

Collected Notes on
CHRIST CHURCH, BROAD CREEK
and HER NEIGHBORS.

by

Henry H. Hutchinson, 1963.

INTRODUCTION

Old Christ Church, sometimes known as Broad Creek Church, is located about two miles east of Laurel, Sussex County, Delaware, and is in Broad Creek Hundred. It is on the south bank of Chipman's Pond, which is on the north fork of Broad Creek, sometimes called Gray's Branch. Since it is what might be called the "Mother Church" of a number of other Episcopal churches in southwestern Sussex, we have made this attempt to collect as many facts, traditions (and possibly a few myths), pertaining thereto as we could find in books, pamphlets, newspapers, church and court records, and stories or traditions handed down by "old timers" in the neighborhood. These we have condensed as much as possible while still giving as many facts and records as will give a clear picture of our findings.

Public services are held there on Whitsunday every year, and offerings at that time are used for the maintenance of the building and the property. Visits at other times by parties interested in antiquities can be arranged through the vestrymen or rector of St. Philip's Church, Laurel, Delaware.

This is necessarily only a small fraction of the whole history of the church, for most of the records containing its activities have been lost. Even back in 1873 the Reverend Benjamin J. Douglas refers to this regrettable fact. (18) Most of the records since that time were destroyed in August 1933 when the lower part of Laurel was flooded, including an office where the records were stored. Sometimes references are made to things that do not specifically relate to the church, but do give an idea of the conditions affecting the church and its members. Also given are many notes on contemporary churches or their members which help to complete the general picture. The notes in the Historical Section are given in approximately chronological order. And if I sometimes lapse into the first person "we" or "us" or "our", I am referring to those under the jurisdiction of Christ Church, Broad Creek, or its rector.

In literature, records, and local usage the old structure has been called and referred to by many names, such as, a Chapel of Ease, Broad Creek Church, Christ Church Broad Creek, Christ Church Laurel, Christ Church Chipman's Pond, and before 1848, the Church at Laurel, and Broad Creek Congregation. The first recorded use that I have found of its official name, Christ Church, appears in the Diocesan Journal for 1791 where the Reverend William Skelly was recorded as representing Christ Church in Sussex County. Since we have other evidence that the Reverend William Skelly was rector of Christ Church Broad Creek at



INTERIOR OF OLD CHRIST CHURCH

that time, we know it refers to this church and not to Christ Church Milford, also in Sussex County.

Original documents or records are not copied in full herein, in order to conserve space and prevent repetition. Only pertinent quotations are made; references to sources are made in parentheses. See numbered list of references at the end of this paper.

WHO BUILT OLD CHRIST CHURCH?

This paper is in no wise intended to reflect on the integrity of previous historians or authors. However, since they do not agree on who built the church, and since they evidently did not see or have access to certain records in the Worcester County, Maryland and the Sussex County, Delaware courts, I believe it is time to make public some records which indicate that a Robert Houston who lived in Broad Creek Hundred(3) and whose will is dated January 23, 1788 and recorded in Sussex County Court(9c) (Will Book D4, p 168) on February 25, 1788, was the builder of Old Christ Church, or Broad Creek Church, originally the third Chapel of Ease in Stepney Parish, Maryland.

The question will naturally arise why a deed for Old Christ Church should be recorded in Worcester County, Maryland. (See below) It must be borne in mind that in 1772 when Old Christ Church and the land on which it was erected were deeded to Stepney Parish by Robert Houston, the inhabitants of that area around Broad Creek and Little Creek Hundreds often did not know exactly where they were situated according to political land boundaries. This area of what is now southwestern Delaware had been in dispute between the Lords Baltimore (for Maryland) and the heads of the Penn family for almost a hundred years. A few dates might be listed here to bear in mind:-

- 1742 Worcester County formed out of Somerset County, Maryland.
- 1751 Transpeninsula line between Maryland and Pennsylvania was surveyed(11) by John Watson and William Parsons for Pennsylvania, and John Emory and Thomas Jones for Maryland.(20)
- 1760 Transpeninsula Line agreed upon by Lord Baltimore and the Penns.(11)
- 1764 Survey by Mason & Dixon of line now the western boundary of Delaware.(11)
- 1775 It was not until April 8, 1775 that the then Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the three lower Counties of the Province of Pennsylvania, as Delaware was then called, published his proclamation regarding the new boundary lines which was followed on September 2, 1775 by an act of the Legislature confirming the new lines, and the rights, liberties and privileges of the people.(26)
- 1791 Sussex County Courts removed from Lewes to Georgetown.(3)

In order to show the uncertainty in people's minds regarding the jurisdiction over the lands in Broad Creek and Little Creek Hundreds, I will give a few examples of official or personal actions about the time our old church was built:-

(A) 1768. In this year the Maryland Assembly authorized the sale of the lands of the Broad Creek Indian Reservation which was in Broad Creek and Little Creek Hundreds, and they referred to these lands as being in Somerset County, Maryland.(7 & 12). Note that this authorization was made after the Transpeninsula line had been agreed upon between the two Colonies, and also after the north-south part of the Mason & Dixon line had been surveyed. This Indian Reservation was where the town of Laurel, Sussex County, Delaware now stands, well within the Pennsylvania (now Delaware) lines.

(B) 1770. This year the inhabitants of Broad Creek and Little Creek Hundreds at the headwaters of Broad Creek petitioned the Maryland Assembly to provide money (or tobacco) to cover expense in erecting a House of Worship.(2).

(C) 1772. Robert Houston who lived in Broad Creek Hundred(3) called himself "of Worcester County" in the sale to Stepney Parish, September 1772.(10).

(D) 1775. John Houston of Concord, Broad Creek Hundred, referred to himself in his will as "John Houston, of the new county on Delaware." Apparently, although he owned extensive property, he was not sure of the name of the county in which he lived.(3) & (9c, book C3, p 91).

(E) 1775. The Committee of Public Safety in Sussex County was not established until June 20, 1775. They explained the delay in getting organized by "the long winded boundary dispute with Maryland," and "not from the influence of any Tories amongst us, or any disregard to the common cause." (27 p 8).

