

In 1857 Henry Harbaugh (1817-1867) completed the first of what would eventually be six regularly published volumes of biographical sketches entitled *Fathers of the German Reformed Church*. Recognizing the need to preserve the lives and ministries of the early clergy of the Reformed Church in the United States, Harbaugh suggested to several others who he felt more qualified than himself to undertake the project. Finding no takers, he began the work himself in 1853, publishing the first two volumes in 1857 and 1858 and completing in manuscript many sketches for a third volume. Upon Harbaugh's death in 1867, work on *The Fathers* was continued by Rev. Daniel Y. Heisler (1820-1888) who edited and completed the sketches for volume three (1872) and wrote and compiled those for volumes four (1872) and five (1881). Having completed most of the sketches for volume six, the work was edited by Rev. William M. Deatrick and published in 1888. Deatrick was the president of the Society for the Relief of Ministers and Their Widows, the pension board of the Reformed Church in the United States. He was asked to complete the volume by Heisler's widow since the proceeds from the sale of volumes 4 and 5 were donated to the Society and it was Mrs. Heisler's desire that the same arrangement be made for volume 6. Under the guidance of these three editors, who wrote many of the biographical sketches and solicited sketches from others, 520 biographies covering the period from the Reformation through 1888 were published. These six volumes record not only the lives of the clergy, but in some since also record the history of the Reformed Church in the United States.

Unfortunately, no further volumes were published due, most probably, to a lack of funds from a sponsoring denominational judicatory or from interested individuals. However, in the 1950's Rev. Guy Bready (1882-1973) took it upon himself to continue the work and between 1955 and 1956 compiled an additional 1176 biographical sketches of clergy and licentiates who died between 1889 and 1941. Upon completion, Bready presented the typewritten work in six bound volumes to the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society. This work was completed at the same time Rev. Bready also completed a detailed name and subject index to the Evangelical and Reformed Church *Messenger* and its predecessors from 1827 through 1953 in twelve typewritten volumes.

While the first six regularly published volumes of *Fathers of the German Reformed Church* have been digitized and are thus widely available to the public, volumes 7-12 and the comprehensive index to all twelve volumes were never published and only one typewritten copy was prepared. To provide greater access to this valuable work, the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society is pleased to present this digitized edition.

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