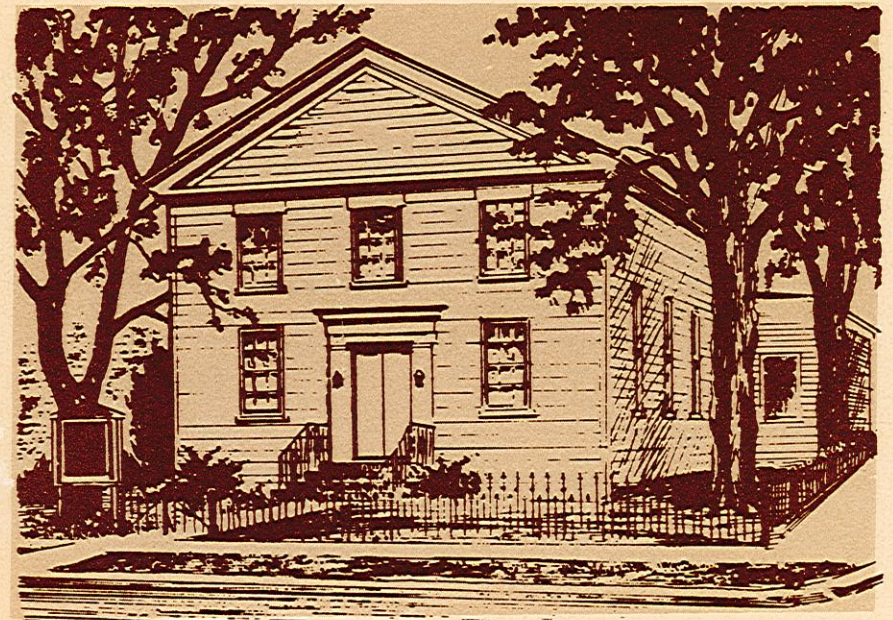
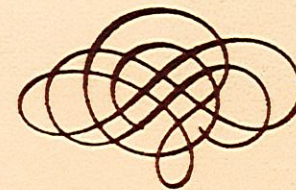


THE FAIRFIELD PRESBYTERIANS

Puritanism in West Jersey from 1680



Lawrence C. Roff



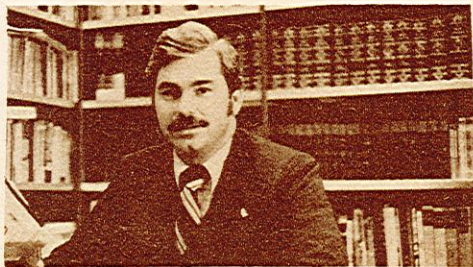
Anniversary celebrations for congregations whose churches have had long and illustrious records of existence and achievement are thrilling occasions. Interest in such festivities has noticeably increased with recent national bicentennial observances. A church which is able to trace its origins to events fifty, seventy-five, or even one hundred years ago is able to captivate the interest of great numbers of people. Special commemorative services and sympathetic reporting in community newspapers enables many to share in the excitement.

But how often does one hear of a church preparing to celebrate its three hundredth anniversary? Perhaps a memorial program could take note of the site where worshippers began meeting three centuries ago, and where a shopping center now stands, the church having dissolved decades previously. Or it might be a commemorative plaque on the side of a country warehouse, noting that it had once served for Christian worship for a defunct congregation. Yet again, the focus might be on the meeting house of a philosophical society which in its earlier years had been a Christian church.

Such disappointments, happily, are not encountered at a special location in Cumberland County, New Jersey. New England Puritans organized themselves into a Calvinistic congregation there in the 1680's. Their physical and spiritual descendants have preserved a Biblical and evangelical faith within the same church fellowship. Today, the same Lord is honored, the same Scriptures are believed, and the same Gospel is proclaimed. Such continuity over the span of three centuries is an achievement worthy of the attention this publication seeks to provide. The church has never been extremely large. It has not been blessed by great wealth. It has never attracted much attention to itself. But its spiritual constancy gives it an importance far out of proportion to its size. And its Biblical richness has given it a power far out of proportion to its material possessions.

To be a member of such a congregation is a very special privilege. Participation in this church's life is something rather unique in this country. It provides direct contact with those who sacrificed so much in the colonial era to insure the continuation of Biblical faith and life in this land. Membership here permits one to join hands with a great cloud of witnesses to the spiritual force of a risen Christ indwelling and empowering His church. It is an honor not fully appreciated by most who share the privilege.

Even more significant is the inestimable honor of standing in the long and highly distinguished line of pastors who have offered their spiritual gifts as living sacrifices to the Lord of this church. To be named in the same company with William Ramsey and Ethan Osborn, to share with them the honor of serving the King by laboring as a pastor of such a special flock as this, is a luxury enjoyed by few over these three centuries, and certainly deserved by none. Such is the feeling of this writer in offering a history of the spiritual life of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church from its beginnings until the time of his own service as its pastor. It is his hope that readers will be more inclined to take note of those marvellous things which the Lord has done here, than the contributions of this or any pastor.



In His Service
Lawrence C. Roff

THE FAIRFIELD PRESBYTERIANS

Puritanism in West Jersey from 1680



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by Lawrence C. Roff

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THE FAIRFIELD PRESBYTERIANS

PURITANISM IN WEST JERSEY FROM 1680

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PART ONE: FORMATION [1680-1780]

A. SETTLEMENT [1680]

Pioneers found homes and materials for life on the upper Atlantic coastline. Settlements grew along the rivers of Connecticut, the bays of Massachusetts, and the shores of Long Island. Among these communities was one established by Congregational Puritans in Connecticut. Roger Ludlow, having first served for four years as assistant governor of Massachusetts (1630-1634), came to Connecticut in 1635 with seven other men. With a commission from the Massachusetts Court, he set out to plant and govern a new colony. War with the Pequot Indians kept him from following up on his 1639 purchase of a large tract of land. But his associates remained to found Fairfield. By 1644 an ordained minister, Rev. John Jones, an Oxford graduate, was leading Congregational worship there. (1) These were sturdy pioneers.

"They bargained with the red skinned denizens of the forest. They acquired honorable title to these acres. They reared rude huts in which to shelter their families. They began the onerous tasks of soil subjugation. The territory was roughly mapped, the streets were outlined, the green was indicated, the sight of God's house chosen." (2)

The difficulties encountered by these brave souls can scarcely be imagined by those living today on lands so totally tamed. The excitement of new opportunities would have soon worn thin. The challenge of building a Christian community apart from state interference by the established forms of religions would have shortly become a task secondary to mere survival.

"The glamour of pioneer life has been dispelled. Harassment of bears and wolves and panthers becomes wearisome, excessive. The perils of agriculture are so great that the farmers build their homes in the village and spread their farms through the adjacent land. But it is the treacherous Indian that gives the people largest peril and dire trouble. Guards are placed throughout the neighborhood. Their call to arms is frequent. Men carry firearms with them as they toil in the fields, as they walk their way to this sacred place of worship. Watchmen are compelled to stand by the doorways of the sanctuary while Pastor Jones preaches his long sermons, lest the people be surprised and massacred. Now one family, and now another is made to deplore the loss of property or the sacrifice of human life." (3)

It was settlers from this area who, in the mid-seventeenth century, migrated to south Jersey. The reasons for this move have not been preserved. Speculation focuses on two possibilities. One is suggested by the above quotation. With such difficulties as these mentioned, it would not be surprising that men would look for a more hospitable environment. With Indian attacks such a constant fear, the reputation of the Leni Lenape tribe of south Jersey would have been most appealing. They belonged to the great Algonquin stock, one of the largest in North America. These were woodland Indians, skilled in hunting and fishing techniques. William Penn reported that they were quite friendly with white men and lived in a peaceful life-style with generally very happy dispositions. (4) If these details were known by the people of Connecticut, the New Jersey migration may have been a very popular move. The combination of mild climate, fertile riverlands, and peaceful Indians would have meant a great deal to those people.

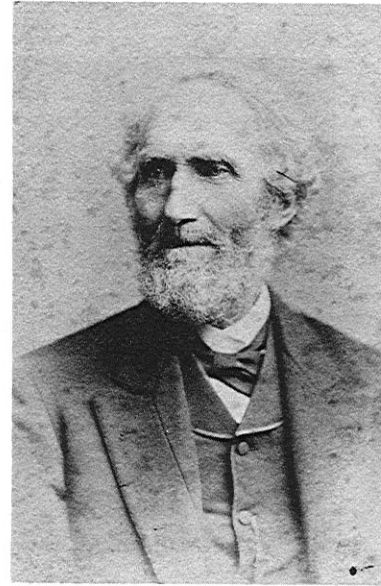
A second possible reason for the migration is suggested by records of an official settlement commissioned by the colony of New Haven. One report indicates that in 1640, New Haven purchased a large tract of land spanning both sides of the Delaware



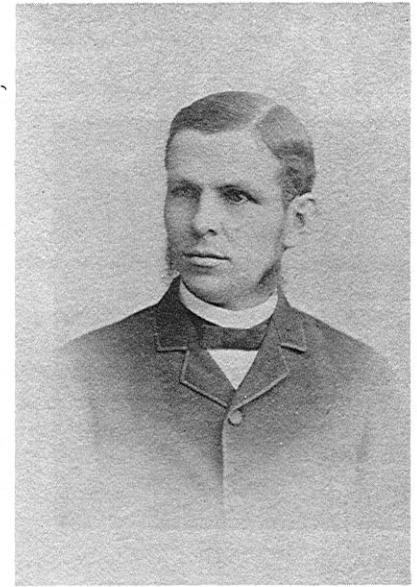
William Hollingshead
Pastor, 1773-1783



Ethan Osborn
Pastor, 1789-1844



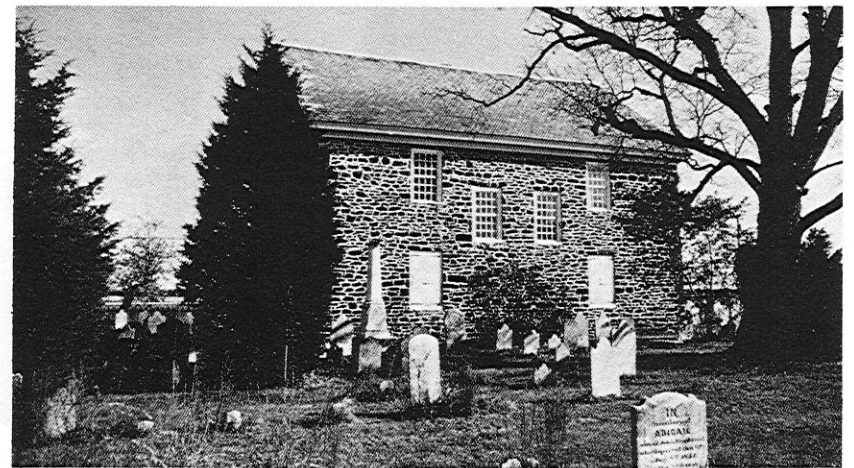
James Boggs
Pastor, 1857-1866



Frank Symmes
Pastor, 1886-1890



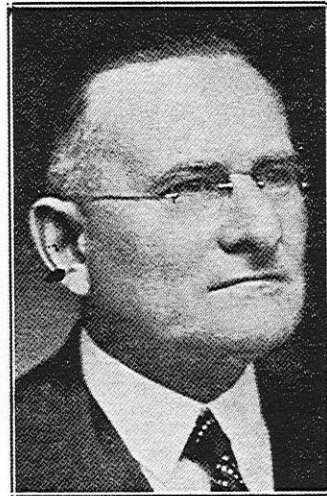
New England Towne Burying Ground
Original church site



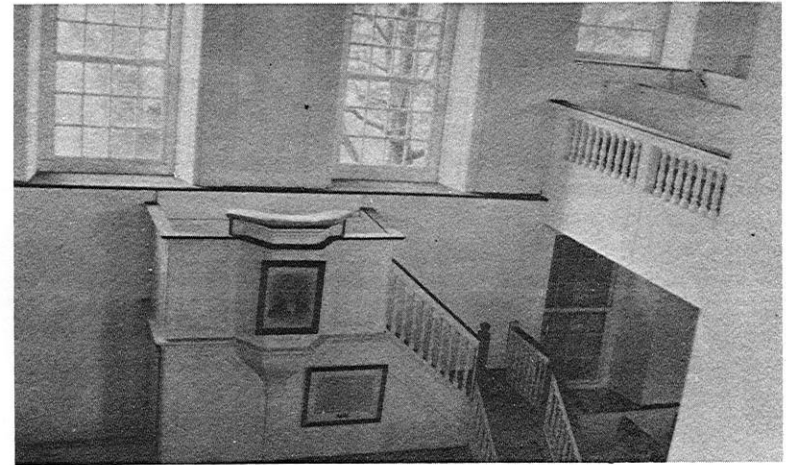
Old Stone Church, used 1780-1850
Large monument in center is grave
of Ethan Osborn (1758-1858)



J.N. Wagenhurst
Pastor, 1897-1900



Clinton Cook
Pastor, 1929-1941



Interior of the Old Stone Church
Erected 1780



The Fairfield Presbyterians
August 30, 1980



Interior of present sanctuary
Erected 1850

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Jersey migration may have been a popular move. The combination of mild climate, fertile riverlands, and peaceful Indians would have meant a great deal to those people.

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Whatever the reason, the fact that it was New England Congregational Puritans from Fairfield, Connecticut who first settled here seems beyond dispute. It is very frequently reported. (6) No other possibilities are offered.

The New Haven settlement was not a very prosperous one. Whether it was an effort to achieve gain through agriculture or hunting and trapping (deer and muskrat still populate the woods and marshes), investors were disappointed. Those that remained found farming to be suitable, at least for their survival. Of probably several settlements, the only one whose location has remained clearly marked is that known by them as New England Towne. It was here that they erected their Meeting House for worship and buried their dead. (7) The site is located on flat terrain, overlooking the tidal marsh of the Cohansey River (which flows into the Delaware) where it makes a ninety-degree turn toward the present city of Bridgeton. A wharf was very likely built just beyond the church to facilitate trade for residents of the new community. Such a wharf was certainly built at Greenwich, eight miles downriver, a community being settled at about the same time, having been purchased from the Indians about 1677. (8)

Details of the organization of a congregation here are not available. The exact date, the number present, the location, the first minister, and the doctrinal covenant which bound them are particulars not known today. They may have been included in early sessions minutes, but all official church records made prior to 1755 were lost that year in a fire which destroyed the manse.

The covenant used to bind themselves into a Congregational fellowship may well have been like the one used in the mother church in Fairfield, Connecticut. If so, I bound them to a Trinitarian confession, and the obligations of a walk in holiness enforced by discipline within the body of believers. (9)

The exact date of their establishment as a congregation is a most elusive detail. It appears that settlers were living here, perhaps as early as 1640. A date in the 1660s would seem more likely. Devout Puritans would never have considered forsaking public worship simply because no church yet existed in the community. Gathering of the people and erection of a Meeting House would have been one of the first goals of such people. There is no record of church activity until 1692, but it seems impossible to believe that such activity would have been delayed until such a late date. No early document identifies 1680 as the year of organization. Such references do not occur until the late nineteenth century, near the time of the 1880 centennial celebration of the erection of the Old Stone Church. One may assume, then, that 1680 was selected as a convenient date, marking one hundred years before the building of the Old Stone Church. But such a date is entirely reasonable, if only a convenient guess. If anything, organization may have occurred even before that time. To continue speaking of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church as dating from 1680, though not entirely accurate, is certainly permissible. And now that 1680 has been assumed as the founding date for so many anniversary

celebrations, along with the absence of any serious challenge by another more preferred date, its continued use seems entirely in order.

B. FROM CONGREGATIONALISM TO PRESBYTERIANISM [1680 to 1710]

Puritanism in Colonial America was not nearly as homogenous as common impressions today would suggest. Within the Anglican Church, Puritans fought for renewed personal holiness. They adhered to Calvinistic dogma but felt no compulsion to abandon the episcopal structure of ecclesiastical government. Others were not so broad minded. Puritan doctrine was shared by Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and more strict Separatists, none of whom would permit the existence of a true church under a bishop's control. But neither could they agree on which form of church government was most Biblical. High views of Scripture, combined with strongly opinionated minds, kept them apart on this question. (10)

The Connecticut settlements, like most in New England, were populated by Congregationalists. Strongly Calvinistic in doctrine, they organized themselves into churches which submitted to no external authority apart from Christ and the Scriptures. Each body of believers was self-contained and independent of any official relation with any other fellowship of saints.

This being the case, it may certainly be presumed that the church established in New Jersey bore their brand of church doctrine and government. These Puritans were Congregational Calvinists. (11) Tradition has passed on the name they gave to their fellowship. It was included on the memorial erected on the site of the "New England Towne Crossroads," where the church met for a century. On the "Cohansey Monument" placed at the spot in 1909 by West Jersey Presbytery is inscribed the fact that here worshipped "The Church of Christ in Fairfield."

Though no clear records remain of a pastor serving the church prior to 1695, the possibility of one or more men occupying that position cannot be dismissed. Anniversary bulletins of the church in the 1920s and 1930s list an M. Bradnor as pastor from 1680 to 1695. This was likely the result of research by the pastor at the time, Rev. Clinton Cook. The source of his information was not noted, but may have been a reference to a Mr. Bradnor by an unidentified editor to the session minutes in 1813. There it is recorded that "the first minister of whom we have any information was Mr. Bradnor from New England." The editor attributed his information to an account drawn up by Ephraim Harris in May, 1794. The dates 1680 and 1695 are probably incorrect assumptions, but the name Bradnor and his pastoral relation to the church must have some historical foundation and should probably be accepted as genuine. Rev. Samuel R. Anderson, pastor of the church from 1875 to 1883, in a historical account of the congregation commissioned by the General Assembly, preserved the tradition that some of the earliest settlers were from the eastern part of Long Island and that they brought a minister with them. (12) Perhaps this was a later group of settlers who joined those from Connecticut already here. Bradnor may have been the man who accompanied these newcomers from Long Island.

The first documented pastoral affiliation was initiated on July 29, 1692. On that day, the "West Jersey Society" sent a letter, by way of London, to Rev. Thomas Bridges. It was addressed to him in "the Bermudas," thought by others to be a reference to Jamaica. (13) A Dr. Coxe had informed them that Bridges was inclined to leave the islands and settle in West Jersey. Having received excellent reports about him, they

confidently requested in this letter that he come to share his “Pious Instructions” and “Exemplary life” with them as their minister. Two thousand acres of land had been set aside. Half was for the church. The other thousand would be presented to him for his permanent possession, free of charge. (14) On August 5, 1692, Daniel Coxe wrote to him to inform him that he had reported Bridges’ interests and qualifications to the West Jersey Society, and to offer his high hopes that Bridges would soon be laboring in the area. To insure it, Coxe offered to make “a Considerable annual allowance to be paid you in money during my life if you **soe** long Continue your residence in our Province.” (15)

Bridges had earlier been in Boston, having attended Harvard. He had come to America from England. His family was reportedly of considerable importance. He anticipated a career in mercantile pursuits. After redirecting himself toward the ministry, he was able to acquire testimonials from John Owen and other eminent dissenting ministers. (16) In Boston in 1682, he had met the Mathers and several other prominent New England clergymen. (17) He must have been a Puritan to be acceptable to these New England Congregationalists. But letters mailed to him, in care of London, have been interpreted by some to indicate that his pastoral service in the West Indies was as a member of the Anglican Church. (18) In any case, he was willing to accept the invitation to Fairfield. His own dissenting spirit enabled him to find a spiritual home in this new fellowship.

One cannot help but wonder whether pastor influenced congregation or vice versa in the matter of church government. The action of the church following Bridges’s departure would strongly suggest that he had led them to a view more in accord with his own feelings of connectionalism. His ministry at Fairfield was completed in 1704. There is no record of other ministers serving the church until 1709. Bridges moved from Fairfield back to Boston where he became pastor of the First Church from 1705 until his death on September 26, 1715. (19) Fairfield was fortunate, indeed, to have had the service of the talents of one so eminently qualified for service in the Kingdom.

Meanwhile, an energetic Scottish minister had been very active in the Southern Colonies and in the Delaware Valley. Francis Makemie had begun his ministry on January 28, 1680, by presentation to the Presbytery of Laggan in Ulster. Ordination followed in 1682. The next year, he was in America. The culmination of his itinerant preaching and wide-ranging church planting was the establishment of the first presbytery in America. (20) Seven ministers met together in Philadelphia in 1706. Whether a minister or elder from Fairfield was present at that first meeting cannot be determined due to the missing first page of the Presbytery’s minutes. (21) Fairfield could, indeed, have been a part of this historic event. But by 1708, it is known that the church was in contact, if not in full fellowship, with the Presbytery. At its meeting on May 19, 1708, the Presbytery recorded the following actions.

Ordered yt Mr. Wilson, Mr. Andrews, & Mr. Hampton speak with Mr. Joseph Smith and ye People of Cohanzy about his Settlement and Ordination.

Mr. Wilson, Mr. Andrews, and Mr. Hampton make their Report what it is Mr. Smith and ye People of Cohanzy desire vizt: that some might be appointed to wait upon Mr. Smith and the People at Cohanzy.

Ordered by ye Presbry that upon the desire of Mr. Smith and the people of Cohanzy, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Andrews, and Mr. Boyd shall wait upon them at Cohanzy in order to his Ordination, and the people are to present them a Call to the said Mr. Smith.

The tryals appointed by the Presbry to Mr. Smith 'An Fides solum justificet,' for Sermon John 6.37 last part of the Verse. Mr. Andrews to be Moderator, and the people are to give three weeks Advertisement. (22)

Mr. Andrews was Rev. Jedediah Andrews, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. "He prevailed upon his Harvard classmate, Rev. Joseph Smith, to become their pastor in 1709." (23) Smith was the child of Lt. Philip Smith and Rebecca Foote of Wethersfield, Conn. It appears that they were living in Hadley, Mass., at the time of Joseph's birth. After graduation from Harvard in 1695, he married Esther Parsons of Springfield, Mass., on September 15, 1698. He taught for a time in the grammar school in Hadley and then taught in Springfield and Book-field. (24)

Smith's ministry at Fairfield was not very long. On May 10, 1709, Presbytery directed one of its members to "write to the people of Cohanzy to perform their Obligations to Mr. Smith." Perhaps the church had been unable to meet his material needs. Perhaps the people had been unhappy with his labors and were demonstrating it by their failure to maintain his salary. Or perhaps he was already anxious for a change. At any rate, on May 11, Presbytery directed him to preach at Maidenhead, Hopewell, and other congregations on his way to New England. This may have been a move intended to assist him in finding a new pastorate. (25) He wound up in Greenwich, Conn., preaching there for a time. About 1713 he accepted a call to upper Middletown, Conn. He gathered a church there and was installed as its pastor on January 15, 1715. He labored there until his death on September 8, 1736. He was then 62 years of age. (26) Fairfield had lost the service of a very capable minister, most likely their own fault.

With these entries in the Presbytery Minutes comes clear testimony that in a few short years the Congregational Church at Fairfield had become Presbyterian in character and was in official relations with other Presbyterians in this first Presbytery in America. This set the course for the rest of its life.

C. WORSHIP IN THE WOODS [1710 to 1755]

While the site of the earliest Meeting House is known, details of its construction have not been preserved. The allocation of one thousand acres of land for the church, in the letter to Bridges from the West Jersey Society, would indicate that it was not until sometime after his arrival and commencement of pastoral labors that the building was raised. But its size, shape, and furnishings remain a mystery. The only detail preserved is the fact that it was a log structure. But then, most of the dwellings in the area at that time were likely of similar construction. (27)

By 1717, this building had deteriorated and was no longer fit for use. A more comfortable structure was erected in the same location. It was a frame building covered with shingles on the sides as well as the roof. Plain benches were arranged inside for seating. It was situated on the southeast corner of the lot. (28)

After Joseph Smith departed, the congregation was served by Samuel Exell. His period of ministry was even shorter than Smith's, apparently less than a year. Whereas Smith seems to have had to go because of the congregation's negligence in paying his salary, the blame for Exell's failure here was clearly his own fault. (29)

The presbytery wrote to them, in 1711, that they 'wished the congregation had taken better-advised steps for their provision as to the ministry: by the best account they had of him, they judged him not a suitable person to preside in the work of the ministry. Though invited to be present at our meeting, he neither came nor sent, intimating either a contempt or a supine neglect of ecclesiastical judicatures. We cannot approve of some printed papers dispersed by him among the people, as they contain, so far as they are intelligible, abundance of gross errors—a great part consisting of nonsense and obvious self-contradictions.

He settled at Chestertown, in Maryland, and formed an Independent congregation. A grant of land for its use was made, in 1727, to Mr. Samuel Exell. (30)

The church was learning to be "presbyterian." Exell had been called without the advice and opinion of the members of Presbytery. He was never ordained to the Fairfield ministry. The next pastoral call was prepared in close contact with Presbytery. Elder Ephraim Sayre was directed by the church to ask for the advice of Presbytery in their search for a new pastor. The name sent back for their consideration was Howell ap Howell, soon to change his name to Howell Powell. (31)

Powell had been ordained as a pastor of a Welsh Congregational church in South Wales. He later came to America, having been sent by the Congregational Fund of London in the interest of expanding congregationalism in the Middle Colonies. He organized a Congregational Church at Chestertown, Maryland. On September 16, 1713, he presented himself for admission to the Presbytery of Philadelphia, desiring to orient himself toward Presbyterianism. Examination of his knowledge and credentials was successfully performed. Presbytery delayed final action until additional credentials from "some eminent ministers in England known to some of the members of the Presbytery." In the interim, he was free to preach in their churches, but not to accept a call to any permanent settlement. On September 20, 1715, Presbytery, having received the desired additional credentials, welcomed Powell and approved him for the ministry in Fairfield. After patiently waiting two years, he was ordained in the church on October 14, 1715. (32) By all accounts, his ministry met the needs and desires of the people most wonderfully. It was during this time that the new Meeting House was constructed. But this blissful pastorate was all too brief. Powell died in 1717, less than two years after his arrival. His remains, though unmarked, are probably resting in the old church cemetery at New England Towne Crossroads. (33)

Powell's successor was Rev. Henry Hook, an Irishman. He began preaching at Fairfield in 1718, but seems never to have been installed here. By this time, Presbyterian worship was being conducted in Greenwich.

Several families of Scotch and Scotch-Irish settled there, and trustees, in 1717, received a deed for land on which to build a church edifice. A church was organized as early as 1728. Mr. Hook preached for a time both in Fairfield and Greenwich. (34)

Trouble developed during his stay in Fairfield. Rev. Jedediah Andrews of Philadelphia wrote of it in a letter to Increase Mather in April, 1722.

The week before last by the pressing importunity of the minister of Cohanzey I went thither to heal some difficulties between the two congregations there, which being effected contrary to expectations. Such charges were laid against him as have subverted him from acting there or anywhere else. (35)

Hook moved to Delaware that year, 1722. The Presbytery of Newcastle picked up the matter and dealt with it in special session at Fairfield. Though many details were left unsettled, enough was established to lead to his being publicly rebuked at Fairfield in the Meeting House. He was suspended from the ministry for a season. (36)

He was followed, two years later, by Rev. Noyes Parris of Massachusetts, a Harvard graduate. There is no record of his being installed here by the Presbytery. Hints of some manner of impropriety in his ministry led to his sudden and disorderly departure. (37) He had preached here for five years, 1724 to 1729, before returning to New England. (38)

D. ENERGETIC MINISTERS [1729 to 1783]

After these many years of suffering with ministerial misfits, brief pastorates, and frequently recurring pulpit vacancies, rich blessings were at last poured out, perhaps as a reward for the patient endurance of a people so severely tried. The prayers of faithful elders began to be answered, and continued to be answered through the next hundred and fifteen years, spanning the ministries of four spiritual giants and encompassing the period of the church's greatest spiritual growth and vitality, as well as numerical increase, including all the years since.