The historical plaque in the church says it was built by Robert Holston. This plaque was prepared by Henry Hanby Hays(16), registrar of the Diocese of Delaware in 1921, Torrence(2) and Rightmeyer(5) also say the church was built by Robert Holston, although Torrence also quoted from records of Stepney Parish saying that Robert Houstin was paid 510 pounds "pr contra by building a Chapel at Broad Creek, on September 25, 1772." Rightmeyer(5) makes a note that the descendants of Robert Houston claim he built it. Dorsey(4) says it was built by Robert Holton. And Zebley(6) states that it was built by Robert Houston. These conflicting statements led this author, after considerable research, to the conclusion that Robert Houston was the builder, for the following reasons:

Torrence(2) and Rightmeyer(5) base their statements on the records of Stepney Parish, and Torrence quotes those records as showing the Parish to have paid money to both Robert Holston and to Robert Houstin. The Worcester County, Maryland Court Record, in Deed Book No. 1, p.156(10) records the transfer from Robert Houston to "the vestrymen Thomas Holbrook, William Horsey, George Day Scott, John Freeney and Henry Gale, and the Wardens, John Wales and John Spam Conway, all of Stepney Parish in Somerset and Worcester Counties, for the sum of 510 pounds" on September 25, 1772 of "one and one half acres, part of a parcel of land called CHANCE in Worcester County.....beginning at a marked red oak standing near the east end of the aforesaid Robert Houston's mill dam, thence North 57 deg. east, 16 poles, thence south 33 deg. east 12 poles, thence south 30 deg. west 16 poles, and from thence with a right line to the first bounder. Containing 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ acres whereon

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- (8) Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- (9a) Sussex County Court Records, Georgetown. Orphan's Court Records.
- (9b) " " " " " Deeds.
- (9c) " " " " " Wills.
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About 1952 a committee was organized to look after, repair, and maintain Old Christ Church. Mrs. Nan Campbell was chairman of this group and other officers were Dr. James E. Marvil, Treasurer, and Mrs. Jonathan Wheatley, Secretary. They raised a total of \$4698.91. Two thousand dollars of this was donated by the Diocese of Delaware under Bishop McKinstry. The balance was raised by solicitation of the committee. Mr. John I. Collins of Millsboro was engaged to make the necessary repairs, which consisted of new brick foundations, wall straightening as well as repairs to walls, sills, and shutters. A new roof was installed, the cross on the roof replaced, and the outside sheeting was painted with an insect-resistant paint.

During the years following these repairs the church building was used annually on Whitsunday, and for an occasional special service. Attempts were made by the few committee members to maintain the place properly but funds were scarce. The front steps became dangerously weak and were replaced by Dr. James E. Marvil with creosote-treated wood as a preservative. Rubber mats on the steps became necessary when the creosote soaked out of the wood and stained our shoes.

Early in 1966 the Old Christ Church League was reorganized with the object to preserve, and maintain, and use this historic old structure. Since the good work done by the committee in the 1950's the physical care of this property had been neglected, although it was used occasionally. With little money available the church grounds and graveyard had been neglected. Trespassers had made paths across the graves, weeds and underbrush had grown up over much of the grounds; and, the open spaces were criss-crossed with tracks of trucks and cars short-cutting over the graves and grounds. Also, it became a trysting place for "sparking" couples who left the grounds littered with beer and soft drink cans, papers, bottles, undergarments, cigarettes, etc., etc. Every week during good weather the place was disgraceful.

The reorganized committee of the League started mail and personal solicitations, got estimates on the needed work, and raised money to start needed maintenance. Gradually the weeds and underbrush from the grounds around the church and graveyard were cleared. A fence was installed around the church and graveyard which practically eliminated the nuisance of parking and trespassing.

In 1966 the floor of the whole church seemed to be suspended from the two ends only. It was declared unsafe until investigation and the necessary repairs could be made. Examination under the floor revealed that the north and south wall sills had spread, dropping the ends of the floor beams so they were suspended in air only by the center beam and the floor boards. Why this condition occurred is a mystery.

Some suggested that the wall sills had been moved by the reverberations from the brass and percussion music provided by a school band which had furnished music for a service a few months before. (Remember the walls of Jericho?) To repair this situation we engaged C. Robert Marvil and his crew of housemovers to install two "cellar doors" in the rear of the church as access for workmen and material under the floor and to excavate trenches under the church to provide working room. Every floor beam was jacked up, then the side wall sills were drawn back and held in place by 1 1/4" turnbuckles and rods and the floor beams let back in place. As further insurance 6" steel I-beams, supported on concrete block piers, were installed and wedged under the floor beams.

While this work was going on we had the sills, lower woodwork, and ground both under the building and outside the foundations treated with a strong insecticide, since traces of termites were found. All this work done by Mr. Marvil was done at bare costs of labor and material. The placement of insecticides was done by a professional exterminator.

In 1968 the cross on the peak of the church roof was blown down and shattered beyond repair by a wind storm. The fragments were reassembled and an exact reproduction of California redwood was made by Mr. William F. Wilkinson of Seaford at no cost to us.

In 1969-70 the Seaford Garden Club made a study plan for landscaping the grounds around the church, and completed the foundation planting of evergreen shrubs around the church building and roses around the fence.

In 1968 the League invited all churches in western Sussex County to use Old Christ Church, Broad Creek, for religious services since the church was originally built as a "House of Worship," and was paid for by the taxpayers of residence on the "Headwaters of Broad Creek" in 1771. Through the 1970 summer season this offer has been accepted by one Lutheran, two Methodist, one Presbyterian, and three memorial services by the American Legion. There have also been several marriages performed there.

Since 1968 the League has had the church opened for visitors on summer Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., a guide or attendant being present to answer questions. The visitors have numbered from 600 to 1000 per year. They generally leave a small coin offering in the box at the door. We appreciate their offerings but we appreciate even more their interest and encouragement to keep and preserve the beautiful old historic building.

Early in 1969 vandals broke a shutter-bar and entered the church by a window, and stole the two old wood chairs in the chancel, as well as two handmade wood footstools from the reading desk and the pulpit. They have been replaced by two antique wood chairs for the chancel, a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Frederick of Sycamore, Delaware, and two handmade wood stools for the reading desk and pulpit, a gift from Mr. George Hitchens of St. Philips, Laurel, Delaware.

The building has been opened many days during the week for special groups, school classes, clubs, special local celebrations, and out-of-town visitors. We are always glad to schedule visits at convenient times, preferably in the milder months, for there is no artificial heat or light available in the building. Contact the rector of St. Philips Church, Laurel, Delaware, for such special visits. He can get you in touch with a member of the committee or League to make definite dates for opening or using the church building.

RELICS OF OLD CHRIST CHURCH, pictured on Page 44 APPENDIX B

Figure 1, top. Original key to front door. This old key is of conventional shape, but it is unusual in that it is made of three separate metals; iron, brass, and copper. It has been suggested that the three metals represent the Trinity, to unlock the gates of heaven. This key was in possession of the Kenney family and was given to Old Christ Church by Miss May Kenney.

