



The Story
of
ST. DAVID'S RADNOR

DEVON, PA.

278

APP

Horton . . . Jane C., wife J
Lindsay, m
65th yr.
Lydia Roberts
23, 1858; 2
Mary Ada, da
1858; 8 yrs.
Mary S., b. 11.
M. Elizabeth, l
Richard Thom
6, 28, 1875;
Sarah, wife Ja
57 yrs.
Hughs.....Sarah Ann, da
1826; 1 yr.
Hughes.....Edward, (Inter
gravestone.)
Mary, d. 2, 25,
Hunter.....Ann, d. 8, 2, 17
Ann, wife John
n^{ee} Davis), d
Ann, dau. John
6, 1865.
Elizabeth, d. 12
James, d. 2, 17,
James, Sr., d. 8,
James, d. 7, 13,
John (church w
John, d. 9, 3, 18
John, d. 4, 1734;
Hannah, d. 11, 1
Hannah, d. 11, 2

Towards the close of the 17th Century, a hardy group of Welsh colonists settled in an area which became known as the Welsh Barony, the lower or southeastern end of which was Radnor. To the northwest extended the Great Valley of the Schuylkill, Tredyffrin, its fertile land and gently rolling hills proving ideal for the primitive farming of the time. As the settlers were widely scattered and such roads as there were, were all but impassable in bad weather, early religious services were held in farmhouses under the leadership of lay readers.

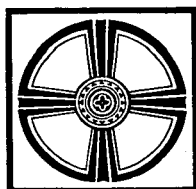
Until 1691 the majority of Welshmen in America were Quakers, the remainder being Church of England communicants. In that year, however, the Keithian schism caused a great number of conversions to be made by the early Church of England missionaries. The Reverend Evan Evans, an evangelistic, hard-working Welshman, was sent in 1700 by the newly formed "Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts" to

Christ Church, Philadelphia, as a circuit missionary. He journeyed through the surrounding countryside, preaching the Gospel in Welsh one weekday every fortnight in the house of one William Davis at Radnor. But with the return of Parson Evans to England in 1704, the Welsh colonists were again obliged to depend largely upon lay readers. A 100-signature petition for Welsh prayer books and a Bible, but more particularly for a Welsh-speaking missionary, was then despatched to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London, stating that as there were some 50 families in the Radnor area who were without benefit of a settled minister, the need was great. After ten years of petition, and aided by the good offices of Parson Evans, the Society appointed the Rev. John Clubb, who had for some years ministered to the Radnor group as another circuit missionary, as resident Missionary at both Radnor and Oxford, 28 miles apart.

On September 7, 1714 the people of Radnor met with their new leaders and, in return for this long-awaited recognition, "heartily engaged themselves to build a handsome stone church" to be named after the Patron Saint of Wales.

The cornerstone was laid on May 9, 1715. Limestone was quarried and hauled from the Great Valley for burning into lime, timbers were felled and squared, shingles split and shaved. Gradually the building took shape. Much of the physical work was performed by the parishioners. The dimensions of the new church were 40' x 27', and according to custom, it was laid out east and west, with the main door at the south. Two Gothic windows were on both the north and south sides, one large window was placed to the east and a second door seems to have pierced the west wall. The sharply pitched roof was intended to shed snowfall.

The first winter proved too much for Parson Clubb, who was obliged to commute by horseback under the most adverse conditions in dutiful service to his two far flung parishes. The effort overtaxed his strength and he died in Christmas, 1715, before the completion of St. David's. That the "Dismal wayes and weather" between these two parishes during winter were all but insurmountable was confirmed by the experiences of succeeding missionaries, one of whom complained bitterly that he often found it necessary "to be contented with the shade of a Large tree for a Lodging." At long last permission was given in 1732 to change the



THE ST. DAVID'S CROSS

Radnor mission to include St. James's Perkiomen, built in 1721, and later St. Peter's in the Great Valley (1744), an amalgamation which existed until after the Revolution.

For many years the interior remained unfinished, the hand-hewn rafters fully exposed, and no pews or seats graced the dirt floor. Although flooring was laid in 1765, the ancient Anglican institution of "pew ground" continued to be observed whereby, for a consideration paid to the Church, title vested in the purchaser, as long as he remained a communicant, to a plot of ground within the building on which he could erect such a pew as he desired. In fact, parish records show that in some cases parishioners were actually interred in the ground directly beneath their pews. Rough benches were also provided by the Vestry on an annual rental basis. The custom of pew rent continued until 1911, when all became free.

From 1737 until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, the mission was held by the Rev. William Currie, a most active and colorful Scottish Tory who was a Presbyterian convert. This wiry gentleman was not only a complete stranger to the Welsh tongue but had no inclination to learn it. Fortunately, his Welsh congregation had by this time become largely English speaking. The lusty Welsh hymns were accompanied on a bass viol, which must have eased the early tension to some degree.

