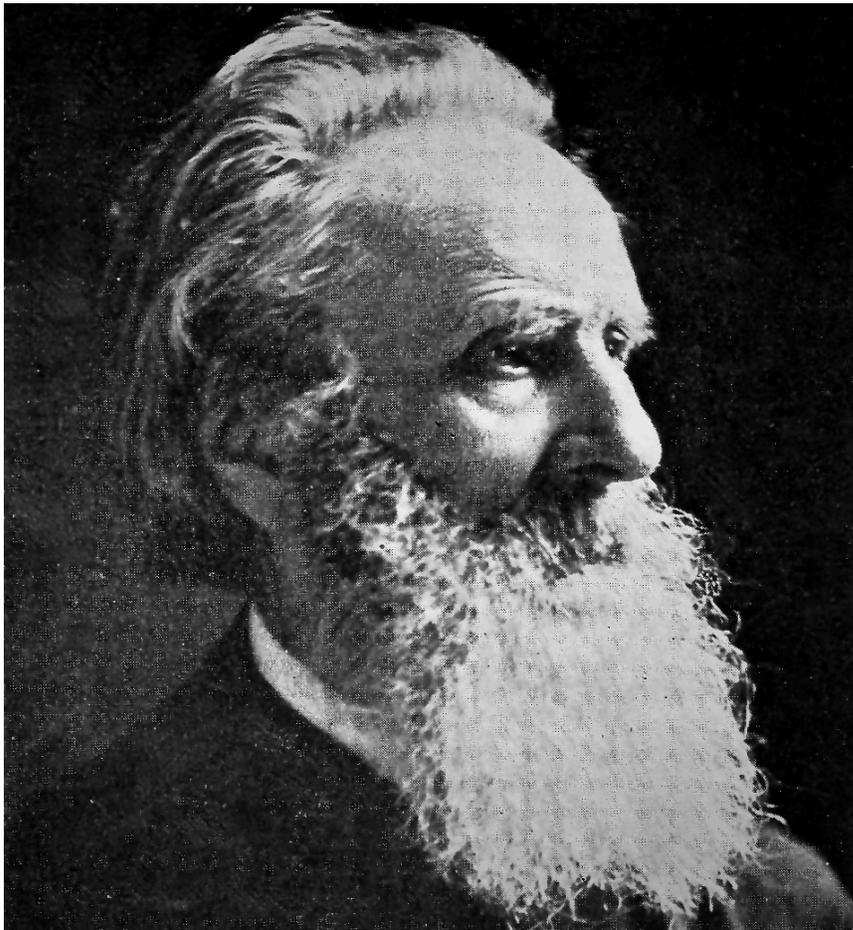


**JOHANNES ADAM SIMON OERTEL PAPERS**

**1868 - 1883**



Collection Number: 04592

**JOHANNES ADAM SIMON OERTEL PAPERS**

**Diary 1868 – 1883**

**Southern Historical Collection at The Wilson  
Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill**

## Introduction

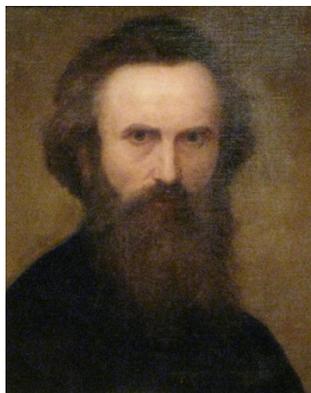
When the Archives Committee at St. James Episcopal Church in Lenoir NC acquired the Oertel diary, we thought it would be interesting to read more about the priest and artist whose paintings, stained glass, carvings and reredos define the ambience of our church and parish house.

We made a hard copy of the diary and soon discovered the difficulty of reading the handwritten document. A lack of punctuation, coupled with the loss of clarity through the copying process, made it clear that transcribing the diary was necessary. Little did we know the process would take more than a year to complete! The use of a magnifying glass, dictionary, internet searches, and locating someone who could translate old-style German were all part of the equation. The end result is a document which affords the reader a glimpse into the life of the rector, artist and man, fraught with hardships, frustration and periods of melancholy, yet full of faith and trust in God.

### NOTE:

Oertel's diary is transcribed from numbered archival pages. The content is conveyed here, in a continuous flow with red page numbers; however, archival page numbers are included for reference, (when indicated) before most headings.

EXAMPLE: (Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 20)



**L to R:** Self Portrait of Johannes Adam Simon Oertel, Circa 1848;

Portrait of Mrs. Julia Adelaide Torry Oertel from a drawing by J.A.Oertel, 1854.



"Rock of Ages," an oil painting by J.A.S. Oertel in 1876; was copied many times by other artists. The original painting was acquired by William Hayes Fogg, New York; his bequest to his wife, Mrs. William Hayes Fogg, 1884; her bequest to Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Art Museum, 1895.

**JOHANNES ADAM SIMON OERTEL PAPERS**

**Diary 1868 – 1883**

Mr. James promises us an increase for next year, of some \$3,000.00, independent of my sale of paintings. Besides this, he urges my immediate painting of "Charity" and is ready to supply me the means for doing it if I can find a suitable, large room for this purpose. Of this subject he hopes great success.

Of the Vestry and congregation of Lenoir NC, I have received a formal invitation, including a letter of Bp. Atkinson and I have accepted.

My gracious Lord God, who has thus far, guided and preserved me and has led me through many great dangers and trials, be still my support and counsel in every need, for Jesus' sake, Amen!

### **February 25, 1869 - Tarrytown**

Perhaps just now, I should make an effort to record more clearly, the events of my life as they transpire, since this seems to be a period of transition, in which every successive occurrence is of significance and value. But I am sadly up for time. My days ought to be twice their length and I ought not to need sleep. But five weeks and I need to be gone from here. The house is given up and rented to other parties. The Bishop of North Carolina is informed of my coming and requested to have me transferred into his Diocese. Mr. Norwood left yesterday for home to prepare all against our coming. We have taken steps to collect money from our friends for my impoverished Parish and succeeded wonderfully. Supplies, communion service, pipe-organ, are provided and we shall no doubt have lamps for the church, books for altar & Sunday Schools & probably every needful thing to open Divine Service in a becoming manner.

This is very cheering and to be thankful for. It will comfort my poor people who have suffered so long and been used only to neglect. Perhaps it will be the means, under God's grace, of starting better times in which the church will be strengthened and enlarged. I will

work hard and set all to work who can be made to work. I doubt not but the people will be ready and glad to help in the good cause.

The Vestry of Christ Church here, have given me the old little organ which was bought thirty years ago, second hand, for \$100 – and knowing that I could not collect the means to purchase another pipe-organ, I have accepted and set to work repairing it myself, with much labor: for the instrument was in bad condition and one entire metal stop (Dulciana) I have to replenish new at a cost of \$50.00. There are only three stops in it but I hope to make a serviceable and respectably looking affair, which will be a great addition to the services in our so long-neglected church, which never has had any instrument at all. God seems to have raised friends to this church all around and I am much encouraged to think that thus, He in kindness, gives me a proof of His favor to my undertaking in going there. Indeed, what else could I do? When reading of the fearful spiritual destitution of other southern states, I thank God most fervently that He has permitted me to be one at least, who can go and help them by bringing again the light of the H. Gospel and the services and offices of our church.

By my publisher's earnest urging, I am now painting the subject of "Charity," by it completing the holy three virtues. The painting when done, will at once go to Paris & be transferred on stone. Tarrytown has then witnessed the painting of these three pictures and I have tarried just long enough in this town to do them, the first being the "Faith" or "Rock of Ages," painful & endearing, & "Charity," on leaving. May God now enable me to give, by my life, a practical illustration of the latter.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 5)

### **Good Friday, March 26, 1869**

It is just one year, since I entered upon my ministerial functions in Tarrytown. I preached my first sermon written in Mr. Spencer's

study. I have been from Easter to Easter. Sickness only, and absence once or twice, kept me out of the chancel. I have borne this people on my heart in prayer, as part of my burden. This spiritual lethargy has given me much pain and sorrow and I shall continue to pray that the almighty power of the H. Spirit may arouse them to new life and energy. I have labored: the spirits, if such there are, God only knows. Many now seem sorry I am going and I believe their regret, sincere. But most of all I grieve for Mr. Spencer. He will be lonely indeed. The good, kind-hearted man has shown me real affection and I also shall miss his supporting presence, when henceforth I shall have to stand in the chancel alone, all this responsibility resting upon me unshared by another and more experienced and wise man. I shall need a new measure of strength and light to keep me from despairing: for I have but slender confidence in my own ability, knowledge and tact. I am feeble and untried, to go forth in charge of the souls of men and the interests of a parish. Well, that it is a very small one.

My path has been made smooth for going. Quite wonderfully have the means come: and also, the contributions for my needy parish, so that I can bring a very encouraging number of things besides the organ. The remainder of my land at Irvington has sold; and also, the painting of the "Circling Year," in Boston, though for a small sum. Part of my goods have left for Lenoir and next week, I hope myself to bid good bye to Tarrytown.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 7)

### **May 31, 1869 – Lenoir NC**

One whole month I have been here already. Most certainly, I have entered upon a new phase of life. Nearly all is very different from what in former years, I have met.

We arrived after a tedious journey of two days and one night, well-preserved in Lenoir on 24 April last, it being Saturday evening. At

the house of Mr. J. Norwood, we met a very hearty welcome. As with the accustomed slowness of the south, only a part of our goods had been hauled over the about eighteen miles of poor road from the station. It was a full two weeks before we could leave Mr. Norwood's hospitable house and move into the Rectory; - and it wanted some weeks more before the last load of goods arrived and we could feel at home and in order. So far as able, we are now settled. The house is rather too small for so many and I, in the absence of a studio, must occupy a room which ought to be my mother's. But these difficulties will be rectified in time.

The plans for my building are in the carpenter's hands - but this is no country for lumber yards and searching of houses by the wand of Aladdin. Men have first to be sent into the woods, trees selected, cut, and dragged to the sawmill. They are made into boards, planks, sills and joists according to want; a portion is kiln-dried and then the carpenter may begin his task.

All things are made by hand: every nail, hinge, pane of glass and screws must be sent from the north, - steam engine, since the war; there is none in this place; - and the men have not the energy of steam engines. They think slowly and act with deliberation. They seem never in a hurry; nor is it possible to drive them into it. The strongest lever just now, is ready cash, of which there is a "plentiful scarcity," - and even this fails of urging them beyond a certain gait. The whole community most powerfully affects the force of old habits. The curse of slavery and accustomed indolence is still upon the people. They know not, the value of time. They are dreary, like this atmosphere, speculative rather than active; expecting of others instead of relying upon themselves.

There is some timber on the ground, - a comforting map for the imagination which has ample leisure to frame it into a future building. But week after week passes and I only hear that men are at work somewhere in the forests cutting those trees. - By this mode of

procedure, a man's ruin may soon be converted into a practical mood of passive expectation, if his temper is not riled and soured before this sweet wine-making process can be finished. In my case, having Parish work to organize and a general renovation to make in the miserably neglected rectory grounds, besides having much labor still on that little organ for the church, my time is for the present, well filled, so that if I had a studio it would not be practical to use it much except for greater comfort. These are palliating circumstances, reconciling me somewhat to this tedious delay.

Now, these remarks illustrate in part, the condition of things about here. Destitution, depression of spirits, want of enterprise and foresight, a listless indifference with many, neglect of houses, homes, roads and everything else, - are prevalent. Yet, the people are waking from their stupor. It is not as bad as it has been. Despair is giving place to hope and a knowledge that something must be done. All I converse with are unanimous in the acknowledgment that the country needs what they call "Yankee enterprise" - besides capital. This latter is especially wanting. There is absolutely no money here. It is very difficult to get change for a \$5.00 bill, except at some stores. Those who would engage in enterprise cannot, for want of means. Nor can they raise any, for their credit is gone. They are impoverished. The war has swept them clean. They want to encourage emigration, - but it is not done systematically and therefore, must be a question of long time. The county is one of splendid resources, if they could be developed. The climate is delightful, location healthful, the winters mild and short and the heat of summer not excessive, living cheap and wood plenty. There is wealth in the magnificent forests. The soil will produce almost any fruit or tree or field. But the farms are too large and the science of agriculture in a crude condition. There is no machinery and competition with the stirring west, where any kind of improved implement is freely used, out of the question.

As to my Parish and Church, I found it as expected. Neglect and decay marked it, as everything else. The numbers are few and

scattered; and though longing for spiritual care, they have grown out of the habit of regularity and systematic work, if ever they had any such habit. All must be organized anew. The field is left to my choice and I am so far, its master. The Bishop has not given me any directions for work, nor even assigned me to any neighboring clergymen. There was, under these circumstances, nothing left but to go at once, unbidden, into the work and assume the responsibility of arranging on conceded authority.

The day after my arrival being Sunday, I arranged at once for an afternoon service and had a very full church. Curiosity, of course, filled it. But ever since then, I have no cause for complaint. Only yesterday morning, there were no seats left anymore. Moreover, by my system of naming pages in the prayerbooks distributed in the seats, the participation in the services even by strangers, is quite general. There is manifested a certain attraction: for surely, if the people had decided objections, they would not come. Nor would so many repeat their coming. Neither in the Presbyterian, nor in the Methodist meetinghouse, have they uninterrupted services and this brings many of these people to our church. Then, while they are there, I take good care that they should become acquainted with our Liturgy and this, of itself, will remove many a prejudice proceeding from ignorance. Although but six families of church-people reside in this place, the others, being at a distance from two to eight miles, there is always a fair and mostly full attendance. I can have but one service (in the morning): - but have organized a Sunday School at 4 P.M., and it develops, encouragingly. Though most of the children have to be taught elementary, I hope to have them in better training in one year, than the school at Tarrytown was, after many years; for my teachers are more disposed to labor and be controlled by my wishes. Nor do I rely exclusively on their teaching but teach and train the children myself, both in the Liturgy, general Christian knowledge and singing. The latter I make a decided feature.

Besides all this, I ride every other Sunday during summer, to the Valley of the Yadkin, for afternoon service in the old log church built many years ago for a sort of Junior Meeting House. The valley is thinly populated and contains in the upper portion, but three church families, of these being two of the most influential and wealthy of the whole Parish. These people form with Lenoir but one Parish.

The church building at Lenoir is, though provided with a steeple, a bell (which is a good one) and provides windows pretending to be Gothic, an uninviting and inconvenient structure, with chancel arrangements and furniture at once inappropriate and very dowdy. It stands upon a slope, right below the Methodist Female College, barren of trees and shade, fenceless and wasted into gullies by rains, without grass or value of any kind sufficient to relieve the hot aspect. There is a Vestry room tucked on behind, that contains two old, very common chairs, a bench and an old, rusty stove and pipe, formerly used for heating the church. On occasion, when more than the usual congregation assembles, the building is too small. Besides, it's shape does not warrant alteration nor enlargement.

I determined at once, on seeing it, not to meddle with this structure but to build a new one, with the help of God. – The rectory stands upon the back-end of a sharp ridge, containing about eleven or twelve acres of ground, running up from south-east to north-west, towards the village which it commands. Two roads pass at right angles. They are to Hickory Station, separating the ridge from the still higher, college grounds; the other, leading in front, square across. On the north-east it is bound by a wide hollow belonging to Mr. J. Norwood's estate.

The whole ridge is beautifully wooded and for unity and completeness, as a piece of church property, cannot be excelled. On this ridge, fronting the village and united with the rectory grounds of some five acres, the church ought to stand. And it ought to be a very handsome stone church. – The land is left in the hands of Mr. Walter

Lenoir from the estate of his deceased brother and he will sell it to me for the Parish and church for the sum of \$500. Of this amount, I'm making \$100. – He will sell it to no other party; thus, I have virtually secured the site. I have designed, in the rough, both a church and gate-way. Though I propose to go on from my own means as the Lord will prosper me, yet the people will be very glad to help in such way and to such an expense as their abilities permit. All greet the place with joy, as a harbinger of better times to come. The church, even now, is needed. A churchly, appropriate, well-cared-for church building is needed anywhere to educate a Parish to the beauty and solemnity and holiness of their religion. And I am looking ahead. I wish to build and to work for the future. The church must grow and it wants room. While there is opportunity, let us provide it.

The people in the valley also design to build on a very fine spot near Gen. Patterson's handsome residence and have requested architectural plans from me. Their church is to be of brick, which are already provided.

It appears then, that there is work enough for me. Indeed, there is perhaps too much – more than I can do justice to at the same time, considering that art will soon claim me again and must have the greater share of my time. I fear that either this, or the church work has to suffer, or at least be postponed. But God, on whom I rely, will help me through all.

Before I left the north, I finished the painting of "Charity" for my publisher, who has gone again to Paris, the picture soon following him thither. I have not yet heard from him.

For Rev. R. Howland DD, N.Y., I have also to paint five altar pieces to go inside a church on 5<sup>th</sup> Av. N.Y. which he built as a memorial church of his wife. It is called "The Church of the Heavenly Rest," and is a beautiful and costly edifice.

**Sunday, August 8, 1869, 11 A.M.**

I have been here now three months; have tried my friends and my own strength and may mark down the first stage as accomplished. The time is yet too short to speak of results yet. So far as they are visible, they are encouraging. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of July last, the Bishop of this Diocese made his annual visit here and I could present to him a class of nine persons for confirmation. The Sunday before, on St. James' festival, the saint after whom our church and parish are named, I baptized three adults.

I have also established services for the colored people, each Sunday, 4p.m., in which instruction is given to old and young by teachers and which are not only well attended, but promise greater numbers as we go on. Today will be the sixth service held for the blacks. They seem very much interested and have applied themselves for permission to come. Surely, the blessings of the Lord have thus far been with our labors.

The Bishop urged me, strongly and repeatedly, to apply for the full orders of The Priesthood, setting aside all my objections and insisting that this is my duty and that I can, in that office, be still more useful, without giving up my art. I have applied to the Rev. J.S. Spencer for a testimonial and from him, shall joyfully receive it, as his advice to me has been to this same effect. I go forward with holy fear but also, trusting in the help of the Lord, whose instrument I am, knowing that of myself, I can do nothing, and careful, less I should mistake against His manifest will. May he give me grace to be faithful until death.

The Church lot, I have bought and handed the Deed for it over to the Vestry, who have taken action for fencing it as soon as possible. My studio is not yet done but during this week, I shall be enabled to move into the small room and thus, get rid of some inconveniences.

**Monday, January 3, 1870**

This book does not receive much attention. I have more to write and otherwise to do, than I can manage. What is not strictly necessary, has to move aside and take its chance.

I have entered upon a new year. Much has happened in my experience since I last wrote in this. Since the Bishop's visit I had obtained and sent to the proper place, my testimonials in application for priest orders. Meanwhile, I go on with Parish work. Of course, I have now a canonical right to an independent charge. – God is not unmindful of my labors and His blessing is apparent, not in increase of numbers to membership or congregation on Sundays: this place is too small for much of either & sectarianism is too deeply rooted - and even with church people, the word of Christ, too little understood or valued. They need teaching – plain teaching and bold; nor, can the Sunday School be larger. There are no children to form more numbers. But the evidence of blessing is consistent in the devotion of a goodly number to church work. And this work can be had without extra urging. It comes forth, even voluntarily.

The P.M. Sunday School for colored people still continues and is doing well. The predictions of evil prophets, that it would soon die out, has not yet come to pass. It will live a little while longer. We have over a hundred names on the list: with an average attendance of about seventy. The teaching is an arduous task: many of the scholars openly idle, their heavy minds difficult to reach; but, we persevere, leaving to God, the vessels which may, on the day of account, prove better than we thought. On Wednesday last, (evening), I had a Christmas festival for the people in the church. The Church was handsomely decorated; the square, unsightly building quite transformed into something like architecture; the Christmas tree added its flaming beauty. The white children had their festival the evening before, on the Innocents Day. Mrs. Seligman, my good friend,

sent us 50 lbs. of broken candy and \$10 and by kind of a little study and contrivance, we managed not only to ornament the tree well but present all the scholars (the whites) with fine paper boxes and cornucopias filled with candy, etc. and the colored with cakes, candy and nuts in sealed paper bags. To most, a Christmas tree was a new sight. Indeed, there has never before been a festival in this Parish. It therefore, marked on Eve.

But there is still the best to record. Miss Louisa Norwood, some time ago, started the idea of a charity school on the hill, nearly three miles from here, in a neighborhood where a number of those forlorn squatters vegetate, who live in log cabins with a few acres of poor land about them, mostly mired in poverty and ignorance, indifferent to progress, slovenly in habits and shut out from every religious and other advantage.

This neighborhood was canvassed for children; an unoccupied school house obtained, fitted up by myself and instruction begun. Three other ladies and my wife volunteered and each one has a preset day to teach. They must walk the distance, taking a lunch with them. The road is very well in fine weather but, bad enough at this season. Such self-sacrifice is commendable and acceptable to the Lord. It is one of the most encouraging fruits of earnest, Christian temper to me. I am thankful for it. There are some 22 children; poor, ignorant and destitute things – but these also must have their Christmas Festival. On Thursday last, it was provided for them. The ladies rode out, taking my melody along; fitted up a gorgeous tree, spread two tables, one with eatables and another with presents; and as soon as I came, upon my horse, the children sang a carol. – I addressed them and prayed with them; then we sang for them the grand “Gloria in Excelsis Deo,” and another carol; distributed cakes and candies and presents. To the girls, each a warm cape and to the boys, a comb and pocket knife each – and dismissed a lot of as happy, surprised children as can be imagined. - Christmas in a log hut: - It was a new thing, in this neighborhood certainly. – The school is a Parochial School and treated

and considered as such. I have, therefore three schools now, besides my mission station in the Yadkin Valley. This latter I still regularly visit each alternate Sunday P.M. But a sad change has taken place there. One of my most valued members has gone home to her heavenly rest. Mrs. C.P. Patterson is no more of our numbers on earth. She was suddenly taken ill while at Salem with her older son and died there after lingering two weeks on Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>. Gen. Patterson brought on her remains and we buried them in the hope of a joyful resurrection, from her former home in the valley, laying them in the graveyard nearby on the hill where she hoped to see a little church built; and where now, her son, Rufus, intends to erect a chapel to her memory, of which I am to be the architect. Thus, the Lord has brought deep afflictions to us and especially to the aged General. He is sorely stricken down and his house very desolate.

At the same time, I received also, news of reverses in my business by my publisher. During his absence in Europe, the copyright of the "Rock of Ages" has been interfered with and the fall-trade very seriously damaged. He has since entered a suit against the offending parties for damages and prospects look again more hopeful. Both the drawings of "Hope" and "Charity" are out; but I came short of my calculations last year about \$1,000 and it leaves me just that much in debt on my standing and otherwise. This is an affliction. We had close times. My people have been exceedingly kind to me, offering from their scanty stores and presenting me richly, on Christmas. And with the grace of God, I hope to be lifted again to a position of greater ease and ability to bestow on others, rather to receive from my parishioners.

My daughter, who has been at the academy in Salem, NC for one term since last August, has returned home and I have to keep her, for want of means to pay her school bill.

Of course, I now occupy my fine studio. One picture, called "May in October," I have finished and sent to New York, for sale. I used for

it, the portrait of my dear little boy Eugene. - Having another noble subject ready, I shall now work for my publisher again, painting life-size.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 20)

**May 13, 1870**

Ah, my poor journal! – It will be a long time before all these pages are filled. I have now, more writing than I sometimes care to do and more other duties than I often know how to manage. Work accumulates on me. In this country, a man in my position must be a half dozen different men in point of occupation, if he will fill his position with effect. I am pastor, artist, organ builder, cabinet maker, architect, etc. and ought to be able to throw my weight and energy into matters of manufacture and general enterprise and industry. Although I go to bed late – sometimes very late – I am always occupied. I have no time, even for letter writing. A good deal has transpired to mark the time since I wrote last into these pages. Though this is a slow place and my life that of a simple village pastor, it is not without incident. First then, there is that “Mission School.” This is bonafide Parish work, a branch and outgrowth of this Parish. It has increased to larger dimensions: the names of day scholars now number upwards of forty. But then, in summer, many are kept at home by work. A single teacher cannot manage them. Through application by my wife, we have received from Christ Church, Tarrytown and Church of Holy Communion, New York, about \$185, in money, besides clothing, etc. and began the erection of a larger schoolhouse and chapel, combined of logs but picturesque and upon land given by Mr. Schafer to the Church. It is to have a bell and be in every aspect appropriate. – A Sunday school has also been commenced and is numerously visited, even by persons no mere children. The neighbors out there look with anticipation to the time when, in the new building, there can be held Divine Services.

We have also found, at last, the lot I bought for a new church and a cemetery. Improvements of the grounds will soon begin and we shall soon save and rejuvenate the present neglected and inconvenient church building.

My first annual report was very encouraging to my parishioners. They all perceive their endurances of life and even outsiders must admit that the church of Christ, in this place, is experiencing a decided influence.

The plans which I made for a memorial chapel for Mrs. P.C. Patterson in the Yadkin Valley, are still only on paper. The gentlemen who have the matter of building in hand are not pushing characters and Mr. Rufus Patterson has not come up yet from Salem where he resides, to attend to the building.

