THE NEWARK ACADEMY OF DELAWARE
IN COLONIAL DAYS

BY GEORGE H. RYDEN, PH.D.
University of Delaware

THE present University of Delaware had its inception in a
little institution of colonial days known as Newark Academy.
This academy was a child of the Presbyterian church, and for
many years its trustees, clerical and lay, were for the most part,
if not altogether, of the Presbyterian persuasion. It was preceded
by only one other Presbyterian school, namely, the famous “Log
College”, founded by the Reverend William Tennent, a well-
trained Anglican clergyman, who, upon his arrival in Philadelphia
from overseas, joined the Presbyterian communion. Tennent
established his school about 1726 with a view to meeting a great
need for preachers of the gospel among the Scotch-Irish immi-
grants. He located it north of Philadelphia at the Forks of the
Neshaminy River. Here Tennent’s four sons were trained for
the ministry; likewise many other men who served the Presby-
terian church faithfully in the older established congregations as
well as upon the frontier mission fields of Pennsylvania, Maryland,
and Virginia.

The demand for ministers, however, still exceeded the supply,
and the temptation was always strong in the various presbyteries
to license as preachers pious laymen equipped with little or no
cultural or theological training. As is usually the case among
struggling congregations in a new country, very little distinction
was made between a trained or an untrained clergyman. If the
man could preach, little more was asked of him, excepting that he
should be fully cognizant of the difficulties of life confronting
his people, and adapt himself accordingly. The early missionary
preachers, trained in such a school as the “Log College”, soon
came to favor these lower educational standards of the laity, and,
when the so-called “Great Awakening” occurred throughout the
length and breadth of the colonies, largely as the result of the mag-

1 An historical address delivered at the annual meeting of The Genealogical

205
netic preaching of George Whitefield, a warm friend of William Tennent, the Presbyterian leaders who came to regard evangelism in the church as of much greater value than intellectualism, increased in number.

It was to combat this tendency of deprecating learning in the ministry, that the Presbytery of Lewes in 1738 was prompted to send a lengthy memorial to the Synod of Philadelphia in which it proposed "that every student who has not studied with approbation, passing the usual courses in some of the New England or European colleges, approved by public authority shall, before he be encouraged by any Presbytery for the sacred work of the ministry, apply himself to this Synod, and that they appoint a committee of their members yearly, whom they know to be well skilled in the several branches of philosophy, and divinity, and the languages, to examine such students in this place, and finding them well accomplished in those several parts of learning, shall allow them a public testimony from the Synod, which, till better provision be made, will in some measure answer the design of taking a degree in the college."

The memorial was received favorably by the Synod of Philadelphia the same year, and it was ordered "that there be two standing committees to act in the above affair for this year, one to the northward and the other to the southward of Philadelphia." Seven clergymen were named for each committee, the Reverend Francis Alison, later to become founder of New London Academy, the forerunner of Newark Academy, being a member of the southern committee. This committee, in November, 1738, recommended to the synod the erection of a school or academy as the best solution of the problem for the time being, and when the synod met again in May, 1739, it unanimously approved the proposal and appointed four clergymen, Ebenezer Pemberton of New York City, Jonathan Dickinson of Elizabeth, New Jersey, (both of the Presbytery of New York), and Robert Cross and James Anderson, of the Presbyteries of Philadelphia and Donegal, respectively, any two of whom should proceed overseas to solicit subscriptions in the churches in Great Britain and Ireland. The imminence of this momentous step brought on a break in the meeting, for it is quite evident that the unanimous vote could only have occurred after the Tennents, father and sons, and their friends, under the leadership of Gilbert Tennent, had protested
and left the meeting, their action having been provoked by the feeling that the proposal was a reflection on the work of William Tennent, the elder, and his "Log College."

Here was no division over doctrine; both parties accepted the Westminster Confession in toto. The conflicting opinions raged about the question as to what should constitute the requisite amount of training for admission to the ministry, and as to how much countenance should be given to the religious excitement occasioned by such evangelists as George Whitefield and the "Log College" graduates during this time of the "Great Awakening."

When the Synod of Philadelphia at its meeting in May, 1739, decided that any two of the four clergymen it then selected should proceed overseas to solicit funds for the proposed school, it also decided that its commission, i.e., executive committee for the year, should meet in Philadelphia in August, 1739, with so-called correspondents from every presbytery, for the purpose of taking definite action about securing funds both abroad and in the colonies, especially in Boston. The commission held its meeting, but decided that an extra meeting of the synod in September was necessary before it felt authorized to proceed with the project. But in that year, 1739, war broke out between England and Spain, known in history as "The War of Jenkins's Ear," and no special meeting of the synod was held, owing to the opinion that nothing could be accomplished in Great Britain and Ireland at that time. This was reported to the regular session of the Synod of Philadelphia on May 29, 1740, and the project was laid aside.

