

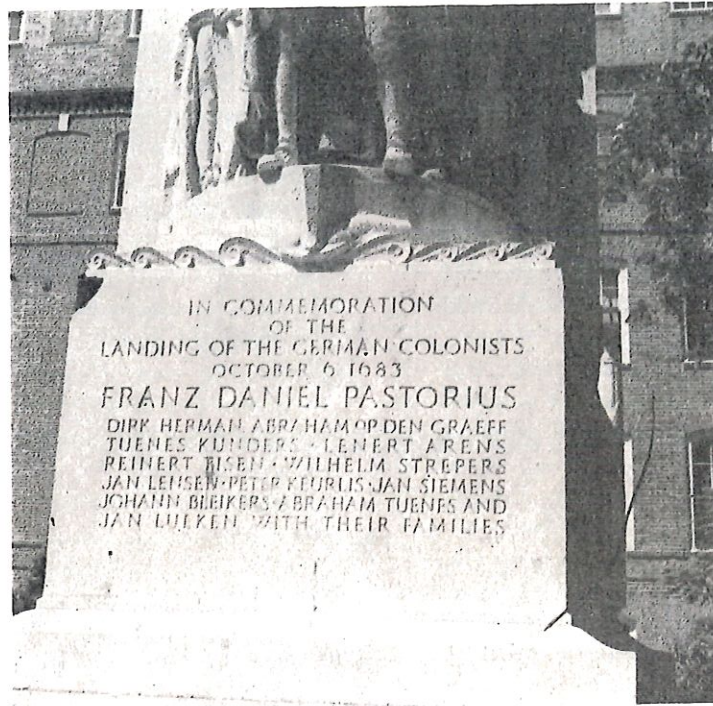
GERMANTOWNE *CRIER*



PASTORIUS STATUE IN VERNON PARK—see Page 11

The Op Den Graeffs

By NANCY C. SELLERS



Pastorius Statue in Vernon Park
Photo by Stanley L. Sellers

Note: Spelling of names throughout article varies and is in accordance with source material.

THE early history of Germantown is full of interest, much of this can be traced to a lively founding family—the Op den Graeffs. When the Pastorius statue was erected in Vernon Park with Dirick, Abraham, and Herman Op den Graeff inscribed among the 13 original founders of Germantown, there was a singular aftermath for the statue was crated and boxed in “righteous indignation” during our two wars with Germany. It is a fact that many of those early Krefelders were indeed displaced Hollanders who had fled Holland for religious reasons to settle in Krefeld, Germany. Pittsburgh Records of the Pennsylvania Historical Society tell us that one “Abraham Op den Graeff” became a Protestant and fled Holland. A son, Herman Op den Graeff, was born November 25, 1585, in the lower Rhineland town of Aldekirke, the village of the “great church” and the scene of battle between the French and the Germans. He died in Krefeld December 27, 1642 but not before he had married a Mennonite girl, Gretjen Pletjes, daughter of Dreissen Pletjes of Kemper on August 16, 1605 and

moved to Krefeld. In 1632, he was a delegate to an important convention to form Mennonite “Confession of Faith” held at Dordrecht, Holland. Eighteen children were born to this couple; Isaac; father of Abraham, Dirick, and Herman, founding fathers of Germantown; was born February 28, 1616, and died January 1678–9. Obviously, he was not present for the marriage of his son Dirick (Krefeld, 1681) who later came to America with his mother (Gretchen Peters), sister Margaret (who married Peter Schumacher, Jr. of Germantown), and his two brothers, Herman, and Abraham. Dirick Op den Graeff’s Marriage Certificate is only one of its kind on the Continent of Europe, written in Dutch, and issued by the Friends, it appears in their Kreveld Monthly Meeting Minute-Book signed by almost entire meeting, the 19 who came to Germantown en masse. Stephen Crisp, Quaker Evangelist, visiting Krefeld later in 1686, commented that the Kreveld Quaker Meeting was depleted as most of its members had departed for America⁵

What happened before they came to America and Germantown?

In 1679–80, Herman Op den Graeff was forcibly exiled from Kreveld. Such an act on the part of the

authorities was to have far reaching effects, for, in their exile, Herman Op den Graeff and Henrik Janze wrote and published a Pamphlet of Protest 1680. William Penn wrote the Prince of Orange protesting their exile, March, 1680 as follows:

"There are several inhabitants of Crevelt (a town upon the Rhine, near Cologne, member of thy ancient patrimony) that have been banished, without regard to age or sex."

