

Sketch History

OF

**Buck Creek**

**Church**

BY

**J. A. BENNETT**

Under Direction

OF

J. A. Bennett  
J. W. Hipsley  
W. C. Underwood } Committee

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# **SKETCH HISTORY**

## **OF**

# **BUCK CREEK BAPTIST**

# **CHURCH**

## **1812 to 1912**

On March 5th, 1798, a small company of Baptists constituted a church at Beaver Dam, Kentucky. At that time Hazel Creek Church, near Drakesboro, Kentucky, was the only other such organization between Warren and Logan Counties and the Ohio river. The membership of Beaver Dam was scattered over a territory of probably 1,000 square miles.

For a short period the membership north of Green River and Rough Creek and west of what is now Heflin, Kentucky, met in various places as an arm of Beaver Dam church. In 1812 eleven members were organized into a church and took the name of The Church at Tanner's Meeting House, which name was changed June 5th, 1841 to Buck Creek Baptist Church. The constituent members were: Philip Taylor, Polly Taylor, Mollie Tanner, Elizabeth Smith, Benjamin Taylor, John Atherton, Barnett Field, Ellen Field, Reuben Field, Catherine Taylor and Polly Atherton. Elders Job Hobbs, Samuel Anderson and Philip Warden were the preachers who took

part in constituting the church.

Unfortunately the records of the first twelve years were burned with the dwelling of Frederic Tanner, the Church Clerk. And more unfortunately, much of the early church record is very meagre and imperfect. Therefore this brief sketch will necessarily be disappointing. Any list of the total membership is an impossibility. Even mention of all its revivals cannot be made, since there were frequently held meetings of that kind of which there is no record in the minutes of church meetings. One of the notable features in the history is the evidence that there was for many years little connection between the evangelistic and the general and disciplinary work of the church. During the first forty years of the church history little is said of the pastor and his work. For years together there was no reference to preaching except an occasional note that some preacher was invited to preach there on certain Sundays, or as often as convenient, and but rarely are we told whether such invitation was accepted or not.

Elder Job Hobbs was probably the first pastor. He served but a short time and was succeeded by the famous pioneer, Elder Ben Talbot. There seems to have been a general and protracted revival interest throughout this whole section. As a result the

little band grew rapidly. For many years great crowds of people were drawn to their meetings. There were additions and baptisms at most of their meetings, but the records were so imperfectly made that statistics would be little more than guess work. With the large number coming into the church there was much unsoundness, and for many years cases of discipline and charges of heresy occupied most of the time devoted to church business. It is delightfully gratifying to note the patience, care and forgiving spirit that characterized the church and yet the unflinching loyalty with which they met every issue. Many cases are on record where it was necessary for committees to make long trips to labor with delinquents and although these journeys were often through almost pathless forests, if there appeared any grounds for hope that the offender would be reclaimed they went again and again. On one occasion a called meeting was ordered held at a private home "On Panther Creek" (Which could not have been less than twelve miles away) in order that a colored sister might have opportunity to make acknowledgement to the church and be reinstated in it's fellowship. The lack of opportunity for instruction, the ignorance of some would-be leaders and the formative state of many things that give little trouble now, made frequent calls upon

the Mother Church at Beaver Dam, and later upon other Sister Churches, for counsel a necessity. They frequently appointed members to attend such councils called for by other churches; but on two occasions they declined to do so, because after inquiry, and discussion, they believed it was a question with which a church should have nothing to do. Alas! that the record fails to tell us what those matters were.

Church attendance, at least once in three months, was required of all male members. On failing to do so they were notified that the church was grieved by their absence.

The church has always been thoroughly evangelistic in doctrine and in practice. In 1826 the church requested Goshen Association to divide its territory into four districts and to meet in each district once in four years, and to provide for the holding of union meetings in each district, i. e. Union of Churches of that district, in order that all the people might have better opportunity to hear the gospel. Nothing is told of the result.

The church roll of members prior to 1866 contains the names of many negroes. And the records show many special efforts to help them. After their emancipation they went to the separate churches of their own race.

In 1832 Elder Thos. Downs, then pastor, was appointed to attend a general meeting of Baptists at Bloomfield, Kentucky.

In 1839 a delegation was appointed to meet with representatives of other churches at Rock Spring. "To devise means to liberate some preacher to devote his whole time to preaching."

In August 1840 thirteen members were granted letters to constitute a new church at Mt. Liberty, near Cleopatra, McLean County.