Figure 1, bottom. Old Prayer Book, used by the Kenney family for five generations in Old Christ Church. It was published by the Aux. N.Y. Bible and Common Prayer Book Soc'y, A.D. 1816. It was used by Samuel Kenney (1771-1828) and his wife, Sally Ralph Kenney; Samuel Kenney (1800-1881) and his wife, Mary Elenor Kenney; Samuel Kenney (1833-1899) and his wife, Hattie Short Kenney; Samuel Short Kenney (1860-1926) and his wife, Fannie Lee Kenney; and by Miss May Kenney and Mrs. Nan Kenney Fooks Campbell, daughters of Samuel Short Kenney. This edition of the Book of Common Prayer was authorized in A.D. 1789.

Figure 2. Old wood grave markers, found in the adjoining cemetery when cleaning out underbrush behind the church in 1968-69. There was no trace of name or date left on them but they are obviously quite old.

Figure 3, top. Handmade wrought iron nails and anchor bolts of many sizes and shapes, found when making repairs during 1968-9.

Figure 3, bottom. Small potsherd from an Indian vessel, found in excavation under the church floor.

Figure 4. Samples of shingles used between 1772 and about 1950. #1, oldest at left in the picture, heart pine, hand split, rounded end, 1772; #2, Eastern white cedar, hand split or free split and smoothed, about 1829; #3, Native cypress, sawed on circular saw about 1850; #4, Western red cedar, sawed with circular saw about 1880.

NATHANIEL MITCHELL - (1753-1814)

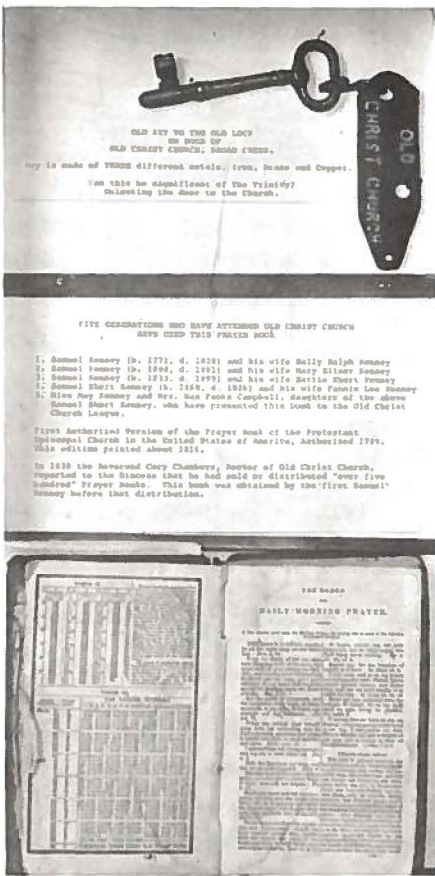
*NOTE: Numbers enclosed in parentheses () indicate the sources of the information given. Thus; (1) is number one in the bibliography given at the end of this paper.

Among the many "forgotten heroes" of Delaware's early history, one stands forth as predominately worthy of remembrance and honor. He was Nathaniel Mitchell of Sussex County, son of James and Margaret Mitchell, and a nephew of General John Dagsworthy. He was born near Laurel, Delaware in 1753.(1)* We have found no record of his early life or education, but subsequent events indicate his training led to him being a "gentleman and a scholar." His military and civil record through life clearly indicated his devotion to his country, his state, his community, and his church. His modesty is clearly indicated by the lengthy inscription on his grave slab. This he probably composed before his death, as was frequently done in those days. This inscription mentions none of the honors that came to him in life. It simply gives his name, year of birth and death, and a dissertation on the coming of death. As near as we can decipher this inscription, it reads as follows:

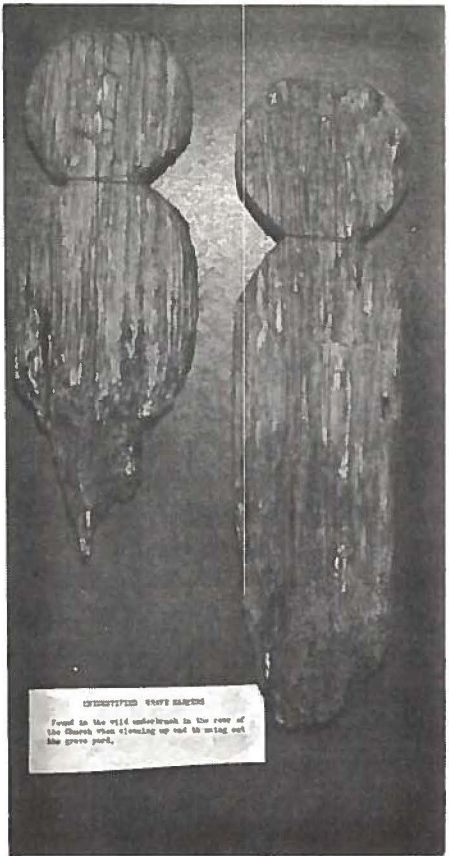
Life is short--Eternity how long.
Must this sad chance succeed near me?
Also, am I to draw my last gasp; to
become a breathless corpse, & be what
I deplore? The Lord shall deliver thee
also into the hands of death.
Yet a little while and thou shalt be
with me.

By digging through archives and early records, and published historical and biographical books we have found enough records about him to give some of the events in his life which follow.

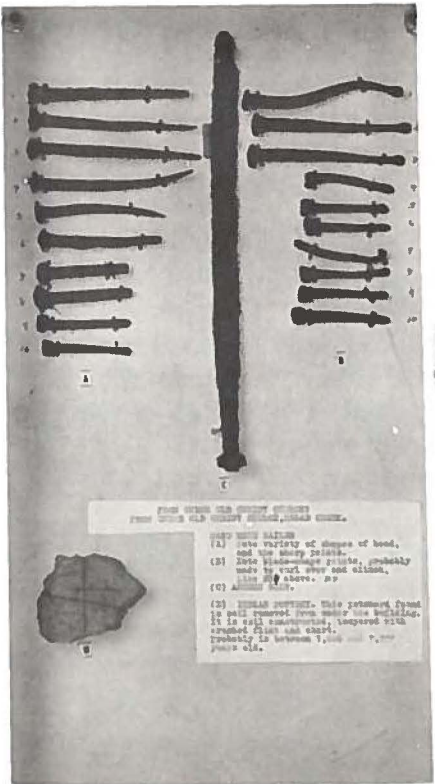
MILITARY RECORD: At age 22 he was commissioned Adjutant in General John Dagsworthy's battalion of Delaware Militia, and as such was probably active in helping to prevent clashes between the "Torys" and the "Patriots" in Sussex County who were very bitter at each other in those days (1775). The Torys were known to be active in



