

THE CHURCHES OF POUGHKEEPSIE.

No. VI.

The Society of Friends.

HOW THE QUAKERS CAME TO DUTCHES COUNTY AND TO POUGHKEEPSIE—MANY MEETINGS IN THE COUNTY BEFORE THE FIRST ONE WAS ESTABLISHED HERE—AN INTERESTING HISTORY—SEPARATION BETWEEN THE TWO BRANCHES.

One of the most interesting of the church histories of Dutchess County is that of the Friends or Quakers. They were in the country very early after their settlement, and their first meetings were started not many years after the first Dutch congregations were founded in the river towns, and before the Church of England missionaries had come to Fishkill and Poughkeepsie. They came not from Pennsylvania nor from England, but from New England through Long Island, where their first settlements were made. The story of the persecution of the Quakers by the Puritans in New England is familiar to all readers of American history. To escape that persecution they fled first to Rhode Island and thence many of them crossed over to Long Island, naturally seeking religious liberty under Dutch rule. It is nevertheless true that Peter Stuyvesant and other Dutch governors did make efforts to bring them under the jurisdiction of the established Dutch church, and on several occasions imprisoned and otherwise persecuted prominent Friends for holding unauthorized meetings at their houses, until the persecutions were stopped by a proclamation from Holland in 1623. From that time the spread of the Friends was rapid. By 1711 they had built a meeting house in Eastern Dutchess, at Quaker Hill, but it was not until long after this that they found their way to Poughkeepsie. The meetings at the first meeting here were started by the descendants of the settlers in the central part of the county who moved here at the village of Poughkeepsie, and grew to grow. It was probably not until after the beginning of the present century. The Friends here always been among the most substantial and respected citizens of the county. They were united and their spread was very rapid until the late part of the century caused the separation between the Or-

thodox Friends and the Hicksites in 1827, in Pennsylvania, and in 1828 in this state. The Dutchess County Hicksite Friends retained the meeting houses and property generally, including the meeting house in Poughkeepsie. The separation between the Orthodox and Hicksite Quakers was attended with much bitterness of feeling, and though both retained the name of Friends and the same manner of meeting and worship they are as far apart in belief as any other two religious denominations that could be named. However of late years the feeling between them has been much softened and they have frequently united in the celebration of important events that took place before the separation, as the recent.



MONTGOMERY STREET MEETING HOUSE.

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**BI-CENTENNIAL.**  
At the bi-centennial celebration of the founding of New York Territory, held at Fishkill on May 29th last, a very interesting historical address was delivered by James Wood. He told of the early settlement of the Quakers in Long Island, of the proclamation of religious liberty made by the Dutch in 1663, of the visit of George Fox to America in 1671, and how he occupied the Quakers from Long Island to the eastern section of the main land of New York, and up through Westchester and Dutchess Counties. The first meeting of the Friends in New York City he held in 1681. By 1683 numbers of them had moved from Long Island to Westchester County, and in 1685 what was known as Harrison's Purchase of lands in the neighborhood of Rye was made by Friends. By 1725 the first monthly meeting on the main land of the state had been established, and as the lands of "The Purchase" became occupied the spread of the Quakers northward was rapid. We cannot do better than quote James Wood's own words on this part of the subject. He says:  
"An almost continuous settlement was formed that extended through Westchester County and that of Dutchess, and soon reached into Canada. The situation of this district was peculiar. The eastern side of the country had been settled by Presbyterians from Connecticut, and the western side along the Hudson River, by the Dutch. The feeling between them was far from friendly. Their disputes had been violent, and they were divided into two parties, the one from New York's jurisdiction. Their whipping posts stood ready for the punishment of any from the river settlements who committed even slight offenses within their limits. As the two people gradually separated, each other had left a strip of land, comparatively unoccupied, between them. This contained in nearly a north and south line a parallel with the river, and a hill

NEW LAFAYETTE PLACE MEETING HOUSE.

It had a frontage of only thirty feet on Washington Street, and ran back almost feet, and the building was placed in the rear, where the lot was sixty feet wide. In 1841, when the meeting house was enlarged and turned to face Lafayette Place, and remained there until it was sold with part of the lot in 1862 to Horace Clark, who altered it into two handsome dwellings. The present new meeting house was finished this spring.

ORTHODOX MEETING HOUSE.

After the separation between the two branches of Friends the Orthodox Friends being left without a meeting house for a short time, met at a dwelling owned by Mrs. Pine, in Mill Street, but in the spring of 1852 property was purchased on Mill Street by Elias Downing, John Ellison and Paul Flieger for a new meeting house. The building is removed by the city and stood on the lot where Robert F. Wilkinson's home now is, and was used as a meeting house until the present brick building, on Montgomery Street, was erected. According to the records in the county clerk's office the Mill Street lot was sold Jan. 2d, 1852, by deed from James Congdon and Joseph Flieger, trustees, to Charles W. Swift.

The ground on which the Montgomery Street meeting house stands was purchased by deed, date May 1st, 1853, from Joseph W. Collins and wife to Jonathan Flieger, trustee, which reference is made in the records of Oswego Monthly Meeting, and the building was erected during that year.

ORGANIZATION.