During the succeeding years, however, the interest in establishing an official synodical school did not diminish, for on November 16, 1743, three presbyteries of the Synod of Philadelphia, namely, Philadelphia, Donegal, and "Old Side" New Castle, met at Great Valley to consider, as they said, "the necessity of using speedy endeavors to educate youth for supplying our vacancies." They agreed to open a school, which on May 25th of the next year, 1744, was taken over by the Synod of Philadelphia as its official institution. As a matter of fact, the school which became the synodical institution had been established in 1743 as a private venture by the Reverend Francis Alison at his manse, located about two miles southwest of New London, Chester County, Pennsylvania. Mr. Alison was retained as master at the small salary of £20 a year, but was permitted to select an assistant, in those days called
“an usher,” who was to receive £15. Mr. Alison was permitted, however, to retain his congregation. Eleven Presbyterian clergy-men were appointed as trustees of the school, their duties being “to visit the school, to inspect the master’s work, prescribe textbooks, examine the scholars, disburse the funds, and have a general superintendence over the school.” Although it was the intention of the Synod of Philadelphia eventually to develop the school into a college, a temporary expedient was adopted in May, 1746, when the synod addressed a letter on the thirtieth of that month to President Clap of Yale College, requesting that candidates for the ministry at the New London school might be granted certain privileges at that institution with a view to obtaining a degree from it after one year’s residence at New Haven, Connecticut. Although a favorable response was received from the Yale authorities, it does not appear that any students of the New London Academy availed themselves of the opportunity afforded.

In the same year (1746) Alison was in correspondence with the celebrated Scotch philosopher, Professor Francis Hutcheson of the University of Glasgow, relative to the establishment of a degree-granting institution, but nothing came of the proposal. Two years later (1748) the synod raised Alison’s salary to £40 a year and that of his assistant to £20 a year. In 1749 Alison requested permission to remove to Philadelphia, but the synod refused the request. Three years later, however, Benjamin Franklin secured his services as rector of the newly established Academy of Philadelphia, Alison accepting the offer without first securing the permission of the synod. When the Academy of Philadelphia in 1755 obtained a charter as a college with powers to grant degrees, Dr. Alison was named in the charter as vice provost, Dr. William Smith being named provost. In 1756 the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) conferred the degree of Master of Arts upon Alison.

Francis Alison was one of the leading scholars in America in his day, being the first Presbyterian clergyman in the colonies to receive an honorary degree from a foreign university when, in 1758, the University of Glasgow conferred upon him the degree of doctor of divinity. President Stiles of Yale referred to Alison as “the greatest classical scholar in America especially in Greek,” and it was said of him that “few schoolmasters [in the colonies] ever taught a larger number of pupils who afterwards acquired
such distinguished reputations." Among these pupils were four members of the Continental Congress who signed the Declaration of Independence, namely, Thomas McKean and George Read, both of whom signed for Delaware, and Dr. Benjamin Rush and James Smith, both of whom signed for Pennsylvania.

When Francis Alison, in 1752, went to Philadelphia to become rector of the academy and eventually, in 1755, to become associated with Provost William Smith as vice provost of the college, the principalship of the academy at New London was conferred by the synod upon the Rev. Alexander McDowell. He was a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, "Old Side" pastor of three congregations, White Clay Creek, Rock (or Elk), and Nottingham, and a great uncle of General Irvin McDowell, the Federal commander at the first Battle of Bull Run in the American Civil War.

Since the manse of Mr. McDowell was situated in the northeastern corner of Cecil County, Maryland, about a mile southwest of Lewisville, Pennsylvania, the academy was removed to that place from New London and remained there for fifteen years. During this time, of course, McDowell continued to serve his congregations, and, in 1754, when he complained of the great amount of work that he had to do, the synod appointed an "usher" to teach languages at a yearly salary of £20. This assistant was none other than Matthew Wilson, who, like McDowell, was a clergyman, a teacher, and a physician, and who later for many years ministered to the spiritual and bodily needs of Presbyterians in and about Lewes, Delaware.

Dr. Maclean, President of Princeton, in his History of the College of New Jersey, makes an interesting reference to McDowell's academy at this time. For lack of official records concerning the curriculum of the college, then located at Newark, New Jersey, and under the direction of the Rev. Aaron Burr, he states in his book what the minutes of the meeting of the Synod of Philadelphia in 1754 have to say about the studies pursued in McDowell's school, and then ventures a comparison. Dr. Maclean writes: "In the school under the care of the Synod of Philadelphia, established three years before the first charter of the College of New Jersey was obtained, the course of instruction included 'languages, philosophy, and divinity'; and from a minute of the Synod of Philadelphia, May 23, 1754, it appears that Mr. Alexander McDowell,
the Principal of the school at that time was to continue to give instruction in 'logic, Mathematics, natural and moral philosophy,' etc., and that Mr. [Mathew] Wilson, just appointed to assist him, was 'to teach the languages.'