Daniel Elmer, appropriately enough, was born in Fairfield, Connecticut, in 1690. In 1713 he graduated from Yale. (39) He taught at a classical grammar school in West Springfield. While there, he married Margaret Parsons, sister-in-law of Rev. Joseph Smith who had been a former pastor of this church (1708-1709). After preaching for several years in Westborough, Massachusetts, he and his family, now including five children, left the area. (40) He had been sorely underpaid by the General Court in Brookfield, and left town before 1715. His whereabouts for the next twelve years are not known. In 1728, he settled on a farm at Fairfield. (41) Anderson records a rather interesting tradition that Elmer had come on a cart with his wife riding behind him on a pillow! He goes on to surmise that it is much more likely that they had come by boat. He was ordained and installed as pastor of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church in 1729. (42)

That same year found him struggling over the adoption of controversy which arose from the General Assembly's decision in 1729 to institute a formal subscription of its ministers to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. (43) After a year of uncertainty and intense reflection, he at last professed before Presbytery in 1730 his personal, and apparently enthusiastic, adoption of the documents. (44)

In the spring of 1740, the dynamic young British preacher, George Whitefield, brought the fires of revival to West Jersey. He recalled the events in his Journal. After preaching at Gloucester, Greenwich, and Piles Grove (Pittsgrove?), he came to "Cohansie, 18 miles from Piles Grove."

Wednesday, Nov. 19. Had two precious meetings to-day at Cohansie. Preached to some thousands, both morning and afternoon. The Word struck the hearers till the whole congregation was greatly moved, and two cried out in the bitterness of their souls, after a Crucified Saviour. My soul was replenished as with new wine. At this place, Mr. Gilbert Tennent preached some time ago. At his, as well as the people's request, I came hither. Blessed by God, His Gospel spreads more and more! Amen. (45)

The twenty-five year old evangelist had found receptive hearts. There is some question as to whether this is a reference to the Cohansy River or the Cohansy community (Fairfield). If it is an identification of the River, the likely assumption is that he preached to the Presbyterians down and across the River in Greenwich. It is known that the church took the newer opinions more quickly than did Fairfield. But such a reference to Greenwich as "Cohansie" is entirely out of character for this period of time. The name was used regularly in those days to speak of Fairfield. This is the opinion of Webster, who comments that Gilbert Tennent had indeed preached here the previous summer. (46) Also significant is the fact that Whitefield noted in his Journal, just a few entries before the "Cohansie" visit, that he had visited and preached at Greenwich, calling it by its correct name. Incidentally, this visit was not particularly successful. Only a few were present and Whitefield judged it well that he be thus occasionally humbled.

The Great Awakening that was breaking out throughout the colonies caused conflict wherever it exploded. Fairfield was not exempt. Elmer adhered to the Old Side in the controversy, joining with those who opposed the new evangelistic activity, objecting to its apparent (but not real) Arminianism and what they judged to be excessive and dangerous emotionalism associated with the powerful preaching. The congregation divided over the matter. Even his own son occasionally crossed the River to Greenwich to hear Andrew Hunter preaching there. The division within the people continued for many years. A letter to President Stiles of Yale on July 20, 1755, informed him that the two factions had finally re-united in that year of Elmer's death. (47)

Elmer's salary is reported as having been inadequate for the support of his large family. He was industrious in supplementing it by cultivating his own farm and even serving occasionally as a surveyor. He was accustomed to wearing a gown with bands in the pulpit. He would also be found with knee breeches, a cocked hat. and a white wig, turned up at the ears. (48) His name stands out as a most wonderful and patient pastor for this flock during these years of controversy.

A successful and very appreciated ministry was marred only by these aggravations over the acceptance of new life brought with the Great Awakening. So strong was the division in this church that Elmer's oldest son, Daniel, ceased worshipping entirely in his father's church. He had married a daughter of a zealous Baptist, and made his home near his father-in-law. (49) He led the New Side faction of Presbyterians at Fairfield in requesting that preachers be sent to them from the Presbytery of New Brunswick, one of the strongest New Side Presbyteries. Tennent and other dynamic New Side ministers preached for them at Cedarville, where they were trying to establish a rival church, one that would embrace the new principles of evangelism. Elmer requested a committee be appointed by Presbytery to come and try to heal the differences. Three men were designated: Cowell, McHenry, and Kinkaird. But Elmer's death on January 14, 1755, at the age of 65, occurred before the committee had a chance to begin their work. (50) He was buried in the Old New England Towne

graveyard at the church. The stone marking the spot is visible today. Its inscription is remarkably simple for a man whose life produced such a powerful impact on so many.

“In memory of the Rev. Daniel Elmer, late pastor of Christ’s Church in this place, who departed this life, January 14, 1755, aged sixty-five years.” (51)

His house, located near his final resting place, burned a short time before his death. All church records made prior to that time were forever lost in the flames. (52)

Elmer was succeeded by a man even more loved by the people of Fairfield. He was William Ramsey, born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 1732. His father, James Ramsey, had emigrated to this country from Ireland. His brother, Dr. David Ramsey, distinguished himself in Charleston, South Carolina, as a physician and historian. (53) William Ramsey graduated from the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University, in 1754, having prepared himself for the Gospel ministry. (54)

The Fairfield Presbyterian Church had re-united almost immediately after Elmer’s death in 1755. Those who had been trying to organize a “New Light” church in Cedarville turned their efforts toward obtaining a new minister that would satisfy everyone in Fairfield. One of the elders, Thomas Ogden, travelled to New Haven to seek the advice of Yale’s president, Ezra Stiles. In a letter from a Dr. Alison, their need was clearly laid out.

These wait on you in favor of the church at Fairfield in N.J. which was formerly under the care of Mr. Daniel Elmer. They were divided in his time, but have now agreed by advice of our Presbytery to invite a minister from Connecticut, and if they can be happily supplied to bury all their contentions, and to unite under his ministry. (55)

Ogden’s efforts with Stiles produced no results, despite the good wishes and kind advice which would certainly have been offered.

However, Ramsey’s name came to the attention of the church and they were quite soon favorably disposed toward him. Responding to their call, and sensitive to the disruptions in Presbyteries and sessions which had been brought on by the issues raised by the Great Awakening, Ramsey travelled to Connecticut to be licensed by the Association of the eastern district of Fairfield county there. It was his desire to be able to “appear before the people free from all that could alienate any from him.” He was received by Abingdon Presbytery on May 11, 1756, and was ordained and installed at Fairfield on December 1, 1756, almost two years after Elmer’s death. (56)

The call issued to him by the congregation on March 22, 1756, was signed by thirty-eight men. They promised to provide an annual salary of eighty pounds, based on property assessments of the members. At the time of his marriage to Miss Sarah Sealy of Bridgeton in 1758, the congregation presented him with the generous gift of a farm of one hundred and fifty acres on the east side of Sayre’s Neck, about two miles south of the church. His gentle ways were obviously effective from the start. Here he lived until his death in 1771. (57)

His ministry saw results beyond the healing of past disputes. By 1759, membership had increased to seventy-eight. All the former troubles seem to have disappeared. The people were happily united. Daniel Elmer, who had led “the opposition” in former years under his father’s ministry, was ordained as an elder in 1760. Revival broke out in 1765. Membership nearly doubled that year with the addition of sixty-one new members. The next year saw twenty-eight more. Ramsey was himself a

“New Light,” sympathetic to the new methods of preaching so successfully used by Whitefield and the Tennents in the 1740s. But he was obviously a man of great tact and gentleness to have so effectively carried out his ideas and methods in a church previously opposed to his work with this evidence of spiritual blessing and divine approval. A thirteen year-old, Ebenezer Elmer, wrote that “the young especially became very much engaged, and we had meeting at least twice a week during all the summer and fall.”

The congregation gathered from both sides Cohansey and from the mouth to the bridge known as Cohansey bridge. There were no carriages—it is said no covered wagon ever came to this church— and they came on horseback or walked, except in winter when they came in sledges.

There was no means of heating the building, but in severe winter weather they built a fire in the woods near by. There was two sermons on the Sabbath with a half hour interval for lunch. (58)

In the midst of this activity and extremely effective ministry, the servant of God’s people was taken very suddenly at the early age of thirty-nine years. His death, on November 5, 1771, was a great shock and a source of deep lamentation by the people. “His brother-in-law, Dr. Jonathan Elmer, pronounced a glowing eulogy on his piety, talents, and excellence.” (59) He was laid to rest in the church cemetery. The large marble slab remains today, its inscription no longer legible. It reflected profound admiration from his children in the faith.

Beneath this Stone lie interred
the Remains of
The Rev’d WILLIAM RAMSEY, M.A.

For sixteen years a faithful Pastor of the
Presbyterian Church in this Place
Whose superior Genius and native Eloquence
Shone so conspicuously in the pulpit
as to command the attention and
Gain the esteem of all his Hearers.
In every Station of Life he discharged

His duty faithfully.
He lived greatly respected,
And died universally lamented.

November 5th, 1771,
in the 39th year of his Age. (60)

His wife survived him and remarried. After her death thirty years later, she was returned to Fairfield to be buried beside her first husband. Her tombstone is quite legible today, and bears testimony to a Godly woman, well suited to the demands of the life of the pastor’s wife.

Here was deposited the Body
of
SARAH SMITH

Successively the Wife
of the Rev d William Ramsey
of this place
and the
Rev d Dr Robert Smith
of Pequia

She was highly distinguished
for the exercise of the
Estimable and amiable qualities
in various relations of
wife mother friend and Christian

Having survived her last
worthy husband a few years
In great weakness of body
she fell asleep in Jesus
August 9th 1801 aged 63 years (61)

A year and a half after Ramsey's premature death, the congregation welcomed a new pastor, Rev. William Hollingshead. He had been born in Philadelphia in 1748 and entered the communion of the church in his youth. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, studying for the ministry. After graduation, he was licensed in 1772 and ordained by the First Presbytery of Philadelphia on July 29, 1773. A few months later he married Sarah McCalla from Roadstown. (62) His must have been a most difficult task, laboring as he did through the years of the Revolutionary War. Both church cemeteries bear testimony to the losses incurred by families across the country side.

Hollingshead's work in the community intersects the life of another of the distinguished residents of the area in colonial history. The journal of Philip Vickers Fithian, remembered best for his "meticulous observation and human character analysis," (63) especially during his travels through colonial Virginia, records a most valuable visit with Rev. Hollingshead during the summer of 1773. Fithian was in the midst of serious contemplations about offering himself to the presbytery for ordination. Hollingshead was ordained that summer, giving Fithian excellent opportunities to weigh his own decisions more carefully and intelligently.

On Friday evening, July 16th, having crossed over from Greenwich, he had dinner with Mrs. Ramsey. He then spent the evening talking with Hollingshead, "who entertained me with a long and agreeable Narration of the State of Affairs in Philadelphia. We went to rest about two." (64) They rose early the next morning, and discussed the issues of ministerial responsibilities. Though only then entering the work himself, Hollingshead clearly had a great deal of wisdom to share with Fithian.

I had this Day a long Conversation with Mr. Hollingshead on my Offering Myself to the Care of the Presbytery, which is to sit there in about ten Days, when he is to be ordained & settled. I have several Objections to offering so soon, but he calls them all frivolous, & strongly persuades me to offer myself to them now for Examination. Mr. Hunter, also, & Mr. Green are of the same Opinion, & have both advised me some few Days ago, in the Same Manner, but I cannot yet determine. Mr. Hollingshead

shewed me his Library, which tho small as yet seems to be made up of useful, & well-chosen Books. (65)

Their discussions continued the next day, turning to more theological matters, focusing on the subject "The States of Man," which had been the topic of Hollingshead's sermon that morning. Fithian was quite impressed with the young minister's abilities. "He performed, both parts of the Day, in a beautiful, and I hope in a profitable Manner. And he seems happy, in having gained the Esteem & Affection of his People." (66)

On Tuesday, Fithian recorded in his journal that he had been successfully persuaded by Hollingshead and others to proceed with his examination for ordination. This meant that both he and the Fairfield pastor were studying toward the same end. Hollingshead's trials came on Wednesday, July 18. Andrew Hunter of Greenwich, John Duffield, Benjamin Chesnut, and Enoch Green of Deerfield were the ministers present for the examination. Hollingshead was approved for ordination, but it was determined to delay the examination of Fithian until the regular meeting of the Presbytery in Philadelphia the following November. (67)

The great day for the people of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church came on Thursday, July 29, 1773. With all parts of the examination having been found in order, William Hollingshead being acceptable to the people, to the Presbytery, and to the Lord, the service of ordination was accomplished in the church at New England Towne Crossroads. Fithian's journal provides a wonderful eye-witness account of the festivities.

Rose at half after five as we walked home the Misquitoes seemed as numerous as the spires of grass. This day is observed as a Day of fasting & Humiliation on account of setting Mr. Hollinshead apart by ordination to the Work of the ministry.

About ten we rode to Church; where the sermon was delivered by Mr. Hunter to an extraordinary Assembly of Hearers from (illegible)

After which, Mr. Hollingshead was first ordained & set apart to the Word of the ministry & immediately after installed, & set over the Congregation at Fairfield. Mr. Duffield gave the charges both to the Minister & people, in a plain, pathetic & judicious Manner!

The Sermon & whole Exercise being over, the People dispersed. I dined with the Miss Hollingsheads at Squire Harrises, while we were dining there came on a violent Tempest of Rain, Thunder, & Wind!

After the Rain about four o'clock, the Minister & People, as many as could attend, went down to Bridge-Town, where Mr. Duffield appointed to preach at six. (68)

Fithian travelled to Princeton soon after this, but headed south through Fairton, having heard of a tutoring job available in Virginia. On August 2 1st, he spent the night at the home of Hollingshead's mother. He remained a while longer to be present for a most wonderful occasion, Hollingshead's wedding.

"About nine in the Evening the Rev'd William Hollinshead & Miss Sally McCalla were married, by Mr. Sproat, without a numerous Train of Guests, as is much the most decent – or a Splendid Entertainment – which is always Superfluous." (69)

Hollingshead and Fithian would meet again, but under most unhappy circumstances. When the Revolutionary War drew men into conflict, chaplains were

needed to minister to their spiritual needs. Fithian, along with his pastor from Greenwich, Andrew Hunter, offered their services. Diseases of many kinds swept through the army camps. On September 23, 1776, Fithian, having been stricken with illness several times, was found to be seriously ill. Hollingshead had apparently also become a chaplain for the army (at approximately the same time that the young Ethan Osborn was serving with Washington's troops). The Fairfield congregation must have given him a leave of absence, as did many congregations through the colonies. Hollingshead found Fithian "lying upon a thin bed raised from the floor only by a little straw covered with a blanket or two... reduced to the lowest state one would imagine possible for human nature to support under." (70) Hollingshead's friend succumbed to the fever on the morning of October 8, one more of the many souls he comforted in those extremely trying times.

Hollingshead's ministry has been most remembered for the relocation and rebuilding which took place during his stay. The frame building in use for so many years (since 1717) had to be torn down in 1775. Pulpit and benches were set up in the shade of an enormous oak tree near the site of the old building. Public worship was held here in fair weather. Plans were undertaken for a new site and a new Meeting House.

The hallowed and grateful association of the old place, even though sanctified by the graves of their parents, were made subordinate to the prosperity, convenience, and welfare of the people, and of posterity. The good of the township required that the church should stand on the main road running through its centre from one end to the other. Accordingly, they bought land here, and determined that a suitable edifice should be erected. (71)

Notes in the session records at the time of the church's bicentennial celebration recall that during 1775 and 1776, two hundred loads of stone and eight hundred feet of lumber were gathered on the newly purchased property. Local tradition preserves the story that British troops confiscated the materials and used them to build a docking facility on the Fairfield side of the Cohansey River across from Greenwich, the town where local youths, dressed as Indians, burned British tea stored in community basements, imitating the "Boston Tea Party." (72) Whether such confiscation occurred or not is uncertain, but stones left at Laning's Wharf suggest the possibility of its having taken place. At any rate, construction of the new church home was understandably delayed by the demands and uncertainties of the Revolutionary War. The congregation met for six years on rough benches set outdoors among the trees at the old New England Towne cemetery. The harshness of the more severe seasonal weather must have been a sorely trying experience for the faithful of the congregation. But Mr. Hollingshead's ministry was adequate to hold them together and lead them on to the long-awaited erection of their new building.

Finally in 1780, most of the British forces in the area were transferred further south, and work was begun.

Providence greatly favored the design, and no rain fell from the time the foundations were laid, on the first day of May, until the rafters were raised and the roof put on in the middle of June.

Thus in spring and summer the work advanced so rapidly that before the first week of autumn was past, the Rev. Mr. Hollingshead, sharing the joy and thankfulness of his people, could, in this house, lead their

profound and grateful devotions. He preached his first sermon here, September 7th, 1780, from Philippians, 3:7. 'But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.' (73)

The building was erected on a lot one mile east of the former site, on the main road connecting Fairton with Cedarville. The walls were constructed of native stone, exposed on the exterior, plastered inside. A balcony extended from three walls, with a tall wineglass pulpit, capped by a sounding board, at balcony level on the fourth wall. Clear windows on both levels permitted light to pour in from all directions. There was ample seating space for prospective growth in the congregation. That growth was not long in coming. Forty-eight additions were made in the spring of 1781, and almost that many more before the end of the year. (74)

In 1783, Hollingshead left the Fairfield Presbyterian Church, having accepted a call to serve as pastor of the large and prominent Circular or Independent Church of Charleston, South Carolina. He continued there until 1815, when he was stricken while in the pulpit on the Lord's Day. His health deteriorated until his death on January 16, 1817. (75)

PART TWO: GROWTH [1780 to 1850]

A. FATHER OSBORN [1789 to 1844]

Ethan Osborn was born in Litchfield, Connecticut, on August 21, 1758. His parents, Capt. John Osborn and Lois Peck (both of whom lived well into their eighties), raised nine children: John, who died at the age of seventy-nine; Ethan, ninety-nine; Eliada, eighty-six; Rebecca, eighty; Elizabeth, forty-six; Herman, nineteen; Lois, twenty-one; and Thalia, who remained in good health at age eighty-one at the time of Ethan's death. (76)

Details of his early life and conversion are scanty. The best information comes from Osborn himself. In 1822, after thirty-three years as pastor of the church, he delivered two sermons based on Acts 20:18, "Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." In these sermons, he reviewed his life and ministry up to that date, a practice frequently repeated during his labors at Fairfield. Though these two particular addresses have not been preserved, Hotchkin, one of his successors in the pulpit, was able to quote from those manuscripts. Osborn's words trace his spiritual pilgrimage in his early years. The Godly training in his home conditioned his mind and heart for the journey through legalistic efforts to please God to that warm embrace of the free grace of Jesus Christ that set him free.

My condition and school education were like those of other children in my native place. I was favored, thanks to God! with religious parents and a religious education. My parents are gone to their long home, and I trust sleep in Jesus. They trained me in habit of attending public worship, but for some years I went to meeting rather reluctantly, or against my inclination. Some alarming providences impressed my mind with serious thoughts of death and judgment. This was perhaps before the age of nine or twelve years. After my serious impressions began, I went to religious

meetings without persuasion or driving. I then went, not to see and be seen, but to hear the word of God, and to learn how I must escape the wrath to come and obtain eternal life. The Sabbath became a most welcome day, which I tried to keep holy, and improve for my best spiritual interests, for this was my principal concern. Compared with my soul's salvation, every affair of this life appeared low and trifling.

About this time I began secret prayer, which I have continued more or less to this day, though I am conscious that I have often been too remiss in it. * * * I felt conscious that the eyes of the Lord were upon me, and I fully resolved carefully to avoid whatever my conscience and his word and Spirit should tell me was my duty. But, like David, I soon found that innumerable evils had compassed me about, and mine iniquities had taken hold upon me. I found that my own strength was weakness; temptations assaulted me and too often prevailed against me; yet like Job, I tried to hold fast mine integrity.

When I was preparing for college, while studying the Greek Testament, I saw more clearly than ever before the amiable excellency of our Saviour. My mind was enamored of his heavenly beauty, and my soul's desire was to be like him and with him. Ever since, I have had a trust that I have received the Saviour by faith, and am interested in the special favor of God through his merits and mediation, though it often seems too exalted a favor and blessedness for such a sinner to expect. And scarcely, if ever, do I feel that assurance of salvation which I desire. May the Lord perfect in us all that which is lacking of grace, faith, and assurance! (77)

After a period of earnestly "trying" to do and to be what he felt would satisfy God, he at last discovered, perhaps gradually through his personal Bible study, what it was to simply rest in the Saviour for divine acceptance.

In due course, probably at the age of seventeen he commenced his college training at Dartmouth. It was a good time to be in such a place. A revival occurred in the parish and in the college in the winter of 1782. Fifty converts were admitted to the church in Hanover. Later, of a graduating class of seventeen, Osborn was one of thirteen who became ministers of the Gospel. (78)

While I was a student in Dartmouth College, I was admitted to full communion with the Presbyterian Church there. Never shall I forget the first time I partook of the Lord's Supper. My mind was solemnly and devoutly exercised, and with a good degree of consolation. (79)

His course of study at Dartmouth was interrupted by the American Revolution. At the age of eighteen, in the second year of the struggle for independence, Osborn left school to aid the cause. He was among a sizeable company of volunteers from his native township. Though his connection with the army was brief, it extended through one of the darkest periods of the war, the campaign of 1776. He was with Washington's forces in their retreat through New Jersey. His experiences made profound and permanent impressions on him that he continued to share through his later years.

He kept in his mind a catalogue of providential deliverances from imminent perils of death. One of these interpositions of heaven on his behalf occurred during this service. While the division of the army to which he belonged occupied Fort Mifflin, above New York, he was compelled, by sickness, to accept a short furlough. During his absence,

the fort was taken by the British, and the prisoners were removed to New York. Some were confined in the building known by the name of the Sugar House, and others were thrown into prison ships. Close confinement and a fare that was next to starvation, produced a mortality so great, that only four persons of the company to which Mr. Osborn belonged survived. If, in his then enfeebled health, he had been subjected to those exposures, there is little doubt but that his personal history would from that time have belonged to another world. (80)

After his term of enlistment expired, he returned home to Connecticut. Dartmouth had been temporarily broken up as the result of an invasion from Canada. This delayed his return to his studies. But return he did, and was a graduate of the class of 1784. His college years were a very satisfying experience for him. He later made conversational references to this period of his life that “contained many affectionate allusions to the then presiding officer, Dr. John Wheelock. For him, he seems to have cherished a peculiar attachment...” (81)

As there were no theological seminaries available yet to young men preparing for the ministry, further instruction was conducted under the close tutorial supervision of experienced pastors on the field. Osborn took advantage of this opportunity to sharpen his skills by working under Rev. Andrew Storrs of Plymouth, Connecticut, and later with his cousin, Rev. Joseph Vaill in nearby Hadlyme. During this time, inner spiritual struggles were being resolved by the ministerial candidate.

After I left College, I was disemployed for about three years. During that time, being often exposed to vain company, I insensibly and gradually became too much conformed to the spirit and fashion of the world. More than once my feet, like David's, were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. More than once I was almost drawn into the whirl of iniquity. But in mercy the Lord sternly rebuked me, stopped me in my presumptuous course, and once more turned my feet unto his testimonies. For ever blessed by his name! (82)

By 1786 he felt sufficiently prepared to present himself for licensure. Within a few weeks he had been invited to become the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Spencertown, New York. He declined this call, desiring more time to “shop around,” to consider more possibilities before making this permanent commitment. He travelled to Philadelphia with this in mind. There, at the advice of Dr. Sproat, he set out for further travel into the lower counties of New Jersey. His excursion on horseback brought him first to Pittsgrove. From there he came down to Deerfield. Here he spent his first night in Cumberland County. It was his thirtieth birthday. He lodged in the home of Ephraim Foster, the family to which he allied himself some thirty years later by marriage.

He then came on to Fairfield, where, after laboring with acceptance through what was then the usual time of trial, he entered upon that pastoral settlement which was destined to be so enduring, and so fruitful of blessed results. On the 3rd of December, 1789, the Presbytery of Philadelphia inducted him into this charge under the ordination formula of his church. The sermon was preached by the Rev. George Duffield, D.D., Pastor of the Pine Street Church, Philadelphia. (83)

The church was in desperate need of capable pastoral leadership. It had been five years since Hollingshead had departed. In the interim, “the congregation appears to have lived under the precarious and comparatively thriftless ministry of occasional

supplies.” (84) The grave concern over their plight and high hopes of answered prayers are strongly conveyed in the call extended by them to Osborn, whose preaching over several months’ time had convinced them that he was God’s choice for them.

‘To Mr. Eathen Ozburn.

SIR.— We the subscribers, members of the Presbyterian congregation of Fairfield in the County Cumberland, and State of New Jersey, having been for sometime passed Destitute of the Stated Means of Grace the Preaching of the word of God among us do most Sincerely lament the loss of so Great a blessing, and desire to bewail over our sins which has provoked the Lord to strip us of those priveleges we have so long enjoyed in time passed and too much abused and being Deeply affected with this our bereaved situation would most humbly implore the Supreme Ruler of all Events, and head of that Church so to Dispose the hearts of this people that truly repenting of their Sins and returning unto God he would graciously return unto us and Grant the Settlement of the Gospel in this place Again. —

And Sir haveing had the opportunity of Some Personal Acquaintance with and frequently heiring you preach, have upon the Most Mature Deliberation Unanimously agreed to Call and invite you to Come and take the Charge of this Church and Congregation: and Cannot but Entertain pleasing hopes that Devine providence has destined you for this part of his Vineyard in as Much as he has inclined the hearts of this people to Unite in this Call. —

And for incoragement in a temporal respect and for the support of yourself and family we do hereby promis and ingage for our selves that if you should Come among us as our pastor that you Shall have the whole Use of the Passonage in this place of one Hundred and fifty Acres of Land, with the houses and Buildings and improvements thereon all put in Good Tennantable repair, and likewise will pay unto you or to your Order Yearly and Every Year, while you Continue our Minister at the Rate of One Hundred pounds per annum, Gold or Silver, and do Every thing in our power to make your Situation among us as Comfortable and easy as possible. —

and again, Sir, we beg leave most Earnestly to Solicit and intreat you to Except this our call and invitation to Come and take the pastoral Charge of this Congregation; you Know our Destitute State, and are acquainted in some Measure with the Dispositions and tempers of the people, we must therefore leave it to your own consideration, and most Sincerely pray that God May Direct you in your Deliberations thereon, and incline you to Determine in Such a Manner as may be most for his Glory and the Good of Church in General —

Witness our hands this Twenty-fourth Day of March one Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty-Nine.’

Signed by one hundred and four persons, apparently all the male members of the congregation. (85)

Osborn’s ministry was characterized by sound, if not especially dynamic, preaching, and a wonderfully warm pastoral love and personal concern for each member of his church. The messages delivered by him from the high pulpit of the Old Stone

Church were in-depth expositions of the Scriptures, carefully thought-out and organized, with specific applications offered, always intended to demonstrate to his hearers in what ways their lives should be altered to live more in conformity with the pattern of Gospel living expected of followers of Christ. His own comments about preaching, delivered in an ordination sermon he presented at Cape May before 1809, are helpful in understanding his own goals and style.

