

A Sketch of
Rev. Samuel McMaster.

1744=1811.

John Stevenson McMaster

A. J. DOAN, PRINTER,
JERSEY CITY, N. J.
1900.

TO
THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER,
JOHN T. B. McMASTER, M. D.,
THIS SKETCH OF HIS GRANDFATHER
IS INSCRIBED.

Theological Seminary of Princeton N.J.
from John S. McMaster Oct 1900

10.18.1900.

Library of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

BX 9225 .M265 M26 1900
McMaster, John Stevenson,
1859-1928?

A sketch of Rev. Samuel
McMaster

Shelf.....

BY WHOLE

A SKETCH OF
Reverend Samuel McMaster,

PASTOR DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR PERIOD OF THE
OLDEST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA;

PASTOR AND EXECUTOR OF MADAME ANNE HOLDEN,
DAUGHTER OF REVEREND FRANCIS MAKEMIE;

FOUNDER OF THE McMASTER FAMILY OF THE
EASTERN SHORE OF MARYLAND.

BY JOHN STEVENSON McMASTER.

The subject of this sketch was born in 1744 and died in 1811. The age therefore in which he lived was the one when Great Britain and her colonies were being ruled by George III. and George IV., Prussia by Frederick the Great, France by Louis XV., Louis XVI. and Napoleon I., and the United States of America by Presidents Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Madison.

It was a period of great strife and furnished these great wars: the French Revolution, the numerous campaigns and exploits of Napoleon I., the Seven Years War, the American Revolution, and numerous Indian Wars.

Born in Scotland, Great Britain, and coming to America about 1765 and remaining in America until his death, the subject of this sketch experienced fully the four periods of the American Revolution, viz.:

1763-1776—Causes and Beginnings.

1776-1783—Winning Independence.

1783-1789—Critical Period.

1789-1815—Period of Weakness.

At the time of his death the war of 1812 was brewing, and Napoleon I. was in the zenith of his glory.

The Old Makemie Desk.

BY REV. DR. L. P. BOWEN.

This venerable piece of furniture, of solid mahogany, remarkable in itself, and the only surviving Makemie relic, was discovered and identified by me in 1878, and it came into my possession in 1883.

Taken from the records of Accomack County, Virginia, where they may be seen, I have copies of the will and inventory of Madame Anne Holden, our pioneer's daughter—the former dated November 15, 1787, and the latter September 29, 1789. In both of these documents the mahogany desk is mentioned. All these facts are put upon permanent record in the Appendix to "The Days of Makemie," published by the Presbyterian Board.

The will contains this bequest: "I give to the Rev. Samuel McMaster the sum of forty-six pounds, a mahogany desk, a bed and furniture, and a negro woman called Keziah and her children." At the death of her pastor, it became the property of his son, Samuel McMaster, Esq., and at his vendue it disappeared, his heirs too young at the time to know its value. His son, John T. B. McMaster, M. D., grandson of Madame Holden's pastor, remembered it well and always said he could prove the fact by his familiarity with its very peculiar secret drawers and springs. Dr. McMaster, a man of fine intelligence and prominence, had greatly assisted me in my investigations of the traditions and court records of the adjoining counties.

The whole community had known of the desk and its fame, and yet very strangely it had utterly vanished from public power to locate it. Some of us had been trying to trace it for years.

Finally, like many of my successes, I struck accidentally, as we say, upon the old desk. During a pastoral visit to one of the historic families in the country near Pocomoke City, Maryland, I was telling enthusiastically of some of my late discoveries, when an old gentleman sitting in the room quietly, but intently listening, said: "All this sounds very familiar. My father knew a great deal about those Presbyterians. Besides, I have at my

house a wonderful mahogany desk which belonged to the very people you are talking about."

Of course I was aroused. He told me that he had bought the desk for two dollars and a half at Mr. Samuel McMaster's auction, and that it was no modern or ordinary piece of furniture; that all his money was in it, and that I could have the money if I could find it!

I went home with the aged gentleman and he showed me through the secrets of the concealed springs and drawers. It was such as we read about. Here the old Presbyterians of the past had hidden their gold and treasures. The owner now was this Mr. John B. White, a citizen of character and much respected.

I drove to town immediately, and took Dr. McMaster out to see the desk. On entering its presence his face brightened, recognizing it at once as known in his boyhood, and he said, "Now don't hint a word, and I will prove my acquaintance, for no one not familiar with it could ever find its secrets."

And the doctor readily opened all the hidden drawers, to our delight. He was much affected by this eloquent reminder of his childhood and his ancestry. He and my court documents made the identification complete.

I said to Mr. White, "Bring it to the parsonage to-morrow, and I will give you twenty-five dollars for it—ten times what it cost you." But we had enthused too much, and the old gentleman was concluding that he owed a bonanza. His good wife said, "By all means let Mr. Bowen have it. We are Baptists, and cannot appreciate it as the Presbyterians would. Mr. Bowen's heart is in the history, and he ought to own the desk."

But it wouldn't work. Afterward I offered \$30, but he was coy. The Presbyterian Historical Society authorized me to offer \$50 for them. This I never did, for I had written a description of the ancient relic for the *Philadelphia Presbyterian*, which brought some enthusiasts down from the city to see it, and they told Mr. White it was worth \$500! Thus I had defeated my plans and hopes.

All this while Mrs. White was urging that the Presbyterian Church or myself should own it. So I kept my eye on it and waited.

In 1880 I returned to Missouri, and three years after a letter came from Mrs. White telling of the death of her husband, and

saying that she wanted me to have the desk at my former offer of \$30, [the legally appraised value in the inventory of the estate of Madame Holden]. I was absent, and my wife hurried off the money and made me a present of the noble old landmark. It came during the winter when I was writing my memorial to Makemie, and no one but myself can estimate the joy and inspiration which it brought.

Thus through the goodness of two good women, both sainted now, Mrs. White and Mrs. Bowen, the only relic of the Father of American Presbyterianism has come into the filial care of the Church which is his child and heir.

And in donating the desk to the Seminary [Union Theological of Richmond, Virginia], in the bounds of the State where Francis Makemie lived and died and lies buried, I would like for the memory of Ellen Powell Bowen to be connected with it. I give it in her name.—[*From Central Presbyterian, Richmond, Va., July, 1900*].