city. Perhaps the Baptist church in that village may have sprung from his labors on these occasions. His visits among his people were always enjoyed and his coming to their houses gladly welcomed, at marriages, and social gatherings, as well as in seasons of afflictions and sickness, and at funerals. In times of festivity he was very often invited to carve at table, as was the case with many clergymen in former years and was more successful in it than many of his brethren. When public anniversaries of religious societies were held, he was not infrequently requested to make an address, and possessing a loud, penetrating voice, and distinct enunciation; he could be heard by several thousands, and was popular with the masses on that account, as well as because he was fluent in speech, fervid and impassionate in manner, and had the faculty of impressing his views with great force upon his hearers. He was often employed, as the records of the courts of Bucks county show, in the settlement of estates, as executor or administrator, writing and witnessing wills, attending sales, etc. His advice was often sought by his people in their temporal as well as spiritual affairs, and he always endeavored to reconcile parties, who were at variance, to heal dissensions in the neighborhood, and promote peace and harmony.

When the war of 1812 arose between Great Britain and this country, and 14,000 men were drafted from Pennsylvania into the service of the United States, Rev. Montanye was appointed September 25, 1814, one of the five chaplains from this State. The others were Revs. Jonathan Eaton, Robert Rossel, Robert Sample and Samuel Tait. He was stationed with the second division, commanded by General Smith, at Marcus Hook, below Philadelphia, and occupied the same tent with Nathaniel Shewell, who was a highly respectable citizen of New Britain, in this county. He was a warm patriot, and entered upon the duties of his position in the army with alacrity and a desire to benefit the men individually as well as the cause. In an article upon the events of that period, published in the *Union Star and Chron-*

*icle* of December 5, 1859, which was furnished to me by a friend, occurs the following passage:

"Of that sweet Boanerges, Thomas B. Montanye, an incident is related illustrating his supreme devotion to the King of Kings. His life was so pure, and such his personal majesty, grace, and earnestness of address, that officers and soldiers were alike swayed by his magic will."

Then follows the anecdote, which is taken from "Sprague's Annals of the American Pulpit," and which was written by Hon. Horatio Gates Jones. It reads thus:

"Having received a chaplain's commission, he sallied forth to the camp on the banks of the Delaware. His clerical labors there proved highly acceptable and salutary. On one occasion, particularly, he had an opportunity of exhibiting his fortitude and conscientiousness in a way that attracted special notice. A general drill and review of the army had been ordered for the morning of the Sabbath, at the same hour, when preaching had hitherto been the order of the day. He told his friends that this military exercise must not take place at the hour of public worship. He then proceeded to the quarters of the General in command, and stated to him in a dignified and courteous manner, that he held a commission from his country, and also from his God; that by virtue of this latter commission, *he* was superior in command on the Sabbath to any of the military; that the general order for a review would interfere with orders from a higher source; and that consequently the review *could* not and *must* not take place. The General heard the chaplain with surprise, but with respectful attention; and the result was, that 'after-orders' were issued, and the review was postponed."

After his term of service as chaplain closed, he was appointed in December, 1814, Principal Assessor of United States taxes for the Fifth District, and held the office three years, until 1817. No doubt, this position was the more desirable for him, as the salary paid him by the church was only \$300 per year, as appears by the original account books from 1818 to 1827, still in possession of the family. This sum, however, was intrinsically and relatively more valuable then than at the present day.

He received a call, April 9, 1827, to become pastor of a new church just formed in Bridgetown, N. J., which he did not see his way clear to accept.

He was chosen in November, 1824, by the church in Wilmington, Delaware, to be a member of a Council, which was held to try the case of Rev. Samuel R. Green. Associated with him were Rev. Messrs. Matthias, Ashton, Shepherd and Walford.

Mr. Montanye was a member of a committee to organize the Philadelphia Baptist Society to promote Foreign Missions, before which Drs. Rice and Judson subsequently preached, and was in sympathy with the efforts to send the gospel to the heathen; and during his pastorate contributions were given by this people to aid the Foreign Missionary Society in its benevolent work. He sometimes also held protracted meetings of several days consecutively for the revival of religion, as had been done in this church from her earliest history. A Sabbath school was established during his pastorate, in which "rewards of merit" were given to the pupils, as appears from a testament containing the following inscription: "Presented to the Southampton Sabbath School Society by Captain John Davis;" and under this is the following: "Reward of Merit from the Southampton Sabbath School Society to Jane Cornell, October 12, 1823," with James Anderson's name subscribed as secretary. "The merit for which this reward was given was her committing 900 verses of the New Testament to memory." Among the superintendents of this school were William Purdy, Jacob Wright, Christopher Search and General John Davis. Rev. Montanye was not infrequently present, and addressed the school, and on such occasions, the galleries, in which it was held, were filled with spectators and listeners. At certain times the school met in the school-house on the grounds of the church.

Mr Montanye was decidedly opposed to the use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and a warm friend of temperance, even before the agitation of the question of total abstinence began. On one occasion he was invited to take some ardent spirits, as others were doing in the company. He replied, "No, I thank you; I will take a glass of water." The well-rope at the house happened to be broken, and a draught of that simple fluid was not obtained without some difficulty. However, a glass of water was at length brought by a little boy, who afterwards became Rev. Horatio Gates Jones, D. D.