Preach the law and preach the gospel. Preach the law in all its strictness and spirituality, as an external rule of right, binding on every moral agent, and as covering all the exercises of the mind as well as outward actions, requiring perfect and perpetual obedience in every act, word, and thought, on pain of condemnation. And make close application to the conscience for the conviction of impenitent sinners, to make them duly sensible of their sin, and to make them feel as if standing in the Day of Judgment.

But not confining yourself to the law, preach the gospel. Hold up the blessed remedy it provides for guilty, perishing sinners. Preach Christ and Him crucified, in all His fullness and freeness to save. Preach Him in all His offices and sacred characters, as the way and only way to the Father through whom alone we can be redeemed from the curse of the law, and obtain salvation. Show His ability and willingness to save all who come to Him believing, and also the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence to enable and dispose them to come believing. Show the happy consequences of belief, and the fatal consequences of resisting the Spirit's influences and remaining in a state of impenitency and unbelief. Do not confine yourself to general doctrines and truths. Descend frequently to particulars, so that you may touch the particular cases of your different hearers. And let your practice correspond with your preaching. Pay a proper respect to the discipline of the church to purify and build it up. And in all things approve thyself a minister of God, in much patience and perseverance in the blessed work to which thou hast devoted thyself. (86)

Additional comments gleaned from some of his autobiographical discourses by a later pastor, Samuel Anderson, are worth noting.

"You know after what manner of style I have preached to you, that it has been a simple and plain style.

"Though I might have used a more elegant, learned or sublime style, yet I thought it my duty to follow the example of Paul in speaking to you with great plainness of speech. For the design of preaching is to convey ideas, and give instruction and knowledge to the hearer. But if my language is above the understanding of many hearers I might as well preach to them in Greek or Hebrew. And, therefore, to speak the truth has been my first object, and next to speak it in such language as to be intelligible or easily understood. I have been all along sensible that by using such a plain style, I have sacrificed my reputation for learning; but this is a matter of little consequence. I ought not to care whether I am thought learned or ignorant, if I can but promote your Christian knowledge and be a helper of your faith." (87)

In another sermon, he set forth the intense concern he felt for the genuine conversion of his hearers, whether he was speaking from the pulpit or in the parlor.

“In the first I aimed to represent religion as the most important of all things with which we have any concern, and that it ought to be the chief object of our desire and pursuit. As we are fallen, depraved creatures, I urged the necessity of a change, by the renewing and sanctifying influence of God’s Spirit. I urged it home to the conscience by this serious question – ‘Do you really think you have experienced such a change, or possess true gospel religion?’ When the answer was in the affirmative, I reminded them of their constant need of the grace of Christ to keep them in such a state, and their obligation to live near to God, by walking as Christ walked.

“When the answer was in the negative, I reminded them of the lamentable character of a conclusion and their gloomy prospect beyond the grave. I solemnly warned them of the danger of resting there, and exhorted them immediately to seek for mercy. After mentioning some essential duties, such as repentance, faith, love and obedience, I spoke of the relative duties of parents and children, and urged on parents and guardians the important duty of bringing up their children in the fear of God. After this I led on the conversation to the duty of family prayer and inquired whether it was performed in the family. After this I turned my conversation to the children and others present. Here I urged the importance of obtaining religion in early life, as youth is the most favorable time for it.” (88)

One who grew up under Osborn’s ministry later recalled the regular format of the pastor’s sermons. He had been quite impressed by the setting of the preaching in his earliest years.

“In my childish notion of things I believed that somewhere about that sounding board there was an Angel, or some invisible Being, communicating with the speaker, dictating, and directing the words he uttered; and the surroundings, filled me with awe, and the most profound reverence for the place and the day.” (89)

Later, this Jagers was able to appreciate more intelligently the sermons he heard from Osborn. They were quite methodical in organization. Three parts were consistently present: introduction, doctrine, and application. The first two occupied thirty minutes, the application fifteen. The forty-five minute time frame Osborn imposed on himself was enforced by his frequent checks with his silver pocket watch.

Osborn’s pattern of arrival at the church and preparation for the service were equally methodical and predictable.

“Some ten or fifteen minutes before the hour of service he might be seen, on a morning in summer, slowly and thoughtfully walking along the grove up to the church. The trees, large and in full foliage, afforded a delightful shade. A number of the well known members of the congregation, standing in groups, discussing the events of the day, would each in turn, as he approached, step forward to grasp the cordial hand extended, with the usual salutation and inquiry as to the family welfare. The line generally extended some considerable distance, from the center of the grove to the church fence, and sometimes nearly to the door. He would take those directly in his way by the hand, bowing politely to others in the background, or at a distance, who were too diffident to approach him. He then entered the church reverently, taking off his hat as he

passed through the door, and, with a measured step, walked along the upper isle to the pulpit steps, and ascended. Taking his seat in the pulpit, he would draw from his pocket a brown silk handkerchief, and wipe his eyeglasses thoroughly, after which he was ready for service.” (90)

The music in the church was typical of the day. Four leaders officiated from the “clerk’s seat” at the base of the pulpit. After setting the pitch with a fork and giving the note for each of the four parts, the singing began. Hymns as well as Psalms were used. A choir was formed about 1837 and a new song-book was introduced. The young people of the church were quite pleased with this development. Predictably, the older members were very distressed! The music was sung unaccompanied. The first organ was not obtained until 1862, after the congregation had left the Old Stone Church for its new home in Fairton. (91)

Osborn’s ministry was faithfully conducted, not only from the pulpit, but in the homes and schools. He was diligent in visitation. Every three months, he visited all the public schools in the area. His purpose of these visits was to hear students’ progress in recitation of the Westminster Shorter Catechism and to offer explanations of the doctrines contained there in a manner suited to the children’s level of understanding. Osborn had cause to remember this aspect of his ministry for many years. He was much impressed by God’s providential deliverance of himself from death on an occasion of this laboring. Early in his ministry he was conducting such catechetical instruction in the schoolhouse in Fairton. While he was standing before the children, lightning struck the building. The electrical current, apparently following the course of a row of nails in the floor, entirely tore a toe away from one foot. He escaped without any other injury than that. That night at home, his house caught fire when a member of his family was in the attic with a light, searching for material to use in bandaging his foot. No one was harmed. The house was saved, but not before a considerable portion on the roof had been destroyed.

More organized instruction of youth was begun during Osborn’s ministry. On December 12, 1818, in a meeting at the schoolhouse in Fairton, citizens appointed a committee of seven to institute and operate a program modeled after the plan of the Sunday School Union. They would teach in rotating teams of two on Sundays. Though not an official operation of the Presbyterian Church, most of those involved were Presbyterians. It was disbanded in 1821, but was resuscitated six years later on a more permanent foundation. Joseph Dayton was chosen to serve as superintendent. He continued faithful in this post until 1840. Effective teachers diligently continued the Biblical education of the children of the community, holding classes in the schoolhouse until 1865 when they moved to the “chapel” recently erected behind the new sanctuary built in 1850 in Fairton. (92)

In 1794, Osborn married Elizabeth Riley, a member of his congregation. Shortly thereafter, his salary was raised from 100 to 125 pounds. In 1802 it was returned to the original hundred pounds, as promised in the call of 1789. In 1803 it was further reduced, now that a parsonage and farm were to be provided. When they were sold four years later, the salary was increased, now amounting to \$400 annually. Fifty dollar increases were granted in 1809 and again in 1812. It remained at \$500 (supplemented by generous donations, up to \$100 at a time, when urgent needs were discovered) until 1836. (93)

In that year, an additional pastor was called to share the duties Osborn had thus far carried on his own shoulders. David Davies McKee was born on August 14, 1805, in Harrison County, Kentucky. He completed the Central College of Kentucky in 1832 and

moved to New Jersey to attend the seminary in Princeton, graduating in 1836. The call to Fairton was his first pastoral responsibility. He and his wife were here from 1836 to 1838. During their stay, a daughter born to them died, and was buried in the Old Stone Church cemetery. After leaving Fairton, he served several churches as stated supply, but never again as pastor. His charges included Russellville, Kentucky (1839-1840); the Winchester, Union, and Providence Churches in Illinois (1840-1844); Vandalia, Illinois (1844-1846); Freeport, Pennsylvania (1846-1848); and Fairfield, Indiana (1849-1854). He was then associated with the White Water Presbyterian Academy from 1854 to 1855. He entered the United States Army as a chaplain in 1864, near the end of the Civil War. His duties over the nine year period 1854 to 1864 are not known. In 1865 he left his army position, the war having come to a close. He remained in ill health from that time on, whether from war injuries or age, and died in Hanover, Indiana on January 17, 1884, just a few years after sending his letter of greeting back to Fairton for the 1880 anniversary celebration.

At a congregational meeting at three o'clock on Monday, June 20, 1836, Osborn announced his willingness to have McKee called to be his assistant. He offered to have \$200 of his own salary taken away to provide a suitable income for McKee. The congregation voted to call the young man, promising him \$400 (\$100 more than Osborn would now be receiving!). McKee was informed of the action the next day at Osborn's home. He declined the call. He was not willing to serve as an assistant minister. He would, however, consider a call to be co-pastor with Osborn. The congregation met again on July 5th. There was, understandably, much discussion about McKee's views. Finally, a vote was called to determine the congregation's desire to have "any person to become colleague with Mr. Osborn." Thirty-five voted yes, eighteen voted no. Osborn then announced to the congregation that he had changed his mind about giving up \$200 of his salary. The moderator, Rev. Samuel Lawrence, ruled him out of order since that was not on the docket for the meeting. After further motions and votes, the congregation voted forty-one to one to issue the call to McKee to serve as co-pastor. At a congregational meeting on July 16, Osborn expressed satisfaction with the decision and retracted his retraction of the \$200 from his salary. McKee was examined, ordained, and installed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia on August 4, 1836. Session records report that all found the proceedings of that occasion to be very "Solemn and impressive." There is no indication of friction between McKee and Osborn, despite the confusion of the call issued to McKee, but it was announced to the congregation in a meeting on July 21, 1838, that McKee wished to be dismissed from his pastoral relationship there. (94) At the time of the 1880 anniversary celebration for the church, McKee, then sixty-seven years old, was residing in Hanover, Indiana. (95) He had been invited to attend the special services but poor health prevented his coming. In a letter he sent to the church, he briefly reviewed his ministry with Osborn. He had come in April 1836, after completing his studies at Princeton Seminary, at the suggestion of Dr. Archibald Alexander, to spend some time in training under the seventy-six year old veteran at Fairfield. He recalled his two year ministry here with great joy, remembering especially his privilege in sharing in the revival that occurred during that time. (96)

At the time of McKee's departure, Old Stone/New School controversies, already causing great difficulties in Presbyteries, made their impact on the Fairfield Presbyterian Church. Osborn's views were in accord with the New School, while many of his most influential elders, a great number of his church members, and a majority of his Presbytery brethren sided with the Old School. After so many years of harmony and revival, controversy split the church. A great number left to organize a new church in Cedarville, an action contemplated spasmodically for decades previously not just because

of doctrinal disputes, but because of the distance and number of people now living in that separate community distinct from Fairfield. Osborn's problems were not over with their departure.

"Although he believed and preached the doctrines of personal election and the certain perseverance of Christians, still his friends never claimed that he was a strongly Calvinistic theologian; and in this time of unusual sharpness in searching out heresies, he made several free exposures (once at least before an assembly of co-presbyters, under much provocation as he averred) of views of atonement which were sure to be offensive to be a rigid Calvinist." (97)

The comments before Presbytery caused such concern that there was much discussion of the matter for some time afterward. Though no formal charges were filed against him for heresy, his reputation among some circles was sadly tarnished and his ecclesiastical position for a time was imperiled. (98)

Those in the church who remained loyal to him and his views joined with others of like mind in other churches to form a New School Presbytery. On May 11, 1840, the Fairfield Presbyterian Church voted to withdraw from their Presbytery. Session minutes record the action.

"We the undersigned members of the Presbyterian Church & Congregation of Fairfield New Jersey Respectfully Request our Pastor & session to withdraw the connection of themselves and our church from under the care & watch of the West Jersey Presbytery at the organising of said Presbytery in our church on Wednesday the 13 inst & we the undersigned members aforesaid authorise you the said pastor & session to Declare our church & congregation free from the Jurisdiction of the said West Jersey Presbytery.

Fairfield May 11, 1849"

(Signatures follow) (99)

They affiliated with the new Third Presbytery of Philadelphia, and continued in that association until after Osborn's death. But, difficult as this action was, Osborn never became a crusader over it. And for the most part, the high esteem in which all had held him continued to be maintained. At the time of his death, his successor, Hotchkin, reflected on those years and their impact on Osborn.

"I knew him when these events were yet fresh, before lacerated tempers generally have time for healing, and my relations to him were such that if he was disposed to transmit any latent grudge to any living mortal, he would probably have sought to imbue me with it. But I rejoice to say I never heard from his lips a word which would have gone harshly to the feelings of those with whom he had come into ecclesiastical conflict.

"It was a subject upon which he seldom spoke, and as time wore away, he as seldom thought. It is a fact full of significance respecting his spirit, that when his memory began to be seriously impaired, the division of the Presbyterian Church was the first ecclesiastical event of any importance which in his mind was clouded with a haze." (100)

In 1844, Osborn had reached the age of eighty-six and was still active and alert in all his pastoral duties. But the weight of too many years finally compelled him to seek release from the responsibilities of the care of this congregation. Only one person

remained alive of those who had been members of the church when he had come in 1789. (101) Yet, fourteen years of life remained for the senior minister. The Presbytery, at its April meeting in 1884, agreed to his wishes for retirement. In dissolving the pastoral relationship between him and this, his only church in his entire ministry, they felt it necessary to include in their minutes suitable note of the unusual circumstances of his pastorate.

“For fifty-four years Father Osborn has ministered to this branch of Zion, during which time a degree of harmony and fellowship has subsisted between pastor and people, and a success has attended his ministry, highly creditable to them, and happily illustrating the beauty and importance of permanent pastoral relation. Now, late in the evening of his life, in the eighty-sixth year of his age, after having been permitted to enjoy, in connection with his labors, several revivals of religion, and having buried all but one of those who composed his flock at the time of his installation, and after having seen the children of two generations, baptized with his own hands, succeeding to the places in the church vacated by their fathers, he comes with undiminished regard for his people, and in the unabated enjoyment of their confidence and people, and in the unabated enjoyment of their confidence and affection, to commit his united and happy charge to the care of this body. The Presbytery commend this church for providing that their worthy and venerable pastor may continue to lean on their arm while he lives, and recline on their bosom when he dies, and hope that other churches may follow their example.” (102)

His retirement was not one of inactivity. His name had become a household word throughout the churches of the region, and his services were constantly in demand. He could be found supplying the pulpits of Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist Churches from Pittsgrove to Cape May. And in his own church, his ministry continued. For at least six years he conducted the morning worship service on an average of once a month. (103) At the age of ninety-two, he agreed to preach the final sermon in the Old Stone Church before services were moved to the new building in Fairton. This last occasion of his ascent up the staircase of the pulpit in the seventy year old house of worship was a tremendous emotional experience for all present. In a clear and searching sermon, he reviewed the doctrines he had preached, the repentance toward which he had urged people, and the joy in Christ he longed for them to continue to experience.

“As we expect this to be the last Sabbath on which I shall speak to you from this pulpit, let me say in the presence of God who knows my heart, that I have endeavored and prayed that I might faithfully perform my ministerial duties. Though I am conscious of much imperfection, God is my witness that I have ever preached such doctrine and precepts as I verily believe are agreeable to his word. I have repeatedly said ‘the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.’ With gratitude to God I look back upon the religious revivals with which he has blessed us and the friendly relations which have subsisted between us. It is no small satisfaction that as pastor and people we separated as friends, and that a pleasant intercourse subsists between myself and my successor, your present pastor. Never were the people more dear to me, I shall love them as long as I live.

“Excuse my plainness, and permit me once more to say in the fullness of my feelings, that my heart’s desire and prayer to God for you all is, that you may be saved. As it will not be long before we must each answer to God – I for my ministry, and you for your improvement of it, let us be diligent in what duty remains and in advancing toward heaven. Let brotherly love continue and abound, until it shall be perfected in the heavenly kingdom. And may God prepare us all to meet in heaven! I now bid you a cordial farewell, praying that it may fare well with you in this world, in blessings of health and prosperity, as far as shall be for God’s glory and your own good, and that in the future world, entered with your blessed Saviour into the joy of your Lord, you may FARE WELL.” (104)

Though he continued to preach on occasion for the people in their new sanctuary in Fairton, ever greater distances of time separated those treasured services. His final sermon was in the summer of 1855, at the age of ninety seven. (105)

The last few years of his life witnessed a rapid decay of his mental powers. His memory failed him to the point that he sometimes lost recollections of closest friends and events immediately past.

“He would sometimes perform family worship twice in the morning, and I believe in some cases a third time, forgetting that it had been observed at all. It is however a striking index to the state of his heart, that his memory of worship was never treacherous in the opposite direction. He never forgot to observe family devotions.” (106)

Those who visited with him may have entered distressed over his mental weaknesses and inability to enter into the activities of life around him. But they departed amazed at the contentment of his soul, seemingly lost in a spiritual world all his own. He could be found sitting or walking, “singing some happy song of Zion, or relating some sweet experience, talking always of mercies, and wondering how any can complain when God is so good.” (107)

In the winter of 1857-1858, revival broke out again. The aged saint was alert enough to understand the reports he heard and to devote himself even more enthusiastically to private prayer that God might be pleased to call many of the unconverted to Himself. Osborn was even revived himself temporarily by his new concerns. He seldom left the house, but a fresh mental keenness manifested itself. His last church appearance was related to this revival. In the last year of his life he attended a service at the “White Church” (later named the Osborn Memorial Presbyterian Church) in Cedarville. Between one hundred fifty and two hundred young converts were assembled for a special service. After the sermon by one of several ministers present, Osborn was asked and agreed to add a final exhortation and closing prayer. One of those ministers present recorded his impressions.

“He seemed like an old veteran commander in the army, taking a view of the recruits just entering the service for King Immanuel. He reminded them it was a service for life, and their warfare would not be done until they obtained their crown. In such a manner he spoke, and then prayed God that they might be faithful unto death.” (108)

The time of his death had arrived. His niece, who had for many years been as his own daughter in her constant love and attention to his needs, was present during his last week. Her letter, to Rev. Robert Osborn, is a most beautiful account of Ethan Osborn’s departure from this life to the home prepared for him by his Saviour. A summary of its

contents could never do justice to the sentiments associated with the event. It must be read in its entirety.

“MY DEAR COUSIN, — It appears to me like months instead of weeks, since I stood by the dying bed of my ever dear uncle, and saw him draw his last breath. Of how little importance did the world then appear to me! He had so long been the object of constant care and solicitude, the centre of all my thoughts and labors, that it almost seemed that there was nothing left for me to live for; and I still feel an indescribable dreariness that none can realize who have not felt the same. I am glad it is not wrong to weep, and I can at times rejoice that his glorified spirit is free, no longer cramped and bound by the frail tenement that had borne the trails of almost an hundred years. But he was so ripe for heaven and enjoyed such a blessed nearness to the Saviour, and was so abundant in prayer, that although for him to depart and be with Christ was far better yet his death has left a void that no common Christian can fill.

“How I wish you could have been with us the day before he was taken down. I shall always feel thankful for the privilege of being with him when he had, (as I believe,) a view and foretaste of heaven. He had passed a night of suffering. In the morning he slept till ten o’clock. When he awoke he was all life and animation, and his whole appearance was changed. He had been so long confined, mostly to the house, that his complexion had become very fair and clear. Now, his face was full, without a wrinkle, his eyes sparkled, he walked erect; the stoop in his shoulders was all gone — his appearance was beautiful. He came out of his room singing words that I never heard him sing before, ‘O happy! O happy! My happy, happy home!’ then spake in a loud clear voice, ‘O what a glorious King is Jesus! The martyr Stephen saw Heaven opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.’ He than spoke of the glories of Heaven as described in the Revelation. After repeating the passages — ‘and there shall be no night there; they stood on a sea of glass; they sang the Song of Moses and the Lamb; and after speaking in the same strain a longtime, he sang —

‘O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like me God,’ &c

“I could but look and listen almost spell-bound, and the words ‘They shall flourish in immortal youth,’ were constantly in my mind. He took a slight dinner, and then seated in his rocking chair, with his head resting on the back of it, and eyes fixed upwards, he sang songs of praise most of the afternoon, without the least apparent fatigue; not low, humming, but loud and clear, ringing sweetly through all the house, and heard distinctly at the barn.

“When asked to supper, he said, ‘Yes, willingly and thankfully.’ He wheeled round his chair, asked a blessing and then sang —

‘My flesh shall slumber in the ground
Till the last trumpet’s joyful sound;
Then burst the chains with sweet surprise,
And in my Saviour’s image rise.’

“It was the first time he had sung that verse, though the preceding ones he had repeated often. He took supper with a good appetite, and in the evening asked us to sing –

‘How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord.’

“He attended family prayer three times, and went to bed apparently in good health. He was awake most of the night, but did not suffer as usual.

“Next day he slept till noon, took a little dinner – then slept again. At three o’clock I found he was unwell, and called the Doctor, who was very attentive to the last. About midnight he expressed his belief that he would soon leave us and be with the Saviour, where there is ‘fullness of joy.’ He gave me his last charge to trust in the Lord, look to Him and He would not forsake me. These were his last connected words. But let me pass over those two days and a half. Suffice it to say, ‘he was made perfect through suffering,’ and left us at noon on Saturday!

‘Servant of God, well done!

Praise be thy sweet employ.’” (109)

Five days after his death, a funeral was held such as the residents of Cumberland County have never before nor since witnessed. Reports of it were carried not only in local papers but also in Philadelphia. The Bridgeton Chronicle included several full pages covering the funeral and memorabilia about Osborn’s life. Scores of carriages coming from Bridgeton, Cedarville, Deerfield, Greenwich, Hopewell, Millville, and Newport, clogged the roads to the Old Stone Church. The building was jammed long before the funeral procession itself arrived. By all estimates, over fifteen hundred persons were present for the services honoring the venerable old saint. The church accommodates only slightly more than three hundred. With windows open to receive the crisp spring air, well over a thousand people stood outside, straining to hear the words being spoken inside. A special platform had been built at the front of the church. Seventeen ministers, of different denominations, were present to share in the service. A former pastor of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church, Beriah Hotchkin, preached a sermon based on II Kings 2:2, “And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more; and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two places.” The pastor of the church at that time, Rev. James Boggs, also preached. His sermon was taken from Proverbs 10:7, “The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot.” (110) The congregation took some time to file past the open casket before it was taken outside to be interred in a grave immediately behind the building.

On August 21, 1858, services were held again at the site of his burial, while his memory was still fresh in their minds. On that day, the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, a monument was placed over his grave. It is a shaft, ten feet in height, made of Italian marble. Inscriptions on its four sides commemorate his life and ministry.

FRONT – “Erected August 21st, 1858, to the memory of Rev. Ethan Osborn, born in Litchfield, Conn., August 21, 1758; died full of faith, and in the hope of a joyful resurrection, May 1, 1858, aged 99 years 8 months and 10 days.

RIGHT SIDE – “Graduated at Dartmouth, 1784, licensed 1786, called to Fairfield 1788, ordained 1789, and resigned his charge 1844, having been pastor of this Church 55 years.

REAR – “A soldier of the Revolution, a good man, a faithful minister of the Gospel.

LEFT SIDE – “He obeyed the command – ‘Go preach my Gospel.’ His children in the flesh and in the spirit lie around him.” (111)

A eulogy was delivered by Judge Lucius Elmer and an address was presented by Rev. N. C. Burt.

Osborn’s family included thousands whose lives he had touched on behalf of his Saviour. Many enjoyed his company in visits to his home, always open to callers who wished to receive his cordial greetings. It was said to be “A centre of attraction for some of the best society in Cumberland and the adjacent Counties, who sought it, not for its hospitality alone, but for the impressions of tranquillity which they were sure to carry away.” (112)

His own family included eight children, only three of whom survived him. His first wife was Elizabeth Riley, born near Bridgeton on January 30, 1775. They were married on September 18, 1794. Their children were Anna (1795), Betsey (1797), Ruth (1799), Ethan (1801), John Elmer (1803), Mary (1805), Harriet Seymoure (1810), and Robert (1813). Ethan died in 1811, Harriet in 1816. Robert became a minister. Father Osborn’s wife through these years died at age forty-two, on October 9, 1817. He remarried on May 8, 1822. His second wife, Ester Foster, of Pittsgrove, was born in 1785. She died on June 7, 1835. (113)

A cousin of Osborn’s, Luila, composed a poem at the time of his death expressing the affection of his own family.

Go care-worn soldier to thy rest,
Thine earthly race is run;
In heaven thou art forever blest,
With Christ, thy father’s son.

The morning dawns, the victory’s won,
Of freedom’s joyous band;
Of happy Sons, thou too art one,
To hail dear freedom’s land.

For ninety-nine long weary years
This sin stained earth thou’st trod;
And watered well with many tears,
the seed thou’st sowed for God.

Late in the morning of thy life,
Warned by a Saviour’s voice;
Thou left the scenes of warlike strife,
And made a heavenly choice.

While young in years with manly zeal,
Thou trod the battle field;
For freedom’s cause thy country’s weal
Thou bore the sword or shield.

A minister of gospel grace,
To bear the holy word;
Started anew thy earthly race,
To labor for thy Lord.

‘Mid toils of war and scenes of strife,
Undaunted still thou sent;
‘Tho all the morning of thy life,
In tumults sore were spent.

Watering with tears the precious seed,
Rejoicing thou shalt come;
Bearing on faith the well filled sheaves,
Thy father greets thee home.

Thou braved the terrors of disease,
And held by angels power;
Thou stood the storm of many a siege,
Unhurt in dangers hour.

Beloved in life and blessed in death,
Thy works of faith and love;
Shall point us from the scenes of death,
To that pure home above.

Thou'st reached the goal, the stream is passed,
Of Jordan's swelling flood;
In heaven thou'rt safely housed at last,
To sweetly rest at last.

B. PERIODS OF REVIVAL [1809 to 1844]

In an age today when revivals are highly organized, carefully scheduled, tightly budgeted, and commercially advertised, it is not easy to enter into the spirit of those saints of past ages who spent years in prayer that God would send revival. Such outpourings of evangelistic fervor were not the result of wise church strategy. When they came, people rejoiced at the mysteries being unfolded before their eyes. Revivals were not confined to a week of evening sermons and morning Bible studies. They continued for months at a time. The results were long visible in the drastic and lasting increases in numbers of converts and new church members.

There had been revival in the Fairfield Presbyterian Church before. After the tense years of Elmer's ministry, when the church was divided over the issue of revivalism itself, Ramsey's labors saw a powerful increase of spiritual interest intensified in the year 1765. That year, membership doubled. It continued into 1766. Recollections of such a wonderful season must have remained in the church. Godly members and pastors had earnestly prayed ever since that God would open the heavens again to pour out His Spirit on His elect at Fairfield. With a new church in 1780, new growth in membership in 1781 and a new pastor in 1789, hopes must have been high through the last ten years of the eighteenth century. But the first twenty years of Osborn's ministry passed with nothing out of the ordinary in the way of spiritual prosperity. In 1790, the church's membership stood at one hundred and twenty-five. In April 1809, there were one hundred and twenty-four. Gains and losses had counter-balanced each other almost perfectly, keeping the roll constant. Osborn analyzed this as a sign of stability.

