THE ANCIENT SWEDISH SETTLEMENT AT MORLATTON.

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We meet today upon historic ground. We trace in this immediate region the earliest settlements of white men within the limits of the present County of Berks. Upwards of two centuries ago, a small band of Swedes established their homes in the very spot on which we have assembled, upon territory but recently purchased from the aboriginal red men, whose trails formed the only pathways through the primeval forests. Amidst the silence and gloom of the surroundings they took up lands granted to them by the Proprietor of Pennsylvania, and began in humble piety and persevering spirit the foundation of a settlement till then beyond the borders of civilization. In the progress of events from that time to the present, the vestiges of these pioneers have become obliterated, save in the tracings of the boundary lines of the tracts which they took up. Their descendants are recognized at this day only in a few families of the neighborhood, where the names have been preserved through the male line, the ancient lineage having been largely intermingled with the stock of a different race.

The beginnings of the settlement are traceable to the warrant for the original Swede tract of ten thousand acres of land on the River Schuylkill, dated October 20, 1701, issued to Andreas Rudman, the Swedish pastor at Wicaco, and several others, in pursuance of which fifteen patents were issued to as many Swedes in severalty for tracts varying in extent from 300 to 1,200 acres each, and bearing various dates in 1704 and 1705. These tracts collectively constitute the present township of Amity, originally Philadelphia County, and since 1752 included within the territory of Berks.

Amity is thus the oldest settled part of Berks County, and was erected into a township in 1718 by the Court of Quarter Sessions of Philadelphia County, though its boundaries were not specifically set out until 1745. Its name is said to have been suggested by the circumstance of the well-known friendly relations which always subsisted between the Swedes and the Indians. The original occupation of the lands by the Swedes, some twenty years before the inundation of the German element from the Palatinate, which settled in many other portions of the county, and the more rapid adoption of the English language by them, accounts in a great measure for the steady preponderance of that language in this section to the present.

The Swedes, as is well known, were the pioneer settlers of Pennsylvania. Their original colony settled on the Delaware in 1638. Penn found them here upon his first visit to the Province in 1682. From some of their number he purchased the site of his future city of Philadelphia. They were of the Lutheran faith, the national religion of Sweden, and their congregations in Pennsylvania were from the beginning supplied with ministers from the parent country, as well as with Bibles and hymn books, catechisms and manuals of the denomination.

Andreas Rudman, to whom, in all probability, the founding of the local congregation was directly due, was one of three ministers sent to Pennsylvania from Sweden in 1697. He was a graduate of the University of Upsala, and ranked as provost or bishop of the several Swedish congregations. He was active in the establishment of the churches at Wilmington and Wicaco, and officiated at the consecration of both, the former in 1699 and the latter in 1700. That at Wicaco, called Gloria Dei, which, like all the other Swedish missions, passed eventually into the control of the Church of England, is the oldest congregation in Pennsylvania in which services continue to be regularly held.

All accounts agree that Pastor Rudman was a man of earnest piety, and his missionary zeal is attested by the variety and extent of his pastoral work. The Swedish churches were from the beginning upon intimate relations with those of the Anglican communion. The Swedish pastors regularly attended the Episcopal conferences, and in the absence of the English rectors they preached in the latters' pulpits. Mr. Rudman was indeed granted a gratuity of 62 pounds sterling by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and ministered for a time in the then newly organized Christ Church, Philadelphia, Trinity Church, Oxford, and St. David's Church, Radnor. While serving the two latter charges, it is said that he walked to and from Philadelphia, stopping by the way in the wilderness to administer spiritual consolation wherever it seemed to be most needed. He served for years without salary, and when funds were at hand paid church debts with them. He was of frail constitution and exhausted himself by his arduous labors. At his request, the Rev. Andreas Sandel was sent from Sweden in 1702 as his assistant. Pastor Rudman then devoted himself for a brief time to the work among the Swedish congregations in New York, though continuing to act as provost of the church in Pennsylvania. He died September 17, 1708, at the early age of forty, and was laid to rest beneath the altar of the Church of Gloria Dei, which he had founded.

The date of the actual settlement of the Swedes in this region and of the establishment of their congregation here is not precisely ascertainable at this remote distance of time. The settlers had been members of the congregation of Wicaco, and it is entirely probable that their location in these parts was coincident with the date of the warrant of 1701. It was not the habit of the Swedes to enter upon lands without lawful authority. If the congregation was organized before 1704 it but just antedated the establishment of the Lutheran congregation at Falkner's Swamp, now known as the Swamp Church, in Montgomery County, said to be the oldest Lutheran congregation in America still in existence, which dates its origin from that year.

