

Year 1814-1914

Sketch History

OF

WALTON'S CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH



JULY 9, 1814—JULY 9, 1914

BY

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SKETCH HISTORY OF

Walton's Creek Baptist Church

At the close of the Seventeenth century, Beaver Dam Church, in Ohio County, and Hazel Creek Church, in Muhlenberg County, were the only Baptist organizations in all the Green River section of Kentucky. In 1803, members from Hazel Creek constituted Nelson Creek Church. In 1812, Buck Creek Church, McLean County, was constituted of members holding letters from Beaver Dam.

July 9, 1814, 38 members from the Beaver Dam Church, having secured letters for that purpose, met and with the assistance of Elders Benjamin Talbott, Joseph Taylor and George Render, constituted a new church which was named Walton's Creek. The meeting was probably held at a private home; but that, like many other interesting facts of the history, is left out of the records. One of the circumstances that must necessarily make this sketch a disappointment is the meagerness of the record and the failure to leave us any record of many things that would not only be interesting, but of great historical value.

The constituent members were Jesse Ashby, Thamar Ashby, Jos. Warden, Sarah Warden, Thos. Morton, Garner Morton, Ann Bennett, Elizabeth Ross, Timothy Tichenor, Elizabeth Ross, Timothy Tichenor, Elizabeth Tichenor, Jared Tichenor, Patty Tichenor, Jonas Tichenor, Sarah Tichenor, Thos. Ashby, Katie Ann Ashby, Peter Ashby, Jane Williams, William Ashby, Katie Ross, David Ashby, Elizabeth Ashby, Elizabeth Humphrey, Evan Williams, Rebekah Williams, Stephen Gennings, Rhoda Perigo, Samuel Brashear, Annie Elliott, Geo. Render, Sr., Geo. Render, Jr., Erasmus Bishop, Frankie Rowe, Ann Gallihue, Sarah Rowe, John Williams, Polly Williams, and Rebekah Williams. August 15th, Benjamin Humphrey and Hannah Brashear, who held letters from Beaver Dam, but were not present July 9th, were received by letter. Thus, with a membership of 40—18 brethren and 22 sisters—the young Church began its work, which for one hundred years has constantly made its impression upon the lives and characters of the thousands of people that have come within the circle of its influence. That circle was for many years a wide one. The territory covered by this Church extended from Rockport on the south to Rough River on the north, and from Hartford on the east to Cypress Creek and Cypress Lake on the west. Walton's Creek has always been an evangelistic Church. Very early in its history evidences appear of an ef-

fort to extend soul-saving influence into the extensive territory west of Green River. When a start had thus been made the Church began meeting occasionally, by special appointment, at private homes near Island, McLean County, and later near Moorman, Muhlenberg County, where converts were approved for baptism. Thus were the foundations laid for the constitution and growth into greatness of New Hope, South Carrollton, Bethlehem, Island, Station, Sacramento and the others that have gone out from them. By the same process West Point, West Providence, Central Grove, Smallhous and Centertown have been constituted nearer to us. That spirit of evangelism so plainly seen through the records of the past and so blessed of God in its results, still lives in Walton's Creek Church; and worthy sons of noble sires are still striving to supply with the bread of life such destitution as may be found within our reach. The successful and vigorous Mission Sunday School, near Carter's Ferry, on Rough River, is an example.

It would be interesting to follow the history of the growth of these missionary efforts, but time and space here allowed are too short.

Walton's Creek Church has always been in close touch and organic union with the work of Kentucky Baptists. In July, 1815, when eleven months old, the Church elected messengers to represent it in Gasper River Associa-

tion, of which it remained a member until 1896, when it joined Daviess County Association, remaining a member of that body until the constitution of Ohio County Association in 1901, when it became a constituent member of that body. And every years since 1815 it has elected messengers to the Association at its July meeting except one year when they were elected in August and one when they were elected in June. At every point in the records where there is mention of Missionary work—Home or Foreign—the Church has shown the missionary spirit, and was among the first of this section to take steps to regularly and systematically support our Missionary work. But we are forced to the conclusion that the cash contributions to Missionary work at the present time represents less of the true Missionary spirit than the contributions of time and labor represented during the first fifty years of the life of the Church. For six years there was but small growth of the membership. But beginning with a revival in January, 1820, the growth was rapid. Members were approved for baptism every meeting for eight months; 38 being baptized in that time. Then began that process of evangelistic expansion that made this one of the great mother-churches, and so occupied the territory, that in the large area mentioned above there are three Baptist churches to one of all other denominations combined. The rapid growth