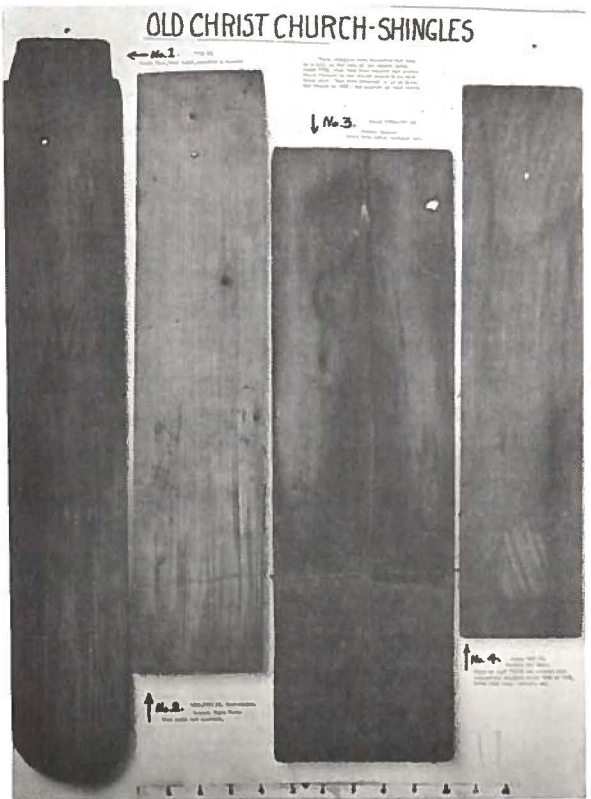
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3



4

supplying British ships with provisions, and they were accused (but not proven) to have burned a Presbyterian Church near Laurel. (1) (6) (7)

In 1776 General George Washington was authorized by Congress to form a regiment which became known as "The Flying Camp." It was organized and equipped to be sent anywhere at a moments notice. Nathaniel Mitchell joined this regiment as a Captain under Col. Samuel Patterson and was mentioned as having captured a company of British and Hessians numbering more than his own company. (1) His regiment is recorded as having headquarters at Perth Amboy in October and November 1776. (4) He was transferred to Col. William Grayson's regiment and so recorded January 20, 1777. (4) When transferred to Col. Grayson's regiment he recruited his own company and Grayson's regiment was attached to the Delaware troops where they were at Valley Forge and fought in the Battle of the Brandywine on September 11, 1777. (1) He was disabled with "camp fever" and did not take part in the Battle of Germantown on October 12, 1777. (1) From December 1777 through February 1778 he was on furlough, but was in command of his regiment when the Battle of Monmouth occurred in June 1778. (4) While Col. Grayson was in command of the brigade, under General Charles Lee (not "Light Horse Harry" Lee). His regiment was complimented on their stand against the enemy, though the battle as a whole, was badly managed by General Charles Lee.

His company had headquarters at White Plains in July 1778, at Robinson's Plains in September 1778, and at Middlebrook in October 1778. Though he was on the Field and Staff muster roll in September at North River, he was promoted to Major in December 1778. (4)

January through March 1779 he again was on furlough. He appears next in April 1779 as Major in Col. Nathaniel Gist's regiment. (4) It is noted that he did not receive the pay of a Major until he joined Col. Gist's regiment in April. (The red-tape was as bad then as it is today!) Col. Gist's regiment was then under General Peter Muhlenberg in Virginia where we were attempting to stop or restrict the raids that the British were making inland from their bases on the Chesapeake Bay. Here Major Mitchell was in charge of the advance guard of a force against a raid commanded by General Benedict Arnold. (1) He could not stop the raid, but did harass the British and took a number of prisoners. During the winter of 1779 and 1780 he was appointed Brigade Major and Inspector under Gen. Muhlenberg. On the night of May 10 & 11, 1781, Major Mitchell, with a detachment of troops, was trying to throw a pontoon bridge across the Appomattox River near Petersburg, Virginia when they were surprised and captured by the British, and held prisoners until paroled after Yorktown. (1) This ended his active military service in the field, but later he signed documents as Brigadier General of the Third Regiment of Delaware Militia (1797). (4) This

probably accounts for several references on record where he is referred to as "General Mitchell."

In "The Constitutionalist or Defender of Human Rights," published September 19, 1804, is a long tribute to Major Nathaniel Mitchell signed by "An Old Officer." Who this old officer was we don't know, but most of his tribute is just a corroboration of the facts already mentioned along with the following anecdote relating to Major Mitchell's experiences in Virginia - "One morning being at the head of a scouting party, the principal object of which was to gain intelligence, he came up to the farm house of a poor widow, whose husband had fallen in battle, and found her in tears, with several small children crying about her. He inquired into the cause of her distress, and offered any relief in his power. She told him a party of British had just left her home and had plundered her of everything necessary for the subsistence of her family, leaving her no food for the children, and she knew not how to prevent them from starving" To cut the rest of the anecdote short, Mitchell pursued the plunderers, caught them, made them carry all the plunder back and return it to the owners and pay for anything that was missing. They were then taken to headquarters as prisoners of war. Such an act was typical of his nature, so the anecdote is probably based upon fact.

CIVIL AND POLITICAL. After his parole he returned to Sussex County, Delaware, and was soon married to Hannah Morris, a daughter of Anthony Morris. (10)

He was a member of the CONTINENTAL CONGRESS 1786-1788. In 1787 he was credited with aiding the conservative victory in Sussex County by what was said to be "leading armed bands against the Irishmen and Presbyterians and frightening the Liberals so that they would not go to the polls." (12)

He was a "Privy Councillor" in 1792. (2) The Federalist Elector in 1800 and Prothonotary of Sussex County 1788-1805 (2). In 1801 he ran for Governor of Delaware but was defeated by David Hall of Lewes by 19 votes. He had been described in the press as "a professed Diest, an open scoffer at, and reviler of the Christian Religion" and opposed to the Methodist. (12) That, and his opposition to the Liberals in 1787 (mentioned above) probably accounted for this defeat. However he was elected Governor for 1805-1808 on the Federalist Ticket; to the State General Assembly 1808, and State Senator 1810-1812.

His public offices were not marked by any sensational innovations, and were conducted in dignity and with his usual modest and conservative nature, but his many public offices reflect the high confidence that his friends and countrymen held for him and his judgment and ability.

His PUBLIC offices seem in the reverse of the modern trend. That is, he started at the top and worked down--Continental Congress, 1st; State Governor, 2nd; 3rd, State General Assembly; and 4th,

State Senator. I account for this in the fact that he was a staunch Federalist party supporter, but the Federalist Party was on the down trend everywhere except in Delaware. He was a practical realist of the situation and still a believer in the Federalist's party theory of government, so he ran for the office that he thought he had had enough support to be elected to, and where he thought he could exert his influence to the best advantage of the proper way of government; not aspiring for the honor of an office, but aspiring to influence the government at any level in the most practical direction for the good of the people. By modern standards he was a poor politician, but by any standard he was a Patriot, a Statesman, and a Gentleman.