"It is not to be presumed," Dr. Maclean continues, "that in the College of New Jersey, under the Government and instruction of President Burr, a graduate of Yale, and one of the first scholars of his day, the prescribed course would fall short of that existing in the school of the Synod of Philadelphia [the McDowell Academy], as it was the aim and desire of the early friends of the College to provide for the young men of the middle Provinces an education equal to that furnished by Harvard and Yale to the youth of New England." To confirm his views concerning the curriculum at the college, Dr. Maclean then reproduces extracts from letters written in the years 1750, 1751, 1752, and 1753, by a student at the college, namely, Joseph Shippen of Philadelphia, to his father, Judge Edward Shippen, and to other correspondents.

In the year 1758 the schism in the Presbyterian church, which occurred in 1745, was healed by the union of the "Old Side" Synod of Philadelphia and the "New Side" Synod of New York, known thereafter as the Synod of New York and Philadelphia. By this time three colleges had come into existence in the middle colonies, namely, the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), which was opened in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in May, 1747, removed to Newark, New Jersey, in October, 1747, and to Princeton, New Jersey, in the autumn of 1756; the Academy and College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania), which opened as an academy in January, 1751, and was chartered as a college in 1755; and King's College (now Columbia University), which was opened in the summer of 1754, and chartered in October of the same year.

The Presbyterians now having a college at Princeton, New Jersey, which all churches of that denomination could support, and there being located in Philadelphia a college free from any denominational control but with prominent Presbyterian clergy-men as its teachers and administrators, such as Alison and John Ewing, it no doubt appeared to the Presbyterian clergy and laity in Pennsylvania and Delaware, during the eight years from 1758 to 1766, that it was unnecessary to proceed further with the original plan of erecting the Alison-McDowell academy into a college.
As a matter of fact, the conservative (former “Old Side”) element of the church seemed ready to take the College of New Jersey to its bosom, whenever the proper moment presented itself, despite the fact that the former “New Side” element was still in control of that institution. There was only one fly in the ointment, namely, that the College of New Jersey had not yet attained the standards desired by the conservatives. No professorships had yet been established, the instruction having been entirely in the hands of the several presidents, assisted by tutors. When, therefore, President Samuel Finley, a “Log College” graduate, died in 1766, a movement was begun in Philadelphia to offer to the board of the College of New Jersey a guarantee of financial assistance for a number of years, provided the board elected Dr. Francis Alison of Philadelphia as successor to President Finley, and provided further that a number of professorial chairs be created. A delegation in fact proceeded from Philadelphia to Princeton to present the proposal to the board, but that body, fearing that “lurking behind the offer was the specter of synodical control,” elected Dr. John Witherspoon of Scotland as president, before they would formally receive the delegation from Philadelphia. Since the delegation was instructed only to submit the full proposal, including the election of Dr. Alison as president, they declined to agree to anything less, although it was intimated by the board that they would be willing to name Alexander McDowell of the synodical academy as one of the professors. The next year (1767) the board actually elected Dr. Hugh Williamson of the “Old Side” element as a professor, but he never was installed in the chair for lack of college funds.

Mr. McDowell in the same year (1767), after having conducted the academy in his manse in Cecil County, Maryland, for fifteen years, removed it to Newark, Delaware. The removal no doubt was effected with a view to establishing the school on a firmer basis. Perhaps we are justified in connecting the removal with the failure of the conservative Presbyterian element in reaching a satisfactory arrangement with the board of the College of New Jersey. In any case, the founder of the school, Dr. Alison, and three of his former New London students, Rev. John Ewing, Charles Thomson, the perennial secretary of the Continental Congress, and Dr. Hugh Williamson, now began planning to assist McDowell to inject new life into the academy,
and Newark, Delaware, was fixed upon as a conveniently located village, both in relation to Philadelphia, to the Delmarva Peninsula, and to the Southern colonies, for trying an experiment which might eventually justify the conversion of the academy into a college. The town of Newark had been incorporated under a charter in 1758, and, according to a newspaper printed in 1770, it was "a suitable and healthy village, not too rich or luxurious where real learning might be obtained." The town was also described later as the "Athens of Delaware."

The academy had never been incorporated, but its supporters now planned to remedy that defect. A charter was obtained in 1769. This charter continued in force until the academy was merged with the college in 1834, and consequently serves as an indubitable basis for the contention by some students that, instead of regarding the charter year of 1833 as the beginning of the University of Delaware, we should at least go back to 1769, the year of the charter of Newark Academy, if not to 1743, when Alison opened the school near New London, or 1744, when the Synod of Philadelphia took over the control of the same.

