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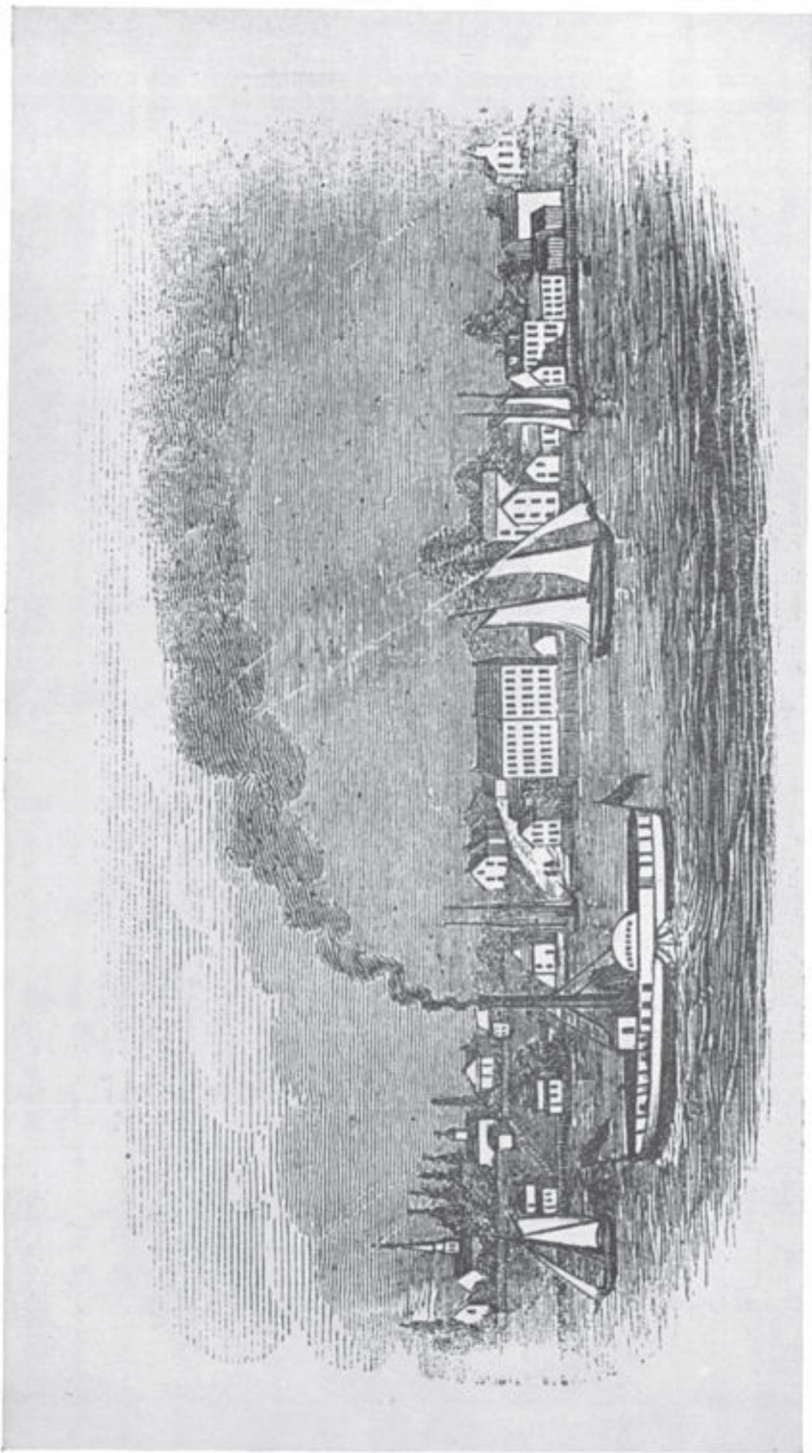
## WHEN PERTH AMBOY WAS A SEAPORT TOWN

BY WILLIAM J. CHUTE

ASPECTS of the life in a New Jersey town in the 1820's and 1830's are here revealed in extracts from letters of a clergyman who was an active observer of the secular as well as the ecclesiastical interests of Jacksonian days. The author is a lecturer in History in the Rutgers College of Arts and Sciences.

