

# HISTORY OF THE ORANGEVILLE REFORMED CHURCH.

PRIMITIVE PERIOD, 1815-1865.

[CONCLUDED.]

THE ZION REFORMED CONGREGATION.

The first regular Reformed service in this neighborhood was held in 1842 by Rev. D. S. Tobias in the old Stucker school house where this church is now located. In the winter of 1843, on about the 1st of January, Mr. Tobias was assisted by another Rev. Leader in holding a protracted meeting. There being good sleighing, the people came from near and far in great sled loads. As the school house was too small, they obtained permission to hold their service in the old church at Stillwater. After occupying this church one week, they were denied further privilege, and they were obliged to return to the school house. During this revival a number made a profession of religion who virtually became subsequently the founders of the Zion congregation. In 1842 to 1857 as a preaching point, the congregation, without church organization, was served by Revs. D. S. Tobias, H. Funk and W. Goodrich. On the 17th of February, 1857, the Zion church was dedicated, and on the following Saturday the Zion church was organized with thirty members. These were principally from Orangeville and the St. James congregation. Rev. Goodrich, in whose time the Zion church was built, continued to serve this congregation till 1863. During his pastorate of this congregation he baptized 37 and confirmed 29. During his brief pastorate, of less than two years, Rev. E. B. Wilson baptized 4 and confirmed 8 and Rev. A. Houtz to present time baptized 24 and confirmed 30. This congregation in the way of baptisms and confirmations, has made equal progress with the other congregations of the church, but it has sustained more losses by death than any. Death has laid its relentless grasp upon a number of its members and depleted its ranks. This congregation, however, has not been retrograding, but has been making progress slowly. The aged and aged are good and there exists a harmonious feeling among the members. It is surrounded by considerable confessional influence which seems to retard its progress somewhat. There has not been enough self independence maintained in the congregation and Sabbath school. Without favor, the Zion church has been in commandments, enthusiasm and Apostolic Creed should be used. Rather than sacrifice the doctrinal expressions of our faith to the caprice of a few persons who in faith and religious culture differ from us, we had rather sacrifice the favor of attendance of those who would make disturbance.

There is a number of young persons in this neighborhood who are not regularly connected with any religious denomination. Having attended various kinds of religious services, they are much interested in the Christian religion, and going from one church to another, have become vacillating and trifling. Attempting to be everything they are nothing. Their energies are scattered and feeble without a church name and without a church home. Far better would it be if they would identify themselves with a church of their choice and fill their places in that vineyard. We want more concentration of church life and energy in this congregation. A free and unreserved display of our creed, doctrine and faith, and a bold advocacy of adhesion to the same. As a congregation who enjoys a charter furnished by the General Synod, we should obey that charter as our constitution. To be less compromising and more independent as a church, is the best attitude we can assume.

About the year 1850, Amos Saville Peeler started a Bible class in the old Stucker school house, which was kept up for years, and finally developed into the present Zion Sabbath school. She may therefore be regarded as the founder of the Zion Sabbath school, and perhaps in a certain sense, the founder of the Reformed church in that neighborhood as the Sabbath school gave rise to the preaching point. The Sabbath school during the last few years has made considerable progress in the number of its attendants, but number is not the highest end. Its main object should be to prepare for the church. It is the nursery of the church. In so far as this object is not reached, the Sabbath school is a failure. The Sabbath school, at all events, should be under the direction of the church.

The planting of shade trees was woefully neglected when this church was built. Had this been attended to at the time, the church would now be surrounded by a beautiful grove. We recommend that a rod of additional ground be leased or purchased on the south side, and that there be suitable trees planted around the church.

In the winter of 1883-84, the Zion church was greatly improved in the interior by a new gallery, pulpit, carpets, matting, painting, kalsomining of the walls and an organ also by a new chandelier and bracket lamps.

[Last the reader should think my criticisms severe. I simply recommend them as suggestions.]

THE ORANGEVILLE REFORMED CONGREGATION.

The first regular Reformed service was held in the old Union log church, located at the McHenry graveyard, two or three miles west of Orangeville. This church was jointly owned by the Lutheran and Reformed. It had a gallery on three sides, and an old fashioned pulpit. Rev. Jacob Duffenbach preached here during his ministry in this county (1815-1824). It is quite probable that each denomination worshipping here during that period, did not have service more than once in a month. Rev. Larson became Rev. J. Duffenbach's successor and served this congregation a few years. Tradition says he was a fine speaker, very gentlemanly in his appearance and had a very agreeable and attractive wife. Death soon ended his useful career and for years his remains have been peacefully slumbering in the old graveyard at Bloomsburg. His congenial companion soon followed him to the spirit world. As co-workers in the earthly vineyard of their blessed Master, they now cease from their labors and have possessed their heavenly inheritance.

About the year 1828 or 29 the congregation moved their place of worship to a building in Orangeville. This house was located where the residence of Col. H. R. Kline now stands on Mill street, and is said to have been built for the double purpose of day school and worship. Here they continued to worship till about the year 1849 when they moved to the Union church, their present place of worship.

The Rev. Isaac Shellenham became the immediate successor of Rev. Larson at the old Union log church and contin-

ued to serve the Reformed interest here till it moved to Orangeville. His survivors tell us that he traveled on foot to his various appointments, that he was humble in spirit and faithful in the performance of duty. His piety was greater than his education it is true, but nevertheless he was a true spiritual shepherd and his paternal spirit secured for him the well merited title of Father Shellenham.