But we have also been stricken by severe misfortune. On Easter Eve, the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, the house of Mr. J. Norwood caught fire about 1P.M. and in a very short time, during a raging wind from the south, burned to the ground with many valuable things that could not be saved. Any much moveable property was fortunately, gotten out by a hard-working crowd, but the spacious house is no more. The chimneys alone, mark with a desolate air, the side of the blackened foundation. It was a very severe blow and we had a sad Easter Day, which all will long remember. – Nor has misfortune passed by my own door. My Publisher, Mr. James, had promised me, last year, an income of \$3,000 from the sale of my several works. Upon his return from Europe, he discovered that the “Rock of Ages” had been copied and the rights of the other pictures were questioned. He had to suspend operations and this lost us the fall-trade, always the most remunerative. Mr. James was determined to test the matter of law. It was entered as a Case of Equity and tried, after usual delays in the Supreme Court of New York City. The judge decided in our favor. An injunction on the proceedings of Wood, the photographer who had copied, was left standing by not taking out judgement until the next

term. But recently, I heard that the case is finally considered; the Supr. Court of the United States having endorsed the decision of the Civil Court of New York, so that an appeal would be useless. We have therefore undisputed ground, with no danger lurking in the future from a similar enemy but the damage is done. I have lost our last year's account, some \$1,500, which unexpected loss leaves me in debt to my carpenter and house painter and cripples me otherwise, seriously. Business has been very dull, though the premium of gold is lower than it was for four years. Several pictures I sent to market remain unsold and I have scarcely any income and a large, expensive family to support.

For art, I am making headway with all the other work awaiting discharge. I have now, nearly done, two of the four angels for the "Church of the Heavenly Rest," in New York. The center picture is also yet to be painted. But these all will look well, I think and perhaps surprise Dr. Howland, who scarcely expects such pictures. There is so much, cutting deeply into my time, that the expectation of such paintings necessarily stretches through a long period; but I hope to finish them this summer and also go to those illustrations of Mr. Bryant's poem again.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 24)

### **Wednesday, September 13, 1870**

At last, I have these altar paintings, standing finished, in my studio and since Monday morning, have held a general reception, exhibiting them for the benefit of the people to whom they are a novel and interesting sight. These paintings have given me much hard work - but only the smaller ones, for the central piece, though much the larger, is of far greater difficulties. I painted, in just two weeks, - indeed quicker than anything else in my whole experience and I am joyful to say, better. No other work, as regards treatment and ease of

handling, has ever left my room to compare with this in merit. Pray it will take a new era in my artistic career.

But why is this so, - and so suddenly? – It is almost a miracle to myself and I can regard it no other than a divine providence to help me in my appointed work.

While still laboring (for such it was) on the angels, afraid to touch the large picture, Mr. Thomas Norwood brought from Charlotte, a young Frenchman, Thomas Piguet, to aid him in the study of the French language during his vacation. Th. Piguet is teacher of French and painting in a Presbyterian College at Charlotte. He was anxious to visit my studio. I discovered he was an artist both by gift and education and, I invited him to use my studio during his stay in Lenoir, which he gladly accepted. And by this means in daily conversations he made known to me the method by which (Thomas) Couture, the great French painter, achieves his wonderful effects with an ease truly surprising. It was like a revelation to me. I saw at a glance, it's value to me. For fifteen years, my industry has been searching for something like this: and now, at last, I found it. To put it into practice with other angels was impossible. But the large picture remained to be painted and for this I resolved the trial. Daring it, I succeeded to my great delight. From the day I first laid paint on the canvas to the day of completion were just two weeks. In this I covered a surface 6 feet wide by 13 ft high, better and easier than I ever covered on no more than one ft square and when I had reached the bottom, the picture was substantially finished. No important conclusion remained to be made. I am truly thankful for the surprising result; - thankful to God, that He sent this messenger to my house with such good news to me. I shall now be enabled to expand my work without that manual labor which takes all freshness from a conception and makes a surface, at once hard and untrue and yet the method has greater capacity than I have yet tried. It is, however, necessary to be perfectly sure beforehand and not to have to make alterations as by these all the benefits of process is lost. Great care

and knowledge are, therefore, required. One who must painfully elaborate, can make no use of this method. It probably also was not for me, at an earlier part of my life and study. Coming just now, it is to me, invaluable. I have many thoughts on hand. To give them rapid existence as paintings will prove a mine of wealth, if at the same time, they are good in point of artistic merit. Much of my time must be open for my parish work. But it appears that my calling is not one exclusively ministerial, if I mistake not. God has given me powers and a portion to aid His church in a double capacity. Art can move a great, strong lever; not only as an educator, an aid to devotion and piety; but as a means to procure money with which to do the Lord's work in this place and section of country.

The Church of Christ is to be set upon a solid foundation in this country; schools to be supported; church property to be improved; a new and dignified church edifice to be erected; an assisting clergyman to be maintained. And beside all this, the prospect has just recently loomed up that we may get into our possession, the property of Davenport College, now used by the Methodists as a female institution - but in reality, given and built mainly by our church people.

All these things require money as well as heart and purpose and devotion; and though God can give means from unexpected sources, yet my own duty and calling seems plain, distinct by my very position and abilities. I would rather remain Deacon only and never be ordained priest if only I could meanwhile place this Parish into an estate of perfect efficiency and completeness. The Bishop was here over a month ago and confirmed 15 persons; and my ordination was to take place about that time; but an irregularity in my application postponed it. I cannot now tell when it will be held, or where.

At present, I am full of art plans. I have taken a new path and can perceive daylight ahead. It must be decided whether I am to occupy the position as an artist to which I am entitled or fail; and it seems as if the providence of God has opened the way for me to

pursue. An inward invitation or principle of faith calls upon me to be encouraged and try with all my strength.

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### **December 11, 1870 – the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent**

How events have piled up since last I wrote into these pages. Events not mine and, which indeed, sink into utter nothingness in comparison, though they all are important to myself.

Most assuredly, this is an age for prophecies of old, to be fulfilled. No observant mind can fail to reflect seriously upon their momentous character. The mere record of them reveals their importance and magnitude in the history of our race, both the civil and religious. Indeed, the double aspect is so strongly imprinted upon the occurrences that even a worldly mind is forced to see this fact. The whole, civilized world watches with keen interest, the imagery of this so-called Ecumenical Council: their revelations of weakness; of tyranny; of internal dissention, where boasted unity was thought to exist, and strength that could resist the disintegrating influence of the age, even upon this ancient colossus of Papal power. The real dogma of infallibility is introduced.

The council is to vote on a parish, according to the "Papus Dictum." A minority of opposition opens up: able, learned, determined, & influential. It comes from the most unexpected quarters: from Austria, France, America, not to mention Germany; but at last force, intrigue and Jesuitical will, succeeds against all opposition. Though the Pope cannot stop the mouths of pious men, too deeply learned and clear-headed, for ultra-momentous arguments, he can compel a final vote of the detestable dogma. He signs the document amidst one of the most terrific thunderstorms that ever burst over Rome. He is triumphant. His blasphemous vanity is gratified but still, he trembles. No sooner is the deed done, than

France withdraws her garrison from Rome and declares war against Prussia on the most trifling, wicked pretext. Battles commence on German soil. But the Emperor finds a superior and is pursued into his own country. Henceforth, France is the battleground. All Germany feels challenged and springs to arms. About a million of the best trained soldiers of the world pour into the offending country. Strasburg and Metz are encircled and cannot be relieved. The main French army is conquered at Sedou and 100,000 men lay down their arms and go as prisoners to Germany, together with the ambitious, crushed Emperor, himself. At this news, a self-constituted party in Paris declare the Empire abolished and France a Republic. The Germans move upon the city and hold it closely besieged. Meanwhile, Strasburg and Metz fall, together with other fortunes. Paris is becoming short of provisions but is determined still, against the Pope. France has lost all her old soldiers and can only oppose raw levies to the veterans of King William. One third of the country is subjugated and every one outside of France believes her fate, sealed. She is humbled beyond any precedent in history and has suffered untold loss. The world is waiting, still anxiously, the results.

But what of the "Infallible" at Rome? Alas! He is a sorry figure, smitten by the avenging arm of God. The death-knell has shrunk to his temporal power. Where but a little while ago, he commanded and misruled like a most oppressive tyrant; he is now like a prisoner, shorn of his regal dignity, moping, querulous and imprudently cursing as in Papish custom. The desire of the Italians has been consummated; Rome was taken by the army of King Emmanuel and has become the capital of the government. "She is fallen, she is fallen, Babylon the great!"

We now land at the eve of another year. Before it closes, more gigantic events may have come to pass. The whole of Europe is in commotion. Great changes are before the door and revolutions of the gravest nature must be looked for. A few more months have already changed the aspect of all Europe. A few months more may amaze us

with new and changes as great. What if, in another year, the Muslim intruder should be driven from European soil and the Church of Christ once more rule Byzantium!

When these things come to pass, then lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh. These outward changes are not all. They only follow as results upon the changes in the domain of mind. Lights grow brighter and sharper; shadows deepen and become more threatening. This is a time of unrest. All is in fermenting commotion. But through it all, the disciple of the expected King of Glory can read in fiery characters, through lightening prophecies of His appearing. Let His church wake up and prepare for his Bridegroom!

Must I come down to my own little affairs? Little also, need be said about them. I work on, amid difficulties, procrastinations and trials of patience in this slow country. My recurring troubles still continue. Though I have paid some few debts, yet my income is cut down to the minimum. Paris being shut in, the supply of chromos is cut off and we entirely lose the fall-trade, the most profitable of the year. My pictures do not sell and I am kept very poor in money. I have painted some pictures; one for my Bishop; a present to him. My parish duties go on, as usual.

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### **Thursday, August 10, 1871**

A new peak has been reached in my life's journey. Strange indeed, are God's providences with me. How unlike what I have considered this! How different from what I could foresee! And there seems to be no retracing possible; nor, any deviation from that line upon which I have been pushed, as any road. If my career is not of God's own choosing and of painting, I am at a loss to account for it.

Yesterday, I returned from Morganton, where I read an examination for priest's order. Mr. N. Falls and J. Tillingham acted as my examiners. The Bishop will come here tomorrow but the final examination on Saturday and on Sunday night next, ordain me in my Parish church to the priesthood. The thought has in it, something crushing. God have mercy on His unworthy servant!

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### **May 7, 1872 – Rogation Tuesday**

Alas! My own concerns! They are constantly being pushed more into the background. Where is the regularity of former years in attending to that which is my private and family business? All gone! I have it all; it must be by "fits and starts." The Parish now and plans and work for the Parish, have taken the lead; and there is always so much on hand that no leisure remains for thinking of ought besides. So also, this book is woefully neglected. But the record may be told in few words. I was ordained to the priesthood on August 13<sup>th</sup> last year, in my Parish church, as it has been where I came. The carpenter had already raised the frame for new chancel and transept for organ. By the Bishop's request, I accompanied him on a trip to Watauga Co. Rev. Mr. Barbor of Wilkesboro and the Bishop's brother, a Presbyterian minister from Raleigh, were with us. I assisted in the services at the Chapel of St. John's in the Wilderness and at Boone, baptizing 7 persons. On the Sunday after my return, Div. Service was held in our church with the old rear wall torn out and in the new chancel, though that was still unfinished. A new start has been taken, in a double sense, but it is very slow moving here. The inside was ceiled and the carpenter work finished, last Christmas. I have also been unable to obtain a chancel window of stained glass, quite a novelty here. But not until recently, have I succeeded to get the chancel painted (in distinct colors) and the body of the church is still in an unfinished

condition. A porch is wanting; the face and the new part is not done; neither the fence.

It is so exceedingly difficult to move these people; especially the men, to action & earnestness, for their homes and in the cause of their Savior. They are a dawdling set almost to a man. Such trial to my patience and forbearance is occasioned and I need, sometimes, the consolations of faith when a little progress is made and the prospects remain dubious. Still, I work on, hoping that the future may disclose a different state of things for which I endeavor to lay foundations. My object is to prepare, for there is little which is definite; only my intuitions and hopes and the possibilities of this country and the Diocese. Some might think me a visionary. But a certain new impulse has moved me, once I am here. I feel not at liberty to disobey it but I must go on working and contriving.

I have just made my usual annual statement to the congregation. There is surely some advance just as vigorous in some things as desirable but perhaps as great as under the circumstances, can be reasonably expected. My people have done well in one particular, during my absence at convention last year and in view of my heavy loss in business.

A subscription paper went round which received the signatures of many of the more able, pledging a certain supply for the year in goods or produce and some few, in money. This pledge was independent of presents they have always been giving to me. The same subscriptions are renewed this year. The action, thus taken, removes from the Parish the stigma of indifference in the important matter of self-support. I am very glad, for their sake, and also for the example it furnishes in the Diocese. But still, my own covenant with God respecting the free-will offering of my ministry, cannot be violated. I therefore return, in another way to the Parish, what it gives to me and have already done so this past year. Their contribution has amounted to about \$350, which amount I have earned and spent on

the improvements of the church building. This method answers the two-fold purpose of satisfying the minds of the people that they contribute to the support of their pastor and become habituated to do so; and of forwarding whatever plans I have, by their assistance. I can still add my own quota.

The last year has been to me, financially most unfortunate. I have run largely into debt. Nothing would prosper but all things miscarried. It was a year of sore trial. But with the beginning of this, it has pleased my merciful Father in part, to relieve the pressure. It will take a long time, however, and much hard work and good financing to get out of all debt.

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### **Monday, June 24, 1872**

Our Diocesan Convention is passed and I am back home. Not much of importance has been done. This, I believe, is the rule of such conventions. However, pursuant to last year's resolutions, steps were taken to secure the permission of the several Dioceses of the church for the election of an assistant bishop. I am sorry the measure became necessary, having little faith in assistants and holding them only permissible and advisable in case of absolute circumstances when relief is not possible in a better and more apostolic or primitive way. Perhaps they may be a sort of Barnabas to Paul; but in our own experience, they have never given any decided impulse and life to a Diocese for the simple reason that from the nature of their position, they are incapable for this impulse. The best man must have a limited spree & influence under the system. Our only hope of vigorous life and growth is in division. This, we must seek to effect. The Diocese is not progressive. It moves languidly and even seems to lose ground. The active spirit of enterprise and aggression is not visible. Some of the oldest and best parishes are in a sickly state or even without

clergymen. They have been steadily declining for years past. We are losing men; but gain none of marked ability and pluck. Indifference of a tepid resignation to things as they are seeming to have settled upon the people and stifled what energy for improvement there existed. This feeling does not exist everywhere to the same extent but it seems to rue distribution throughout the Diocese with few exceptional cases.

Our Bishop himself, it must be inferred, is not a man of advanced ideas and lively enterprise. He is too prudent and slow. He would never take strong, rapid measures and it appears to me that he carries with him, no inspiring, energizing atmosphere, but rather a constitutional conversation of the respectable type which cannot be censured for dullness nor commended for enthusiasm.

Of course, such a man is an excellent administrator but not a bold pioneer. Now this latter kind is what we seem most to need: a man who is not afraid of shadows; of quick perception and action; of professed zeal and fire, who takes a particular interest in the detailed troubles of his clergy when they wish his advice and cooperation - especially who inquiries into their needs carefully and with friendly sympathy, enters into their difficulties. The Church in these days and in a state like ours, compared with sectarianism, wants strong, loud and bold leaders to push and defend her claims. We must not be satisfied to hold our own respectably. We must attack the enemy's flanks and seek to conquer. May the wisdom and goodness of God give us what we most need and uphold His Church for the extermination of schism and error and the blessing of many souls!

I just sent an oil painting to my brother Fritz, who will have it chrome lithographed and the copies sold for the benefit of his German Union in New York City. The subject is "Christ Healing the Sick." Today, I began again, on the remaining illustrations to Bryant's "Waiting by the Gate."

**Tuesday, December 31 1872**

The last day of this year has come. I have behind me, some more of experience. This is of varied nature. It belongs both to the artist and the clergyman. In both occasions, I have to gather my store. The last article was closed with the announcement that I intended finishing the illustrations of Mr. Bryant's poem. They are all done and have appeared for publishing as photographs. There are eight of them. Seven of these I had to make and one, twice. Being large (some 3 X 4 ft) drawn in charcoal and crayon and fixed from the rear and very carefully done for the size, they have cost me immense labor. Yet, I cheerfully understand it all, in hopes of bringing something before the public which they would gladly recognize as work of thought and merit and so increase by a good sale, my income. Thus, I hoped soon, to be free of debt and to have made an opening for other works to follow. The testimony of all persons who saw the cartoons, confirmed my anticipations. My publisher himself shared these. But how little is this strange American public to be counted on! Not merit or demerit; but chance, fixes a man's reputation here. He must "fit" the public taste. Nor could he know beforehand, whether he be able to do it. All calculations may fail. He plays a blind game and may be the winner or the loser. My publisher has spared no pains to advertise and no money. He has fitted up the cartoons at large expense so as to be attractive and gathered up the photographs in handsome style. - And now, a letter from him, received three days ago, informs me of the startling fact that not a single one of the copies has yet been sold!

Surely, this is extraordinary! I cannot account for it. Is it not enough to make a man disgusted and discouraged? Had I not the consolation as a refuge that all things are governed by the mercy of God and that His wisdom orders the affairs of His children. I would throw down my brush and paint, as useless utensils for the purpose of

gaining the public. For this is only one of many experiences of the same character. They have pursued me these twenty years. I cannot wring from this fickle and superficial public, a decent acknowledgment that the ideas for which I have honestly labored, are worth a shilling. They meet the approval of the thinking and feeling few; but they fail to reach the money bag. It makes one heart-sick. The repetition of this thing is too constant not to stifle enthusiasm and impulse. I thank God that besides art, He has given me the labors of the ministry in which the reward of toil is not invisible and compensate me for the faithfulness I strive to practice.

What course is open for reasonable success, I do not know. Illustrating is odious to me. I prefer to publish my own thoughts. But supposing the people have no use for them? - The ministry here gives me no adequate support. My family is large and expensive. My paintings also remain in market. There is no encouragement to paint others. Under such circumstances, I am completely puzzled; although I willingly leave all my cares in the hands of my heavenly Father; yet, must I determine on some line of action and have some plan. Should nothing succeed, - and I loathe to even peep at the possibility - I would be driven from this Parish and seek support in one better able to maintain a rector. But this also would militate against all my resolutions and desires, or else I must go wholly back to art - and how can that be done, consistent with my ministerial vows?

*"Now, oh blessed and faithful Lord God, who has guided so far, my strange life, impart unto me wisdom, humility, submission and unwavering faith, that I may do no single thing which is contrary to Thy will, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen!"*

In my Parish there has been progress. We have opened two schools: + the one a Parish-school, under two teachers, Miss Mapenburg of Virginia and my daughter, Lena, who instructs in music, etc. - the other is a mission-school, under the care of Miss Louisa +

Norwood. This school of the mission is the continuation of the work begun before and interrupted.

The Parish School was begun in March last – the school room being as yet the Vestry of the Church. The Mission Day School, two miles south of town is held in the new, nearly completed “Chapel of Peace,” in which there is also a Sunday school and Div. Service every other Sunday P.M. when I am not in the Yadkin Valley. To this, there are some forty children. I have already baptized nine children. The work has evidently the blessing of the Lord; it must, however, be carried on by not inconsiderable personal sacrifice. The salary of the teacher (\$200 annually) falls wholly upon me. So also, I am responsible for the salary of Miss Mapenburg (\$125) and must provide her board and lodging in the rectory. But a few paying pupils are attending, the larger number being unable to pay but children of the Parish for whom I feel it a duty to provide a church school and keep them away from sectarian influence.

During this year, the chancel of our church was painted; and I have at last, been able to move into its place, the altar painting in elaborate carved gothic frame which was now for a year and three quarters, under construction in my hands. By it, the church is considerably enriched. However, much remains to be done yet, in order to harmony and completeness.

My dear friend, the Rev. Charles W. Rankin, has paid me a visit and given me a delightful time, such as in my seclusion, I have not had yet. He was here immediately after the Bishop’s annual visitation and spent one week. Personal exchange such as this with him is a profit and a blessing.

**Saturday night, January 25, 1873**

Last night, lying on the bed, sick with fever, my wife read to me from a letter of my publisher, Mr. James, the finishing stroke, as it seems, of the story recorded before. According to this, not only are the "Bryant's" a complete and absolute failure, not a single copy having been sold yet and they, being refused acceptance in Boston, but the income from my other publications also, owing to the bold piracy of their copyright, is threatened to be reduced to nothing so that in such case, I would be deprived of all income, my paintings remaining all on hand. Of course, news of this description brings me to a sudden stand. All prospective work entailing expense of time and money must at once be stopped. The smallest expenses not really necessary, have to be returned. With not even a hope or a prospect before me, I cannot honorably insure one dollar of outlay or become responsible for any burden in the Parish or its enterprises.

Mr. James advises an auction sale of my work. To this end, I would have to paint some fifteen or twenty pictures, a lot of them being now in his hands. Can I do this without means? The sale is to be gotten up to aid me in going to Germany.

But my debts here have first to be paid: I have not the remotest idea that the collection will bring sufficient for both purposes. I should, however be grateful to accomplish even the paying of the debts. Yet, that seems no permanent improvement since mainly the law and depressed state of public taste and the worthlessness of copyright. I should have the same struggle ahead of me for the rest of my life. Without some income, how could I stay as Rector of this Parish? It pays me only a few hundred dollars; almost entirely in produce and about one fifth of my family expenses. True, much has, in the past year, gone for charity and to the Parish. But I can scarcely avoid in the future, to continue this state of things.

Altogether - here is a profound riddle. I am painting a picture for my dear brother Fritz and that done, I have a course of grave-digging before me. The place is a very tight and mysterious one and it would be very presumptuous to say that I know any advice or have a different plan. At present, there is but one general, musty, but strong thought agitating me, namely that now I must do everything and use superhuman expertise to pay off my debts. They have hung their blank pall over me now, long enough. I have cowed under it in the shackles of a slave. I know it is unchristian to live on, in debt. I have prayed hard and earnestly, even at the Holy Table of the Lord, where He vouch saves His special presence to be delivered. Perhaps this is the road, unlikely as it seems, to lead me to that end. I am willing to follow the Lord, trusting that it is His hand which guides me.

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### **Monday night, March 31, 1873**

Two months have passed since I last wrote into this book. My brother's picture is sent off and I began a small animal painting. It seemed for a while that I must again put on the old threadbare coat and wear it out still more. But animal painting in my hand is hopeless for the attainment of my object, as well as religious art. Americans prefer to get their pictures from Europe. Vast sums go annually for foreign art.

But yet, I have floated to where a plunge is inevitable. It must be made and is close ahead of me. Whither? That is the anxious question. And yet, I feel, not anxious. Though sober, knowing that the situation admits of no play. In my uncertainty, I believe God, Himself, by one of those seeming accidents which often direct the course of human life, has worked out a decision. I have read over again, A Voyage on the Amazon by Mr. Edwards, written twenty-five years ago and the knowledge gathered from it in the absence of

pictorial rendering of that great and wonderful region, shaped my resolution to go thither for material, fresh, new and exuberant, wherewith to tempt the public taste for novelty and the exciting. As days pass on and thoughts dwell upon the plan, it gains in favor and promise of success. It is only what other artists have repeatedly done.

The intrusion is neither new nor adventuresome but perfectly feasible, legitimate and called for in its nature but the demands of modern civilization accordingly, my wife concurring. I have taken steps today of preparing the way to obtain more and needed information and the money for expenses. My friend, Mr. Henry Seligman, is to get me in New York, the information and my publisher, the money. I have also disclosed the plan to brother Fritz, in order to situate my parents, if possible, either with him or George in my absence, which may have to be for a year. My place in the Parish has to be filled in some manner, probably by a young man, by the help of our Bishop. Eugene may go with me. Fritz is well situated in St. Clements Hall near Baltimore. My wife and Lena remain here, in charge of the school for girls, which is now at the Rectory, several boarders contributing to the support of my family. After convention, as early as possible, I ought to leave for Para at the mouth of the Amazon.

So far, we have mapped out the next movements. I now abide God's gracious approval and direction and I do so in peace, with faith and repose on Him. He has led me so long and so wondrously and is even now, supplying my wants with such a merciful care that I know myself safe in His arms and may be still, as if there were not to be a great commotion. A crisis has again arrived in my life. What I must do seems in reality, the very opposite of the course I have been made to follow these four years and yet, it may be the very means of helping in that work. God only knows! It is enough.

**Tuesday in Easter Week, April 15, 1873**

During a crisis, the physician watches anxiously and closely, every symptom of the disease. I also, may properly do so now, with my situation. Taking of notes has a plausible excuse. – My correspondence brings in opinions, judgments, advice and suggestions of friends, regarding my plan. He is a conceited man who thinks such are not of value. They often develop new ideas. They help us to clearer vision and to correct defective views. I am glad they come, as diversified as they do. A prudent man sleeps over a new idea. Tomorrow, it may appear to him in a different shape: for we cannot trust our first impressions, always. I freely grant that my plan is subject to like conditions and it has already sobered down and submitted to criticism. There is about this plan, a novel charm and such it might also wear to the public. As a striking novelty, it may succeed, financially. In that case, the success would be sudden. But also, it would, with the novelty, disappear. On the other hand, if it should prove a failure, all the expense of time, money and labor would be thrown away. That risk is to be run.

My thoughts were also for England. Very little reflection, however, convinced me of the impossibility of such a moment for the purpose of rapid returns. There now remains Italy, the world center, Rome. I know that my publisher, from whom I must desire the means of travel, would favor my going thither. It would cost no more, probably, and perhaps advance my objective in the quickest manner. Americans go there all the while. Quite a number of our artists reside in Rome. With the rich Americans, art-works produced abroad have a beauty he cannot see in those made at home. And there are other considerations of value. To become a landscape painter would take me off, entirely, my regular course. What I can do is not so much the question now, as what I best should do. I have no years to sacrifice for inferior pursuits. All my strength and time must go into the main

business of my life. Therefore, to go to Rome, has the advantage. Besides, what impulse and study I can there receive with my mature facilities, would be of decided importance for my future. Once more in my life, I feel the need of, and must take, a new start.

But once gone, it may not be so easy to come back. At any rate, to return would be unwise unless what is proposed were really accomplished. Still, my future field of labor is here, I verily believe and that I have no right whatsoever, to separate from it. The connection must, in some way, be kept up. My Vestry are already informed of the actual condition of my circumstances and my purpose and I have asked six months leave of absence. Of course, this can, if necessary, be extended. However, the Parish cannot, ought not, for any greater length of time, be without a pastor. But I cannot see ahead far enough to determine what must be done and circumstances may direct, under God's gracious guidance and free us all from care. "My soul, wait thou still, upon God: for my trust is in Him."