IN THE MONTH of July, 1826, the air of Perth Amboy was particularly infested with New Jersey's most annoying pest, then quite uninhibited by the State's later-developed efficient Mosquito Control. "Since you left us, the evil has greatly increased," wrote the Rev. James Chapman of St. Peter's Episcopal Church of that town on July 10 in that year. "We suffered much on the nights of Friday & Saturday in particular. Our little girl has looked as if she was poisoned. One of her eyes was much swollen as your dear little boy's when he was last here. The maschetoes of this season are *truly orthodox*, if you regard their orthodoxy as consisting in severity of bite, and in permanency of the subsequent pain. Multitudes of them indeed gave proof of *their orthodoxy* yesterday by attending St. Peter's Church. Hundreds of them were in readiness to receive us in the porch of the Church, so that the wall was black; and a detachment was in the Vestry room ready to welcome the Rector, who found himself much indisposed to give them a friendly salutation."

The Rev. Chapman's friend and correspondent was Thomas N. Stanford, partner of the then well known publishing firm of Swords & Stanford. Chapman's letters can today be found in four bound volumes at the Rutgers University Library. In some six hundred



*A view of Perth Amboy about 1842*

well preserved epistles composed in a remarkably legible hand by the clergyman between 1823 and 1839, can be found significant material, not only for the local historian, but also for the scholar seeking information on events and the climate of opinion in the period.

Not saturated with religious soul-searching so characteristic of clergymen of the time, these letters contain a fascinating catalogue of the daily activities and social life of Perth Amboy—weddings, births, illnesses, fear of the papacy, and information concerning relatives who had gone in search of new homes in the undeveloped West and South. Read as a narrative of almost two decades, the correspondence vibrates with the excitement of the steamboat rivalry for the Raritan River traffic. One becomes familiar with the captains, is outraged by the inconveniences caused by the New Jersey fog, the river log jams, and the ship-owners' mania for breaking speed records.

The weather seemed to be vastly different then. The river and bay were constantly frozen in winter, and people were able to cross to Staten Island on a solid bridge of ice. In 1831, in fact, the Raritan froze up as the winter set in and did not thaw before March 3. In rainy weather, the roads, inadequate for travel at best, became impassable with deep mud, leaving Amboy isolated except for steamboat travel.

There is a lengthy, progressive description of the warfare between the oystermen of New York and New Jersey for the products of the oyster beds of Raritan Bay, in which were employed cannon and Jersey militia; the cholera epidemic of 1832; the freakish and devastating tornado of 1835; a daring bank robbery and the pursuit and apprehension of the thief by prominent citizens; Mr. Durant's unbelievable descent into the woods of Perth Amboy by balloon, frightening children, and astonishing the less credulous inhabitants; the difficulty of hiring a respectable teacher for the classical school; the financial disaster brought to some residents as a result of the great Wall Street fire and the collapse of the stock of the United States Bank. Add to these a discussion of church affairs, and the competition between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians, which at times becomes even humorous. Anti-Jackson politics can be found in volumes two, three, and four.

The New York historian will be interested in the discussion of

politics in the Empire state, references to church conflicts, mob violence, and the destruction by fire of the Swords & Stanford bookstore together with the problems presented in restoring it.

Perth Amboy in the 1820's and 1830's with its spacious Raritan House, was a prosperous town, a popular summer resort, a promising seaport which handled twice as much steam tonnage as Boston, and an important entry point for European immigrants seeking a new life and opportunity. The Rev. Chapman, however, does not seem to have shared extensively in its wealth. Much of his food was grown in the parsonage garden, diminished by drought or increased by abundant rain. His salary was supplemented, whenever possible, by private tutoring. The chronic illness of his wife, the eldest daughter of Joseph Marsh, one of the town's most distinguished citizens, often prevented them from boarding his pupils.

Occasionally monetary "acknowledgements" were received for officiating at weddings and funerals, although the suggestion is strong that such remunerations were not in large denominations. For example, when the son of the Democratic Congressman, James Parker, II, "took himself a wife out of the captain's [Forbes] fine family of daughters," although more than fifty prominent persons attended a lavish party following the wedding, "the acknowledgement to the *parson* consisted of two gold pieces—one a half eagle and the other a Spanish piece worth about 3 dollars, making 8 dollars in the whole." Yet, he assured his friend, "you know what a contented couple your friends at the Parsonage are and will not conclude that the result gives them much trouble."

His Christian impulse to help less fortunate clergymen in other parts of the country was often stifled because of the difficulty of raising enough money to support his own parish. Church funds came from the rental of pews and collections, which must have been diminutive, for in 1831 the parish owed him fourteen hundred dollars, and a special collection to support missions brought in only fifty cents. Nevertheless, he did not have to worry about books, which were supplied by Stanford, "for perusal," to be eventually returned unless sold to parishioners.

