

# THE REFORMED CHURCH OF NYACK

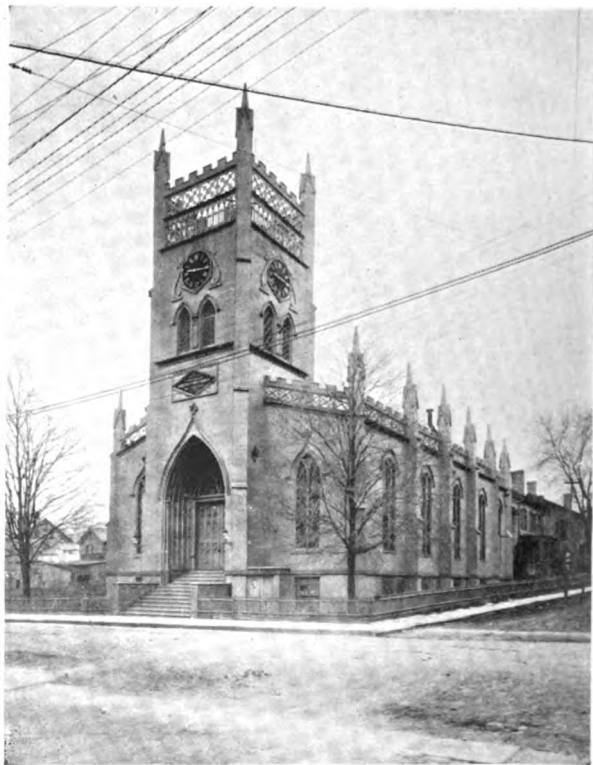
BY

THE REV. WILLIAM J. LEGGETT, PH. D.

THE first Sabbath services held by the Reformed Dutch people in Nyack, were in the year 1830. For five years these services were held more or less regularly on alternate Sabbath afternoons, at first in the Presbyterian church, and later in a private house, conducted by the pastor of the Clarkstown Church, in whose parish Nyack belonged. June 1, 1835, "a number of the inhabitants of Nyack, and friends of the Reformed Dutch Church, considered it necessary that a house of public worship be erected in said village for the accommodation of the Reformed Dutch population," and indicated their interest by subscribing for this purpose, money or labor to a sufficient amount to justify them in choosing a committee to select a plan for the church building. Mr. Peter Smith, Esq., gave a lot about seventy-five feet by eighty-five on the west side of Broadway, on condition that it should always be used for church purposes. On this lot, the site of the present church, a frame building was erected by Thomas Burd, contractor, under the direction of the building committee, composed of John Lydecker, Peter Smith, Tunis Smith, A. A. Tallman and Cornelius T. Smith. The building was thirty-two by fifty feet, and had a tower and gallery over the entrance. The total cost was about \$2,000. It was dedicated to the service of the Triune God, May 29, 1836, the Rev. John Knox, D. D., pastor of the Collegiate Reformed Church, New York city, preaching the sermon from Exodus, 20:24, "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." The Rev. Alexander H. Warner, of Clarkstown, and the Rev. Isaac D. Cole of Tappan assisted in the services.

Sabbath afternoon services were regularly conducted by the pastor of the Clarkstown Church, and a prayer meeting was held each week in the homes. At the close of one of these social re-

ligious meetings, held in the home of Simon Van Antwerp, February 9, 1838, the good people of Nyack took steps to have a separate congregation organized in their village. A committee was appointed to confer with the Consistory of the Clarkstown Church, who so favorably presented their cause, that the Consistory, as their minister declares—"upon mature deliberation unani-



THE REFORMED CHURCH OF NYACK, — 1836.

mously agreed that it would tend to the advancement of the Dutch Church to have a congregation organized in the village of Nyack and its vicinity." This was a striking example of wise and kindly action by the mother Church. The same committee, viz.: A. A. Tallman, Henry Hause and Cornelius T. Smith, were appointed to present a memorial to the Classis of Paramus at its session April 10, asking that a Church be organized at Nyack. Classis

unanimously granted the request, and appointed the Revs. Wilhelmus Eltinge, Isaac D. Cole and P. J. Quick a committee to effect the organization, which was done April 24, 1838. The new Church was composed of twenty-two members, received from Clarkstown. The first officers were, elders, Tunis Smith, Peter Smith and Abram A. Tallman; deacons, Henry Hause, Cornelius C. Blauvelt and Edward Felter. The number of elders and deacons was increased to four each, in the following year, and that number has since been retained.