The charter of the academy, which is deposited in the library of the University of Delaware, is an extremely interesting document, written on sheepskin and sealed with the 1751 seal of the "Counties on Delaware." It was signed at Philadelphia on November 10, 1769, by "John Penn, Lieutenant Governor of the Counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex on Delaware and the Province of Pennsylvania," and begins as follows: "Thomas Penn and Richard Penn Esquires true and absolute Proprietaries and Governors in Chief of the Counties of New Castle, Kent, and Sussex on Delaware and the Province of Pennsylvania: To all unto whom these presents shall come, Greeting—Whereas" etc., etc.

The charter names specifically the following Presbyterian clergymen as having been the original persons interested in the founding of the school: John Thompson, Adam Boyd, Robert Cross, Francis Alison, Alexander McDowell. Further on in the document we read the names of the persons interested in securing the charter. They are the Reverend Doctor Francis Alison, the Reverend Mr. Alexander McDowell, the Reverend Mr. William McKennan, the Reverend Mr. John Ewing, the Reverend Mr. Patrick Alison, Doctor Hugh Williamson, and Mr. Charles Thomson, a merchant in Philadelphia.
The number of trustees named in the charter is thirteen, seven Presbyterian clergymen and six laymen, nearly all of whom were among the most distinguished citizens of their day, particularly those who lived in Philadelphia. Their names, in the order that they appear in the charter, are as follows: the Honorable William Allen, Chief Justice of the Province of Pennsylvania and a member of the first board of trustees of the Academy of Philadelphia and continuously a member until the charter of the college and academy was annulled by the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1779; the Reverend Doctor Francis Alison; the Reverend Mr. Alexander McDowell; the Reverend Mr. John Ewing; the Reverend Mr. William McKennan; the Reverend Mr. Patrick Alison; the Reverend Mr. Matthew Wilson; Doctor Hugh Williamson; Mr. Charles Thomson; Andrew Allen, Esquire, a son of the chief justice, a graduate of the College of Philadelphia at its second commencement in 1759, and later a trustee of the college. (He, like his brothers, became a Loyalist during the American Revolution. He went to England during the war, remaining there until the end of his life in 1825); the Honorable Thomas McKean, the famous signer for Delaware of the Declaration of Independence; Mr. James Mease, a merchant and a prominent member of Dr. Ewing's church, the First Presbyterian, in Philadelphia; and John Evans, Esquire, of Newark, Delaware, who was elected member of the Continental Congress in November, 1776, to succeed Thomas McKean, who, together with Caesar Rodney, was for the time being regarded as too radical by a conservative Delaware assembly. These trustees were given the power to choose other trustees and thus the corporation became self-perpetuating.

That the academy was still considered by the Presbyterian authorities as their own, we gather from the minutes of the annual meeting of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia held in Philadelphia in May, 1771. A minute concerning the school appears on May 22 as follows: "An application from the trustees of the Academy at Newark, to obtain the countenance and approbation of the Synod for a general collection through their bounds in behalf of said Academy, was overruled and read. The Synod considered the prayer of said petition, and cheerfully agree to countenance it; and do recommend it to the charity of the various congregations within their bounds."

Evidently the collections throughout the synod fell short of the
needs of the academy except to meet the most pressing and immediate demands. There was no endowment, and ever since McDowell had removed the academy to Newark in 1767, its classes were conducted in his home. If the academy was to prosper, it was very necessary that money be secured for erecting a school building as well as for an endowment. The board therefore adopted the expedient that had proven so helpful in recent years for the College of New Jersey, the College of Philadelphia, and King’s College of New York. The Reverend Messrs. Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Davies, by direction of the Synod of New York and with letters of recommendation from Governor Belcher of the Province of New Jersey, had gone to England, Scotland, and Ireland in 1754 and collected a sum of money sufficient for the erection of the first building at Princeton, namely, Nassau Hall. In 1762 William Smith, Provost of the College of Philadelphia, likewise fortified with letters of recommendations from his trustees, had gone abroad on the same errand. Close on his heels in the same year went Dr. James Jay, a physician of New York City, who was directed to collect money for King’s College. Instead of competing with one another for funds, the two latter men very wisely decided to pool their collections and, as a consequence, each institution secured more money than it had expected. Incidentally, Dr. Jay was knighted by the King because he represented a college bearing the name King’s College.