Thomas N. Stanford does not emerge as a fully-drawn person. That he was benevolent is indicated by the fact that he forwarded to the Amboy parson his New York newspapers, parcels of candy for the children, and limes and oranges, melons and pineapples for

the sick. He never forgot birthdays, and was happy to send Christmas packages full of toys. Both men enjoyed exchanging remedies for ailments of the community. Stanford also contributed liberally to the work of St. Peters. At one time, when a parishioner left town without fulfilling his promise to support the Sunday School, he offered to assume the financial responsibility for one year. Nothing occurs in the correspondence, nevertheless, to dispel the impression given by the famous New York diarist, George Templeton Strong, that Stanford was "the meekest of bibliophiles and of men."<sup>1</sup>

After one visit to Perth Amboy, Stanford and his family received rather rough treatment on a return to New York from the speed-conscious, public-be-damned attitude of young Captain Cornelius Vanderbilt of the steamboat *Thistle*, who was dominated by a passion for beating rival vessels in the run from New Brunswick to New York. Obviously the stop to pick up passengers at Perth Amboy was considered an unnecessary inconvenience. Chapman denounced this behavior in definite terms. "We are happy to hear that you and the girls reached home in safety, as we were under some apprehension of accidents on board the steam boat from the inexcusable hurry which was manifested to make an unnecessary short passage. I returned from the wharf much displeased at the treatment which those met who succeeded to get on board, and more so at the treatment of those who were left behind, and who would not have come to Amboy, unless they had depended on the *Thistle* to take them back in the afternoon. Nearly all of the company at the Raritan House was left and most of them were put to inconvenience and expense to get to N.Y. I am afraid that the pleasure of your visit was destroyed in a great measure by the unexpected conduct of the captain of the steam boat. Mrs. Chapman was much grieved at the circumstance of the girls being taken from the table before they had finished their dinner." (July 23, 1824)

In 1829 we get a firsthand account of the struggle between two great states for the oysters of Raritan Bay. "The last two or three days we have been disturbed by a contention between the oyster company of Perth Amboy, and a party of men from the State of New York, who have been endeavouring to take away the planted oysters of the company, which has derived the right to the ground

<sup>1</sup> Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, *The Diary of George Templeton Strong*, Vol. II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 22.

from an act of the legislature of New Jersey. The Amboy people have fired cannon upon the oyster boats, and altho' no person was injured by any of the shot, yet the boats were driven off. Yesterday our town assumed the appearance of war by the arrival of a large body of armed militia from N. Brunswick. This body of soldiers has left us for their homes, so that I trust the contest is over." (September 11, 1829)

The contest, however, was definitely not over. The next year the "staten Island Plunderers" returned to their despoiling mission in stronger force. "They came with a large fleet of schooners and boats on Tuesday last week, and continued to labor on the oyster ground until Friday, P.M. without the least molestation. The marauders amounted to about 500. They went off in triumph with their vessels well loaded. It is supposed that they have completely cleaned the beds. . . ." The latter invasion met little opposition, because "the cannon in Amboy were spiked by some of our own citizens who are opposed to the Oyster Company of New Jersey." (September 22, 1830) As though victory had increased their boldness, the deprecators returned shortly "to plunder the plantations of oysters on the shore." Although Chapman predicted that they would "meet some of our most industrious workingmen," the oyster controversy is not again mentioned. (October 4, 1830)

Man's attempt to conquer the skies fascinated the inhabitants of Amboy, especially the activities of Charles Ferson Durant, who had excited the world in the summer of 1829 by ascending twice in a balloon in Paris. Durant had returned to the United States intent upon interesting the Americans in the use of the balloon for transportation. It is fortunate that Chapman saw Durant's first American flight on September 9, and left us a description. "On Thursday afternoon between the hours of 5 and 6 the attention of us all was excited by an unusual appearance of a visiter from your city sailing in majesty over our bay in a balloon. Such a sight had never before been witnessed here. I went without delay to the east window of the octagon in your room, and by help of my telescope had a clear view of Mr. Durant in his car with his flag in his hand. We observed the movement of his balloon until we saw it gently descend directly right of the Parsonage among the woods of South Amboy. This happened about  $\frac{1}{4}$  past five. Some of our people immediately crossed the river to assist Mr. D if necessary. They

found that he had safely landed, and prevailed upon him to accompany them to their town. The party arrived at Arnold's tavern with the balloon at 8 o'clock. The next morning the car was carried about the town on a wagon for exhibition. . . . I have been informed that the people of South Amboy were astonished beyond measure at the strange arrival of Mr. Durant among them, and that it was a hard matter to convince some of them that he had actually come from N. York by means of the balloon."