THE REV. PHILIP M. BRETT, D. D.

Supplies for the pulpit were provided by Classis for alternate



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Sabbaths, till the autumn, when the Rev. Philip M. Brett was called to be the first pastor. He was ordained and installed September 13, 1838, the sermon being preached by Mr. Brett's grandfather, the Rev. Philip Milledoler, D. D., president of Rutgers College. The growth of the Church during Dr. Brett's pastorate of four years, justified the action of the brethren who had asked for the organization, for the membership increased to about eighty, and most of the additions were on confession of faith. Ill health compelled

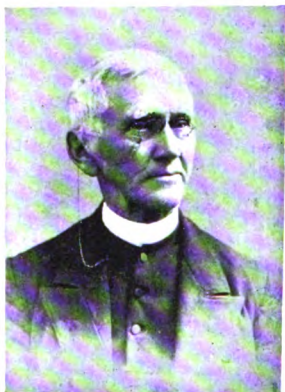
Dr. Brett to seek a warmer climate. He was therefore released from this charge August 2, 1841, and went to St. Thomas, one of the West India islands, and became pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church there. In 1846 he returned to New York and was pastor of the Mount Pleasant Reformed Church for five years, and then served the Reformed Church of Tompkinsville, Staten Island, till his death in 1860.

"Dr. Brett was born in New York city in 1818. He received both his classical and theological education at New Brunswick, graduated from the Theological Seminary in 1838, and the same year was licensed by the Classis of New York. 'He was a very successful and able minister,' says the Rev. Dr. James M. Mathews, 'of an elevated tone of piety, of great consistency of

character, universally beloved, and respected. He cherished a peculiar fondness for the great leading doctrines of grace, which formed a prominent staple of his discourses. He had a clear, lucid mind, and his ministrations were greatly blessed.' His only son, the Rev. Cornelius Brett, D. D., is pastor of the Bergen Reformed Church, which he has served most efficiently since 1876." \*

THE REV. CHARLES S. HAGEMAN, D. D.

The second pastor was the Rev. Charles S. Hageman, who was ordained and installed September 27, 1842, and continued to be pastor till December, 1852. During his pastorate the village grew, and the Reformed Church received its full share of increase. The



THE REV. C. S. HAGEMAN, D. D.

membership increased to 124, and the number of families from 60 to 105. This growth necessitated the enlargement of the church building. The seating capacity was increased by putting in side galleries, and later by inclosing the porch, but still there was need of more room, and the enlargement of the building was undertaken in 1850. It was moved to the rear of the lot and raised, and a basement constructed for the use of the Sabbath school and prayer meetings, a larger tower was built, additions nine feet wide

were put on each side of the building, and the side galleries were removed. The church was re-dedicated January 7, 1851, the Rev. George W. Bethune, D. D., preaching the sermon from Psalm 27:4. The cost of the rebuilding was about \$8,500, most of which sum was raised by an offering at the dedicatory service and the sale of pews, but a balance of about \$1,500 was provided by David D. and Tunis Smith, who were given possession of seventeen unsold pews till the money should be refunded.

The first pastor lived with his mother-in-law, at the southwest corner of Broadway and Second avenue, but a parsonage was built for Mr. Hageman on Cedar street, at the end of Church street, which was occupied by him and his successors till 1860. Mr. Hageman left Nyack to accept a call to the Second Reformed

• Editorial Addenda.

Church of Poughkeepsie, N. Y., where he labored till 1870, when he became pastor of the Second Reformed Church of Freehold, N. J. That charge he gave up in 1878, when he returned to Nyack, and for many years preached nearly every Sabbath as stated supply of Churches in the vicinity. For the last five years he has been a regular worshipper in the church where he began his ministry fifty-eight years ago. Rutgers College honored him with the degree of D. D., in 1862. His old friends and friends of later years honor him for his faithfulness in the pulpit and in the pew, and for his powers of mind and heart.

THE REV. BENJAMIN VAN ZANDT, D. D.

