

# Early Donegal Presbyterian Church Biographies

## Rev. David Alexander

He was a native of Ireland. He may have been educated at the Log College, and licensed by New Castle Presbytery. He was ordained and installed pastor of Pequea Church, in the Presbytery of Donegal, October 18th, 1738. The West End (Leacock) petitioned that a portion of his time might be given to them. In 1741 Leacock was declared by the Synod entitled to all the priveleges of any vacant congregation. Mr. Alexander let no man outstrip him in his violation of all rules in his treatment of those whom he esteemed "opposers of the work." He was suspended by his Presbytery till "satisfaction was given for his disregardful conduct to them, and his refusal to submit to the government of Christ's Church in their hands." The conjunct Presbyteries of New Brunswick and Newcastle appointed him, on account of "the necessity in the Great Valley," to supply there. From that time his history cannot be traced.

## Rev. James Anderson (1678-1740)

He was born in Scotland, November 17th, 1678, and was ordained by Irvine Presbytery, November 17th, 1708, with a view to his settlement in Virginia. He arrived in the Rappahannock, April 22d, 1709, but the state of things not warranting his stay, he came northward, and was received by the Presbytery, September 20th. He settled at New Castle, Del. In 1717 he accepted a call to a congregation in New York City, which, at the time was worshipping in the City Hall. September 24th, 1726, he received a call to Donegal, on the Susquehanna, and accepted it. He was installed the last Wednesday in August, 1727. In September, 1729, he began to give every fifth Sabbath to the people on Swatara, and joined the congregation of Derry. In April, 1738, at the behest of John Caldwell, the founder of Cub Creek Congregation in Charlotte Co., Virginia, the Presbytery decided to ask the Synod to send a deputation to wait on the Virginia Government, and solicit its favor in behalf of Presbyterianism there. The Synod wrote to the Governor, and sent Mr. Anderson to bear the letter, providing supplies for his pulpit, and allowing for his expenses "in a manner suitable to his design." This mission he performed satisfactorily. He died July 16th, 1743. At the time of his death, he owned a farm of 305 acres well stocked and three slaves. He was a charter member of Donegal Presbytery October 11, 1732, and was Moderator of the Synod of Philadelphia May 23, 1739. February, 1713 he married Suit Garland, daughter of Sylvester Garland of the head of Apoquiminy, by whom eleven children. She died December 24, 1836 and he married Rebecca Crawford of Donegal, Pennsylvania.

## Rev. Adam Boyd (1692-1768)

He was born at Ballymoney, Ireland, in 1692, and came to New England as a probationer in 1722 or 1723. He was received under the care of New Castle Presbytery in July, 1724. He accepted a call to the churches of Octorara and Pequea, and was ordained, October 13th, at Octorara. In October, 1727, the families on the west side of the stream Octorara having asked for one-third of his labors, he was directed to spend every sixty

Sabbath at Middle Octorara. The Forks of Brandywine composed part of his field until 1734. In the progress of the great revival, a large portion of his congregation having left him and joined the Brunswick brethren, he asked leave, August 11th, 1741, to accept the invitation given him by the fraction of Brandywine which adhered to the Old Side. His relation to the Forks was dissolved in 1758. He died November 23d, 1768. Mr. Boyd was a man of great exactness, recording in what articles his salary was paid; thus John Long paid by publications (as a magistrate) of marriages and astrays, and by a riddle. His congregation agreed to pay him twenty-five pounds yearly during his life and several of them remembered him, in their dying testaments, by small bequests.

### **Dr. Robert Cathcart (1759-1849)**

He was born November 1759, near Coleraine, Ireland. He was educated in the College of Glasgow, and after being licensed, preached several years without a fixed charge, till 1790, when he emigrated to the United States. Declining other overtures, he was settled October, 1793, over the united churches of York and Hopewell, Pennsylvania, fifteen miles apart, which he served on alternate Sundays. When the infirmities of age told on him, he relinquished the Hopewell Church, commonly known as York Barrens. In 1839 he was forced to resign the York Church also, after a pastoral connection of forty-six years. He died October 19th, 1849 at the advanced age of ninety years. He was a trustee of Dickinson College and a member of the Synod of Philadelphia. He never missed a meeting of the Synod but once, and that was occasioned by sickness. For twenty years he served as one of the clerks of the Assembly. Although Dr. Cathcart was consulted by other authors, he never gave anything to the press but one sermon, which was a tribute to the memory of his friend, Dr. Davidson, of Carlisle.