We can only imagine the scenes of patient toil among the little pioneer band in the felling of the forest and the construction of the primitive log huts scattered here and there without plan as to their location, which were to afford them shelter from the severity of the elements. The ancient Swedish log houses are described as very rude affairs, each of one story and containing usually but a single room, the door so low as to require the oc-

cupant to stoop in passing through it. The windows were small square holes cut in the logs, the frames being sometimes supplied with isinglass, but oftener opened or closed with sliding boards—an inconvenient arrangement in bad weather. The chimneys were of rough stone, erected either in the corner of the room, or outside against the gable end of the house. The hardy pioneers dressed themselves in the skins of the animals taken in the hunt, wore bear skin caps, with flaps to protect the ears, and shoes made of tanned leather of the style of the Indian moccasins. The covering of their beds was of the same primitive material.

Until 1709 no road was laid out through the wilderness to afford the settlers means of communication with their former homes at Philadelphia. Their only mode of transportation was by the Schuylkill River, a species of navigation attended at times with many risks and dangers. It was the habit of the Swedes to settle along the streams, and hence it was said of them that, "like ducks they always had a predilection for the water." Not only for business, but for pleasure was the river resorted to in preference to the primitive roads. Watson, in his Annals of Philadelphia, mentions the interesting circumstance that upon the occasion of the wedding of Magdalena Hulings—a native of Morlatton, and daughter of one of the early settlers, Marcus Hulings—to Matthias Holstein, of the Swedes Ford, a little below the present borough of Norristown, the bride with her entire retinue made the journey thither in their canoes. A fine scene for the imagination of a painter!

As has been said, the relations of the Swedes with the Indians—a few of whom lingered in the vicinity—were mutually amicable. No Indian outrages ever disturbed the tranquillity of the little settlement. In 1728 an incursion of a small party of the savages in the neighborhood of Rutter's Iron Works, on the Manatawny, in Colebrookdale Township, occasioned considerable excitement and alarm, but upon a spirited resistance on the part of the inhabitants the affair passed without serious results. The peace of the region was not again disturbed by the same cause, even during the period of the French and Indian War, when so many terrible massacres of the inhabitants of the Western and Northern districts of Berks were perpetrated in revenge for

alleged grievances of the red men over prior land transactions between them and the whites. It may be mentioned in this connection that the early efforts of the Swedes to spread the gospel among the Indians—which went so far as the preparation of the catechism translated into the Indian tongue by order of the King of Sweden—were never attended with any substantial results. The Moravians made more progress in this direction than any other denomination. The aborigines, upon selling their lands, retired from the settlements of the whites, the few who remained being regarded by the migrating tribes with suspicion, eventuating at times in open hostility.

The region for many miles surrounding was known in provincial history as Manathanim, derived from the Indian name of the creek which rises in Berks County and empties into the Schuylkill at Pottstown. The name Morlatton, by which this church has been known for nearly a century and a half, is, I have no doubt, a corruption of Manating, a later version of the name Manathanim. Morlatton is said not to be a Swedish name and does not appear in the early Swedish records, or the writings of the early Swedish historians. Manathanim, and subsequently Manating, on the other hand, were employed to designate the locality.

The Rev. Andreas Sandel, the Rev. Rudman's assistant and successor, ministered to the little congregation at Morlatton several times a year from its establishment to 1719. At that date he returned to Sweden, and in 1720, at a meeting of the several congregations connected with Wicaco Marcus Hulings and several other residents of Manating were present and requested that the Rev. Samuel Hesselius, who had arrived in America the year before and was assistant pastor at Wicaco, might be appointed their minister. The request was granted, and Mr. Hesselius removed to Manating, preaching alternately there and in three other charges in Bucks and Philadelphia counties. He was a most pious and worthy shepherd. Becoming resident pastor of the church at Wilmington in 1723, he withdrew, after which the congregation continued as before to be supplied with occasional preaching only by the assistants at Wicaco. The next regular pastor was the Rev. Gabriel Falck, whose ministrations were con-

tinued until 1745. The earliest church records were begun by him in 1735. By reason of some charges against him while assistant pastor at Wicaco he withdrew from the ministry and returned to Sweden. For several years thereafter the congregation at Manating was without a pastor, the Rev. Henry M. Muhlenberg, the organizer of the Lutheran churches in America, serving the congregation at its request, preaching at intervals in English and German until 1752, baptizing and confirming and performing general pastoral offices. The Rev. John Abraham Lidenius then became settled Swedish pastor, terminating his labors in 1755. He was the last Swedish minister in this charge and the pulpit now remained vacant. I have upon a former occasion detailed the events which resulted in the union of the congregation with the Church of England, and the sending hither by the Propagation Society in the year 1762, of the Rev. Alexander Murray, who conducted a mission at St. Gabriel's and at Reading, down to the period of the Revolution.

By reason of the close denominational bond between the Swedes and the Lutherans, both adhering to the Augsburg Confession, and working in harmony from the earliest times in the advancement of the common faith, the question has arisen as to why, upon the decline and ultimate cessation of the Swedish mission, the churches under its care did not formally come into the Lutheran communion, instead of uniting without exception with the Protestant Episcopal. One reason assigned is that the Church of Sweden was Episcopal in its form of government, having since the Reformation had Bishops, or a superior order of hierarchy, whilst the Lutheran Church in Germany, from which the Church in America was directly derived, held to the system of the parity of the clergy. Another and probably a still more potent consideration was that the services in the Lutheran churches of the day were exclusively in the German language, whilst the Swedish tongue, though closely askin to the German, gradually fell into disuse with the decease of the ancient people, and was eventually superseded by the English. At Morlatton, the marked influx of Church of England members also had much to do with the change of its denominational relation.