The cholera epidemic of the summer of 1832 alarmed the town of Amboy, for it was believed that the dreadful disease was brought in from England and Ireland by immigrants, and Amboy was a port whose officials were less strict than those at the port of New York.

In the month of June the population was thrown into a panic by the approach of the ship *Albion* from Bristol with two hundred persons on board. But the voyagers were healthy and little sickness was found in the early days of July except for a few cases of measles among the children and a few isolated cases of intermittent fever. During the plague's sway in New York, Chapman boarded two of Stanford's children at Amboy, promising to guard their health with the greatest of caution, and to make sure that this might be done, asked Stanford to send "one box of *Bilious Pills* prepared by Dr. S. N. P. Lee of New London, not Lee of Windham. We have found these pills very useful for the children on some occasions and wish to have some always on hand." (July 5, 1832)

Chapman received a daily bulletin on the pestilence and was full of theories and remedies. "I hope that the abundant rain which you say has thoroughly cleared your streets and the temperate weather which now prevails, will prove beneficial to the city. From several circumstances which have been mentioned recently I would think that the atmosphere of N.Y. is loaded with pestilential vapours, and must still say that the cholera must have been imported through means of the emigrants, or of the visitors etc. from lower Canada. . . . Perhaps it would be well, to eat one or two soda crackers before you go out in the early time in the morning. An empty stomach is said to be a dangerous thing in time of epidemic diseases." (July 11, 1832)

As the disease spread over the city of New York, Chapman worried about his friend who obstinately refused to leave the infested city. "You are indeed a good soldier, strong in faith, and in

natural courage, to be able to hold out through such a season of trial," wrote Chapman in praise. "Your fortitude must often be put to a severe test when tidings of death and misery are daily brought to your ears, and every sight that meets your eyes reminds you of the presence of death in all your streets." (July 25, 1832) The deadly route of the pestilence was traced as the letters were despatched more frequently than at any other period of the correspondence.

Cholera broke out in Philadelphia, New Brunswick, and Paterson, and there was a single case in the family of Mr. Vermule at Plainfield. This last incident led Chapman to believe such occurrences "show that your physicians have been too positive in saying that the cholera is not a contagious or infectious disease. Surely the unfortunate stranger that was so kindly taken in, brought the disease into the family that received him, for it could not have gone in the air from the city to that place, without affecting the intervening places. Great mystery indeed hangs over the whole subject of this awful disease." (July 17, 1832)

Chapman reflected on the injustice of selection, for "amidst the multitude of the wicked and worthless, who are taken away, some of the best members of society must be expected to be taken away. This is the case in all general calamities." (July 21, 1832) That was especially true when the pestilence arrived at the village of Haarlem. "Truly we are distressed to hear that the Rector of the church and his wife and child have all been cut off since 4 o'clock P.M. yesterday. . . . How do you account for the fact that a village so remote from the seat of the epidemic should be so severely assailed." (July 25, 1832)

Newark was the most seriously afflicted of all the towns in New Jersey. Contrary to published reports, not one single case of cholera appeared in Perth Amboy, however, and Chapman protested vehemently when an article in the *Commercial Advertiser* claimed that the disease had broken out there. Although Amboy escaped the more frightening cholera attack, the usual diseases, especially scarlet fever, took their tolls. "The disease is very malignant, and almost beyond the controul of medicine." Eighteen children died of it that year.

There is recorded an interesting event in which modern technology came to the aid of religion to the satisfaction of the congregation



and the bishop of the diocese. Old Bishop Croes\* had died of feebleness and old age. He had been the first bishop of New Jersey, a general in the American Revolution, and part of George Washington's staff. But the world belongs to the living, and the congregation was looking forward to meeting the new Bishop Doane who had announced his visitation. Unfortunately he would not arrive before evening. Chapman confided the surprise he had in store for the prelate. "Yesterday I engaged Mr. Johnson, who is the manager of Dr. Andrew's Gas Lamp Manufactory, to supply old St. Peter's with a sufficient number of lamps to make a splendid illumination. We hope the sight of a venerable old church will add to the gratification of Bp Doane's visitation." (December 7, 1832)

It was not the venerable old church, however, which most impressed the Bishop. "About an hour after the setting of the sun, Bp. Doane arrived in the parish of St. Peter's. . . . He had a stormy time at E.T. [Elizabethtown] and rather a small congregation. He left that place about half past three, and had a miserable ride through the mud. Before he arrived old St. Peters was brilliantly illuminated with the light of Dr. Andrews Gas Lamps. I did not tell the Bishop beforehand what kind of illumination we had prepared for him . . . and [he] was soon surprised with the novel light. He had not yet heard of the invention of these lamps, and after service expressed himself as much delighted." (December 12, 1832)