During his pastorate he received into the membership of the church 129 persons by baptism and quite a number by letter. Twenty-one were baptised in a single year. When he commenced his labors there were 91 members, and when he died, though

many had deceased, and many removed, there were 125 members, an increase of more than one-third.

Among the many whom Rev. Montanye united in the bonds of marriage, may be mentioned all the sons and daughters of Thomas Beans, formerly proprietor of the hotel at Warminster; many of the large circle of relatives in the Yerkes family, and General John Davis who married Miss Amy Hart. Upon his return home from the latter wedding, which was in 1813, he named his own newly born daughter, Amy Hart, after the bride. She grew up and became the bride of Stephen Yerkes, and the mother of Hon. Harman Yerkes, judge of the courts of Bucks county.

In his public life, Rev. Montanye was closely associated with not a few prominent men in this part of the State, as General Davis, Judge Watts, and Enos Morris, Esq., the latter a distinguished lawyer of Newtown who was received as a member of this church in 1806, from the church in Hilltown, and was one of the executors of Montanye's will. A daughter of Mr. Morris, Mrs. John Lloyd, died at the early age of 19 years, and the last sermon Rev. Montanye preached was at her funeral, which occurred about two weeks before his own death. This lady was the mother of E. Morris Lloyd, Esq., formerly of Doylestown, and of Dr. Henry Lloyd, of Yardley.

Rev. Montanye was careful in his pecuniary transactions to have everything correct and fully understood by those with whom he dealt, and disliked to have any accounts remain unsettled after the first of April of each year. In his will he prohibited any one from examining his accounts or business papers beyond April 1st, previous to his decease, except such as he designated, which were connected with his own private affairs.

He usually enjoyed excellent health, being endowed with a strong physical constitution, but in June, 1829, having been in attendance at the Association, in Warwick, he contracted a disease of the liver, which at length terminated in death. During the month of August he was able to fill his pulpit a few times, but in September his strength failed more rapidly, and it became evident that the end of his earthly labor was drawing nigh. After the funeral service already mentioned he gave up the ex-

pectation of recovery, but expressed to a brother in the ministry the highest confidence that he was destined to a happy immortality. On one occasion, when his disorder seemed to assume a more favorable aspect, he remarked that he could scarcely calculate on long life. "My course," he said, "has been a rapid one; I was early in sin, and in that I ran a mad career; was called early to embrace the Savior; commenced my ministerial course early; and have preached perhaps oftener since I have been engaged in the ministry than almost any other man; therefore I may expect that my life may not be greatly protracted." His friend remarked to him that it was not probable he would meet the Philadelphia Association, then near at hand, and which he had attended 28 years in succession. After a moment's reflection he said, "If I am not there, I shall be—" pointing upwards, as though he would have said, "I shall be in Heaven." His last words were, "I die! I die!" and immediately he passed away into the everlasting rest on Sabbath morning, September 27, 1829, aged 60 years, 7 months and 26 days. His funeral was attended on Monday, by twelve ministers of the Gospel and an immense assemblage of parishioners, neighbors and friends, and a suitable discourse was preached by Rev. Joseph Matthias, of Hilltown. The Philadelphia Baptist Association, at a meeting held soon after, adopted resolutions expressing their sense of his ability and value to the cause of religion, and the loss they had sustained in his removal from among them. The inscription found upon the marble at his grave was prepared by himself, and in his will he directed that it should be placed upon his tombstone, which he desired to be modest and of New Jersey freestone. His pastorate at Southampton extended through a period of nearly twenty-eight and a half years.

The following testimony in regard to him is from the pen of Rev. Horatio Gates Jones, D. D., his intimate friend.

"Under his ministry many were translated from the state of nature to the state of grace, and many were advanced to a higher state of holiness. The bad were made good, and the good were made better. In his sermons there was a rare union of argument and persuasion to convince the mind and gain the heart. In speaking he possessed an admirable felicity and copiousness. In his style there was a *noble negligence*, his great mind not deigning to stoop to the affected eloquence of words. In

the social circle all who knew him were delighted with his urbanity. His natural abilities and endowments invariably commanded respect; his reasoning faculty was prompt and acute; his memory uncommonly tenacious, and his conversation highly agreeable."

I may add that he was constant and faithful in filling all his ministerial appointments, and one of his sons remarked in a letter to General Davis, in 1873, that his father was absent from the church but two Sundays in forty years.

Before he was twenty-one years old he married his cousin, Ann Edmunds, born January 27, 1771. She was the daughter of a prominent merchant of New York, in prosperous business before the Revolution, but during that struggle deprived of his property by the British. She remembered distinctly seeing the English army coming into the city, when she was a girl of only five years, while with her father's family she was carried away in a boat, that contained all the goods they contrived to save from the hands of the spoilers. She survived her husband thirty-two years, dying in 1861, aged ninety. They were the parents of eleven children, of whom but three, Mrs. Sarah Ann Conrad, Mrs. Eliza W. Addis and Mrs. Rebecca M. Dungan, are still living. When the mother died there were living of their descendants 65 grandchildren, and 213 great-grandchildren and several great-great-grandchildren.

NOTE:—Rev. Thomas B. Montanye was descended from John Montanye, his first ancestor in America, and not from Thomas as stated by Gen. Davis in his paper on "Southampton Baptist Church," Vol. 1, page 206. Thomas was the grandfather of Rev. Thomas B.