After an interim of about a month, the Rev. Benjamin Van Zandt was called, and was soon active as pastor, though he was not installed till April 19, 1853. His former charges had been Union Village, N. Y., from 1836 to 1842, and Kinderhook, N. Y., from 1842 to 1853. During his pastorate the Church was incorporated, August 2, 1855, and the same year the largest addition to the membership in any one year thus far (twenty-one) was reported to Classis. Mr. Van Zandt interested himself in the establishment of Rockland Female Institute, in Nyack, and ceased to be pastor, June 13, 1856, in order to become president of the school he had been instrumental in founding. This position he held two years, and then was pastor of Presbyterian Churches in the West till 1862, when he became pastor of the Reformed Churches of Canajoharie and Sprakers, N. Y., and in 1869 moved to Leeds, N. Y. Here he served the Reformed Church as pastor till his retirement in 1878, after which he resided in Catskill, till he was called home, October 14, 1895, in the 87th year of his age. The degree of D. D. was conferred upon him by his *Alma Mater*, Union College, in 1866.



THE REV. BENJ. VAN ZANDT, D. D.

"A sturdy theologian, he stood always a valiant defender of the faith. Thoroughly informed upon matters of Church polity,

he insisted upon law and order. In his best days he was an elegant writer, and was recognized as a preacher of more than ordinary ability. His sermons were carefully prepared, and were clear and strong in thought. He had much energy and executive ability. Possessed of gravity and dignity, he yet was genial with friends and faithful in friendships. Up to the last his one thought was for the kingdom of Christ, and the glory of the Redeemer." \*

THE REV. DANIEL LORD, M. D.

The fourth pastor was the Rev. Daniel Lord, who was settled in March, 1857. This was a year of remarkable revivals in this region, and this Church shared in the blessing. April seventh, twenty-nine members were received on confession of faith, and seven by certificate. This is the largest accession by confession that the Church has ever received at one time, and notwithstanding the lapse of forty-three years, nine of these persons are still members of this church. During the three years of Mr. Lord's pastorate, ninety-six new members were added to the Church, the Sabbath school increased from 115 to 200, and the number of families from 105 to 133. Mr. Lord came to Nyack from Henderson, N. Y., and in May, 1860, returned to the same charge. In 1878, he became the pastor of that church for the third time. His other charges were Piermont, N. Y., from 1847 to 1850; North Congregational, Bridgeport, Conn., from 1864 to 1869; Presbyterian, Chicago, from 1869 to 1873; Union Church, Jordansville, N. Y., from 1881 to 1899, where on Sabbath, September 10, 1899, while conducting the morning service, he was stricken with apoplexy, and passed from the sanctuary to his reward, in the eighty-eighth year of his age. †

In the first forty years of its existence the Church in Nyack exhibited remarkable promptness in filling the pulpit, whenever it became vacant. In four out of five instances a new pastor



THE REV. DANIEL LORD, M. D.

\* Editorial Addenda. See Minutes of Synod, Vol. XVIII, p. 491.

† See history of Piermont, in this volume.

was called within two months after the vacancy occurred.

#### THE REV. URIAH MARVIN.

In 1860 the Rev. Uriah Marvin of Brooklyn accepted a call to Nyack before the former pastor had left. In this there was no disrespect to the retiring pastor, but zeal to fill his place. Mr. Marvin had been pastor of the Reformed Church in Union Village, N. Y., from 1848 to 1855, and of the Greenwich Reformed Church, in New York city, from 1855 to 1858. During his pastorate in Nyack the congregation, Church membership and Sabbath school continued to increase in numbers, and there was marked increase in contributions both for benevolent and congregational

purposes. He ceased to be pastor October 1, 1870, and moved to Troy, N. Y., where he lived without charge till November 28, 1898, when he died, aged nearly 83 years.

"Mr. Marvin was born in Albany, N. Y., January 9, 1816. He graduated from Union College in 1825. Immediately after his graduation he studied law and was admitted to the bar in New York in 1839. In 1844 he heard the call to the ministry, and entered Princeton Theological Seminary, from which he was graduated.



THE REV. URIAH MARVIN.

In 1846 he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Troy. His two sons, Rev. Dr. Frederick R. Marvin of Albany, and Rev. Dwight E. Marvin of Germantown, Philadelphia, are successful and well known ministers in the denominations in which they labor. It is said of Mr. Marvin that, 'he always took great interest in the Church, and the kingdom of God throughout the world. He was unostentatious in manner, widely respected as an upright Christian citizen, and leaves behind him many pleasant remembrances of Christian service.' \* \*

During the ten years of Mr. Marvin's pastorate, the Church did not own a parsonage. The one built in 1842 was sold in 1860, and part of the price was applied to reimburse David D. and

\* See Minutes of Synod, Vol. XVIII, p. 560.