The religious attitudes of the Rev. Chapman were those of a moderate churchman of his day. Surprising enough, however, Jesus Christ was referred to not once. Chapman's name for the Deity was usually "Providence," although the occasional use of "God," or the "Lord" may be found. The foundation of his belief was "orthodoxy," by which he seemed to mean adherence to the "apostolic Church" as preached by the famous Bishop Hobart. He had been "on the most intimate terms of friendship" with the Bishop in his earlier days in New York, before coming to Amboy in 1809. "Perhaps I had a better opportunity than others of knowing that Dr. Hobart composed his chief and most admirable work, 'The Apology for Apostolic Order' under circumstances of langour of body," he reported to Stanford, who was gathering information on the life of the recently deceased Churchman. "I remember how much I ad-

\* The John Croes papers are in the Library's manuscript collection.

mired the strength of his mind in the midst of great bodily debility, as I served as his amanuensis in writing the concluding part of that work and the preface, while he lay on his bed dictating the matter." (November 7, 1830)

Orthodoxy in other letters appears to mean the highest form of perfection in anything. "I hope," he once wrote, "that St. Peter's Parsonage will always send forth what is orthodox in all things." (September 6, 1823) In sending Stanford some of his Foxland potatoes grown at the parsonage, he assured his friend "that they are of as excellent quality and as fully *orthodox* as the rare ripe peaches." (October 14, 1823) Limes, oranges, wines, and oysters "are truly orthodox."

Providence was responsible for all things. Regarding the death of Bishop Hobart, Chapman remarked that "his decease in the ripeness of life . . . is among the mysterious and more trying dispensations of Providence." During a period of drought he declared that "Providence appears to frown on us this season, but we are encouraged a little with the prospect of rain." (June 15, 1826)

During the great tornado of 1835, which destroyed property and lives in New Brunswick and its surrounding communities, the Episcopal church at Piscataway was wrecked completely. "Even the floor and the beams were carried off, so that nothing but the foundation was left on the ground occupied by the church." Yet the Rev. Chapman could see the guiding hand of Providence in even this disaster. One particular man, for example, was struck down by the falling timber of the church, but on the Friday morning before the tornado "this man had openly avowed himself at a public house nearly opposite the church to be an atheist, and that he would never believe that there is a God, until he had seen a stronger and clearer display of the Almighty in awful manner. He is still alive but senseless. It is said that he has a family of a wife and twenty children. Perhaps it is a mercy to them that such an ungodly wretch should be taken from them in so awful a manner." (June 23, 1835)

References to conflicts with other religious denominations are sprinkled throughout the correspondence. Chapman looked favorably upon the Methodists, curiously enough, but was suspicious of the Presbyterians. He welcomed the tracts printed by a Methodist press, and wished it Godspeed. "I hope that their establishment will be well supported, as in many respects they are aids to our apostolic

church and but very few of their books or tracts can do us any injury." (August 17, 1831)

He reserved his anathema for the Presbyterians who were holding revival meetings in the 1820's and early 1830's. The earliest mention of this conflict is in 1823. "The Presbyterians grow stronger in their antipathies but without any effect to hurt any but themselves. They push hard, but as a congregation they are so divided that they can do but little. Some of their own people are already disgusted at the revivals, and the church [St. Peter's] has already gained one respectable family, who have taken a pew." In 1831 he could report with rejoicing that his Sunday School was large and constantly increasing in size. "Several of the Presbyterians prefer having their children connected with our school. The line of distinction is now clearly drawn, and the Episcopal strength can clearly be seen. . . . The *revival* is in progress now. On Thursday there were three services in the Presbyterian meeting house. The attendance appeared to be very slim. . . . My people have less to do with these revivals than with the preceding one. . . ." (April 23, 1831) "The 'Presbyterian lion' growled hard, but that is all that he can do. The Methodists and Churchmen together will prove too much for him. The Methodists seem disposed to make a common course with us, as it regards opposition to Presbyterian encroachments." (November 24, 1831)

But his favorable attitude toward the Wesleyans began to change when he was informed by Andrew Bell that his brother, Thomas Chapman, who was "by far the best skilled in theology of all the laymen of New Jersey," and had collected over the years a huge library on the subject, was donating the books to the Methodist Wesleyan University at Middletown, Connecticut. It is implied that such a movement was inspired by Thomas' wife, for "all the daughters of John Gifford have become Methodists." The information was transmitted to Stanford on September 19, 1832. "I have heard some news which surprises me," he wrote, "and which will equally surprise you; which is, that my brother Thomas has transferred books out of his large and valuable library to the amount of 2000 dollars, to the General Theological Seminary of the Methodist Church, receiving \$1000 in cash, and making a donation of the other \$1000 to the Seminary. How this affair has been brought about, I do not

know. He was greatly attached to his books which are many of them scarce and highly valuable."

