

Little Britain Presbyterian Church

by Dr. Charles H. Stubbs

The migration of the Scotch-Irish into these parts was coeval with that of the English Friends. They embraced the Presbyterian faith, and in those days not being sufficiently numerous to form a congregation, received occasional visits from Scotch missionaries, as did brethren of the same faith, similarly situated in other localities. In all probability, early settlers continued to receive spiritual visits from these itinerant clergymen until united as Little Britain Congregation. The exact time when this local event took place cannot be determined.

In the years 1744-1745, a certain Daniel Carmichael had granted and confirmed unto him by patent, under the great seal of Pennsylvania, a large tract of land which now constitutes several of the finest farms in the central part of Fulton Township. On this Carmichael tract was erected, probably as far back as 1740, the first church belonging to Little Britain Congregation of Presbyterians. It was a log house, small in dimensions, with a large stone fireplace and chimney built at the end, and on the outside. This primitive structure stood for many years after it ceased to be occupied for Church purposes. It was located a few yards north of the northwest corner of the old graveyard, on the farm now owned by Thos. P. King. At one time the "great road" passed immediately east of this yard, and consequently near to the front of the old church building. The old house was immediately abandoned after the completion of the new church, and the land upon which it was built reverted to the descendents of Daniel Carmichael.

The graveyard connected therewith was always reserved, and in an old deed given by the heirs of Thomas Carmichael, we find relating to it this language: "Only and always excepting and reserving ten perches in length and eight perches in breadth, containing half an acre, including the graves of the deceased persons which are buried there, and all the appurtenances belonging to said graveyard for the use of the Presbyterian Congregation of Little Britain, and for no other use but the burial of the dead."

The old burying ground, a silent landmark of the early days of the Church, still remains. Here, where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep," are several headstones containing inscriptions remarkable for quaintness or oddity.

As specimens of these ancient epitaphs we give the following:

"Here lieth the body of Daniel Carmichael, who departed this life January 10th, 1753, aged 38 years."

"In memory of Samuel Davison, who departed this life January 27th, 1753, aged 46 years."

"In memory of John Armstrong, a child, 1751, aged 3 months & Francis Armstrong, who departed this life December 27, 1759, aged 3 years."

Donegal and Newcastle are two of the oldest Presbyteries in the Middle States, and at one time during the last century, all the congregations in Southeastern Pennsylvania were under their jurisdiction.

The second volume of the Records of the Proceedings of New Castle Presbytery, embracing a period of twenty-eight years - 1731 to 1759, were lost, and with it, in all likelihood, much valuable historical data relative to the old church building and congregation of Little Britain.

On the thirtieth of May, 1759, a Presbytery was held at West Nottingham at which a number of members of Chestnut Level Congregation within the bounds of Little Britain, were regularly dismissed from said Congregation and annexed to Little Britain by the "late first Presbytery of New Castle, and were to be supplied as a vacancy."

Commissioners from the Congregation of Middle Octoraro (Bart), and Little Britain, informed the Presbytery on the fifteenth of October, 1760, of a plan to unite and support the Gospel. On the twenty-first day of April, of the year following, "Commissioners reported these Congregations united in agreeing to divide the labors and expenses of some minister God shall send among them."

April 27, 1764, fourth year of the reign of George III, King of Great Britain, Thomas and Margaret Scott, for a consideration of Five Shillings, deeded an acre of land to Patrick Ewing, Hugh Patrick, John Allison and James Bradley, in trust for Little Britain Congregation, on condition that it remain in union with the Synod of New York and Philadelphia. On this acre of land a year previous, 1763, the foundation of the present Church edifice was laid. The deed was not recorded until April 1770.

March 3, 1763, a call was presented to Mr. Hunt, which was to be accepted on condition that the members of Middle Octoraro consent to a dissolution of the union then existing between them and those at Little Britain. This union was amicably dissolved, and in June, 1764, a Committee consisting of Messrs. McDowel, Findley, Strain and Blair, was appointed to install Mr. Hunt as Pastor.