PERSONAL. Nathaniel Mitchell's home, which still stands (1969), on Delaware Avenue, North Laurel, Delaware, is reported to have been built in the mid 1700's and is one of the oldest homes in Laurel continuously occupied since that time. Of course it has been much modernized and added to since the original structure.(3) It is generally known as the "Collins House" and as "Rosemont." It stands on high ground overlooking the mill-dam that forms "Laurel Lake" formerly known as "Record's Pond" and is located near the old land-mark known as "the wading place." This mill-dam was built about 1800 by Nathaniel Mitchell to operate a flour and grist mill. This mill was still grinding meal up to about 1961.(8)

He was a member of Christ Church, Broad Creek, in which pew 38 is believed to have been assigned to him, and for which he was assessed 30 shillings per year.(7) He was apparently reasonably active in that church for in 1807 he was a lay-delegate to the Diocesan Convention held in Lewes, Delaware, along with William B. Cooper (later Governor of Delaware 1841-1845) and the Rev. Hamilton Bell (Old Parson Bell) the Rector of Old Christ Church, Broad Creek.(5)

He was a delegate from Delaware to the general meeting of the Society of the Cincinnati in Philadelphia in May 1787 and was an original member of that Society.(4) (9)

He was a brother of George Mitchell who was one of the Commissioners to lay out the new County Seat (Sussex) in 1791, now known as Georgetown, Delaware. Some say that the town was named after this George Mitchell, who was also a participant in a number of land transactions in early Sussex County.

His children were - William I. Mitchell; Theodore Mitchell, both of whom lived in Laurel; Alfred Mitchell, who lived in Trenton, New Jersey; Dagsworthy Mitchell, unmarried and lived in Philadelphia; Elizabeth, who died young in 1833; Mary Ann, married John King of Georgetown, D.C. and had a son, Nathaniel King; and Elizabeth, who married Whiting Sanford and had a daughter, Deboro Sanford.

(4) A Mr. J. Mitchell Hastings joined the Society of the Cincinnati

in 1952 as a great-great-great grandson of Nathaniel Mitchell.(4)

Gen. Nathaniel Mitchell died in Laurel, Delaware, February 21, 1814, and is buried in the graveyard at the S.E. corner of Old Christ Church, Broad Creek. His grave is near the grave of his friend the Rev. Hamilton Bell (Old Parson Bell) who was one of the only three ordained Episcopal Priests in the State of Delaware when he died in 1811.(7)

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- (8) CARMEL MOORE, Vol. XI, 1959, No. 1 of the ARCHEOLOG. "Mill Ponds of Little Creek Hundred."
- (9) BRUCE METCALF, Original Members and Other Officers eligible to the Society of the Cincinnati. (1938)
- (10) Family Histories and Descendants of Richard Wilson Long. By Curt W. Long of Salisbury, Md. 1968. Privately printed.
- (11) See also W. Emerson Wilson's book "Forgotten Delaware Heroes" due for publication in 1969, which contains brief histories of many of our great and good men.
- (12) Personal correspondence from W. Emerson Wilson of Wilmington, Delaware.

We are also greatly indebted to the following persons who did much tedious research in histories, references, archives, etc. to fill in these notes: Miss Mary Bacon, Laurel, Delaware; Mr. Dominick Fallon, Seaford, Delaware; and, the Librarians of the Laurel Public Library.

In a handsome tomb in the churchyard of Old Christ Church, Broad Creek, Sussex County, Delaware, lies John Polk, a descendant of the Polke family that originally came from Ireland. The immigrants, John and William, took up lands at "Dames Quarters" near Deal Island, Somerset County, Maryland, in the sixteen hundreds. Their numerous descendants moved to Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and other states. Included in the family were a President of the United States, two state Governors, numerous Revolutionary War officers, as well as officers on both sides in the Civil War. One was a Bishop in the Episcopal Church who resigned to become a General in the Confederate Army and was killed on the battlefield.

Our John Polk was a descendant of a branch that stayed on the Delmarva Peninsula. His father John Polk married Betty Moore, daughter of Thomas Moore of Sussex County. After her death he married Polly Dolbee, by whom our John was born.

In a book published in 1912 by William Harrison Polk of Lexington, Kentucky, and containing 492 pages of Polk families and their histories, the author Col. Polk says of our John Polk:

"John Polk, son of John Polk and Polly Dolby....was born in 1797 and died in 1842, a bachelor. He was a merchant in Laurel. No man, perhaps, ever enjoyed the confidence and affections of those who knew him in a higher degree. He possessed a very vigorous mind, and business habits that crowned his labors with handsome fortune."

In our personal research and through associated lands we have identified John Polk as a relative of a Dr. Polk and of Levin Collins. These were members of families of known residence in or near Laurel and the old Indian Reservation and the tract of land called "Batchelor's Delight." John Polk also had family relationships to numerous other Sussex County landholders of that period. Our John Polk was also part owner of the water power mill near the wading place which still stands at the lower end of "Laurel Lake."

According to Col. Polk's book mentioned above several of the Polk family were patriots and "minute men" and in the Revolutionary Army. John's uncle became a Colonel in the famous Delaware regiment "The Blue Hen's Chickens." His brother William was a "minute man" and marched to Lewes, Delaware, to defend it during the war of 1812, and numerous cousins were active and prominent in the Revolutionary War. Our John is not identified with any military affiliation, nor public office in the State or County. Yet he is highly praised by the people for his mentality and business habits at a time when connection with military and civil office was considered almost necessary to fame. I am thereby inclined to believe that he was

physically handicapped in some degree which prevented him from military connections, and might handicap him for any possible political aspirations. He apparently made up for that handicap by being a good advisor and friend to the people of his neighborhood.

John was a merchant in Laurel, Delaware. He occupied pew #25 in Old Christ Church, Broad Creek, which was assigned to his elder brother William. At the death of the Reverend Hamilton Bell of Old Christ Church, in 1811, the youngest daughter, Mary Elenor Bell, was adopted by John Polk as she was "under fourteen years old." Also the widow of the Rev. Hamilton Bell was given a home by John Polk.

All indications are that John Polk was an outstanding citizen and prominent member of Old Christ Church in its early days.

CREDITS:

"Polk Family & Kinsmen" by William Harrison Polk of Lexington, Kentucky. 1919.

Miss May Kenney, family papers.

Miss Mary Bacon, library research

many Laurel residents who gave me verbal tips on the family.

APPENDIX D
CONDENSATION OF REGISTER OF
OLD CHRIST CHURCH, BROAD CREEK, and ST. PHILIP'S CHAPEL,
LAURE, SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE
1853 - 1863

Reprinted from the July 1960 ARCHEOLOG

Since the heretofore unavailable records of Old Christ Church, Broad Creek Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware, are full of names of old families in Sussex County, these extracts may be of interest to many persons hereabouts.