"Regular discipline in the church was kept up, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered. Members of the church very generally walked in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. Small additions were made to the church from time to time, so that the number remained nearly the same." (114)

It has long been recognized that genuine revival is the result of two factors. The first is the sovereign will and power of God. Over this, man has no control. But the second is within man's hand to do, indeed by divine command. Revival is almost always preceded by careful attention to the Scriptures, through personal study and the preaching of the word, and by intense devotion to prayer. Such was the case at Fairfield. Osborn began having a monthly meeting with several other ministers in 1806, and four of them exchanged pulpits with some regularity for special Tuesday services. On occasion, they even preached extended series of services, on consecutive days in a particular location. (115)

Finally it happened. Osborn reported it with great joy.

"Through the summer and fall of 1809, a general awakening to the concerns of the eternal world prevailed among the people. Conferences or prayer meetings were held in different parts of the congregation, not less than six or seven evenings in the week. It was truly a revival time, both to

saints and sinners; the spirit of grace was poured upon each; some were severely experienced and brought into deep distress. Others were exercised in mild manner. Though there were diverse operations, yet the same God wrought in all. In a few months a considerable number entertained a hope, and, thanks to God! He continued His gracious work for many months. On December 3d, 1809, just twenty years from my ordination, twenty-four were admitted to the church. In April, 1810, thirty were admitted to full communion. In August following, twenty-seven more, and small numbers at the two communions following, so that in the space of two years there were added to this church one hundred and twelve. The Lord hath done great things for us, and blessed be His name. Though various means were used, yet it was evident the excellency of the power was of God and not of man. This appears from the great change wrought, and the good fruit following. Though I was not idle during the revival, yet it seemed as if I was a spectator, beholding the wonderful operation of divine grace convincing and converting sinners.

My brethren of the session were long and diligent in prayer and religious conversation, and perhaps I may have aided, in some measure, the good work of the Lord. But I was only one among a multitude of agents who were active in the same employ. Truly my soul rejoiced to see many return unto the Lord and enlist under the banner of King Jesus.” (116)

Such an event must have captured the attention of everyone in the area. The prayer meetings which were held through the time of revival would certainly have been the source of much praise to a Lord who had so wonderfully visited His church. But the blessings had only barely begun.

In the spring of 1819, a prayer meeting was begun in Sayre’s Neck. Fervent prayer by those who met regularly in a home there resulted in another outpouring of revival. This second season of blessing during Osborn’s ministry lasted into the next year. In August of 1819, seventeen new members were received. In December, twenty-one presented themselves. And seventeen more were admitted to the communion services of the next year. (117) This addition of fifty in less than two years was most dramatic and appreciated by an excited congregation.

Heightened spiritual interest continued until 1826 when a third revival broke out. The first had begun in Cedarville the second in Sayre’s Neck, and now this third commenced in Fairton. A new weekly prayer meeting was begun there on Sunday evenings. Osborn participated in it.

“When I went to the first, I was pleasantly surprised to find the house full of people, and an unusual solemnity seemed to pervade the assembly. The exercises were serious and impressive; many were awakened and some alarmed.” (118)

Osborn recalled one young man who had attended one of these meetings. While on his way home, this fellow “felt such a burden of guilt that he could hardly move along. He said it seemed every moment as if the lightning would strike him. After going along a while he knelt down by the fence and prayed . . .” (119) The conversions occurred as intensely emotional events for many. They were not produced by dramatic pleas from the pulpit. They came from private agonizing over the guilt of sin.

Communion services through the revival months were harvest seasons for the church. Each celebration of the sacrament was accompanied by the joyful reception of new members. In December, 1826, nine were admitted. April 1827, saw fifty-one new members. In August of that year, twenty-eight more were received. The session noted their "thanks to God for his continued shower of grace." (120)

A fourth period of revival began in 1831. On April 3rd, nine professed their faith in Christ. On the following December 4th, twenty-four stood to join the fellowship of the church. Osborn recalled, "This was truly a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Christians rejoiced and were animated by seeing numbers brought into the kingdom of grace." (121)

The fifth revival was the most powerful of all. It commenced in 1836, the year that David McKee was called as a co-pastor with Osborn. Though it did not last as long as previous seasons, it was the climax of the prayers for divine intercession. Numerous prayer meetings were held throughout the township. Conversions were reported almost continually, especially among young people.

"On the sixth of August, 1836, (that memorable day when this house was filled with a crowded audience, so numerous as never was, nor ever will be in it,) on that day sixty-one stood up before the pulpit on the left, and in the presence of God and his people solemnly professed their faith in Christ, acknowledging the Lord Jehovah to be their God, and promised to walk in his commandments and statutes blameless. That was a time long to be remembered, and remembered with gratitude and praise to God, for the wonders of his grace. It seemed as if we were near the Millennium, when all the people shall be righteous. Peace and brotherly love seemed to pervade the whole church and congregation. During the revival, (which was of shorter continuance than either of the preceding,) not far from eighty were admitted to the church. The whole number of communicants belonging to the church was more than three hundred and thirty." (122)

It was not long after this that the Old Stone/New School controversies intruded into the church. The long-considered establishment of a sister church in Cedarville now came about, taking many of Osborn's members. Though division in a church is never a happy occasion, yet there is satisfaction in the birth of another congregation. The new church was to meet very real needs for people who now resided in Cedarville, and found it inconvenient to travel to the Old Stone Church for worship.

Yet, the Lord was not through adding to the mother church. In Osborn's final year of ministry as pastor of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church, 1844, at the age of eighty-six, it was his pleasure to welcome twenty new members to the Lord's Table. (123) During his pastorate, he has "received upwards of six hundred members into his church to full communion, baptized 1118, married 715 couples, and officiated at the funeral of 1611 persons. After his pastorate closed he baptized 8 more, married ten couples and officiated at 55 funerals." (124)

C. CHURCH DISCIPLINE [1759 to 1844]

A primary activity of the elders of the church was the faithful exercise of discipline. A watchful eye had to be kept over the lives of members to discern and deal

with their transgressions of the laws of God so as to lead them through loving admonition back to a holy life. Session records are lost prior to 1759. But from that year through the completion of Osborn's ministry in 1844, the minutes of the session are filled with accounts of their dealings. In fact, they reflect the performance of basically only two tasks: the examination of candidates for membership and the disciplining of church members for their moral offenses.

After examining the variety of offenses dealt with by the session, one cannot help wondering about the manner in which cases were brought to the elders. In some instances it appears that guilt led the parties involved to voluntarily present themselves to confess their faults. In other instances, charges were made by others who had witnessed the questioned act. Without doubt there must have been many occasions in which general rumors alerted the elders. On their own initiative they seem to have investigated many cases.

Drunkenness (uniformly labeled intoxication after 1797) was the crime dealt with in twenty five of the cases during these years. Sometimes this surely would have been the result (as in the present day) of male gatherings at a tavern (such as one reportedly frequented by pirates across the river in Greenwich) after a tiring day of labor in the fields or glass factories. Other times were likely the result of small, unplanned gatherings in private homes. Yet others were lone drinkers whose problems would today be diagnosed as chronic alcoholism. Such appears to have been the case with David Hustead, Sr., who appeared before the session in 1759, 1761, 1762, 1763, 1764, and 1767. During these years, despite apparent seasons of repentance and genuine attempts at personal reclamation, he lapsed again and again into his old habits. Drunkenness was also the problem dealt with in a series of sessions with Samuel Hustead (perhaps David's son), in 1770 and 1771. Without doubt, the offensiveness of the drunkenness was often compounded by the behavior that accompanied it. Charges of drunkenness recorded in session records were often joined with charges that the individual was at the same time guilty of "other vices of unchristian conduct," "behaving very unchristianly in a public tavern," "very obscene behaviour," or "very profane and wicked language."

Sexual immorality was not unknown within the community. Public standards certainly must have served to restrain more bizarre activity so commonly reported today. The only charge of this nature to be brought repeatedly before the session was that of fornication. Twenty-four individuals answered to such charges before their elders. Almost all of these occurred in 1781, the year after the Old Stone Church was completed. Many were husband and wife at the time their cases were heard. One possible explanation is that in the process of preparations for marriage, perhaps in counseling with Hollingshead, the truth emerged that their passions had not known the patience expected of an engaged couple. Or it may have been that guilt increased from their courtship days until, after marriage, they felt compelled to find release from the burden of their wrongdoing by confessing to their pastor what they had done. This was not the case with all. In 1789, a widow was charged with fornication "with aggravation." In 1812 it was a matter of "gross violation of the seventh commandment." And in 1843 it was "adultery in the first degree."

Other offences of a religious nature appear occasionally in cases brought to the attention of the session. The two most frequently heard were inattendance at public worship and Sabbath-breaking. In 1759, Jacob Robbison was excommunicated for "repeated criminal neglect of the public worship and ordinances of God's house." Two years later Jeremiah Nixon and his son were cautioned for travelling on the Lord's Day. The son was before the session ten years later for "unnecessary and avoidable Sabbath

breaking.” He had driven cattle up from Cape May. In 1797, separate charges included Sabbath breaking, being absent from the Lord’s Supper, and not presenting children for baptism. And in 1841, eight men were excommunicated at a single meeting for “failing to attend worship and schism.”

Civil offenses were also treated by the elders of the church. A variety of personal charges found their way to the court of the church. Incidents of fraud, forgery, lying, and physical abuse were handled. Widow Sayres accused Robert Low of not keeping a just bargain with her in 1762. After examining the matter, the session “found nothing worthy of censure.” The Nixon family was plagued with quarrels in their home in 1766. The session felt that the wife was the chief cause and suspended her. In 1778, Elizabeth Westcott was charged by Thomas Ogden of having beaten his wife, Nancy. The session found Elizabeth guilty of the charge. But she refused to show any repentance and was suspended. In 1781, it was the Nixons again. Hanna had to be reprimanded by the session for calling Mrs. Elmer (probably an elder’s wife) a liar and threatening to send her “the privates of the boar.”

A variety of other offences occurred only occasionally. These include session action for profanity, bigamy, obscene behavior, breach of promise, and even joining the Baptists!

It is heartening to find a balance in the actions taken by the elders during these years. Thirty-seven individuals were censured by admonition, warning, or direction to offer public confession. Twenty-three were suspended for a time, many being later restored. And twenty-three were excommunicated (but eight of these occurred at one meeting in 1841). The elders did not demonstrate an inclination to go overboard with their authority. Neither were they timid in taking strong action if warranted. Most were warned. More serious cases were the object of suspension. And only those who obstinately refused to repent were excommunicated.

Through the actions recorded, a patience is demonstrated that speaks well of their imitation of Christ. If there was some question about the genuineness of the charges, the session was quite willing to postpone any action until all pertinent evidence could be presented. If there was a need to hear other witnesses, they were summoned to present their testimony. If, in the elders’ estimation, there seemed great probability that repentance would be forthcoming if sufficient and reasonable time were allowed, they were willing to delay inflicting censures already agreed upon. And throughout the minutes of their meetings for discipline, they seem with commendable frequency to have brought up for review those cases where reformation had been hoped for, despite previous censure by those very elders.

The forms in which disciplinary action was taken provide solid evidence to the church’s conscious adherence to the Westminster standards in their government and discipline. Admonition, suspension, and excommunication were the formal decrees pronounced by the session (except in later years when the last of these was spoken of in terms of persons “excluded” from the church). The terms match perfectly the stages of discipline set forth in Chapter XXX of their Westminster Confession of Faith.

The admonition given by the session took a number of forms. If it seemed though the offenders were guilty, yet that they were quite willing to admit their wrong-doing and were genuinely intending to desist from the offensive activity, then the session frequently acknowledged these circumstances and directed the individuals to make public confession of their sin. It appears that most of the time, the person was to consider himself suspended until such confession had been made, but that suspension was

automatically lifted as soon as such satisfaction had been made. On other occasions, solemn admonition, severe warnings, and earnest caution were issued when the session was in doubt of the genuineness of the repentance offered.

Suspension was frequently ordered, but most often only until public confession had been made, life had been reformed, or satisfaction had been made to the one who had suffered from the offense. It is encouraging to note instances of formal sessional removal of suspension and restoration of one whose case had been reviewed and found acceptable. It does not seem that any pattern exists of certain offenses meriting only admonition and others meriting suspension. Drunkenness resulted in a warning to some, suspension for others. Fornication was satisfied by the confession of some, and the suspension of others. One is left to conclude that the attitude of the offender played the dominant role in the session's decision of the form of discipline to be used.

Despite the seriousness of excommunication, the session showed no hesitancy to invoke it when they felt they had to for the sake of the offender or the honor of the church of Jesus Christ. The elders do seem to have been more willing to impose it toward the end of the period. Most decrees of excommunication (including those of individuals "excluded") took place from 1828 to 1843. The use of the decree in earlier years was largely involved with the on-again, off-again excommunication of David Hustead, Sr. Hustead's case clearly shows what was probably a regular pattern for excommunication's imposition, and perhaps even with admonition and suspension. At one point in the session's protracted dealings with Hustead, a date was set for the reading of the Solemn Decree of Exclusion in the hearing of all at a public worship service.

D. DIVISIONS AND MOVES [1838 to 1850]

Long before the decision was made to move the church location into Fairton, residents of the township had begun to build homes in this community and also in the town of Cedarville. Consideration was given spasmodically to the need for a church nearer to the place where most people had made their permanent dwelling.

On September 13, 1818, a Sabbath School was organized in the "Friendship" schoolhouse on the south side of the dam in Cedarville. Two to three hours of instruction was given each Sunday afternoon. One hundred and ninety youths were in classes as it commenced. Ethan Osborn was part of a twelve member committee which supervised the operation and took turns providing the instruction. Great emphasis was placed on Scripture and Catechism memorization. One girl was reported to have learned one thousand to twelve hundred verses per week, "studying by the light of the moon." (125)

Long-felt desires and needs for a Presbyterian Church there was brought to a head in 1838. Doctrinal dissension in the denomination was responsible for a rift in the Fairfield Presbyterian Church. The Plan of Union of 1801 between the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Church had not proved to be a totally satisfactory arrangement for either denomination. Presbyterians, especially, were disturbed by it and General Assemblies for many years debated aspects of it. Unitarianism was reportedly on the rise in New England Congregationalists. Cooperation in the establishment of new churches on the frontier could not be supervised as closely as many Presbyterians desired. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the new "Presbygationalism." Overall, an attitude of doctrinal carelessness for the sake of

cooperation pervaded ecclesiastical relations. This was a cause of great anxiety to many Presbyterians concerned about the possibility of their church drifting from its once secure moorings to the historic Reformed faith of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. Their views dominated the General Assembly of 1837. The 1801 Plan of Union was declared null and void. The Presbyterians withdrew from their awkward relation with the Congregationalists. But this action was effected in such a way as to cause bitter feelings within the Presbyterian Church. Opposition to the Assembly's action of 1837 was smothered at the 1838 Assembly as that court excluded a sizeable number of the ministers and Presbyteries who disagreed with the abrogation of the Plan of Union. Opinions were hardened and the two parties (now virtually two denominations) held clearly opposite views about the doctrines and practices involved. "New School" Presbyterians regretted the 1837 rescinding of the Union, believing that there was much to gain from continued joint efforts with the Congregationalists. "Old School" Presbyterians were relieved to be free from a connection they judged too costly. Their church had been jeopardized and their theology compromised. They viewed the action of 1837 as the salvation of the faith. (126)

Ethan Osborn was of the New School views. So were the majority of his elders and slightly more than half of his congregation. But the minority was sufficiently large and convinced of the importance of its Old School conservatism that thirty-five withdrew from the Old Stone Church. It was not an action taken with anger. By 1880, this was no longer even described as the primary reason for the separation.

"There were many people living in that neighborhood who belonged to the Stone Church. The distance was considerable to walk (and there were many who did walk), and it was for these reasons chiefly that there were thoughts of the formation of a new church in that neighborhood, and steps in that direction were taken." (127)

The new church was organized on October 23, 1838, with thirty-nine signatures on the petition. Rev. George W. Janvier officiated and preached from Exodus 25:8, "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." Rev. David McKee, the co-pastor of the Old Stone Church, preached for them for a time, but was not called as their pastor.

"His sympathies, however, were with the Old School, and it was probably for this reason that he did not remain in connection with the Stone Church, and his recent connection with that might give a sufficient reason to a Christian why he should not become the pastor of another Church which was a branch of the old vine planted in the neighborhood." (128)

McKee had informed the Fairfield Church in July that he intended to leave. His preaching at the new church in Cedarville was apparently a temporary haven until he could secure another call.

By 1839, the Cedarville congregation had called as its pastor Rev. Richard Curran. They affiliated with the Presbytery of Philadelphia, an Old School Presbytery. In 1841, a brick church was constructed. The church reported regular growth, including considerable numbers of transfers from the Fairfield Church. Their next minister was Rev. Thomas W. Cattell. He remained for a little more than three years until September, 1851. During his ministry, the church transferred to the Presbytery of West Jersey and enlarged its building by an addition of twenty feet. Rev. J.A. Annin began laboring with them on September 19, 1852 and continued there for fourteen years. Under his ministry,

growth continued until by 1869 the church was able to report two hundred and twenty members. (129)

While doctrinal differences were the chief cause of the organization of the First Presbyterian Church of Cedarville, practical considerations were the occasion for the organization of the Second Church. The first page of its session minutes records the reason given by the church.

“A considerable portion of the people of Cedarville and vicinity, connected with the Presbyterian Church and congregation of Fairfield, under the pastoral charge of Rev. Ethan Osborn, having for a long time desired to have a Presbyterian Church established in that village, and concluding that the time had arrived that it should be brought about; did, according to previous public notice from the pulpit on the Sabbath previous, hold a meeting in the church at Cedarville, on the evening of the 17th of August, 1838, to consult about the propriety of having a church organized at that place, and to adopt measures for that purpose.” (130)

Though doctrinal convictions had not been responsible for their departure from the Old Stone Church, such had been the reason they were not affiliating with the recently established First Presbyterian Church of Cedarville. They were New School. The Cedarville Church already begun was Old School.

Sixty people signed a petition to the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia that a church be established for them. On November 5, 1838 the service was held with Rev. Robert W. Landis presiding. Their first minister was Rev. Alexander Porter of Philadelphia. He remained only three months. In 1840. Rev. A. G. Morse began a three year relation as stated supply, lasting until July 1843. For two years, various ministers preached for them. Then on November 19, 1845, Rev. Beriah B. Hotchkin was installed by the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia. He was to serve as pastor of both the Fairfield and the Cedarville congregations. The latter was known at the time as the Second Presbyterian Church of Fairfield. It was in 1870 that it was renamed by the Presbytery of West Jersey as the Second Presbyterian Church of Cedarville. (131) Later still it was named the Osborn Memorial Presbyterian Church. Dwindling membership has led to its since being dissolved, while the First Presbyterian Church there continues with an active ministry.

Following Ethan Osborn's retirement in 1844, the Old Stone Church commenced a search for a new minister. On November 19, 1845, an installation service for Rev. Beriah B. Hotchkin was held. He was to serve both the Fairfield Church and the Second Church of Cedarville. He resided part of the time in Cedarville and part of the time in Fairton. The mother church did not experience anything like the growth and revival under Osborn's ministry. Regular worship and discipline were maintained, but no outstanding seasons were reported. “An unpleasantness and want of harmony in the session the pastor regarded as a hindrance to spiritual growth.” (132)

With such great reductions in membership as had occurred from 1838 and with the focus of the community centering more and more in Fairton, discussions were renewed regarding the relocation of worship there. A preliminary meeting was held in December, 1846. No decision was reached and the matter was resigned to private contemplation for the next year and a half. On March 16, 1848, the church officially decided, by a vote of ten to two, to commit themselves to relocating in Fairton. (133) Donations were to be solicited to cover the cost of the new building. On April 5, 1849,

having received donations amounting to \$1687, the congregation set their plans in motion.

“Resolved, that the meeting proceed to appoint a building committee and that said committee proceed as soon as possible to the erection of a church edifice in Fairton with such means as are now subscribed together with such additional subscriptions as they may be able to obtain.

“Resolved, that the building committee should consist of two. The following persons were chosen. Viz - John Trenchard and Theo. E. Harris.

“Resolved, that the following instructions be given to the building committee.

1st To build the church as near the centre of the village as they can obtain ground.

2nd That they should have an end gallery in said church.

3rd That there should be no vestibule.” (134)

A lot was contributed by John Trenchard. He and Theophilus Harris, the building committee, reported on March 29, 1850, that the building had been completed. Total cost had been approximately \$2500. At the final service in the Old Stone Church, Osborn preached. In April, worship was transferred to Fairton and pews were rented.

Leaving the Old Stone Church could not have been an easy thing for many of the older members. Their memories of events associated with it would have been yet fresh and powerful, producing a mixed happiness at the news that the new church was ready for occupancy. Later, at the service commemorating one hundred years since the building of the Old Stone Church, Francis de Haes Janvier offered poetic tribute to it.

THE OLD STONE CHURCH, time-worn and gray,
Survives, though, since its natal day,
A hundred years have passed away!

Still stands, while those who planned and reared,
Its walls, have long since disappeared;
A sacred shrine, beloved, revered.

With hallowed memories running o'er,
With visions of the times of yore,
Dear to each heart forevermore.

And with them comes the kindly face
Of one whose life we fondly trace—
A Pastor, full of heavenly grace.

A youth when, in those distant days,
He led the flock in Wisdom's ways,
With words of love, and prayer and praise.

And still, through half a century
Of sweet devotion, lived to be
A Father in God's ministry.

Till, with the weight of years oppressed,
His mission closed – accepted, blest,
He tranquilly lay down to rest.

And reunited now with those
Who, gathered here, these graves enclose,
The Pastor and his flock repose.

But the archangel's trump shall sound,
And God Himself rend every mound
Within this silent burial ground.

Then shall the dead awake, and be
Redeemed from death's deep mystery
To life and immortality!

The fathers sleep, but what they wrought,
The faith and love their lives have taught,
Survive the changes time has brought.

And cherished with their memory,
Prized as a precious legacy—
THE OLD STONE CHURCH shall ever be.
(135)

PART THREE: STABILITY [1850 to 1970]

A. Life In Fairton [1850 to 1900]

Fairfield's original settlers in the late seventeenth century had located on land surrounding the New England Towne crossroads, so named for the intersection of the road from Back Neck to Maurice River with the road from Cohansey Bridge (Bridgeton) to Cedar Creek (Cedarville). The Harrises and Ogdens from Connecticut and the Batemans and Diaments from Long Island built homes and cleared land for farming along the Cohansey River.

Early survey work to establish clear titles for property holders was considerably less than successful. Land Surveys were made for Helby and Bellers. Helby's surveys caused no difficulties, but Bellers's work left many disappointed settlers. He had grandiose plans for himself, including the desire to establish himself as lord of a great manor in America, much like those scattered across the English countryside. When he died in 1724, the properties he had surveyed were tied up by his creditors. Subsequent surveys revealed that several families had apparently good claims to the same parcels of land.

As late as 1801, titles were still unsettled in many instances. Benjamin Chew was sent from Philadelphia to represent the Bellers estate in an attempt to claim much of the land in question on behalf of Bellers's descendants. When word of his intentions reached the area, infuriated settlers threatened to cut off the tail of his horse if he dared make an appearance. Later, another representative of the estate was sent to accomplish the same purpose. This time the residents of the community made plans to hang him. His hasty retreat to Millville assured his safety and calmed the nerves of the residents. Finally, court action in 1806 rejected Bellers's claims and insured clear titles for homes and farms.

The establishment of recognizable communities such as Fairton and Cedarville was a gradual process that began not too long after the initial New England Crossroad settlement. By 1702, Fairton's first mill was in operation. In that year, Samuel Fithian willed it to his son, John. After his death it passed into the hands of John Ogden who operated it until his death in 1745. From his son, Thomas, it passed to Joseph Ogden, who died in 1772. Prior to 1763, it was moved to a new site when the mill dam was changed. In 1843, John Trenchard secured ownership of the dam and rebuilt on the present location on the Bridgeton-Fairton road. The raceway was completed in 1846. Theophilus Trenchard assumed control in 1862. A full roller process was utilized in the mill's three stories. Twenty bushels of feed and one and one-half barrels of flour could be produced each hour. The mill employed four men and used two double teams and one single team for hauling its products.

And other small industries grew up in the area of the mill, it was only natural as more and more homes would be built in the area. It was a very advantageous location for a community. The Cohansey River makes a 90-degree turn on its path from Bridgeton to the Delaware Bay. Spring-fed streams flow together through what is today known as Clark's Pond to join the Cohansey at its bend; the river is easily navigable to this point. Dwellings and businesses were conveniently located on the high bluffs on the east bank of the Cohansey.

Before dams were built across the streams, forming the picturesque ponds now in Fairton, a meandering stream wound through the lowlands past the mill. The name Mill Creek was a natural choice. Its course proceeded until it joined with another creek at the bend in the river. Its partner was known as Rattlesnake Gut or Run. A bridge carried traffic across Mill Creek at the mill. Local tradition preserves the memory of a "bum" who fell from the bridge after imbibing in an area tavern.

Supposedly, this incident provided the town with the name by which it was known in 1779, Bumbridge. The name Fairton was given to it when the postal service brought a Post Office to the town. James Clark served as its first Postmaster. (136)

Development proceeded more and more rapidly through the nineteenth century. Other churches had been organized. Across the river in Greenwich, Presbyterians, Quakers, and Baptists worshipped. The old Cohansey Baptist church which had first met in Back Neck had by now moved to its present location northwest of Bridgeton. Methodists were residing in Fairton and needing a church of their own.

On September 21, 1783, Francis Asbury, pioneer Methodist preacher in the colonies, attempted to bring a sermon to residents at New England Towne. His journal records a most unpleasant reception provided by the people of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church.

"I had a wild chase — first, to New Englandtown; but their minister had warned the people against hearing us: thence to Cohansey (Bridgeton); here Mr. Vantull (another Presbyterian minister) had appointed to preach at the same hour, although my appointment had been given out some time before; arriving, however, before him, I preached in the court house — and cleared out; those who remained met with hard blows."

In 1786, when Asbury returned to New Englandtown, William Hollingshead was no longer pastor. The Fairfield Presbyterian Church was without a minister. This visit is recorded by Asbury with joy as being considerably more profitable. It was Sunday, October 8, 1786. He writes: "At New England Town we had a small house and a large congregation. I had liberty in preaching on 'By grace are ye saved through faith.'" By 1791, the results of his ministry were evident in the organization of a Methodist Society here under the direction of Michael Swing, who was subsequently ordained to serve as pastor.

On January 5, 1819, the Methodist congregation voted to erect a house for worship on property adjoining the Presbyterian cemetery on Back Neck Road. This first building was torn down in 1866, and the present facility was dedicated on January 26, 1867.

In 1869, a school was built for the children of Fairton. The next year, a packing house began operating after Furman Willis's and James McNichols's \$50 investment. It handled beef and pork and grew in the next decade to employ 13 men. Soon after this, Fairton's first glass mill fired up its five pot furnaces. It was located between Rattlesnake Gut and the railroad at the end of Schoolhouse Lane. Originally known as the Gibson-Hilton Glass Company, it was purchased in 1893 by the Cumberland Glass Works in Bridgeton and was removed to Bridgeton with its employees and structures.

A second glassworks operated in Fairton under the ownership of Jonas More. It began as a cooperative venture of three young men. Robert More (a medical student from Jefferson Medical College), his brother Richard More, and George Jonas purchased

three acres of land for their factory. They produced green and amber bottles that are still dug up from the sand by local antiquarians.