and scattered condition of the membership naturally brought about that condition that gave most of our early churches much trouble. It was but natural that widely separated members, exposed to the dangers of uninformed leaders and teachers of hearsay, would often be led astray. For many years by far the larger part of the written history is a record of the Church's effort to adjust differences, discipline disorderly members and correct unscriptural teachings. Counsel of other churches was occasionally asked, and many instances are recorded of the appointment of brethren to visit other churches to aid them in adjusting difficulties among them. Such committees always reported to the Church the cases they were called to consider and the decisions they rendered. They went as representatives of their Church and on returning rendered an account of their stewardship, for the approval of the Church. When we remember that these journeys were laborious and difficult, on account of lack of roads and bridges, we must highly honor those servants who for Christ's sake made these journeys. Many trips were made to Nelson Creek and on one occasion the Council, finding the Church in error, returned to their various churches, reported, and asked for any instruction the churches had to give or for other brethren to be sent with them to a second meeting. It is gratifying that their efforts were success-

ful; and that the unity, fellowship, and orthodoxy of the sister church were preserved.

Almost invariably the revival meetings have been held the last of December and the first of January. Many great meetings have been enjoyed, many hundreds led to Christ and good work done that only eternity can reveal; but we are of the opinion that in recent years much has been lost by following too long the old custom, and that better weather and better roads would often result in better meetings.

Eighteen different men have served the Church as pastor. Eld. Benjamin Talbott was probably the first pastor, beginning his work with the organization of the Church, as he presided at the first business meeting, August 15, 1814. But the first mention of the pastoral relation is the statement, June, 1819, that he was "called as pastor for another year." Elder Talbott is known to all readers of the history of Baptists in the Green River section. He was a man of power, possessing endurance and consecration that made him one of the most efficient workers, and successful pastors God has ever given us. He served the Church for 18 years and saw it grow into a vigorous, aggressive body. The first year of his ministry the Church bought a lot and built a house of worship. In 1827, the house was sold and a new one built, presumably on the same lot. Both were log houses. The

size of the first is unknown, but the second was 24x30 feet. It was unanimously agreed that every male member should assist in building it.

In 1829 the Association met with this Church.

For the first five and a half years of Eld. Talbott's pastorate not a single baptism is recorded; but for the next 12 years there was never more than a few months without baptisms. It was during his ministry, in 1826, that the missionary work west of Green River was begun. Near the close of his ministry we find the first reference to salary of the pastor; but the amount is not named. But the Church recognized the obligation, and in 1829 took a special collection to pay a balance of \$25.00 due the pastor.

Eld. David J. Kelley was the second pastor, serving from 1833 to 1836. Although he was pastor for three years, he was evidently with the Church but little and records show but little work done during that period.

In May, 1836, Elder Alford Taylor, who had supplied for them much of the time that Eld. Kelley was pastor, was called to the pastorate. He was four times their pastor—from 1836 to 1842, from 1845 to 1847, from 1849 to 1857, and from 1860 to 1863, making 19 years of service. Of Elder Taylor little needs to be said here. His name has been a household word in this community for three generations. He was a man of unusual ability. From

the year 1834 when his name first appears in the records until after the close of his fourth pastorate in 1863—for a third of a century—his character, his life and his preaching were potential elements in the growth, development and permanent work of Walton's Creek Church. During the intervals between the several pastorates of Elder Taylor, Eld. Frederick Tanner was pastor, 1842 to 1843; Eld. J. M. Bennett, 1848 to 1849; Eld. J. M. Peay, 1858 to 1859; and Eld. David Bernes supplied for a considerable time when the Church was without a pastor.

