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REV. JAMES CALDWELL, WAS A PATRIOT OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

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The territory now occupied by Elizabeth, N. J., was formerly the abode of savage tribes unknown to fame; whence they came and how long they had dwelt on these shores are questions that neither authentic history nor plausible tradition pretends to answer. They have since passed away without a memorial..

It was on Sunday, the 6th day of September in 1609, that the eye of the stranger from the old world first saw this site. Three days before, a two-masted schooner called the Half Moon, under the command of the renowned Henry Hudson, cast anchor in Sandy Hook bay. The adventurous craft was manned by twenty men, Dutch and English, in the service of the East India Company. Their design was to explore a passage to China and the Indies by the northwest.

On Sunday, the 6th, John Coleman and four other men were sent out in a boat to explore the harbor, sailing through the narrows that they found. The narrow river through which they sailed was the Kills between Bergen Point and Staten Island and the open sea was Newark bay. The site of the town that bordered on the bay was, of course, in full view. These five men are believed to have been the first European discoverers of this particular spot. Coleman was slain the same day, on his return, by the treacherous arrow of one of the natives. It is not at all unlikely that Coleman was an Irishman, as his name bears the Celtic tone, and as there is nothing to verify it to the contrary.

The most distinguished man of Irish descent who identified himself completely with this old city was the Rev. James Caldwell, the eighth pastor of the First Presbyterian church. The Rev. Mr. Caldwell was a Virginian. His father, John Caldwell, came to this country with four sisters and his wife and several children, from the 90County Antrim, Ireland—what year is unknown to the writer. He settled first at Chestnut Level, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania.

Soon after, he removed to the new settlements in the southern part of Virginia and located on Cub creek, a branch of the Staunton river, in what is now known as Charlotte county. Here in the wilderness, James, the subject of this sketch, the youngest of seven children, was born in April of 1734. The place was generally known as the Caldwell Settlement or Cub Creek. A daughter of one of his brothers, also born here, was the mother of the Hon. John Caldwell Calhoun of South Carolina, a well-known senator and leading statesman of the South.

James was prepared for college under Rev. John Todd Caldwell and entered the College of New Jersey. He came hither when the college was at Newark and formed the acquaintance, while there, of a young maiden to whom he was afterward married. He graduated in September,

1759, and on Sept. 17, 1760, he was ordained. He received a call from the Presbyterian church of this town in November, 1761, which he accepted. He was duly installed in March, 1762, with an annual salary of £160. He was at that time in the twenty-seventh year of his age, a young man of prepossessing appearance and of more than ordinary promise as a preacher of the gospel. In the year of 1775 charges were preferred to the Presbytery by former members of the congregation affecting the orthodoxy of their pastor, Mr. Caldwell, which, however, were found to be of trivial import and not affecting at all his soundness in the faith. Whatever uneasiness may have grown out of this matter, it was speedily forgotten in the rush of events that preceded and precipitated the War of the Revolution.

On the question then at issue Mr. Caldwell's position was a matter of public knowledge. He waited not to learn how the struggle was likely to terminate; his ardent temperament was for his country, for liberty, for independence. In all his prayers, often in his sermons and exhortations, and in all his pastoral intercourse, no religious society in the land took a bolder move or stand, and few were more efficient for their country's cause than Reverend Caldwell and his congregation. And not a little of this patriotism was owing to the fervent zeal of their pastor. Among his congregation at the commencement of the Revolution were such men as William Livingston, governor of the state; Elias Boudinot, afterward resident of the Continental Congress; Abraham Clark, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence; Hon. Robert Ogden, speaker of the assembly at an earlier day, with his three sons, Robert, Matthias and Aaron (the two last distinguished officers in the United States army); Hon. Stephen Crane, speaker of the assembly; Elias Dayton and his son Jonathan, both of them subsequently general officers of the army and the latter, speaker of congress. From this one congregation went forth about forty commissioned officers and privates to fight the battles for independence.

Among the men belonging to the militia of Elizabeth who enlisted on board of the different sloops as volunteers, in order to take the ship Blue Mountain Valley, January 22, 1776, under the command of Colonel Dayton, are to be found the following good old Irish names: Sergeant Thomas Quigley, Thomas McCarty, Timothy B. Stout, James Clancey, Timothy Burns, Moses Connell and William Higgins.

Among the commissioned officers of Reverend Caldwell's congregation in the army are found a Capt. David Lyons, and Capt. Matthias Lyons, Irish or of Irish descent, without a doubt.

In April, 1776, Colonel Dayton's regiment, that had been quartered in the town during the preceding winter, received orders to march to the relief of the Northern army then besieging Quebec. As most of the officers and many of the privates were members of Reverend Caldwell's congregation, an ardent desire was expressed for his services as their chaplain.

Lieutenant Elmer in his diary, April 28, says: "Members of the Presbyterian meeting set about Reverend Caldwell's going to Quebec with us, which was agreed upon after some debate. Drank tea at Colonel Dayton's, then went to Major Spencer's to lodge." So it was determined that

Reverend Caldwell, whose consent was readily obtained, should accompany his townsmen on their Northern expedition.