We hear of one victory over the Presbyterians which made Rev. Chapman very happy. "I send you astonishing news," he informed Stanford on October 20, 1834, "that the Rev. Mr. [David G.] Gillmer, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Amboy has resigned his charge, and declared his intention to apply for orders in our Church. He is a pious and exemplary young man of good ability. He has left his former connection on the conviction that Presbyterian ordination is invalid. There is a great commotion among the Presbyterians here on this most unexpected event." Rev. Gillmer was eventually received by the Episcopal communion. When the new young Presbyterian minister, Benjamin Cory arrived, the Rev. Chapman could not resist some taunts at the Presbyters. He wrote Stanford: "I have already taken a fancy for him and have told some of the Presbyterians to keep a good watch over him, lest he attend frequently at St. Peter's as Mr. G. did." (October 31, 1834)

Inspired by this singular victory, he ordered from Stanford Episcopal literature to distribute throughout the community and soon had "tracts enough to convert all the Presbyterians here if they would yield to the truth." (November 15, 1834)

The Chapman correspondence serves to augment the scarce material on the use of New Jersey ports as entry points for European immigrants. For example, in a letter written on June 15, 1837, we find the Rev. Chapman saying, "our harbour abounds in ships, chiefly of good Old England. We like the ships better than their living cargoes. Only a few of the emigrants remain here. No disturbance has taken place altho we have had several hundreds at a time on the wharves. But few of the whole number are sick."

The suffering that many immigrants endured in the early days of our history because of the lack of adequate regulatory laws, is brought out in a letter dated August 3, 1837. "The English ship Phebe arrived here on Monday afternoon in 17 days passage from Liverpool with 300 passengers in a most miserable condition. Many of them are sick with ship fever and the smallpox. I learn that nearly 30 persons have been taken sick on board since yesterday morning. We have no house to receive them here, and I do not know what will become of them. None have been allowed to come to shore, and many of our citizens are much alarmed. The overseer of

the poor, has been endeavouring to persuade the captain of the ship to take them to the Staten Island quarantine."

A week later he reported, "we begin to be troubled with beggars as you are in the city. The passengers of the Phebe between 300 and 400 have been landed. Of these 30 or 40 sick persons have been taken into Mr. Bell's woods on the road to Woodbridge, and placed in tents made of sails. Several women are near the time of their confinement. I have just seen an Irish woman in that condition conducted with difficulty to the barn of the Raritan House. Numbers are on the steam boat wharf, without shelter by day or night. Thomas Marsh [Chapman's brother-in-law] put six or seven of them last evening into one of his storehouses on his wharf. Amboy is not a proper place for the reception of such multitudes of foreigners, as we have no hospital and no large spare house to receive them. Much altercation is produced in the town, between the officers of the custom and the health physician, and the inhabitants. As both typhus fever and the small pox have prevailed on board the Phebe, there is certainly much risk to the citizens at present." (August 9, 1837) Later when this incident was used by New York politicians to inflame the Irish, Chapman wrote: "It is utterly false that any of the Irish were suffered to die on the beach of Amboy. The people here were kind to all that came to our shore, and expended much time and money for the relief of all that needed assistance." (April 22, 1839)

Politics is not mentioned in the correspondence until Congress passed the bill to recharter the second United States Bank in 1832. This action afforded the Rev. Chapman much pleasure, and lifted his thoughts momentarily from the devastation of the cholera epidemic. Jackson's astonishing veto of the bill, however, moved him to express his protest in ink, and from then on he was a strong anti-Jackson man. After the formation of the Whig Party in New Jersey, he gave it his approval more and more. By implication, through his praise of John Quincy Adams, "the most learned man in Congress," one might gather that he had long adhered to the Adams-Clay point of view. As few letters have been preserved for 1824, and as the only gap in the entire collection is for the years 1827-1828, there is little evidence to show how he voted in the elections for those years. It is possible, however, that he was one of the old Federalists who voted for John Quincy Adams. We know, also, that he greatly

admired George Washington, and placed a portrait of him in the most prominent place at the parsonage to arrest the attention of visitors.