With the knowledge that three institutions of learning had successfully solicited funds abroad, it is not to be wondered at that Francis Alison, Vice Provost of the College of Philadelphia, and, since the incorporation of Newark Academy the President of its board of trustees, should look with hope across the seas for substantial aid for the academy which he had founded at New London, Pennsylvania, thirty years before. The board of Newark Academy held a meeting in October, 1773, and authorized a canvass in Great Britain and Ireland, designating the Reverend Mr. John Ewing and Dr. Hugh Williamson, both of Philadelphia, to undertake the work. A letter of recommendation from the board was written on parchment and signed and sealed on October 19, 1773. The signatures are the familiar ones of Francis Alison, President, and Charles Thomson, Secretary and Treasurer. This letter, the legal property of the Historical Society of Delaware, was deposited in the library of the University of Delaware in
May, 1934, as a perpetual loan to the university in connection with the celebration of its centenary as a degree-conferring institution. The document has an interesting seal, the only one of the old academy that I have seen. In addition to the Latin inscription, "Academiae Novarcae Sigillum," it has the English words, "The Lord Himself will Keep & water it," referring to a tree appearing in the center of the seal.

The letter is addressed "To all pious and charitable Christians in Great Britain and Ireland." After observing that the school was opened near Newark in 1743 at a time when there was much ignorance, and but "few men of learning were to be found among us for Publick offices, or for the work of the ministry, but such as were educated in Great Britain and Ireland," the letter goes on to say that the school, which was "open to youth of all religious denominations without distinction," had so successfully carried on its work as to merit a charter from the Proprietaries to enable the trustees "to receive donations and to carry this pious institution to a greater and more extensive degree of usefulness." The letter refers to the rapid increase of population in the colonies and expresses a fear that, despite the fact that colleges have been opened in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, more schools of higher learning are necessary lest the colonies "become as ignorant and as barbarous as the savage Indian Nations, their neighbours." Moreover, it was too costly for most parents to send their children to the city colleges and some parents feared that their children might "be prompted to live above their abilities and future incomes." For such students, it was argued, Newark was an ideal place as a center of learning. "Its inhabitants [were] few in number, frugal and industrious: there [was] a plentiful country around it, and accommodations [could] be had cheap, and the temptations to luxury and high living [were] few." Evidently, Philadelphia and New York, with their few thousand inhabitants each, were regarded narrowly by the country folk as places not conducive to simple living and high thinking. The country was reported as groaning "under the heavy taxes occasioned by the late wars" (King George's War and the French and Indian War) and, as was always the case in a new country, much money had been expended by the people for the erection of court houses, church buildings, and bridges, and the making of highways. Hence, little or no money was left for school build-
ings. The letter is concluded with these words: "Encouraged by your generous contributions to other Seminaries where our most opulent cities [Philadelphia and New York] stood in need of your charity, we have determined to lay our distresses before you and to implore your assistance; and for this purpose we have commissioned our faithful friends, the Reverend Mr. John Ewing & Doct. Hugh Williamson, both of the City of Philadelphia and both Trustees of the Academy, to apply in our names to all well disposed Christians in Britain and Ireland, and to solicit benefactions for this Seminary of New Ark and to receive and remit to us such sums of money or donations, as they shall bestow for this charitable purpose. Sealed with our publick seal and Signed by order and in behalf of the Trustees of the Academy of New Ark the nineteenth day of October Anno Domini 1773. Francis Alison, President, Chas. Thomson Secy & Treas." A letter of recommendation was also obtained from John Penn, Lieutenant Governor, and fortified with these documents, Ewing and Williamson went abroad with high hopes for success.

Times had changed since Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Davies for Princeton, Provost William Smith for the College of Philadelphia, and Dr. James Jay for King's College, crossed the ocean on similar missions. In 1754 the French and Indian War was just breaking out on the frontiers of Pennsylvania and Virginia, and in 1762 that war was nearing its close, with England victorious over France on the ocean, in America, and in India. Throughout the fierce struggle the colonies had proven their loyalty to the crown and empire, and, when Americans came to England, Scotland, and Ireland to appeal for aid in establishing institutions of learning on firm foundations, they experienced little or no difficulty in securing good round sums. But now, when Ewing and Williamson were starting out for England, times had changed. The excitement over the Stamp Act had, to be sure, died down with the repeal of that act by Parliament in 1766. Even the unfavorable reaction to the Townshend duties had all but disappeared after all these duties excepting that on tea were repealed. And the English people, especially the merchants, were about as happy about these repeals of English statutes as were the colonists. But, in the autumn of 1773, several ships laden with tea, left English ports for Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Annapolis, and
Charleston. The Boston Tea Party occurred in the evening of December 16, less than two months after the letter from the academy trustees was signed and sealed. In all probability Ewing sailed from Philadelphia, but Williamson, according to Thomas Harrison Montgomery's *History of the University of Pennsylvania*, sailed from Boston. Says Montgomery: "the ship he sailed in from Boston lay in the harbor ready for sail, when the famed Tea Party took place on that eventful night of 16 December, and he was the first one to communicate to the British Government the tidings of this decisive destruction of the East India Company's cargoes of tea."