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### **Monday, May 12, 1873**

No decision yet. The future becomes more doubtful. I receive no light as to what is actually before me, either to do or to suffer. My brother is in the Church, the Rev. B.S. Brouseau of Charlotte is here, taking an intense interest in our scheme for a Diocesan school. I must believe and have ever strangely suspected that what he asserts is true, namely that the very existence of this school, at least for some years to come, is bound up with my name as rector here. How, then, can I go away at present? Can the labor of years, the child of many sacrifices and many prayers, be given up? If the Parish can live in my absence and the school and the mission cannot, must I not, in most solemn duty, remain? Still, there are these debts, looming with a threatening ugliness into my peace: How are they to be paid? Some

\$4,000 in all, and the interest daily increasing the amount! If the past is a prophet of the future, I can never pay unless something else is attempted. Any attempts may indeed, be a bare venture: - but how, if I do not ever make the venture? Have I a right to expect deliverance without?

I frankly confess that I am much perplexed. Certainly, "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that He cannot help," - but I know not anything, either what to do or leave undone. To go on, from day to day, with the performance of such duties as are laid right before me, is now, and perhaps it ought always, to be my only course.

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### **Wednesday, June 11, 1873, St. Barnabas Day**

I have returned from Convention. The business most conspicuous is told in few words: We elected an Assistant Bishop, Dr. Lyman of California; but he is not so much our choice as that of Bp. Atkinson. I feel certain the convention did not vote altogether as a free body. At least we, of the west, desire a man of more pronounced churchmanship. Our younger clergy recognize the needs of the age and that of our section and they desire an aggressive spirit of bold determination. We can no longer afford to linger complacently upon the level of prudent conservation. Next year, we hope to divide the Diocese. The new Bishop may then become ours; and we should like a vigorous, decided man.

I have made a stay of two days with Dr. Smedes at St. Mary's Hall, Raleigh and saw Mrs. Brodnay, my good friend. Then, I did ministry work for three days in Hillsboro, talking for a new church, much needed in that place. Then, ministered on Trinity Sunday at Greensboro for the people who have no pastor. From there, made for Lenoir. Here, I found Eugene just recovering from a very severe attack of dysentery. Otherwise, things in the old condition, except

that my good parents have already packed their few chattels for an early departure to Newark NJ, the place where my younger brother lives.

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**Wednesday, July 16, 1873**

No change yet, excepting that my letter from brother Fritz, my poor old parents are so excited they may leave for Newark NJ on Monday next, to be henceforth taken care of by their other children, Fritz and George. It seems they must go alone on the long journey, my brother refusing to so far, either come or lend his money so that my wife can accompany them. But for that, they are anxious to go, partly for the change which childishly they fancy more agreeable and partly because it offers the only opportunity to see once more, Fritz and George, before the near-end of their days. I am exceedingly sorry to let them depart. Yet, God's will, will be done. Evidently, this again is a period in my life. I am about to enter a new phase, whatever that may be. The Lord knows what is best for me and also how to relieve me out of my indebtedness, which I feel sure he will do.

There are now, in Lenoir, quite a number of summer guests from Raleigh, Charlotte and Wilmington NC. Mr. Kemp Battle and family among them.

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**Tuesday, July 24, 1873, (PM)**

I have but a few hours ago returned from Hickory Station, where on the cars to reach Newark NJ, I took leave of my parents. Yesterday at 2½ hours, they took a final farewell of my house and household and

I accompanied them to the nearest railroad station, there to arrange for their safe, overnight journey, which I happily accomplished.

Now, they are gone. Their rooms and their places are empty and nothing can fill them. Can anyone occupy a mother's or a father's place? Nine years they have been with me. They shared my house in three different localities, far apart. They had the best of my house, though sometimes that was not much. I have gone in debt for living both in Westerly and here, so they might not want and not know the straits of my condition to their occupancy and these debts have yet to be paid. In Lenoir, I was sorry to know, they were as prisoners. There are no Germans here. They could speak with nobody and mother especially was very much confined partly and mostly on account of her great infirmity. My house also, since it became a School, has been no quiet retreat. The noise of music, in particular, was uncontrollable and of course, it proved a sore trial to them. In the providence of God, they are once more changing their home and may it be to their happiness! But life, even what narrow strip is still remaining for them, will have its dark and its light. But the good and kind Lord's protecting hand be ever with and over them. Although purposely, I made the parting short and without sentimental ceremony, it was, I know, to my poor, little weak mother, a sore agony. It may be I have looked for the last time upon her dear, aged form.

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**Monday, August 4, 1873 (PM)**

A call has gone forth for the Rev. C.P. Bland, now of Wadesboro NC to become Assistant Rector in this Parish. An important, and I believe professionally prepared correspondence, had before been carried on between him and me, assuring me of his intentions and acceptance of the position, especially in regard to our school here. No

better man could probably have been found in the Diocese and I am very thankful indeed and much comforted in mind, at this turn of affairs. This Parish is now supplied with a good and conscientious pastor and the school with an excellent teacher and the way opened for me to leave without care for what is behind me. I have now taken the first steps to go to Italy or Munich, about the last of September next and whatever befalls in the mysterious providence of God, whether I am successful or not in my old vocation of an artist; whether I am destined to go back into the ministry five years past; or, must be a pioneer of Christian art; I can, with the present arrangement, leave things completely and without regret, knowing that the will of God is expanded in my life, rather than my own and feeling resigned that is the best, even when it was contrary to my own plans, hopes and expectations. It is very strange! I have laid out schemes in this Parish for church expansion and decoration, working very hard at the plans and not sparing myself. I have, and my faithful wife has, toiled for the school. She, more than I, in that matter. News of crisis has evidently come. I have gone deeper into debt and that all must be paid. I have risked my health by the endeavor to satisfy consistently two vocations that tax the strength of a man, separately. Now, I must turn away, if I wish to save body and honesty. It looks like a thorough breaking up. Indeed, I cannot tell and may not speak of the possibilities to my people. Let it be merely a visit to Europe! Such at present it is: for the future, I need not care, for God will, in mercy, shape it. "Give us this day our daily bread." I am content. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

For so long, I have been entirely secluded from the world of art. I truly hunger like one famished, for seeing again, great and worthy things. I need impulse. Once more, a time has arrived in my career for a great leap forward. I am conscious of power to take it; but it must be without weight and a Parish is a heavy weight. Perhaps the work God had for me here, is done. I am but a tool, ready to follow my Master's guiding. But I am, even now, yielding to pressure from

without as well as necessity from within. Since my poor parents have left my house, my writings are much more at liberty. There is recognizable and secret hurt shaping my affairs gradually, so as to determine my steps and every new step seems to display a less encumbered field ahead. "My times are in Thy hand. Make my face to shine upon Thy servant. Save me for Thy mercy's sake!"

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 54)

**Tuesday, August 19, 1873**

I can record the formal acceptance of Rev. C.P. Bland of the call from my Vestry and also the means secured for my travel through Mr. G.T. James. I have now fixed upon the first Saturday in October next, as the day of leaving New York per Cunard steamer for Liverpool, on my way to Munich, where I intend to make my first stay, unless circumstances should determine me to go at once, to Italy.

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**Wednesday, September 17, 1873 (PM)**

Since writing the above, the Rev. C.P. Bland has been here for one Sunday, during which I could initiate him into the work which he will begin the first week of December next. The Bishop also has made his visitation, being accompanied by his son-in-law, the Rev. M. Buel of Asheville NC. Seven persons were confirmed in the Parish church and two in the Mission Chapel; nine, in all and the Holy Communion administered at Patterson, Yadkin Valley, yesterday. He has now gone with Mr. Buel to Watauga County on a missionary tour.

This visit of the Bishop has been very satisfactory and will be productive, I hope, of good fruits in many ways.

Last Saturday, it was three weeks since a young lady from Rock Hill SC came with her father, Col. Cordwallader James, to study with me for a short period. Annie is a beautiful character and has, in a wonderfully short time, endeared herself to us in a wonderful manner so that already, she can never be forgotten.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 55)

**Wednesday, October 15, 1873 (PM)**

Darling Annie has returned home last Monday morning. As our own child, she has become to me, and how sadly I miss her cherrie company, her gentle, considerate and unassuming ways, her loving, guileless disposition and the quickness of her intellect and sympathetic appreciation. I have certainly never before seen a girl of but twenty years of so much tact and self-denying control and ease of manners. My studio seems lonely and desolate for me. In this room she spent much of her time. God bless her richly, always!

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**Monday, November 3, 1873 (PM)**

This day, I have become a half centenarian. It is my fiftieth birthday. So far, God has, in his great mercy, led me on in my life's journey. Half a century old! It is a shame though, many years by human reckoning and yet, I seem to myself, the obedient child in many things – a beginner and just waking up to the mystery of living to the serious, consequential business of ordained existence – more self-conscious than a child, if that is an advantage, which sometimes, I question with a great deal to regret and expect, with knocks and bruises and scars to show and to feel, with the knowledge of many storms met successfully weathered, with many false hopes conceded and true hopes disappointed or improperly realized with a life road

singularly cursed and not a little toilsome – but with strength increased, clarity undiminished, determination iron-backed and affections as young and keenly alive as a May evening. After all, the body only grows old. The soul of man is young and by its actions and longings, anticipates in this life already, it's undying, eternal condition. It's powers and familiarity are for perpetual expansion and use, preserving forever, the mysterious principles of life, which we know by this name but cannot understand, in its wonderful essence, except that we know and believe it to be an accommodation from the infinite and eternal – But here it is seed time. What have I sown these fifty years? What fruit will await my reaping? Are the trees and briars and thistles not more than the grain? Alas! I much fear the misplaced mercy. Who is there who would not wish to mend his life were he to live it again? Much evil and little good not unmixed with impurity, is also my complaint. Come, oh heavenly Father; with the mantle of Christ's merits, all my many failures and shortcomings! Increase unto me wisdom and strength for what remains of my earthly pilgrimage, with the improved latter part away in a slight measure, at least where for the error of the beginning! Also, whatever changes and trials there be for me, let the end be peace and hope of a purer day!

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### **Wednesday, November 5, 1873 (1AM)**

For more than six months, I have been big with plans. Necessity invented them and kept them mine. All this time was a struggle to come nearer to the realization of all of these plans, not only to go to Europe. Some little time ago, if my other affairs could have been ready, the money for going was at my command, for my publisher agreed to advance \$500. Now, a business crisis is pending and Mr. James declares himself unable to keep his promise. To make up the required means, I am thinking of portrait painting in some places besides Lenoir and I wrote already, one letter concerning this new plan

to Salem NC. It may be successful but I have not yet a certainty, only a hope. But in that event, my final departure from here cannot take place until after New Year's. I am now busy, yet expect to finish what work there is on hand here and straighten out everything – my Parish affairs, my possible papers and letters, etc., like one who goes as if he might also be called to leave this world. God may want me to live many years yet but may also take me suddenly and soon. Two strange halves of my poor life are lived on opposite sides of the Atlantic, in equal portions, are gone. As I look over them, they fill me with sadness. A feebly sustained struggle with self and evil and a prolonged contest with adversity, mark almost the whole of these fifty years. What is now ahead, I know not. Somehow, my apprehension darkens before the thick veil that hides the future. But I am content. For myself, I wish neither ease, nor even life. What is behind, I do earnestly repent of. What is before, I do not dread, only imploring God's mercy to deal with me in love and not in anger. Excepting for the Blood of my Saviour Christ, which is able to cleanse from all sin, I might cry out with heaven. "Ay, good and wonderous laborer!" Only one favor I desire is that I might be blessed in my efforts to pay my debts and leave my wife and children no burden and an honest name. Also, if possible, to produce yet some work or works which, by publication, would afford them a competent support in case of my death. Ambition I have none to gratify. I desire to do all my work well, as a Christian man, but the stimulus of ambition, I stand not in need of. It is evident that another of my dearly cherished plans must follow to the grave a sorrowful line of predecessors, namely that in regard to this, my Parish, a new stone church, nobly decorated and a successful school established. God's will be done! My death, after a long and severe trial, is spared also from this. My whole life seems destined to be only fragments and desultory efforts in various directions – a fitful struggle to incorporate a high purpose and resolute enterprises defeated in every direction. Not that therefore, I am weary, but yet, I wonder at this, myself and long for completeness and

harmony for an existence where ideal desires are not at war with the whole course of the world.

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**December 4, 1873, Mount Gallant, Rock Hill SC (House of Col. Cordwallader James)**

I have well started on this, to one, singular course: an important portrait painter. Certainly, I never dreamed of having this to do. Yet, here I am, the separation from family and home effected; myself among strangers ignorant of art and art-feeling, seeking to make enough by a pursuit always, peculiarly distasteful to me and which I avoided like a pitfall. Now it is to serve me as a step to higher purpose. Whether the design will be successful, it would be hazardous as yet to say. "There is many a slip between the cup and the lip." This plan also may miscarry, as others have done before. That God has His own plans with me, I much believe. Even this thing also is to contribute to the general education of my life and what else may grow out of it no mortal eye can foresee. (Perhaps a German expression here?) I am not my own guide nor counselor. Step by step, I must go and will be content to go, at last, following on the Lord's gracious hand, all will be well, though in human estimation it should seem evil and be even afflictions and earthly loss.

On the last Sunday after Trinity, closing thus with the Christian year, my ministrations at Lenoir, I preached what I regard as my farewell sermon. It may have no significance; yet, to me, the fact had something memorable. On the following morning, I took a sorrowful, sad farewell of my precious wife and children and on the same day, arrived at Rock Hill SC after 10 PM, where I was received courteously, by Mr. Allen Jones, brother to Annie, and lodged at the house of a churchman, Mr. London, close by the depot, Col. Jones, living three miles from town. Next morning, a buggy took me out to the house of

dear Annie and I was gladly received by herself. The actual business for which I came here, I could not begin at once because the little photograph of her deceased sister-in-law had been taken by Mr. Isbell James with him to Columbia SC but I am now fairly at the picture.

Last Sunday, the first of another Christian year, I held, by previously obtained permission of the clergyman of Yorksville, Rev. H. Johnson, Divine Service, both morning and evening, in the tasteful Gothic church built here, chiefly by the devotion and energy of a few - Mr. Jones being a principal mover. There are but four church families in this place. Yet they have erected this edifice, free of debt, furnished it becomingly and kept up by lay reading regular services every Sunday - Mr. Johnson, coming only twice in each month. Had there been such a spirit in Lenoir, how very different might even now be my own situation, in spite of my leaving and repeated misfortunes! How much can be done by earnest, united effort!

I am now here in this real planter's house in the second week. It is my first experience of southern life on an expansive cotton plantation. Mr. Jones keeps up an area five miles in length, twenty-five miles of outside fence. Cotton fields, not fully picked yet are on all sides. The gin and the packing pen, not far from the house. Open handed and free-hearted hospitality characterize the family and the life down here. Much is new and strange to me but yet, there are certain ties. Churchmanship and friendship, which give a home feeling and take away the sense of isolation which otherwise, most bitterly oppresses me. I move in the house with freedom and strive not to be a burden but leave an acknowledgment of their kindness in sundry sketches and night work of casting. Annie's nice little studio is quite a refining place where I can spend so much time as I have, unmolested and troubling none of the family. Herself is there with me part of every day, painting, and I instructing and helping. The portrait I came to paint is begun and otherwise I keep very busy - a necessary precaution with me at all times but especially now, during this period of trial, separation and uncertainty.

**Saturday, December 20, 1873, Rock Hill SC**

Still, I am here and shall have to stay over Christmas. Besides the portrait of Mr. J. Jones, another two are begun and well advanced. Mrs. Ivy and Mrs. London, the latter making a fine picture with her characteristic face, large brown eyes and well-defined nose. The portrait looks like that of a medieval lady. Both of these, I paint at Mrs. Ivy's house, a zealous churchwoman and as good a painting room as can generally be found in a dwelling house is at my disposal. A few times this week I have stayed overnight there but often walk out to Mt. Gallant in the evening, though it is about three miles, even by taking the railroad. But the weather has been most delightful, dry and clear and the walk is a pleasure and a benefit. Other portraits I shall defer until after my visit to Salem NC for it seems that I must come back again to this busy cotton town for work to do here, both artistic and ministerial.

Letters from home inform me that my good brother, Rev. C.P. Bland has fully entered upon his labors in my Parish and created a very favorable impression with the people, generally. The school also is closed for the session. After Christmas, the rectory will empty of its occupants not belonging to the family and my poor wife and daughter, overworked and driven both, can enjoy a spell of rest. It is much needed by them and I could almost wish that they would not have to enter soon upon another and perhaps more laborious session in the coming spring, without my presence and assistance, under the guidance of a stranger. Where I shall be then, who can tell? - whether still in the country, painting portraits or across the ocean in Germany? At the rate my work progresses, it will consume a long time to accomplish my purpose. Only a beginning is, as yet made and four weeks are already gone since I left home. The compensation I receive is too small to be remunerative, - a merely nominal price for a good portrait and yet, I have to accommodate times and people or go

without anything to do. However, so far, my living has cost me nothing, since I am among friends and otherwise in a position to make generous acknowledgement of kindness received.

Every Sunday, I have been engaged here, in ministerial work, the last two at mornings in the church and at evenings holding Div. Service in the house of Col. Cord. James, the family for the most part forming my congregation.

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### **January 1, 1874, Mt. Gallant, Rock Hill SC**

Almost with trembling, I write the above date. Perhaps one day is as good a landmark as another. Perhaps the mind feels foolishly disposed of sentimental reflections on these turning-days of years. But I am this day, truly melancholy. I am away from home. When I can go back, it must be only as a visitor, to depart again presently. I feel lonely and wandering, as one deprived of a foothold. For what is behind, I care not. The past cannot be made to return for mending and altering. What it has been, what good and what ills it brought, are alike without change; yet, not without consequence. I am concerned only for the future.

A new year has opened – and opened upon me, strangely. To say what, in this profound darkness of events which is always before, fills me with apprehension, would be exceedingly difficult. Our fears are often the creatures of fancy. Forebodings may arise from a heated brain and even from an unsound stomach. But my fears are not of late. They may be overcolored – but are scarcely without foundation, reasoning from the developments of the last three or four years. They relate chiefly to my family life. No amount of gotten-up fortitude and prayerful struggle can banish them. They haunt me like shadows and lie ahead and along my path. Have not all revolutions, their preliminaries and boding, signs? Gladly, would I shake off the torment

rising up in different shapes and persuade myself that all my troubles are groundless; but I cannot succeed.

Should faith be able to control these feelings and keep them at least within bounds? Aye, if it were not for that, they would keep me in a sad state of unrest. I know I must be quick and abide my Father's pleasure. Yet, these prophecies, or whatever they may be, have a mysterious power to flip their shades over the mind, ever and now, like moving clouds, obscuring the sunshine. The sun is there we know, behind, in the blue, shining with undiminished brightness but the thin vapor serves to shut him out of sight, very effectively.

But these are dark New Year's reflections. They are sorry sentinels of woe at this portal of time. Can I not let the veil alone without troubling for the secret it hides? Gracious God, give me strength to be patient, submissive and calm, whatever comes! Does it not proceed from Thine Hand, except it be evil drawn down upon my head by sin? Teach me to avoid this and lead me into the ways of peace and truth!

Many a step through mire have I taken with resoluteness, in order to push on towards the purpose of my life. I have kept a steady course for the port, though to the uninitiated, my sense has gone on an erratic cruise to all the points of the compass, storms and calms and currents and adverse winds, compelling compliance. It is still the same. I cannot do what I would, but under fight of incessant obstacles. To gain a given point, I must make apparently, for another. To go to Europe, I must go about this southern country, portrait painting to get an impetus for the practice of religious art. I must spend much time in what dissipates imagination, heart and mind. My family life has, for the past two years, been disturbed. But there was a sweet consolation in the cause for which that sacrifice was willingly made. To establish the school, we must give up our home comforts. Now, however, a real separation has been added – a separation for an indefinite time; a tearing away from home, roving among strangers for

an objective both slow and doubtful of accomplishment - the paying of my debts and beyond this, a change, total of past relations of a pastoral character. Even already, my daughter talks of taking somewhere, a situation as teacher, being not satisfied to stay at the school in Lenoir, in case that school cannot be made to pay. Fritz must go into business and only Eugene will be left with my poor wife, who has to grapple with wearing difficulties, single-handed and desolate. Should I ever be able, at last, to go to Europe, unless very successful; I cannot send for her, but must remain separated, perhaps for years. It is a doleful prospect; appalling the heart and pressing out anxious prayers. Whatever and whomever I hold most dear, I leave far behind, going on the chase of an uncertainty. Truly, I must leave all in God's gracious hands. I must not take care of the morrow but in faith, pray for my "daily bread."

No doubt, if I can have faith, my daily bread will be given me. - But what human heart can forbear anticipating reflections? Is that "daily bread" to the Christian, not often the bread of tears and sorrow? I apprehend such is before me. While I strive to perform known duties as they daily arise, if to be assured in the trust that a Father cares for me., - yet, clouds and darkness float before me and my weak nature troubles at their approach. God forgive me, if I am sinning in having fear. Just now, a combination of emotions and circumstances best known to Him only, find me often depressed and sorrowful and apprehensive. There is no human being to comfort me. I must bear the dark trial alone. But a little while ago, after a dismal day of rain, there stood, in the sky, and shone into my window for a very long time, the most glorious "bow of peace" I ever beheld. It seemed to shine with a glowing promise into my sighing soul and bade me love from the tearful storm to the evening, when the clouds will be rivers by the lights and immortal day and peace will illumine their departing front. I recollected that once I wrote a sermon on this very "bow in the cloud," the token of God's covenant and I took it down to Annie and when she brought it back, read it over again myself, not without

diving consolation. So, may I be content to weep on and sorrow under temptation and trial & patiently wait for the glory promised at the end. And so, may this year pass on with all it can pour over me, of floods of afflictions and others. If it be God's pleasure, send their deluge of pain and loss, if only at last, the light will reveal unto me, the beautiful covenant of peace and rest - even beyond this life's boundary, on the shores of another world. Through all and for all, the Lord's Holy Name be praised! Amen!

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**Saturday, January 10, 1874, Mt. Gallant, Rock Hill SC**

I am now ready to leave this hospitable house, and am to depart for Charlotte NC this evening at 6 o'clock with the up-train. For seven weeks, I have been here, lacking just two days and for seven weeks Annie, who has been with me in Lenoir, plus two days, the dear girl who is, to a day, just the age of my daughter and oldest child, i.e. 21 years, born on the 10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1852. Singular coincidence! I have, almost from the first, felt that in some way, she belonged to me. I have given her a number of things, sketches and drawings of my own and it never has seemed to me as if they were given away. I know also, she loves her old master, though it is without much show and devious practice. The Lord bless her always!

Beyond my control, so much of my time passed away down here. Perhaps, I have not done much but a beginning has been made and I can pay a visit at home for a few days and relieve my poor dear wife with some little money, for she writes to me of being in great straits on account of the board for some school children failing to have paid, besides other money due to us. On my way, I shall try to get some work in Charlotte. It appears as if, instead of saving my earnings for the expenses of a European trip, I shall have to spend a good part of them for family needs. And unless this painting of

portraits proves a better success than at present appears, that trip will have to recede into the charming blue of distance.

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**Tuesday, January 20, 1874, Lenoir NC**

I am in my studio again. But Oh! I do not feel at home; only here on a visit; a passing stranger and scarcely master in my own premises. A restrictive desire has taken hold of me. The field which was mine for activity, plan and enterprise, seems to lie behind me, even while I am on the very spot. Under such circumstances, a little melancholy is natural and it certainly follows me all around. Memories crowd upon me here, as of the dead. My work is done. Where such a condition once has lodged in a man's mind, he is not likely to attempt such work in the old place.

On the whole, things are as I left them two months ago; only, Rev. C.P. Bland is here and has begun active labors. It is a subject of great thankfulness that so excellent a man has, by God's providence, been obtained for this Parish. Does the Parish as a whole, deserve him? The house is empty of girls. The former teacher and her niece, Maggie Henry, have gone. The quiet is very soothing for the time; but, with apprehension, I look forward to when my over-taxed wife must assume new and greater burdens, and that, in my absence. It is not at all visible yet that the school, the next session, will pay. The old arrears are not met yet but we must wait, trust and be faithfully persevering.

Gen. S.F. Patterson, the most prominent member of this Parish for many years, is Sr. Warden and representative in Diocesan Convention and lately, also, the General has departed this life in the peace of God last night. Tomorrow, (D.V.) I go with Mr. Bland to minister at his funeral in the Yadkin Valley and lay him by the side of his worthy wife, who proceeded over four years ago. A new

generation, his sons, will now rule in the old and beautiful place,  
"Palmyra."

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 69)

**Sunday, February 15, 1874, Quadragesima Sunday, Salem NC,  
house of Mr. R.L. Patterson**

Over one week, I am here, in this quaint, old stationary Moravian town. My visit is, of course, on business and I have nearly finished portraits: one of Mrs. R.L. Patterson and that of her mother, Mrs. Fries. My studio is a little room; cozy and tolerably comfortable, with a narrow north light and situated in an office building of Mr. John Fries, close to the button factories that make a familiar noise all day long, as if laboring to bring back bygone times and recollections of New England life. For two Sundays, I have been an attendant at the Moravian Church services – this place enjoying the peculiar felicity in a country of endless sects and divisions of but one church and almost exclusively one form of religion. The services are altogether liturgical but how barren and tame, as compared with those of a well-appointed Parish in our dear Communion; or, even with those of the most ultra-evangelical in the land! To pray the litany in a sitting posture – how cold and unbecoming it seems! And then, no reading of lessons; no responsive psalter, no invigorating chants; no swelling of repeated glorias; no soul-stirring, sublime Te Deum; no offertory nor commandments, heart-searching and penitential; nor even a humble confession or comfortable absolution. Their congregational music is fine and simple. They all, like true German descendants, sing; but, otherwise, the responses are feeble and timid and have a formal sound, as the whole service, so far as it is said, impresses with a character of monotony and mechanical rule. I could deduce the character of the people from that of their services. Yet, the liturgy is good unexceptional in doctrine, based upon the ancient and scriptural model and comprehensive of petitions, even to copiousness. The

morning service is, in fact, only an enlarged litany; a few hymns, the Epistle and Gospel for the day, the sermon and the minor benediction, make up the whole. There is no kneeling at all, either on the part of the minister or congregation, the posture being, for the people, mostly sitting. The clergyman comes in, in faultless frockcoat and linen, takes his seat without private devotions and so goes out, as also does the congregation. The arrangement of church and chancel is that of a dissented house of worship. It all makes me long the more, for the beautiful forms of our blessed communion and while I would not censure the Moravian who is intensely satisfied with less and honor him for what he has preserved of primitive order of worship, I could not change place with him.