It was this Herman Op den Graeff who was to become the first President of First Council in Germantown. It is worthwhile to read parts of this early protest, an early "Bill of Rights" written and conceived some 292 years ago.

"We believe that it is known to every resident of Kreveld that I, Herman Isaaks (Op den Graeff) have been born and bred there, and that I, Henrik Janz, have resided there for about 6 years . . . that we earned our livelihood by our own hands without having been a charge or burden upon anyone and much less have we been conscious of causing anyone loss or injury through trickery, fraud, or violence, or of having given anyone the slightest reason for resentment by leading an evil life . . . to induce everyone to reflect upon what reason could possibly justify our being expelled in such manner . . . Friends, it is 3 weeks today since we and two others of our friends, together with a woman and her infant child were led by armed men out of City and Jurisdiction of Kreveld, without our knowing any just reason or cause therefor . . . When a thief, robber, violator of the peace (geweldenaar), or some such person is expelled from a city or country, ought he not to be convicted previously of his misdeeds, either by his own confession, or by impartial witnesses? Should not his sentence be read to him publically? Should not a statement of his crimes be made in his sentence? And if he requests a copy thereof, should it not be given him? We, on the contrary have not been convicted of any crime, and no copy of our sentence has been granted us, although we have requested the same, orally and in writing. It is true that we have learned indirectly that the three following pretexts have been urged against us as reasons for our treatment. First, (we did) not yield due respect to the authorities; Second, that we renounced the outward sacraments; third, that we hold separate conventicles." (Dutch publication in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, 1680.)

Later, the Prince of Orange issued a proclamation which authorized public meeting for worship in his realms by Quakers and other Protestant sects provided admission to them of the ministers of the Reformed Established church.

We note Herman Op den Graeff's signature on his brother's notable Marriage Certificate, Kreveld, 1681, thus he was allowed return from his uneasy exile.

Nonetheless, the climate was indeed shaky and insecure for the Krevelder Quaker-Mennonite community. Reports say that the "Bishop's Men" descended on the Op den Graeffs in their homes and

physically assaulted their families. Perhaps their influence was too important?

Plans were then made with William Penn and his agents to settle in the new land. William Penn then conveyed to Jacob Tellner of Crefeld 5,000 acres laid out in Pennsylvania. This land was sold to 8 purchasers one of whom was Pastorius. On April 20, 1681, Jacob Tellner sold 2,000 acres to Op den Graeff brothers (828 acres were located in Germantown). The Op den Graeff Deed in the Germantown Book is dated 4-10 Mar. 1682, executed in London (March 1681-2 Penn was in England). In June 18, 1683, while the colony was at Rotterdam, Jacob Tellner conveyed the 2,000 acres and made Herman Op den Graeff his attorney.

Much discussion has taken place as to whether the Op den Graeffs were indeed Quakers or Mennonites; they came from a strong Mennonite family with Dirick becoming a Quaker, the rest remained or reverted to Mennonites? It is possible that at the earliest they were Flemish for the Waldenses carried art of weaving from Flanders to Holland (they were fine weavers) and brought also the newer religious convictions. We know that from the Mennonite congregations sprang the Baptist churches of England and the Quakers. Early Quaker meeting sprung from, or worship in concordance with, already established Mennonite congregations. These William Penn saw fit to visit. Stephen Crisp, Quaker Evangelist, organized the first Quaker meetings in Crefeld. In Germantown, it is fairly certain that Quakers and Mennonites worshipped together at each others houses before securing own places of worship. The famous "Protest Against Slavery" took place at the home of Thones Kunders and was signed by Abraham and Dirick Op den Graeff in 1688. The table used now rests in hallowed memory as a communion table before the altar of the First Mennonite Church in Germantown.

Perhaps in later issues you will enjoy following the fortunes of the Op den Graeffs to America—To read about the "Concord" a well-fitted out and provisioned ship taking them and founders' families to Germantown in 1683? A Quaker journalist, James Claypoole, has left an entertaining account of the journey in his "Letter Book, Philadelphia, 1681-1688"—he tells how Krevelders almost "missed the boat" at Gravesend, England! Theirs is always a lively and interesting story—the Op den Graeffs of Germantown.