Under Eld. Taylor's ministry there were many important changes made. In the early history of the Church the pastor had little to do with any of the church work, except what was done in the pulpit. His advice was sometimes asked in cases of discipline, or, about querries sent in; but in the ordinary business his name rarely occurs. When Eld. Taylor became pastor he was made Moderator, and soon became the real leader in all the work of the Church. In July, 1838, 29 members were granted letters of dismission to constitute New Hope Church, Muhlenberg County. In 1839 representatives were sent to a meeting at Concord, Butler County, "to devise means to supply destitution with preaching." In November, 1843, Elds. J. M. Bennett and Thos. Tichenor were ordained to the ministry. From 1841 to 1844 there was much discord and

exclusions were many and frequent. Campbellism and Anti - Missionism were the causes. Especially was the latter the cause of the loss of numbers; but it was not a loss of strength. In 1846 a meeting was held at the home of John Maddox, where 16 were baptized; one of whom was D. J. K. Maddox. That meeting was the beginning of the work that grew into West Providence Church. In 1849 the first sexton was employed. In 1854 a committee on Home Missions was appointed. In 1855 the deacons were directed to take charge of all matters of Church expenses. In November and December, 1856, 45 members were given letters of dismission to constitute the Church at West Point, 29 of them were Tichenors. In all these cases of dismission to form new churches it is noticeable that in connection with this work there was such a revival spirit that very soon after such losses of members, additions brought the membership above the former number.—“There is that scattereth and yet increaseth.”

Eld. Taylor's fourth pastorate began with the same vigor, spiritual power and success that characterized his former work with this Church; but owing, doubtless, to the confusion caused by the civil war (although the war is mentioned but once), there were months together when the Church failed to meet; and other evidences makes it plain that the Church lacked much of its usual aggressive

spirit and efficiency. However, several successful meetings were held and several names added to the Church roll that have done much to make its history for the last half century, among whom we find Alford Ashby, Wm. Ross, Joseph Ross, L. C. Morton, and many others, but the record is incomplete on account of a mutilated leaf of the book.

Eld. Judson S. Taylor succeeded his father as pastor, beginning his labors July, 1863, and ending them February, 1869. About this time a new frame house was built. There is no record of the kind, size, cost, or date of beginning or finishing, but only a reference to balance due on it in 1864. In January, 1864, a meeting was held resulting in 95 additions and 89 baptisms. Elds. W. P. Bennett and L. C. Tichenor conducted the meeting, the pastor being absent most of the time.

In 1865 the Church doubled the salary of the pastor, paying him \$200.00 a year, but soon reduced it to \$150.00.

In 1866 the Church entertained Gasper River Association. There were several meetings held during the pastorate of Eld. J. S. Taylor; and all of which we have the record, were successful. The church at this time became more strict in its attention to Baptist doctrine. Alien immersion was repudiated. The Articles of Faith of Barnett's Creek Church were read before this Church and approved;

then it agreed to receive members by letter from Barnett's Creek.

Elder J. F. Austin served as pastor two years, 1869 to 1871. Under his ministry the prosperous condition of the Church continued. In 1871 the Church began Sunday School work. Officers were elected by the Church.

In April, 1871, Eld. W. P. Bennett became the pastor and served as such for ten years. The following January a meeting was held resulting in only 14 baptisms, but one of them was Thos. M. Morton. During the ten years pastorate of Eld. W. P. Bennett a number of meetings were held resulting in many additions to the membership. The striking features of his pastorate were the large number of exclusions and almost continuous baptisms. At no period in the history of the Church were there so many baptisms between protracted meetings.

Elder J. T. Casebier was the next pastor, from 1881 to 1889. During his pastorate substantial improvement was made in Church work. Mission committees began reporting to the Church regularly, and a decided increase in contributions was a result. There were several successful meetings held, resulting in about 100 baptisms. About the close of his pastorate the mission at Central Grove School House became an important interest. In 1889 a meeting there resulted in 11 baptisms.

The writer (J. A. Bennett) served the Church as pastor from November,

1889, to May, 1892, when removal to too great a distance made his resignation necessary. During his pastorate more than 50 were baptized. The Church began regularly contributing to the Orphans' Home and the Kentucky Baptist Ministers' Aid Society. Another meeting was held at Central Grove School House, resulting in 18 baptisms. It was held by Elds. J. T. Casebier and Hiram Brown. At this time the Church was greatly hindered by serious disputes and business differences between some of its most prominent and useful members. I want to bear personal testimony to the fact that the patient, forbearing, and fraternal spirit shown by the Church and its members is unsurpassed; and I am glad to add that by the aid and counsel of a number of Pastors and Brethren from other churches, these difficulties were finally adjusted and all parties reconciled.