My daughter is also here on a visit. She can stay but a few days more because the school term begins at Lenoir next week. The home news regarding that school is not at all encouraging. No new pupils are expected. What the result will be, is difficult to foretell.

My pecuniary affairs close in tighter, like the folds of an anaconda. Mr. Geo. T. James reports dolefully, outstanding dues fail to come in. My own labors proceed slower, considering the remuneration, than to warrant much relief from that quarter. So, my poor wife has a most trying time at home, fretting after and scraping away all her nervous strength. At this rate, a radical change must be made at the end of the session, for it is positively ruinous to continue with such a load of expense for a large household. But, a little time more, a few months this summer, and the question has to be purposely decided in some way, if God, in His inscrutable providence, does not, even before that time, decide it for us.

**Sunday, March 1, 1874, (P.M.) Salem NC**

I have just returned from holding Div. Service in a hall of Butners Hotel. Last Sunday, I did the same in Winston Court House. The congregation was very good and very orderly and attentive, especially large on the previous Sunday, which was a beautiful day while this day, is wet and rainy. There are but few church people here and in Winston; but, as these are like sheep without a shepherd, it is of course, my duty to minister to them while in town and I gladly do so. On Sunday next, I am invited to preach in the Moravian Church for the Pastor, Rev. Renlu Oerter and on the Friday following, deliver, in the academy chapel, my lecture of "*The Revelation of the Beautiful*," for the Salem Literary Society, who, in advance, have complimented me by election as an Hon. Member.

My work progresses with tolerable speed; not quite as fast as I wish but still with good success. The portraits are done, or nearly so. Mrs. Patterson's, which gives much satisfaction - Mrs. Fries', her mother and that of the deceased father, Mr. Francis Fries. Two more are to be done, which I probably commence tomorrow.

This morning I received a few lines from Mrs. Jerry Dick, inviting me to Greensboro in order to paint her own and sister, Susan's portraits and those of several other persons. I am in a dilemma, how to act, as I am soon expected at Charlotte, though no portraits are positively engaged there, as yet.

At home, things are in a poor condition - at least the school is and money affairs, accordingly. No pupils have yet come. The school opened last Wednesday and but three boarders are at the rectory. The prospects are disheartening, after so much of hard work and so much of expectation, which seemed just and well-funded. The present condition is even worse than that of last session. If no improvement takes place, I can see no possibility of the school being kept up at all;

for we cannot go any farther in expenditure. We have reached the outermost stretch of prudence in that direction and in the judgment of most persons, gone beyond it. It will, if the family cannot be made self-sustaining by the school and my earnings must be swallowed up by that vortex at home, leaving nothing to pay debts and no capital for my journey to Europe - it will be our solemn duty to drop both school and Parish, to retreat into the smallest compass, all expenses and make a desperate struggle out of the burdens of indebtedness. Sad as the alternative seems to be, there appears no avenue by which to escape the dreaded movement. May God help and direct us!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 73)

**Thursday, March 19, 1874, (A.M.), Salem NC**

My work here has come to an end. All the portraits are finished and paid for. They are five in number, Mrs. and Mr. R.L. Patterson, Mrs. and Mr. Francis Fries and Mr. Henry Fries. But that of Mr. Fr. Fries, from some mistake about size of head, I had to paint twice. The rejected one I presented to Mrs. Patterson. Two smaller heads in oil, Mrs. Emma Fries, a beautiful blonde and Mrs. Emma Albright of Philadelphia, a lively, affectionate girl. I painted for myself, the first from a photograph; the latter, from life. Also, I drew in charcoal, two of the boys, Andrew and Samuel, of Mrs. Patterson, as a present for her.

No very lofty record of work, as regards ideality of subjects. I have just now, to rival the camera in reproducing faces. Tomorrow morning, I start for Charlotte, to do the same business there and elsewhere. Until, God willing, money enough is earned for my European trip and trial. So long I work, a treadmill. "But I can do anything through Christ who strengthens me." This is my only true consolation, outward comfort and ever-abundant kindness of good people, would compensate but indifferently, but for the belief that God

directs my ways and will see me out also of this trouble in his own time.

At home, there is only very modest success. The school demands hard work, patience and sacrifice. Mr. Bland gets on with clockwork precision. The Parish jogs along with the spirit of a tired hack. Nothing stirring but that the engineers have actually begun work at Lenoir on the "narrow-gage R/Road." (narrow gage railroad). An excellent thing for the town and country about!

Now, good-bye to Salem – and lo for the south!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 75)

**Wednesday, April 8, 1874, Charlotte NC, House of Mrs. Lukas**

I have made a change of base in my operations, over two weeks in this thriving city, quite laboriously settled - both as respects studio and house. The former, I obtained by the kindness of Rev. C.T. Bland's son, a dentist here who offered me his carpeted and furnished parlor for use, in the most accessible street and building, well known. The latter could not be more suited to my needs and feelings as a "stranger and sojourner," for the family is certainly delightful, easy of manners and habits, sociable, bright and intelligent. There are three daughters, the mother, her brother, Col. W.A. Williams and the grandmother, a very extraordinary old lady of 80, in many ways. Besides all this, they are Annie Belle's friends and that would recommend them to me, did they need the recommendation. It cost me time and money to fix up my studio for service but it is now quite comfortable – a far better room than I occupied in Salem. The first day, after being in order, I painted some flowers and had the good fortune to receive an order for \$100. The picture of a child from a photograph, exceedingly happy in position and feeling and just suited for a good painting. The father is Capt. Hayes from Morganton NC. I

have since advanced this work in a favorable manner and shall complete it with ease and success.

In a few days more, I shall have my painting of "The Final Harvest" in my room and see it again myself, the first time in many years. That will attract crowds of people. Whether any more orders for portraits, it is to be hoped for, but not certain.

Holy Easter is passed. I spent it at Rock Hill, giving the people the church's beautiful services both for good Friday; Easter Eve and Easter Day; nearing the evening, while on Saturday, we made great efforts to have the church draped becomingly, in which we did well succeed – for it looked, that is the chancel, very fine and delighted the people for the change wrought in the appearance. Dear Annie was, as always, most efficient and a leading energy in the arrangements and the music. On Monday evening, I returned to Charlotte. From home, there is no special news. The school is not more than just existing. We cannot speak of prosperity. Home, school and Parish affairs move in an even, insolvent rate. Mr. Bland is very regular and punctual and keeps things on a quiet level of propriety. He is the best man in that place now and probably forever vacated by me.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 76)

**Thursday, May 7, 1874 (P.M.), Charlotte NC**

This is the day of the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my departure from the house of my parents in Germany and I have, this year, accumulated a series of experiences which I certainly did not, in wisdom, anticipate and which would have appalled me by their character of incessant toil and struggle. Twenty-six long years! How much of that, which I hoped for, have I accomplished? How many things have I done, that I never dreamed of? Strange, indeed, has been my course and strangely varied! Nor can I in the least, know what is still before me. A treacherous path lies behind and one no less-so seems ahead.

Perhaps my heaviest crosses are yet to come. Certainly, I stand just now at the threshold of a great crisis that is inevitable. My resignation of the rectorship at Lenoir is resolved upon. It has become a stern necessity. To return without any debts being all honorably paid, is impossible. That may involve a long time. And to return there would be to begin the same old troubles over again. All my affairs are once more revolutionized: and (if it is not foolish to record dark premonitions), I feel almost certain of yet more radical changes and perhaps deeper afflictions. Indeed, my mind is constantly tortured by fears and prognosticating which haunts me so that I cannot escape them for a single day. I feel like a poor victim and pray for certainty, whatever that might be. Suspense is a dreadful thing and takes away all repose and energy. To keep up involves a constant effort of mind and body and to be cheerful among strangers and share in conversations which have often little or no interest for me in my present situation, requires self-denial.

My wife writes discouraging news about the school. Under the best supposable circumstances, we shall be for this service, \$200 behind expenses, in other words, we have got that much into debt! Of course, we cannot keep up any longer, so disastrous an enterprise. The Bishop and convention must take it up: or else it must stop. In the first case, my poor and almost worn-out wife proposes to stay as matron for her and Eugene's board. On the latter, after my resignation, my family will have to quit Lenoir and re-move, somewhere else. Where? – it is not easy to say - nor, even how to obtain the means for re-moval. The whole situation is painful to contemplate. Yet, I am thankful that convention is so near and a decision will be arrived at, at last. The sword, suspended so long over us, must finally fall and perhaps even the wound it inflicts will be something like a relief, after the anxiety and the struggle.

Charlotte has not at all fulfilled the promise of success made to me in portrait painting. I have so-far, had very poor luck: only two busts are commissioned, when I expected at least half a dozen. The

people come to see my pictures, to be accepted and pay me stale compliments, bother me with ignorant platitudes and inquire the price of portraits; but, no one orders any. They are close-fisted at Salem but here, they are still more of penurious worshipers. But I have painted a careful picture from the photograph of a little girl with clothes stripped down and leaning the head sleepily on the back of a chair, ordered a frame for it from New York and propose to take it with me to Wilmington for a chance sale. If I can dispose of it there, I shall be somewhat retrieved of my disappointment and loss in the portrait line. Perhaps I can get some few leads to paint at Wilmington, after convention.

On Sundays, I always do some missionary and ministerial duties. I have been thrice to Rock Hill, including Good Friday and Easter, where I directed the decorations of the church, which were quite handsome and two times, to High Shoals, spending delightful days in the interesting family of Admiral Charles Wilkes, who still resides there. To them all, the church and school work at High Shoals is due. They have built up a Parish in a remarkable manner and sustained it. At Rock Hill, I still assist on Mondays, my darling Annie, in her painting. I am also busy nearly every evening, on the elaborate credence table I have begun for Rock Hill Church.

The Rev. B. Brunson has resigned his Parish. Some dissatisfaction has grown up gradually, between him and his people and induced this step. They are now looking out for another minister.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 79)

**Monday, May 18, 1874 (A.M.), Charlotte NC**

Today, I expect (D.V.) to start out for our dear convention, which is to meet at Wilmington during the present week. I go with a somewhat heavy heart and still resigned, as to God's will. Whatever comes, my mind is prepared to accept as the best.

But in general, a strange, unsettled feeling possesses me; no doubt in part, arising from my new, so very unsettled and migratory condition; but also, of a boding character, as of one who travels in the night and is aware at once, of some precipice or deep stream right before him, though he is unable to see. Blessed be the knowledge that is in the Lord who leadeth me. What matters is if I do not see my path!

*"Lead, kindly light!*

*I do not ask to see the distant scene*

*One step enough for me"*

There has been much sickness at home recently. Two of the school children were ill and my dear little Eugene had dysentery. Trouble and trials come thick and heavy upon my poor wife, all alone too. God help her! She writes that the Parish is in an inactive condition and cannot see where the first candidate for confirmation is to come from against the promised visit of Bp. Lyman. The mission work is visibly declining, though there are always regular services. Methodical Mr. Bland does not seem to have power to interest those people; nor, to stir up a Parish which subsisted for now, five years on galvanized life. I am exceedingly grieved to hear this news and fear that all is wretchedly losing ground again, what with so much of labor that has been advanced. My observers are the ways of Providence! Why must my own misfortune also effect the Lord's work?

I have received one more portrait order here and begun the deed, which is that of Mrs. Walter Phineas, a bright and handsome face. Perhaps, some others may still be found after my return from Wilmington.

A letter from the brother of my publisher shows evidence that the copyright of the "Rock of Ages" is practically without further value to us. Copies of every description are selling largely, all over the country and business is at a total standstill. Consequently, we may hope for nothing except what my brush can earn and portraiture

seems, for that purpose, the only available means and my present life, a continuous necessity. I have resolved, however, to make a desperate effort towards paying my debts and have relinquished the thought of going to Europe this year. Some of my creditors in Lenoir became pressing and I, myself, feel degraded under the burden and must rid my mind of it at any sacrifice, God helping me. I will, at last, try to become a free man.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 81)

**Wednesday, May 27, 1874, Wilmington NC**

I came here to the Diocesan Convention, which opened in St. John's Church, one week ago. It closed on Saturday, P.M., doing some business that may be of importance. I believe in general, conventions, at least in North Carolina, are chiefly valuable for bringing the clergy together and affording them a little respite from their service and mostly isolated toil during the year. It is no doubt a blessing to many to leave for a short time, even their Parishes and see other scenes and other people. I hope that their meeting may effect good for the Diocese, as well as for themselves.

Some of the resolutions brought forward were calculated to introduce a spirit of party, as they were aimed chiefly, though not nominally, against what is called "Ritualism and Romanism." They come from the Bishop's own family; his son, supported by Rev. M. Buel, his son-in-law. But they were, in every shape, opposed and triumphantly voted down. A committee was nominated to take into consideration, the division of the Diocese and the movement has come indirectly from myself. But even if they report favorably, one cannot divide until the next general convention, three years hence. Otherwise, there is nothing of special and direct importance. Bp. Atkinson delivered a charge to the clergy on Sacramental Confession. But the only one against whom it was supposed to be aimed, Rev. N.

Murdock, of Salisbury, recovered immediately, a printing of 2,000 copies and so declared himself not hit by the charge.

Of my own difficulties of school and Parish, I have spoken to the two bishops without receiving other consultation than that now, I know their confusion. They do not see how to help me; therefore, our course seems plain. We will have to drop that school and the Parish must soon follow. God's will be done! We have worked hard to keep up a ship which the rats have already forsaken and must trust ourselves to boats or spars or whatever will float us. The decision seems now, at hand.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 83)

**Friday, May 29, 1874, Wilmington**

Yesterday, after six years of inland dwelling, I once more stood on the ocean shore. What a glorious feeling of vastness and motion and freedom! The beach off this shore is a singular one, only reached after sailing across an intricate network of islands, shoals and channels of what they term "The Sound." Wrecks strew the coast – that of a large English blockade runner, ironside wheel steamer, Clyde-built, darkly and historically conspicuous. I enjoyed the sail, twice across and indeed, the whole day, with the drive over the sandy pine-savannah, so profusely compensated for the lack of other beauty by a splendid flora and I could not resist the tempting beauties but would get out of the buggy a number of times to gather them for my amiable companion, Mrs. Hattie Moore, who loved these quite as much as I did. We stopped at the summer house on the shore, of Dr. Anderson. Altogether, I have here, a better taste of southern hospitality and kindness and the southern type of character, particularly of women, than I ever got before, in North Carolina. I must say that I am much taken with the impression. There is a poetic ease and repose and a sense of enjoyment, together with a genial climate, politeness of

manners and freedom from conventional restraint without coarseness or obtrusiveness, which delight me.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 84)

**Saturday, June 13, 1874 (P.M.), Charlotte NC**

I have arrived in this town again, starting from Wilmington yesterday morning. Kind Mr. Van Bokkelen took me to the depot himself and I confess that I left mournfully, although I hope to go back in about three months in order to take Dr. Watson's place during his absence as delegate to the general convention, which meets in New York during October next.

Nowhere, have I ever received so much of considerate attention on the part both of clergy and people, nor seen such a time of allayed enjoyment. Bright in my memory, forever, be Wilmington of the old and true state of North Carolina! Bright be the three "Tabernacles," good fortune has there set up for me, in recollection and in prosperity of real friendship and sociability. The houses of the Van Bokkelens, the Andersons and the Brawlers – close neighbors and cozy, retiring spots for pleasant intercourse! I left in each, some memento; Lily's portrait in crayon at the first; my order by request to Eliza A. at the second; and a little painting of a favorite idea: "To the Light!" a thought of aspiration and intense devotion to "Nila" (Maria) Brawler, at the third. *Lovely*, is especially the thought of this girl and the atmosphere of her whole family and house are of calm delight, where Christian virtue, molded by affection and unaffected simplicity of refinement, convey a sense of repose that indicates to come again and enjoy.

I came here, hurrying past all places where I was expected to stay, only to find one of my sitters, Mrs. Walther Brown, gone to the mountains and myself \$75 – poorer because she is not to return under four months. This is fortune; the kind of fortune I usually have. Well,

I will not complain. Who knows but it is for the best? I must now close up my work here, rapidly, finish at Rock Hill and proceed to other parts.

News from home is not cheering. Depression of funds and some dangerously disagreeable matters about Mr. Bland, which, if they do not come to the worst, have already impaired his usefulness. Before long, the crisis respecting him and my own affairs, must approach. Below: Inscription on the Domaring Inn at Telfes, Stubay Valley, Tyrol

*"I live, - how long I know not.*

*I die, - but when I know not.*

*I journey, - whither I cannot see.*

*'Tis strange that I should merry be."*

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 85)

### **Sunday night, July 5, 1874, Charlotte NC**

This is to be my last evening here. Tomorrow P.M., I depart, enroute for home. For eleven weeks, I have been here and the neighborhood, but done very little of business to profit. Indeed, the real earnings have been discouragingly small and yet, I have been all the time, very busy. Yesterday, I returned from Rock Hill, finishing there and setting up, at last in the church, the credence table I have been so long making - for just a week, I was in this place - twice for an afternoon at Annie's house and studio. Now, I have bid them all farewell. Whether my way will ever again be directed there, I know not. Good bye. If it is best, so to be, for all time! An episode of life more; - of what import, who can say? I now return home for a brief stay because soon, I must depart again. There is not yet an abiding place for me; nor, may I divine when my wanderings shall cease.

My plans also, are changed. As far as possible, I intend to stop portrait painting. By suggestion of my publisher, I propose to sell what pictures I have on hand, by auction next winter and increase the collection by several new ones, which to produce, must be my business this summer and fall. I have shrunk from the probable sacrifice heretofore; but, now am ready to immolate anything for the sake of getting out of debt. May God bless the effort!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 86)

**Monday, July 13, 1874, Lenoir NC**

At home once more, in what is still a home. How long will it continue to be so? Not long for me, though my family will occupy it at least to the end of this year. My people are all well. Fritz has grown very much and looks like a young man. The boy is gone. Mr. Bland is at his post and punctual as a clock. There is as much regularity in the Parish and school. No conclusions need to be expected. Perhaps they are not desired nor desirable. Let that pass. The Parish must soon be his, if anybody's, for it is mere sham to continue the Rectorship any longer, when the prospects of a permanent return are all taken away. Before I leave Lenoir again, my resignation will have to be handed in to the Vestry. As to the school, it is a bog without a bottom to sink all I can earn. One session more of trial, to give time for all the parties to arrange as best they may and then I must drop the whole attempt. So much is settled. For the future, I do not trouble. God will take care of it and me.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 87)

**Monday, August 27, 1874, Lenoir NC**

The Rubicon is passed: Yesterday, I handed in due form, my resignation as Rector of this Parish to the Senior Warden, to be acted

upon in an expanded meeting of the Vestry, tomorrow, A.M. On Sunday last, I had a lengthy conversation with Mr. Bland, confiding to him the whole situation of my affairs and he also has, at the same time, given in his resignation as Assistant Minister of the Parish, in order to leave this Vestry free to act as they see fit. I propose to be here one more Sunday and leave again, the week following. My work in the Valley of the Yadkin, where I was, two Sundays ago, administering the Holy Communion, is already closed. May God ever rule all for the best!

The step will bring consternation to some, although many are prepared for it. But the condition of the Parish after we are gone, must be a very changed one. Mr. Bland will probably be called to the Rectorship. The school will have to be given up and that is sad to think of.

I have worked hard at the easel since I came home, painted and sent off an animal picture (sheep) of good size and ordered by Mr. Munn, N.Y. – extraordinary occurrence for me to receive a commission! I am now busy on three others to go to the proposed sale; one, a large canvas of mountain scenery with cattle going up to pasture. I shall have to keep at it furiously to be off at the contemplated time.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 88)

**Friday, August 28, 1874, 10 o'clock P.M., Lenoir NC**

The last hours of my Rectorship of St. James Parish are fast expiring. Tomorrow morning, Mr. Bland will be in the office in my stead and I shall be without position and equally without home. Thus, I start out from here, into the world. All my work is finished, even to the last. I have painted four pictures since I came home; two, of good dimensions. My goods are nearly packed and conveyance hired. I have taken leave of friends and parishioners and it was a sad and

heavy duty; to some, like a funeral. The Lord Jesus be with them all, protect, keep and guide them and lead this Parish to blessing, for His most Holy Name's sake! Amen.

Thus, I go because the Lord bids me to do so. I came not down here of my own mind; neither do I leave of my own choosing. Yet, the separation is a bitter trial and sore; one of the bereavements which hide in a mystery, the Holy Purpose of God. Mrs. Hartley, the Caisson family - poor things - the Lord be merciful unto them - and the Norwoods, especially Laura, - how they mourn after me! And how changed must things in this Parish be hereafter, when my family also are gone!

For five years and a half, I have labored here as one of the Lord's stewards. Forgive me, Oh Lord, all my many grievous sins, all my ignorance, negligence and shortcomings and only remember for Jesus Christ's sake, my poor service rendered with devotion, though in much weakness. I turn unto the blessing of a rich, eternal harvest, whatever I and my family have offered unto Thee, building up these people, old and young, in Thy most Holy Faith and in righteousness of life, fruitful in every good work, so that none of these precious souls be lost, but all at last, gathered into the joy of Thy everlasting Kingdom. Even so, Lord Jesus! Amen.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 90)

**Thursday, September 3, 1874 (A.M.), Wilmington NC, "Purcell House"**

A new period has begun. On Saturday, I left home. My dear family, a sorrowing group, stood in the porch of my studio, the only place which still is mine and represents a home for us. Moisture and dreariness were in the atmosphere, for a counterpart to the condition of my poor Parish. At Hickory, I spent Sunday, according to promise, administering the H. Communion and preaching twice, Rev. Th. Huskie

of Fayetteville, assisting in the morning. On Tuesday, I met the Vestry at the Church of the Good Shepherd at the house of the Rector, Rev. Ed. Rich, and also the builder. It was settled that the plans I furnished for their church building should be used and work begun, immediately. In the evening, all the clergy of Raleigh met me by invitation and we had a jolly, pleasant time 'til near midnight. Yesterday, I arrived here and today, expect to go down to the sound with Mr. Van Bokkelen and at once, commence work.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 90)

**Sunday, September 27, 1874 (A.M.), Masonboro Sound NC**

Over three weeks, I have now been here enjoying the bounteous hospitality of Mr. Van Bokkelen, whose family are in the same house with that of Dr. Anderson and consequently it is full of people. At times, not very still, especially since, in warm weather, the broad piazza, looking out upon the sound and the ocean, are the great parlor for old and young. But I am schooled to be contented and can work under almost any conditions. So also, I have made this visit conducive to attentive study for a special purpose, mainly that of furnishing additional pictures for the proposed sale in New York, of my accumulated works. The chief object of careful study with me has been the ocean. I have been four times at the banks and worked hard while there, - this branch, marine painting, being a new one to my practice. These few occasions of detailed study cannot be considered as satisfactory, excepting so far as they go, on a subject demanding long familiarity and close work on account of the difficulties intrinsic to its nature; but I have endeavored to compress, into a short space, such minute observation in order to enable me to produce some few good, well-considered paintings of the sea.

One night, as was my purpose, I spent on the ocean shore, alone. The banks are a low sand bar separating the sea from the

sound. On this bar stands, near the inlet, a fisherman hut which they use for their business. This hut was my quarters and I arrived there after sunset. There, I camped alone and stood on the soaring brink in the dark - lonely and feeling the pitiless mystery before me like the fateful future into whose unfathomable extent we peer - a deep infinitude, knocking at our hearts with boding surf that crawls onward, as if to swallow us up - and thunders of things strange and unknowable. What a profound symbolism there is, bound up in that awful, mighty, trackless deep, so full of restless power and pulsating life! May the wisdom of God's Holy Spirit enable me to speak worthily by art, of this wonderful exhibit of His Almighty Greatness!

A few days more and my visit here is ended. I go then, to Wilmington, by engagement with Dr. Watson and I pray for a blessing on my labors there.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 92)

### **Monday, October 5, 1874, Wilmington NC**

In my own room at Dr. Carr's house, Market St. is, indeed, a comfortable feeling for which I am thankful to be lodged where a sense of rightful possession gives one assurance that he is not there by favor and probably is not, least perhaps, an intruder. If you pay for a thing, it is yours and you dare assert that. If you have it by grace and kindness, no matter how willingly given and from what real friendliness, you feel timid about it, unless devoid of that delicate notion of independence which should grace every person. I have been a guest, invited to visit. That was well enough. But since my return to Wilmington a week ago, I had to beg the favor of being housed in Mr. Van Bokkelen's premises, his house being vacant, because before the 1<sup>st</sup>. Oct. (being a moving time here) I could obtain no rooms. But God's goodness has united me to very good and convenient quarters: two rooms, north light, good furniture, carpet and bedding. Today, I

have moved into there and am now, so far in order that tomorrow, I hope to commence painting. There is something of an artistic feeling in the room; an atmosphere peculiar to studios - sketches on the walls and portfolios, easels, draperies and the varied and manifold paraphernalia of an artist sanctuary. So there, for some six weeks at least, I am fixed and can settle my mind to work.