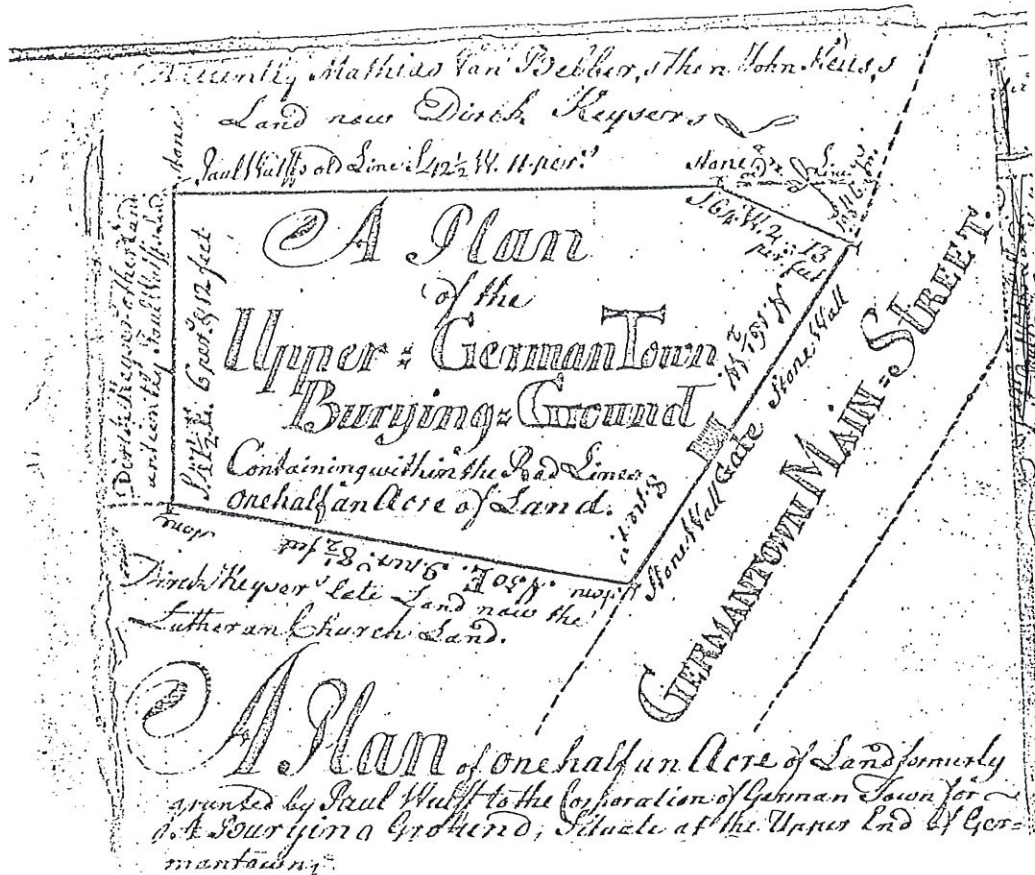


The original price of land in Germantown was one shilling per acre. As late as 1720 a tract of five hundred acres was purchased at two shillings per acre.

Germantown Guide—October 3, 1908

The Upper Burying Ground of Germantown

By DORIS F. RITZINGER, *Historian*
Upper Burying Ground of Germantown Concord School House



Plan of the Upper Germantown Burying Ground drawn by Christian Lehman dated 1753. This is from the old record book of the Burying Ground.

Note: In the early days, the Upper Burying Ground was sometimes called Ax's Burying Ground, as John Frederick Ax was superintendent from 1724 or earlier, until 1756.

