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WHITSETT HISTORICAL MONOGRAPHS - No. 1.

LANDMARKS AND PIONEERS

AN ADDRESS

By **William Thornton Whitsett, Ph. D.**

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LANDMARKS AND PIONEERS.

(By William Thornton Whitsett.)

(Extracts from an address delivered at St. Pauls Lutheran church, near Burlington, N. C., at the historical celebration Sunday, August 16, 1925.)

Earliest Information About North Carolina.

10/1/15
It may always be interesting to recall the first knowledge that was obtained by white people about this particular part of our country. All intelligent people in Europe were awake to the news of the New World soon after its discovery in 1492 by Columbus. As the years passed more definite information was secured through various agencies. We can note only a part: Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition of 1584; John Lawson's travels in 1700; various explorers and expeditions at different early dates, and more especially for this part of central North Carolina, the results following the settlement at Jamestown, Va., in 1607. The question as to why the people of the Lutheran, Reformed and Moravian faiths came into central North Carolina is in part answered when we learn how they secured information of this particular territory. Lutheran and Reformed people were pouring into this Alamance-Guilford-Randolph section from 1720 on to 1770, and during this fifty year period thousands came for permanent settlement. Moravians came in 1753 and in large numbers in the years after, making settlements in adjoining Forsyth county to the west. How did all these people learn of this favored section? Certainly they did not come blindly without any previous knowledge of their destination. All these—Reformed, Lutheran and Moravian—were originally from the same section of Europe; closely re-

lated by habits, kinship, occupations and religious teachings and ideals. The information possessed by one branch was the common property of all. These early North Carolina settlers came in most part from that region known as "The Palatinate," which country lay on both sides of the Rhine river, sections now belonging to Bavaria and Baden. As loyal Protestants they had suffered terrible persecutions. In 1622 the chief Palatinate city, Heidelberg, was burned by General Tilly, and the immense University library robbed of its treasures. Their only sin was their Protestantism. If we may believe the great historian, Seckendorf, the greater number of Palatines were Lutherans. From such a stock as this came the North Carolina settlements of the Lutheran, the Reformed and the Moravian people. To remain in Europe and believe in the Augsburg or the Heidelberg confessions of faith was simply to court a violent death. No wonder, then, that all information about the advantages of the New World was eagerly desired. Some of these sources we know well; let us now learn about one of whom we seldom hear, but who by the knowledge he spread of this region exerted much influence in determining the trend of these earlier settlements.

John Lederer in North Carolina, 1669-1670.

On December 19, 1607, the vessel, Susan Constant, commanded by Captain Christopher Newport, a craft of one hundred tons burden, sailed from England, and on May 13, 1607, landed at Point Comfort, pushed on forty miles up the river which they named the James after King James, and laid the foundations for the first permanent English settlement in the New World at Jamestown, Va. Later Capt. John Smith was made president of the colony, and did much to

make it a success. In 1608 Capt. Smith made a map after exploration, wrote a short account of the country, and sent them to England. Capt. Smith was followed in his rule of the colony by Lord Delaware, by Sir Thomas Dale, and in 1649, after the execution of King Charles I, Sir William Berkeley was made governor of Virginia.

John Lederer, a Lutheran from the Palatinate, had come into the colony about 1660. He was a good Latin scholar, and well posted for his day on geographical matters. He soon attracted attention by his ability, and Governor Berkeley selected him to lead an expedition for further explorations. Three expeditions were sent out during 1669-1670 to explore the regions that lay south and west of the James river. Dr. Hawks, the historian tells us: "Berkeley commissioned Lederer to make explorations, and three several expeditions were made. The first, from the head of York river due west; the second from the falls of the James west and southwest, which brought him into Carolinas; the third from the falls of the Rappahannock westward towards the mountains." He passed through North Carolina, and into South Carolina, as far south as the Santee river. At this time there were two small colonies in eastern North Carolina, one on Albemarle sound, the other on Clarendon (now Cape Fear) river. No whites were in South Carolina. Lederer's journal of his travels written in Latin was translated by Sir William Talbot, Governor of Maryland who praises the literary ability of Lederer. Gov. Talbot published Lederer's journal of his explorations. Lederer's start is thus described by himself in his journal: "The 20th of May, 1670, one Maj. Harris and myself, with twenty Christian horse (horsemen) and five

Indians marched from the falls of the James river in Virginia towards the Monakins, and on the 22nd we were welcomed by them with volleys of shot. * * * Here inquiring of them the way to the mountains, an ancient man described with a staff two paths on the ground. * * * The 3rd of June we came to the south branch of the James river." Space forbids further quotation from this most interesting description of conditions in 1670.