Dr. Watson has left this A.M. for the Gen. Convention in New York and I am fairly in his stead - a bewildered substitute with the difficult duties of a large Parish and the visiting for a very accurate and particular man. Now, it will be necessary to do most of my painting in the forenoon and devote afternoons to seeing the sick, etc. Hard work for the next six weeks!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 93)

**Monday, October 12, 1874 (A.M.)**

Began today, a larger painting of the ocean, after making the stretcher myself. I shall call it "The Wide Lone Sea." There is to be no living thing in it; nothing but a flat, sandy, lovely beach, the restless waters throwing their foaming crests upon it, the long, level horizon leading the mind thousands of miles beyond - and a placid sky with a low, long bank of far-off cloud-heads stretched across the last rays of sunlight, casting over all, a tinge of sadness, of coming night, as of a history of conflict and longing for rest - farther suggested by the piece of a wreck just cast out and the battle which contains the last tale of a sinking crew: The mighty waters tell no other tale.

Life, Eternity and the Hope above, I mean to signify by this picture: The struggle, the end, the aspiration - the mighty poem sung in mystic tones along the shores of the grand old sea - On the New Earth "there shall be no more sea." In this world of trouble only, with its unfulfilled desires, its wrecks and its unexplained longings; of a most mysterious Yonder, that type of Eternity may roll. Where all is

peace and all is completion and the very hope of man is attained, it is needed, no more.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 94)

**Tuesday, November 3, 1874 (A.M.), Wilmington NC**

My birthday is here again and I am already one year advanced passed the half century.

This last year, how strange has been my experience! I have lived it among strangers, separated from home and family; have even lost a home - unless I count my studio still such, since I am the owner of that - and beside scarcely any of that purpose for which ostensibly, I set out, has as yet been, at least so far, as tangible results go, accomplished. It is a singular life and will it soon come to a close? Ah, who can tell me? Sometimes it is difficult to be reconciled to it, in faith that God is leading and in hope that He will direct the end for the best. Still, I must say, "It is the Lord's doing; let Him do whatsoever seemeth good in His sight."

But into this exile, that peculiar smile of God's favor, (unmerited in my case!), through kind and loving friends, does follow me. Very unexpectedly, several tokens of the same, delighted me: A most interesting book (Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea) and some very handsome apples from Mrs. Lydia Livingstone, sister of Mrs. Watson and from the latter, a ream of fine letter paper, beside a tray of beautiful flowers, surrounding appetizing cake from Mrs. Dr. Thomas. How pleasant these evidences of affection and esteem, the very order of social life; the bloom of good fellowship and Christian intercourse!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 95)

**Monday, November 16, 1874 (A.M.), Wilmington NC**

Gen. Convention has adjourned some weeks ago. It was one of great importance. A "Pascal Cannon" was passed, in effect forbidding adoration of the H. Eucharist and providing for examination into any case of breach by the Bishop. The discussion of this cannon was of decided interest, Dr. DeKoven taking the leading part, as I think he takes in the Am. (American) Church, generally. As offset to this ritual cannon, the exemption sought for by the considerable number of tender consciences, in regard to the offensive parts in the office of Infant Baptism, touching regeneration, was triumphantly voted down and the Doctrine of the Prayer Book boldly avowed to be "Baptismal Regeneration," of course implying a kind of moral change - despite the negative declaration of the House of Bishops in a forever cowardice.

One may now affirm with more background than ever, the doctrine of objective grace in the H. Sacraments; for if this decision does not plainly declare a mystery present and operative in and through the elements used according to Divine ordinance, I cannot see what it does declare.

The time is, when doctrine must be decidedly stated and declared and faith preached in the ordinances of Christ; because, appointed by Him as vehicles of grace, in opposition to the rationalizing, materializing efforts which are so prominent in declining to accept and believe anything which cannot be comprehended by reason and squared with sensuous phenomena.

A letter from my Publisher discourages an auction sale of pictures this fall on account of the ultra-stagnation in business and the impossibility to realize any respectable price for works of art at present. I have, in consequence, laid aside my paintings for the contemplated sale and must again, take to portraits, if they can be

obtained. Just now, I have little time to paint until Dr. Watson's return, somewhere about the end of this month.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 96)

**December 13, 1874, (P.M.), 3<sup>rd</sup> S in Advent, Greensboro NC**

For an entire week, I am already here, in the house of Judge J. Dick, where, for the present, is my occupation - namely that of a portrait painter. I have six to paint in this one family: Mrs. Dick and the three daughters, Jessy, Susan and Emma; and again, that of Jessy and her husband, Mr. Robert Douglas and one of Senator Douglas, the "Little Giant." Two of the first family, I have begun.

Alas! I had to leave Wilmington and very good friends there! St. James Parish, the "House" and its inmates, the sisters Kate, Rose and Cecilia and the work of visiting daily among the sick, the poor and the bereaved. The rectory and those most excellent ladies there, Mrs. Watson and her sister Mrs. Lydia Livingstone, with whom I spent so much of pleasant time at the meals and after in the evening and showed me so much of kindness - these, and other friends and remembrances are all behind now and I had to take again, the staff of a wanderer, true to the character of my life and go to new people and other scenes. Bright in my recollection, shall always be Wilmington. The work was a very Lord's work; preaching the blessed Gospel, ministering the holy sacraments, burying the dead, visiting and comforting the sick and afflicted; even the prisoners in their cells were my care, for I went at least once a week to the jail with Rev. Mr. Brady, the colored deacon and gentlemanly Christian, in order to hold services and preach to those who would listen. In no other place has kindness surrounded me so much and the good will of those to whom I ministered. When the day of parting came, it was for me, a bitter day. I know there were friends who let me go in sorrow. Blessed be those ties of love and sunny hours of affection! During the very last hours,

the most gratifying tokens were shown us. Not least was one from the Vestry of St. James Parish. They assembled on that very evening, passed unanimously, a very complimentary and friendly resolution, had a copy of it made from their journal and sent it to me by a delegation of two gentlemen who followed me from place to place until I was found. This welcome testimonial of their regard was moreover accomplished by a present of \$100. It's able acknowledgement, as the gentlemen said, of my services in the Parish. On the Thursday previous (Thanksgiving Day), Dr. De Rafset had already sent me, through Mrs. Watson, a present of \$25, as an individual offering. It must be remembered that, by Dr. Watson's request and urging, I had already drawn the regular stipend allowed by the Parish, to the assistant minister, \$50 per month, so that the Vestry were under no obligations whatsoever to me. I was utterly amazed when these testimonials came to me because I had no right to look for or expect anything whatsoever. The kindness overwhelmed me.

But how very much of a help it has been to me! I could pay a debt in Lenoir that troubled me and send to my hard-pressed wife, a check for \$80. Like the gracious rain from heaven, it came, unasked and truly refreshing.

I stopped for one day at Raleigh with Rev. E. Kirk, in order to make suggestions for the church building after my designs; saw also Rev. Lawrence and my friends, Mrs. L. Broadway and Maggie Henry. Three more days I stayed at Hillsboro in the hospitable rectory, enjoying my dear friends in that old place, as always I do, when we can meet.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 99)

**Tuesday, December 22, 1874 (P.M.), Greensboro NC**

Last Friday, while I read the Litany in St. Barnabus Church for the absent Rector, Dr. Wheat, two of my schoolgirls were in the

congregation: Maggie Faulkes and Bessy Bryant. How their presence compelled thoughts of sadness! They were the visible evidence of the death of my school. Today, a letter came from my wife, picturing in a few graphic lines, the stillness and loneliness of the house, the empty table, the vacant seats in church. The end has come and one more event is sealed. Already also, the breaking up has begun; the horse is sold and gone, the cows are disposed of and places for getting the children off are in active operation: Leva to New York, Fritz to Savannah to school. After this Christmas, so very near, the work of demolition will proceed.

Well, it is that we are busy and have not much time to mope. I shall save myself some gloomy days by leaving Greensboro, where congenial society is scant and pay a visit to my good brother, Rev. Ch. Curtis in Hillsboro, who presses me to come. My wife is more than busy and it may save her a heavy amount of somber thinking.

Two of the six portraits, I have engaged to paint in this house, are nearly completed and the people like them. It is often a subject of congratulation when criticism is not so learned and acute and the simple, uncultured taste is easily satisfied. Fortunate for me it is, in my present state of mind and art, that I have such an unsophisticated public who seems determined to praise whatever I do.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 100)

### **Tuesday night, January 5, 1875, Greensboro NC**

In the name of the Father, Son and H. Ghost! Amen

Another new year is begun and with and in this most holy name, it will be brought to a successful end. Whatever it hides, dark to me and unknown, is all in my Father's keeping and therefore, I may be at peace. "Let Him do whatsoever seemeth good unto Him."

The past year has been strange to me. As a wanderer, going from place to place, I hope I have done some of the Lord's work, even if for the accomplishment of my designs, there seems to have been made but little progress. Yet, I feel a singular peace that all is right. I have not followed my own will or pleasure. I have acted under pressure at circumstances and have done what was before me as well as my weak ignorance would permit. What else need I do? I am not responsible for results. I have preached; I have ministered; I have assisted some; have comforted others, by word and letter, as the blessed Lord gave me opportunity. May I not trust that it is little seed that will show a harvest on that Great Day?

Doing such work, I have just come from Hillsboro. There, I have left behind friends who won my heart, both in the rector's house and with the Camerons; Emma and Rebecca, with whom I spent pleasant hours, not to be forgotten. God bless them all, as I love them, sincerely. That old town is graced with some most excellent people worth knowing and having for friends.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 101)

**Tuesday night, January 12, 1875, Greensboro NC**

"The Rubicon is passed," so I learned by letter from my wife. She and my family have, yesterday, vacated the rectory. For nearly six years, it has been an asylum and a home to us, while we labored under new conditions, gathering new experiences in a new field and country. We are now adrift, in the fullest sense. We have no definite idea where to go and locate. Never before in my roving life, have I been left so utterly destitute of fixed plan or purpose for the next future - so practically aimless, regarding the probable movements directly ahead of me. I know in truth, nothing about them. God has placed me in a complicated and at the same time, helpless condition. I am not without work. It rather crowds upon me, though it is of a

small sort and of mean compensation. But the work points to nothing in particular; marks no road; opens no prospect. It is floating and desultory, though pressing enough. One purpose it has - the one, vulgar, prosaic purpose of providing daily bread and paying debts. This now, is the main end of my art work. There is other I do, of which I can see the aim and it satisfies me well enough, being mainly correspondence. It does pastoral duty - perhaps, the highest I can perform. Now, I am clay in the hands of the Potter. What will He fashion of me?

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 102)

### **Monday night, February 15, 1875, Greensboro NC**

Again, I write into this book. Some things must be recorded, though that inner life of the heart, the best part, remains for the most part, untold, except on the books up yonder, where all things are written. But the months move steadily on and so do the changes which come in our existence; a strange, shifting scene, existing wonder and at times, alarm.

Last night, I came back here from Hillsboro, where I spent ten days. I went there for a special purpose. Some weeks ago now, the thought occurred to me - and I believe it a providential inspiration - in my present wondering life, to indulge my evenings and what other spare hours I may have, in order to give shape (marketable shape) to many stray but valuable pictorial thoughts buried in my portfolios. Very few of these can even be made paintings; but drawings are practicable in any room and better available for reproduction. At once, the idea became a system for activity. The subjects were arranged under appropriate heads and I saw before me, a definite plan.

In order to publish successfully, book-form would be far better than isolated pictures or even series. The rate of reproduction must be such as both to review the work perfectly and be itself, elegant,

artistic and cheap. For this, I re-remembered the process of Albert, of painting photographic negatives by mechanical means instead of chemical and of which Mr. Edward Bierstadt, in New York, is agent. For publication, some well-known house must be obtained.

The text remained. This I could write, if all my time were free. But that is not likely to happen soon. Nor would it be, perhaps desirable, that I should write myself, for several reasons. I found an executor of my direction in Miss Rebecca Cameron. She has written a book and is soon to go to New York, engaged by the Appletons, to compile a large work; has great familiarity of language, a ready pen and, what in this connection is of no little consideration, a devotion to me, which makes her a ready friend to carry out any thoughts under my direction. Having thus a scribe, the work may be a unit in conception and expectation, a very desirable quality in my production.

Now, I have seen Rebecca and talked with her and we have resolved ourselves into a firm, made partnership and agreed on the plan. We are affectionately attached and can, I feel certain, work together, harmoniously. As the largest part of the labor falls to my share, I have already pushed on, vigorously, with some drawings. The first book is to be "The Prophets of Grail," from Moses to John Baptist, comprising an Introduction on the general scope of the prophetic affair in the old Dispensation and sketches on the several characters, with illustrations and descriptions of these in footnotes. Two drawings in crayon, are finished: an old prophet, on his journey studying the scriptures and Elijah in the cleft of the rock on Horeb.

The second of these, I made at Hillsboro, mostly at the house of Rebecca, which has become a suitable house to me - for I loved to sit there and work and talk and the spirit of that house is congenial, all the more, because it is a poor and a small one and those three blessed women, Emma, Anna and Rebecca, are ornaments in many a sense - and how I love them! Several compositions more are well underway. And now, may God give His blessing.

This work of artistic artistry, I must confess, is most in accordance with my whole past life, excluding the few years of ministry, the tenor of my faculties and education. Why should not the will of God be expressed in it, concerning what I ought to do in this world? Many conceptions come to me, unbidden.

*"Waves of thoughts roll in upon my spirit,  
Strains sublime break over me unsought."*

And I shall not go to Europe. I believe my old prophecies are true: My eyes shall never more behold my native land. Like one of the ancient monks, I will be content to abide in my cell and as it seems, on my knees - imagine my designs and paint and draw my pictures. My inspiration must come from above. Has the Lord tried me so severely for this end? And what is my mission but a life of faith and trust and sole dependence upon God in life of sacrifice and love? The bridges and walls God builds in my way are the expression of His will that I shall stay in this country. For two years, they have been raised and now their meaning is plain to me. I gladly submit.

And now, this day, comes a call to mission work. A letter from Dr. Watson invites me in urgent terms, to come to Wilmington and take charge of the St. James House and the sisters pleadingly support his call. He offers as liberal terms as possible and they might suffice to cover my living. But what would become of my debts? Must they not first of all be paid? What of the education of Fritz, who is just to enter school at Sewanee Town? What of the whole of my art, in a field which would tax all the strength I have and take my whole time, for clearly, I must decline, painful as it is to do so and disappointing to Mr. Porter, the sisters and probably my Bishop. Here, also, I need wisdom and heavenly guidance.

**Saturday, February 27, 1875 (P.M.), Greensboro NC**

I have declined that call to Wilmington, painful as the duty was. To have accepted would have joined into a new channel, probably the whole of my future life and a step such as this would be, involves too much of grave consideration and responsibility. I dared not risk the leap and in truth, something warned me back from the very moment I read the letter.

My work here, it seems, is drawing to a close. I shall not be sorry. For money's sake, I should willingly stay in Greensboro some time longer, if there were still portraits to paint. But otherwise, the place suits me ill. I feel alone here, and lonely - sometimes to a depressing degree. And now, I am really getting restless. I must push on: go first, up to Stokes Co. to Mr. Hairsten and then hurry back to Lenoir as quickly as possible.

My darling friend, Mrs. Reuben Cameron, went through here last Thursday night and I met her at the depot at 11½ P.M. She came in an excited, nervous state, as indeed, I expected to see her, after leave-taking at home, which she then departed from, for the first time in all her life. I took her to the new hotel and made her comfortable in the parlor where she rested by and by and we had a long talk of nearly four hours, which seemed altogether too short. When I bid her goodbye in the cars, as the train began to move off, mine was the last familiar face she looked upon, for she knows not a single soul whither she is going in all the sea of busy humanity. How often in New York, that out-heap where one can feel so alone and desolate, will she long for a single look of some one of her dear ones! - But she is a brave girl, made of martyr-stuff and the blessed Lord will go with her for counsel and consolation.

**Tuesday, March 16, 1875 (P.M.) Greensboro NC**

Yesterday, I finished the eight portraits in this home. What a lot of such work! And am I not thankful they are all done? The people are highly delighted and that is gratifying. I have earned \$600 by the hard work - little enough for such a pile of painting. But then, these are bad times and work of any kind for the most moderate pay, is a blessing now. I do not murmur. All gifts come from God and I acknowledge, with a deep sense of gratitude. But I have in addition, awhile been waiting for Mr. Douglas, who was delayed in Washington, made a drawing for Mr. Arthur Terrell, London, Eng. which was ordered by him for \$195. This, I studied carefully and with interest. I used warm, tinted paper and black and white chalk, which made an effective picture.

Today, I was packing for my exit tomorrow to Stokes Co. and lo! - the railroad track is being altered; no cars running and I am caught. But why not make the best of every situation? I shall turn, tomorrow, to profitable amount by painting on some children's heads for Mr. Urquehart and so loose nothing on the delay.

Lent is nearly passed. For a whole week, I held services twice a day in St. Barnabas Church here, for the rector, who has gone to Salisbury to celebrate his golden wedding at the house of his daughter.

Yesterday, my son, Fritz has, in all probability, left Lenoir for Sewanee, Tenn, the "University of the South." We determined to give him a year or two more of schooling and churchly training before sending him into the world for business, thinking he might then be better qualified to make a way for himself. May the blessing of God be upon the effort! I can barely afford the great expense; but what better can a father do for his children than endeavor to fit them for the struggle of life in this world? Fitz is now passed eighteen years, six feet tall, a pleasant fellow; but, by force of circumstances, somewhat

neglected in education. We earnestly hope this move will help him substantially.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 108)

**Tuesday, April 1, 1875 (P.M.), Plantation of Mr. Peter W. Hairsten, Stokes Co. NC**

At last, I arriveth this place. Yesterday, I was driven up from Salem, over twenty-four miles of bad, muddy road and arrived about 3½ P.M., certainly hungry, if not tired. Now, I am again, in a veritable planter's home but here, tabakko is raised instead of cotton. Hr. H. is absent and Mrs. H. and a lady visitor, the only companions in this isolated place. But they are very pleasant and intelligent and by addition of hard work, I shall get on very well for the few weeks I have to stay. For the greater part of today, I was busy making an easel, as without, I could not paint and tomorrow, I can begin on the portrait engaged.

My Easter Day and the week previous were spent at Hillsboro. I could not bear to be cut off from all church privileges up here and being hindered from coming at the appointed time. Determined to lend a helping hand to brother Curtis and see my dear friends, now I am glad I went, for my visit was both pleasant and profitable, since during it, another larger drawing for the "Prophets," was begun and almost completed, namely "John Baptist" as a young man on the river bank, beholding with prophetic eye, the sunrise. The drawing was mostly made at Dr. Cameron's house where industrious eyes helped my industrious hands. On Sunday night, I bit farewell again and on Monday, started from the dull Greensboro, for the narrow Salem, where Prof. Edw. Lineback received me cordially.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 109)

**Tuesday, April 20, 1875, Mr. Hairston's Plantation**

My work here is completed. I have painted a careful portrait of Mrs. Hairston and a picture of the horse, "Eldeim." But I have also worked for myself: finished the "John Baptist;" made a crayon drawing of a Prophet in the exact art of seeing a vision; nearly completed a third one, an enlarged design from one made in Greensboro, showing the studious and wandering habits of Prophets. This one is on canvas, in simple black, rubbed in very thin; the canvas supplying the lights and thus, a strange effect is produced with little labor compared to crayon drawing. I also painted a sketch of peach blossoms. I have enjoyed myself here. Mrs. H. is a delightful companion, well-bred and well-read, and understands how to make my visit very agreeable. Now tomorrow, I can depart. There is no more work for me in Greensboro; but I concluded to pay a sort of farewell visit to my dear friends in Hillsboro before I leave this neighborhood of the state and if the weather permits, I shall, God willing, arrive there on Friday morning.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 109)

**May 6, 1875, Ascension Day, Fort Defiance, Yadkin Valley NC**

Once more, I am within the bounds of my former parish, in the house of Mr. Rufus Lenoir, an old rickety place of not very inspiring influence and I am here to paint a lot of portraits, which are to cover a debt of \$400 incurred in the purchase of the church and cemetery lot at Lenoir nearly six years ago. My wife is with me and we came over from town on Monday last. After eight month's absence I have come back from my wanderings to find my wife only, at Mr. Norwood's; Fritz, having a month ago, gone to Sewanee, Tenn. and Lena and Eugene headed into the country visiting, to go to New York at once - Lena, to be doctored for a lameness of the wrist, which totally disables

her to do anything - of course, playing on the piano included. All is changed. A tomblike chilliness is in the atmosphere for me. Here, I have buried hopes and plans and fortune. My work is ended; I must smooth a few wrinkles and scars caused by the struggle - and there be gone, whither? God only knows.

I have, indeed, some designs for the future. Certain circumstances are so grouped as to give my thoughts some definite direction: My commissions have come to a close; the auction sale of my pictures in New York has taken place and the result acquainted me with the stern fact of immense loss; Mrs. Rebecca Cameron, my partner in the proposed book ends her engagement with Appletons this month and is to come back to her house in Hillsboro. These are the outline features. With, very soon, nothing more to do - with a small capital from the sale to secure one year's rent, about six month's living and payment for the next term of schooling for my boy, Fritz, I have thought best to go on with the designs for that book, first securing a house and there giving to the undertaking, all my time and energy. Hillsboro has seemed to me a desirable place for this purpose. It is a cheap place for living, has good society, an excellent rector and the house of Rebecca. A pleasant house can be obtained there for moderate price, very near to Dr. Cameron's residence and any partner can be with me for all necessary business.

Meanwhile, I have written to Mr. H. Derby (connected with the Appletons) and sent several of my designs for the "Prophets." They must have reached New York this morning and I may expect news next week, of the favor or disfavor of that firm, relative to their publishing this book. This answer is now what I am awaiting. The nature will positively decide my move. Before coming to Lenoir, I spent several days at Hillsboro as guest in the house of my beloved friends and so arranged, that at short notice, I can secure the house mentioned and make it my headquarters of operations.

Had that N.Y. sale been more prosperous, my plans would be considerably modified. But its disaster cripples my immediate enterprises. There have only come to me, after deduction of expenses, (and these managers always know how to line with fat, their own pouch,) \$1,113.94 from the sale of twenty pictures, fourteen being of considerable size. One half the number ought to have brought more money. In reality, more than a year's work has been entirely given away.

The evening of the sale was rainy, few purchasers present, the sale unconditional - and so, the slaughter was consummated. The Bryant series of cartoons were more than a total loss, bringing only \$410, while the expenses amounted to about \$700 or more. The "Hope" and "Under His Own Vine" did not sell at all. Such is my luck: wherever I turn, failure and disappointment. Such is likely to be my luck for life.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 111)

**Monday, May 31, 1875 (P.M.), Clover Hill, Yadkin Valley NC**

My quarters are changed to the house of Mr. Edward James, also my former parishioner.

Notwithstanding, pursuing misfortunes and losses, the Lord's blessing goes with me and is manifested, especially in the reduction of my debts; that slave-chain, which loses link after link of its iron weight. Strange indeed, is the circumstance! That which I have desired to accomplish by labor in my own direction, by pictures and that sale in New York and signally failed, is yet done or advanced and at last, by notion of my own creditors. Thus, I have paid off, within the past four weeks, a note of \$430, due to Mrs. Sarah Lenoir for the church and cemetery lot bought from her brother, six years ago and by me, deeded to the Parish of St. James, Lenoir. Now, I am to liquidate another \$300 note held by Mr. E. Jones, the last unpaid sum

from the cost of my studio on the Rectory Hill. All this is effected by portrait painting, so a stern discipline keeps me down to a pursuit I have always shunned and feared and with the general rule of my life, compels me often curse - I would not choose for myself and at the expense of this one that is congenial and evidently the scope of my faculties.

It is well to state that after due consultation, my wife has counselled we should go to Hillsboro and I have consequently empowered Rev. Chs. J. Curtis to act as my attorney with the proprietor, Mr. Paul Cameron and rent the house. Lena has paid a visit to the place and is immensely pleased with it, hoping she will move there. We will also, God willing and permitting, when my work here in Lenoir is completed.

I have no definite news yet from the Appletons and whether they will consent to publish that book of "The Prophets of Israel."

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 113)

**Thursday, June 24, 1875 (P.M.), Clover Hill NC**

The Appletons have not accepted my work and will not, unless it is all complete: Therefore, the only chance is to complete the same, which I hope to do.

Portrait painting is still going on. Meanwhile, I have formed another plan. It is to paint a large picture for the Centennial Exhibition to be held at Philadelphia next year and decided on "The Shadows of the Rock," life-size figure, requiring a canvas 8 X 10 feet. The subject is of the very best, dramatic in interest, intense of feeling and character, simple and self-explained, capable of beautiful treatments in form, effect and color. Of course, this picture must be done in my studio at Lenoir and this circumstance will prevent my moving to Hillsboro for some time to come.

**Sunday, July 18, 1875 (P.M.), Lenoir NC**

At last, I am back again in my own room. Whatever disadvantages there may be of isolation; yet, I cannot remain unappreciative of the comfort, after two years of wanderings and lodging in other people's houses, that there is in a real undisputed home, a place I can in right, call now my own, for it is at last, entirely paid for. Those last eight weeks, spent in the Yadkin Valley by painting portraits, have freed me from a debt of \$800 - about half of which was due for the church and cemetery lot bought six years ago from Mr. Walter Lenoir and deeded to the Parish - and \$300 on a note, part payment for this very studio building in which I write at present - the rest being for the extinguishing of some smaller debts. I am therefore, at this very moment, despite the outward appearance of adversity and struggle, under discouragements - better off financially than when my fortunes seemed more flourishing. It is very singular and noteworthy but ever since my resignation from the rectorship of this Parish, the kind providence of God has led me on the road out of my difficulties by slow degrees, in toilsome manner it is true, but nevertheless, sure and steady, accomplishing what with all my efforts and carefully laid plans I could not effect. God be praised!