Of all times to come and ask for money! With one hand our emissary, Williamson, slapped the British authorities, figuratively speaking, with the worst kind of news he could bring them, whilst with the other hand he reached out for gifts for the academy at Newark, Delaware. What "good" news Ewing brought the English from Philadelphia we are not aware of, but apparently he was not daunted when he learned upon his arrival in London that Lord North, in reprisal for the Tea Party, was planning to introduce in Parliament the celebrated coercive acts designed to bring the colonies, especially Massachusetts, to book. These were the Boston Port Act, the Massachusetts Government Acts, and the Quebec Act, the first of which was introduced on March 14, 1774. In the previous month of February, Ewing and Williamson had caused to be printed in a London paper the whole of the letter from the academy trustees and the letter of recommendation from John Penn, the Lieutenant Governor, and also announced that whatever sums of money they received would be publicly acknowledged in the newspapers.

In order that we may the better understand the difficulties that the two representatives continued to face during their entire stay in Great Britain, we will briefly sketch the political events on both sides of the water during the year of 1774 and part of the year 1775. We have referred to the coercive acts of Parliament. The American answer was the assembling of the First Continental Congress in Carpenters Hall on September 5, 1774, and the adoption the next month of the "Association" whereby a boycott on British imports in America was instituted on December 1. Early in the year, 1775, Parliament refused to pass Chatham's conciliatory bill and failed to follow Burke's
advice that the vindictive acts of the previous year be repealed. With large majorities both the House of Lords and the House of Commons voted to support the King’s policy to the end. Massachusetts was declared to be in a state of rebellion, acts were passed to close all the New England ports and to prevent New England fishermen from reaching the Newfoundland fishing grounds. The British army at Boston was to be increased to 10,000, Sir William Howe was appointed to supersede Gage as commander-in-chief of the British forces, and his brother, Richard, Lord Howe, was appointed admiral of the fleet in American waters. To make matters worse, the Americans soon learned also that the King had gone into the market for the purchase of the services of mercenaries, by negotiating first with Catherine the Great for Cossack horsemen and, when he failed in that quarter, by bargaining with German princes for Hessian and Brunswick troops. The fighting at Lexington and Concord occurred in April, 1775, and, after the arrival of Howe and his reinforcements, the battle of Bunker Hill was fought in June. In the meantime, the Second Continental Congress had assembled on May 10th, and, on June 15th, Washington was appointed by that body the commander-in-chief of the American forces. Riding from Philadelphia to Cambridge, Massachusetts, Washington, on July 3, took over the command of the American army which was besieging Howe’s forces “cooped up” in Boston.

Reference is made to these well-known events of American Revolutionary history merely to fix definitely in the reader’s mind the years and months during which Ewing and Williamson were endeavoring to carry on their worthy mission. As may be imagined, it was a well-nigh hopeless task. Fortunately, we know something of their experiences, especially those of Ewing, through six of his letters written to his wife. It must be remembered that British naval vessels at this time were scouring the Atlantic and intercepting letters between England and the colonies. Consequently, some of Ewing’s letters never reached his wife, and, judging by his constant complaints about not receiving letters from Mrs. Ewing, most of her communications must have been intercepted. Parenthetically it may be said that the six letters referred to were in the possession of Dr. Ewing’s descendants until some twenty-six years ago, when, through the efforts of the then Vice-Provost, later Provost, Edgar F. Smith, the library of
the University of Pennsylvania received them from a Mrs. Wright. Three of the letters were written from London in the late winter and early spring of 1774, the fourth letter was dated Edinburgh, July 5, 1774, the fifth, Glasgow, May 3, 1775, and the sixth, London, July 9, 1775.

In the first letter, dated London, February 20, 1774, Ewing betrays homesickness for Philadelphia and for his charge, the First Presbyterian church. He already refers to difficulties in the way and says "We are almost accounted Rebels here." The first page of this letter is badly mutilated but one can make out nevertheless that many declined to "give money to those who refuse to submit to" the laws of Great Britain. But he finds more to trouble him than the strained relations between the mother country and her colonies. He has learned that letters have just arrived from America written by the Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon, who, in 1768, had entered upon his duties as president of Princeton College. In these letters, according to Ewing, Witherspoon expresses a fear that gifts of money to Newark Academy will hurt the Jersey college and insinuates that the academy teaches "other Doctrines in Divinity than" the Jersey College. If true, these strictures were evidently written under the influence of men like the Tennents, who apparently could not forget that the academy during the schism belonged to the "Old Side" Synod of Philadelphia. When Dr. Witherspoon arrived in this country the schism had been healed exactly ten years, but prompted by "New Side" supporters of the former "Log College" and of the College of New Jersey of an earlier day, he might be pardoned for entertaining some suspicions as to what were the intentions of Alison and Ewing when they secured a charter in 1769, when they secured a promise of a collection from the united synod in 1771, and when, now in 1774, they were interested in securing funds in Dr. Witherspoon's former synod in Scotland. While in London, Ewing and Williamson lost no opportunities to stimulate better feelings toward America, and, indeed, Ewing had frequent conversations with Lord North. He also met Dr. Samuel Johnson, and when that literary man scoffed at education and learning in America, and insisted that Americans had no books and did not read, Ewing countered by saying that not a few had read Dr. Johnson's "Rambler" there; whereupon, it is said, Dr. Johnson was constrained to make a fairly large contribution.
Ewing found a very helpful person in the Countess of Huntingdon, whom he visited at her estate at Bath. She was the founder of a sect of Calvinistic Methodists, known as the "Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion." She built with her own funds sixty-four chapels during her lifetime and also founded a college which today is located at Cambridge. She not only subscribed to the academy fund herself, but also wrote several letters of introduction for Ewing to her friends.