The factory prospered. Window glass was produced after 1884, when a new building was added for that product. Expansion included the acquisition of five more acres of land. The window glass division began operating with a capital of \$50,000, half of the company's assets. Two hundred and fifty laborers operated the three furnaces. Railroad tracks into the plant permitted the shipping of 12 tons of glassware each day. A complete organization of the business in 1896 produced a new name: the Jefferis Glass Works. A branch office was opened in Philadelphia.

Fairton's glassworks are only a memory to some of the older residents of the town. In their day, these factories paid high wages to skilled craftsmen who spent their summers at fishing resorts along the shore. There was sufficient business and employment to draw more and more families into the community, and therefore into the two churches now meeting regularly for worship.

Fairton had a second industry supporting its growth in the nineteenth century. Boat-building facilities were to be found in numerous locations along the Cohansey and Maurice Rivers. Fairton got its share of the business after 1868 when Michael Myers set up his own shop here. He had served an apprenticeship with the Rice Ship building Company in Philadelphia. He at first worked under canvas in the yard of his home. The oyster industry in the Delaware Bay provided him with opportunities to repair and construct yawls. For the next 73 years, his boat yard produced round and flat bottom gunning skiffs (for use by hunters in the marshes), sturgeon skiffs, shad boats, and batteaux. The facility closed after the death of his son, Joseph Myer. (137)

The Fairfield Presbyterian Church was keeping apace with the modernization of developments in the region. As factories and homes located in the newly emerging community, so did the congregation. Pastor Hotchkin had brought them to the town. That very year, 1850, saw his departure. He was succeeded by Rev. David C. Meeker, who served in the new church in Fairton from 1851 until 1855.

Housing needs demanded attention from the congregation soon after his arrival. The decision was made to erect a manse for the minister and his family. Land immediately behind the church was designated for that purpose, and in 1853 work was completed on the white frame structure that served [well as the pastor's home for 150 years](#).

Information about Meeker's years of service here is extremely scarce. Either internal problems, difficulties adjusting to life in Fairton, or pastoral ineffectiveness are possible causes for a period of decline. In 1850, there were 167 members reported to the General Assembly. After Meeker's departure in 1856, the roll had declined to 94.

This trend was dramatically reversed during the ministry of Meeker's successor Rev. James Boggs. Born in 1810, Boggs was 47 when he came as pastor of the church. He served from 1857 until 1866, during the agonizing years of Civil War when homes were torn apart by divided loyalties, and the bodies of sons of the congregation were returned for burial in the Old Stone Church cemetery. During his second year in Fairton, a revival appears to have burst with great suddenness and force. In 1858, the membership swelled from 104 to 154. Thirty-three adult baptisms were reported. Membership remained constant throughout the rest of his pastorate.

The Sunday School movement had begun in England almost 100 years earlier. Robert Raikes, a British newspaper editor, was concerned about vast numbers of children laboring long hours in the factories springing up in enormous industrial

districts, working alongside their parents to keep their families from starving. They were growing to maturity with no education at all. Too many of the churches had no interest in them or in the slum ghettos in which they lived. The gospel was not reaching them. They were not to be found in churches on Sunday mornings. In 1780, Raikes began gathering some of these children together on Sunday afternoons for rudimentary training in reading skills. The Bible was a natural choice for a textbook. Dramatic successes led to Sunday Schools springing up all over England and soon even in America.

Fairfield's Sunday School had no place to meet at the Old Stone Church. The schoolhouse in Fairton served on Sunday afternoons during Osborn's ministry. It was while Boggs was here that plans were made to add a "chapel" to the new building in

[[PHOTOS]]

town, a facility that would accommodate children's classes. In 1865, a single large open room was constructed behind the present sanctuary. Classes met simultaneously in different corners of the room. It was nearly 100 years later that this chapel was divided up into separate class areas with an interior hallway and two restrooms.

Boggs married Sarah Orr. Their daughter, Caroline, married Elmer Craig of Daretown, near Salem. The Craigs were members of the Pittsgrove Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Boggs lived with her daughter there for a number of years after Rev. Boggs's death. Another daughter, Mary, married Rev. David Dickson on November 2, 1865. He served as a missionary to the "Freed Men of the South." After Rev. Boggs died in 1888, his body was returned to Fairton for burial in the Old Stone Church yard. Sarah, born in 1814, died in 1908, and was buried beside his grave, as was also their daughter, Mary. Caroline was buried in the yard at the Pittsgrove church.

Hiram Johnson was the sixteenth pastor for the Fairfield Presbyterians. His work lasted only from 1866 to 1869. Gone were the days of lengthy pastorates of twenty, thirty, or forty years. The only record of his work is that which was reported in the annual record submitted by the church to the General Assembly. Worth noting is the year 1868, when 14 adults were baptized, 23 members were received on examination of their profession of faith, and 4 were received by transfer of their membership. But the next year saw only 3 new members.

Samuel R. Jones labored here in the work of the gospel as pastor from 1869 until 1874. The six years of his work have also gone unrecorded in the annals of the church. It may be that he was an elderly, if not retired, minister who served the church during difficult financial times that followed the Civil War. The General Assembly records do not list him as pastor during those years. Instead, they show the church barely holding its own with a stated supply (apparently Rev. Jones).

Better days were to come. In 1875, a call was issued to Mr. Samuel Rutherford Anderson to preach the Word from this pulpit. He accepted the call, and labored until 1883. He was a Canadian, born December 7, 1836 in Pictou, Ontario. He graduated with a B.A. from the University of Michigan in 1862, received his M.A. in 1865, and completed theological studies at the Presbyterian Seminary in Princeton in 1866. The Presbytery of New Brunswick licensed him to preach on April 21, 1865. His ordination came from the Philadelphia Presbytery on August 9, 1866.

Anderson served several congregations before coming to Fairton. From 1866 to 1869, he had a three church parish in Pennsylvania: the churches at Ben Salem, Newportville, and Aurora (Eddington). He then went on to preach in the Tuckerton and Bass River churches in New Jersey (1869-1875). Fairfield was his next field. After

leaving in 1883, he went to Caldwell, Kansas for a year as Stated Supply, and then as Pastor until 1888. He remained in Kansas until his death in Wichita on September 28, 1902, having served churches in Clearwater (1889-1893), Indianola (1889-1902), and Brainerd (1893-1902), as Stated Supply in each of the Kansas locations.

Anderson's ministry was marked with steady, if not dramatic growth. Of greatest importance was the honor that was his in serving at the time the church celebrated its two hundredth anniversary, and the centennial of the erection of the Old Stone Church. Anderson himself may well have been the source of inspiration for the church to take special notice of its history. He compiled the most thorough account to date of the church's distinguished history, having been commissioned by the General Assembly to do so. This record was preserved only in manuscript form. It was never printed and Rev. Anderson never saw the need to indicate the source of his information. Thus, its accuracy is left in doubt, as it may be only the compilation of hallowed traditions passed from one generation to the next.

In a session meeting held July 4, 1880, the elders decided to hold a memorial service on September 29, only two and one-half months away. It seems incredible to the modern mind that such an event could have been ignored up until the last moment, and that adequate plans could then have been made on such short notice. The program was arranged, and invitations went out requesting special addresses from key individuals. The session records preserved a full description of the anniversary celebration.

It was estimated that 2000 people were present, meeting in the Old Stone Church, and gathered in the cemetery surrounding it. It was an all-day affair, with canvas hung outside to provide shade for refreshments served in the middle of the day. Judge Lucius Q. C. Elmer, 88 years old, was asked to preside.

The service began at ten o'clock on the morning of September 29th, 1880. After singing the doxology to the long meter tune, prayer was offered by Rev. Ephraim Ogden from Pittsburgh. Rev. George W. Johnson, an Episcopalian clergyman, read the scriptures, and the congregation joined in singing a psalm. Rev. Ephraim Whitaker, D.D., of Southhold, Long Island, delivered the primary address, a lengthy and comprehensive survey of the history of the congregation, paying special attention to the families and elders whose work had been recalled by their ancestors with special appreciation.

The congregation recessed for a half-hour intermission to enjoy lunch and share cordial greetings with friends and guests both from the immediate community and from distant areas. Dr. William Elmer of Bridgeton presided at the afternoon session. It began with the singing of the psalm, "How Did My Heart Rejoice to Hear." Pastor Anderson then delivered his history of the church. Mr. Joseph F. Jagers spoke briefly, recalling the "Service of Song in the Old Stone Church," including delightful recollections of the worship services held in the venerable old building during Osborn's ministry. Brief addresses from former pastors David Meeker and James Boggs followed. Letters were read from David McKee (in ill health in Indiana) and Hiram Johnson (in Rhode Island).

The latter part of the service included Rev. George Smith delivering a history of the Cedarville First Presbyterian Church (he was called away to a funeral before his part of the anniversary), a recitation of the history of Cedarville's Second Presbyterian Church from Rev. Christian Winnie, and reminiscences from his youth brought by Rev. Lewis Githens, then of San Francisco. After a collection to assist with the expenses of the program, "All Hail the Power" was sung, Dr. Whitaker pronounced the benediction, and the program was concluded.

So well-received was the celebration that all of these addresses were put into print by popular demand. A.M. Fleston, a Bridgeton printer, produced the cherished book in 1881. Copies remain today as wonderful sources of information about the life of the congregation.

It is from this publication that first glimpses are gained into the musical practices of the Fairfield Presbyterian worship services. It is entirely proper to assume that the congregation followed the patterns that developed through the years in American Christianity. The earliest settlers in New England brought with them the Calvinistic practice of exclusive psalmody. The "regulative principle of worship" had been the source of intense controversy in old England between Puritan and Anglican divines. Elizabethan prelates, following the "via media" compromises charted by the Queen, tended toward the Lutheran pattern of retaining much from Roman Catholic worship practices. As long as the practice in question was not expressly forbidden in Scripture, it was to be allowed if it could be shown to assist believers, and in many instances might even be required to insure national uniformity in worship patterns.

Candles, incense, vestments, choirs, and fixed prayers were all anathema to Puritans outside the state church who found that while Scripture did not forbid these things, since it did not command them, they were all to be discarded as relics of "popery." It was only on the subject of congregational song that there was some degree of unanimity. Because God was the object of worship, He alone had the right to prescribe the form worship should take. English (and especially Scottish) Calvinists, both within and without the Anglican church, all insisted that God had given the Psalter as the only authorized songbook of old and new Israel. To sing to God anything other than His own words was regarded as the height of presumption.

To facilitate the singing of Psalms in the English language, translations had to be made, and then metrical settings composed to force the words into a rhythmic pattern that could be sung verse after verse. The first psalter to gain widespread approval was Calvin's production in Geneva, completed in 1562. All 150 psalms had been re-written in metrical form. 125 tunes were offered in 110 different meters. Louis Bourgeois, Clement Marot, and Theodore Beza all made superb contributions to this excellent collection.

English and Scottish refugees in Geneva during the reign of Bloody Mary (1553-558) adopted the practice and took home with them what were later derogatorily described as "Genevan jigs." The English practice became common after the Sternhold and Hopkins complete psalter appeared in 1563. A much-improved psalter became available in 1696, the "New Version" of Tate and Brady.

It was the Tate and Brady psalter which the New England Puritans brought with them to the new country. But while their convictions about exclusive psalmody did not waver, their desire for smoother arrangements increased. At last, a more polished psalter appeared. It was the first book to be printed in America, the "Bay Psalm Book," and appeared in 1640. No doubt, these were the tunes that were sung under the maples and cedars at New England Towne Crossroads by the earliest members of Christ's Church at Fairfield.

But changes were in the making even then. In England, Isaac Watts was becoming increasingly frustrated over atrocious singing of the Tate and Brady psalms and increasingly exasperated at the inability afforded the Congregational church his family attended to ever sing the name of Jesus in their worship. At his father's suggestion, he set out to paraphrase the psalms in ways that would point more clearly to the promised Messiah. Thus, Psalm 72 became "Jesus Shall Reign," Psalm 90 became

“Our God, Our Help in Ages Past,” and New Testament concepts and passages were set to music for Christian worship (“When I survey the Wondrous Cross” and “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?”).

Watts’s first collection of “hymns” appeared in London in 1707, one year before the Fairfield Presbyterian Church was recognized as part of the Philadelphia Presbytery, and possibly less than 30 years after the gathering of Christ’s Church at Cohansey. Watts’s practice was soon imitated and expanded by Charles Wesley (“Love Divine” and “O for a Thousand Tongues”). Hymn-singing rapidly overtook the narrow exclusive psalmody in England. The Great Awakening in America in the 1740s and 1750s united the colonies under the banner of the cross and united the churches in the newly rediscovered practice of singing praise to Christ using all of the Scriptures as seed-beds for the hymnody rapidly flowing from the pens of gifted poets and musicians. (138)

When the Fairfield Presbyterian Church made the transition from psalms to both psalms and hymns is not known. But it must have been well established by Anderson’s time. The concluding hymn at the Bicentennial in 1880 was “All Hail the Power of Jesus’s Name,” a hymn written by the evangelically-minded Anglican, Edward Perronet, in 1779 and 1780, the year of the building of the Old Stone Church.

Churches were much slower in implementing musical instruments to assist in singing, both out of conviction and economic expediency. At the Old Stone Church, the clerk’s seat below the pulpit was occupied by four singers who would lead the congregation, after announcing four-part harmony with a sounding fork. The old psalm-singing practice had been strictly unison, with each phrase being “lined out” by a precentor, then imitated by the congregation. By now, song books would have been available and widely in use. Mr. Jagers, in his remarks at the bicentennial celebration, recalled using tunes from a shaped note book (with different shapes used to indicate the pitch).

During the later years of worship in the Old Stone Church, singing was led not from the front desk, but by three men, Rueben Ware, David Bateman, and William Moore, announcing the tune either from the pew in which they happened to be seated that Sunday, or from the front pew in the gallery, immediately opposite the pulpit. Jagers commented, “From this custom the singing began to decline, and fears were entertained that the public worship would suffer in consequence.”

Attempts were made to improve the situation with the organization of a choir about 1837 or 1838. Six ladies and four men joined their voices together, again from the front gallery pew, to inspire the congregation to more energetic singing. A new song book was introduced, offering many new, probably “livelier” tunes. “This was pleasing to the young people, but the older folks affirmed that the new tunes were not as good as the old.” How many times in this, and other churches’ past has this tale been retold?

In 1842 Mr. Daniel Williams arrived from Philadelphia to live on his farm in Herring Row. He soon after began providing invaluable assistance in the congregation’s singing. After the new building was occupied in 1850, the session formally asked Mr. Williams to take charge of the choir and to lead the congregational singing. A substantial choir was now active to support the hymn-singing. Among the ladies were Lydia Barret, Emily Trenchard, Hannah Campbell, Nancy Trenchard, Mary Holmes, Mary Campbell, Sarah Jane Bennett, and Mary Githens. The men’s section was composed of Theophilus Trenchard, Joseph Williams, Daniel Williams, Samuel Williams, Albert Williams, and Charles Campbell. The Williams family clearly provided not only leadership, but also substance to this choir! (139)

There was never any instruments used in the Old Stone Church. The first organ was secured in 1862, purchased for fifty dollars from Bridgeton's First Presbyterian church. Soon thereafter this was laid aside and replaced with a cabinet organ, still in use at the time of the bicentennial in 1880. Albert Williams was the church's first organist. He served from 1862 until he moved to Philadelphia in 1867. Occasionally, Mary Jagers supplied music from the organ in Williams's absence. After 1867, Mrs. McNichols and then Miss Sophronia Elmer played for the services.

Daniel Williams's work with the choir was continued by Theophilus Trenchard from 1858 to 1866. He not only sustained the work of his predecessor, but was able to enlist a number of younger voices to add to the choir. After 1866, Samuel Williams assumed the responsibilities of directing the choir, and was still active in that capacity in 1880.

Concerns about the music in the church carried past the bicentennial observance. On April 17, 1881, the session voted to call a congregational meeting to consider acquiring a new hymnal. The next month a committee reported to the elders that they had canvassed the membership and found most in favor of purchasing new hymnals. Subscriptions were sought to cover the expense. This was the period of time when the "gospel song" was being popularized through the mass evangelistic meetings in eastern urban areas. It may have been that a desire to sing some of the "new" songs by writers like Fanny Crosby ("Blessed Assurance" and "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour") was the motivation for Fairfield's action. In approving the purchase, the session also voted to make a concerted effort to get more members into the choir and to practice the newer tunes. That same month, session records show that a number of disgruntled members were dismissed to the Fairton Methodist Episcopal Church, hopefully not because of controversies surrounding the purchase of new hymnals!

Apparently, Rev. Anderson suffered with severe health problems. In September, 1882, he was discussing the possibility of taking a leave of absence. The session took note of his poor health and granted him a three month vacation with pay. He was only in his mid-40s at this time. Rev. Henry Reeves was invited by the session to serve as moderator during Anderson's absence. On March 23, 1883, having received a letter from Mr. Anderson in College Springs, Iowa, the session voted to request that the congregation concur in his request that his resignation be accepted. This was accomplished on March 30, with the members adopting a resolution of deep appreciation for Pastor Anderson's capable service in the ministry in Fairton.

The next month, the session asked Rev. Reeves to remain for 6 months as Stated Supply. Henry Reeves (who remained as Stated Supply through 1886) was an experienced pastor who brought well-polished skills to the job at Fairfield. He had been born in Bridgeton on February 5, 1823. After graduating from the College of New Jersey, later known as Princeton University, in 1844, he remained there for two years as a member of the faculty. In 1846, he began his studies in divinity at Princeton Theological Seminary, graduating in 1849.

His first pastoral charge was as Stated Supply at the Ellesdie Chapel in New Hamburg, New York, in 1849. Later that year he went as Stated Supply at Wappinger's Falls. The Presbytery of Newton ordained him on November 12, 1850. He assumed the pastoral responsibilities of the church in Belvidere, New Jersey, remaining there from 1850 until 1858. In 1858 he moved to Fayetteville, Pennsylvania as Stated Supply. He maintained that church responsibility until 1864. As he began the work there, he also accepted the position of principal of the Female Seminary in Chambersburg, continuing with that institution until 1864. That year, he moved to West Philadelphia to serve as

principal of the Woodland Seminary. In 1868 he left that work to accept a position in journalism. From 1868 to 1875 he was editor for "Young Folk's News" in Philadelphia. From 1871 to 1875 he was also editor of the Philadelphia publication "Our Monthly."

He returned to the pulpit in 1869 as Stated Supply of the church in Gloucester City, New Jersey. But his love for the printed word must have been quite strong, for he was in the later years of that pastorate (1877-1881) editor, of all things, of the Philadelphia "Grocer's Price Current"! Such a drastic change in his sphere of work may, more likely, be an indication of difficult economic times and his need to find work in unrelated fields to support himself and his family.

The world of education was high on his list of interests. He re-entered that sphere of ministry in 1881 by accepting the position of principal at Ivy Hall Seminary in Bridgeton. He stayed here for ten years. It was while serving in this nearby institution that the session of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church asked him to assist in the period following Samuel Anderson's departure.

Ivy Hall Seminary was originally a private dwelling. David Sheppard, a descendant of one of the earliest settlers in the Back Neck region, also named David Sheppard, purchased large blocks of land on both sides of the Cohansey. Later, he added to that the land on the north side of West Commerce from the river to Franklin Drive. In 1791 he built a large brick mansion, naming it Ivy Hall. He lived with his second wife until his death in 1864. The property passed to his son, Isaac (born there in 1806). Isaac's first two wives died, leaving several children. He married again in 1850. It was his third wife, Margaretta Little, who organized the Ivy Hall Seminary as a fashionable boarding school for girls. The institution began functioning in 1861, just as the Civil War was tearing at the nation's heart.

Margaretta Sheppard was an experienced teacher in a public school in Bridgeton. Ivy Hall prospered at first, having up to 30 resident students, and a number of others for day instruction only. But after she permitted control of the school to pass into the hands of others, hard times set in. The prospects seemed extremely dim in 1881. Student enrollment had never been lower. It was at this point that Henry Reeves was asked to come. Under his direction the school once again prospered and gained an excellent reputation that lasted until it was closed in 1917. The building remains, and has served in many capacities, including _____ and as a restaurant in the 1970s under the name "The Sheppard House". The house fell into disrepair for many years and the rear portion of the building which had been added on after the edifice was initially built was demolished in the 1990s. However, the Sheppard House is currently being restored by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension for use as an office building.

Rev. Reeves had demonstrated himself a man of many talents in the various career interests in which he had engaged. At this time, he was not only superbly capable of serving as administrator of the Ivy Hall Seminary, but also of directing the life of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church. He also pursued additional studies from the College of New Jersey. In 1886, as he began his work at Fairton, he was awarded the Ph.D. degree. A second doctorate, an honorary D.D., was conferred on him by another institution in 1897. Fairfield was extremely fortunate to have had a multi-talented preacher for these few years.

In 1886, Fairfield called a new pastor. Dr. Reeves returned to his work at Ivy Hall, remaining until 1891. The next year he began laboring as Stated Supply for Bridgeton Fourth Presbyterian Church. This was pioneering work, for the church had

just been organized. Reeves was their first pastor. In 1895 he was installed as pastor of the church in Gloucester, where he continued until his death on March 13, 1901.

May 13, 1886 marks the date that Rev. Frank R. Symmes was ordained and installed as pastor for the Fairfield Presbyterian Church. Once again, Fairton had been blessed with a man of uncommonly excellent skills. Frank Roosevelt Symmes was born in Madison, Indiana on October 24, 1856. Like Reeves, he graduated from, and then briefly taught at, the College of New Jersey in Princeton. In 1886, he completed his studies at the Presbyterian seminary there and was ordained in Fairton by the Presbytery of West Jersey.

Despite expectations of numerical growth, Fairton did not experience dramatic change during Symmes's stay. Membership remained constant at 102 to 118. It was during his ministry that James Boggs, then residing in Philadelphia, passed away. Funeral services for him were held on April 6, 1886, and he was interred in the Old Stone Church Cemetery.

On January 24, 1890, Symmes asked to be released to accept the call to the Old Tennant Church near Freehold, New Jersey. The next month the elders at Fairfield asked Dr. Reeves to return, not as Stated Supply, but as moderator. He served in this capacity on several occasions over the next year.

Rev. Symmes was to serve in a very distinguished pulpit at the Old Tennent church. This historic building preserves the heritage of the Tennent family in the Great Awakening of the 1740s. While serving there, Symmes carefully researched and then published a complete history of that church. He retired in 1919, and was elected Pastor Emeritus. He died in Freehold on March 22, 1928, having been awarded the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree four years earlier.

The Fairfield Presbyterian Church enjoyed a brief but prosperous pastorate with Rev. Thomas Wright Pulham. Mr. Pulham was an Irishman, born June 5, 1850 in Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary. He came to America for his education, graduating from Princeton Seminary in 1891. The Presbytery of Newark ordained him on May 6 of that year, and he entered the work in Fairton. He had had some experience, having worked in a chapel in Newark during his seminary years.

During his first year in Fairton, 16 members were received, including 6 adult and 6 infant baptisms. Interest in the church's past was renewed with the placing of a glass case to store old bibles and communion ware.

Pulham left in September, 1893 for the Olivet Church in Baltimore. In 1911 he moved to a church in Vancouver, British Columbia, but returned to the Olivet Church in Baltimore in 1914, where he retired in 1921. He was elected Pastor Emeritus by that congregation, and lived in that area until his death on July 26, 1923.

Fairfield's session invited a Rev. Snyder to serve as moderator, effective September 17, 1893. On December 1st of that same year, George Warrington was asked to serve in that capacity. In January, 1894, the congregation moved to call him as Pastor by a vote of 25 to 2 (these dissenting votes having been cast for Rev. D.M. Marshman).

George Warrington was born in Dover, Delaware on December 13, 1842. He graduated from Amherst College in 1862, and after serving in the United States Army, attended Princeton Theological Seminary from 1867 to 1871, not receiving his degree until 1898. The Presbytery of West Jersey ordained him on May 9, 1871 as Pastor of the Glassboro Church and Stated Supply of the Bunker Hill Church. From 1872 to 1873 he had the responsibilities of Stated Supply in the churches in Berlin, Atco, and Waterford.

He served as Pastor of the Bald Eagle and Nittany Churches in Beech Creek, Pennsylvania from 1873 to 1874. Longer pastorates were enjoyed in Manalapan, New Jersey (1874-1880), and in Birmingham, Iowa (1882-1888). He moved back to Pennsylvania in 1888 as an editor in Beaver Falls, serving there until 1891. He was in Fairton from December 1893 until April 1897. From here he went to the Trout River and Pennsdale Churches in Pennsylvania as Stated Supply from 1898 until 1900 when he retired. He lived in Perth Amboy only briefly, his death coming on September 1, 1900.

The church grew during his ministry in Fairton, but only kept up with losses, remaining at about 100 members. Church records hint at difficult times during his pastorate. In the final year of his ministry here, the trustees found it necessary to borrow \$184.48 from Sara Bateman in order to pay back salary due to the minister. An entry in the session minutes notes that there was serious dissension in the church in 1894. The pastor was directed to meet with the parties involved.

In the summer of that year, a disciplinary matter began to occupy the attention of the elders and continued to do so for several months. On July 13, the session was informed that a letter had been received from Mrs. Abbie W. Smith, charging Rosa MacCheseny with "personal slander and defamation of her character" in remarks made before a Sunday School class on April 22nd. It seems that Rosa MacCheseny had called Mrs. Smith a "chicken thief" in front of her pupils.

On July 27th, the session met to hear the case. It was reported that attempts had been made to reconcile the parties, but without success. Both parties were adamant in their position. The elders had no choice but to proceed with a trial. The matter was postponed until after the pastor's vacation, a rest for him that was probably not restful at all in view of the tensions that awaited resolution.

The matter was brought to trial on September 12th, 1894. The elders were careful to follow the details prescribed by the Rules of Discipline in the Book of Church Order. The witnesses called were all girls under the age of 14, pupils from the Sunday School class where the remarks had reportedly been made. All the testimony was recorded, but the session minutes include only the motions made. There were no witnesses called for the defense. The accused testified in her own behalf. The session concluded from the testimony that Rosa MacCheseny had only said that she had heard that Mrs. Smith had stolen some chickens. She was found not guilty of the charges.

On September 21st, Mrs. Smith returned to the session, asking that she receive complete exoneration of her character in the matter. She also asked to be removed from membership in the church. The session decreed that Rosa MacCheseny had been indiscreet in her words, and admonished her to be more circumspect in the future. The pastor was directed to visit with her and deliver this admonition personally. Later that year, in reviewing the session minutes, the Presbytery found that the matter had not been handled wisely, and cautioned that it had been improper to remove Mrs. Smith simply at her request. Presumably she had transferred to another church, but no record of this was made in the session minutes.

Through the three centuries of its life, the Fairfield Presbyterian Church session has had many instances of discipline, more so in earlier years. Only occasionally has it gotten to the point of requiring full judicial procedure and inclusion in the permanent records of the congregation. Credit for this should go to pastors and sessions who diligently sought to achieve reconciliation between offended parties by personal visits and counsel.

Rev. Warrington's last session meeting at Fairton was on April 18, 1897. Preparations were made to secure pulpit supplies for the next six months. After Warrington's departure, Rev. Snyder returned to moderatorship of the session. Six months was the time needed to fill the gap between pastors. In a congregational meeting held September 14 of that year, with Rev. Snyder moderating, 12 votes were cast for Candidate Samuel W. Steckel, and 30 votes were cast for J. N. Wagenhurst.