In the year 1829 Rev. Daniel S. Tobias became pastor of this congregation, now located in the town, and continued to serve it till 1851. In the meantime a growing want for English service necessitated the employment of a pastor in this language. Accordingly in the year 1844, the Rev. Henry Funk became the colleague of Rev. D. S. Tobias, the former serving in the English and the latter in the German. This double arrangement continued till the close of Rev. Tobias' pastorate of this congregation, when the transition from the German language to the English language was completed. Rev. Funk remained the sole pastor during the following three years and then declining health necessitated his resignation.

His successors in regular order were Revs. W. Goodrich, E. B. Wilson and A. Houtz. This congregation at one time was the largest in the neighborhood, but by removals and deaths its ranks have become very much depleted. Within the last ten years, however, its membership has been doubled. Since 1840 it has been worshipping together with the Presbyterian and the Lutheran congregations in the neighborhood. During all this time, with very rare exceptions, there has been maintained a spirit of unity and fellowship between these congregations. Being of one faith, one baptism, and of one Lord, they all generally attend when there is divine service, and especially when the Lord's Supper is administered. In this church has often been felt by many a devout worshipper the sentiment of that beautiful and fraternal hymn:

"Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above."

Here, too, the experience of the worshipper has given sacred sanction to the doctrine of the communion of saints. To worship here is a sacred privilege and pleasure. Hallowed by the sacred associations of forty years, the old Union church will soon undergo repairs which will beautify the temple of our dear departed ancestors and do honor to their posterity.

PREVIOUS REFORMED CONGREGATION.

Previous to 1838 the Presbyterian brethren worshipped in a log church located where the present Union church now stands. The Reformed at that time had no organization there, but worshipped at the upper Briarclark church. The old log church becoming dilapidated, it became necessary to build a new one. The Presbyterian brethren had overtures to the Lutheran and Reformed in the neighborhood to unite with them in building a new Union church. The agreement was entered into in 1838 and rebuilt in 1842.

With the building of this church began the organization of the Hillside Reformed congregation. It was organized mostly of members from the upper Briarclark congregation. This congregation was served by the following pastors: Revs. Isaac Stuby, Henry Hoffman, John W. Loewer, A. L. Hotenstetel and A. Houtz. From the time of its organization till 1871, this congregation belonged to the North Susquehanna charge. At the annual meeting of classes held at Shamokin in 1871, it was transferred to the Orangeville charge.

The members of this congregation are generally well-to-do farmers. The community is known as a sturdy and somewhat worldly in their pursuits. And while the latter is still quite prominent, we are happy to say the people are inclined to be somewhat more spiritual minded, and more liberal in their contributions to benevolent objects. That this congregation is behind the others in some particulars cannot be denied, but its former associations have done much to shape its character. It was at one time under the control of a minister who belonged to the Independent and Synod. This spirit is occasionally seen yet, but is fast dying out. It once belonged to a charge having eight or ten congregations, and was not accustomed to do much for the pastor. And it has just made the transition from the German to the English language. Brother Hotenstetel, the last pastor who preached in the German language and A. Houtz the first regular English pastor. Within the last few years, the Hillside church and graveyard have been greatly improved, which has awakened a church pride in the people. The Sabbath school is well patronized and ably conducted. The relations of the two denominations is harmonious and peaceful. The prospect of the Reformed congregation here is good. It has taken a higher stand in the sphere of moral and christian obligation. The atmosphere, however, effects not only the banister of this place but we are sorry to say so the attendance upon divine worship, but not so much so the attendance at the Fair or election. A more regular and better attendance, especially in the afternoon, would be a better manifestation of the christian life and zeal. The singing in this church is not so good as it might be. As each denomination is too weak to have a good choir of its own, and as there is ample material in the three denominations to form a good choir, why not organize a union choir like that at Orangeville? Wake up brethren and move in the line of progress.

A. H.

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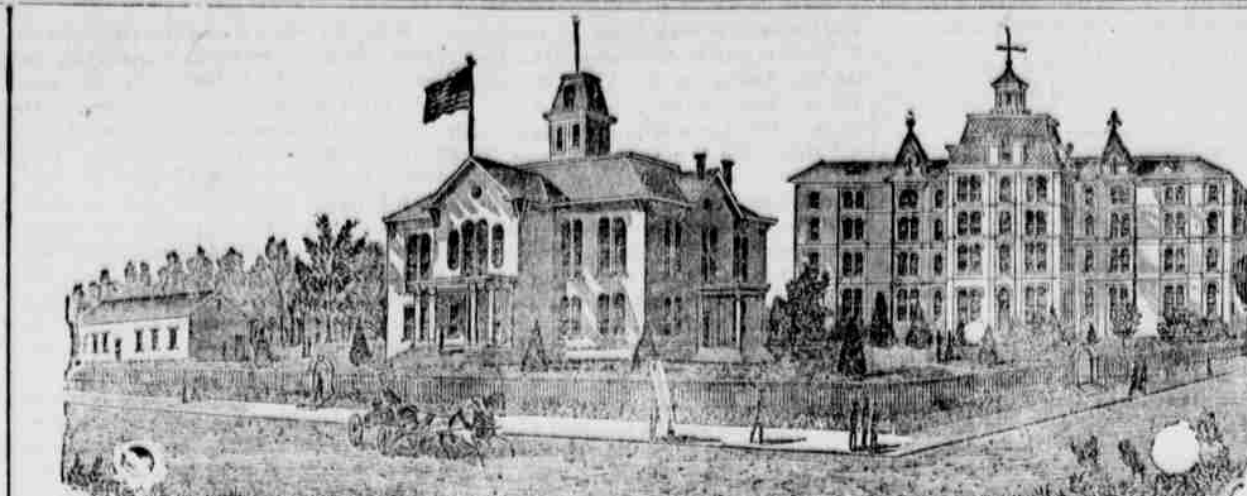
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