

ENCYCLOPÆDIA
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

INCLUDING THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN ASSEMBLIES.

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AND OTHER EMINENT MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH.

Including a Description of the Historic Decorations of the Pan Presbyterian Council of 1880,

By REV. HENRY C. McCOOK, D. D., LL. D.

Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following—PSALM XLVIII, 12, 13.

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On the 25th of November, 1817, Mr. Denny married Miss Elizabeth F. O'Hara, the accomplished daughter of General James and Mary (Carson) O'Hara, of Pittsburg; and the children of this very congenial relation became successively members of the church, as have also several of the grandchildren, and some of them occupy responsible and leading positions in the church and community. Mr. Denny's home was filially and socially attractive, and he beautifully honored the family covenant. Morning and evening, day by day, he faithfully maintained the worship of God among the members of his household—fully and cordially supported by a faithful and loving wife—and his transparent life of Christian consistency commended the great importance of personal piety. His character was well established and symmetrical. No one ever questioned his rigid integrity, his profound sense of honor and honesty, the moral purity of his life, or the perfect sincerity of his religious professions. He was a person, too, of very prepossessing features; whose appearance, however, had become prematurely venerable. He was erect and gentlemanly in his bearing; and though somewhat reserved and dignified, yet a man of genuine modesty and amiability, entirely free from all pretension, and eminently kind and affable. In the several spheres of life—domestic, social, civil and ecclesiastical—he was truly and impressively a good man, and his entire life was without reproach.

His career was not a long one, but an active and useful one; and his is the longest that best answers life's great purposes. After a lingering and painful illness, which he was graciously enabled to bear with serene resignation, cheered by the precious hopes of the Gospel, and soothed by the affectionate attentions of those near and dear to him—he was removed, by the ministry of death, to a higher and better life, January 29th, 1852, in the fifty-eighth year of his age.

Denton, Rev. Richard. In the history of early Presbyterianism in this country the name of Richard Denton should have a permanent and prominent place. The Rev. Peter D. Oakley, of Springfield, L. I., N. Y., by whom this article was written, says: He was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1586. He graduated at Cambridge University in 1623, and then for seven years was the Presbyterian minister of Coley Chapel, parish of Halifax, in the northern part of England. By the intolerant spirit of the times which led to the Act of Uniformity, he felt compelled to relinquish his charge, and to emigrate to America. This was probably about 1630, and in company with John Winthrop and Sir Richard Saltonstall. The Rev. Mr. Alvord, speaking of the first settlers of Hempstead, says, "They were among the earliest inhabitants of New England, coming, as we have seen, through Wethersfield, from Watertown, in Massachusetts, and from that noted company who arrived

with John Winthrop and Sir Richard Saltonstall." Mr. Denton first came to Watertown, Mass.; then in 1635 he commenced the settlement of Wethersfield; and in 1641 his name appears among the early settlers of Stamford; and then in 1644 he is recorded as one of the original proprietors of Hempstead, L. I. A part of his flock accompanied him from England, and also settled with him as their pastor; the descendants of some of them remain there to the present day. Thus a Presbyterian Church was established in Hempstead, L. I., in 1641. But if, as indicated above, a colony of Presbyterians came with him from the old country, and followed him till their final settlement on Long Island, he, as a Presbyterian minister with a Presbyterian colony, the inference can scarcely admit of a doubt that he preached to a Presbyterian congregation from their first arrival, in 1630, till their permanent settlement on the Island. Mr. Denton served the church till 1659, when he returned to England, and spent the latter part of his life in Essex, where he died, in 1662, aged seventy-six years.

Mr. Denton had a mind of more than ordinary gifts and attainments. He was from the very first noted as a man of "leading influence." Rev. Mr. Heywood, his successor in office at Halifax, speaks of him as a "good minister of Jesus Christ, and affluent in his worldly circumstances." In a report of the church of New Netherlands in 1657, by Revs. John Megapolensis and Drisnis, to the Classis of Amsterdam, occurs the following passage: "At Hempstead, about seven Dutch miles from here, there are some Independents; also many of our persuasion and Presbyterians. They have also a Presbyterian preacher, named Richard Denton, an honest, pious and learned man."

Gov. Stuyvesant, in a letter to the people of Hempstead, under date July 29th, 1657, says: "About the continuance of Mr. Denton among you we shall use all the endeavors we can." Cotton Mather speaks of him as "our pious and learned Mr. Richard Denton, a Yorkshire man who, having watered Halifax, in England, with his fruitful ministry, was, by a tempest, hurled into New England, where his doctrine dropped as the rain. Though he were a little man, yet had a great soul. His well-accomplished mind was an Iliad in a nutshell. He wrote a system, entitled 'Soliloquia Sacra,' so accurately describing the fourfold state of man that judicious persons who have seen it very much lament the Church's being deprived of it."

THE CHURCH OF JAMAICA, L. I.