For one year Eld. D. J. K. Maddox served as pastor—1892 to 1893. A successful meeting was held and regular contributions were made to Missionary and benevolent work. In August, 1892, Bro. G. T. Tinsley was licensed to preach; and Bro. J. A. Reneer the following October. On February 14th, 1893, Bro. T. M. Morton was ordained to the ministry. How little the Church knew of the importance of that event. It meant the sending forth into his great life-work the man who, as Church-builder, pastor, and evangelist, grew into the most successful and effi-

cient worker the Green River section has known within the past half century. If Walton's Creek had never accomplished anything else, to have given T. M. Morton to the denomination would fully justify her work for 100 years.

Eld. Hiram Brown was the next pastor, serving 1893 to 1901. After the trouble above referred to was adjusted, the pastorate of Bro. Brown was a harmonious and successful one. Two meetings were held with the Mission at Central Grove, and in September, 1896, 58 members were given letters to constitute Central Grove Church. In 1887-89 the old house of worship was torn down and the one now in use was built. Through the courtesy of our Methodist brethren the Church used their house at Centertown while the new house was being built. A number of successful meetings were held; but, from that time, the numbers added have been less than formerly, owing to narrowing territory and a more closely cultivated field. In 1898, nine were dismissed by letter to unite with Smallhouse Church, thus furnishing part of the material for another new Church. The Church procured denominational tracts and a supply of Church Manuals and distributed them among the members.

Eld. E. W. Coakley became pastor June, 1901, and served one year. In September of this year Ohio County Association was formed and Walton's

Creek was one of its constituent members.

In August, 1902, Eld. L. P. Drake accepted pastoral care of the Church and served in that capacity till July, 1906. Two successful meetings were held and 35 or more baptized; but almost an equal number were dismissed by letter.

Eld. O. M. Shultz was the next pastor, from August, 1906, to April, 1909. There was a marked improvement in the business life of the Church. New Deacons were chosen, Trustees appointed, and the usual financial affairs and benevolent enterprises were kept in a healthy condition. In November, 1907, 31 members were granted letters of dismission to constitute Centertown Church. A Mission Sunday School was established at Rough River School House, which continues as an efficient and useful work. Its officers are elected by and report to the Church.

Eld. Clay O. Bennett became pastor August, 1909, and continued till August, 1912. His work in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and ill health kept him away from the Church much of the time. Two successful meetings were held. Sunday School and Missionary work carried on, and Denominational Education added to the list of enterprises supported.

From August, 1912, till March, 1913, the Church was pastorless. Eld. E. B. English served as pastor for a few months, when his removal to an-

other part of the State left the Church again without a pastor until January, 1914, when the writer again became the pastor.

Jared Tichenor was the first Clerk of the Church, beginning August 15, 1814, and serving in that position until 1855—41 years; but, for 12 years of that time his failing sight made an assistant necessary. He wrote with a quill pen, and his writing is as plain as print. Jas. S. Igleheart was Clerk for one year. He was followed by Geo. R. Ashby, who served in that capacity from 1857 to 1881—24 years. He was followed by John M. Bishop, who served from 1881 to 1897—18 years. Since that time Melvin D. Ashby has been Clerk and has for 17 years efficiently done that important work.

Jonas Tichenor and Jos. Warden were the first Deacons and were chosen at the first business meeting of the Church, August 15th, 1814. In the earlier years of the Church resignations of Deacons were remarkably frequent, but the cause is never recorded. The Church was careful and prayerful in their selection. In 1819, when the Deacons had resigned and a vote for Deacons was not unanimous, they postponed the election; and when men chosen asked to be excused, they set a future time to elect, and asked that it be a day of fasting and prayer. Those elected served. It would be interesting to follow many features of the Church and the fam-

ilies who composed it, but space forbids. Their record is on high; and it is their work that makes the history. They have laid the foundations on which we are to build. They have left us a glorious heritage in the achievements of a 100 years. We probably will not and should not plant as many churches around us as they did; for the destitution is not the same. But the same great commandment that moved them in this work is still the marching orders of our Captain-General, and if we are worthy of the heritage left us—if we are as loyal as our fathers were we will use, as did they, our God-given opportunity to give the gospel of the Son of God to a lost world.