About 1847 the church began paying their pastor, as a church. Doubtless there had been some payment made to pastors before; but it had been done by individuals personally. At this time also the pastor was requested to preach on Saturdays at the Church Meetings. From this time the relation of pastor and church is seen to become increasingly closer. In the earlier history the relation was a very loose one. He was unknown in the church business except that he was sometimes asked for advice, and on rare occasions presided as Moderator, Pro. Tem. in the absence of the regular Moderator. In 1851 the church began paying a stipulated salary. Since about 1855 or 56 the pastor has been also moderator of the business meetings of the church.

In 1850 the church agreed to excuse the pastor for such time as he could devote to missionary work. Also appointed Elder F. Tanner to represent the church in meetings of the Mission Board of Daviess County Association. Also set apart Sunday, September 1st, 1850, to meet to raise money for missions—a missionary rally.

At every point in her history the church has shown herself a missionary body. From about 1834 to 1850 the records show **many evidences** of the trouble caused by the Anti-Missionary spirit. Many were excluded for declaring "a non-fellowship for the benevolent work of the church." Among the number Elder Wm. Downs. Several voluntarily severed their connection with the church for the same reason, but such weakening was gaining strength.

In 1858 the Church decided to organize and conduct a Sunday School. The officers were elected by the church and it has continued to this day to watch over, support and direct it's Sunday School work. It has thus cultivated it's field and no other denomination has ever organized nearer to it than Livermore and no unscripturalism has ever found material on which to thrive within the bounds of Buck Creek Church. At no time within the knowledge of the writer, 25 to 30 years, has the church had any trouble on account of the manv

more or less popular heresies that have sprung up and that have given some of our churches trouble. The care, discipline and rigid adherence to Scriptural teaching maintained in the past are yet bearing excellent fruit. Other men labored and we are reaping the benefits.

In 1866 the church adopted a preamble and resolution setting forth the vital difference between her belief and Campbellism and therefore the impossibility of the union with that sect.

Of the seventeen men who have served the church as pastor but brief mention can be made in this sketch. A separate volume would be required to write the history of their work. Little is known of the life work of Elder Job Hobbs, the first pastor. But from the results of his work it is clear that he was successful in holding together, encouraging and inspiring his little flock in such a way as to make the work a success. Benj. Talbott was a man of ability and a successful pioneer who did much throughout this region to plant strongly the Baptist faith. These were followed by Elder Geo. Render, who was licensed and ordained by this Church. He was succeeded by Elder Thos. Downs, whose life work has been taught by mothers to their children all through the Green River country for a half

century. He was a hardworking farmer who earned his bread at home and spent one or more days of each week in preaching to the scattered churches within a radius of twenty five miles or more. It is uncertain just how long he served this church, probably several years before our extant records begin. But it is certain that he was pastor from 1829 or earlier to 1840. During that time most of the meetings were in private homes, during the Winter, and for several years in Summer also. Yet there was a wonderful growth. How many souls were saved only eternity will reveal. Even the additions to the church can never be known.

Elder Frederic Tanner was licensed by Buck Creek Church September 1824 and ordained November 1830. He accepted the pastoral care of the Church in 1840 and served in that capacity probably until 1844 and often at other times for brief periods. He was willing to do the work, but never would consent to be the pastor except when another could not be had. For many years his name is interwoven with the history of the Church; serving as Clerk from some date earlier than 1824 to 1830, when he was ordained to the ministry. For many years, as messenger to the Association, as a preacher from house to house and as a general missionary worker he planted seeds that will

doubtless continue to bear in the coming century. Elder K. G. Hay was the next pastor, from 1844 to 1854, excepting one year, 1851-2, when Elder Richard Jones was pastor. During the pastorates of Elders Tanner and Hay was the most trying period of the Church's life,—anti-missionism and Campbellism were both aggressive. Preachers of both these deadly and paralyzing creeds lived in the community. Evidences are plentiful among the records of the battle that was continued from year to year. Exclusions were numerous—sometimes from two to eleven cases at once. Charges are sometimes somewhat vague, but it is made clear that the trouble is not unchristian conduct, but unscriptural teaching. When a query was presented asking if it was good form for a Baptist to join the Free Masons, they promptly tabled the question, but whenever missions, temperance, Sunday School work or the question of Baptist faith and practice was presented they always returned an answer as clear as the tones of a silver bell.

Thos. Downs, Fred Tanner and K. G. Hay were the men that guided, guarded and instructed the flock so well that every decision on these great questions is worthy of a Judson, a Carey or a Boyce. And bear in mind that in the fight on these two lines, Anti-missionism and Campbellism, is

involved the fundamental principals of the plan of salvation and the execution of our Lord's command to give the Gospel to a lost world. Elder Hay was the connecting link that united that company of pioneers to the present order of things. He did a great work, extending from Henderson to Bowling Green. During his pastorate the Church began holding what we now call revival meetings. They had enjoyed many revivals before that time, but they were conducted in a very different way. Prayer meetings were held from house to house, and occasionally a preacher came for two or three days, but they did their work, and God blessed them. It was under Brother Hay's leadership that the Church first made provision for pastoral support, and later definitely fixed the amount of the pastor's salary.