It should be stated for the benefit of those who are not familiar with the organization of the Society of Friends that their corporate organizations are known as Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings. A yearly meeting is made up of one or more preparative meetings, the latter being individual congregations of any number of members. The monthly meetings, which are held generally in the winter months, and in turn refer important matters to the quarterly meeting, which is held in a wide territory, and quarterly meeting in turn refer matters to the yearly meeting of all Friends in a single territory. Each monthly and quarterly meeting is known by name, and corresponds to the Presbytery, Synod or Diocese of other religious denominations. Thus the Poughkeepsie Preparative Meeting is under the care of Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting, which includes also the meeting at Arthurburg. Formerly Arthurburg was known as Oswego, and the monthly meeting, taking its name from the city, was, until recently, known as Oswego Monthly Meeting. The Hicksite Friends still retain the old name for their monthly meeting, although it is always held now in Poughkeepsie. The quarterly meeting is known as Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting, which includes all of Dutchess County, the name being used by both branches. These names serve as reminders of the historical facts of the Dutchess County, showing that the earlier meetings, and for many years the most important, were those in the interior of the county.

The Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting (Orthodox) now includes four monthly meetings: Poughkeepsie, Dutchess Partners (Millbrook) and Oblong or Quaker Hill. At one time or another in the past one hundred and fifty years nearly every meeting held in any part of the state had some connection with Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting. The old Nine Partners Boarding School is well known and many of the most substantial citizens of the county were educated there. It was opened in 1796, and at the separation of the Orthodox Friends, although the meeting house at the same place went to the followers of Elias Hicks, it was finally discontinued as a school in 1844.

A study of the history of the Friends in Poughkeepsie shows that the most prominent—Dutchess County families, John Ellison, Elias Downing and David Dickinson were among the first prominent Orthodox Friends here at the time of the separation. John Ellison was proprietor of the mill on the corner of Washington Street, looking over the records of births, deaths, marriages, etc., in the possession of Friends in the county has been for some years recorder of the Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting, we find among other things the certificate given to Elias Downing and his wife when they removed to New York. It reads as follows:  
To the New York Monthly Meeting,  
Dear Friend:  
Elias Downing and Sarah, his wife, have removed within the limits of your meeting and request that you certify that they are members of this meeting, that Elias is a minister, and that the same temporal concerns appear to be settled to satisfaction.  
We recommend them to you. Christian care as usual is your duty.  
Signed in and on behalf of Oswego Monthly Meeting held the 17th of 11th month, 1843.  
GEORGE CONGDON,  
Correspondent.  
SAMUEL CONGDON,  
CATHARINE IRISH,  
Clerks.  
Many Friends for years drove in from the country to attend meetings here and this is still the case with a considerable proportion of the congregation on Montgomery Street. Paul Flieger, who lived on La Grange and was the grand father of Paul Flieger of this city, Enoch and Samuel Dorland were among those

MARY MOORE'S SCHOOL.

An interesting story of the establishment of the first Sunday School in the Montgomery Street building, was first superintendent, I. Albert Chury was, also one of the present ministers, a sister of Mrs. Nath Flieger, moved here in 1878, having been a minister several years, before, showing how the separation between the two branches of Friends divided families. The Flieger moved into the present residence of Mrs. Moore's Mill in 1878, and was one of the most prominent preachers of the other branch in the country. Elmer D. Gildersleeve, who has been a minister here since June 22nd, 1878, was born at Sebasticusville, in former years when a Quaker married outside of the Society he was disowned. This was the case with Mr. Gildersleeve's father, Smith J. Gildersleeve, who became a prominent member of the Christian denomination at Stamfordville, and afterwards, when he moved to Poughkeepsie, a Methodist. The Friends "acknowledge the gift of ministry," as they say, of those of their members who feel especially called to devote themselves to the work of the gospel, but any member is privileged to speak in meetings as the spirit moves him. It appears that at this time there are four ministers in attendance at the



ELMER D. GILDERSLEEVE.

Montgomery Street meeting house, Mr. and Mrs. F. O. Cartland, who moved here a few years ago from the South, Mary Moore and Elmer D. Gildersleeve. Mr. Gildersleeve has been very actively identified with the work of the church, and no minister in Poughkeepsie has more frequent requests to conduct funeral services. Quaker ministers resolve to give their time freely to the work of spreading the gospel and comforting the sick and afflicted. When missionaries are sent out, they receive a sufficient compensation to pay living expenses. The church is active in mission work, and raises a considerable sum of money for carrying on the work. The officers of the Missionary Society are: President, Elizabeth C. Ferris; secretary, Jennie F. Cooley; treasurer, Mrs. Margaret J. Heaton. The Sunday School was not started among the Friends as early as by some other churches, and the records for some years, so far as we can find out, the establishment of several of the churches in the Montgomery Street Meeting House.

THE CHRISTIAN ENDSEVER SOCIETY.

The Christian Endeavor Society is a title and narrow with about 41 members. Its officers are, president, Miss L. E. Cooley; vice-president, F. M. Cartland; secretary, Miss L. T. Beasley; treasurer, Paul Cooley. There is also a Junior Christian Endeavor Society.

SOME OF THE OTHER FRIENDS IN TOWN.

Some of the other Friends in town who were active in the church work were Amos Smith and Paul Upton, of Clinton; Charles Hoag, of Little Nine Mile; Philip Flieger, of La Grange, and Isaac Ostrom, of Arthurburg.

The present trustees of Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting are Adena F. Heaton, of this city; Philip Flieger, of La Grange, and Isaac Ostrom, of Arthurburg. Aaron Robinson and Stephen Frost, George Corlies, of Ghent; Archie Coffin and Mays were and their families still are prominent members of the Lafayette Street Meeting.  
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