John Lederer's explorations in 1669-1670 when known through his journal which as stated was published by Sir William Talbot after translation from the Latin in which it was written must have exerted great influence upon those back in Europe who were looking and longing for a home in the New World. The fine climate, the wonderful opportunities, and the hope of greater religious freedom, turned many eyes in this direction, and in 1680 only ten years later a tide of emigration to America began which during the decades following drew tens of thousands to these shores from the very region from which John Lederer himself had come. Beyond doubt, Lederer's journal was the prime cause for hundreds of Lutheran, Reformed and Moravian people turning their eyes to that land "south and southwest of the James" that we now know as Piedmont North Carolina. True history seeks for causes and effects, and it seems strange that so few historians even mention such men as John Lederer, Louis Mitchell, John Lawson, Col. William Byrd, and others who wrote journals of exploration and accounts of conditions as they found them in this Western World in the earlier days. These early accounts were powerful in their effect in turning the attention of home seekers to the re-

gions described. Nothing could be more convincing than the words of an eye witness, and Lederer's account carried weight for this reason. We have no doubt that many a man sitting by his Rhine river fireside hundreds and hundreds of miles away was fired with the desire and the determination to find his permanent home in Piedmont Carolina by the glowing accounts of some of these earliest explorers. The turmoils of European governments, especially the evils outgrowing from the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) forced sober-thinking men to look for more desirable homes. Many a home was finally established on the Yadkin, the Catawba, the Haw, and the Eno, because of the information spread by John Lederer and others who like him braved a trip into new and hitherto unexplored territories.

We can never know just how much influence was exerted by the reports of these earliest explorers, but we do know that settlements rapidly followed. Without going into particulars we may mention settlements as follows: The Dutch Lutherans on James Island, South Carolina, in 1674; the Palatinate colony at New Bern, N. C., in 1710; the Swiss at Purysburg, S. C., in 1732, and at Orangeburg, S. C., in 1735, followed by the Saxe-Gotha settlement in Lexington county, S. C., in 1737. Then came many others among them the Lutheran colony in Abbeville county, S. C., in 1763-'64. While these Lutherans were coming in such numbers, the Reformed people were also pouring in, and the Moravians at Savannah in the years between 1735 and 1740, and then that splendid Moravian effort at Wachovia (now Salem, N. C.) in Forsyth county in 1753, after the purchase by Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg of nearly one hundred thousand acres of land, from

Lord Granville's part of the interest he held in the lands owned by the "Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas." When this exploring party consisting of Bishop Spangenberg, Lord Granville's surveyor, William Churton, and others came through what is now Alamance and Guilford counties in 1752 seeking desirable location for the Moravian colony they found what is now Alamance and Guilford counties, or rather what is now located between Greensboro and Hillsboro already occupied by the homes of Lutheran and Reformed settlers who were still pouring into this section by the hundreds every year. Bishop Spangenberg records in his journal on September 25, 1752, this observation: "Having crossed the length and breadth of North Carolina we have found that towards the mountaains (now Alamance, Guilford &c.) many families are moving in from Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and even New England; in this year alone more than four hundred families have come with horses, wagon and cattle. Among them sturdy farmers and skilled men and we hope they will greatly help Carolina."

Interesting Events in Local History.

The student of history can find much to reward his efforts in the particular locality in and around this church. This St. Pauls Lutheran church, located here in southern Alamance county, N. C., was long known as "Grave's Church" because of the original ownership of lands on which it is located. Although the church now possesses only eight acres of land, originally there were sixty acres in the church tract. The early settlers gathered for worship on or near these grounds many years before any formal church organization took place. They were directed in their worship by devout and conse-

erated men and women of their own number, and by occasional visiting mission preachers and workers of their own, and other denominations. The first formal organization took place in 1773.

We forget too easily our debt to the past. "The pyramids themselves, dotting with age, have forgotten the names of their founders." What we term the present is only an outgrowth of the past. Yonder splendid ancient rock wall, surrounding St. Paul's cemetery, and enclosing a space of near two acres is silent witness to the great and patient industry of those who slumber within its sacred enclosure. Thousands of dollars would not today equal or replace this wall, still it was built more than a century ago, and even tradition fails to keep the names of the willing hands that must have labored so long and faithfully to erect it. Travel far and wide and one will seek long to find so workman-like and enduring a piece of work as this fine work in stone. Let us not forget, "Dies diem docet" (one day teaches the other) and as the Earl of Shannon has said: "Vivit post funera" (virtue lasts beyond the silent grave.)