Rev. Wagenhurst was installed on November 30, 1897. The following April, the session reviewed the rolls and found only 88 active members. On November 11, 1900, the minister asked the congregation to remain after the service. At that time he asked them to release him from his duties here that he might accept a call to a larger church. The session once more turned to Rev. Snyder to moderate for them while the church searched for a new pastor.

Specifics relating to Wagenhurst's ministry here are scarce. On September 22, 1898, the trustees made a motion to rebuild the parsonage, apparently intending to accomplish some renovations or additions to the existing home. On December 19 of the next year, the trustees approved selling a strip of land and granting passage in front of the church for the planned trolley service of the Bridgeton and Millville Traction Company. This street railway served admirably for many years to provide residents of the Bayshore communities with inexpensive and convenient transportation to and from Bridgeton. On November 6, 1899, the trustees approved the expenditure of \$499.50 for a 32 x 16 foot addition on the chapel to provide for an infant department and a kitchen in the church.

B. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY [1900 to 1941]

It was after Wagenhurst had gone that the Synod asked the church to give a piece of ground at the old New England Towne Burying Ground to be used as a site for the erection of a monument in honor of the establishment of the Fairfield congregation as the first Presbyterian church in the southern part of the state. It was not until 1909 that the monument was raised. Its design and erection was supervised by Mr. P. Kennedy Reeves, who was treasurer for West Jersey Presbytery at the time. Dr. Frederick Richard Brace, Presbyterian Missionary, was largely the key motivator in working toward this memorial. He was an eminent scholar, superb preacher, and effective church planter in the regions of southern New Jersey.

On June 15, 1909, special dedication services were held at the wooded site on Back Neck Road. The monument will stand for many years to come, bearing an inscription that testifies to the faithful labors of those who were responsible for bringing this church into existence. Its words are clearly legible at the end of a cedar-lined field and at the entrance to the overgrown cemetery.

"IN MEMORY of the true and good men and women who coming in the seventeenth century founded here on the Cohansey, THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN FAIRFIELD. It came under the care of the Presbytery of WestJersey, May 19, 1708.

This monument is erected by their descendants and the Presbytery of
West Jersey; June 15, 1909

REV. THOMAS BRIDGE WAS THEIR MINISTER.”

“Signers of Agreement in Fairfield, June 10, 1697.

Thomas Jones	John Chatfield
Jonathan Morehouse	John Mills
Joseph Seelye	Thomas Bennett
Joseph Sayre	Joseph Smith
Robert Dallglesh	Thomas Kernes
Joseph Wheeler	Joshua Curtis
Daniel Westcott	John Griffin
Joseph Grimes	Nicholas Johnson
John Roberts	Michael Hanna
Eleazar Smith	John Ogden
John Bennett	Samuel Foster
Samuel Bellnap	Edward Lummis
John Bateman	John Smith

On September 6, 1901, the congregation acted to call its next pastor. John Bamford was elected, with the church promising to provide him a yearly salary of \$500, free use of the manse, and three weeks vacation. Bamford was another Irishman, born in Portrush on March 4, 1872. He had attended the Queen’s University in Belfast before coming to America. Here his studies were continued, first at Princeton Theological Seminary (1894-1895) and then at Auburn Theological Seminary (1896-1898). He was ordained as a Congregationalist on July 15, 1898 and accepted a call to Eaton, New York. He remained here from 1898 to 1901.

It was to Eaton that the people of Fairton turned. How they learned of a man so far away and in another ecclesiastical connection is not known. Perhaps it was by way of a reference from a professor in the Princeton Seminary. Bamford was at Fairton from 1901 to 1903, but only as Stated Supply, never as Pastor. It may be that he was, as yet, unwilling to completely sever himself from his Congregational connections.

His brief stay at Fairton ended with a call to serve as Stated Supply for the Western Highlands Presbyterian Church in Kansas City. He remained there until 1909, having later been elected to serve as Pastor, perhaps indicating at last his willingness to fully enter into the Presbyterian fold. After several years without a call, he moved to the Westminster Church in Des Moines, Iowa (1912-1913). The next two years found him as Stated Supply again, this time for the Belmont and Burke Churches in New York. A series of brief charges followed: 1916-1917, Pastor-elect of the Brotherhood Church in Kansas City; 1917-1920, Federated Pastor in Blue Mound; 1921, Stated Supply in St. Joseph, Missouri; 1922, Pastor-elect of the First Church in Barnesville, Ohio, then Pastor

there from 1923-1925; and then to the Northminster Church in Springfield, Ohio as Pastor in 1926.

On February 28, 1903, with Bamford gone, the session of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church voted to invite Rev. J.L. Landis to serve as moderator. His service was not needed for long. The following April, Dr. William J. Trimble was asked to serve as Stated Supply. He agreed to do so. He had been born in Pittsburgh and grew up in the Free Presbyterian Church. Before coming to Fairton, he had served churches in Ohio and West Virginia. He was also to see service in the Second Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

A very significant modernization of the church took place during Dr. Trimble's stay. On September 20, 1905, the trustees reported that they had found the congregation in favor of having the church wired for the installation of electric lights. The estimated cost was \$100. The work was shortly accomplished. For some time, there had apparently been discussion about the adequacy of the parsonage. Repairs, modifications, and minor additions seem to have been effected from time to time. By the late fall of 1906, serious discussion was being devoted as to whether or not a new home should be provided. In November, the trustees considered investigating the possible exchange of the church parsonage for a home formerly owned by Harry Bamford. The next month, in a congregational meeting, the members considered an exchange for the Wesley Hogbin property and approved such a transaction. It was evidently not carried through for reasons not preserved.

Several months earlier, in October of 1906, Dr. Trimble informed the session that he could not remain as Stated Supply any longer. In April, 1907, Rev. A.P. Botsford agreed to serve as moderator. In May, repairs were done on the parsonage, including fixing the coal bin and the "water closet." In June, Rev. Hackett agreed to assist the church in continuing the customary summer anniversary service in the Old Stone Church. It was decided to hold the celebration at two-thirty on the afternoon of Sunday, June 30th. Rev. William Bullock agreed to work out details of the service with Dr. Trimble.

Rev. Bullock had recently arrived in the area from Eldorado Springs, Missouri. In July, the session asked him to serve as moderator. He soon accepted the position of Stated Supply, on the condition that he could return to Europe in August to visit his parents. He had been born in Mangolsfield, Gloucestershire, England, on August 29, 1865. Most of his training for the ministry had been informal, under the tutorship of a Pastor in England. He was ordained as a Congregational minister on March 11, 1891 and served churches in Lansing, Lamotte, and Fairgrove, Michigan; Kalida, Ohio; and Eldorado Springs, Missouri, before becoming the Stated Supply at Fairton.

He had been widowed while in England. His children had been distributed for care after that sad event. He later remarried a widow, Mrs. Elmer, whose children joined his household. At the time of his presence in Fairton, a number of children were in the home. Several boys worked on the James Taylor farm by the mill pond. He is remembered today by members of the congregation as a gentle and unusually godly man. One of his sons, William, Jr., lingered in the memory of [one of the church's members in the 1970s as the object of a childhood romance](#). Church music was again an active concern in the church at this time. The session discussed the need for new hymn books for Sunday School and prayer services at its October 19, 1907 meeting. Pastor Bullock was asked to choose what he thought would serve best.

The pulpit was not vacant long after Bullock's departure in 1908. On November 11, of that year, the congregation voted to call Rev. Nelson Burret Kline at a salary of \$600. Mr. Kline had been born on October 29, 1868 in Philadelphia. He attended school in York and at Princeton, graduating from the seminary there in 1899. Aberdeen Presbytery ordained him on July 19th of that year to serve as Stated Supply in Gary, South Dakota. In 1901, he moved to Langford, still as Stated Supply. From 1902 to 1904 he was Pastor at the First Church in Gary. In 1904 he moved back to Pennsylvania to pastor the churches in Armagh and Seward. This work concluded in 1908. It was the next year that he came to Fairton for a ministry that lasted only from 1909 until 1910. He would return to Fairton, however, in 1918 for a five year period serving as Pastor for the second time in the same congregation.

These were years that saw the church facing periodic economic difficulties, because of declining numbers. In March of 1908, the trustees reported that they were \$117 in debt. A special request went out to the congregation, and in two weeks, \$98.75 had been received to help remove that debt. In July, a new shingle roof had to be installed on the manse. In November, the water closet had to be repaired again. Unexpected costs such as these ate further into the tightly budgeted church finances.

Kline had been installed on January 27, 1909. On November 6, 1910, he preached his final sermon, having been here slightly less than two years. During his stay, there was growth in membership. There were 107 active members noted in March 1909. The session was diligent in its duties, placing 23 names on the roll of suspended members. Mrs. Kline experienced poor health the entire time of their stay. Doctors advised Rev. Kline to take her to an area with a higher elevation. With much regret, Kline offered his resignation. He moved to Fort Collins, Colorado in 1910.

On January 16, 1911, Samuel Potter agreed to serve as moderator. On March 10th, 1912, Dr. Trimble was asked to assist for a time. And then on May 22 of that year, the congregation voted to invite William M. Seel to come as Pastor. Mr. Seel had been licensed by a Baptist Church. He became a member of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church in order to come under the care of the Presbytery as a candidate for the ministry. A good bit of time was spent after his arrival studying diligently for his examination for ordination by the Presbytery. All went well and he was approved for the call.

At the time of his arrival in Fairton, he was a young man, married, but as yet without children. He paid special attention to the needs of the youth in the church and organized programs (including dramatic productions) to interest them in the church. He continued the pattern of anniversary services in the Old Stone Church in the summer. On June 29, 1913, a memorable program was held, incorporating ministers from a number of area churches. The elders even felt inclined to make a record of the program in the session minutes.

L. M. Doxology

Invocation prayer

Rev. Rogers, Cedarville

Singing

Reading Ps. 8

Rev. Veal, Cedarville

Introductory Speech

Rev. Seel, Fairton

Singing, Quartette

Mr. Evans, Bridgeton

Address

Rev. Krause, Greenwich

Address

Rev. Richardson, Fairton

Singing, Quartette

Mr. Evans, Bridgeton

Offering

for repair and maintenance at O.S.C.

Address

Rev. Willis, Newport

Address

Rev. Bischoff, Deerfield Street

Singing

Auld Lang Syne

Benediction

Rev. Seel

Earlier that spring, the matter of song books was back for discussion. In April, the congregation approved purchasing song books (probably containing more of the new "gospel songs") for the evening services. The next month, they heard that the price would be not ten cents as originally reported, but a staggering twenty-five cents apiece! The purchase was approved, despite the steep cost. On June 9, 1913, at a congregational meetings, a number of significant projects were approved: painting the inside of the manse, renovating and painting the inside of the church, constructing a building at the Old Stone Church to use while waiting for funerals, removing 2 or 3 of the back pews, and installing swinging doors with glass windows at the entrance from the vestibule into the church auditorium.

On May 20, 1914, Rev. Seel announced that he would be leaving the following July. The pattern of two year pastorates was being repeated all too often for Fairton's benefit. A pastor has only begun to adjust to a community and to be completely received by that time. But at least the church was not to suffer with lengthy periods of vacancy between pastors.

The committee worked very quickly and by August had a recommendation for the congregation. With Rev. Thomas R. Taggart moderating a congregational meeting, the church voted to call Rev. Franklin W. Weatherwax at a salary of \$650. He was then laboring in Bloomfield, Iowa.

Rev. Weatherwax was born in West Lake, New York. He received his education from a missionary institute in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania and was ordained a Lutheran minister in 1873. In 1880, he was received into the Presbytery of Kalamazoo, after serving several pastorates in Lutheran congregations. As a Presbyterian, he ministered in churches in Indiana, Michigan, and Iowa before coming to Fairton.

These were difficult years for the church, as the country felt the pressures of European conflict increasing. Though farmers were easily exempted from military service, many families in the area lost sons, husbands, and fathers in trenches during World War I. Rev. Weatherwax compassionately encouraged the congregation in their prayers for an end to the nightmare of war. On April 12, 1917, the congregation held a meeting in which they voted unanimously to begin displaying the United States flag in both the sanctuary and the chapel.

Shortly after Weatherwax's arrival, financial problems began to plague the church. They continued periodically for many years to follow. On July 13, 1914, the trustees found it necessary to borrow \$75 to pay the bills the church had accumulated. The following August, an attempt was made to persuade each member to give an additional dollar to assist with financial needs. Four hundred dollars had to be borrowed to effect major repairs to the electric lights and the gas piping. There were improvements made when possible. In October a new bulletin board was erected in front and "cathedral paper" was placed in the windows separating the nursery from the chapel. Rev. Weatherwax had skills in cabinet-making, and using materials from an old

piano, he constructed a display case for church memorabilia that still stands in the church narthex.

But financial concerns dominated meeting after meeting of the officers. On January 1, 1917, another request went out for an additional one dollar from each member. In June, 1918, a special offering was approved for the following Sunday morning to try to catch up on the delinquent bills the treasurer was holding. A novel suggestion was made by the trustees that the total amount needed be divided up among the organizations in the church and that each should sponsor a fund-raising social to contribute their share. A bit of good news came with the report of \$2000 left to the church in the will of Martha Buck. But the church had to ask help from the Synod Mission Board in 1917; an extra \$100 was needed to pay the pastor's salary.

Rev. Weatherwas was an older man when he came to Fairton. His children were grown, but two lived with him: a son, Andy, and a daughter, Sarah, who often sang in church services. Music was stimulated by a most distinguished member of the congregation, Miss Carrie Livingston. In later years, she gained a reputation as an excellent piano and organ instructor (many of her pupils served area churches for years to come) as well as accomplished church organist and recitalist. Later, she was employed as organist for the large Bethany Temple Presbyterian Church in West Philadelphia, playing a magnificent pipe organ for the services there for many years. She would give the dedication recital in 1946 for Fairton's new Hammond organ. Fairfield continued to have a choir during these years. In June, 1915, Elder Conner resigned as choir director, but the session refused to accept his resignation, stating in the session minutes that without his work, "Christ's kingdom would suffer."

The ministry of Franklin Weatherwax in Fairton came to a close following his resignation on September 16, 1917. (He cited reasons of health for both himself and his family.) A month later Nelson Kline was asked to return for a second term of pastoral service. He had left seven years prior to this because of his wife's health. After going to Colorado, he had returned to Pennsylvania to the Spangler, Marstella, and Emigh congregations from 1914 to 1917. He stayed in Fairton until 1922, when he accepted the call to labor as Pastor of the Penningtonville Church in Atglen, Pennsylvania. He died there on August 11, 1929.

On January 22, 1918, Rev. Kline was again installed as pastor of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church. Nelson, his wife Dora, and daughters Dorothea and Anna moved back into the manse and into the life of the church and community. The following September, action was taken to increase the pastor's salary to \$1000, but the church was still experiencing periods of great economic hardship.

World War I had been an exhausting experience for pastors, concerned to carefully apply Biblical wisdom to a situation that required the right balance of loyal patriotism and deep compassion as the doctrine of "total depravity" became more vivid than ever before in American minds. In April 1918, the elders voted to ask each member to give five dollars for each enlisted man from the church. The money would be given to the National Service Committee. On the twelfth of that month, an American flag was obtained. One star on it was dedicated to Frank Westcott in the Naval Reserve Corps. A War Testament was sent to him. Twenty-five cents was solicited from each member to be used to help organize a Presbyterian church at Camp Dix.

The conflict in Europe was to be replaced with prohibition as a topic generating intense feelings in American hearts. Here at Fairton, the session agreed on April 1, 1918 to host a debate on the issue. Anti-saloon speakers were invited to have a dialogue on

Sunday evening, May 26th. Mr. Carlisle and Mr. Pierpont debated the wet-dry issues before the congregation.

Mr. Kline brought with him a great interest in the work of Christian education. Teacher training classes were conducted periodically. In April, 1920, he asked for permission to spend up to \$1200 for the purchase of a "stereoptician" for use in his teaching ministry. At that same meeting, his salary was raised to \$1200, the sexton's salary was placed at \$500, and the trustees were empowered to purchase heaters for the church and chapel.

By every account, both written and recalled by members years later, Rev. Kline was an exceptionally hard-working pastor. The congregation's appreciation of his ministry was evident in their having called him to come for a second time to be their pastor. By 1921, however, he was beginning to feel strained in the demands of the work. On January 13, 1922, he announced to the people that he would be leaving, effective March 26th. The minutes of the congregational meeting record the essence of his explanation. "The mental tax of the work seemed too great for his physical condition." He was released from his obligations here with a resolution of appreciation adopted by the congregation. He took a church in Atglen, Pennsylvania, where he died seven years later.

In the brief interim, Dr. A.B. Collins, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Bridgeton, served as moderator. One month after Kline's departure, a new Pastor was called. On April 27, the congregation invited Rev. Jacob Dyke to come as Pastor, at a salary of \$1200 annually. Rev. Dyke was then residing in Cold Spring, New York. He was an elderly man when he came to Fairton. The manse was unusually quiet during his year here. He was married, but his wife and daughter never lived at the manse with him. Mrs. Dyke remained in New York with their daughter, a college student there. He is remembered as a very quiet man in personality and in his style of ministry.

Once again, financial headaches plagued the officers of the church. The fact that so frequently was this a matter of concern indicates clearly that it was not a matter of pastoral inefficiency or ineptitude. Rather, the continued small size of the church, the rural economy, and low income level of most of the members made it inevitable that the church would have difficulty holding its own in monetary needs. So severe did the problem become, that real questions were raised about the church's ability to continue to exist. On January 16, 1923, the trustees faced the problem head-on and announced the unwelcome news.

"A motion was Carried that in consideration of the financial condition of the Church and the Prospect of the Outlook for the future (after losing so many members) that the Elders be requested to Confer with the Pastor in regards to the situation As it seems impossible that we can Continue to raise the Salary."

One year to the month after Dyke's reception at Fairfield, he left.

On May 21, 1923, with Dr. Collins of Bridgeton again serving as moderator, Rev. Howard Douglas was called. He had been serving a church in Sharon Hill, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. The financial conditions in the church necessitated reducing the salary to \$1000, \$200 less than Dyke had received. Though membership and income remained relatively constant for the next few years, he was able to remain with the church until 1928.

Like Rev. Dyke, Douglas was a quiet man who kept to himself and his family much of the time. He and his wife, Susanna, both loved gardening and flowers and spent much of their spare time in those pursuits. Mrs. Douglas provided the church with floral

decorations at Christmas and for special festive occasions. Rev. Douglas, though interested in horticulture, was not always well-informed. One Rally Day the church having been beautifully decorated with garlands of Virginia Creeper by members of the congregation, he demanded that all the greenery be removed. He could not be dissuaded from his terror that it was poison ivy! His ministry was one of peacefulness, if not dramatic growth. He conducted himself in a very formal manner, making few, if any deep friendships within the congregation.

Work was undertaken to keep the church buildings in attractive condition. In October, 1923, the trustees decided to tear down the old horse sheds and build a 16 x 20 foot garage with a sliding door. This remained in use until a new one was built for the Tamaccio family in the mid-1950s. The next fall, the congregation approved a major project. The church, chapel, and primary rooms all needed repainting. Two hundred seventy five dollars would cover the sanctuary, and eighty four dollars would be needed to do the rest of the work. Since old stoves in the church were not being used any longer, the three chimneys attached to them were removed.

On July 3, 1925, plans were made to paint the outside of the church with a fresh coat of white paint. An electric sweeper was purchased to facilitate the sexton's cleaning responsibilities. April of 1926 saw the acquisition of new hymnals. The cost was \$1.25 apiece. That summer, the church asked the Presbytery to take charge of the Old New England Towne Burying Ground. It was becoming too costly for the church to maintain.

Though he and his wife had no children of their own, Rev. Douglas and his wife were intensely concerned for the youth of the church. A program of Bible study and fellowship was started for the teenagers, largely directed by Mrs. Douglas. They met in different homes on weeknights. Rev. Douglas devoted much time to conducting teacher training classes, meeting in homes on Monday evenings to deepen the knowledge of those charged with the training of the children in the covenant household.

The Fairfield Church had called Rev. Douglas from a pastorate in Sharon Hill, Pennsylvania. Earlier, he had been in business, and equipped himself for the ministry through studies on his own and on evenings. He was not a young man when he came to Fairton, but he lived for many years after this pastorate, surviving his wife. In October, 1928, he announced his intentions to accept another call. He and his wife moved to Thorofare, New Jersey. Some years later, at the time of his retirement, he moved to Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, where he lived with his sister, Mrs. Stella Roberts, until his death.

It was nearly nine months before the church secured another Pastor, though several attempts were made. The following February, with Rev. H. E. Bodder, from the Second Presbyterian Church in Bridgeton, moderating, the name of Rev. E. H. Bronson of Princeton was proposed. Seven votes were cast in favor of calling him, but twelve voted not to extend the call. The next month, Rev. Joseph Harrison of Atco was proposed. Once again, the congregation failed to agree. The vote recorded indicates something of the apparently low spirits within the church. Only a handful turned out for the meeting to bother casting any vote at all. One voted in favor of calling Mr. Harrison. Eleven voted against the motion.

But a decision was reached the next month. On May 15, 1929, the congregation voted unanimously (how many there were voting is not recorded) to call Rev. Clinton Cook from Kansas. The salary, \$1500, had been worked out ahead of time with Presbytery. Because of the church's strained financial resources, it was agreed that the

Presbytery would add \$350 to the church's \$1150 in order to adequately provide for Rev. Cook's needs.

Rev. Cook had not been at the church more than a few months when the Great Depression hit the country. It was to be felt in Fairton just as vividly as in the rest of the nation. Though the congregation was not able to provide the promised salary with regularity, the people were no less concerned for the Cooks. A group of ladies in the church made soup on Fridays and sold it to school children in order to raise money for his salary. In addition to this, special "Lenten Lunches," community bazaars, and church suppers were held to add to that fund.

But by May, 1931, the trustees found it necessary to borrow \$200 to pay debts over and above the pastor's salary. That December, all church services were moved into the chapel until the spring in order to cut down on expenses of heating the facilities. Seventy-eight dollars were transferred from the "Improvement Fund" to pay bills in the church's operating expenses. In March, 1932, it became necessary to reduce every item in the church budget, except the pastor's salary. That had already been cut down to \$1200. Statements were mailed out to members whose giving was in arrears in order to solicit more funds. The situation deteriorated to the point that the next year, in March of 1933, the trustees asked the pastor himself to donate \$4.00 of his own money each Sunday in order to make up the \$208 deficit in his salary. This would raise the remainder of the church's share in his salary so that they could qualify for the subsidy from the Presbytery. This continued for another five years.

There were a few improvements made during these lean years, however. In May 1930, a hot air heater and bathroom were added to the manse. The shed behind the house that had provided the latter service was torn down, and a back porch was built in its place. In the fall of 1937, major renovations were underway in the sanctuary. Having received \$2000 from the will of Mrs. Louisa Whitar, the interior walls were stripped and new plaster surfaces were placed. Work continued with the painting of the outside of the church the next year. The interior of the church was painted in light brown tones. A highly talented artist painted a scene on the flat front wall behind the pulpit. It was a very convincing 3-dimensional view of Greek columns supporting and outlining an apparently recessed platform area. All the way around the ceiling, he painted what appeared to be sculptured wooded trim, matching that around the roof on the outside of the church. Though none of this was real, all agreed that it appeared to be so.

During Mr. Cook's ministry, the church suffered two great losses. On August 5, 1935, Charles H. Livingston died, having served as an elder for 30 years. For much of that time he had been clerk of the Session. In addition, he had been Sunday School Superintendent for 26 years. Almost every church, at any particular time, can quickly identify one individual or family whose inspiration, support, and service are the backbone of the church's life. This was certainly the case with Charles Livingston and the Livingston family. It was his daughter, Carrie, who, as an organist and as an organ and piano teacher, kept fine music in the heart of the people. A second daughter, Frances lived in [later years \[death date?\]](#) near Buffalo, New York. A third daughter, Norma, brought happiness into the lives of many through her jovial spirit. Her death came in December, 1977. A son, Justus, provided able service as an elder for 17 years, and followed in his father's footsteps as Sunday School Superintendent until his sudden death on October 24, 1941, at the age of 40. The tradition was extended and continued all the way through [\[year?\]](#) with Justus's widow, Lillian Wilson, who served in the various capacities of church organist. Sunday Schoolteacher and willing servant in whatever area of need was placed before her, was for many years one of the most

deeply cherished saints in the congregation, known and loved by all for her commitment, love, and faithfulness.

Mr. Cook remained in Fairton until 1941, living here with his wife and his bachelor son, Ruel, who was elected to the office of elder in the church. Sunday evening services were preceded by youth meetings. The "Christian Endeavor Society" provided a variety of programs for the additional training of the teenagers. Mrs. Cook assisted here and in Sunday School, a very capable Bible teacher.

The summers were highlighted by anniversary services in the Old Stone Church. Rev. Cook devoted much time and effort to these occasions. Each year, having solicited advertisements from community business establishments, special commemorative brochures were printed with summaries of the church's past and programs for the worship services held on Sunday afternoons. These took two forms each summer. One was a simple bulletin format, focusing on the Sunday afternoon service. The other, entitled "The Memorial Echo," was an ambitious publishing venture, running to twelve full-size pages. This included advertisements, devotional articles, program notes on guest speakers, lists of former pastors, directories of current church officers, and highlights of the church's history.

In each service, Rev. Cook sought to include a number of ministers from South Jersey churches, as well as a distinguished guest preacher. Special music was provided by soloists and the Fairton Choir, under the direction of Paul Batten. The following is a list of preachers for the occasions.

1930 - Dr. Russell Paynter, Philadelphia

1931 -

1932- Rev. Charles Cureton, Hammonton

1933- Rev. Karl Wettstone, Philadelphia (pastor of Bethany Temple Presbyterian, where Carrie Livingston served as organist)

1934-

1935 -Dr. C. O. Bosserman, Cape May

1936-

1937- Rev. E. Lansing Bennet, Merchantville

1938- Rev. William Sanford LaSor, Ocean City

1939- Rev. Melvin Campbell, Wenonah

1940-Dr. David Berry

1941 - Dr. Albert E. Gregg, Audubon

Rev. Cook obviously invested a great deal of time into researching and preparing these anniversary programs and materials. He was even more diligently involved in a ministry to the needy during the depression years. He had previously been engaged in work with the Salvation Army and continued to do so during the lean years of the '30s. Bridgeton had a rescue mission in which Rev. Cook labored many hours. His evangelistic efforts there, coupled with the meals and beds provided by the mission, were instrumental in the conversions of many who had wandered into town, bereft of hope. But his diligence there often left the Fairfield Presbyterian Church without the pastoral care it needed. With disappointing frequency, he would step into the pulpit on Sunday morning and announce, "Your pastor has been too busy ministering to the needy at the

mission in Bridgeton this week to have time to prepare a sermon.” On those occasions, the members would look from one face to another with comprehending nods, realizing that the sermon that followed would be his “old standby”, a message entitled “What Do You Have in Your Hand?”, based on the stones David held in his hand to conquer the giant, Goliath.

Not only was Rev. Cook’s ministry at the mission an evangelistic one, but so also was the majority of his preaching in Fairton. At one point, loudspeakers were even mounted on the front of the church to broadcast the messages from special evangelistic meetings into the windows of neighboring homes. There was some feeling of dissatisfaction with the content of the sermons, the congregation desiring more than the basics of the plan of salvation in order to grow beyond the fundamentals of the faith. But because of his age and his approaching retirement, his ministry continued. Though he was loved by the people, there was a sense of relief in the church when, in 1941, after twelve years, Rev. Cook departed for retirement in Kansas. Within a few years, word reached the church of his death there.