Before the installation of Mr. Hunt was effected, October 8, 1763, the order was suspended, by Mr. Hunt being sent off to the Presbytery of Donegal by direction of the Synod. In the fall, 1769, "permission was granted by the Presbytery to this Congregation to secure 'supplies' within the bounds of the Synod, looking to the settlement of a pastor." From 1769

until 1804, the efforts of Little Britain to secure a minister were unsuccessful - in other words it seems to have been a flock without a shepherd. During this interregnum of 35 years, "Calls" and applications were made to Mr. Lewis, Mr. McDougal, Lucky, Hindman and Paxton, but without success. Most of these preached as "supplies." Efforts were made by the Congregation of Little Britain and West Nottingham to secure the services of Rev. Mr. Paxton to preach at each place alternately. He preached at these two places for two years, but not deciding to accept the call, left in April, 1792.

September 29, 1802, a petition and charge was handed to Presbytery from the session of Little Britain Congregation, made against Mr. Mitchell for baptising a child in its bounds and without its concurrence.

September 28, 1803, a call from the Congregation of Little Britain and Chestnut Level was presented to Rev. Charles Cummins. He replied with a request to defer his decision until spring, when he concluded to accept; and on the 15th of August, 1804, was ordained and installed pastor of both Congregations. At this ceremony Rev. Mr. Arthur preached the sermon and Rev. Mr. Martin gave the charge. Four months after his installation, December 24, 1804, an arrangement was entered into to repair the church. Appropriate to this event we copy the following notice which may prove of interest:

"In pursuance of notice given by the Rev. Chas. Cummins from the pulpit at Little Britain, a large proportion of the head of families, members of said congregation, met on Friday, 8th March (1805), and proceeded to the choice of managers and treasurer."

"Committee Elected - Messrs. Robert Maxwell, Samuel Neeper, Robt. Campbell, Milton Barkley, James McSparran, John Killough, Alexander Ewing, William Fulton, Robert Love, and Thomas Killough.

Managers to Purchase Material - Robert Maxwell, Thomas Killough.
Treasurer - William Barkley"

The Rev. Charles Cummins remained in charge for four years; and in 1808 the pulpit at Little Britain was again declared vacant, and remained so for twenty-four years.

In order to show how pastors were paid in former days, we insert the following:

1805 - Cash rec'd for the use of Rev. Charles Cummins.

<i>March</i>	<i>Pounds</i>	<i>Shillings</i>	<i>Pence</i>
Robert Love	2	8	2½
Alexander Ewing	2	10	7½
William Fulton	3	3	9
Samuel Reah	1	15	7
John Killough	3	1	4½
William Runner		14	7½
Christ. Gryder	1	6	3

The above sum of \$40 and 9 cts, was paid to Mr. Cummins as his salary for the first three months.

November 21, 1832, Rev. John Patton received a call from both congregations, which was accepted. Presbytery appointed to ordain and install him at Chestnut Level, over both Churches. This took place Christmas Day, 1832; Rev. Dr. Magraw presiding, Mr. Finney preaching the sermon, and Rev. John Miller Dickey delivering the charge. Mr. Patton remained but two years. Differences arose between members & pastor - the latter requested permission to resign, which was granted by the Presbytery on October 31, 1834.

"April 8, 1835, calls from Little Britain 'for one-third' and from Chestnut Level for the remaining two-thirds of his labors," were presented to Rev. Lindley C. Rutter, who at that time expected to be released by the Presbytery of Carlisle. After the usual examination, the "Calls" were placed in his hands, accepted and on the 22nd of May, 1835, he was installed and took charge of both Churches.