The entries cover a period from 1853 to 1864 and are signed by several different rectors or supplies of Old Christ Church and St. Philip's Chapel, namely: the Rev. Mssrs. Richard F. Cadle, George Hall, James W. Hoskins; the Right Reverent Alfred Lee, D.D.; and Mr. S. R. Slack, Rector.

BAPTISMS

Surname is given in capital letters first and omitted after father's and mother's names. Date of baptism is omitted, the year only here given. (b) - birth date. (c) - colored person. (f) or (m) - father's or mother's Christian name or names. (fs) or (ms) - female or male servant of _____. (s) - sponsors. The officiating minister is the Rev. Richard F. Cadle unless otherwise noted. (p) - place or home where baptism took place.

1853

DAVIS Fisher LeRoy; (b) Sept. 8, 1852; (f & m) Daniel & Mary Ellen; (p) Nancy & Hefsy Collins.
KILMARTIN Mary Catherine; (b) Aug. 14, 1853; (f & m) Jerimiah & Catherine; (p) Mr. Vincent's near Hitch's Mill. (s) father.
OLIPHANT Willard Salisbury; (b) Sept. 20, 1851; (f & m) David Henry & Elizabeth Ann; George Henry; (b) Jan. 15, 1853; (p) house of parents; (s) mother.
_____(c) Joseph Watson; age 8 mo.; (f & m) (c) Charles Philips & Leah; (p) house of Samuel Kinney; (s) the mother.
_____(c) Lucetia; (b) April 13, 1850; (m) dead; (p) house of Mrs. Mary Elzey; (s) Mrs. Elzey.
_____(c) Mary Ellen; (b) June 18, 1852; (m) dead; (p) house of Mrs. Mary Elzey; (s) Mrs. Elzey.
_____(c) Rosetta; about 2 yr 9 mo.; (m) (fs) of Mrs. Elzey; (p) house of Mrs. Mary Elzey; (s) Mrs. Elzey.
_____(c) Belinda; (b) June 3, 1853; (m) (fs) of Mrs. Elzey; (p) house of Mrs. Mary Elzey; (s) Mrs. Elzey.

SMITH John Francis; (b) Sept. 20, 1853; (f & m) Robert & Rebecca; (p) Robert Smith's; (s) Geo. P. Boyce, Patsy Lavinia Boyce.
HOLT Rebecca Jane; (b) Mar. 31, 1850.
HOLT George Shepperd; (b) July 10, 1851; (f & m) Mitchel and Caroline; (p) Robert Smith's; (s) Robert & Rebecca Smith & George P. Boyce.
MORRIS Martha Ann; (b) March 9, 1852; (f & m) John & Sarah Kane; (p) Robert Smith's; (s) George P. Boyce & Mrs. Caroline Holt.
COLLINS Annie Penrose; (b) March 5, 1854; (f & m) Jonathan P. & Mary Ann; (p) J. P. Collins's; (s) the parents.

1856

RIGGIN Julia Caroline; (b) Nov. 4, 1855; (f & m) Daniel R. & Catherine; (p) D. R. Riggin's; (s) the parents & Thomas L. Cannon.
_____(c) Charlotte; (b) Nov. 8, 1855; (f & m) Charles & Leah (c); (p) L. Kinney's; (s) the parents.
TURNER Sarah Catherine (c); (b) Jan. 8, 1856; (f & m) Jarrett and Leah Ann Turner (c); (p) Mrs. Eliza Polk's; (s) Eliza Polk.
RALPH Sarah Eugenia Frances; (b) July 15, 1856; (f & m) Wm. James & Amaryllis Comfort; (p) Stephen Ellis's; (s) the parents.
WALLER Cornelius Morgan; (b) July 24, 1856; (f & m) Hamilton B. & Julia Ann; (p) Stephen Ellis's; (s) the parents.
COLLINS Charles Henry; (b) June 22, 1856; (f & m) Jonathan P. & Mary Ann; (p) J. P. Collin's; (s) the parents.

1857

*KINNEY Richards Rawlins; (b) Sept. 9, 1856; (f & m) Samuel Jr. & Hetty; (p) Samuel Kinney, Jr.'s; (s) the parents & Samuel Kinney Esq.
*BRADLEY William Charles Jonathan; (b) Dec. 8, 1855; (f & m) William H. & Phillis; (p) Stephen Ellis's; (s) the parents.
*WALLER Julia Adeline; (b) Nov. 21, 1855; (f & m) Jonathan & Rachel; (p) Jonathan Waller's; baptized in severe sickness.

*Note: The above baptisms were performed in the "recently formed parish of St. Marks, Little Creek Hundred", and were recorded here, as a register - for St. Marks had not been obtained.

COOPER Jane Townsend; (b) Sept. 22, 1856; (p) Mr. Wm. T. Cooper's; (f & m) Wm. T. & Mary Ann. Baptized in severe sickness.

1858

TRUITT John William Martin; (b) April 7, 1858; (f & m) William

Martin & Elizabeth; (p) William Truitt's; (s) William Truitt and the mother. Baptized by Rev. John C. McKein of St. Paul's, Georgetown, Delaware, in absence of Mr. Cadle in Boston.

1859

CANNON David Antony (c); age 11 yrs.;
CANNON Robert Annan (c); (b) April 8, 1852;
CANNON Mary Jane (c); (b) Jan. 17, 1857; (children of (m) Mahala Cannon (c), a servant of Mrs. Harriet Cannon; (p) Mr. Thomas L. Cannon's; (s) the mother and Mrs. Harriet Cannon. Baptized by S. R. Slack.
COLLINS Matthew Washington; (b) May 9, 1853; (f & m) Levin A. & Mary Jane; (p) Thomas W. Record's; (s) the parents.
HEARN John Houston; (b) Oct. 29, 1849.
HEARN Mary Elizabeth (b) May 22, 1833; (f & m) Kendle B. & Elizabeth; (p) Kendle B. Hearn's; (s) the parents.