Now, it seems as if that notion of moving to Hillsboro were not only pushed further into the future for its realization but altogether ended. There is no prospect now that I can go from here before next spring. Necessary work and which I can only do in this large room with plenty of light, is keeping me here. First, I have my dream-picture to finish and have ordered the frame. There are also several smaller things to do. But the main work is a large painting, 5 feet by 10, subject "The Shadow of the Rock," and which is destined for the coming Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. I have already applied for a space and given order for the frame.

This undertaking, although an expensive one for my present circumstances and risky as regards the sale, I dreamed yet, on mature reflection, both expedient and a duty. American art will be represented but how many Christian pictures will there be among the number sent? Should I not represent myself to the utmost and place a sermon on those walls where thousands will see, from here and abroad? Personally considered, I shall never have a better opportunity for exhibition to a large number of people from all quarters and if only I can succeed in producing a worthy painting, it may be no unprofitable undertaking. The H. Spirit of God, to whom I look for guidance and support, will not leave me to disappointment and failure.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 115)

**Wednesday, August 4, 1975, Lenoir NC**

Sir Arthur Helps, in "Social Pressure," makes something like this remark, that "a man having a certain amount of ability should devote three fourths of his energies to the doing of that for which these abilities especially fit him and then, use the remaining one fourth in the effort to work to make what he has done, successful."

Is there not a great amount of worldly wisdom in this saying? Should I, in particular, not remember it and henceforth strive to practice on the first? It is just what, heretofore, I have never enough considered and there may lie the reason of my want of success in this world. The very best thing, at least in our days of rush and dullness, is passed unheeded by the man of men, unless it is judiciously advertised and pushed. Repugnant to a sense of modesty and justice as such a course may be, there is yet a clear necessity that every good thing has "a good try," either by the doer or someone else if it is to be accepted of this slow, selfish, superficial multitude.

N.D. Chapt.22 – I have found the passage which is still stronger than I worded it. Ellesmere – Do you remember what I said a long time ago about the necessity for the trumpet? I forget the exact words but they were to this effect: “If a man has a force which is represented by ten and that man wants to effect something, he may devote three parts of his force to doing the thing but must reserve the other seven tenths to blowing the trumpet about it when it is done.”

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 116)

**Sunday, August 22, 1875, Lenoir NC**

### **The Crooked Footpath**

*Ah, here it is: the sliding rail  
That marks the old remembered spot  
The gap that struck our schoolboy trail –  
The crooked path across the lot.  
It left the road by school and church  
A penciled shadow, nothing more.  
That parted from the silver birch  
And ended at the farmhouse door.  
No line or compass traced its plan:  
With frequent bends to left and right.  
In aimless, wayward curves it ran,  
But always kept the door in sight.  
The gabled porch with woodbine green,  
The broken millstone at the sill.  
Though many a road might stretch between,  
The truant child could see them still.  
No rocks across the pathway lie,  
No fallen trunk is o'er it thrown,*

*And yet it winds, we know not why,  
And turns as if for tree or stone.  
Perhaps some lover trod this way  
With shaking knees and leaping heart,  
And so, it often runs astray  
With sinuous sweep or sudden start.  
Or one, perchance, with clouded brain  
From some unholy banquet reeled,  
And since, our devious steps maintain  
His track upon the trodden field.  
Nay, deem not thus – No earthborn will  
Could ever trace a faultless line:  
Our truest steps are human still.  
To walk unswerving were divine!  
Truants from love, we dream of wrath:  
Oh, rather let us trust the more!  
Through all the wanderings of the path,  
We still can see our Father's door!*

(Oliver Wendall Holmes N.D. from his  
"The Professor at the Breakfast Table")

Is it not so? Our crooked paths, even as we are led there by the hand of God's providence, why are they not straight but on account of our own infirmity? Strange it is, to look back upon one's own meanderings and erratic twisting that seem to lack purpose and aim, strange to note how the will has bent hither and thither and was shirred from its intent as a skillful rider directs a horse. "Man's goings are of the Lord: how can a man then understand his own way?"

So, I have recently been trying to twist off into some other crooked line which I thought the straightest one possible. I petitioned

Mr. A. Bierstadt, on the strength of an invitation given to me years ago, to let me paint my large picture in his studio at Irvingstone on the Hudson. That was three weeks ago but I have not heard from him. Now, the time presses and a decision must be made at once. Of course, it is for executing, trusting altogether, and the wisdom paths of the spirits may and will supply me instead, the help and suggestions of man, which in this case, I hoped to derive from being with an experienced artist. So, let it be! My independence is probably preferable and the seclusion which is mine here, in my comfortable and spacious room. It is now "right awkward" in the most Holy sense.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 118)

**Wednesday, September 15, 1875, (P.M.), Lenoir NC**



I am fatherless!

A black banded letter, which my wife brought to me in frightened haste this evening and showing my brother Fritz's handwriting, brought me the tidings that our dear father departed this weary life for his Home in Paradise on Friday last, the 10<sup>th</sup> September, after 6 o'clock in the evening, about the same hour that I mailed a letter to him and mother. He was buried on the following Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 10 A.M. in Fairmount Cemetery, Newark, NJ on a beautiful sunny day, amid the ringing of all the church bells of the city, to prayer and worship. They rang him home to the celestial choirs.

What can I say? Are tears and plaints sufficient tokens of grief for a father's death? Many have been the afflictions of my life and yet but once before, has that solemn messenger ever crossed the threshold of my nearest family circle. It was when my little darling babe died, which I laid with mine own hands into the cold earth. Now

with the aged line of us three brothers, his visitations have again begun. My poor little mother, who is 82 years of age and very feeble and infirm in mind and body, cannot long survive.

Father reached nearly eighty years. He was ill during the last week but no immediate end was anticipated. Even on Friday, he was up nearly all day and only took to his bed as evening came. His departure was very quiet and none knew of it at all till he was gone. On Wednesday before, he had, by special request, received from his Pastor, the Lutheran minister, Mr. Renaft, with mother, the H. Communion. Thus, he died in peace. He seemed to know certain that his end was near and behaved very still and patient and, in the coffin, the beauty of peace rested lovingly upon his features.

Now, he is gone from us! Blessing and grace be unto him with the elect of the Lord Jesus who have finished their course in faith and do now rest from their labors! He is surely gone Home to the Lord: and there, may the ever-abounding Grace of Jesus the Merciful, assist me, assist all his children, to meet him.

He left but a poor life. For almost nine years, he began to be dependent, not because he was too weak for work but because, in a strange country, whose language he did not know, he could find no support by the ordinary means. His little room had but small comfort and his life, few resources at the last. But brother, Fritz, cared for him and Mother, lovingly, out of his own limited means. Father's life was a long conflict and bitter were his enemies that pursued him. He was tossed upon a wild sea with little repose. But now, there is to him a serene and cloudless sky forever and ever and no tempest will ruffle his endless day any more. Thanks be to the most merciful God for such a hope by faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 120)

**Lines from my brother's letter** (*Note: 3 paragraphs have been translated from the written German*)

**Poem to My Father**

*Rest, dear Father, peaceful slumber  
From your pilgrimage of pain,  
'till the shepherd leads his sheep  
To the father's final home.  
Gentle be your final resting  
And your waking without pain.*

*Jesus Christ, O Lord of all departed,  
You lose nothing what your Father  
Gave you as your own,  
Our Father's spirit hope to find us  
We will trust and put it in your hands.*

*For your mercy, God we pray for,  
To your people send your light,  
On the day of resurrection  
Let him rise without his pain.  
Bless us 'till you come to save us,  
I'll be waiting here for you.*

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 121)

**Saturday night, October 23, 1875, Lenoir NC**

The large picture (The Shadow of the Rock), is at last begun, the canvas already covered. I commenced to paint on Monday and now, a

pretty good inlay is made with all the paints, both in color of light and shade, well developed for future finish. This is really my first experience on so large an oil painting and the confounded venture staggers me a little. Nor is it less than an overture in regard to my experience but not in regard to my trust that the Spirit of all wisdom, on whose glorious aid I rely, will clear away the difficulties before me, one-by-one and finally enable me to produce a good work which worthily does preach of the precious truth that Jesus is a sure refuge and refreshing shelter in the dreary dessert of sin and earthly life. Cut off from all art and civil intercourse whatsoever, I am the more cast solely for help, in that Spirit of God and I know He will not disappoint me. Since I am providentially placed here in frontier seclusion, no doubt the Lord designed to lead me more directly to Himself - and if I am to paint Christian, that is holy pictures, present devout sermons, my life is better to it than by seeking all understanding, light and strength from above from the Supreme Giver of all good and perfect gifts. So, I may also hope that the work produced will be more acceptable to God and blessed by Him as a messenger of His truth to me. My whole, unfeigned desire is to be a witness by art, also of the cross of Jesus Christ, my Lord. As to the result, the reputation and sole of His work, it is none of my business.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 121)

### **Wednesday, November 3, 1875, my 52<sup>nd</sup> Birthday**

In the most Holy Name, I begin another year of pilgrimage, going forward without fear or care in my heavenly Father's Hand of blessing. This day was signalized by the receiving from the station and the putting together the huge and beautiful frame for my large picture, "The Shadow of the Rock."

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 122)

**Friday, November 19, 1875 (P.M.), Lenoir NC**

Rarely have I undertaken work which, from beginning to end, I had so entirely to feel out an elaborate idea and arrangement step by step, than this "Shadow of the Rock." Although the main thought is kept intact, improvements for the developing of the scene are still in progress and I may not see the end yet. It is very strange, how I have to stumble and struggle along. But the picture has its peculiar difficulties, mainly arising from the fact that the only entire figure and foreground are in shadows and from the nature of the idea can receive no light; nor, is it possible to introduce more than occasional color in small portions and in addition, the effort is my first one with so large a canvas.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 122)

**December 19, 1875 – 4<sup>th</sup> S. in Advent – Lenoir NC**

My oldest boy, Fritz, has come last Friday from the School at Sewanee (University of the South) and so we have at least one of our children with us for a while. He is tall, six feet high and has now to go from school to business, having chosen the occupation of a fruit-grower. He has no capacities for any of the professions and indeed, since he cannot be a minister of the Gospel, I had much rather he would be a farmer than an artist or a lawyer.

Perhaps it better, even for me, to be at least in a measure, a tiller of the soil. My thoughts have been of old in that direction for the sake of enjoying a living free from incessant money cares and of late, these thoughts have returned to me. It is inexpedient for me to assume the charge of another parish, for I believe too strongly that my duties to Christian art forbid the relation in the future, that for so many years, has been with me, a ruling contradiction, namely that

God had designed I should eventually, perhaps through much struggle and waiting, carry into execution the great work of my life, the four large paintings, illustrating the "Plan of Redemption;" although, unforeseen circumstances for a number of years crowded out of view, the strong inward persuasion, again is taking possession of me. In one sense, the materials purchased are now even less favorable than in previous years; but there are some circumstances which have grown into the program and perhaps making it better possible of accomplishment. The very inclination to the agricultural pursuit of Fritz may pose a help after another year or two. Here, I cannot remain longer than until next spring. To settle anywhere else even then, will be out of the question. Probably, I must again try portraiture as a means of earning money but it will not be in the south where the prices are ridiculously low. It can surely be in the north - that is New York or vicinity, for there, the business is overdue. Indeed, speculation or that score is impossible, prohibited by the most utter impenetrability of the veil that hides my immediate future. I would go all the way to San Francisco if a promise of work lured me and I would willingly settle in California, would I be assured of a living there on some farm, taking my boy into partnership for cultivation of the raisin grape in that fair climate. God must direct and I must wait, still longer.

My old parish is steadily losing ground, a very sad thing to witness. It is moreover, a constant trial to me to be confined here. Mr. Bland, the present Rector and myself are outsiders. We have even had difficulty, despite the studied neutrality which prudence has taught me from the beginning, to assume. He is a very dry and methodical man and without self-will. By the folly of his courtship with a young girl, a pupil there in the school and his subsequent marriage of her, many of the parishioners have become alienated from him, who himself, has invited obstacles and sufferings that would have fallen much lighter upon a single man. Easy, his small salary cannot be; or if not paid, and his life must, in confusion, be one of much deprivation

and struggle. The school he teaches is now only parochial and contains but one paying scholar. Although he is conscientious in the discharge of his office, the people seem not to be affectionately disposed towards him and he feels his isolation which, in time, has a crushing effect on his spirits and energy. No one comes to him for pastoral advise. He does not seem to be gifted as a pastor and his visits are merely social. Besides, he regards me as a rival in the people's love. - a very painful rivalry to myself and there are some who are unkind enough to give voice to their complaints. That he thought fit to attack my teaching, concerning our ceremonial or Rubrical observances, has not resulted to his benefit, for the attack was noticed and resented. One Sunday, while I was present in the chancel, he openly declared, without necessity, that the singing of the Creed is done in open defiance of the express wording of the Rubric in the "Prayer Book" now, as the Nicene Creed was sung for three years in my Parish and the singing by him, prohibited on his becoming rector, his charge was unjust and bold. Knowing that I had the firm ground of historical usage, both in the Anglo Church before and since the Reformation and also by common consent in the American Church under my feet, I would not abide the severe accusation of having taught my people wrongly and been a deliberate law-breaker and so I confronted him, not for the purpose of convincing a narrow and obstinate man who cares not for history, precedent or high authority of any kind, but because I owed to my own position as a clergyman, the refutation of such a charge. This interview ends my discussions with Mr. Bland. I take part regularly in the services, have substituted when the rector is absent on the second Sunday each month and otherwise, keep in my studio.

But my position is exceedingly unpleasant and I ought to be out of it. It is very doubtful whether Mr. B. can continue here. His salary is not only fair, small as it is and I see no possibility of a change in this matter. Also, the Sunday School has dwindled to nothing. Several families are leaving, the young men have all gone away and general

indifference is settling like a pall upon the people. There is no life or energy, no endeavor to do better and perhaps with many, no ability, either spiritually or morally, which is worse. - Alas! My poor Parish.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 125)

**Saturday, January 1, 1876, (P.M.), Lenoir NC**

*In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen*

Thus, another year has begun. I signified this beginning after returning from Div. Service this morning, by printing an oil-color sketch of a new composition for life size figures, the subject being "Jesus or Barabbas?" - two figures, side by side, like the goats under the Old Dispensation upon which, on the day of Atonement, the lot was cast - a subject of great power and searching moral. May this beginning be prophetic of the year for me, in regard to occupation as a Christian artist and also to spiritual life! I have just summed up last year's accounts and they declare the mercy of God towards my great unworthiness in giving me, despite the otherwise trying circumstances of life from home and family, the low gains received for portraits and the immense loss by the sale of the pictures in New York, where in reality, there was no gain at all, such relief from debts that have been standing for years and became somewhat troublesome and humiliating. I was enabled to send my oldest boy to school at Sewanee, Tenn. for one year (he has just returned) and to pay for frames, etc. of an important large painting, now well underway and promising favorably. I have paid debts and made no new ones and prepared work for the new year by heavy expenses and the work makes me seriously thankful.

**Tuesday, February 22, 1876, Lenoir NC**

"The Shadow of the Rock" is at last, completed. Here it stands, ready for exhibition, for today and the two days following, the people of Lenoir and vicinity are publicly invited to inspect this wonder of western North Carolina which is to be my contribution to the National Centennial Celebration. Thanks to God that by His mercy and help, I am this far! It cannot be said I have not expended every faculty, both of mind and purse, to produce this work and whatever it may be judged worth, whether much or little, toil and sacrifice have very considerably contributed to its accomplishment. I have never before encountered difficulties so manifold and formidable in order to obtain a desirable effect and subdue the idea of a picture to the pictorial labor. With the powerful mass of gold of a large frame to contrast against the yellow desert light, which of necessity, must all be on the circumference of the canvas, instead of being concentrated in the center of middle-tints and shadows, as is the usual and prudent mode of artistic arrangement - the central and main portion of the picture, entirely in the shade, without the possibility of the least bit of sunlight or even very prominent color - the only figure being besides, mostly aglow in the white costume of the burning desert and still to be kept all in shadow, while that shadow on the ground must have the form of a foreshadowed cross, in order to give force of Christian sentiment. All these and many more difficulties caused me unusual anxiety and labor. Added to these, must be a confusion of my comparative inexperience in the painting of large pictures and a desire for minute execution in this work which also disturbed me, considerably. But now, I have conquered and the painting can go forth in the most Holy Name to do for me whatever it pleases God to decree. I have fought this battle out, it is true, but am at present, so poor and without any prospect of means or work that I cannot recall a single period in my life of trials and losses when I have been situated so entirely bare and without a single cent in my possession nor in prospect. Such a

condition of things calls assuredly for faith. The very means for sending the picture to Philadelphia, I had to borrow from a friend and I know not, how again, to repay or when. Yet, I have so often experienced that "from nolf au groptan ifh Godh au noif pnan," (quote in German) und warum sollte es jetzt nicht dasselbe sein? (and why should it not now be the same?). This trust only keeps me in countenance and vigor of action. Having done what appeared in evident duty, as a citizen and as a Christian artist, I resign the results into those gracious hands where that kind of care justly belongs and therefore, am satisfied. Das Malten Gott, das falfan? Amen!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 127)

**Thursday, March 2, 1876, Lenoir NC, Fritz Leaves for Palmyra**

Today, I have started my oldest boy, Fritz, out into the world, to begin business. He is now in his twentieth year, six feet tall but young looking and is to learn fruit culture on the large establishment of Purdy, near Palmyra N.Y. May the protecting and preventive grace of the Lord go with him at this important period of his life on which he goes indeed better provided than I did when I, much younger, being only thirteen, left the house of my parents for similar purpose. We are now, once more alone, all our children being at a great distance from us. When shall we see them again?

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 128)

**Thursday, March 4, 1876 (P.M.), Lenoir NC - The Picture Sent**

My room is now empty and large! For the large picture is packed and gone. Yet, it is a relief to be thankful for. Of course, all such undertakings bring their care in proportion to their magnitude and accordingly, this brought me more than previous works, for it cost me dearer both in money and labor. But now, when the toil is all over, I

have resigned the whole thing together with its results into God's most gracious hands, having done my part - the sowing and trusting to Him for His part - the giving of the increase. Dedicated to Him, it goes out into the world, the unfeeling cold world. For Christ's sake. He will pardon the soil of weakness and sin that cleaveth to it, cleanse it, and accept in the Beloved. My intention was sacred, if the performance partakes of human infirmity.

As a last thing, finding that I could have space for only fifteen words of description in the official catalog, I painted on the frame into spaces which seemed purposely intended for the words, three scripture texts, strikingly and appropriately explaining the whole subject and making frame and painting one unique whole: Below, in one line of scarlet and blue, are boldly visible the mighty sentences from Isaiah 32:2, "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind and a cover from the tempest as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." On the left and nearest the rock in the painting, St. Paul's words from I Cor. 10:4, "And that rock was Christ," and on the right his significant admonition, "So run, that you may obtain, being emphasized by the poor mortal lying out in the desert wind, fallen before he could reach the sheltering and lifegiving rock which his fellow travelers embrace with such thankful intensity. Thus, everything comes into the right place.

Nor must be forgotten, the circumstances under which the picture was sent off. My means were long ago used up, so that I have been running in debt for board for several months, some calculations for money as usual failing entirely and I could not deliver my costly and painful work at Philadelphia without borrowing \$25 from Mr. Lenoir. There, my room was thrown open to the people of this town for four days and they streamed in, a delighted crowd, many coming a second, third and fourth time. Presently, I received a friendly note enclosing \$50, a testimonial of the citizens who felt proud that such a painting should go as a contribution to the National Centennial Celebration and desiring to share at least in the expense of

transportation thither. What else could I do but bow my sincere thanks for so much compliment and accept the gift? In this manner altogether unexpected, a great need was providentially met and my difficulty for the time, lifted. Do not God's help to me most always come as surprises? They have after, struck me as no less than miraculous.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 129)

**Saturday, April 8, 1876, Lenoir NC**

I am again, on the journey from Lenoir, drawn away by necessity, as in previous instances. Truly, this necessity has existed for some time, only there appeared no opening room, of the minutest description, as an excuse for my leaving for a trial fortune. Such an opening has now appeared. It is not much and only one portrait to paint in Raleigh NC; but so desperate have my affairs become, so utterly hopeless if I stay here, that now, the smallest sum over my expenses would tempt me to go on trial, whether elsewhere and by some means, it was not possible to escape out of this soul-trying strait which, the more it presses, causes the more disparate plans to evolve, much after the dream - fashion of a thirsty man in the trackless and arid desert. Portrait painting seems again, the sole available resource for making a little money and I now go, in hopes that perhaps my presence and what I can show, may induce others to employ me. May God in mercy give me success. For months, the large painting, having absorbed all my small stack of funds, I have been running into debt for the board of my family; new debts to the old and I am made almost reckless by this weary state of things. Must I track out my life under such disgraceful burdens and in the shackles of a slave? – No indeed! God, being my Helper, I will break through by a last resolution, no matter what sacrifice it costs. I must become a free man and redeem my character for honesty.

Within the past two weeks I painted an idealized head of Lena from a photograph and once more, the "Rock of Ages 897048;" if perchance, someone might purchase it but primarily to have it again photographed, there being so many inquiries for good copies that I may be enabled, by keeping some on hand for sale, to turn the subject to very individual profit.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 131)

**Monday, April 24, 1876, Raleigh NC, Rectory of the Church of the Good Shepherd**

Tomorrow, it will be two weeks since I left Lenoir. An exploring expedition, may my present undertaking be called. What a strange life for me! Thus far though, it has been followed by me for the better part of three years. Very little, comparatively, has been accomplished toward the purpose, ostensibly held in view from the first. On Thursday in Holy Week, I arrived here and not until last Sunday, could I move into a room hired as a studio and which needs yet a great deal to fit it for successful painting. There are only a few dollars left me of the borrowed money out of which came also my traveling expenses and I must rely on friends or hire on time, what I need by way of furniture and hangings. Oh, how I chafe under this dependency and helpless delay! And that, when time is so precious.

Precious Holy Easter tide is passed. It brought me much joy and consolation under a thankful feeling not to have been compelled to spend it in the barrenness of Lenoir Parish. This little, young congregation and their Rector are alive and their church looked very sweet in its festive garb of flowers and holy emblems. The ministrations also were a pleasant duty to me: the Easter sermons, morning and evening, those of Holy Week and Good Friday, Easter Evening at St. Mary's School Chapel and again yesterday A.M. in Christ Church and at night, in the Church of the Good Shepherd.

News from my daughter is distressing. Her general health is far from good and in addition, she discovered a tumor in her left breast, probably a sad inheritance from her mother, who, at the time of Lena's birth, was subject to an operation of cancer. What mournful consequences will grow out of the frightful discovery?

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 132)

**Sunday, May 21, 1876, Raleigh NC, Fifth Sunday After Easter**

My wife also has left Lenoir. Is this a sure sign that our chapter of life thus is closed? Most likely and so the people are disposed to take it. Addie passed through here, staying two days and leaving again on Tuesday last. While I went to Tarboro to our Dios. Convention, she left for New York.

The convention also has adjourned. Not very much of interest was transacted there. The right of women to vote in parishes, though strongly defended, was not conceded. The vote on this motion stood (by order) 14 to 19, the two Bishops being against it. Considerable talk was expected in the discussion of modes of assessment of parishes for raising the Episcopal and other Diocesan funds and expenses. I regard all these measures as miserable shifts and devices being human expedients, (which) became sadly necessary, after the divinely explained Apostolic plan had fallen into almost universal disuse. The subject of division of the Diocese, although two committees reported on it, had not, when I left on Friday evening, been in any manner considered and yesterday, there could be too little time and too small a number present for any effectual movement. I have finished here, two portraits; good pictures and good likenesses. Several other engagements await my labor.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 132)

**June 4, 1876, Whitsun Day P.M.**

Blessed Day of the Holy Ghost! May he descend upon me and His whole church in abundant measure!

It is eight weeks since I left Lenoir, six of which I have been at work here with the exception of a week spent at the Dioc. Convention, Tarboro. Four portraits finished on a flag (camera sketch), are the result of my labors - one of these heads painted twice and \$215 earned. It is not much for the time and work, but it is better than higher art would have done. This present month is to be occupied in painting the Ladies Flag for the Centennial Exhibition, to be sent by contributions from the ladies of the state. The doing of the whole, will probably fall in my share. Ministerially, I keep also busy, helping my brethren here, especially Mr. Rich. Today, I was, by Bishop Lyman's request at St. Augustine's Chapel, reading part of Morning Prayer and assisting in the Holy Communion. Mr. Th. Cooper, being ordained to the order of Deacon. He is a colored man from the West Indies and of much intelligence.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 133)

**June 18, 1876, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity; House of Mr. Richard Battle**

The mere external features of a man's life are not much to record and the internal are very inadequately recorded by words. So, I feel at present, that I have very little to say concerning visible events and yet, a great deal of those longings and strivings, which yet refuse to shape themselves into sentences for the apprehension of others. Certain it is, that my present life and doings can, in no wise, be calculated to satisfy these longings and strivings; neither are the greater number of the persons with whom I must associate, such as

can minister to many of my deeper wants. There is one element lacking in the society here and which forms the chief ingredient in the composition of my mental faculties; therefore, is a prime necessity with wants of its own; a hunger that must be approved if it would live healthfully and this, the aesthetic, the artistic, I must ascertain very nearly in solitude. More than seven years now it has gone starving, imperfectly and fitfully fed and the craving necessarily becomes more intense and wilder, from month to month - the more so as a conviction strikes dismay into my soul that I am a fettered and caged captive, without power to get away, unless, by a perhaps more dangerous or hazardous coup de ta, a desperate venture which determines to risk, anyhow.