IN 1692, nine years after the founding of Germantown, the Upper and Lower Burying Grounds of Germantown were established by an exchange deed of two half acre plots of land from Paul Wulff. The deed was recorded in the Grund und Lager Buch, which was opened by Francis Daniel Pastorius, the leader of the Germantown settlers. Land and other transactions of importance to the people of Germantown, were recorded in this book. The deed has been translated from the original record, which was in German, and is on record in the Archives of Philadelphia. The translation reads as follows:

Whereas, one acre of land has been reserved and set apart by those who first laid out the town of Germantown, for Paul Wulff's hereditary share as the 6th city lot on the west side for a common burying ground and market place as may be seen from the Germantown Charter No. 10. This exchange contract witnesseth that on the 3rd day of the first month (called March) 1692, in a general court held at Germantown, the bailiff, burgesses and committeemen of this place have granted, confirmed and released to Paul Wulff, one quarter acre of said land (adjoining William Streep's hereditary lot) in such

manner that said Paul Wulff, his heirs successors and assigns may have held and dispose of said quarter acre of land as they will forever, without the least hindurance claim or molestation on the part of this community its bailiffs, burgesses and committeemen. On the other hand said Paul Wulff for and in consideration of the thus granted quarter acre has granted, aliened and delivered to the Germantown community and its posterity one whole acre of land forever, namely, a half acre on the east side of this city situate on the Philadelphia Road, and the other half on the west side of this city on the Plymouth Road, in such wise and manner that each half acre in the form of a quadrangle can be laid out and surveyed as burial places, as the said exchange is recorded and noted in the aforesaid general court in the court book here page 6.

Now in confirmation and ratification of said exchange contract the present bailiff, burgesses and committeemen of the Germantown community for themselves and their successors as also Paul Wulff for himself, his heirs and successors have signed and sealed this deed in a general court held at Germantown this 27th day of the ninth month anno domini 1693.

Paul Wulff

Dirck Up De Graef, Bailiff

* This is the mark of

Reiner Tisen, Burgess

Jan Lucken, Burgess

Peter Schuemacher, Burgess

Abraham Tunnes, Burgess

Committeemen

William Streepers

Wolter Symons

Jan Dueden

Peter Scheefor

Passed in open court of record held at Germantown the 28th of November 1693.

Dirck Op De Graef, Bailiff

Arnold Kassel, Recorder

The half acre on the Plymouth Road became the Upper Burying Ground, and the half acre on the Philadelphia Road became the early part of the Lower Burying Ground. Each burying ground had its own Overseers or Trustees, and separate records were kept for each ground.

The Upper Burying Ground Trustees "opened" their official record book in 1761. Christian Lehman, the noted surveyor and conveyancer, copied into the book, records from various documents (loose pieces of paper) covering earlier transactions. The earliest burial records were from 1756. As the burying ground was established in 1693, there must have been numerous burials between the years 1693 and 1756, the records of which have been lost. There are a few tombstones in the burying ground that show death dates between those years. However, not all persons buried had tombstones, so these names remain unknown. There were over 1,300 burials in this ground. The last burial was in 1907, as the ground was full.

The front wall was completed in May 1724, and in 1760 additional walls were built to correspond with the front wall. At various times the walls were re-

newed. The Record Book contains the names of the contributors.

Although the Record Book does not mention the Battle of Germantown on October 4, 1777, there were burials of three officers of the Continental Army and five unknown soldiers, who were killed in the nearby fighting. In addition, forty-eight known soldiers of the Revolutionary War, who died in the years following the war, rest there, as well as eleven soldiers of the War of 1812, and one Mexican War soldier. Indians were also buried in the Upper Burying Ground.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, owners of "burial rights," which were obtainable for a small payment, would meet annually and elect three Overseers and a grave digger. As the Overseers died, none were elected to fill the vacancies. The last surviving Overseer died in 1943, leaving the ground without supervision until 1945, when by authorization of the Court, the Upper Burying Ground of Germantown and the old Concord School House, situated on Germantown Avenue, above Washington Lane, were placed under the jurisdiction of one Board of Trustees. These historic landmarks are part of the Germantown Historic District, so designated by the U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, the first street in America carrying this distinction. (Germantown Avenue, between Apsley and Phil-Elena Streets is the location of the Colonial Germantown Historic District.)

November 10, 1973

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Germantown Historical Society welcomes new members. Privileges of membership include attendance at all lectures, tours, and other functions sponsored by the Society. Members also receive current issues of the *GERMANTOWNE CRIER* without charge. Society dues are as follows:

Life (payable quarterly or at once).....	\$100.00
Sustaining, Business and Family.....	10.00
Annual.....	7.50
Junior (under 18), Teacher, or Librarian.....	3.00

Interested persons are cordially invited to obtain further information by writing to the chairman of the Membership Committee, Miss Ann Naile Phelps.