The date of the erection of the first church is unascertainable from any record. The original congregation presumably worshiped for a time in the dwelling houses. It is known that a log church, possibly the second, was built near the northeast corner of the burial ground in 1736-37. Upon the erection of old St. Gabriel's Church, in which we are now assembled, in 1801, the former was converted into a neighborhood school house, which purpose it continued to serve until the winter of 1831-32, when it was accidentally destroyed by fire.

A burial ground, an earlier necessity than a church, has doubtless existed here from the date of the original settlement. In it rest the ashes of "the rude forefathers of the hamlet," in unmarked graves, whilst some of the names yet distinguishable upon the remaining stones are those of the progenitors of many well-known families formerly resident in this region. The most ancient stone still decipherable is that of Andrew Robeson, who died in 1719-20, aged sixty-six years. Quaint mortuary designs and verses ornament the dilapidated memorial. Andrew Robeson was of Scotch descent, was a Provincial Counselor and Justice of the Peace of Philadelphia County, and was married to Magdalena, eldest daughter of Pastor Rudman, who preceded her husband in death, and is buried at Wicaco. He held grants of land on both sides of the Schuylkill in this vicinity, and it was from him that Robeson Township, Berks, originally in Chester County, took its name. Another of the more ancient of the tombstones still legible is that of Marcus Hulings, before mentioned, one of the original members of the Swedish congregation at Morlatton, Indian interpreter and man of affairs, who died in 1757, aged seventy years. The resting place of William Bird, who died in 1762 and was the father of Mark Bird, the founder of Birdsboro, and of Rachel, wife of James Wilson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, is legibly indicated. In the same vicinity are the graves of John and Elizabeth Shunk, parents of Francis R. Shunk, Governor of Pennsylvania, who as a mere lad taught school in the old log church building. The inscriptions are in the German language, and that to his mother contains the quotation from Proverbs: "Her sons shall rise up and call her

blessed." These and many other memorials to members of the old representative families of the neighborhood, I doubt not, you will examine with interest.

A notable pioneer of this place was George Douglass, the elder, from whom the village, originally called Warensburg, took its name upon the opening of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, in 1838. He was the son of Archibald and Jane Douglass, of Scotland, and was born in 1726. His family were at first residents of Lancaster County. Settling in this place in 1761, he was a Justice of the Peace during the Colonial period, and became a large land owner, erecting in 1765 the large stone building near which the Pennsylvania Railroad station now stands, and in which he lived and kept a store. He also built what was formerly known as the White Horse tavern, which stands eastward of the dwelling, and was a famous hostelry in its day. It was the voting place for Amity and several of the adjacent townships in the early days, and during the Revolutionary War was the mustering place of the Continental levies from the surrounding region. George Douglass died in 1799.

The Black Horse Hotel, another of the ancient landmarks, just north of the Reading Railway, was built in 1771. In 1833 a company was chartered to erect a bridge across the Schuylkill, "between the White Horse and Black Horse taverns." The only mode of crossing the river before that time was by the fords, one of which, to the westward of the bridge, was anciently known as the "White Horse Ford." The former residence of Dr. Michael Ludwig, who died in 1857, standing at the intersection of the Perkiomen and Amityville turnpikes, is also one of the oldest remaining buildings of the village.

The most ancient and interesting historical object in the vicinity is the old stone house—the oldest in Berks County—situated at the Schuylkill bridge, and bearing the date of 1716. At the period of its erection it must have been a conspicuous object. The date stone contains the initials of Mouns Jones and his wife, Ingeborg. Mouns or Moses Jones, the progenitor of the numerous family of this neighborhood bearing the name, was one of the original Swedish colony at Morlatton, and in this old house were held numerous conferences of Indians during the



OLD MOUNS JONES HOUSE
Douglassville
Built 1716.

Provincial period. Here in 1728, after the disturbance on the Manatawny in that year, before referred to, two of the Delaware chiefs, Sassoonan and Opekasset, stopped on the way to and from Philadelphia, where peace negotiations were conducted by the Governor and Council. Mouns Jones died in 1727, having devised his homestead to his son Andrew, charging him with the maintenance for her life of his mother, Ingeborg, who survived her husband. The ancient house, during the early days of the canal navigation, was kept as a tavern, and a flat boat ferry extended from that point across the Schuylkill. It stands within about a hundred feet of the stream, and has repeatedly been submerged in part in the periodical freshets. It is now unoccupied, and survives in its rude condition principally as a venerable relic of a long by-gone time.

I have thus called your attention to some of the events pertaining to the history of this attractive region in order that you may the more thoroughly appreciate and enjoy the opportunity which this day affords for the visitation of the few remaining memorials of the scenes and associations I have but imperfectly described.