

HISTORY OF OLD SCOTCH PLAINS

It's Churches.

(This is the first of two articles on the Scotch Plains Baptist Church)



During the middle of the 17th century, the times in Great Britain were very troublous. Civil wars, lack of religious freedom, confiscation of property, and a general carelessness in the matter of beheadings, turned the thoughts of many to the new country across the sea. Cromwell in England and MacKenzie and Claverhouse in Scotland, especially aided the settlement of New Jersey.

To the latter two particularly, Scotch Plains owes the incident of its birth and name. For it was a group of Scotch Presbyterians and Quakers fleeing from such persecution who, in 1684, just 260 years ago, settled on the plains at the foot of the Watchung Mountains and called their settlement Scots' Plains. They were followed by families of the Baptist faith and it was these, the families of Darby, Stansberry, Manning, Dennis, Drake, Fitzrandolph, Sutton, Frazee, Connit, Woodruffe, Collins, DeCamp, Miller and others, who on August 5th, 1747, incorporated themselves into a Baptist Church at Scotch Plains. Prior to this time they journeyed far to the Piscataway (now Stelton) Church to worship in their faith. No record has been found to lead us to believe any other church had been built in Scotch Plains prior to the Baptist Church.

William Darby, who lies buried in the cemetery adjoining the historic church, gave the plot of ground upon which the first church stood, the ground being a part of his farm. The church, the size of which is not known, was built where the obelisk stands.

In those days of stage coaches, Scotch Plains became a "metropolis" on the main stage route between New York and Philadelphia with Plainfield being not much more than farmland.

As the village grew the church grew apace and it is recorded that during the first 35 years of its existence, nearly 300 members were added to the church so that in 1759 it had to be enlarged.

In 1816, after having served for 69 years, the church accidentally burned. Undaunted the members erected a new and supposedly a much larger structure which served the needs until 1870. By that time continued expansion caused the congregation to build a new and better edifice, the beautiful church with its stately towering spire, which greets our eyes today. The old church was moved a short distance away to Grand Street and until 1890 it was used as a school. Later it was purchased by Dr. J. Ackerman and Miss Emilie S. Coles and given to the church, completely equipped with gymnasium, bowling alleys and beautifully furnished meeting rooms.

Through the years the church has received many benefactions from devout parishioners to further the cause of the Gospel. To the left and right of the main door, granite tablets dedicated to the memory of James E. Lyon and Matthias Frazee Lee were installed. The beautiful rich-toned organ was the gift of Mrs. Albert B. Darby, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John R. Marsh, who gave it in memory of her mother and her sister, Josephine.

Among other gifts to the church, Dr. Coles gave the "Rock of Ages" statuery on the front lawn in memory of his sister; the granite obelisk on the site of the original church-building in memory of the founders of the church. The painting, a copy of Raphael's "Madonna and Child", hanging on the north side of the transept, and the tapestry, a copy of Ruben's "Descent from the Cross", on the south side of the transept, were also presented by him.

To perpetuate their memory, the Board of Trustees this year commissioned Dr. Charles J. Connick, of Boston, Mass., to design and build the Coles Memorial windows and in June, in an impressive service these windows were dedicated "as a tribute of gratitude and love and as a Memorial of the life and service of Dr. J. Ackerman Coles and Emilie S. Coles".

(To be concluded next month)

RED CROSS WAR FUND DRIVE ORGANIZATION GETS UNDER WAY

Elwood J. Van Allen has accepted the chairmanship of the 1945 Red Cross War Fund Drive and already has recruited leaders in each of the seven zones. Departing from the practice of former drives, Zone 4 has been divided into two sections with separate leadership and quotas for each. The Drive gets under way on February 22nd and continued through March 5th.

B OF E MEMBERS EXPECTED TO SEEK REELECTION

It is expected that the Scotch Plains members of the Board of Election whose terms of office expire, Alexander Muir, James Hale Jr. and Herman Gottwald, the last named having been appointed to fill the vacan-

cy created by the resignation of Dayne Kelly, former president, will stand for reelection. The deadline for filing petitions is January 24th. The term of Edward F. St. George, Fanwood member of the board, who was appointed to succeed Karl Mathiasen, also expires this year.



TALK IN A FOXHOLE

God, I've never before spoken to you,
But I now want to say, "How do you do."
You see, they told me you didn't exist
And like a fool I believed all this.
But last night from a shell hole,
I saw your sky
And I figured right then I'd been told a lie.

I wonder, God, if You'd shake my hand?
Somehow, I feel You'll understand
Why I had to come to this hellish place
Before I took time to see Your Face.
Well, I guess there isn't much more to say -
But I'm sure glad, God, I met You today.

Though the Zero Hour will soon be here,
I'm not afraid since I know You are near.
The signal! Well, God, I've got to go -
I like You lots, this I want you to know.
Look now, this may be a horrible fight -
Who knows, I may come to Your house tonight.

Though I wasn't friendly to You before,
I wonder, God, if You'd wait at the door?
Look, I'm crying! Me shedding tears?
I wish I had known You these many years.
Well, I have to go now, God,
Goodbye -
Strange, since I've met You I'm not afraid to die.

(Written by a GI, killed in action)

DO ANY OF YOU GUYS ever have a spare copy of YANK or STARS and STRIPES? Your Managing Editor will appreciate receiving a loose copy.

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