C. UPS AND DOWNS [1942 to 1947]

The next thirty-five years saw incredible changes in the nation and the church. Powerful forces were acting to alter the complexion of American life at every level. World War II became a reality for the country after Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. It was concluded with the inauguration of the atomic age over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The post-war economy brought new prosperity to almost every home, and the churches benefited from this as well. Church attendance and building increased on into the fifties, after the Korean Conflict. Cold War pressures continued to make Americans take seriously the message of the Bible about sinful human nature and the need for divine regeneration to subdue evil.

Fairfield’s new pastor arrived on the eve of this new age. Arthur Clarence Haverly arrived in Fairton with his wife, Etha, on New Year’s Eve, 1941, directly after their honeymoon. Born in Scranton, Pennsylvania on September 4, 1914, Haverly had graduated from Lafayette College in 1936 and then went to Iran as a missionary and teacher until 1939. He had then returned for seminary training at Princeton, and graduated in May, 1942, having commuted from Fairton during his final months of study. An excited delegation of members from Fairfield participated in his ordination in his home church in Scranton in June. He was then installed as pastor in Fairton.

The church experienced a new spirit of optimism under his leadership, despite the pressures of the war. There was much activity during his three and one-half years at the church. A new roof was installed and the building received a fresh coat of paint, costly expenditures at the time, but fully paid for by sacrificial giving from the members. A great deal of work was invested in re-typing old session minutes and streamlining financial procedures. A part of this involved elevating the standards to qualify for the office of trustee to make this an office of spiritual competency as well as business efficiency. Pastor Haverly would later write of his time in Fairton with very pleasant memories.

“Spiritually, I fondly believe, I led the people and gave them growth in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus. Bible study was emphasized and besides being carried on in a good sized Sunday School with classes for all, was carried on in smaller groups in the manse. The supremacy of

the Kingdom of Christ, the love of God in the gift of His Son and His giving of Himself to be born, live as a human and die, and His glorious victory over death for Himself and us, were basic to all we taught and preached.”

Fellowship dinners, youth meetings, women’s activities, and a couples’ club all took place in a spirit of love and happiness. The Haverly’s happiness was especially increased with the arrival of a daughter in October, 1942.

The church played its part in the war effort, not only through the prayers of its pastor and members, but also through the offering of its young men for duty in the armed forces. Rev. Haverly had visited both Germany and Russia before the war and had seen godless communism first hand. He spoke out boldly while in Fairton, warning against American cooperation with Russia. He saw great dangers in assuming that a nation such as this could safely ally itself with communist regimes. At that time, his views seemed dangerous to some. America needed allies to help win the war. Haverly’s comments led to his being reported to the FBI, and to the rumor that he flew a Nazi flag. Agents came to the manse, and laughed at the incident after talking with the minister and his wife, and even offered their personal, private agreement with his concerns.

In early 1945, feeling that God had accomplished all that He intended through the ministry of this particular servant, Rev. Haverly announced to the congregation that a pulpit nominating committee should be elected. He would be leaving the Sunday after Easter.

The following years found Arthur Haverly serving his Saviour in a number of roles and in a variety of locations. From Fairton, he went to the Belvidere Church (1945-1947), and then to Hallock, Minnesota (1947-1951). In 1952, he became pastor of the church in Sigourney, Iowa. From 1954-1957, he served the Presbyterian Ministers Fund by opening its service in Canada. In 1957, he returned to the pastorate, serving in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania (1957-1959), Bridgeport, Connecticut (assistant pastor in youth work, 1959-1961), and Manchester, New Hampshire (1961-1966). After a summer with Springfield College in Massachusetts, he moved to Chicago to work as a youth counselor for an agency of the state of Illinois (1966-1968). In 1968, he transferred to the position of chief actuary for the state of Illinois’s Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. In 1977, he retired and moved to Montgomery Center, Vermont where he engaged (though retired!) in developing a Christian wilderness area, “Terra”, with his son. [etc?]

The church in Fairton had a relatively short wait before its new pastor, John O. Taxis, was on the scene. Taxis, born on February 9, 1917 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, had attended Ursinus college and Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, graduating from that institution in 1943. The Presbytery of East Hanover ordained him on June 6, 1943. He served as a home mission pastor in Hopewell, and then as pastor of a two church field in Emporia before coming to south Jersey in 1945.

The Fairfield Presbyterian Church experienced new vitality in its economic status during Taxis’s ministry. The church had been receiving aid from the presbytery’s home mission budget, but now achieved the important goal of being a self-supporting congregation.

Music had been carried on in the church with a volunteer choir, led by Mr. Paul Batten, and a small reed organ, played by Lillian Wilson. A delightful development came in 1946 with the gift of funds for a new organ. Thanks to the generosity of Miss Mary Mitchell, money was available to purchase a modern instrument. An organ committee

was selected, composed of Mary Mitchell (the donor), Lillian Wilson, Paul Batten, John Taxis, and former organist Carrie Livingston who was then serving as organist at the Bethany Temple Presbyterian Church in West Philadelphia. The committee traveled to the John Wanamaker store in Philadelphia where they decided on a Hammond organ.

The instrument was delivered to the church that fall. On it was placed a memorial plaque with the inscription:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN MEMORY OF
WILLIAM MITCHELL
NANCY MC MITCHELL
SOPHIE M. THOMPSON

On Thursday evening, November 21, Carrie Livingston played the dedication recital. Her selections included the following:

"Air for 'G' String"	Bach
(Memorial to Charles H. Livingston)	
"Psalm 19"	Marcello
"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"	Bach
"Largo (Xerxes)"	Handel
(Memorial to Miss Mary Stites)	
"Adoration"	Porowski
"Jubilate Deo"	Silver

After prayer, a scripture message, an anthem, a litany of dedication, a dedication message, and a hymn, Miss Livingston concluded with an organ postlude.

"The Land of Hope and Glory"	Elgar
(Memorial to Justus H. Livingston)	
"Praise the Lord"	Karg-Elert

A reception was held afterward in the church chapel.

In 1947, Rev. Taxis left Fairton to assume the post of pastor of the church in West Collingswood. From there he went to Bethesda, Maryland as Minister of Education, and then as pastor of the 1st Presbyterian Church in Northville, Michigan. From 1960-1968, he was Minister of Education in the 1st United Presbyterian Church of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. He was called as pastor of the Sunset Church there and served until his retirement in 1978. He then assumed the position of Field Representative for Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, though continuing to live in Ft. Lauderdale, where he served as Stated Clerk for the presbytery [\[until when? More?\]](#)

In the fall of 1947, Paul and Louise Stauning drove into Fairton in their 1933 Chevrolet. He was in the closing days of his seminary training and was coming as a candidate to be viewed and heard by the Fairfield Presbyterians. A call was extended, and he began his labor as pastor of the church. Stauning, born in Camden on August 11, 1923, had attended Drew University and served as a cadet chaplain in the U. S. Navy during the war years before entering seminary. His ordination was accomplished in January 1948 at the hands of the Presbytery of West Jersey.

It was not a time of construction for the church, but of rebuilding and further strengthening the spiritual lives of the members. Regular services on Sunday mornings and evenings, mid-week services, and even an early morning men's Bible study in the church balcony on a week-day brought Bible instruction from a very competent minister. Rev. Stauning was pursuing graduate studies at Temple University in Philadelphia while in Fairton.

In 1950, a series of anniversary services were held, marking the centennial of the building of the sanctuary in Fairton. An entire week was devoted to the observance with special programs each day, March 26 through April 2.

Sunday: Rev. Stauning, "The End of the Beginning"

Monday: Rev. Joseph A. Fernandez, a converted Roman Catholic Priest, "Our Protestant heritage"

Tuesday: All-day Bible reading, utilizing 25 people and covering all four gospels and Acts

Wednesday: Organ recital by Harold Wright with guest soloist and Rev. Stauning's devotional message

Thursday: Ministers of Bay Shore Ministerium with organ recital by Carrie Livingston

Friday: Rev. Jarvis S. Morris, "Presbyterianism", with special music from Fairfield's choir

Sunday morning: Rev. Stauning, preaching at regular worship service

Sunday afternoon: Men's chorus from Princeton Seminary.

A special program was printed for the occasion. It noted that a new heating system had been installed in the church during the previous winter.

Rev. Stauning stimulated a healthy interaction with other ministers and churches in the area. Occasionally, joint hymn-sings were held on Sunday evenings with people from a number of Bay Shore churches participating. A rotation system determined which church would host the program. A joint Vacation Bible School was held with the Fairton Methodist Church. The local public school facilities were used to accommodate the tremendous number of children who came.

In 1951, Rev. Stauning accepted a call to serve as pastor in Collingswood, remaining there until his move to the Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, congregation in 1958. The Pine Street Church in Harrisburg welcomed him in 1965, enjoying his ministry until 1977. From 1977 to 1980 he served as organizing pastor of a new congregation in Spring Lake, Florida, near Sebring. It was his expectation to enter a "free-lancing" ministry in writing and broadcasting in 1980 when the Staunings moved to Hersey, Pennsylvania. He had been engaged in both of these fields for many years, serving as editor of numerous trade journals and producing radio materials used in syndicated broadcasts in many areas of the country. But a more active life awaited him. Soon after the move, he was invited to become director of the Office of Development and Community Relations for the large Polyclinic Medical Center in nearby Harrisburg. [\[more?\]](#)

Again, Fairfield Presbyterian Church was to find pastoral leadership from a young man, just out of seminary, filled with enthusiasm and optimism about the work of the ministry. Ralph Albert Tamaccio was ordained in May, 1951, by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and served the Fairfield church until 1954. Born in Philadelphia on July 14, 1921, he attended the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, and Princeton

Theological Seminary. From 1942 to 1946, he had seen active duty overseas in the U.S. Army.

The work at Fairton continued to develop, with increases noted especially in the Sunday School and youth. The church entered into several very extensive expansion projects.

“Phase I” involved remodeling the church balcony. It had never been needed for seating worshippers. But with the need for Sunday School classrooms, the decision was made to close it in and install a level floor. Frank Meehan accomplished the task. Bathroom facilities were still available only in “outhouses” located in the yard between the church and the manse. A large wrecker was brought in to hoist the old buildings out of the way, and a new inside bathroom was installed near the kitchen area adjoining the chapel.

“Phase II” was even more ambitious. The congregation of about one hundred members would need to raise \$10,000 to accomplish it, an amount that to some in the church seemed absolutely impossible. But achieve it they did! Bonds were sold to finance the construction of additional Sunday School rooms. It did not involve a new building, but the unusual concept of digging out underneath the existing Sunday School building. This saved money, left room for additional expansion on the limited ground space, and provided a large multi-purpose room that was naturally insulated by the earth around it.

Tamaccio also continued the tradition of his predecessors in holding vesper services in the Old Stone Church during the summer, marking the anniversaries of the congregation’s long and distinguished past.

Rev. Tamaccio’s ministry at Fairton was concluded in 1955, when he and his family moved to Hammonton, New Jersey. He served as pastor there until 1958, going to Bristol, Pennsylvania in 1959; Carney’s Point, New Jersey in 1963; Cape May in 1966; and Amherst, Ohio in 1978. [\[more?\]](#)

On July 3, 1955, a special service was held in the Old Stone Church. It had double significance for the people of Fairton. It marked the 275th anniversary of the founding of the congregation. And it was the occasion for the ordination and installation of Fairfield’s 38th pastor, Lincoln Tracy Griswold. The congregation had voted to extend the call to him on Easter Sunday, April 10.

Griswold, born in 1931, had attended the College of Wooster (Ohio) and then Princeton Theological Seminary, graduating in 1955. After coming to Fairton, he, like Rev. Stauning before him, travelled back and forth to Temple University in Philadelphia, receiving the S.T.M. degree in pastoral counseling in 1957. He brought a variety of experience with him to the field in Fairton, having worked as a counselor in YMCA camps and in a French-American camp in France, as an assistant in the Haddonfield and Point Pleasant Churches in New Jersey, and as a social worker in the inner city area of Detroit.

The ordination service in the Old Stone Church provided pastor-elect and congregation with a memorable incident, that has been painfully relived in some form by almost every pastor (and many members) since then, if not in the Old Stone Church then in the building in Fairton. On that summer day in 1955, the guest preacher was Dr. Donald MacLeod, professor of homiletics (preaching) from Princeton Seminary.

“I shall never forget seeing a large horse-fly land on Dr. MacLeod’s neck during the sermon, but the fervor and intensity of the preacher was

such that, even when the voracious insect left and only a trickle of blood was visible running down his neck towards his white shirt collar, Dr. MacLeod did not so much as pause in his eloquent delivery. I did not exhibit the same level of imperturbability when, the following Thanksgiving Day, I was preaching at the joint service in the Methodist Church and put my hand down on the pulpit without realizing until too late that the pulpit was also occupied by a wasp. The sting I received halted my sermon right in the middle of a sentence! I finished the sermon, but I don't think I ever finished that particular sentence. The concern expressed by members of the congregation, and the numerous home remedies for bee-sting, remains more firmly lodged in my memory than the sting itself, because it was indicative of the warmth and genuineness of the people who made our first pastorate unforgettable."

In other more positive developments during Griswold's ministry, improvements in the church lighting system was accomplished and a memorial cross was provided for the communion table by his wife Jean, given in memory of her father Guede Coghlan. He encouraged a continuation of music for the worship of the church. The church experimented with students from Westminster Choir College as choral directors. One of these students was almost lost when a piano she was attempting to move by herself toppled over onto her.

From Fairfield, the Griswolds went to Lansdowne, Pennsylvania in 1958; Chatham Township, New Jersey in 1960; and then, having earlier followed Paul Stauning's footsteps in Fairton, once more succeeded Stauning as pastor of the church in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia. He was engaged in directing the ministries of that prestigious congregation for thirteen years, 1966-1979. During that period he completed the Doctor of Ministry degree at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1975, with a project in thanatology. Since retiring from the Chestnut Hill congregation, he and his wife have resided in northern Philadelphia. [He served for several years as moderator of the Presbytery of Philadelphia for the United Presbyterian Church. \[more?\]](#)

Fairfield's next pastor was a local boy, a native of Deerfield, located ten miles north of Fairton. Allen Ackley was born there in 1925 and grew up in the heart of south Jersey's farm country. He served as an Air Force pilot in Korea for 5 years during the Korean War. He then attended Wheaton College and gained his seminary training at Columbia (Decatur, Georgia), Temple (Philadelphia), and Eastern Baptist (also in Philadelphia). From 1958 until his graduation from Eastern Baptist in 1960, he served as Student Supply for the Fairfield Presbyterian Church, commuting in order to complete his studies.

Once again, the Old Stone Church was the site of an ordination and installation service for this congregation. In May 1960, Allen Ackley became Pastor for the people of Fairton, who had already grown to love him deeply in his two years with them as a student. It was not the last time the old building was to hear Ackley's voice. Summer anniversary services continued, with sometimes as many as 300 people in attendance.

The church was to grow very significantly during the enthusiastic Bible-teaching ministry that Rev. Ackley conducted. A program of home visitation endeared him to the hearts of the people. His warm personality was instrumental in attracting many new faces to the services. Near the end of his ministry, the church launched a live radio broadcast of the morning services. Each Sunday morning, occasionally during the middle of a sentence, the service having already begun, a cue would be given from the

back of the church, and the Pastor would welcome those at home joining them on radio station WSNJ from Bridgeton.

Up until this time, the chapel was a single open space with several Sunday School classes meeting at the same time in different parts of the room. During Ackley's ministry, it was divided into separate rooms with folding partitions with a central hallway and new restrooms.

A spirit of friendliness enveloped the church and was extended to many in the community through Bay Shore hymn-sings, church picnics, adult and youth fellowship activities, and expanding Sunday School attendance. Ackley's wife, Billye, trained and directed a small chorus of young women to sing in the church services. They received invitations frequently to bring their music to churches throughout south Jersey.

During his ministry in Fairton, Ackley also had duties with the New Jersey Air National Guard as a chaplain. One Sunday a month, he was in Atlantic City for the afternoon. In 1964, he was called to active duty and left Fairton to spend the next ten years in years in Florida, Alabama, Alaska, and Greece. In 1974, he was placed on reserve duty, and spent the next year and a half supplying pulpits. From [19?? to 19??] he served as Pastor of the Riverside United Presbyterian Church in Daytona Beach, Florida. His military service continued as a chaplain (Lt. Col.) in the U.S. Air Force Reserves. Even while living in Florida, Ackley continued to produce a radio show aired on WSNJ in Bridgeton, "Words and Music," which he hosted until the time of his death. [Any fond recollections here from current members, or other info? Date of passing?]

Ackley was succeeded in the Fairfield pulpit by Vaughn Christian Thurman. Born in Philadelphia on March 3, 1936, Thurman was called by the church to come following his graduation from Princeton Theological Seminary. The Presbytery of West Jersey conducted his ordination service on Wednesday evening, July 28, 1965, again in the Old Stone Church. Rev. George Mosgovoy, from Drexel Hill, preached for the occasion, with other commission members Rev. David Riddle (Freehold), Rev. David Campbell (Collingswood), Rev. Terry Fouse (Cedarville), Rev. James Hinch (Hammonton), and ruling elders Addison Bragg (Fairfield) and Ralph Ramsom (Cedarville).

Fairton's pulpit nominating committee had first heard Thurman at the Osceola Church in Clark, New Jersey, where he had been serving as a student assistant. He returned to that church, with many friends from Fairton, for his wedding on August 28th. He and his wife, Diane, began their life together in the manse at Fairton, and were soon joined by a son, Chris.

His year and a half in Fairton saw services continued in the summers in the Old Stone Church, as well as regular pastoral duties with the congregation. In 1967, he left for a call to a church near Newark. More recently, he has affiliated with the Assemblies of God, serving at a lay training center in Baltimore.

D. CRISIS AND CONTROVERSY [1967 to 1970]

The year 1967 was a difficult one for the Fairfield Presbyterian Church, and especially for its elders. The congregation was again without a Pastor. A pulpit nominating committee was elected and the search began to find man committed to the Christ of the Bible and possessing the ability to lead these people in their growth in grace. A second problem was growing even larger on the horizon. That was the issue of

changes within the United Presbyterian Church. It was in 1967 that the denomination effected a drastic revision in its doctrinal position.

Presbyterians in America had been divided several times before the Civil War. The issues were over evangelistic methodology and the danger of Reformed doctrines being “watered-down” by unwise unions. But in 1861, the national conflict drove a lasting wedge between Presbyterians in the north and Presbyterians in the south. A resolution introduced at the 1861 General Assembly by Dr. Gardiner Smith called on all Presbyterians to affirm their loyalty to the federal government. The war kept many southerners from attending the Assembly meeting in Philadelphia, so the resolution passed easily. But the effect of it was to demand that Southern Presbyterians, both members and pastors, declare themselves treasonous to the government under which they were then living, the Confederate States of America.

Representatives of the churches in the south met in Augusta, Georgia in December 1861, and organized themselves into a new denomination, the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. After the war, reunion with the “Northern Presbyterian Church” was never achieved. The “Southern Presbyterian Church” then assumed the name [“the Presbyterian Church in the United States \(PCUS\)”, which it carried until its convergence with the United Presbyterian Church in the USA to form the present-day Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\) in 1983.](#)

For many years, the PCUS held more tenaciously to its traditional doctrines and practices. The church in the north, the [United Presbyterian Church U.S.A.](#), formed by the merger of the Presbyterian U.S.A. and the much smaller [United Presbyterian of North America denomination in 1958](#), more quickly absorbed the viewpoints proposed by “higher criticism.” This new scholarship from late 19th century Germany, joined with the Barthian neo-orthodoxy of the early 20th century philosopher-theologians, had made an impact by the 1920s in the [Presbyterian USA](#).

In that denomination, a statement was circulated in the 1920s and gained the signature of 1293 ministers. This “Auburn Affirmation” opposed the notion that it was essential for ministers in the church to believe in the full inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth of Christ, the miracles of Christ, the substitutionary character of His death on the cross, and His bodily resurrection. These five cardinal doctrines were described by the signers of the affirmation as legitimate theories, but not to be held as binding on any. Other interpretations could be equally valid and acceptable by the ministers of the church. Such doctrines, generally described by conservatives as “modernism”, increased in influence and acceptability until a group of ministers and congregations took action, many having been ejected from the membership and deposed from the ministry of the Presbyterian USA denomination to form the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) [in 1938](#).

This new denomination declared itself committed to the system of doctrine in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms. These had been the doctrinal foundations for Presbyterianism for centuries, and were increasingly coming under attack in the Presbyterian USA. The Westminster doctrines were being ridiculed as outmoded, pre-scientific, and unacceptable for the modern world.

These pressures finally came to a head in the 1960s with the writing of a new Confession of Faith. Many members of the Presbyterian USA still loved and used the Westminster standards. It would have been impossible to reject them completely. So the novel approach was taken to compile a “Book of Confessions” that would include the

Westminster Confession and Shorter Catechism with several other doctrinal statements, along with the new "Confession of 1967." Accompanying this move, the ordination vows were to be changed. Instead of requiring that every teaching elder, ruling elder, and deacon, at the time of his ordination, be required to profess that he sincerely adopted the Westminster standards as containing the system of doctrine taught by the Scriptures, new ordination vows would ask the candidate only to be willing to be guided and taught by these documents.

Though great controversy was generated in the church over these proposed changes, they were adopted and enacted. In 1967, Fairfield found itself not only without a pastor, but in some ways without a denomination as well. The Presbyterian USA was no longer the same church. Once committed to a system of doctrine, it now had none. Once a confessional church, it was no longer. Once boldly proclaiming the historic distinctives of the Reformed faith, the doors had now been opened for theological aberrations of all kinds. The umbrella of belief was wide enough to accommodate almost any who desired to stand under it, regardless of the views that might be held.

There had been other forces at work in the church as well. The denomination, now known as the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, was viewed by many to be changing from Presbyterian to a hierarchical government, contrary to its own Book of Church Order. Instead of a church whose authority was lodged in the elders in the local churches, it was becoming a monolithic structure with authority concentrated in the hands of a few officials serving at the top in executive board positions. Smaller churches like Fairfield often felt that they were being ignored, stepped-on, and pressured to "conform." Informal conversations with Fairfield's elders alerted church members to the fact that serious consideration was being given by some presbytery officials to closing the church and directing that its members travel to Bridgeton to worship in a larger congregation.

Other issues were further from home and not felt as keenly or discussed as intensely by Fairfield's session. But they were issues, nonetheless. Giving to world missions no longer resulted in proclaiming salvation through Christ alone. Increasingly, reports pointed to a mission force that was proclaiming the gospel of neo-orthodox universalism. Because of Jesus's incarnation, God has joined humanity to himself. In His death as the elect of God, Jesus has won salvation for all. The missionary committed to this understanding of redemption went out, not to tell people that they must be saved, but to announce to them that though they didn't know it, they were already saved. Sunday School Curricula, newly revised, confidently taught higher critical views of the origin and authority of the Bible. The "myths" of Adam and Eve, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the miracles of Christ, and certainly the inerrancy of the Bible were all replaced by more rational views of the Bible as a human document that merely recorded men's impressions after significant encounters with deity. General Assemblies proceeded with ever greater boldness to lead the denomination down the path of ecumenism. The great hope of the leading minds of the church was for rapid achievement of the goals of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU — nicknamed "cuckoo" by some conservatives!) in bringing about one superchurch, the unification of all denominations into a single organization.

But the key irritant at Fairton was the use of church funds in causes that the members and officers of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church felt went contrary to the Christian gospel, and instead furthered the Kingdom of Satan. Foremost among these was the work of the World Council of Churches, which received significant contributions annually from the coffers of the UPCUSA. The final straw for Fairfield's session was the

denomination's decision to contribute \$25,000 of the Lord's money to the defense fund for Angela Davis. This young woman, a California university professor, was to face murder charges for her role in the escape of several prisoners who subsequently pulled the trigger of a shotgun they had wired to the head of a criminal court judge. The fact that Miss Davis was a member of the Communist Party and openly proclaimed her views made the act even more detestable to church members in Fairton who felt that their contributions to the church were being grossly misused.

Other conservative congregations were equally distressed by this act, but did not leave the denomination because of it. Fairton's decision to leave came as a result of utter exasperation in its attempt to secure a new Pastor acceptable to them. A series of candidates were proposed to the presbytery's Ministerial Relations Committee. One after another was rejected as unacceptable. Repeatedly, veiled suggestions were made that the church was too small to survive, and should be dissolved. There were two UPCUSA churches four miles away in Bridgeton, and another even closer in Cedarville which could easily and profitably accommodate the people of Fairton. Further suggestions from the committee made the session at Fairton feel like their church was to be a guinea pig. At the Presbytery's insistence, the session at Fairton agreed to sign a form, stating that the church was an "Equal Opportunity Employer," and would accept women and minority candidates.

The pulpit committee's greatest disappointment came over a candidate from a New York Seminary, Mr. Terry Gardner. His preaching at the church had pleased everyone. He was coming with such regularity that he was virtually (though unofficially) the Stated Supply for over a year, from 1968 to 1969. Though the congregation earnestly desired to call him as Pastor, he was rejected by the Presbytery's Committee.

The church had been without a Pastor since 1967. Spirits were at a low, unmatched in the recollection of members. The years without pastoral leadership were bound to take their toll. There was no regular pattern of preaching, though capable men brought messages each Sabbath. Illness and loneliness went unattended, apart from those in the church who compassionately offered their time and prayers. Systematic instruction in the Scriptures was lacking. It was not unexpected that little by little, members drifted away. Attendance, giving, and enthusiasm all decreased with each passing year. Of those who remained with the church, some saw the situation as one of hopelessness. The others viewed it with desperation.

PART FOUR: CHALLENGE [1970 to 1980]

A. Separation [1970 to 1972]

Feeling that they had been pushed to the brink, the session began discussing what options would be theirs if the church sought to be released from the UPCUSA. It was hoped that in another fellowship, where there could be greater agreement doctrinally, there might also be more sympathetic assistance for a church that was now desperately ill. Providing the leadership for these considerations were elders Art Lewis and Pat McHugh and Trustees Fred and Karl Dix. It took very little effort to convince the other officers and members that escape from the UPCUSA was the church's only hope for survival.

By the summer of 1970, the Presbytery of West Jersey had been notified that the church was considering drastic action. The Presbytery's Ministerial Relations Committee moved quickly to set up a meeting to discuss the issues and to dissuade the church from this plan. At the committee's suggestion, the elders agreed to dissolve their pulpit committee and accept a Stated Supply while the presbytery sought to give more assistance to the church. Presbytery's suggestion was that the church call a young woman who had recently graduated from seminary as Pastor. Though somewhat reluctant to follow this course of action, the call was extended by the session to this young woman, but she rejected it. No further counsel was received from the Presbytery's committee.

In March 1971, a petition was mailed to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of West Jersey announcing that the Fairfield Presbyterian Church desired to be released from the UPCUSA. Over the next six months representatives of the church met with Presbytery officials repeatedly, but were not persuaded to desist from this course of action. Informal conversations implied that the Presbytery might be willing to grant the church's request with a minimum of restrictions. It was even suggested that the church would be permitted to keep its sanctuary, Sunday School facilities, and manse for the token payment of one dollar.

It was with these expectations that the officers made their plans to sever ties with the UPCUSA. On May 23, 1971, a congregational meeting was held to adopt this petition.