Most of the characters brought to life on the pages of these old letters are Democrats, and Perth Amboy at the time was dominantly of Jackson's party. There is Joseph Marsh, Chapman's father-in-law, a retired shipper whose business in Southern trade was directed by his son, Thomas G. Marsh. In 1832 he was elected mayor of the town. The warmest personality portrayed, and one of the clergyman's closest friends, is Andrew Bell. "A warm admirer of Hamilton," he was perhaps the richest man in town, and as late as 1836 was, in the opinion of Chapman, "still so devoted to Jacksonism that he expresses no disapprobation of the outrageous proceedings at Washington," even though "the signs of the time are ominous of much evil to us as a nation," and "there appears to be a deep corruption among those who now have the lead in public affairs." (April 7, 1836) Yet there seemed to be not the slightest bit of discord between the two men.

Quite another story was the relationship between Chapman and James Parker, II, Vestryman of St. Peter's who preceded Mr. Marsh as mayor of Perth Amboy.\* He was elected as a Democrat to represent his district in Congress in 1832. Within one year the Rev. Chapman had some harsh words for the Congressman: "The Parkers left Amboy at 10 o'clock yesterday morning," he wrote Stanford. "Mr. P. has gone off without paying me a single dollar, and without the least apology for his neglect and violation of positive and repeated promise. I sent him a letter two months since in which I respectfully asked him to inform me what I had to expect in regard to payment of pew rent and subscription due, but to this letter he has given neither written or verbal reply. Mr. Bell yesterday pronounced his conduct as *shameful!* Every honest man must say the same!" (November 28, 1833)

Four years later Parker's stand on political action for the abolition of slavery raised him in the estimation of the old clergyman, although Chapman was an advocate of African colonization. Even then, however, it was elevation by association. "I was much amused to find that our acquaintance in Congress Mr. Parker," he wrote,

\* The James Parker papers, in the Library's manuscript collection, include some of his correspondence as a member of Congress.

“was one of a small minority of three on the abolition question. One of the three was no less than John Quincy Adams. . . . What an honor to be one of a trio with him! Mr. P. must be a greater man than ever he was before.” (February 4, 1837)

The veto of the bank bill gave Chapman his first political shock. “I see that ‘the greatest and best’ has put his veto to the bank bill,” he wrote. “As he has set himself in opposition to a large majority of Congress and to the whole of the powerful state of Penna, he has taken much upon himself under which he may fall sooner than his advisers expect. Our good friend Mr. Bell, foreseeing perhaps what was to come, sold out his stock in good season at 125. So he bears this event with the greatest patience.” (July 13, 1832)

The fall of the bank stock affected adversely some great plans for the future of the church. “Whatever Mr. [John] Potter, who has resided at Princeton already five or six years, might have been willing to do for the church last spring, he probably has not now much money to spare for the purpose, as he is a large stockholder in the railroad and canal which are very expensive works, and particularly as he has lost an immense sum by the fall of the stock of the United States Bank. Mr. [Robert F.] Stockton is a great loser by the same depression of stock. A gentleman who is acquainted with both, told me that he thought that Potter and Stockton had lost as much by the fall of the bank as would have been sufficient to have built and endow a church.” (January 14, 1833)

Of New York politics Chapman had only the lowest opinions. “I presume that you have men among you bad enough for anything,” he wrote Stanford, “since infidels have come into public repute for office both in your own legislature and in Congress. It is provoking that you are represented by a mean set of fellows in the legislature in that they were chosen in opposition to that splendid ticket for which the Whigs gave their unavailing suffrages last November. Truly we have fallen upon bad times. What will be the fate of our republic, the omnipotent only knows.” (January 28, 1835)

He found much reason for rejoicing, however, at the Whig victory in New Jersey in 1836. “I trust that this state is now emancipated from the collar which it has worn for the last 6 or 8 years. A majority in 9 counties out of 14 promises well for the future. The victory was celebrated here on Saturday, altho’ this town gave a

majority of 34 for Van Buren. This was, however, a reduction from his majority in October." (November 22, 1836)

Yet a certain amount of political tolerance was part of the make-up of Rev. Chapman, as is shown by his attitude toward Van Buren during the last days of his administration. Nothing is said about the effects of the Panic of 1837, nor the President's part in bringing it about. He was also "gratified that you had the President with you at St. Paul on Sunday last," he told Stanford. "From what was said in the Herald of Monday, its readers were left to conclude that the President totally neglected public worship on that day. Such a piece of negligence would have been unpardonable." (June 11, 1839)