"Jamaica was settled by Presbyterians." Before Mr. Denton left Hempstead the church was troubled with sharp contentions between the Independents and Presbyterians. In 1657 Governor Stuyvesant visited Hempstead, and used his influence to persuade Mr. Denton to continue his ministry there, his own Church affinities inclining him to favor the Presby-

terian form of government. But, the troubles increasing, Mr. Denton left, and the Independents gained the control, and had a stated supply for a number of years. Then, through these continued dissensions, the large increase of Quakerism, and the establishment of Episcopacy under the English rule, the Presbyterian Church gradually declined, and passed out of sight as an organized body. The Rev. Mr. Jenney writes, September, 1729: "A few Presbyterians at Hempstead have an unordained preacher to officiate for them, whom they could not support were it not for the assistance which they receive from their brethren in the neighboring parish of Jamaica."

This, as far as the writer can ascertain, is the latest mention made of the existence of any Presbyterian church at Hempstead till after the lapse of many years, when the present flourishing church was organized.

But the Presbyterian tree planted by the hand of Richard Denton, through the Divine blessing, has never ceased to bear fruit. Two sons of Mr. Denton, Nathanael and Daniel, with a number of their Presbyterian brethren, formed a colony, and on the 21st of March, 1656, purchased from the Indians a large tract of land, now included in the village and town of Jamaica. As might be expected, they immediately established religious worship. In a memorial of the inhabitants of Jamaica, signed by Nathanael Denton and others, addressed to Governor Hunter, we find the following statement: "This town of Jamaica, in the year 1656, was purchased from the Indian natives by divers persons, Protestants, dissenters, in the manner of worship, from the forms used in the Church of England, who have called a minister of our own profession to officiate among them, who continued so to do during the time of the Dutch Government." This clearly indicates that they had preaching service from their first settlement in the town, and consequently the origin of the church at Jamaica dates back to 1656. They then, with commendable zeal, soon took measures for the erection of a parsonage, as the following extract shows. December 20th, 1662, a committee was appointed to "make ye rates for ye minister's house, and transporting ye minister." The exact date of the Rev. Zachariah Walker's call is not given, but on March 2d, 1663, the parsonage was assigned to him and his heirs. From this date to the present day there is a clear record of every minister who has served the church, together with the time of their service. George McNish, the eighth pastor, was one of the original members of the Mother Presbytery of Philadelphia. That this church has always been a Presbyterian Church there seems no room for doubt. It is so denominated in all the records where it is named. It has had a bench of ruling elders from time immemorial. November 25th, 1700, it was voted to continue Mr. John Hobbet here among us in the work of the ministry, pro-

vided he be ordained "according to ye Rule & way of the Presbyterian way, & it is the unanomous mind of the towne that he be ordained Accordingly."

This church has ever been a fruitful vine. In 1702 there were more than a hundred families, noted for their intelligent piety and Christian deportment. They had a stone church worth £600 and a parsonage valued at £1500, the glebe consisting of an orchard and two hundred acres of land. Besides being the mother of other churches in the vicinity, it contributed families to build up the First Presbyterian Church in New York City, and subsequently Rutgers Street Church; also the founding of Elizabeth City, and largely the Presbyterian Church of Hopewell, N. J. Since 1816, twenty-seven have gone from the bosom of this church into the ministry of the gospel.

The above statement of facts, which I have verified by personal examination of the authentic sources here mentioned, seems to indicate that, laying aside all merely presumptive or inferential suppositions, and confining ourselves to documentary evidence, Richard Denton was one of the very first Presbyterian ministers in the country, and the Church of Jamaica, Queen's county, N. Y., is the oldest existent Presbyterian Church in the United States. Sources of information: Thompson's His. of L. I.; Woodbridge's His. Discourse; Onderdonk's His. of Queen's County; McDonald's Ch. His.; N. Y. State Doc. His.; Moore's Early His. of Hempstead; Jamaica Town Records. (*See Makemie, Francis.*)

Derry Church. This venerable structure stands on the line of the Lebanon Valley Railroad, at Derry Station, within the present limits of Dauphin county, Pa. It is a weather-beaten log edifice, erected as early as 1729, the congregation having been organized previous to 1725. It is located on what was then termed, in the old Penn patents, the "Barrens of Derry." The building is constructed of oak logs, about two feet thick, which are covered over with hemlock boards on the outside. The inside is in tolerable preservation, the material used in the construction of the pews and floors being yellow pine, cherry and oak. The iron work is of the most primitive and antique description, and the heavy hand-wrought nails by which the hinges are secured to the pews and entrance doors, are extremely tenacious and difficult to loosen. The window-glass was originally imported from England, but few panes, however, remain. In the interior, pegs are placed in the wall, and were used by the sturdy pioneers to hang their rifles upon, as attacks by the Indians, in the Provincial days, were of frequent occurrence, and there is still to be seen many a hostile bullet imbedded in the solid oak walls. The pulpit is quite low and narrow, crescent-shaped, and is entered by narrow steps from the East side. Above it, on the south side, is a large window, which contains thirty-eight panes of glass of different sizes. The sash is made of pewter, and was brought from England. The communion service,