### **Rev. Robert Cross (1689-1766)**

He was born near Balleykelley, Ireland, in 1689. He received both his academical and theological education in his native country, and came to America when he was not far from twenty-eight years of age. March 17th, 1719, he was ordained and installed a pastor of the Church at New Castle, by the Presbytery of New Castle. On the 18th of September, 1723, he received a call to settle over the Presbyterian congregation at Jamaica, Long Island, and between that date and October 10th following, he took charge of the Church in Jamaica. Here his ministry was highly successful, and attended by a considerable revival of religion. The Rev. James M. Macdonald, subsequently a pastor of the same church says, "it is evident that he was very highly esteemed," and "was one of the most prominent and influential ministers of the day in which he lived." Mr. Cross accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, joined the Philadelphia Presbytery, May 29th, 1737, and was installed on the 10th of November following. The installation sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Andrews, with whom he was settled as a colleague. Mr. Cross resigned his pastoral charge June 22d, 1758, and died in August, 1766. The following testimony to his character appears on his grave-stone: "He excelled in prudence and gravity, and a general deportment, was esteemed for his leaned acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and long accounted one of the most respectable ministers in the Province."

### **Rev. David Evans (d. 1751)**

He was of Welsh extraction. In 1713 he graduated at Yale College, after which he received a call from the people of Welsh Tract, and was ordained, November 3d, 1714. He was the recording clerk of New Castle Presbytery for six or seven years. For his services each member gave him a half-crown. He was released from his charge in 1720, and was called to Great Valley, but he declined to accept the call for several years. He was one of the first supplies sent to Sadsbury, west branch of Brandywine, and Conestoga. When he removed to Tredryffryn, he was directed to spend one-fourth of his time at Sadsbury. He died before May, 1751. Mr. Evans is said to have been eccentric and high-spirited. His preaching gave such offence, on one occasion, to a person at Pilesgrove, that, rather than listen a moment longer, he jumped out of a church window.

### **Andrew Galbraith, First Elder of Donegal Church (1692-? after 1747)**

The name of Andrew Galbraith is very prominent among the early founders of Donegal Church. It is believed that he could have been an elder of the church back in Donegal, Ireland and thus was the person chosen to petition the New Castle Presbytery for pastoral supplies when the increasing number of Scots-Irish settlers wanted ministerial services at Donegal. That petition was August 1, 1721, and marks the date of the founding of the Donegal Church.

The Galbraith family supposedly came from Edinburgh, Scotland before going to Ireland. Andrew's father James, born 1666 in Ireland, first came to America with his brother John on the same ship as William Penn on his second trip in 1699. They returned to Europe in 1701, but then emigrated again in 1718 bringing sons John, born 1690, and Andrew born 1692.

John settled along Donegal Meeting House run where he built a grist and saw-mill. He also kept an "ordinary" (tavern) and was elected sheriff of Lancaster County and a member of the first county jury. His son John was a celebrated Indian trader.

Andrew settled also along Donegal run about ¼ mile from the spring and the site of the future church. When Lancaster County was organized in 1729, he was appointed the first coroner, and later a justice, and in 1732 was elected to the General Assembly. In 1746 he sold his holdings to John Kyle who was probably the father of his wife Mary, and the family moved across the river to Cumberland County. His children were John, Arthur and Robert.

Another brother of John and Andrew was James, Jr. who settled in Derry Township and married Elizabeth Bertram the daughter of the Rev. William Bertram, an early pastor of the Derry Presbyterian Church. Their son Bertram was educated as a surveyor and then became one of the most prominent local military officers during the Revolution, serving as the county lieutenant.