In a letter dispatched from London on April 18, 1774, Ewing wrote that he would set out for Edinburgh the same week, that he proposed to go from Scotland to Ireland, and return thence in August to England, where he expected to visit the towns in which he had any prospect of success. "I shall leave no Stone unturned," he writes, "to accomplish my Business; which will take more Time than you or I imagined at first. We are obliged to let ye Storm against America blow over in some Measure, before we can do much." He then informs Mrs. Ewing of the coercive laws passed in that same month against Boston and Massachusetts.

When Ewing was about to leave for Ireland, he wrote a letter from Edinburgh on July 5, 1774, in which he expressed much annoyance because his prospects in Scotland had been almost ruined through the influence of Dr. Witherspoon's letters. A certain Dr. Webster had divulged to Ewing the contents of Witherspoon's letters, in which he disparagingly referred to the academy as not teaching courses of standard grade nor the doctrines of the church in accordance with the Westminster Confession of Faith. Ewing requests his wife to get Dr. Alison to send over to London a certified statement containing the following facts: first, that the academy was founded in 1743 and before the College of New Jersey; second, that the same courses in languages, mathematics, philosophy were taught from the beginning of the academy as were taught in the College of New Jersey; third, that after a charter was obtained in 1769 the trustees applied for and obtained a synodical recommendation, and that Dr. Witherspoon and other trustees of the New Jersey college were present when this action was taken [Dr. Ewing here refers to the collection authorized throughout the synod in 1771 for the benefit of the academy]; and fourth, "that there is not one Minister in the Trust of our Academy, who does not Zealously preach ye Doctrines of
Grace as they are contained in our Westminster Confession of Faith."

Ewing evidently did not get back to London in the autumn of 1774, but returned to Scotland from Ireland in order to continue his work in that country after he had received the certified statement from Dr. Alison by way of London.

On May 3, 1775, Ewing wrote from Glasgow that he had appeared before the Presbytery of Glasgow the day before but that that body had advised "a further Delay of a Collection here until the public affairs are settled, when they expect that something considerable may be obtained in this and the neighbouring Towns." He betrays disappointment that the results of his work thus far are not commensurate with the great efforts that he has put forth. He writes that he has been offered a free passage to America both from Belfast and from Derry and that, if he can avail himself of the opportunity, he will save 25 to 30 guineas for the academy. He plans to set off for London on the next day (May 4, 1775), and expects to arrive there in ten days. He has heard nothing from Dr. Williamson lately, only that he is still in London. "I am afraid he has done nothing this Winter there," he says. Dr. Ewing refers briefly to the political situation again, and concludes his letter on this pessimistic note: "I hate these Politicks, that have ruined our Mission, & therefore will say no more about this."

Having been unable to secure a large sum of money from collections in the Presbyterian churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland, Dr. Ewing, upon his return to London, made two very bold attempts to make up for past failures. He applied to the King for a donation, and then made an application for a royal grant of land as an endowment for the academy. He got the donation from the King, but failed to get the land grant. He wrote Mrs. Ewing on July 9, 1775, from London, informing her that he was postponing his sailing for America until he knew "what effect his Majesty's Donation will have to engage others to follow his Example in contributing to our Academy." He also was waiting to see what success he would have in his application for the land grant. "Our Success" he says, "depends entirely on ye Accommodation of our public Measures. Should that take place speedily, we shall yet get as much Money as [to] establish our Academy upon a permanent & solid foundation. And I am afraid this will
not be the case, if I leave the Business before it be compleated. Dr. Williamson indeed proposes to stay behind me & to wait for ye proper time for carrying our Design into Execution—but he cannot do as much as I could wish."

In all his letters Dr. Ewing shows a deep personal interest in the welfare of Mrs. Ewing and the children. He constantly writes about sending over things to Philadelphia, and in one letter he requests his wife to send their son, Billy, to the academy at Newark. In his last letter from London there occurs an amusing passage about his intention to smuggle some things into the country despite the non-importation agreement. He writes: "I am getting a few things for you & the Children to bring over with me. They must not be talked of on Account of ye Non-Importation Agreement lest I should find Difficulty in bringing them ashore. I am thinking of some Books for ye Children and a Piece of Silk for gowns, &c."