In 1841, Little Britain was assigned to Donegal. Mr. Rutter continued in charge of Little Britain until the year 1860, just a quarter of a century - a much longer period than any of predecessors. His undivided labors were required at Chestnut Level, and to this end he resigned the charge of Little Britain into the hands of Rev. Robert Alexander, of Ohio, who remained for seven years. The last named divine returned to his native State and was succeeded by the present incumbent, Rev. Solomon McNair. Such is an outline of the history of the Presbyterian Church at Little Britain.

Notwithstanding it labored under difficulties at various times during an existence of more than a century, it has prospered in numbers and in wealth. In 1804, as already stated, the building underwent repairs. Since it has at different times, been materially improved, and today this Congregation possesses the finest house of worship in the township.

For valuable information and the use of several old documents, in the preparation of this article, we are indebted to Thos. P. King, of Fulton, and John Gibson, Esq., of Little Britain Township. (From *Oxford Press*, 1870)

Our Junior Historians

by Donald A. Crownover

Dr. Donald H. Kent, retired Director of the Bureau of Archives and History of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, was honored recently at the 37th annual Pennsylvania Federation of Junior Historians Convention at the Historic Strasburg Motor Inn, Strasburg, Pa.

The PFJH honored Dr. Kent by naming its innovative program this year as the Dr. Donald Kent Historical Research-Publication Award and

dedicated its initial *Junior Historian* magazine volume, "Our Town," to him.

This recognition to Dr. Kent was in appreciative acknowledgement for his past service as liaison between the Federation and the Historical Commission when the student movement was a part of the Commission's program. His advice and assistance has been termed "invaluable" in the re-publication of a "Junior Historian" newspaper and in assisting in the re-organization of the Federation and establishing its policies. He had acted as a consultant for Federation business until he retired in 1975.



Ephrata High School senior Linda Shaub and Dr. Donald R. Kent were cited for honors at the 37th annual Pennsylvania Federation of Junior Historians Convention.

Linda Shaub, of the Ephrata Cloister Associates' Cloister Chapter, won the Kent Award for her original research paper dealing with the town history of Ephrata. Linda, class of 1979 at Ephrata High School, will be attending East Stroudsburg State College upon graduation.

Lisa Yungel, Bloodroot Chapter member from Dover High School, placed second in the competition. The senior student's paper was entitled, "Our Town, Dover."

Shari Hall, a junior at North Clarion High School, Leeper, wrote "Our Town, Fryburg: Its People, Their History, and Their Church" to receive Honorable Mention. Shari, a member of the Cook Forest Chapter, is from Tylersburg.

Chapters sponsored by member societies of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies walked off with the majority of the convention's awards: The Cloister Chapter, advised by Mrs. Shirley Bischoff, won the third annual Twin Region Alumni Historians history fair "Best of Show" for its project entitled: "Death is a Way of Life." This chapter also was presented with the Lancaster County Historical Society Award given to the outstanding senior division chapter sponsored by a historical organization.

The Wheatland Chapter, sponsored by the Lancaster County Historical Society, received the Crownover-Ritchey Memorial Award, given to the outstanding junior-senior chapter sponsored by a historical organization. This chapter, advised by Don Crownover, also won the Dr. S. K. Stevens Memorial Award, presented to the most promising first year PFJH Chapter. In competition, this Wheatland Chapter won the junior division of the PFJH Commonwealth History Bowl by defeating Highland Middle School Chapter, Beaver Falls.

Old Stone House Chapter, sponsored by that historical site's associates, received special recognition. School chapters winning awards were: Cook Forest Chapter, advised by William D. Gilbert; and the Highland Middle School Chapter, advised by Richard Oswald. Red Rose Chapter, Hempfield High School, also received special recognition. Cook Forest Chapter won senior history bowl recognition.

The new PFJH Advisory Council administrative echelon announced at the convention are: Chairman, Don Crownover, Lancaster County Historical Society; Vice Chairman, William Gilbert, North Clarion High School; Treasurer, Shirley Bischoff, Ephrata Cloister Associates; and Secretary, Ms. Roxanne Harman, TRAH.