Assuming that the circumstances caging me are in some mysterious way, either arranged or permitted by God's own wisdom, there is still the open question whether they are intended for a complete check or for a stimulus to more vigorous and determined exertion. I am thus, left in doubt and this struggle between uncertainty and hope is, in itself, full of nervous excitement and speculative distress. When the way is clear and visible, no matter how rough, laborious and even dangerous, we can go ahead with confidence - but where, beside these difficulties, thick fog and darkness cover our path, it takes more than moral courage to travel completely onward. Alas! I feel often very weak and even dissatisfied. I am not at home in this present sphere - it is a trial of soul to me at every step. Am I not wasting my faculties, those of a higher order and which I know I possess; and ruining opportunities in other places that would make my life tell, with more force, by extended influence in those departments, for which God has especially fitted me? These are hard questions to answer.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 134)

**Tuesday, July 18, 1876, Raleigh NC**

For over two weeks already, my offers have run out and nothing new is stirring; but on the contrary, several of those portraits I expected certainly to paint, have been withdrawn. The old experience! Prospects of success just shower and almost within reach and then, suddenly withdrawn, to leave me struggling here, deep in the mire. Next Saturday, my studio must be given up, as the month is closing and the next move must be for Lenoir. Meanwhile, I began to paint a little picture, some 14" X 22" arched over the top and as it portrays my situation, it is a source of a comfort to me. There is a man in his frail lifeboat, plying the oars with resolute, though tried strength and thinking with a wistful countenance on which the traces of former and long struggle are plainly sure. His back, like every rower's, is to the line of his destination. He can trace only the way he has come but not the one ahead and around him, in the dark tempestuous night on the rough and heaving, rapidly glancing waters. Nothing but danger is apparent and his own power, but weakness and ignorance. Nor is his eye lifted (for he must perceive that by the inner right of faith only) to the calm, divine Figure of Christ in the storm, filling the boat and illumining the laboring man with glory, the only light of the scene, with a serene gesture of assurance admonishing to trust and faithful work; while, with His face to the distant breaking away of clouds and the star the herald of morning, he holds the steering oar with unerring hand and guides that little trembling boat through the wild and threatening waters.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 135)

**Monday, July 24, 1876, Raleigh NC**

Again, I am ready for a leap into the world. On Saturday last, my month expired for room rent and I moved my goods from the

studio. Work therefore, in this place, is closed. But what is of consequence and may have a most important bearing on my future course is the resolution which has fixed itself in my mind, to plunge by a bold venture into the thickest fight of a metropolis. I determined to go to New York. The attempt will be just what, for many years, I have as determinedly shunned and tried to escape. Now however, I am brought today, as my teeth are set for a last effort at success. But I go into the conflict like a Spartan, only with a short sword and for a hand-to-hand struggle - with no apparent provision either for myself or family for more than a few weeks ahead - and in a place expensive and where everything must be bought. The case seems like driving my frail boat into the cataract that yawns and roars for my destruction. Yet, if once parted, there may be quieter waters beyond. The venture is one of trust, following the leading of some small circumstance only, which has drifted my thoughts into the channel almost unawares; one of those insignificant and mighty turns the providence of God loves to employ for our guidance against our will or pardon: My old friend, E.D.S. Greene, has offered me the free use of his studio as long as I want it.

This fact provides the first requisite for an artist; a good room in a good locality. The offer was made some time ago and I laid it by in mind as impracticable and began my search. For weeks past, my plans were set on Washington City, where I imagined something might be done in portraiture through friends and introductions. But closer reflection has convinced me the safest would be to hear the lion in his den; consequently, I have written to friend Greene, although only for advise; yet, his counsel can scarcely be other than that I shall go. There whispers besides a conviction in my mind, that the right course is struck and this supplies me with nerve and banishes fear and hesitation. Let me know that I am right and I will shut my eyes and dive head-foremost, into the wildest stream. *In Nomine Sanctimonia!*

On Monday next, I hope to leave here for Lenoir. There, some few little things have to be painted and those things packed, which are

essential to my work and the mode of life I have decided for the present to adopt. My room must become to me, workshop, sleeping and boarding place, because my means are very scant and for a while, it is best if I could feed on air and promises.

My friends here have been exceedingly kind to me. In Mr. Richard Battle's fine house, where I have been a guest for some six weeks now, I have enjoyed the kind of hospitality best suited to my temper and requirements; unobtrusive, free and genial. Of course, such kindness I cannot let remain unremembered, so I presented Mr. B. with a memento of one of my most successful fruit paintings. Rev. Mr. Rich, I rejoined by the present of a portrait of his wife. The latter is now about near Baltimore, with family, having quite broken down and needing recreation and I have consented to take the services of his Parish as a matter of course, as also during Dr. Marshall's absence in Philadelphia, I supplied his place for two Sundays.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 137)

**Sunday, August 6, 1876 (P.M.), Lenoir NC**

Once again, I am in this old room of mine and there is a home feeling about it, despite the disorder and confusion of recording time, which kindly contrasts with that strangeness and fragmentary unsettled state of mind incident to such wanderings as were my lot for a large portion of the last three years. Yet, my stay must be brief; painting a few small things engaged, packing what seems most useful for the everyday, paying some visits of farewell - and then, my face must again be turned northward to the place from where seven years ago, I was taken to serve the Lord in the obscurity of this little mountain town.

A strange circumstance has again marked my way hither, now for the third time, having come back just in time to bury one of my former parishioners and was the last of his family. First, it was good

and respected Gen. J.S. Patterson, next, his granddaughter and yesterday, his brother-in-law, Mr. Edmund W. Jones, all in the Yadkin Valley; that place for which from the first, I felt a particular attraction and where I had my truest friends, or some of them. Thus, I am closing up, as it were, the records of my Parish life here in Lenoir and with it, my strange experience, that of a parish priest, engrafted upon the artist for a season.

Surely, it was for me a strange and unprecedented life! What prophet could have told me of it ten years ago? But my career seems to have an executive and even erratic, wild irregularity about it, like a mysterious force hearing and tossing me out of the common course. It is a want of balance and steadfastness in my own mental organization - or does an external superior Power control a mind that would otherwise be contented and restful enough in one of the many tracks and grooves wherein the majority of mankind find scope and satisfaction? Or, is there a mixture of these two causes, that is, this invisible Power governing in such a manner as to develop by a fitful variety at movements, a mind in itself, of shifting, restless impulses which crave for a new field to roam over and new sensations to experience? Perhaps so. I have sometimes strongly inclined to suspect my own stability, not so much of purpose, as of means for reaching it. And perhaps, if my conjecture is truth, I shall never, in this life, be permitted a haven of rest. But it must be as God directs and by that, I will submissively abide.

But who knows? Man, truly is to himself, as Goethe said, the most insoluble of problems: "What truth may there be to know? And shall we know it one day?"

To him who is ignorant of their laws, even the stars seem an irregular wandering host. "Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself." No, my own paths are to me, a mystery. I wonder at myself; why and who and whence I am; whither I am going or what that state is, we call "life" and cannot explain - and how my

insignificant doings, born of necessity and reared in the dust, have a strange connection with the far-off mighty orbs that glitter down on me from yon mighty vault - with the vast reality of the Spirit-world - and wonderingly, I plod on, weary at times and longing for rest and vaguely planning withal, though untold disappointments have shattered untold plans in the past; yet, still hoping a new seed-time may be spared the blight which has fallen upon so many of the old.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 139)

### **Monday Night, August 27, 1876, Lenoir NC**

Alas! The last night but one in this place. The sad business of leave-taking has in earnest, begun. I came this evening from the beautiful Yadkin Valley, the "Happy Valley," as it has been called and one by one, from the "Fort" ("Fort Defiance"<sup>1</sup>) up to "Palmyra," there to the "Fountain," and last to "Clover Hill,"<sup>2</sup> whose late owners I consigned to the grave, so very recently. I rode over there last Saturday evening, as far as the home of good old Gen. Patterson, where his son, Samuel and wife, received me. Yesterday, my health and spirits were not the best but I prepared, as well as possible, for the service and sermon, having permission of Mr. Bland to hold, as the last privilege, beseeching help from the Holy Ghost for words which might be fit, as a parting admonition and benediction and perhaps I

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<sup>1</sup> **Fort Defiance** is a historic [plantation house](#) located near [Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina](#). The main block was built between 1788 and 1792, and is a two-story, frame structure measuring 28 feet by 40 feet. A wing was added in 1823. It was the home of Revolutionary War General [William Lenoir](#). The property was transferred to the Caldwell County Historical Society in 1965 and operated as a historic house museum. This location on the [Yadkin River](#) was originally built upon by the troops serving under [Elijah Isaacs](#) in the summer of 1776. At the time, it was known as Fort Isaacs. The house was listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1970.

<sup>2</sup> **Clover Hill**, also known as the Colonel Edmond Jones House, is a historic [plantation house](#) located near [Patterson, Caldwell County, North Carolina](#). It was built in 1846, and is a two-story, five bay, brick, [Greek Revival](#)-style house. It sits on a raised basement and has a hipped roof. It features a shed porch surmounted supported by four handsome fluted [Ionic order](#) columns. The house was listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1973.

was, by His grace, enabled to speak to a full room for an earnest lasting effect.

At the Fort, (Mrs. Rufus Lenoir) I spent the afternoon and night and this morning, began my homeward (or better, hitherward) journey with my dear, sweet friend, "Freelove Henry;" Cousin Free, as all call her. I spent some pleasant hours at the "Fountain." She is a woman chastened and seasoned by affliction and we have, from the time of our first meeting seven years ago, been bound together by mutual sympathy. Ah, it is hard to look at beloved faces and think it may be for the last time in this life. It is a bitter thing to part. And yet, how often, how constantly, it must be done! Now, tomorrow is another such and even a harder day before me. Yet, it will pass, God helping and then, on Wednesday morning, I have to turn my back upon the field of toilsome but cheerfully performed work for the Lord, upon which He has employed me these last seven years. Weak has been my strength, very much soiled by God-service most imperfect - my offering - but great and wonderful has been the Divine Mercy, forbearance and long suffering and manifold His blessings, so undeserved. Thanks forevermore, be unto His most Holy Name! Amen. A blessing from on high also upon these people, especially those of my former parish - a blessing of all good things in Jesus X!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 188)

**Wednesday, December 5, 1877 (P.M.), Glen Cove**

News has come from Lenoir that Br. Bland, "incumbent" of the Parish of St. James, is to leave the place in a few weeks. Since the information comes directly by a letter (only a few lines of the most formal thanks for the use of our goods left in the rectory) of his wife to mine, it is of course, authentic. The letter contains no statement whither he is going, nor to what work, nor the precise time - no more than a bare declaration of the fact; dry, stiff and cold - exactly like

himself. He has trained his pliable wife, admirably. He would do for the training of flees and canaries. Almost from the start, this result could have been predicted for Mr. Bland. He adopted the very course to alienate the effectiveness of his people, every one of them and starve himself out. Only a few weeks ago, he fulminated from the pulpit, in the presence of many outsiders, what he imagined would be a humbling castigation to his parishioners but which proved only an embitterment of feelings already not too sweet or amiable. Under such provocation, they would, of course resent, and that no doubt, send him off so soon. When over a year ago I left Lenoir, I advised a course of frank and truthful adjustment between the parties, an open declaration of difficulties and conditions and a separation in peace. Now, the separation has come, as it must, without peace. Nothing else would happen. The Vestry persisted in hushing up or passing by, what grievances evidently existed, continuing the engagement with their rector and at the same time, withdrawing more and more their support and attachment. Their respect for him as a man, they had denied years before and scarcely retained that for his office. Mr. Bland's irritable temper and injudicious talk and preaching combined to facilitate the breach and yet, few would admit that he was in reality, neglected and ill-treated beyond reason and desert. There is fault on both sides, as most always in such cases. But the poor man has really mistaken his calling. He is unfit for a pastor. He lacks common sense in dealing with people's foibles and peculiarities. He is vain and jealous, reserved and formal; a routine man who can magnetize nobody and supply no impetus, so much needed in a parish from the pastor to the people as their leader. His good qualities, which are many, are overborne by those that bring him into antagonism with the very ones somehow it is most essential to conciliate. And withal, he cannot command regard for superior talents or attainments, and by these, maintain a position.

In my opinion, it would have been more salutary for the parish to be without a clergyman for some time than to maintain a position

scarcely less than hypocritical and of doubtful honesty, knowing that to drive slow starvation and plain neglect were the consequence of Mr. Bland's remaining, instead by an upright, manly settlement vacating his place, earning thereby, the reputation of Christian equity and straightforward dealing and presenting the parish without blame, to the Bishop as a candidate for another pastor. Now, he will do his best to spread the belief that he was purposely and deliberately starved out and so compelled to resign: virtually driven away. It will certainly appear so and the parish has incurred a stain not easily forgotten or obliterated and which must operate disastrously in the obtaining of another clergyman for the place. Alas! My poor old parish!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 190)

**Thursday, December 13, 1877 Glen Cove L.I.**

In a vestry meeting of St. Paul's Parish of this place (Glen Cove L.I.) and held this evening, I was formally and lonely elected the assistant minister of the same. Only the facts I know from Rev. J.C. Middleton, Rector, but not the particulars, if there are any to the matter. Holding a recognized position of office in the Diocese gives me at least a seat and vote in the Dioc. Convention and altogether, is better than an undefined floating, though the actual work done by me may be no other or more than heretofore.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 190)

**Monday Night, December 24, 1877 Christmas Eve, L.I.**

It is nigh one hour of midnight to the beginning of that blessed day on which the whole church throughout the world celebrates the joys of a Savior's birth into this poor, wretched world. The sky overhead is without cloud and the starry host glitters down into our darkness like another angel-glory proclaiming "good tidings and peace

and good will to men." All the week past and today, I have given, in order that the house of the Lord here, might appear in due festal garb for tomorrow's precious truth and already this evening, was present actively at the children's festival in the tiny chapel of Lattingtown, (Long Island) where the ladies presented me with a fine cassock, some others having sent me before, a suitable surplice to be worn tomorrow by me in church. And now, I am at home again, sitting here in my hall by the stove at an improvised table: a drawing board.

**NOTE: Pages 191-229, missing)**

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 230)

**April 23, 1879 (P.M.)**

My poor little mother is gone! The house seems so lonely without her. Her room door is open and the things she used; her books she so constantly and with so much favor read, lie on the bed and table; the chair I made in Westerly and which has been called the "Bishop's Chair" because so many dignitaries sat in it and that was also her principal seat, stands near the window, vacant. But no feeble affectionate voice comes now from the room as I pass it, calling "good night, Papa;" nor any groans and complaints because of her rheumatic pains and sleepless hours; nor any broken sentences of soliloquy as she ran over aloud, her thoughts about past and present - though not far-reaching were those thoughts; nor of much variety and mental depth, for the poor thing viewed in most matters like a child, yet curiously mingled the shrewdness of age and glimpses of singular energy. Ah me! She has been with me again for nearly two years and I thought my roof would cover her to her last hour on earth but the Lord sends me off once more from my mooring upon a long journey she would not endure and even if she might, the press of my

circumstances would forbid her going with us since we have absolutely no house to go into unless my studio were called so. But she went, I am glad to say, in good spirits, like a child pleased with the change and with wonderful endurance under her infirmities, walked with my help to the depot and when in the car, did not seem exhausted.

My brother, Fritz and his wife, came to take her to their own roof and one of the younger daughters of brother George is to wait upon her so that she will not lack the much-needed attention. Will she have the same gentle kindness, forbearance and considerate care from her other daughter-in-law that she had from my good and dutiful wife? Alas! I fear no. Lizzie is a "boss" with bossy ways and a deal of selfish assertion; and what happiness and comfort can that spirit confer upon my old, decrepit and broken-down little mother? To deprive her of a home in my house, subject her to this serious change and seemingly shift the care of her on other shoulders is, by far, the hardest part of my forced move and a sad, deplorable feature. God help her. When I must leave for the south and say good-bye to her, it will, in all probability be for this life, for who knows when I shall have the means to travel north again.



(Johannes Oertel Diary – Archival Transcription Page 231)

**Saturday, May 17, 1879 (P.M.) Lenoir NC**

Another chapter of life has opened for me. This book, by oversight in the last moments hurry for getting to the cars, was left by

me at the rectory in Glen Cove and has just reached me by mail tonight. I can now recount only by sketches.

We, that is my wife and sons and self, left Glen Cove on the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, it being Saturday. When on the steamer for Richmond and sailing down towards the narrows, my wife called to my recollection the same date, 31 years before. I then left my parental home in Germany as emigrant to this country. That was on a Sunday. How strange the coincidence! Was this later emigration from the north as radical as the one from my native land to America? Not improbable. I have come to establish a house here; a family homestead, by the grace of God consequently, to remain.

The week before starting was hard on me. On the Sunday before I had to say farewell to St. Paul's congregation: first, at early celebration (9 A.M.) at Lattingtown Chapel to my dear friends there, a trying ordeal; then, in the Village Church, after preaching at the 11 o'clock service. – Monday and Tuesday nights, I spent respectively at the residence of Mr. James Russell, No. 10 East 59<sup>th</sup> Street, N.Y. and at that of my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Fogg, making farewell calls to Kate Bowen and Cousin Mary Carr and a sad one to my poor old mother in her little attic room with its clean but very simple surroundings. I found her comfortable and cheerful, having stood the journey much better than was anticipated. Shall I see her dear face again in this life? On Wednesday, nearly all my goods were gotten from the Russell house; part to the depot and some to the rectory, where now were my headquarters. I took tea that evening at Gen. Th. Piercall. On Thursday, I walked to Dosori's to remain the night under the roof of Mrs. Price, for in that house, I count of my dearest friends in Glen Cove, Misses Henrietta, Eliza Thompson and the two daughters of Mrs. Price, Mathilda and Hattie. One more sweet evening we had together; then, on the day following, Eddy Price drove me to the houses of Mrs. John Sowardyke and Mrs. Eliz. Sowardyke and after dinner, Henrietta and Hattie accompanied us to the village and the house of their near relative (sister to Henrietta), Mrs. Mumsell. There, at last, I

kissed them farewell. A few more calls – at Mr. Cockes and Mrs. Johnson and the bitter work of leave-taking was over for that day. My wife had come from the city and this last evening in Glen Cove was spent in the rectory. On it, a letter came from friend Fogg, making the astounding offer of \$500 for the “Holy Grail,” in order to set my mind at ease as to the means when I should arrive in the south. What could be more surprising? On Saturday morning early, we were accompanied to the depot by Brother Middleton and Mrs. Louisa Anderson; Gen. Pennell also coming to meet us. Presently, the steam whistle blew – the farewell words were hurriedly spoken and last shake of the hand to those on the platform – and we whirled along and away from Glen Cove.

On the steamer “Wyonoke,” other meetings of dear faces and more farewells had to be taken. Our daughter, Lena was there and our niece, Annie Toney and brother Fritz with Eliza, brother George’s daughter and cousin Gen. Eugene Carr and his wife. For nearly an hour we could talk before the signal warned them that the bridge was to be drawn in. Now, a warm embrace and they must go on shore and leave us in the moving vessel. All stationed themselves on the end of the pier and we, on the upper deck. From these places, we waved hands and handkerchiefs until (at) first, faces and finally, figures became indistinguishable and we were fairly afloat and rapidly speeding down the bay. The city itself soon vanished and one after another, Brooklyn and Staten and Long Island and the lighthouses of Sandy Hook and Navesink and we were out upon the heaving deep.

All is yet, like a dream. I had roamed for weeks as one entranced and though awake to facts around me, seemed to realize these, not as facts. It is still in a measure so. A new era seems indeed, to have begun. Ever since our going south was determined upon, the direful snarl and persecuting disaster were bidden to retire from my steps and our path was opened and smoothed with singular felicity. The sale of “Hope,” (a significant name and subject to advent such an undertaking), the free passes, the offer of Mr. Fogg, which is

this very evening, by a letter from him enclosing checks for \$500, has become a complete fact of friendly kindness. Even a promise to pay \$45 from Mr. Thomas Pearcall, Junior and \$25 from Rev. J. Sparks for services rendered him in Roslyn almost a year ago; both debts I had given up as lost, have, without effort, arranged themselves in the order of helps on our way. How can I fail to see God's approval upon the plans we have conceived, first as a hungry necessity and then as a hope of future improvements?

We arrived at Richmond about 1P.M., May 5<sup>th</sup>, took the Danville train for Salisbury at 10 ½ P.M.; made immediate connection at the latter place for Hickory Station and from there by conveyance, came into Lenoir at 7 P.M. on Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> and were hospitably at the house of my former senior warden, Judge Clinton Albert Cilley. There, we are still; that is my wife and I; the boys going at once to the house of Hon. George Folk.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 235)

I have already occupied my time to purpose and profit (so I hope), in reproducing four playful, ideal compositions of the Seasons, made many years ago, and they approach completion. Mr. Js. Russell has desired them with a view to a friend whom he believes will purchase. Of the five hundred for the "Holy Grail," four hundred are designed as a nucleus fund aiding in the purchase of a homestead for us all. If these "Seasons" sell, another two at least can be added soon. Perhaps toward the close of this week, I shall expedite Fred to Asheville on a tour of inspection as a kind of forerunner.

The Dios. Convention meets this week at Fayetteville and I have to take the place of the Rector, Rev. Mr. Rush, in the services of today. He has early celebration, but how meager was the attendance this morning! One person besides my own wife and youngest boy. Once more, I preached at the noon service in my old place, and on (an) old sermon of eight years ago. But I cannot advance here under present

conditions. Let me hope that this laborious state does not continue for a great length of time.

I have also addressed a letter to Bp. Littlejohn in reference to the gift made several years ago to the Cathedral at Garden City of my painting "The Shadow of the Rock," desiring its being returned to me, rather than have it consigned to oblivion through the egotistical enmity of Judge Hilton, the ruling money person. No answer yet. What will the Bishop do?

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**Wednesday, May 28, 1879, Lenoir NC**

Bp. Littlejohn has answered and I have written to Mr. Fogg and extended to him, authority to remove the picture frame from Garden City. After I learn of its removal, there is but one more step to take for my complete separation from the Diocese of Long Island, namely my asking from the Bishop, letters dismissory and that I will not delay longer than needs are received from my son, Fred, who has started this morning for Asheville on a tour of inspection.

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**Wednesday, June 4, 1879**

Fred has written. It is not encouraging, concerning land at Asheville. It is too high for our purse and not rich; neither is the country and naturally a grass producing one. We have applied to Mr. Thomas W. Walton of Morganton, for advice.

From the Vestry of Grace Church, Morganton, I have received an invitation for holding Div. Services about twice a month, the Parish being without a Rector. Rev. N. Falls resigned some time ago. I have agreed to come over on the first Sunday after Trinity.

**Tuesday, June 17, 1879, (A.M.)**

Starting on Saturday morning, in company with my son, Fred and on horseback, I went to Morganton for the purpose of fulfilling my engagement. We arrived about 2 P.M. at the house of Dr. Laxton, which was assigned to me as my quarters. His wife is a church woman and the place was considered neutral ground, where members of the two factions that have troubled the Parish for years past, could meet and call upon me. Soon after dinner, Fred rode out to consult with Mr. Ths. Walton about land purchase and reported to me, having seen a tract of fifty acres, mostly wooded but some six acres cleared and standing in corn well-fenced, embracing the building site close to the main road and all at the low price of \$600. In the evening, I rode out with him to inspect and was most delighted with the wide and lovely prospect all about on those fine mountain chains that stand about Morganton as grand sentinels. What a place to have a studio and house on! I believe the most beautiful situation near a desirable town that could be bought. We were invited to take supper with Mr. Walton and there, I met the former rector, Rev. Nelson Falls, again having seen him before, in the village. At the morning service on Sunday, the first after Trinity, for which the church provides, that compare discussion of Christian morals and practice in the Epistle and Gospel which teach of "love to the brother," the Church was well-filled with a well-dressed congregation (for Morganton is an old aristocratic place.). Mr. Falls, with family present and a goodly number of these remained to H. Communion. Again, in the evening, the congregation was a full one.

By previous invitation, I took dinner with Mr. Falls, who built himself a fine house, about a mile from town. He poured many of his complaints into my unwilling ears but I did not comprehend the drift of them and have already forgotten.

On Monday, my boy and (my)self, rode out to the site for the Diocesan boy's school where Mr. Falls showed me the plans to the first hall just commenced building, and there, Dr. Laxton meeting us, we explored more fully, the stretch of land under consideration of purchase, the result being that I became entirely satisfied it would be not only safe, but expedient at once, to buy, providing only that my wife should see it first and so, I told Mr. Walton, who met us on the road. I had promised one of the Vestry, Col. Jeroine, to take the road home, round by his house and so, we started off in the afternoon on our long ride, not reaching Lenoir until nearly 10 o'clock and quite tired. Of course, we had to "relate our experience" and my wife's conclusion was to purchase without hesitation. In the name of God Almighty, I propose to do it. Very strangely, His favor has smoothed down one obstacle after another ever since we left north and I most thankfully, can recognize and do acknowledge His Gracious Hand from one step to another that we have been led. He seems now, to give me the work of a peace-maker in an old but retrograded and distracted parish where the material is good and the opportunities promising. May He also endow me with the power of grace of His Holy Spirit and thoroughly fit me as His instrument with all humility, wisdom and energy, both of mind and body!

I have made arrangements to go to Morganton again next Sunday and take my spouse along.