1854

HENDERSON Sarah Elizabeth; (b) August 19, 1853; (f & m) William & Phillis; (p) T. W. Record's; (s) the mother.
_____(c) Miranda; (b) March 29, 1854; (f & m) Charles Phillips and Leah; (p) Samuel Kinney's.
BAILEY Sarah Elizabeth Ann; (b) Dec. 4, 1853; (f & m) Jefse & Rachel; (p) T. W. Record's; (s) the parents.
WALLER Leah Hester; (b) Nov. 27, 1853; (f & m) Jonathan & Rachel; (p) Jonathan Waller's; (s) the parents.
HASTY Irene Emily; (b) Nov. 21, 1850;
HASTY Harriet Elizabeth; (b) Jan. 13, 1853;
HASTY Eliza Catherine; (b) August 21, 1854; (f & m of all three) Elzey and Phyllis; (p) Jonathan Waller's; (s) the parents.
HASTY Frances Elizabeth; (b) Dec. 16, 1840; (p) Jonathan Waller's; Witness - Mrs. Rachel Waller.
HASTINGS Joshua Clayton; (b) April 23, 1849;
HASTINGS Isaac James; (b) July 27, 1851;
HASTINGS Baynard Washington; (b) April 5, 1854; (f & m of all three) Isaac & Margaret; (p) T. W. Record's; (s) the father.

1855

MOORE Ida St. Clair; (age 2 yrs.) (m) Mrs. Elizabeth Moore; baptized by the Rev. J. H. Hoskins, March 1, 1855.
OLIPHANT Jun France; (b) Feb. 27, 1855; (f & m) David Henry & Elizabeth Ann; (p) Christ Church; (s) the mother.
LECATS William Henry; (b) Dec. 29, 1854; (f & m) Nathaniel & Biddy; (p) Christ Church; (s) Mrs. E. A. Oliphant.
PUSEY Martella; (b) July 7, 1854; (f & m) George W. & Ann; (p) Christ Church; (s) the mother.

_____(c) Lenah; (b) July 5, 1855; (m) Case, a servant of Mrs. Elzey; (p) Mrs. Elzey's.
_____(c) Minos James; (b) Dec. 1, 1854; (m) Nancy Jane, a colored servant of Mrs. Elzey; (p) Mrs. Elzey's.
ADAMS Eglantine Alice; infant; (f) Isaac I. Adams; (s) the parents; baptized by the Rev. Mr. Hoskins.
HEARN (Miss) Sarah Ellen; (p) Mr. Martin Hearn's in Laurel; Witness - Mr. and Mrs. Martin Hearn and Family; baptized by S. R. Slack.
PUSEY John Stephen; (b) March 13, 1858; (f & m) Thos. S. and Winnie W.; (p) Thomas G. Pusey's; (s) the parents and Ephraim P. Pusey; by S. R. Slack, Rector.
PEPPER John Burton (c); (b) Nov. 14, 1854; (f & m) Burton Vincent and Hannah (c)
PEPPER Menaen Jaines (c); (b) Oct. 14, 1857; (f & m) Burton Vincent and Hannah (c); (p) Mr. Henry R. Pepper's, Broad Creek Hundred; (s) the parents & Mrs. Julia Pepper, their mistress.

1862

COLLINS Mary Virginia; (b) Aug. 19, 1862; (f & m) Jonathan N. & Mary Ann; (p) Christ Church; (s) the parents; by the Rev. George Hall.
HALL Mary Virginia; (b) Jan. 5, 1862; (f & m) George and Mary Caroline; (s) the parents and Mrs. Caroline Frost; by the Rev. Alfred Lee.
LYNCH Rosa Catherine; (b) Mar. 28, 1860; (f & m) James H. and Mary Jane; (s) the parents; by the Rev. George Hall.
HEARN Louisa Martin; (adult); (p) Christ Church; by the Rev. George Hall.
HITCH Samuel Benjamin; (b) March 12, 1824; (s) Jessie Long; baptized on a sickbed by the Rev. George Hall.

CONFIRMATIONS

Old Christ Church; May 21, 1854, by Rt. Rev. Alfred Lee, D.D., Bishop of Delaware.

RALPH, William J. ELLIS, Charles William JONES (Mrs.) Sarah Eliz.
O'NEALE, Rachel. ELLEGOOD, Mary Jane KINNEY, Eleanor
ELLIS, Martha J. ELLIS, Priscilla (presented by R. F. Cadle)

May 25, 1856, at Christ Church, Mrs. Julia PEPPER, and at St. Philip's, Laurel, Joseph C. ELLIS.
Nov. 23, 1856, Christ Church, Broad Creek, David O'NEALL.
May 30, 1859, St. Philip's Chapel, Laurel, Margaret H. CANNON, Mrs. Burton CANNON.
May 26, 1862, Christ Church, Matilda C. Moore, Mrs. Mary Ann COLLINS, Sarah Ellen HEARN.
May 16, 1864, Christ Church, Mrs. Harriet HEARN.

MARRIAGES

JONES-TRUITT. William F. Jones to Elizabeth Truitt, daughter of Philip Truitt (dcd); both of Sussex County, Oct. 3, 1853. (p) House of Mrs. Thiza Truitt, widow of Philip Truitt, Esq. (R.F.C.)

ELLIOTT-ELLINGSWORTH. Joseph W. Elliott to Martha Jane Ellingsworth, both of Sussex County, Feb. 8, 1854. (p) House of George Jermin. (R.F.C.)

HOSKINS-MOORE. The Ven. James W. Hoskins to Martha Jane Moore of Laurel. Mr. Hoskins from New Market, Dorchester County, Maryland. August 2, 1854. (p) House of John Moore of Laurel. (R.F.C.)

MORGAN-ELLEGOOD. Jacob W. Morgan of Concord, Delaware to Ann Eliza Ellegood, daughter of Mrs. A. H. Ellegood. (p) Home of Mrs. Ellegood. (The Rev. Hoskins). Feb. 1, 1855.

CHASE-WETHERLY. William James Chase, a free negro to Alsey Jane Wetherly, a free negro woman. (The Rev. Hoskins). August 9, 1855.

PARSONS-TRUITT. George Parsons to Mrs. Thirza Truitt, widow of Philip Truitt. (The Rev. Hoskins). Sept. 13, 1855.

HORSEY-MOORE. William S. Horsey to Miss M. Sonya Moore. (The Rev. Hoskins). Oct. 17, 1855.

HEARN-PUSEY. Michael W. Hearn to Ann E. Pusey. both of Sussex Co. (p) House of James Pusey near Laurel. (Rev. Hoskins). Nov. 13, 1856.

WEATHERLY-KNOWLES. Marcellus Weatherly of Somerset County, Maryland, to Martha Jane Knowles of Sussex County, Delaware. (R.F.C.) Feb. 19, 1857, at house of Mr. Wilson Knowles.

McDANIEL-CANNON. Stephen McDaniel of Indiana to Lucy A Cannon of Sussex County, Delaware, (R.F.C.) June 11, 1857. Witnesses: Mrs. Eliz. Walter, Wingate Mathews, J. Cullen Windsor, Wm. T. Cooper and wife. (p) House of Mrs. Eliazbeth Walter.

ELLEGOOD-CANNON. In Christ Church, Dr. Robert G. Ellegood to Elizabeth Cannon, both of the village of Concord. S. R. Slack, Rector. July 18, 1858.