Tunis Smith for money paid in 1851, to balance the cost of rebuilding the church, and the other part of the price, \$1,200, was kept till 1865, when it was used in repairing the church. The last four years Mr. Marvin occupied the house in the rear of the church, which was rented for him. In October, 1870, this house and lot were purchased by the Consistory, to obtain land for an addition to the church building, which was not large enough to accommodate the growing congregation. An addition of sixteen feet was built on the rear of the church, providing needed space for the audience, an organ and choir loft in the southwest corner, and a pastor's study and robing room in the northwest corner.

The amount expended was about \$13,000. The house purchased was used as a residence for the successive pastors, till April, 1888, when one more desirable was provided by leasing Mrs. Stevenson's house on Broadway, corner of Hudson avenue, which continued to be the pastor's residence through the century.

#### THE REV. HENRY V. VOORHEES.

In November, 1870, the Rev. Henry V. Voorhees, was called as pastor, and he began his ministry January 1, 1871, but was not installed till April 21. During his pastorate the Church grew to 184 families, 319 members; the Sabbath school to 320 members, and in a few years the contributions for support and benevolence

nearly doubled. But the general financial depression of the "seventies" weighed heavily upon some of the most liberal friends of the Reformed Church, and the community as well as the Church, felt the burden seriously. Mr. Voorhees resigned his charge April 1, 1878. His other pastorates in the Reformed Church were Geneva, N. Y., from 1850 to 1854; Broome street, New York City, 1855; Bound Brook, N. J., from 1858 to 1862; Washington Heights, N. Y., from 1863 to 1865; South Bushwick, N. Y., from 1867 to 1869. After leaving Nyack he served the Presbyterian Churches of Princess Anne, Md., from 1881 to 1889, and of Dela-



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ware Water Gap from 1891 to 1895. He died October 10, 1897. \*

THE REV. WILLIAM A. MCCORKLE, D. D.

In October, 1878, the Rev. Wm. A. McCorkle, D. D., of the Presbyterian Church, was secured as stated supply, and remained in this position till April 1, 1881. He occupied the parsonage, and performed faithfully all the duties of the pastor that the Constitution of our Church permitted, but the people preferred an installed pastor and hence lessened their zeal for the Church.

THE REV. WILLIAM H. CLARK, D. D.

The seventh pastor was the Rev. William H. Clark, D. D., who began his work here June 16, 1881, and continued it till April 1, 1886. In the first year of his pastorate he received forty-four members into the Church on confession of faith, and forty-two by certificate, the largest number received in any one year in the Church's history. The Church prospered in every respect. A revival spirit was manifested continuously, interest in missions was greatly increased, and besides meeting the regular needs of the Church with increased salaries, more than \$4,000 was paid on the debt for enlargement of the Church in 1870.†

The semi-centennial of the church building occurred while the Church was without a pastor, but the Consistory planned and carried out a very fitting celebration of the event. It was held June 17, 1886. Dr. Clark, by request, presided at both sessions. At the afternoon session the Rev. Charles S. Hageman, D. D., gave an historical address, and at the evening session addresses were made by all but two of the former pastors that were living, and the Rev. Cornelius Brett, D. D., spoke of the pastorate of his father, the only ex-pastor who had died.

THE REV. JOHN C. VAN DEVENTER.

In October, 1886, the congregation voted with great unanimity to call the Rev. John C. Van Deventer, and he began his work here November first. Both Mr. Van Deventer and Dr. Clark were called from pastorates in this Classis, Dr. Clark coming here from Broadway, Paterson, and Mr. Van Deventer from the old Paramus

\* See an estimate of his character on page 96 of this volume. † A sketch of Dr. Clark's life is given in the history of the Broadway Reformed Church, Paterson.

