

Recently our Pastor called and advised me of the Eightieth Anniversary of our church to take place this month, and would I be willing to contribute some of my early recollections of its existence. So if you will bear with me a few minutes, will tell you as I remember it.

This building was erected in 1855, and 1856. The corner stone was laid October 9, 1855. The church was organized as the Protestant Reformed Dutch Church of East Millstone. The first Pastor was, Rev. Giles Van Der Wall. He was installed July 9, 1856, and it was during his pastorate the church was completed, at a cost of \$5748.23, which included the lot, building and bell.

I have in my possession a copy of the specifications, from which I quote the following: Building Committee- Ernestus Schenck, Joseph Howell and John V. A. Merrell. The Contractors were: William H. Smith, F. S. Brokaw and John Tinney. At various times, the pews were sold at auction. The price was fixed by the Minister and Consistory, which varied as to the location. The proceeds from which was used to pay the minister's salary and the incidental expenses. If at any time that was not sufficient, assessments were made to make up the deficiency.

The second Pastor was Dr. David Cole, of whom I have very pleasant recollections. He had a very kind and fatherly disposition, and was loved by all of his congregation. His family consisted of a wife, son and daughter.

During his pastorate the parsonage was built at a cost of \$3,500.00. Often wondered why they built one as large, guess there was more money in circulation in those days than there is today. Dr. Cole was with us from November 23, 1858 to April 1, 1863.

The third Pastor was Rev. Martin L. Berger. He was with us about three years. At that time, one, John V.A. Merrell, was an elder, and the two became very good friends and together, did good work, both in church and Sunday School. Mrs. Berger was a short lady and wore curlies.

At this time will describe the interior of this church. The wall in the rear of this church, of the pulpit was solid. About ten feet from the floor against this wall hung two curtains of a heavy material, with cords, and heavy gilt tassels to draw back if so desired. To me those curtains were very attractive. They were of various colors, not loud, but pretty. It was my pleasure to look at them, when sitting in our pew, often wondered what became of them. The platform was about one half of the size of this one, with a white desk on it. The pews were about the same, with a few exceptions. On each side there were four long pews, running lengthwise of the church, and those who occupied them could see and be seen by others. A few of the pews, in the rear have been removed, which is a great improvement, as also the long ones which I mentioned. The walls and ceiling were frescoed.

The fourth pastor who came to us in 1866 and remained until 1870, was Rev. William H. Phraner. During his pastorate, the platform was extended and an alcove built to allow sufficient space for a pipe organ. A very amusing thing to me in the construction of the alcove; in the ceiling was a circular opening with which to admit light, this was covered with glass. One Sunday while sitting in our pew, happened to gaze up at that window, there saw a little mouse, ^{not} running back and forth. After that, looked up there many times, did / see it on a second occasion. *Brooklyn First Presbyterian Church, Avenue F.*

A committee to raise the funds and purchase the organ was appointed. They consisted of: Joseph H. Olcott, N.S. Wilson, I. I. Van Ruyse, F. P. Worthman, William Wyckoff, their wives and Mrs. Phraner. The money was raised and the organ was installed at the cost of \$1,200.00 dollars. We were much elated to have, which proved to be a Pipe Organ in our church nearly twenty years in advance of the church at Middlebush, and thirty years in advance of a Pipe Organ in our mother church at Millstone.

The choir, which up to this time occupied the gallery in the rear of the church, was removed to a position in front of the

organ, as it is today. There were a number of adults in the choir with Mrs. Phraner as organist, rendered some very good music. Choirs in those days were different, than those of today. I mean in country churches. They came to stay, and were in their places each Sunday. How well I recall the old note books which when opened were about twenty four inches long from which the choir sang one or two anthems at each service.

The Sunday School was held in the basement of the church and was largely attended by both adults and children. In those days it was held in the afternoon following a service in the church. In the winter the church service was held in the evening, instead of the afternoon. My mother taught me that it was the duty of every child to go to Sunday School and to church, so at the age of six, safely saying, she took me with her. I was placed in the infant class. Do not remember who had charge of it. There were a number of children in the class, and many teachers in the school. As I grew older was removed to a class of boys of my age. Our teacher was Mr. Isaac Cornell. At the close of these services, we were taken into the church, and sat in the seat with our parents.

Imagine I was a little weary by the time the service was ended. Now if we could do that, why could not more of the boys and girls of today do the same. My opinion is that the parents do not instil into their minds that duty. Then again if the parents do not attend the services, how can the children be expected to. Many times in my going to church have seen Sunday School scholars going home, the number of whom almost equaled the size of the congregation at that service.