Originally, the chancel and pulpit were placed at the north side, near the present Vestry Room door, a large sounding board suspended overhead. The wall hook for this purpose is still visible and the indentation for the hexagonal base of the high Colonial pulpit may be seen on one of the pew seats beneath its cushion. In 1771 a large list of subscribers provided funds for the erection of a gallery which extended along three sides of the

interior and to which access was had via the unique outside staircase. The sections other than that now remaining were subsequently removed in 1830 when substantial alterations were made, a new Vestry Room added, and the entire interior turned around to place the altar where it now stands. At that time the 23 existing pews were substituted for 17 original high-backed pews.

With the coming of the Revolution, a rapidly swelling wave of resentment against the Church of England appeared among the patriots of the congregation, who openly resented Currie's litanies for King George III and the royal family. A leader of this opposition was Anthony Wayne, then head of the Chester County Committee of Safety and later appointed Colonel of the Fourth Pennsylvania Regiment at the outbreak of hostilities. By his ordination vows, Parson Currie was pledged to such prayers, regardless of his own political views, and when three of his six sons enlisted in the American army, his position became untenable and he resigned by an affectionate letter penned in the spring of 1776. Ironically, the next year British foragers all but cleared him out of his livestock, linen, silver and food. His public ministry concluded, he continued to perform private baptismal, marriage and funeral services until 1785. He died in 1803 at the great age of 93, and his grave lies directly outside the chancel window.

Rev. Currie's resignation had the effect of paralyzing the church organization, for St. David's was without a minister throughout the war. The church building provided shelter for squads of soldiers of both sides and it is said that lead in the Gothic windows was melted down for bullets. The graves of a number of unknown soldiers killed in the Battle of Brandywine supposedly are contained in a small hollow west of the gallery steps. Probably the best known grave in the ancient churchyard is that of Anthony Wayne, later appointed Commander-in-Chief of the American forces, who died in 1796 at Erie.

In 1788 Rev. Slaton Clay assumed the triple pastorate of St. David's, St. James' and St. Peter's and became the first rector of St. David's under the American succession of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. He brought about the incorporation and charter of the church in August 1792. Parson Clay was strongly evangelistic and devoted most of his time to missionary activities outside the parish, so that his services at Radnor were most infrequent. Deprived of active

DIX

(dau. Andrew and Christina Van Leer), d. 6, 30, 18;

au. James and Catherine, d.

James and Catherine, d. 2.

9, 1843; d. 2, 8, 1909.

10, 20, 1821; d. 12, 17, 1901

son James and Catherine,

3d yr.

b (née Fugh), d. 3, 25, 18

William and Sarah, d. 1.

d) 12, 16, 1716; 56 yrs. (Old

848; 82 yrs.

4; 16th yr.

(dau. John and Rebecca Le

11, 13, 1813; 67th yr.

and Ann, b. 5, 26, 1785; d

14, 1822; 43d yr.

1782; 71st yr.

22, 1811; 67th yr.

1807; 34th yr.

(rden), d. 1, 1, 1847; 64 yr.

21; 73d yr.

67th yr.

0, 1812; 26th yr.

21, 1803; 84th yr.

1790
26
7926

Horton . . .	Jane C., wife J Lindsay, n 65th yr. Lydia Roberts, 23, 1858; 2 Mary Ada, da 1858; 8 yrs Mary S., b. 11 M. Elizabeth, Richard Thom 6, 28, 1875; Sarah, wife Ja 57 yrs.
Hughs	Sarah Ann, da 1826; 1 yr.
Hughes	Edward, (Inter gravestone.) Mary, d. 2, 25, Ann, d. 8, 2, 17
Hunter	Ann, wife John née Davis), d Ann, dau. John 6, 1865. Elizabeth, d. 12 at James, d. 2, 17, James, Sr., d. 8, James, d. 7, 13, John (church w at John, d. 9, 3, 18 at John, d. 4, 1734 Hannah, d. 11, at Hannah, d. 11, 2

leadership, the congregation drifted away to the extent that there remained but one communicant in 1819, according to the parish record! His successor, the Rev. Samuel C. Brinckle, breathed new life into the church. In 1820 he organized the first Sunday School and arranged the first confirmation services at Radnor, conducted by Bishop White.

After the opening of the railroad through Radnor and Paoli in 1832, the wilderness characteristics of the area rapidly disappeared and the population steadily increased. Through all later vicissitudes and wars the church has not only stood fast but has increased the force of its work for Christ. The building itself had begun to assume its present Colonial appearance by the renovations of 1830. Further repairs of the buildings were made in the 1850's, 1870's and 1890's, the last including the excavation of a cellar, the substitution of a furnace for the large stove which then stood in the center of the nave, and addition of the present wainscoting behind the altar. In 1895 the church proper received its only interior decoration when a parishioner obtained the gift of a piece of original Caerbwdy stone-work from the 15th Century St. David's Cathedral in Wales. Welsh artisans reproduced upon it a copy of the ancient cross behind the cathedral altar, and this splendid relic has been placed in the wall above the main door. The churchyard walls had first been enlarged under Mr. Clay and have since been extended on numerous occasions.