If Ewing did not receive as much money in Great Britain as he desired, there was no lack of honors and hospitality. Glasgow, Montrose, Dundee, and Perth presented him with their freedom and the University of Edinburgh conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

How long Dr. Williamson remained in London after Dr. Ewing's departure is uncertain. He eventually went to Holland, and, when news reached him that America had declared its independence, he turned homeward, arriving in Philadelphia in March, 1777.

Dr. Ewing probably got back to Philadelphia in the autumn of 1775. It has been said that he brought with him about six or seven thousand dollars, but since the records of the academy before the year of 1783 have been lost, we have no definite information on this point. With this money and with generous donations from the Penns and others, a stone building was promptly built in Newark and the present endowment of the corporation was begun. It should be explained at this point that, although the academy was merged with Newark College in 1834, the old academy board was reconstituted in 1869 and the academic department separated from Delaware College in 1870. The academy continued thereafter to function until the year 1898. The corporation, however, is still in existence, and
uses the academy buildings and grounds for various civic purposes.

Although Dr. Ewing could not have crossed the ocean in time to be present at the commencement of the academy held on September 26 and 27, 1775, the news of the King’s donation was announced on this occasion. In “Dunlap’s Pennsylvania Packet or the General Advertiser” for Monday, October 9, there appears a full account of the commencement exercises at the academy. There were nine students who received academic diplomas in that year, two from North Carolina, two from Virginia, one from Pennsylvania and four from the counties on Delaware. The correspondent concludes his communication in these words: “We are informed that the Reverend Doctor John Ewing by application to the King through Lord North and Lord Dartmouth has obtained from his Majesty a royal donation for this Academy.”

The school had hardly started afresh, however, before the confusion of the war years came upon it. Howe’s army, 18,000 strong, marched through Newark from the Head of Elk to the Battlefield of the Brandywine early in the morning of September 8, 1777. If any stragglers or camp followers looked into the school building, they probably found that not only its scholars had fled but that they and their principal had taken with them everything of value. As a matter of fact, we have it from the journal of one of the Hessian officers that the village of Newark was deserted when the army marched through it, and that the inhabitants had taken away not only their personal property but also their windows and doors.

When Howe, after the Battle of the Brandywine, sent Hessian and British contingents on September 12th to take and hold Wilmington so as to have a place for his wounded until Philadelphia could be captured, his soldiers not only took possession of the First Presbyterian church for a hospital but captured the first governor of the state of Delaware, Dr. John McKinly, who lived in Wilmington and practiced medicine there. They also seized many of the records of New Castle County, “and every shilling of the public money, together with the fund belonging to the trustees of the Newark Academy,” according to a letter from Thomas McKean to George Washington dated Newark, Delaware, October 8, 1777.

The academy was probably closed for three years until 1780,
the stone building being used for the making of shoes for the Delaware militia troops.

The year of the signing of the general peace treaty with Great Britain, 1783, marked a revival in the affairs of the academy, and, on June 5th of that year, the board of trustees held what was probably their first meeting since the reopening of the school in 1780. Dr. Alison being dead, Dr. Ewing had been elected president of the board. The minutes show who were present and who were absent, and we find that eight of the original thirteen charter trustees of 1769 were still on the board. They were, in addition to Dr. Ewing, the Reverend Messrs. William McKennan, Matthew Wilson, and Patrick Alison, the Honorable Messrs. Thomas McKean and John Evans, and Messrs. Charles Thomson and James Mease. The six charter members no longer on the board were Chief Justice William Allen, who died in Philadelphia in 1780; his son Andrew Allen, who was now in London; Dr. Francis Alison, who died in 1779; the Reverend Mr. Alexander McDowell, who died in 1782, and Doctor Hugh Williamson, who at this time was living in North Carolina and who, four years later, in 1787, was to represent that State in the Federal Constitutional Convention. The five new members elected to fill the vacancies were: Reverend Thomas Read of "Old Drawyers" church in Delaware; Dr. John McKinly of Wilmington, the first governor of the State, to whom reference has already been made; General Samuel Patterson, of Christiana Bridge, who commanded Delaware's regiment in the Flying Camp at Perth Amboy in 1776; and Rev. Mr. Joseph Montgomery and Mr. John Thompson, both of the Presbytery of New Castle.

At this meeting the trustees appointed William Thompson as principal. He had, as a matter of fact, reopened the school in 1780, and continued at his post until 1794. Succeeding principals were a Mr. Johnston, the Reverend Francis Hindman, and the Reverend Andrew K. Russell. The last named held the position from 1811 until the school was merged with the college in 1834, and was probably mainly responsible for the interest taken by the members of the academy board in securing the charter for a degree-granting college in 1833.