The correspondence ends on a note of triumph and unbounded happiness for the complete victory which the good cause of the Whigs gained in the state of New York. "This is a very important triumph in many respects. Its influence on the city will be great and salutary, particularly if it should lead to a registry of voters in the city. Then an end will be put to the effects of unprincipled men, and to the system of so many oaths at election which is a crying evil. It is provoking that the folly of the abolitionists has prevented many Whig candidates from meeting with success. They are all opposed to Mr. Van Buren, and yet they act in a way to serve his purposes and interest." (November 15, 1839)

Chapman gave favorable notice at least once to Rutgers College. The Episcopal Church gladly supported the college with money and students, despite its Dutch Reform foundation. Bishop Croes, mentioned often in the correspondence, had been the director of the Rutgers Grammar School in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

On June 26, 1834 Chapman sent a book order to Stanford with the following note enclosed. "Mr. Bell is very anxious to obtain a copy of Wirt's Life of Patrick Henry, for the use of his favorite [grandson] Andrew Bell Paterson. . . . Mr. Bell is highly delighted that the first honor at Rutgers's College has been awarded to his beloved Andrew B. Paterson. The commencement will be about the middle of July. I spent an hour in conversation with the excellent President of that college, [Philip Milledoler] in a passage from N.B. in the steam boat last Friday. He spoke in the highest



terms of this young gentleman, both as a scholar and as an exemplary young man in all respects." (June 25, 1834)

The reading habits of the community can be studied from the letters because quite often the inhabitants ordered their volumes from Mr. Stanford through the Rev. Chapman. The most prolific reader was Andrew Bell, now retired and ill most of the time. His interest turned toward the reading of biographies of historical characters. We find him ordering the *Life of Jonathan Edwards*, "formerly President of the College at Princeton" (January 22, 1833), and "Observations on the Writings of Thomas Jefferson, with particular reference to the attack they contained on the Memory of the Late General Henry Lee; in a series of letters, by H. Lee, of Virginia." (May 22, 1832) Others are *The Life of Gouverneur Morris*, *The Life of Alexander Hamilton*, *Memoirs of Hannah Moore*, and Dunlap's *History of New York*.

Occasionally, in purchasing books, Rev. Chapman showed a quality that might have made him a fair horse-trader. In one of the very earliest letters he explained to Stanford that he was looking for a set of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 21 volumes "if I can procure one at a low rate. When Mr. Eastburn, of the Literary Rooms, was here last summer, he offered to sell me a sett which he has for 52\$ & 50 cents, but as the Rev. John—purchased such a sett at Mr. Dobsen's for 36\$ and his father upon inquiry at the same place was informed that there were more setts at the price, I was unwilling to accept Mr. E's offer. If you can make it convenient, I will take it as a great favor if you will endeavour to obtain the sett at the Literary Rooms, on more favorable terms than above mentioned. I am willing to pay 42 dollars for the sett. You will please to avoid mentioning my name to Mr. Eastburn and if he agrees to let you have the sett so that you can send it to me for 42\$, to take it without farther notice." (March 21, 1823)

The correspondence relates some interesting occurrences from family life. In 1831 when the new baby named after Stanford was born, the family withheld baptism until Bishop Croes made his visitation. "The Bishop was very feeble, but still he preached yesterday morning, and in the afternoon baptised our little Stanford. The numerous strange faces soon alarmed the candidate for baptism, and he soon began to cry in his loudest style, and continued his discordant music until his mother conveyed him back to the Parsonage with

all haste after the baptismal service was ended. Never in my life have I heard so loud and so long continued an outcry at any baptismal occasion. Truly he has made a sorry beginning of the Christian course." (July 25, 1831)

Another glimpse of a domestic scene involved a Negro boy who had been born a slave in the home of Chapman's father-in-law. "We have had a crying time in our family on occasion of the coloured boy Sidney (who had become so unruly and idle, that Mr. Marsh thought that there was danger of his going to destruction) leaving the family to reside with Mr. Taylor, a relative of the late Robert Montgomery, about 30 or 40 miles from Amboy. As Sidney was born in Mr. Marsh's family, all the members felt a degree of regard for him, so the parting was hard for them as well as for him. Miss Elizabeth [Chapman's daughter] has become so much a member of the family, that she was affected as well as others, and gave Sidney some parting tears. James Marsh came home crying as if he has been much distressed." (August 16, 1831)

Unfortunately, this valuable correspondence ends abruptly on the last day of the year 1839. As both men lived for another twenty years, there seems to be no reason for believing that the letters ceased to be written. More likely one or two more volumes of letters did at one time exist, and possibly still do.