Inspired by a wave of expansionist enthusiasm, the congregation actually voted to demolish the ancient church in 1835, but happily this disastrous movement was forestalled by a small group of adamant communicants. A similar effort in 1860 reached the same end. No visitor to St. David's can fail to sense its tranquil spirit of peace and rest which inspired Longfellow in 1876 to write of it:

"Here would I stay, and let the world,
With its distant thunder, roar and roll;
Storms do not rend the sail that is furled,
Nor, like a dead leaf tossed and whirled
In an eddy of wind, is the anchored soul."

Yet, as one of the truly missionary churches surviving from Colonial times, St. David's has in its turn shared heavily in the organization of other parishes, and its activities today are greater than ever before. Its long and steady spiritual growth has prepared it to assume ever-increasing responsibilities in the activities of the church in the world of today.

APPENDIX

Horton . . .

Jane C., wife John (dau. Andrew and Christiana Lindsay, née Van Leer), d. 6, 30, 1872; 65th yr.

Lydia Roberts, dau. James and Catherine, d. 2, 23, 1858; 2 yrs.

Mary Ada, dau. James and Catherine, d. 2, 24, 1858; 8 yrs.

Mary S., b. 11, 19, 1843; d. 2, 8, 1909.

M. Elizabeth, b. 10, 20, 1821; d. 12, 17, 1901.

Richard Thomas, son James and Catherine, d. 6, 28, 1875; 23d yr.

Hughes . . . Sarah Ann, dau. William and Sarah, d. 1, 29, 1826; 1 yr.

Hughes . . . Edward, (interred) 12, 16, 1716; 56 yrs. (Older gravestone.)

Hunter . . . Mary, d. 2, 25, 1848; 82 yrs.

Ann, d. 8, 2, 1774; 16th yr.

Ann, wife John (dau. John and Rebecca Levi, née Davis), d. 11, 13, 1813; 67th yr.

Ann, dau. John and Ann, b. 5, 26, 1785; d. 9, 6, 1865.

Elizabeth, d. 12, 14, 1822; 43d yr.

James, Sr., d. 8, 22, 1811; 67th yr.

James, d. 7, 13, 1807; 34th yr.

John (church warden), d. 1, 1, 1847; 64 yrs.

John, d. 9, 3, 1821; 73d yr.

John, d. 4, 1734; 67th yr.

Hannah, d. 11, 10, 1812; 26th yr.

Hannah, d. 11, 21, 1803; 84th yr.

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Hunter . . . Martha, wife James (dau. Samuel and Mary Lewis, née Thomson), d. 2, 20, 1827; 78th yr.

Peter, d. 11, 6, 1779; 28th yr.

Thomas Lewis, d. 11, 28, 1811; 20th yr.

William Clifford, Jr., d. 12, 11, 1912; 3 yrs.

Hutchinson . . . Mary, wife James, d. 1, 3, 1857; 37th yr.

Hutton . . . John, d. 11, 12, 1728; 35 yrs.

Perthenh, d. 10, 21, 1727; 9 mos.

Iredell . . . Caroline L., 1833-1900.

Ivester . . . Benjamin W., son John B. and Harriet J., b. 1, 27, 1850; d. 1, 4, 1853.

Elizabeth W., dau. John B. and Harriet J., b. 7, 25, 1839; d. 2, 26, 1876.

George, son John B. and Harriet J., b. 9, 26, 1836; d. 1, 1, 1853.

Harriet J., wife John B. (dau. Samuel and Sarah Waters, née Wetherby), b. 7, 26, 1811; d. 3, 17, 1883.

John B., b. 11, 28, 1798; d. 8, 31, 1891.

John, b. 11, 2, 1846; d. 3, 25, 1905.

Robert H., son John and Annie H., b. 8, 1, 1886; d. 9, 10, 1887.

Sarah A., b. 3, 3, 1832; d. 1, 15, 1890.

Jackson . . . Andrew Earl Dana, b. 8, 21, 1822; d. 5, 27, 1854.

Caroline A., b. 4, 6, 1820; d. 12, 6, 1858.

Charles C., d. 4, 20, 1827; 49 yrs.

Martha Ann, b. 10, 8, 1817; d. 5, 16, 1896.

Ann, wife Griffith, d. 10, 27, 1773, 77th yr.

Griffith, d. 10, 3, 1765; 67 yrs.

James, d. 12, 5, 1756; 24 yrs.

Joseph, d. 4, 24, 1764; 21 years.

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