There was also in the basement, a private school. The first teacher was Frederick Brace, then Holley W. Pierce, Wm. G. Crosby and others. Permit me to mention some of the names of the head of the families who attended this church, many of whom were communicants. Jno. V. A. Merrill, Joseph Howell, Ernestus Schenck, Cornelius Proach, William H. Smith, Jno. Durkee, Wm. Nyckoff, Peter F. Norton, Garret Sieck, Richard Kuhl, Joe. H. Ollott, Henry V. D. Garretson, Wm. B. Ribble, Peter A. Neivius, Tunis Hoagland, Wm. Henry,

B. B. Van Nuys, N. L. Wilson and others. Mr Jno. V. D. Nevins and family united with the church later.

The fifth Pastor was, Rev. A. Mc William who came to us in 1870, and remained about twenty years. During his long pastorate there were many additions to the church. Some of the older members had passed away, and new ones came in which kept the size of the congregation about the same.

The sixth pastor called to this church, was The Rev. J. Paschal Strong in October 1890. His pastorate was a very brief one, but very helpful. He was very much loved and respected. His family consisted of a wife and two or three daughters. On Sunday evening Dec. 7, 1890 while preaching, with arm extended in gesticulation, uttered these which were his last words, "AS A falling Star", and fell to this floor, with a stroke of paralysis. Imagine the feeling of us, who were present. His body was removed to the parsonage, which was his home. I shall never forget that scene, nor his last words. He never regained consciousness and died in about seven hours from the time he was stricken. His funeral service was held in this church two or three days later. It was largely attended. Do not think there were many dry eyes in the congregation. During his brief pastorate of about two months, the Ladies Aid Society was organized, with a goodly number of members. During the forty-five years of their existence, have accomplished wonderful work. With receipts from suppers, entertainments of various kinds, and with lots of very hard work, have raised a great deal of money, and put it to a good use. The ladies are deserving of a great debt of credit and thanks.

The seventh pastor was The Rev. A. Paige Peeke, who was installed as pastor of this church Nov. 8, 1891. During his pastorate, the chapel was built. The building committee consisted of Jos. H. Olcott, Lewis T. Howell and Thos. Cooper. The chapel was erected at a cost of \$1,400.00. At its completion the Sunday School was removed from the basement to the chapel. As some of you remember, Mr Peeke was not a strong rugged man. Finally his health gave way, and was obliged to give up preaching for a while. He went to Clifton

Springs for treatment, but did not regain his health so decided to come home, and while enroute on the train, Aug. 20, 1900, passed away at Bayre, Fr. Mrs. Peeke was very active, both in the church, Sunday school and other organizations.

The eighth Pastor, The Rev. Henry Lockwood, was installed Nov. 29, 1901. During his long pastorate of twenty-four years, there were many additions to the membership. He was very successful in getting the young people to unite with the church. During his pastorate there were two or more Revivalists here. Their labors succeeded in increasing the membership somewhat. Mr. Lockwood was a very able man and did good work here. Mrs. Lockwood, who also had a good many friends here, and labored in the activities of the church and its organizations, passed away May 13, 1924. There are many other good things I could say about Mr. Lockwood, but the majority of this audience know just as much as I do.

The same thing may be said about Rev. J. J. Sessler, who delivered his first sermon to us May 15, 1926. He was then a student in the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Was engaged to preach for us, for one year. He graduated from the Seminary, May 17, 1928. He was ordained and installed as pastor of this church May 29, 1928. He resigned on Dec 1, 1929 and preached his last sermon Jan 12, 1930. He was a very active pastor, and had a good many friends. He succeeded in adding to the membership. Mrs. Sessler was very active in the Sunday School, and was the Organist for awhile. Mr. Sessler was the first to introduce a short talk to the children, every Sunday morning, at the regular church service. Both Seniors and Juniors Christian Endeavor Societies were reorganized, and both Mr. and Mrs. Sessler, were untiring in their efforts to interest the young people of the congregation, until called to another field of labor.

Last but not least, is our present pastor, The Rev. H. C. Willoughby, who came to us, and preached his first sermon, as our pastor Sept. 7, 1930.

I believe he is doing avry good work here, and could do more if he had more cooperation. He is loved and respected by all of his congregation. Mrs. Willoughby is very active in the church and its auxiliaries. I wish them health, long life and prosperity.