Settlers came into this and all the surrounding regions in great numbers beginning in 1720, and continuing in increasing numbers until about 1770 when the tide of immigration ceased on account of the brewing troubles that culminated in the Revolutionary War. These settlers brought with them their religious ideals, and their Protestant zeal. At first one place, and one house of worship served for both the Lutheran and the Reformed people. but as soon as they were able, they separated for worship upon different locations.

There were no quarrels or disagreements, as is sometimes supposed to have been the case; nothing of this kind, simply on the other hand each denomination became able to look out for its own interests. The Reformed people went to Old Stoner's church, now unhappily a forsaken and deserted spot, and also to Der Klapp Kirche which became later known as the present Brick church, and which was in the earliest day called "The Church on Beaver Creek" as referred to in the earliest records in our possession. Original church records still survive as kept by their very first religious leader, Rev. Samuel Suther, a name well-known among the Revolutionary records of the Reformed people of North Carolina. Some assumed historians have gone so far as to state that Whig and Tory differences between the Lutheran and the Reformed people account for separations; such is not the case; and a magnificent record for loyalty to the cause of freedom and liberty can be reliably established beyond any question for both denominations. If there be any other minister in all American history who attempted the wonderful work with his entire denomination that was attempted and so successful carried out by Henry M. Muhlenberg beginning his efforts in 1743, we have been unable to find record of such. Rev. Henry M. Muhlenberg attempted and largely succeeded in stirring up the entire American Lutheran Church to foresee the coming war of the Revolution, and to take a bold and resolute stand for independence. Those unfamiliar with his work and his successful efforts will be astonished to read his record in the quarter century that went be-

fore the Revolutionary War. His work and his success in his patriotic efforts constitute an imperishable record for the loyalty and patriotism of the Lutheran Church in the Revolutionary War. If it has any parallel we fail to recall it. Certainly a people who have been native to the soil of North Carolina and of these United States for 200 years, and who helped set up the very Temple of Liberty itself may justly claim to be classed as genuine, and original American citizens. No well-informed student of American history can deny this claim. There is glory enough for all in the story of the winning of American Independence in those days of 1771 to 1781, but American Lutheranism deserves its full portion based upon the undeniable facts and records of history.

St. Pauls and Adjoining Sister Churches.

In 1801 St. Pauls became wholly Lutheran; at that date the Reformed people ceased to worship in connection with this congregation. In 1803 St. Pauls church, joined with her near neighbors, Friedens church, and Low's church in helping to form the North Carolina Synod, the very oldest Southern Synodical body. This present building was erected in 1893; two buildings have stood here before this. St. Pauls once owned a one-half interest in the Friedens church parsonage; this was sold, and the connection severed with Friedens; it is now a part of the Guilford pastorate. Well-known early pastors here have been Rev. Charles Eberhard Bernhardt, Rev. Philip Henkel, Rev. Ludwig Markert, Rev. Jacob Scherer, Rev. William Artz, Rev. John D. Sheck, Rev. Samuel Rothrock, Rev. Chas. H. Bernheim, Rev. Whitson Kimball, Re. E. P. Parker,

Rev. Charles B. Miller and Rev. H. M. Brown which brings us down to recent days.

Just over yonder hills at Low's church the following Lutheran ministers have been licensed to preach: Rev. Michael Rauch, 1812; Rev. John Yost Meetze, 1812; Rev. John W. Meyer, 1812; Rev. Philip Roth, 1812; Rev. Jacob Miller, 1812; Rev. Adam Grimes, 1821; Rev. Andrew Sechrist, 1821; Rev. John Reichert, 1821; Rev. William Artz, 1830; Rev. David P. Rosenmiller, 1830; Rev. Jacob Kaempffer, 1830; Rev. J. H. Fesperman, 1868; Rev. R. L. Brown, 1868; Rev. W. R. Ketchie, 1868. At Low's church ordination services have been held as follows: Rev. Jacob Scherer, 1812; Rev. John P. Franklow, 1812; Rev. Daniel Scherer, 1821; Rev. Martin Walther, 1821; while at Friedens church with which pastorate this St. Pauls was once connected there have been either licensed or ordained the following Lutheran ministers: Rev. Daniel Scherer and Rev. Daniel Walcher, in 1816; Rev. James P. Sikes, 1861; Rev. E. P. Parker, 1872; Rev. W. J. Smith, and Rev. B. S. Brown, in 1878; and at Burlington in Macedonia church only a few miles north, Rev. C. L. Miller and Rev. G. A. Riser, in 1893.