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### **Monday, June 23, 1879**

We were in Morganton and have come back with news that those important matters of parish and land are virtually settled. All went singularly smooth. The vestry passed unanimous resolutions that I should be provisionally installed to fill the place until Bp. Lyman could be informed, he being expected to come up in a few weeks; but they

are determined that the Parish should not become an appendage to Wilderforce School as the Bishop proposed, no doubt, in order to meet the otherwise difficult support of an able man and in consequence, my formal election is assured and I have meanwhile, the rectory placed at disposal to move over, as soon as convenient. I have agreed, in deference to Bp. Atkinson's wishes, to accept a stipend but made no condition of amount or means of payment. Concerning the property that we inspected, Mr. Ths. Walton is to receive \$300, or our half of the price, in cash; the remainder to be paid by note of twelve months, at the expiration of which the Deed of Purchase is made out, giving me full and good title to the land. Fred has already gone to Watauga County for the sake of purchasing horses and is desirous to commence work on the land as soon as possible.

We have therefore to move to Morganton in a few weeks and Lenoir will soon lie forever behind in our experience as a life-page, turned over for good and all. – The will of the Lord be done!

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**Tuesday, July 8, 1879, Lenoir NC**

The matter of land purchase is settled. All the papers made out and signed and first payment laid down. We also have two horses and wagon. Fred and I rode the horses to Morganton on Saturday and returned yesterday. They are excellent animals and very cheap, costing with wagon and harnesses, only \$215. The Rectory is to be vacated this week and partially repaired and Fred is going today over there with the first load of our goods.

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**Tuesday, July 22, 1879, (P.M), Lenoir NC**

One more entry into this book in my old studio, which has served me so good a purpose through ten years and under a variety of experiences and vicissitudes. It is the last, by intention and probability. Every single item now is packed and the last loads of my goods ready to go on their final - so let me hope - journey. A few days more and myself and family shall (D.V.) be in Morganton, there to rest from incessant, distressing and expensive wandering. It is not three months since we left Glen Cove and what great and prophetic changes have been wrought by the merciful providence of God in our affairs and situation! And all has gone so smoothly and without a jar or hinderance! Truly, it is a wonderful contrast with the three years immediately preceding. "The blessing of God maketh rich; and He addeth no sorrow to it."

Of course, I know that every earthly care bears its thorns and its thistles. I shall find their spontaneous growth in Morganton. But what of this, if only I know my going thither is the Lord's will, my work His work and my weakness His opportunity? Let it be only thus and then, no difficulty can avail; no emergency to hinder; no circumstances discourage. In the most Holy Name, I go and His might and grace are my shield and my tower.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 241)

**Tuesday, July 29, 1879 (P.M.), Morganton NC**

Since last Saturday, we are here. This, I now write in the rectory, sitting on the front porch and looking across on the rain-surfaced South Mountains. Col. Folk brought over my wife and I came with the son of Dr. J. Scott. We have been since, most kindly entertained by Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Pearson, almost across from the

church. Last Sunday, the church being under repairs and difficult in cleanout, I held Div. Service (Morning Prayer & Sermon) in the Court House. The afternoon, I gave to visiting. We have begun in seriousness, to make ready for housekeeping but find it no easy matter to store and arrange our multifarious goods in a box of such meager accommodations. However, when the new Vestry room is finished; my study under the church in condition, and the house properly cleaned and papered, we shall see order slowly coming out of discouraging confusion.

The same thing, which in the outward belongings of church building and rectory is so distressingly necessary, has also to be done here in the far more serious concern of spiritual matters of the Parish. It is painful to advance a charge of sore neglect and incapacity against a predecessor and brother in the ministry; but Mr. Falls cannot be blameless in leaving all things in such a state of wretched dilapidation and neglect after an occupancy of ten years. Wherever I look and whatever I hear, a sad tale is revealed of a faculty to entangle, waste and perplex; and the discovery exists to both sorrow and shame and indignation. I should feel very greatly relieved if he concluded to depart from this neighborhood and could find work elsewhere. His presence may breed trouble.

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**Saturday, August 9, 1879 (A.M.), Morganton NC**

These are the first lines in my new study under the chancel of the church; a secluded little room looking out directly upon the silent graveyard and then over some fields beyond and to an oak-grown hill with a private residence. That is all. No expansive mountain view, so almost everywhere here, as from the rectory, which looks over to a beautiful range of lower hills called the "South Mountains." I have tinted the walls of this box Venetian red; had a good window

introduced, giving a fair light for the painting of small pictures; made and put up a commodious bookcase and when entirely in order with all my essential things about me, either in the room or a large adjoining closet to be built, shall feel quite like working again. The church is yet far from being completely restored but last week, I put up a rough but suitable pine frame structure - my painting of the "First Harvest" as an altar piece and again, had service both morning and evening, baptizing an infant (Mr. J. Hardin's) at morning prayers. A fence is, at last, surrounding the rectory and although we can hear the pigs grunt outside and clamor for entrance, they can no more forage about the house and have their quarters nightly under the porch. A great comfort this, and not quite so heathenistic as I have felt for the last fortnight. Bishop Lyman's visit was made here last week on Wednesday. The weather was dismally raining all day and two of the vestry, Col. J. Erwin and Mr. Wm. Walton were by illness detained from meeting with the Bishop who, of course, was from the moment of his arrival, captured by Mr. Falls and conducted to his house out of town, where he would be completely inaccessible to anyone but himself and the special ones who could see the Bp. in Mr. Falls' presence. An unsatisfactory explanation was volunteered by the Bp., why he passed by Morganton in his official appointments for visitation and the annexation of Parish and School discussed, which the Bishop vows to be his scheme but which he admits impossible against the express wishes of the Parish. The Vestry had pledged their word by recorded resolution that action on my election to the rectorship should not be deferred beyond the end of last month and yet, because Mr. Th. Walton urged that by reason of private business and absence, he could not attend, the divisive meeting should be postponed until this day and it was done and in consequence, my case must wait against good faith and promise. It is true that a majority feel indignant and very resolute; but, the breach of their own action has nevertheless been made and the senior warden was the instigator of a manifest injustice that savors as if even to the last possible chance, the schemes in favor of his son-in-law (Mr. Falls) should hope for consideration and success.

This whole business has been one of wretched wire-pulling and intended sacrifice of Parish interest; not, unmixed with untruthfulness and low concerning that serviced to care little for the feelings and good of others; or, for the welfare of the cause of Christ. May this be the day where, in God's pleasure, final judgment will be pronounced against it.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 244)

**Tuesday, August 12, 1879 (P.M.)**

The proposed Vestry meeting was not held until on Sunday last, after morning service on account of the unavoidable absence of two of the members at Rutherfordton. The others met but decided to wait until that same hour and there(by), force the election without further delay. I advised patience and to wait for the arrival of the others so that no occasion should be given for subsequent complaint. However, the gentlemen were at church and after service, the meeting could proceed, the result being my election and call to the rectorship, which action was duly consummated to me by the Secretary Gen. Johnston Jarvis, the brother of my well-remembered pupil, Annie Isabella. I at once, wrote an acceptance and yesterday, by letter, resigned my position of Assistant Minister of St. Paul's, Glen Cove, L.I., and also requested Bishop Littlejohn to forward to the Bishop of this Diocese, my letters divisory.

I am therefore, regularly installed Rector of this Parish. The vote, I heard it rumored, was not unanimous; two of the Vestry not concurring or not voting; but I imagine their motives, which have no reason in personal objections. Anyhow, the suspense is over and anxious minds may now dismiss their apprehensions and with forgetting of the past, bend themselves to a new race in the fear of God and with the strength and wisdom He alone can supply.

As to myself – what shall I say? The Lord has put me into a position I sought not and laid its responsibilities upon me. Where else shall I look but to Him for help in my weakness and light in my ignorance?

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 245)

**August 31, 1879, 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

Bishop Lyman has been here; not as an official but only on a friendly visitation. His coming was providential. By Mr. Falls' own request, he was entertained by the Parish and not, as heretofore, by himself. The request had the masque of inconvenience to his wife because she had no cook; but I accepted gladly the ruse and willingly provided for the Bishop, handsome entertainment at the house of Mr. Cameron Pearson. Accordingly, on Wednesday last, we called for him at the depot. The train was belated and he did not arrive until 11 o'clock at night. On Thursday, Mr. Pearson, having to go to Newtown on business, the Bishop was left much to myself and that gave opportunity for conversation on topics where the presence of Mr. Falls would have been a decided interference. In answer to his questions, I had to state the condition of this Parish and while away to see Gen. Johnston Jarvis who had that day, undergone an operation. Mr. Pearson acquainted the Bishop with the prejudices existed against him in the Parish, all of which are directly traceable to Mr. Falls' inception and most singular hallucinations. The Bishop was indignantly surprised and stated that he had long foreseen the troubles in this Parish; had advised Mr. Falls to leave, in which he declined doing on the plea that only "a few; two or three malicious persons" were opposed to him; had never intended to annex the Parish to the college (to be established) as a chapel and unless it were as a temporary and provisional measure for the convenience of both and while the Parish had no rector, that he never thought to employ Mr. Falls, either as President of the college or tutor; but at most, as a clerk, only.

So then, we know where the disturbance of this Parish has its inception and nourishment and the confidence in the Bishop can be restored, which has been so seriously impaired. I am doing all that is possible towards that end with the people. We are, it is consoling to believe, at least merging out of this wretched condition of strife and dissention and can give our thoughts and energies to building up what has been wasted by neglect and incapacity. Astonishing, indeed, is the disorder and slovenliness and it will be long, ere other habits are cultivated, both with the Vestry and people.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 246)

**September 3, 1879, from A Letter to Mr. A. Berger, Artist, N.Y.  
(Translated From the German)**

Certainly, down here, there is not much art. You see beautiful nature and pleasant people but little culture and can talk only with few about art. For me, this is not a small loss. It is always the same in this world. You exchange one thing for another and can very seldom have both. Through many years, I worked, zealous to become a good pastor but the northern people ignored me without recognizing my religious idealism. My favorite plans had to be sacrificed. The younger and more productive years are gone and different desirables, more concentrated and specific took the place of the previous ones. The younger basic thoughts were changed, more up-to-date, but not much changed.

And I am now here in the quietness of the back country, far from the art galleries and dreams of my plans, which have nothing in common with the world around me and I strive patiently, for their accomplishment, even with all the difficulties and delays and in spite of a mountain of ideas that an art person, in his gold scale domineering, evaluates and him, a spot of honor guaranties; or his desires are damned to a junk closet.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 247)

**September 27, 1879**

I just returned from Raleigh. On Monday A.M, a telegram requested my presence at St. Mary's School for the purpose of giving advice in the alteration of the Chapel for the sake of accommodating a large, new organ. I went at night, gave my suggestions and plans for a small transept; spent a very pleasant week with Mr. Bennett Sneeds, Mrs. Kate Meares, my friend and Laura Norwood, for whom I was so happy as to procure the position of teacher of drawing and painting in that most agreeable church school. Besides, I had the satisfaction of saving a building, the work of old Mr. Upjohn and sacred to hundreds of pupils by very dear and hallowed memories, from losing its identity of interior by foolish alterations that were imminent.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 248)

**Tuesday, September 30, 1879 (P.M.)**

It is a frequent experience that the freshest and truest of a person's thoughts are often incorporated in letters to friends whose sympathy and knowledge of one's details of life calls henceforth and therefore many biographies have been made up of letters; like Beethoven. Therefore, here is the insertion again, for the sake of preserving it to myself of a bit of feeling from an epistle written just now, to my friend, Henrietta Thompson, way off in Glen Cove L.I.

"Aye, aye!" Frank Price has got a first-class position (Superintending Engineer in Egypt for the shipping of a great obelisk to this country) and can win favor for himself, of which I am very glad. Instead of coming to North Carolina to dig in the woods, he will be doing a work published in the papers and applauded, if successful and will be, for a while, "the hero of the hour," as novels have it. Meanwhile, my own big boy is down here in this quick land of slow

habits, farming, cutting hay today and on another, hauling fodder or wood, or building a fence around our newly acquired possessions. So, also, with my own labors. They do not tell before the world, eager of noise and display. They go on very still, like the seed-dropping of the husbandman that stirs no one; it is such an old fashioned, common affair that has in it, nothing wonderful or exciting. And I may not ever see that seed ripening or enjoy the fruit thereof but may have to wait all these long and weary years of toil and faith until my dial shows the hour for departing to the fields yonder, where the Giver of Light and Warmth and Blessings has shown in light, surrounded by the quiet sleepers of the churchyard with the church overhead reminding me constantly, of religious duties and cares and to little bits of pictures - but rarely touched, instead of the inspiring surfaces of many feet, calling for tremendous effort and concentrated endeavors. - "Si transit gloria mundi!" - and let it pass, for it is but shadow, at best and we poor mortals too often pursue after "vain shadows," deluded as to true greatness and lasting value and comforting glory. For God's ways are not like man's ways - only we are so slow in learning His deep truths and understanding His hidden counsels. The Lord gives us wisdom that we may penetrate below the surface of things and thereby obtain "that peace which the world cannot give," neither take away!

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 250)

### **Saturday, October 18, 1779**

The Bishop of the Diocese has been here. His visitation occurred on Tuesday last. I presented to him nine persons for confirmation at the evening service, the largest class ever confirmed in this Parish and singularly enough the same number with my first class in Lenoir.

On Wednesday morning, I made with him, a flying visit to the school buildings (Ravenscroft) and there, we took cars for Statesville, where convocation was in session and the little church was also

consecrated on Thursday. I met several of my old friends among the clergy there: Dr. Braxton Bruel from Asheville, Mr. Osborne and Gen. Webster. Mr. Falls was also present. I was lodged in the house of Mr. Ramsey, editor of one of the local papers, with his widowed mother and two lovely daughters.

(At this point, the text skips pages from 251-269)

---up her penitent spirit into the hands of her Savior. She was a special love of mine, so maidenly and graceful and simple and good; of a complexion like one glorified, too fair for the tempests of this rough and evil world. It is meek that such unsullied souls should seek their House in Paradise at an early age. Eternal peace be unto her!

I have just thrown away about three weeks of hard labor on a canvas, after discovering a total failure. Change followed change until the whole thing grew disgusting and cumbersomely heavy and dull and stiff. The fact is, I have grown dull and stiff, myself. Partly my surroundings and also, absorption of my mind in other directions, have added disastrously upon my artistic flexibility of producing. I have done too much "studio painting." I must resolutely saddle and ride another horse. My mode of study and work must be totally changed and I have already begun on a new canvas to make a resolution. The time has come again when I must, unaided and solitary, enact the Munchausian Prodigy and by a superhuman effort, lift myself by my own hair from the engulfing swamp upon terra firma.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 269)

### **Wednesday, September 15, 1880**

A very important step has again been made in my life, namely my resignation of the Rectorship of Grace Church Parish in this town (Morganton) has been handed in to the secretary of the Vestry to be acted on today by that body. It is to take effect on December 15<sup>th</sup> of

this year; thus, giving time for the procuring of another minister. I know not, but of last year especially I seem...

(At this point, the text skips pages from 270-273)

The course is extraordinary, to be sure, and we may smile and pronounce it contrary to reason and to experience. For the usual mode and purpose of art study, I grant it is so. But I have not followed mine own devises and will. The Lord has forced me to this place and this course and perhaps, I am a little of His meaning and humbly bow to His Diviniare. Solitariness and struggle - these are the marks of my career and the ideal of my life is above the clouds. Travelers to lofty peaks and whereabouts must not hope for large company.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 273)

**Thursday, October 21, 1880 (P.M.)**

Another bubble has burst. It is strange, how in my experience, they come up as from marshy ground to allure and deceive. There was that Garden City affair, promising so much and ending in such a sublimated disaster and now, a devoted but foolish friend proposes a scheme almost dazzling in its magnitude and extent, just to blow out like a tallow candle and end in smoke and unsavory odor. It seems all so absurd and ludicrous to look back upon! I wonder a sane man could, for a moment, entertain notions so utterly visionary and lacking all foundation in sober fact and transmit there, notions to me, as a scheme of action and contract. But there it was, Edward Hyde, the Methodist preacher, who proposed that a certain company or society with a certain nameless rector at their head of wonderful humanitarian enthusiasm and energy, would enter with me into a regular engagement for painting my grand series of the Place of Redemption and four colossal canvasses for a stipulated compensation, part of the contracted provisions being the devoting and stated portions of the

proceeds from exhibition and sale of reproductions to the creation of a free Christian Gallery.

(At this point, the text skips pages from 274-304)

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 304)

**Sunday, July 31, 1881 (P.M.)**

Another of these doleful Sundays. How many more? But now, they have been forced to an end. Last Friday, the Bishop being here, we met him by appointment; that is, Gen. Jones, Esq. Pane, J. Hennem, my son, Fred and myself, at Greer's house. I would not call on him in the house of the arch hypocrite, Cameron Pearson but wrote some lines of welcome. The meeting lasted nearly three hours and was dark and dreary. We know now, our doom. Episcopal authority has pronounced. The score has skillfully shifted and from the aggrieved and oppressed, we have become the offenders. Marvelous to relate: but so, the case stands. In fact, we are now, also accusers of the accuser and he, the Bishop. He blamed but that is too mild a word – he violently condemned us and especially me, as the ringleader, shaking meanwhile his fist at me; "for trampling under foot," his Episcopal authority in not going to the services the men, held in that forbidden church, whom he sent here as his representatives and he would adapt more of the comedies of these difficulties here which were proposed but obstinately rejected, every one, in turn, entirely passive in censure or punishment of the coldhearted, designing villains who have made all this trouble and are now triumphant through the Bishop's weak countenance. He is afraid to touch them. They have position and money and may go Scott-free; but we may be with entire safety, abused and condemned. However, the condemnation has not been one-sided. None were afraid of him. God forbid, I should be disrespectful to the Episc. Office. But no man bearing that office can

attempt to force me into abandonment of right and principle by the use of his authority.

But how does the case actually stand? From the very beginning, the Bishop has been told by us by letter and word of mouth, in the most emphatic, plain, reiterated terms, that no ordinary or extraordinary means of conciliation were available in this case, or provided an adequate remedy, short of the resignation forever of those three offenders, or permission to form a new Parish; that we could, on no account, enter that Church building again while these men represented, officially, the Parish; that we stood before the whole community as witnesses of right against wrong; of truth against lying hypocrisy and tyranny and were committed publicly, to that position; therefore, dared not compromise the same, that if those very means the Bishop chose were adapted, they would utterly and signally fail of their purpose and leave the heterogenous ingredients of the turmoil exactly where they were before, only making them more apparent and in consequence, less capable of uniting; that we could not adopt such remedies, if used, because the evil lay too deep and could only be met by radical measures. This all, he was repeatedly told in unmistakable language. And yet, in the very face of it, and moreover, as himself stated, by the suggestion and cooperation of these offenders, he adopted those identical measures we, from the start repudiated and pronounced hopeless and then, when we simply continue in our course of right and protest, he turns with wrathful vehemence upon us as if the blame of the whole matter had been incurred by our rebellious fault and so, shifts the entire aspect of things, making the injured the offenders that must be punished and requiring all the concessions from those who were outraged and suffered by malice and revenge of low cowardly pot-house politicians who are fondled and condoned with the fortified, in their wretched and polluting course. We pressed him boldly and directly with the issue and he would flinch and turn aside and had not the ingenuous mealiness to acknowledge that he had rather shielded the offense of these men of bad repute, although he

fully favors their character and here, they go about with lies and hypocrisy and personal schemes and that the move was made in the interest of these schemes. We charged the Bishop directly, with these things. And moreover, I accused him of withholding from me, his sympathy and advice during the weary space of six months of what was the most trying affliction and while a number of distressed people naturally looked to me for counsel and comfort, the Bishop would not give, as was expected of him, and many things more, equally true, and no less severe, I was forced, by himself and his unjust dealing, to utter to his face; nor could he make answers to any of them; but, even referred to the hollow charge that we had "resisted Episcopal authority and so made reconciliation impossible."

How blind and perverted. He is in the toils of these very men. Their shrewdness is too much for him. He has become this veritable dupe. From the very beginning, the Bishop missed. What I seriously question and others also do, if they have really the legal power to shut the church against me and the whole congregation and he could not act against them on legal ground, why could he not crush them by moral force? Supposing, instead of tacitly acquiescing in their action and giving them countenance by his presence and help, he had said to these men: "You have done an unholy and unnecessary thing. You have shut the church doors against a faithful Presbyter without cause. I must condemn your action, legal or illegal and I will not come into your church until you have repented and amended." Supposing he had come here, appointed a service in the court house and invited me to take my part: this miserable faction must have stood rebuked and abashed and powerless and the truth and right would have been vindicated and peace made in the only possible way for a lasting and honorable peace. – But No! He takes sides with bad men against one of his most faithful clergy (so far as faith to the Church and her authority is concerned) and so not only injures this Parish most deeply and irretrievably but injures the cause and respect of the Church in this town and makes it a jeer and reproach and breaks down all

respect for himself. Besides, what injury has not resulted to many individuals; injury that may have consequences beyond place and time!!

It matters little after this, what the Bishop will do. On me, he has inflicted what will make my continuance in Morganton and in the Diocese a very undesirable thing; nay, impossible. Even for my eldest son, the place cost tenable character and we have already discussed the chances of his leaving and our selling out. Of course, my plan to go to Italy stands now all the more eagerly to pursuit. I have, last week, finished the second painting for Rob McKinney and shall send it to New York in a few days. Then, there are two more to be painted, both commissions; one a portrait. But that Friday of consultation can be written down as the BLACK FRIDAY! For on it, truth and fidelity were rebuked, honest and pious hearts palsied and given over to humiliation and mourning and malicious wickedness exalted to triumph. A sorrowful day it has been, every way. The consequences will soon become apparent. The fruit must be as the seed sown. I am heartsick over it all.

(Johannes Oertel Diary - Archival Transcription Page 307)

**Monday, August 8, 1881 (A.M.)**

Not results but gradual modifications or changes, I can support. We are undergoing a molding process - whether understand of the molding of locals or the molding of images. There are only crude forms to be seen at present, possibilities or the undenied makeover with stubs of roughly used covering. Time is needed - more time and more waiting and more patience. Uncertainties perplex the soul but we are kept in obedience.

This, in regard to our moving in church matters and in family, but also in regard to my going to Italy. Want of money is the obstacle. I have many works out but they do not sell. I can hear nothing from

them. So, calculations fail. They have, perhaps, basis enough but cannot be hurriedly realized. What then?

It would be only one more of the thousand disappointments of my life. Yet, by them all, I have learned that God rules; not my will and foresight: and can I let Him? What He does must be best and if best, I would not alter it if I could. If it is best, I should stay right here, this must be a better place for me than Italy, both for study and work. What special task I am to do must be performable here, better than elsewhere. In the absence of human facilities and impetus, grand works of art, art society and art atmosphere – I must more directly rely on divine help; the help that furnished Bezalel<sup>3</sup> in the wilderness and Soloman in isolated Judea and could fit other kinds of divine instruments, such as Burus<sup>4</sup> and Beraugere<sup>5</sup> in seclusion and extreme poverty. The Lord has many ways of doing His business. I must let Him alone, in what He wants of me.

I have recently finished reading Thomas Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero Worship," and may give my impression for he was to me, a comparatively new writer, though the confession may not be to my literary credit. He had, for me, something startling: abrupt in his sentences, rugged and bold in thought, almost mannered in idiom and expression, whether designed

(here ends the Diary of Johannes Adam Simon Oertel)

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<sup>3</sup> In Exodus 31:1-6 and chapters 36 to 39, Bezalel was the chief artisan of the Tabernacle and was in charge of building the Ark of the Covenant.

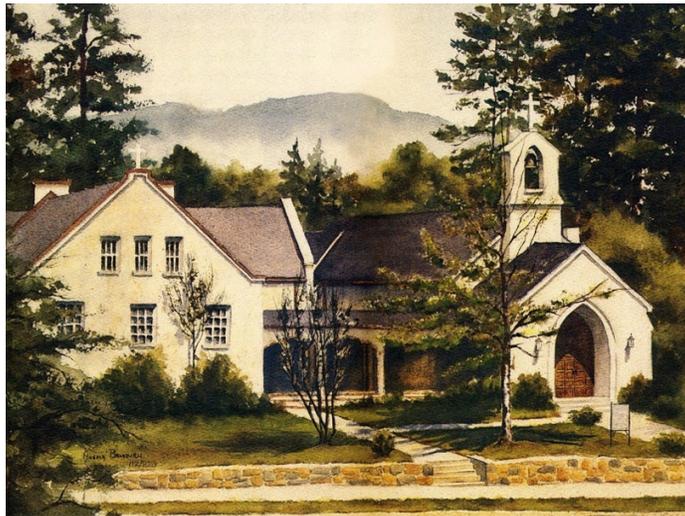
<sup>4</sup> Burus – an origin myth that purports to describe the origin of some feature of the natural or social world; such as legendary, fierce crocodile creatures inhabiting an area. *Wikipedia*

<sup>5</sup> Beraugere – A women's fashion standard derived from art during the Victorian era. *Journal de Modes Beraugere* by Heloise LeCoir was a Fashion Journal considered to be a showcase for fine women's dress, romanticism and mysticism.

## Afterward

Oertel's story does not end in Morganton. In the years that follow, he and his family call many places home, including Florida, Washington, District of Columbia and Tennessee. During these years, he continues his painting and exhibits his artwork in several cities. He buries his daughter in 1889 and ten years later, receives notification that the Doctor of Divinity degree has been conferred upon him by the University of the South. Oertel spends the last years of his life with his sons, in Vienna, Virginia. His wife dies in February of 1907 and Oertel joins her in December of 1909.

Saint James Episcopal Church, home to 22 paintings by Johannes Adam Simon Oertel, continues to gather and share information about the artist. The church archives committee and individual parishioners strive to remain good stewards of this body of religious art which has been left to our care. Saint James remains a Parish in the Diocese of Western North Carolina, where Oertel lived and labored as rector and artist during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The church survives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as a home for faithful parishioners in the small, mountain town of Lenoir, where his legacy of faith through hardships has become legendary.



Watercolor of St. James Episcopal Church by Angela Talton Bradburn

Translations from the German by Oscar Dobereiner

Transcriptions by St. James Episcopal Church parishioners, Sherry Miller, Karen Tolbert, Sandra Scobie



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