MASSEY-HALL. James L. Massey to Maria E. Hall, both of Laurel. (p) House of Mrs. Hearn in Laurel, Delaware. S. R. Slack, Rector. August 5, 1858.

HITCH-WOOTEN. Levin Hitch to Ellen M. Wooten, daughter of George M. Wooten, both of Laurel, Delaware. (P) House of George M. Wooten, Laurel, Delaware. S. R. Slack. Feb. 9, 1859.

SMITH-MORGAN. Doctor Philip W. Smith to Martha R. Morgan, both of Sussex County, Delaware. (p) Christ Church. Sept. 22, 1859.

PARKER-HEARN. Asburry W. Parker to Louisa Hearn. (p) The bride's home. Dec. 11, 1862, by The Rev. George Hall, in Laurel, Delaware.

THOMPSON-COOPER. Josiah W. Thompson to Julia Cooper, at home of Mr. Neal near Laurel, by The Rev. George Hall. Dec. 18, 1862.

RICHARDSON-WOOTEN. Ezekiel J. Richardson to Arnelia Ann Wooten, at house of George Wooten, near Laurel, Delaware. By The Rev. George Hall. Jan. 29, 1863.

CANNON-HEARN. Joshua S. Cannon to Harriet H. Hearn, at St. Philip's Chapel, Laurel, Delaware. March 15, 1864, by The Rev. George Hall. Miss Ellen Hearn and other witnesses.

WEST-ELLIOTT. Paynter G. West to Lovey Elenor Elliott at the Rector's house in Laurel, Delaware. Dec. 8, 1864, by The Rev. George Hall. All of St. John's, Little Hill. Mrs. Harriet Cannon and other witnesses.

LEGATES-HASTINGS. Whealbank LeGates to Mary A. Hastings at St. Philip's Chapel, Laurel, Delaware. Dec. 8, 1864, by The Rev. George Hall. Miss Matilda Moore and other witnesses.

BURIALS

Name of deceased, age or date of death, relatives if mentioned, and place of interment, if given.

TRUITT, Philip - age 54 yrs. and 4 days.

DULANEY, Alfred Lee - August 27, 1853, Christ Church, Broad Creek.

DULANEY, Julia White - August 6, 1853, Christ Church, Broad Creek. (Sister to Alfred Lee Dulaney).

COLBURN, Ann Maria - Age 2 yrs. and 5 mo. Daughter of William Colburn, interred near residence of William Truitt.

TRUITT, Ann Maria - April 19, 1854, Daughter of William Truitt.

PARSONS, Mrs. Mary - Born Jan. 12, 1768; died Aug. 20, 1854; interred in Salisbury, Maryland.

TUNNELL, William - Nov. 24, 1854. Age 56 years. Interred in Georgetown, Delaware.

REDDING, Nehemiah - Dec. 6, 1854, age about 59 years. Interred in Methodist Episcopal Churchyard, Laurel.

MATTHEWS, (Miss) Nancy E. - Born Dec. 23, 1824; died Jan. 21, 1855; interred in Methodist Episcopal Churchyard, Laurel.

ELZEY, (Mrs.) Mary - Aug. 8, 1855, age 71 years. Interred near Mt. Moriah Meeting House.

SAUNDERS, Thomas Jesse - Sept. 22, 1855, age 22 years. Service in Presbyterian Church near Laurel.

PHILIPS, William J. H. - son of John Philips, aged. Service on Oct. 21, 1856.

TUNNELL, Edward - of Laurel, Delaware. Age 22 years. Interred in Georgetown, Delaware. Service, June 2, 1856.

ELLIS, John Fowler - Infant son of Joseph and Eliza Jane Ellis. Interred Methodist Protestant Church, Laurel. Sept. 18, 1857.

BELL, (Mrs.) Mary - Jan. 23, 1857, age about 70 years. Service at William Bell's. Interred at graveyard near residence of Mr. Boaz Bell.

GILES, Edwin - Infant son of Isaac and Sarah Giles. Feb. 11, 1857. Interred Presbyterian Churchyard near Laurel, Delaware.

ELLIS, (Mrs.) Amy - March 5, 1857, age about 76 years. Service at house of Stephen Ellis; burial at residence of Mr. George Ellis 2 1/2 miles south of Stephen's, in St. Mark's Parish, Little Creek Hundred.

COOPER, Jane Townsend - Born Sept. 22, 1856, died August 4, 1857; daughter of Wm. T. and Mary Ann Cooper.

HEARN (Mrs.) - Feb., 1858. Daughter of Mr. James Pusey.

TRUITT, Cyrus Sharp - July 4, 1858, age 21 years. Son of William Truitt.

TRUITT, William Martin - August 22, 1858. (late residence in Broad Creek Hundred).

PUSEY, James - April 25, 1859. Age 57 years.

TRUITT, (Mrs.) Mahala - April 28, 1859; age 52 years; wife of William Truitt.

ADDITIONAL DEATHS as noted from the preaching of "FUNERAL SERMONS" which were preached some time after the interment of the person, sometimes as much as nineteen months later. If date is indicated with (ser), it is the date of the Sermon, not the date of death.

O'NEALL, Josiah - March 28, 1853, age 70 years 2 mo.

PHILIPS, Joshua - July 16, 1853, age 77 years 8 mo. Mount Moriah Meeting House.

PHILIPS, (Mrs.) Mary - August 14, 1853, age 78 years 2 mo. and 16 days. Mount Moriah Meeting House.

KILMARTIN, Catherine - August 15, 1853, age 17 years. Wife of Jeremiah Martin.

HEARN, (Mrs.) Mary - Jan. 27, 1853, age about 84 years. At House of William Lloyd.

HASTY, Isabella - Burned to death Feb. 1852, age about 4 years. Daughter of Elzey and Phillis H.

HASTY, Mary Ellen - About 2 yrs. Aug., 1853. Daughter of Elzey and Phillis H.

COLLINS, Hugh - Nov. 20, 1854, age about 44 years. At house of Benjamin Bailey.

PHILIP, Hosea B. - May 17, 1855, age about 43 years. At Mount Moriah Meeting House.

COX, (Mrs.) - (ser) May 14, 1862, At Philip's graveyard.

COX, Mary Ellen - (ser) June 30, 1862, St. Philip's graveyard. Age about 44 years 9 mo.

COLLINS, _____ - (ser) July, 1862, Methodist Meeting House and graveyard, Laurel, Delaware.

HITCH, Samuel B. - age about 39 years. Family burying ground near Laurel. (ser) July 15, 1863.

FROST, Caroline - age 20 years, St. Lukes graveyard, Seaford, Delaware. (ser) July 21, 1863.

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