The troops left the town the following day, but Colonel Dayton and Reverend Caldwell did not join them until Saturday, May 11, at Albany, N. Y. The Jersey Brigade to which the regiment was attached was stationed the most of the season in the Mohawk valley. On the 16th of June Reverend Caldwell was at Johnstown and at German Flats in July, preaching twice every Sunday and taking an active part in military operations.

In July, as already related, the British troops had taken possession of Staten Island. The people of the town became greatly alarmed for their personal safety, and their relatives in the Northern army became exceedingly anxious for their friends at home.

Reverend Caldwell returned to his family and people early in the autumn, where his services were pressingly needed. On the retreat of the American, and the advance of the British, army the last week of November, 1776, Reverend Caldwell took his family up into the mountains and found a home for them in the town of New Providence. From this time forward Reverend Caldwell was occupied more or less continually in the service of his country to the close of his life.

The enemy having vacated the town at the end of the first week in January, he returned to his charge and resumed his ministrations, mingling the duties of the pastor and the soldier together. At various times through the long years of the war, during which his congregation was greatly scattered and their means of subsistence for the most part considerably diminished, Reverend Caldwell served not only as chaplain of the Jersey Brigade but as assistant commissary-general from the first of April, 1777, to April, 1779. Instead of a regular salary, he received for his pastoral service only what was contributed by the congregation on Sunday.

His church was burned down on the night of Tuesday, January 25, 1780, and the services of the congregation were thenceforth held in Colonel Hatfield's red storehouse. It is probably while preaching here, or it may have been at an earlier date, that Reverend Caldwell (as related by Reverend McDowell) preached with his pistols lying on each side of him in the pulpit, and the sentinels had to keep watch during time of service.

The Sunday found him, whether at home or in camp, ready to proclaim the gospel with its message of mercy and comfort to his fellow men, while he was ever watchful at other times to improve every opportunity to promote the spiritual welfare of citizens and soldiers. He was held, therefore, in the highest esteem by officers and men, confided in by all, and regarded with enthusiastic love by the rank and file. No one, consequently, saves his parishioner, Governor Livingston, was more feared and hated by the Tories and the British. Gladly would they have kidnapped him if they could.

At the fall election of 1780 he was chosen by his fellow-citizens a member of the State Council. He continued in the discharge of his various duties to which he was called until the autumn of 1781. The last record made of him by the Presbytery was at their meeting, May 7, 1782. It is in these words: "The Rev. James Caldwell departed this life, falling by the hands of a cruel murderer on the twenty-fourth day of Nov., 1781." The circumstances attending this mournful event were very fully announced in the public prints at the time. Rivington of New York, in his Gazette (a Tory journal of that time), said: "The Rev. Caldwell was shot dead without any provocation at the Point (now Elizabethport) by a native of Ireland named Morgan." Note the sting this allegation placed to an Irish name.

The New Jersey Journal and the New Jersey Gazette devoted much space to the murder at the time, but they never mentioned the murderer's name nor claimed him to have been Irish. These are the only accounts written and published at the time. As that of the New Jersey Gazette is the most particular and was written after sufficient time had been allowed to obtain by means of the coroner's inquest, and from other sources, the exact state of the case, it is apparently the most to be relied upon. It was generally affirmed at the time that the murderer, as intimated in the New Jersey Journal, was bribed by the British enemy to do the dreadful deed. And it is not strange that it should have been believed, as it was known that the British had offered a reward for the apprehension or assassination of Governor Livingston, and as no other reason could be assigned for the murder.

The body of Rev. Mr. Caldwell was carried to the public house at the Point, now Red Jacket Hotel. A homely ambulance was obtained and the body was slowly brought to town. A crowd of people, greatly excited, gathered by the way. The mournful cortege, tradition says, passed through Water street, now Elizabeth avenue, to Broad street; then to Jersey street; and then to the residence of Mrs. Noll. The day following, when the people gathered for public worship, the place where they met might well have been named "Bochim, the Weeping Place." The people were crushed by the sad calamity.

The funeral service was held on Tuesday, the 27th, with the whole town suspending all business and gathering in uncontrollable grief at the house of Mrs. Noll. An opportunity was given to the people to view the corpse in front of the house in the open street. After all had taken their last look and before the coffin was closed, Dr. Boudinot came forward leading nine orphan children, and placing 94 them around the bier of the parent, made an address of surpassing pathos to the multitude in their behalf. It was an hour of deep sorrow. The procession then slowly moved to the grave and laid his body by his wife's remains. Over his body was placed a marble slab with the following inscription:

"Sacred to the memory of Rev. James Caldwell and Hannah, his wife, who fell victim to their country's cause in the year 1781. He was a zealous and faithful pastor of the Presbyterian church in this town, where, by his evangelical labors in the gospel vineyard and his early

attachment to the civil liberty of his country, he has left in the hearts of his people a better monument than brass or marble. Here also lies the remains of a woman who exhibited to the world a bright constellation of female virtues. On that memorable day never to be forgotten, when a British foe invaded this fair village and fired even the Temple of the Deity, this peaceful daughter of heaven retired to her hallowed apartment, imploring heaven for the pardon of the enemy,—in that sacred moment she was by the bloody hand of a British ruffian despatched, like her divine Redeemer, through a path of blood to her long wished for native skies.”