The following Lutheran ministers are buried near here, as follows: Rev. Philip Henkel, at Richlands church; Rev. Bryant C. Hall and Rev. Jacob Greeson, at Lows church; and Rev. E. P. Parker, Rev. Simeon Scherer, and Rev. James R. Sikes at Friedens church.

Rev. C. E. Bernhardt, well-known early Lutheran minister came into this St. Pauls territory in 1789 and labored here until 1809, when he left for work in South Carolina.

Rev. Adolph Nussman, who began his work as the pioneer Lutheran minister of North Carolina in 1773,

labored and traveled over a wide territory, often more than one hundred miles from his home, and his missionary work brought him into this very community, and over this surrounding territory. In this work he was joined by Rev. John G. Arndt, who came over from the mother country as a teacher, but became a minister on account of the pressure for more ministers in the wide territory to be covered.

This church, St. Pauls, also came under the influence of the well-known Scherer family, one of the most notable in all the history of the Lutheran church in this State. Here on these grounds labored once Rev. Jacob Scherer, later his son, Rev. Simeon Scherer. Beginning in 1810, the arduous labors of Rev. Jacob Scherer placed this field of the Lutheran Church in the very forefront of the work in the entire State. From this same local Scherer family has gone out a grandson of Rev. Jacob Scherer to occupy one of the very highest offices in the power of the church to give; Rev. M. G. G. Scherer, D. D., general secretary of the United Lutheran Church in America with headquarters in New York City.

Lutherans in North Carolina, United States, Etc.

As we today recall the coming of Rev. Adolph Nussman and the teacher-preacher Rev. John D. Arndt to North Carolina in 1773, marking the beginning of organized church effort in the Old North State, we naturally look to see what progress has been made from that date down to 1925. Today the Lutheran Church has in North Carolina one hundred and ten active ministers, and a membership of about thirty thousand. In these United States she has eighteen different bodies of Lutherans with a total membership for 1924 as given

by Dr. Carroll in the Year Book for 1925 (See page 63) of 2,465,841. Taking the entire world in view, the Lutheran Church today has from sixty to seventy millions of souls under her spiritual care, and from thirty to forty millions enrolled as communicants at her altars. According to Dr. Carroll's careful figures there are in the United States forty-six denominations with a less membership than the Lutheran Church, and only three denominations that exceed her enrollment. (See page 63, Year Book.) For the United States alone the total benevolence of the Lutheran Church exceeds ten millions yearly; and the total expenditures exceeds forty millions yearly.

One outstanding event in Lutheranism in North Carolina arose in 1819, when the Tennessee Synod was formed from those withdrawing from the North Carolina Synod. Rev. Gottlieb Shober was the leader of those who remained with the North Carolina Synod, and Rev. David Henkel of those who formed the Tennessee Synod. Without going into a discussion of the course of events, the personal differences, the various views, that resulted in the separation, doubtless, it resulted in greater efforts by both bodies with the generous rivalry that resulted than would have been possible with no separation. This separation is lost sight of in the great fact of the merging in 1918 of the General Synod in the United States, the General Council, and the United Synod of the South, into the wonderful body now known as the United Lutheran Church in America. After living apart for more than fifty years, at one stroke they caught the spirit of the times, and united for larger activities. This fine action won more praise from the Christians of our country than anything that has ever occurred in the

long story of the Lutheran Church in these United States. Here was Muhlenberg's ideal at last coming to fruition, and an example set for other great Christian bodies that are yet divided by minor differences.

Lutherans as Revolutionary Patriots.