4000 Gypsy Lane

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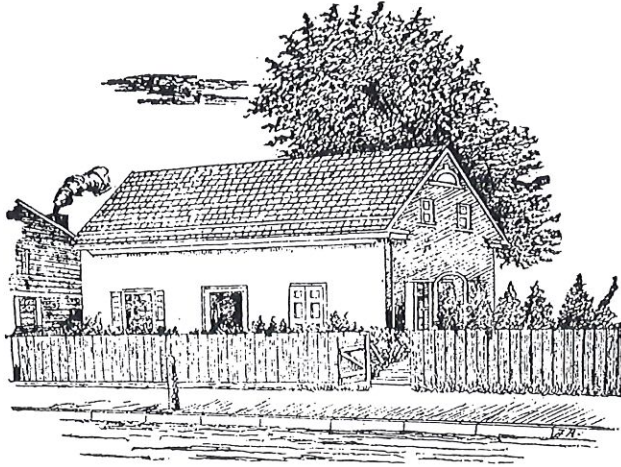
Philadelphia, Pa. 19144

The first woman elected a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, Miss Margaret H. Morris, lived during the first half of the nineteenth century in the house at the corner of Main and High Streets. Here were made many scientific investigations and here Miss Morris first observed the periodic recurrence of the seventeen-year locusts.

Germantown Guide—October 3, 1908

EARLIEST KINDERGARTEN

Germantown "Infant School," Founded in 1829, Was One of the First Attempts in America to Adopt Froebel's Ideas



SOME interesting evidence that one of the first attempts in America to put into practice Froebel's Kindergarten theories was made in Germantown, is brought to light by an old document which Dr. George H. Burgin recently discovered among some papers of his ancestors in his home, 63 West Cheltenham avenue. This is a four-page leaflet containing a list of the first officers and the constitution of the "Infant School Society of Germantown," which was organized in 1829.

At that time the new educational ideas of this German pedagogue, Frederick Wilhelm August Froebel, were attracting the attention of leaders of thought all over the world. He was then 47 years old, and for some time he had been laboring to introduce his new methods in the schools of Germany, hoping to displace the rigor and harshness that then prevailed in the school room with a kind and natural mode of instruction. By means of play and games he sought to employ the healthy activities of the child for its own mental development. He had founded his first school in Greisheim in 1816, and gradually evolved his method, until in 1824 he published his book on "The Education of Man," which is recognized as his most important work.

Though at that time Froebel had enunciated the principle characteristics since employed with such great success in the kindergarten, he had not yet found a name for it, and it was not until 1836, while conducting a school in Blankenburg, that he hit upon the expressive name that has since designated his

methods.

And so, in 1829, when, on October 15, a company of men and women of Germantown who had been following Froebel's work, and were convinced that it was beneficial, held a meeting in St. Luke's Episcopal Church to consider the advisability of adopting the Froebel system in Germantown, they decided to call the new institution an "Infant School." The influence of Froebel is clearly apparent in the sixth article of the constitution adopted at that meeting, which reads thus:

"In the schools of this Institution, amusement shall be blended with instruction, and suitable employment be prescribed the pupils. Children shall be taught the fear of God, to be respectful to their parents, and to treat each other with kindness. The Holy Scriptures, or lessons from them, without sectarian interpretation, shall form the religious code of the schools."

"Children, male and female, under six years" were to be received into the school, and "teachers, assistants and nurses" were to be employed. A compulsory vaccination rule was also adopted, it being provided that the children admitted to the school must "be free from contagious disorders; and no child shall be admitted unless it hath passed regularly through the vaccine disease; or whose parents and guardians will consent to its immediate vaccination."

Members of the society paid \$1 a year, and the payment of \$20 entitled anyone to life membership. The annual meeting was to be held "on the first Monday after the 20th of May, in every year," and

at that time a board of twenty-five women was to be elected to be entrusted with the management of the school.

Reuben Haines presided at the meeting when the organization was perfected, and John Rodney, Jr., was secretary. J. S. Henry explained the purposes of the proposed school. A list of the first officers follows:

First directress, Mrs. Duval; second directress, Mrs. Johnson; secretary, Miss M. H. Morris; treasurer, Miss Haines.