Church. The unanimity manifested in the call was continued by the people all through the six years of his pastorate. The lib-



THE REV. J. C. VAN DEVENTER.

erality of the Church for the Lord's work in this and other lands continued and increased, and the balance of the old debt for the enlargement of the church was paid. A goodly number were added to the Church by confession and certificate, and all the services were well attended. The Society of Christian Endeavor was organized October 14, 1887, and proved a great blessing to the young people. In March, 1890, a severe illness left Mr. Van Deventer with heart disease, which caused his death, November 8, 1892, in the forty-sixth

year of his age. For several months it was generally known that his health would never be improved, and that any Sabbath might be his last. On Sabbath evening, October 23, he preached from Rev. 20:11, "And I saw a great white throne," and all who heard him were impressed by his words, and with the thought that it was his last sermon. Such it proved to be. His remains were laid to rest in a plot provided by the Church in Oak Hill cemetery, Nyack. His former charges had been Cold Spring, N. Y., from 1873 to 1875; Glenham, N. Y., from 1875 to 1879; Paramus, N. J., from 1879 to 1886.

"Rev. Mr. Van Deventer was a man of superior qualities of heart and mind, possessing a sweet and liberal disposition. He was also gifted with a clear analytical and logical mind. As a preacher, he was very attractive. His sermons and his lectures were not only vigorous and lucid, they were also presented in a winning way, and as one has truly said, 'it was always a pleasure to listen to the words of truth which fell from his lips'."

The resolution adopted by the Consistory of the Reformed Church of Nyack fitly expresses the views of all who knew him. "As a preacher he was clear and strong in thought, earnest in expression and entirely practical in the enforcement of God's word. As a leader of Christ's people in the various departments of Christian effort, he was peculiarly skillful and wise, and successful in

originating and developing the Christian activities of his people in such a way as to secure the harmonious and fruitful co-operation of all. As a pastor, tender and prudent, he endeared himself to all his people, and won the respect and esteem of the community. To know him, was to respect, to trust and love him."\*

THE REV. WILLIAM J. LEGGETT, PH. D.

The ninth pastor was Rev. William J. Leggett, Ph. D. who entered upon his duties April 1, 1893. His former charges had been Schodack Landing, N. Y., from 1875 to 1882; Claverack, N. Y., from 1882 to 1889; Belleville, N. J., from 1889 to 1893. During his ministry the Church membership has been increased, and also the gifts for benevolence, averaging over \$1,600 per year, and the work of the Church has been well sustained. A Junior Christian Endeavor society was formed May 1, 1894, which under excellent leadership is very helpful in the spiritual training of the children. A chapter of the Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip was formed October 15, 1896, and a Boy's Brotherhood, January 24, 1900. Individual communion cups were introduced in June, 1898. For several years the need and desire of the people was to have a new



THE REV. W. J. LEGGETT, PH. D.

church and chapel, because it was difficult to keep the old building in repair, and because there was need of a better Sabbath school and prayer meeting room than the church basement. June 7, 1892, Consistory resolved, "that the time had come, when the erection of a new church edifice should be earnestly considered," and appointed a committee to take steps in that direction. A few months later the pastor died, and the committee reported that it was not wise to consider the matter at that time.

July 18, 1893, Consistory again appointed a committee, and the subject of building a new church and chapel was considered at meetings of the Consistory and of the congregation till November 13, 1894, when plans were approved, and the building com-

\*See Minutes of Synod, Vol. XVII, p. 891.

mittee authorized to begin the chapel when the cost, \$9,000, was subscribed and \$5,000 paid in. General financial depression prevented the carrying out of these plans. A building fund was started and augmented, but no special effort was made to build till October 10, 1899, when Consistory appointed a committee "to resume the consideration of plans." An impetus was given to the project at this time by the probable receipt in the near future of \$15,000 under the will of Amanda Van Nostrand, widow of elder



THE REFORMED CHURCH OF NYACK,—1900.

Garret Van Nostrand, which sum was received by Consistory in June, 1900. New plans were approved March 20, 1900.

The old parsonage in the rear of the church was demolished June 26, and on its site the foundation walls of the chapel were begun August 9, 1900. The building was completed and dedicated without one cent of debt December 19 of the same year, at a cost of \$10,000, including furnishing; \$2,120 of which came from the Van Nostrand legacy, and the balance was given by the congregation. The sermon at the dedicatory service was preached from Psalm 118:25, by the Rev. Charles S. Hageman, D. D., who,

as pastor, fifty years before, January 7, 1851, presided at the re-dedication of the enlarged church building.

In the sixty-two years of its existence this Church has received on confession of faith, 612 members, and on certificate, 512. The present membership is 363. The Church has been blessed with faithful and efficient pastors, with capable and devoted officers, and with helpful and consecrated members, both male and female. This brief outline points out some facts in the history of this Church, but the inerrant record is written in heaven.