This particular section of the country during the Revolutionary War affords an interesting study in the reaction of certain denominations to war and the bearing of arms. Here were Lutherans, Reformed, Friends or Quakers, and the Presbyterians. In the distinctive views of the Friends or Quakers outstanding ideas were: a refusal to take oath, lack of professional ministry, recognition of woman, and positive testimony against war and the bearing of arms. Hence, the Quaker preacher, Herman Husband, who from 1765 to 1771 preached and argued with these people was not found on the battle-field of Alamance on May 16, 1771, when shots were to be fired. Only a few miles west were the Moravians who also did not fight in the War of the Revolution but took the oath of allegiance to North Carolina, and the United States, and paid triple tax. If then the mother country was to be opposed by arms it remained for the Lutherans, the Reformed and the Presbyterian people to do the fighting. And they rose to the occasion and did it nobly! Their church grounds became meeting places for the militant, and their pulpits sounded the calls to arms. The names of these Piedmont Lutherans were signed to the Petitions of Grievance sent to Gov. Wm. Tryon, and they were, almost without exception, patriots. It was the spirit of Lutheranism—freedom from oppression. At Charleston, S. C., in old St. Johns church, a company was raised whose

captain fell at the siege of Savannah. Salisbury, N. C., Lutherans were patriots with Beard, Barringer, Beekam, Mull and others fighting for freedom. (See Wheeler's History.) From St. Johns church, Cabarrus county, N. C., one family furnished seven sons for the Revolution. Capt. John Paul Barringer remained at home to oppose the Tories. One or two Lutherans from this section signed the Mecklenburg Declaration. Rev. Christian Streitt, for his activities for freedom, was made a British prisoner. At Friedens, and Lows, both Lutheran churches; and at Stoners and Brick church, both Reformed churches, there was co-operation always for the efforts of Alamance, Haw Fields and Buffalo, all Presbyterian churches, looking to the success of the American colonies in their determination to be free, and to secure justice and liberty from England. Captain Peter Summers, who entered the War of the Revolution as an eighteen year old boy, from Friedens Lutheran congregation, where he had joined as a charter member, and who rose to become captain of the First North Carolina Battalion in the War of the Revolution, giving to his country years of distinguished military service, is typical of the Lutherans of that day, and of the spirit that prevailed among them.

These Lutherans had come into this region during the years from 1720 to 1770, and in all these fifty years had no other thought but to make of this region their permanent home. They were ready with their material supplies, and with their arms and lives if necessary, to lend every possible help in the establishment of the new form of government, and to assist in wresting all power from the British government over the American colonies.

If there are any original Ameri-

cans on our soil and in our land to-day, certainly these people who came here from one hundred and fifty to two hundred years ago, may claim to be among the original, and genuine American citizens. We would not detract in any measure from any glory due to any other of the early settlers, but too long has history neglected to pay just tribute, and accord due place and recognition to the Lutherans from the Palatine region who became the first and original settlers of certain sections of North Carolina, taking the lands that became their homes direct in many cases from the hands of the Indians themselves. While they had no criticism to offer the two other faiths and denominations that were their close neighbors, still with the light of their conscience to guide them they were ready if need be to die for their faith in freedom's cause. These people had the faith of one of their own heroes, Muhlenberg. Let us see as to him.

The House of Delegates in Virginia in December, 1775, appointed Muhlenberg colonel of the Eighth Virginia Regiment. George Bancroft says: "The command of another regiment was given to the Lutheran minister, Peter Muhlenberg, who left the pulpit to form out of his several congregations one of the most perfect battalions in the army." The American poet, Thomas Buchanan Read, tells the story in vivid verse of how pastor Muhlenberg in the church of Berkley Manor rose in his pulpit and so stirred his congregation that they then and there enlisted for the fight for freedom.

"The text, a few short words of might—
The Lord of Hosts shall arm the right."

He spoke of wrongs too long endured,
Of sacred rights to be secured;
Then from his patriot tongue of flame
The startling words for Freedom came.

"Who dares,"—this was the patriot's cry,
As striding from the desk he came—
"Come out with me in Freedom's name,
For her to live, for her to die?"
A hundred hands flung up reply,
A hundred voices answered "I."

The humble Lutheran preacher, Peter Muhlenberg, became Brigadier General, then Major General; later a representative in the First, the Third and the Sixth Congress, and finally United States Senator from Pennsylvania. He won the approbation of his countrymen including Washington, Gates and Greene, and our gallant helper, LaFayette.

No wonder that such societies as the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Sons of the American Revolution, are today carrying so many names of members who join by right of ancestry connecting them with the pioneer Luthern families that contributed so largely towards the setting up of the American government in the years 1771-1781. These people had endured all the trials that gave to the world the Protestant Reformation of the 15th and 16th centuries, and they took their stand for civil and religious liberty in the spirit of their own Martin Luther who had cried out: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God!" Concerning liberty they sincerely felt:

"'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume."



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