"In order to enter a fellowship more congenial to our interests we, the undersigned, officers and members of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church, Fairton, New Jersey, respectfully request the Presbytery of West Jersey to sever the relationship between the Presbytery of West Jersey and the Fairfield Presbyterian Church, and to grant the congregation a quit-claim deed to its property for the sum of one dollar or other adequate compensation."

This was signed by the members of the congregation and sent to the General Council of the presbytery with the following list of facts to justify the decision.

1. The church has not had an active pastor since Nov. 1964 with a vacant pulpit for the past 4 years.
2. During the past 6 years, three prospective candidates were not approved by the MR Committee.
3. The last prospective candidate was turned down in June 1970. One of the reasons given by the MR Committee was that the congregation was too small to meet the minimum salary requirement.
4. On June 30, 1970, the MR Committee requested that our pulpit nomination committee be dissolved and that we enter into a Stated Supply situation for one year. This was agreed upon by the Session.
5. In October 1970, the MR Committee submitted 2 candidates. The Session interviewed both and extended a call to one who turned the offer down. There were no more meetings and no more candidates submitted. This ended our correspondence.
6. During this period of 6 years our membership has dropped from 146 to 65 and our total receipts for the year of 1964 were \$18,523.00. The receipts for the year 1970 were \$11,922.00.

7. As a result of our petition, meetings between the Session and the Strategy Committee were held during May and June. All of these facts were discussed in detail with the committee. As a result of these meetings, the committee has submitted their recommendation to the Council.
8. This leads us to the request of our petition, in order that we might carry on a much needed ministry in a small town without being bound by minimum salary requirements that we cannot afford.
9. We feel that a full time ministry should be carried on in Fairton (population - approx. 1000) since the other 2 churches do not have full time pastors.

Everyone at Fairton felt great relief in having taken this difficult step, but were confident that the Lord had led them into it, and that He would lead them through it. And the preliminary indications had pointed to a simple and prompt response from the Presbytery, acceding to the church's request in every particular.

But it was not to be simple at all. On August 17, 1971, the clerk of the session, Arthur Lewis, received a letter conveying the response of the Presbytery's Strategy Committee. Their report to the General Council resulted in the following decision.

"We recommend that Presbytery appoint a Commission to dissolve the Fairfield Church of Fairton, N.J. with the following provisions:

1. Presbytery retain the ownership of the Old Stone Church and Cemetery and that negotiations be entered with other churches of the Presbytery for its maintenance and use.
2. That the new independent congregation in Fairton not be permitted to use the name "Presbyterian" in their church name.
3. That the other properties involved be sold to the new independent congregation at a negotiated fair price. If no agreement can be reached, the properties are then to be offered at public sale. All monies received shall go for the new church development staff."

Here were conditions drastically different from those suggested in preliminary conversations and then expected by the officers and members of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church.

The next few months were filled with discussions in Fairton about the newly imposed conditions. Everyone in the church felt that they had been taken advantage of, but they had neither leverage nor resources to use in opposing the Presbytery. The loss of the Old Stone Church was a severe blow for older members of the church whose memories of decades of fond associations in the building were very real. The refusal to allow the church to use the name "Presbyterian" seemed incredible. The UPCUSA held ownership to its official name, but not to the adjective "Presbyterian" which was used by a number of other denominations in the country. (This restriction was removed in 1979 by conciliatory actions offered by gracious representatives of the Presbytery. The church was enabled once more to become the Fairfield Presbyterian Church. This came about on the initiative of the UP Presbytery to request that Fairfield take the Old Stone Church back from the Presbytery because of the cost and inconvenience of maintaining it.) And the sudden demand that full market price be demanded for the properties was impossible to meet.

Since 1971, increasing numbers of congregations have successfully opposed the notion that the denomination owns all properties of local congregations. Such an "episcopalian" structure places all control in higher judicatories, when "presbyterianism" has traditionally been known for just the opposite: authority at the sessional (but not "congregational") level. Later civil court rulings have upheld the rights of churches to retain their own properties, purchased and erected with their own sacrificial labor and giving. But in 1971, these precedents had not been set. And even if they had been, the Fairfield Presbyterians were in no position to initiate the lengthy and phenomenally costly court battles that would have been required to defend themselves against the certainty of the Presbytery's contesting of their claims to the properties.

In October, representatives of the church met with a special commission appointed by the Presbytery. The church's case was heard, but no change was forthcoming in the Presbytery's determination. The bleak report was brought back to the people of Fairton. But they remained resolute. If necessary, all agreed, the property would be forsaken and they would start from scratch to bring a church into existence, with new facilities to meet the spiritual needs of the community. The treatment they felt they were receiving at the hands of the Presbytery and its commissions made them all the more determined to escape, regardless of the cost.

A second meeting was held between the "Fairfield Commission" of the Presbytery and representatives of the church. Present for the meeting were Arthur Lewis, Frederick Dix, Howard Cole, Melvin Wolbert, Patrick McHugh, Clarence Johnson, Lillian Wilson, and Harry Simpkins, along with the church's attorney, William Doherty, Jr. It was a long meeting, filled with angry words from both sides, that all would later regret. The people from Fairton were informed that the Commission was willing to negotiate over the selling price of the properties. A total price was announced of \$40,000 (\$20,000 for the church, \$7,000 for the manse and parking lot, \$13,000 for furnishings). The first offer by the Presbytery was for 50% of the value of the church itself. Discussions were both lengthy and heated. The final determination was that the church (never again to be permitted the use of the name "Presbyterian") could purchase their own property from the Presbytery for a total price (including all expenses and bills assessed the church) slightly in excess of \$4000.

This meeting was held on February 2, 1972. Reluctantly, the church representative brought the disappointing news back to Fairton. Still, they determined to proceed. On March 21, 1972, the Presbytery authorized the conditions offered by its "Fairfield Commission." On April 11th, the General Council declared the Fairfield Presbyterian Church dissolved, the congregation having agreed to submit to the conditions being imposed on them. On June 20, 1972, 67 members were certified to have voted to become part of the new Fairfield Church, an independent congregation. On November 25, 1972, a deed was delivered to the trustees of the Fairfield Church, sale of the properties having been concluded. In it, one provision stood out as if printed in bright red ink.

"PROVIDED, HOWEVER, that this conveyance is made upon the following EXPRESS CONDITION AND COVENANT, which is hereby declared to run with Tract No. 2 of the land hereby conveyed, and to which condition and covenant the party of the second part, for itself and its successors and assigns, hereby consents and covenants to observe and keep, that is to say, that if the party of the second part, or its successors or assigns, should use or suffer or permit the use of the word "Presbyterian", or any similar word or words indicating a connection with the

Presbyterian Faith, in its corporate or other common name, then the title and interest in and to said tract No. 2, hereby conveyed to the party of the second part, shall be and become wholly void, and said Tract No. 2 shall revert to and become revested in the party of the first part, its successors and assigns, without re-entry or any other act or ceremony whatever, as fully as if these presents had not been made.”

The church was out. It had cost dearly. But there was a new feeling of hope.

B. AID FROM THE OPs [1972 to 1976]

As soon as consideration was given to leaving the UPCUSA, the elders knew that they were going to need outside counsel. It was to come from sympathetic hearts in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Once the church had exhausted (and was exhausted by) the list of suggested candidates from the Presbytery, the session found men to supply the pulpit from many different sources. The entire summer of 1970 was taken care of by a student from Princeton Theological Seminary, Ronald Russell. He was a Baptist, preparing for service in Canada. He recognized the church’s doctrinal position and appreciated its dilemma. He made the suggestion that the session might find both compassion and compatibility in Westminster Theological Seminary of Philadelphia. This is the institution organized by Machen, Van Til, Stonehouse, and Wooley at the time of disenchantment with “modernism” in the Presbyterian USA of the 1920s. It was a seminary, though remaining independent, that had provided training for a great number of men entering the ministry of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).

A phone call to Westminster resulted in contact with Rev. LeRoy Oliver, Director of Development for the Seminary. Having served as a pastor, he was able to sympathize with the agony of the people in Fairton. And as a minister in the OPC, he was in a position to give them wise counsel in ecclesiastical matters. He came immediately to meet with the session for a briefing on the situation in the church. He promptly agreed to provide regular preaching from the Seminary’s resources. Faculty members such as Ray Dillard, Jay Adams, and Harvey C. Oliver himself; and a number of different students brought a new kind of preaching that delighted the officers and members of the church. Not only was there hope of escape, there was hope of a new dimension of ministry and teaching in their midst.

By January of 1972, with details almost complete for their separation from the UPCUSA, the congregation had become sufficiently enamored with the pastoral abilities of one young man from Westminster that arrangements were undertaken to call him as the minister of the church. Charles Dennison was completing his senior year of seminary. On January 9, 1972, the congregation voted to call him as their pastor. By the end of the month, he and his wife, Virginia (“Ginger”) had moved to Fairton, living first in the home of Karl and Florence Dix, while the manse was being renovated.

The New Jersey Presbytery of the OPC met in April to examine Dennison for licensure. His ordination exam would come after graduation from Westminster in May. His ordination was held on Tuesday evening, May 9. The service was led by Rev. George Cottenden, with Dr. Richard Gaffin preaching, Rev. Robert Marshall charging the pastor-elect, Rev. LeRoy Oliver charging the congregation, Rev. Lendall Smith offering prayer, and with the participation of Fairfield’s elders Arthur Lewis and Clarence Johnson. One of the first visible changes that came with a new pastor was the reactivation of the

Sunday evening worship services, long since defunct, renewed at first on a once a month basis.

Rev. Dennison's ministry came at a time when the church needed everything that a pastor could possibly give: encouragement, counsel, instruction, motivation, guidance, and leadership. The many years that the Fairfield Presbyterian Church had continued without active pastoral leadership testified to the faithfulness of the elders who performed an invaluable ministry in the interim. But it was by divine design that a Pastor be placed at the head of a church— that a Shepherd be given responsibility over a flock. It was now finally possible for the Biblical patterns of church leadership to be renewed.

The need for solid doctrinal foundations was immediately evident to Dennison. Without delay, his preaching and teaching began to focus on essentials of belief. The church had long held to evangelical commitments. These had grown even stronger during the tense years leading to separation from the UPCUSA. But the lacking dimension was clearly articulated convictions about the Reformed faith. It had been a long time since the Westminster standards had been actively used within the life of the church. These were revived, especially in catechism studies with youth. "Sovereignty", "Election", "Depravity", and "Providence" were re-introduced into the vocabulary of the Fairfield Presbyterians. Conversations turned from marigolds and petunias to "T-U-L-I-Ps", as the five points of Calvinism were drawn out in their Biblical authority and practical benefits.

Changes are never easy for people accustomed to the regular and the predictable nature of country life. This was especially so in the introduction of doctrines which seemed to many to be not only new but also confusing and unnecessary. But with great determination, Dennison continued to explain the system of doctrine that had for generations been the foundation for the church in Fairton, and thousands of others like it in the traditions of the Reformed faith. Little by little objections were overcome, the newness wore off, and hearts were persuaded in the truthfulness and significance of these teachings. With encouragement from the session, Rev. Dennison held to his convictions and found increasing numbers of people who stuck with him coming to the same conclusions.

Not only was there the need for instruction in doctrine, but also in polity. The dissatisfaction in the UPCUSA had forced Fairfield, even before separation, into the position of a practically independent church. The late 1960s saw the church contributing less and less to denominational causes, participating less and less in denominational programs, and using less and less of the denominational materials. When Fairfield was declared to be an independent church in 1972, it was a declaration after the fact. It had been virtually independent for years.

Pastor Dennison began early to lead the elders, and then the congregation at large, back to an understanding and implementation of Biblical forms of church government. "Presbyterianism" as a form of polity had become suspect because of the church's feelings about the UPCUSA. It was an extremely difficult task to persuade the people that this form of church government need not be feared just because of ways in which it had been abused by one Presbyterian denomination.

In February 1973, the session agreed to begin a pattern of study of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Both elders and congregation were to be introduced to this denomination through study of its Book of Church Order, guest speakers on Sunday mornings (ministers from the OPC), and information supplied by the pastor. This plan

was carried out over a period of several years in hopes that the congregation would be induced to move out of its independent status into full membership in the OPC. It was a key goal of Dennison's ministry that would be achieved only in part. The church would become Presbyterian, but PCA instead of OPC.

By the summer of 1976, after four years of ministry as pastor of the Fairfield Church, Charles Dennison had achieved more than many pastors whose labor might have stretched to twice that period of time. The congregation was back on track in its understanding of doctrine. The session was back on track in its understanding of polity. And the course ahead looked much smoother, despite the roughness of many of the changes that had been necessary since 1972. Feeling that he had accomplished the work God had sent him to do, Dennison made himself available for a call to another church.

In July 1976, he announced his resignation, to be effective the following September. At that time he and his family moved to Sewickley, Pennsylvania (a suburb of Pittsburgh) where he was installed as pastor of the Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church, where he served with his wife and [four](#) children until [19??](#) [\[Update?\]](#)

Before his departure, a special service was held in the Old Stone Church. On Sunday July 4, 1976, as the nation celebrated its bicentennial, a joint service of praise was conducted in the venerable old building. That afternoon at four o'clock, pastors and members of the Fairfield Church, the Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church ([Vineland?](#)), and the First United Presbyterian Church in Cedarville met together to give thanks to the God who had been the key to the nation's unparalleled blessings. Rev. Robert Ekhardt, pastor of the Vineland church, brought the sermon, "God and our Nation," based on Daniel 4. It had been many years since regular summer services had been held in the Old Stone Church. The next summer would see them revived as an annual event.

C. SEARCH FOR A NEW HOME [1976 to 1979]

It had been only a few years since the church had ended its agonizing struggle to leave the UPCUSA. That had been preceded by years of looking for a pastor. The news of Dennison's impending departure brought back to mind the fears of long, disappointing searches. The fact that the church was now independent caused even greater worries. Who could supply the committee with names? Who could counsel them in their investigations? Where would they begin? The pulpit committee that was elected carried the burden of concern for a congregation that looked toward the prospects of a new pastor with some degree of dismay.

But the pulpit was to remain vacant for an unusually short time. Two months after the Dennisons moved to Pittsburgh, Westminster Theological Seminary, with the aid of Rev. LeRoy Oliver again, sent an ordained minister to preach on Sunday, November 14, 1976. Rev. Oliver had been sending students and faculty members each week to fill the pulpit at Fairfield. This Sunday, the preacher was a man who had recently moved to Philadelphia with his family to pursue graduate studies. He was not sent to Fairton as a candidate, but an alert pulpit committee immediately inquired into his interest in the Fairfield pastorate.

A second visit was arranged for communion Sunday, December 2nd. Further conversations over that weekend resulted in his decision to accept a call, should it be offered. A congregational meeting was held on December 19th, and Rev. Lawrence

Charles Roff was asked to come as Fairfield's 42nd pastor. Larry and Betty, with their children Elliott and Jennifer, moved into the manse during the first week of January 1977.

Roff, born in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 4, 1946, had grown up in Miami, Florida. A graduate of Belhaven College and Reformed Theological Seminary (both in Jackson, Mississippi), he had served as a Pastor in the Southern Presbyterian Church (PCUS) in Marks, Mississippi before returning to Miami. From 1973 to 1976, he had served as Minister of Education at the Kendall Presbyterian Church in Miami. After six months as the Stated Supply for the Second Presbyterian Church in Greenville, South Carolina, he and his family had come north for additional study.

The Fairfield Church had not chosen to move into the Orthodox Presbyterian Church during Dennison's ministry [why?]. At the time of his departure, he suggested that the session consider the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) as a denominational home and as a source for ministerial service. Without realizing it when he first came, the session had become interested in a minister in the PCA in November when the Roffs first visited.

The PCA had come into existence in December 1973, for many of the same reasons that the OPC had been formed nearly forty years earlier. Liberal theology and oppressive church government had been a growing concern for many congregations and pastors in the south. The PCUS seemed to be drifting, if not racing, away from its historic moorings to Biblical teachings and Reformation practices. Groups of ministers and laymen banded together in the 1960s to seek to redirect the PCUS to return to its roots, but they met with little success. In 1973, representatives of concerned churches met together in the Briarwood Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Alabama to constitute the General Assembly of a new denomination. The Presbyterian Church in America would experience phenomenal growth in the following years, in part from other churches leaving their denominations, but most especially from the organization of new congregations by an energetic and effective team of church planters. By 1979, the PCA had grown from 260 churches to 460, from 41,232 members to 77,008.

Fairfield's new pastor, already a member of the PCA, would bring to this congregation an opportunity to learn about and consider becoming a part of America's newest and fastest growing Presbyterian denomination. When the church left the UPCUSA in the early 1970s it was never with the intention of remaining permanently independent. The search for a new home would be renewed with fresh interest.

On January 30, 1977, a commission from the PCA's Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic conducted a service at Fairfield to install Lawrence C. Roff as pastor. With Rev. Ronald Harding (Baltimore) conducting the service, Rev. William Iverson (Newark) preaching, Dr. Palmer Robertson (Westminster Seminary) charging the pastor and Rev. LeRoy Oliver (Westminster Seminary) charging the congregation (as he had done for Dennison's ordination), joined by ruling elders Brookes Smith (Baltimore) and Mirchell Hall (Newark), Roff's ministry officially began.

The program of study that Pastor Roff had anticipated in his move from Miami was permitted by the session. In September, 1977, he entered the master's program at Princeton Seminary, continuing through the spring of 1978 to travel to the seminary one or two days each week. He graduated in May with the Th.M. degree in church history, having concentrated on researching the history of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church. His interest in church history was directed toward recalling to the minds of the members of the church the great distinction that was theirs in being part of a congregation so richly

blessed by God for so many years. During his first summer at the church, anniversary services in the Old Stone Church were revived, having been neglected for some time. On four successive Sunday afternoons in July he preached through the book of Philippians for a congregation of nearly one hundred worshippers seated in the venerable old structure.

Much attention was being given to the matter of denominational affiliation. Occasionally, representatives from both the OPC and the PCA were invited to speak at the church to give members further opportunity to hear of the importance and the benefits of being a part of a denomination. At a congregational meeting on January 11, 1978, the members voted to ask the session to provide them with specific information about the PCA during the following year. With printed information, guest speakers, and special studies, this was done. Nearly a year later, the session brought its complete report, including a recommendation, to a congregational meeting. On November 8, 1978, the Fairfield Church voted to petition the Mid-Atlantic Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America that it be received into the denomination. This was accomplished after a commission examined the elders and brought its report to the January 1979 Presbytery meeting. Following several postponements because of snow, representatives of the Presbytery held a service in the church in February, with Rev. Robert Smoot of Baltimore presiding, and the congregation was officially recognized as a part of the PCA. Fairfield Church had a new home.

In recent years, there has been every attempt to so direct the church's life as to provide opportunities for growth, service, and fellowship on the part of every member. Prior to his coming, there had been Wednesday night Bible studies conducted in various homes by the pastor. After a few months of similar studies at the manse, Pastor Roff suggested a mid-week family program incorporating a weekly covered dish supper with time for Bible study afterward. For several years, this schedule enabled more people to be a part of the fellowship and teaching that had always been available. A highlight of these dinners has been the new custom of holding a congregational Christmas banquet on a Wednesday prior to the holidays. With over one hundred people crowded into the festively adorned and colorfully decorated fellowship hall, a magnificent turkey dinner was served each year, followed by the exchanging of presents among Sunday School students and teachers. An adult fellowship, revived from its earlier years of noted success during Tamaccio's ministry, included hayrides, canoe excursions, Valentine banquets, and progressive dinners.

The increasing number of teenagers coming to church with their families brought youth needs before the session in the summer of 1978. That fall, the session called a young man, studying at Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia, to join the pastor on a part-time basis, assisting as Youth Director, in order to develop a program of ministry to 5th-12th graders. George Syms brought a jovial spirit and keen mind to the task, and soon had young people meeting with him on Sunday evenings each week, as well as in occasional social activities on weekends. George, with his wife Debbie travelled to Fairton each weekend, returning Sunday evenings to his academic responsibilities as a seminary student.

During its years of independency, the church had entered into the financial support of several missionaries in the OPC. Concern for missions was perpetuated by the Women's Missionary Society and by cooperation in mission conferences directed by the Faith OPC in Pole Tavern. In addition, PCA missionaries visited the Fairfield Church. Gene Boyer (France), David Hamilton (Ecuador), Gary Nantt (Korea), and Ron

Michaels (Mexico) each stimulated excitement and prayer with their descriptions of the work to which God had called them.

The loss of members by death is always saddening in a small congregation. Especially severe to Fairfield was the blow felt in the spring of 1977 when Marian, and then Fred Dix (wife and husband) were lost within three weeks of each other, the first by cancer, the second by heart disease. Both were well-known and deeply loved in the church and in the community. Fred (trustee of the church and co-owner with his brother, Karl, of Dix Brothers Farm) and Marian (Sunday School teacher) were immediately the objects of great numbers of memorial gifts to the church. At the suggestion of family members, these gifts were designated for use in the purchase of a new organ. Fred, having loved organ music, and his daughter Eileen Dix Gosweiler having served, with others, as church organists, made it a natural decision. The antiquity of the aging, 35-year old Hammond organ contributed to the wisdom of the decision.

The fund grew rapidly after the death of Norma Livingston in the fall of that year. Her sister, Carrie, had been an organist of some renown in the Delaware Valley. Soon thereafter, the Melvin Wolbert fund, so named in honor of the deceased elder of the church who had passed away during Dennison's ministry, was incorporated into the organ fund by request of his family. The officers encouraged specific donations to the fund, and by the next year, it had grown to \$10,000, including memorials to over 20 individuals.

The session appointed an organ committee and charged its members with the responsibility of recommending a suitable instrument. James Sutton (chairman), William and Eileen Gosweiler, Lillian Wilson, and Arthur Lewis worked, studied, and visited before recommending the Allen organ. A contract was signed. Magnificent speaker cabinets, designed not only for sound, but also for beauty, were built under the supervision of Merle Rain. With electrical work provided by Frank Meehan, the church was ready when the organ was delivered in November 1978. It was used in the Christmas cantata that year, and then heard in dedication programs in January. A dedicatory service was held on January 7, 1979, with many musicians from the church playing, and concluding with selections by the new church organist, Mrs. Joy Ide.

The dedication recital was presented on Friday evening of that week, compliments of the Grafton Piano and Organ Company, from which the Allen Digital Computer Organ had been purchased. Mr. Richard Van Auken from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, played the first full organ recital the church had heard since Carrie Livingston's program in 1946. His program was as follows:

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"	Manz
"Adagio in E Minor"	Marcello
"Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide"	Bach
"Toccata and Fugue in D Minor"	Bach
Hymn Settings	Van Auken
"The Church's One Foundation"	
"Beautiful Savior"	
"When Morning Gilds the Skies"	
"God of Our Fathers"	
"Suite Gothique"	Boellmann

"Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee"	Elmore
"Look Up, My Soul, to Christ, thy Joy"	Elmore
"Scherzino" (The Squirrel)	Weaver
"Les Petite Cloches"	Purvis
"Toccata in F Major" (Symphony V)	Widor

The organ would be heard in concert again that spring in a program by Pastor Roff, himself an organist (and [pursuing, part-time, doctoral studies in hymnology from Westminster Seminary](#)), and in the fall of 1979 in a piano-organ duo-concert by Pastor Roff and Rev. Robert Gramp (Pianist) of the Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Bridgeton.

Other special musical programs in the past few years have provided enjoyment for all ages in the church. Twice James Ward has electrified an audience of youth and young adults with his unusual vocal and keyboard talents. Folk groups "His Folk" (from Miami Christian College) and "Son Shine" (from North Carolina) have appeared. Father-son and mother-daughter banquets have also been sources of a variety of forms of entertainment.

The church sanctuary has seen its share of improvements. In November 1979, polished brass chandeliers were hung in the sanctuary, replacing the simple glass globes that had been installed in the 1930s. These beautiful fixtures were a gift of Mrs. Phyllis Nitshe in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Preston. A matching lamp for the narthex was soon after installed, in memory of Robert Smythe.

Following the sudden death in December 1979 of Karl Dix, members and friends expressed their tributes to this man, a capable farmer and trustee and devoted husband and father, in memorial gifts to the church. These were used in the renovation of the church entrance, replacement of the two interior doors with a single double door, new lights at the back of the church and on the exterior, a new floor for the narthex, and a covered porch for the front steps; these were all suggestions of his wife, Florence.

D. CELEBRATING 300 YEARS [1980]

1980 found the Fairfield Presbyterian Church completing its plans for a tricentennial observance which was honoring to the Lord of the Church and beneficial to its members and friends. Under the direction of Florence Dix, a committee worked, involving each person in the congregation, to make September 21, 1980, the celebration of a lifetime.

The schedule for the day was designed to direct attention to the past, in what God has done, as well as to the future, in what He may yet have in store for the Fairfield Presbyterians. The program was as follows:

"10:00 - Worship in the Old Stone Church. An authentic communion service in the form of the early 1700s, with the congregation dressed for the day in colonial attire, and hearing a sermon preached there by Ethan Osborn.

12:00 - Old-Fashioned Picnic Lunch. With blankets spread under the cedars at the cemetery, former pastors will reminisce about their ministry in Fairton.

1:30 - Guided Cemetery Tours. With a running narrative of the history of the church, guides will conduct those remaining through both of the old cemeteries.

2:30 - Memorabilia Display. The church fellowship hall will be filled with old bibles, photographs, communion ware, bulletins, and records from the church's past.

4:00 - Festival Service of Praise. With former pastors, visiting dignitaries, special music, and a sermon by Dr. James M. Boice of Philadelphia, worship for the King will be offered."

5:30 - Outdoor Reception. Refreshments will be served and fellowship provided, with special honor paid to former pastors of the Fairfield Presbyterian Church."

MORE??

PART FIVE: GROWTH & STABILITY ? [198? to 2005]

PASTORS OF THE FAIRFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1. John? Bradnor	(?)1680-1695	23. J. N. Wagenhurst	1897-1900
2. Thomas Bridges	1695-1704	24. John Bamford	1901-1903
3. Joseph Smith	1708-1709	25. W. J. Trimble	1903-1906
4. Samuel Exell	1712	26. William Bullock	1907-1908
5. Howell Powell	1715-1717	27. Nelson B. Kline	1909-1910
6. Henry Hook	1718-1722	28. William M. Seel	1912-1914
7. Noyes Parris	1724-1729	29. Franklin Weatherwax	1914-1917
8. Daniel Elmer	1729-1755	30. Nelson B. Kline	1918-1922
9. William Ramsey	1756-1771	31. Jacob Dyke	1922-1923
10. William Hollingshead	1773-1783	32. J. Howard Douglas	1923-1928
11. Ethan Osborn	1789-1844	33. Clinton Cook	1929-1941
12. David McKee (co-pastor)	1836-1838	34. Arthur Haverly	1942-1945
13. Beriah B. Hotchkin	1845-1850	35. John Taxis	1945-1947
14. David C. Meeker	1851-1855	36. Paul Stauning	1947-1951
15. James Boggs	1857-1866	37. Ralph Tamaccio	1951-1954
16. Hiram E. Johnson	1866-1869	38. Lincoln Griswold	1955-1958
17. Samuel R. Jones	1869-1874	39. Allen Ackley	1960-1964
18. Samuel R. Anderson	1875-1883	40. Vaughn Thurman	1965-1967
19. Henry Reeves	1883-1885	41. Charles Dennison	1972-1976
20. Frank R. Symmes	1886-1890	42. Lawrence C. Roff	1977-1984
21. Thomas W. Pulham	1891-1893	43. Allan Story	1985-1992
22. George Warrington	1894-1987	44. Michael B. Schuelke	1992-present

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