Another John Galbraith, perhaps a cousin, had extensive land holdings on the Susquehanna near present Bainbridge. The Conoy Indian town also was just south of this tract where the Conoy Creek enters the river. Galbraith's home was about a mile up the creek where Peter's road crossed it. Galbraith's holdings later became the property of Samuel Scott, then the Haldeman family, and from 1899 to 1934 was owned by the Benjamin F. Hoffman family, parents of Jean Withers and Polly Longenecker.

## **Rev. George Gillespie (1683-1760)**

He was born in 1683, in the town of Glasgow, and educated in the University there. He was licensed by Glasgow Presbytery, early in 1712, and came to New England in the Spring. He first settled at Woodbridge. He was ordained May 28th, 1713, having received a call from the people of White Clay Creek. Red Clay, Lower Brandywine and Elk River, besides White Clay, seem to have formed his charge for several years. He is said to have organized the congregation of the Head of Christiana, and he served it till his death, which occurred January 2d, 1760. Mr. Gillespie was zealous for the interests of the Church, and was remarkably punctual in attendance on Presbytery and Synod.

## **Rev. William Kerr (1777-1823)**

He was born in Bart Township, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, in 1777; was educated at the Institution which afterwards became Jefferson College, studied theology, partly under the Rev. Dr. Sample, and partly at Princeton, was settled in the ministry at Donegal, Lancaster co., Pennsylvania, about 1809, and died in 1823, in his forty-seventh year.

## **Rev. Colin McFarquhar (abt. 1729-1822)**



Early in the Spring of 1776 the Rev. Colin McFarquhar took charge of the church at Donegal, Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania. He came to this country from Scotland, to seek a home and settlement, and left his family behind him, expecting to send for them as soon as he was settled, but on account of the interruption of travel occasioned by the prevailing war, he did not see them for ten years thereafter. Mr. McFarquhar continued to be the diligent and faithful pastor of Donegal until 1805, when his wife having died, he was bowed down with sorrow, and concluded to resign the charge and live with his daughters, Mrs. Wilson, in Lancaster, and Mrs. Cook, in Hagerstown, where he died, August 27th, 1822, aged ninety-three years.

## **Rev. Daniel McGill (d. 1724)**

He was ordained in Scotland. He joined the Philadelphia Presbytery (the only presbytery) in 1713, having accepted a call to Upper Marlborough, Patuxent, Maryland where he labored for some time (1713-19). He was a charter member of the New Castle, Delaware Presbytery in 1717. In 1719 the Synod sent him to preach to the people of Potomoke, Virginia, where he spent some months, and put "the people into church order," but declined their call. Mr. McGill was called to Elk River, in Maryland, but after a long delay, declined. He was a supply for short periods in Kent, at Birmingham, on Brandywine, at Snow Hill, White Clay, Donegal, Drawyers, Conestoga, and Octorara. He died February 10th, 1724, his home being in the London Tract, New Castle county, Delaware.

## **Rev. Nathanael Randolph Snowden (b. pre 1767-1850)**

He was a graduate of Princeton College in 1787, licensed by the Presbytery of Carlisle in 1794, for a time was Tutor in Dickinson College, and was settled over the churches of Harrisburg, Paxton and Derry, Pennsylvania, in which he labored about three years, with zeal and success. He occasionally preached at Donegal as well. After resigning these charges, he supplied many congregations, but made no permanent settlement. He died November 3d, 1850.

## **Rev. Joseph Tate (pre 1728-1774)**

He was received as a licentiate by Donegal Presbytery, April 1st, 1748, and was sent to Lower Pennsborough (Silver Spring), Marsh Creek and Conewago. On the 14th of June he was called to Donegal, they giving him seventy pounds to buy a plantation and seventy pounds salary. He was ordained, November 23d, 1748. He spent eight Sabbaths, in the following Fall, in Virginia. Mr. Tate joined the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1768. He was sent by the Synod to Western Virginia and North Carolina, and in the following March he was called to Caddle Creek. He died October 11th, 1774. He is said to have been eccentric, but fearless in reproving vice and errors of the day.

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