Managers—Mrs. Duval, Mrs. Betton, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Harvey, Mrs. Henry, Mrs. J. Rodney, Mrs. J. Duval, Mrs. Haines, Mrs. Skerritt, Mrs. Kirk, Mrs. Nourse, Mrs. Tatum, Mrs. Wagner, Mrs. Bowen, Mrs. P. Giddings, Miss Norris, Miss Keyser, Miss Lorraine, Miss M. Johnson, Miss Roberdeau, Miss Haines, Miss Bayard, Miss Morris, Miss M. H. Morris, Miss S. S. Morris.

Advisers—The Rev. Mr. Rodney, the Rev. Mr. Harvey, the Rev. Mr. Nourse, J. S. Henry, R. Haines.

Physician—Dr. Betton.

The school was opened in a building on East Haines street, which had formerly been the house of worship of the First Methodist Church. This church, the first of the denomination in Germantown, had been built in 1804, and an unusual feature at the laying of the cornerstone was that a woman, Dorothy Reger, had a prominent part in the ceremony. In 1823 the congregation built another church a short distance further east on Haines street. This church was succeeded in turn by the brick building which is now the Alfred G. Harmer Combined School, the congregation having abandoned this site for that now occupied at Germantown avenue and High street.

Some quaint methods were employed in the early days to make school life pleasant for the little folk who attended. Bread and molasses were supplied to them when they were hungry, and if they became sleepy there were beds upon which they could take a nap. In later years a somewhat stricter discipline seems to have been enforced, and one of the punishments, in the case of boys who used improper language, was to wash out the culprit's mouth with soap and water.

The introduction of the public school system, in 1834, had little effect upon this school, and it continued to prepare children for the public schools until 1886. Many men now prominent in the business and social life of Germantown attended the "Infant School." There were usually twenty-five or thirty pupils in charge of one teacher, although the school room was large enough to accommodate seventy-five.

Miss Millner was for many years teacher of the school. Miss Emily Emerson was the last teacher, and upon her marriage to Dr. Martin Weaver it was discontinued, the building being sold to Winona Council, Junior Order of United American Mechanics. The structure was then torn down, and a merry-go-round erected upon the site. When this enterprise

was abandoned John Randall established his auction house there and still occupies the property.

Kindergartens known as such were not started in America until 1868, when the first was opened in Boston. Only in the past twenty years have they come into general existence all over the country.

From "The Scrap Book" compiled by N. K. Ployd, of Germantown, in 1909.

SCRAPS OF LOCAL HISTORY

MARKET SQUARE CHURCH

The *old church* erected on Market Square originated as a Dutch Reformed, and was built and used directly under the Reformed Church of Holland. The front part was built in 1733; the back part was added in 1762. It had an ancient shingle roofed steeple after the Dutch manner, and was surmounted by a well finished *iron cock*, being the Dutch sign of a church. From its low elongated form, of stone, with its adjunct addition and affixes, and exposed beams to the gallery, together with its high and narrow pulpit and sounding board, it was in itself a venerable specimen of the olden time, and for that reason was prized for its associations. It seemed calculated to bring up the recollections of our forefathers who once worshipped there, and the very place to their descendants with hallowed reminiscences of those who had gone before them. Among its recollections was that of its being the place, in 1793, where General Washington and his family regularly went, as often as they had English preaching—Washington at that time, resided where Mr. Elliston P. Morris now lives, directly opposite Mill street, the town being held as the seat of government.

But time and the passion for new things, resolved them to pull down and build anew; therefore a brick structure now stands in its place. The steeple of the old edifice was taken down with great skill, entire, and used as a summer house by one of the citizens who had a fancy for preserving it as a relic of the past; and the rod and vane were set up on the Sons of Temperance Hall, Mill street, near Main, by Mr. Wyndham H. Stokes. The steeple at the summit had many rifle bullets in it, shot there by the Paxtang boys, in 1762, from near Lancaster, who halted on the square preparatory to their intended invasion of Philadelphia, to kill the friendly Indians sheltered there; but they yielded to negotiations and went home. The old organ of the church too, with its trumpet angels in golden array, just as they came from Holland was discarded and set aside.

"They all are passing from the land,
Those churches old and gray,
In which our fathers used to stand,
In years gone by to pray—
They never *knell* those stern old men,
Who worshipped at our alters then."

From N. K. Ployd's "The Scrap Book," 1909.