Dr. J. S. Coleman followed Brother Hay. He was pastor from 1855 to 1869—at which time he resigned to become General Evangelist for the State Mission Board. He was again pastor from 1873 to 1878 and again from 1884 to 1886, making about twenty one years that he served the Church. The earlier years of his pastorate were noted for great revival interest. A meeting that seemed to grow out of a number of prayer meetings at various homes finally centered at Brother Chas. Porter's near Livia and more than eighty were bap-

tized besides many converts who united with the surrounding churches. The pastor was aided in several of these meetings by Rev. J. M. Peay, who with pastor Coleman made up a team probably never equaled by any that has labored in Western Kentucky. Their name and fame will live until this generation has passed. Of Dr. Coleman personally little needs to be said. His history is well known. He was one of the greatest men Kentucky has produced and was more often honored as the Moderator of the Gen-Association in Kentucky than any other man, living or dead. But when his conduct was called in question, Buck Creek church required an explanation before permitting him to further officiate as her pastor. Brother Coleman was followed in the pastorate by Rev. J. M. Peay 1870 to 1872. A breakdown in Brother Peay's health made it necessary for him to supply the pulpit with a substitute a large part of the time. Brother Peay was succeeded by Rev. Wm. Stephens, 1872 to 1873. Brother Stephens was at one time a Methodist preacher, and lived near this church. When about 47 years of age and when he had been a preacher in the Methodist Denomination for ten years or more he was led to a more careful study of baptism by the request of his 16 year old daughter, who had been converted, for the scriptural authority for affusion. His investigation led him to

a belief in immersion and further study into a strong, vigorous belief of every article of Baptist faith. He with his daughter, was baptized July 14, 1867, by Dr. Colemann. In the following October he was ordained to the Ministry and until his death in 1891 remained a useful, honored and beloved member of this church. His work in the church was very much like that of Frederic Tanner. Always ready when called on, he aided various pastors in revival meetings and supplied the pulpit many months when the church was without a pastor, but he only reluctantly consented to take the pastorate and at the end of a year requested them to call another. And when re-called he declined. He served, with acceptance and success other churches at various times and was a faithful worker in various departments of the work of this church. There remains today the sweet fragrance of his meek and gentle spirit, and his noble, self-denying life still blesses his church and honors his Lord. The daughter, Lydia, through whom he was led to become a Baptist, now Mrs. J. Warren Hipsley, is yet one of our faithful and efficient members. It was witnessing the baptism of a young girl by Dr. Coleman that led her to demand Scriptural authority on baptism. She went to see Bren. Coleman and Peay baptize one hundred persons. She saw one only, and was so impressed that she

sat down, thought and wept until the baptizing was all done, and then went home and made, with God's help, Baptists of the entire family. Brother Stephens was followed in the pastorate by Dr. Coleman's second term of five years.

Rev. B. F. Swindler succeeded Dr. Coleman and was pastor from 1878 to 1884. During his pastorate there is seen a decided improvement in the records of church work. Record is made of revival work and division of Mission funds. One quarter of each year was given to each of the four Missions. Also the Orphans Home is regularly supported. There were several very successful meetings held. Of Brother Swindler but a word need be said. His seventeen years in Daviess County Association is so interwoven with it's churches and life that it is familiar to all the present generation. It is the opinion of the writer that no man has done more to systematize and bring into orderly and aggressive form the general work of the denomination here and elsewhere in Kentucky than Brother B. F. Swindler, D. D. At the close of Dr. Swindler's pastorate Dr. Coleman was again called and served two years 1884 to 1886. Rev. B. F. Jenkins became pastor and continued 1886 to 1891. During Brother Jenkins' pastorate the regular systematic work was continued and further developed,

especially the prompt and more liberal support of pastor. Also during this pastorate the church came nearer to reaching and winning all the unsaved in it's bounds than any church we have ever known. The pastor aided by Brother Stephens, with a wide awake church, seems to have almost reached the limit in home evangelism. Brother Jenkins is, as before said of K. G. Hay, a connecting link between a former generation of preachers, and the laborers now in the field. He has labored with all the former pastors of this church who have served since 1844, except Richard Jones, who was pastor but one year, and is yet hale, hearty and happy in a fruitful ministry. God bless and give him to us for a long time. Brother Jenkins was followed by Rev. W. P. Bennett, who served two years, 1891 to 1893. There is no special distinction of this pastorate. The church was in prosperous condition and remained so. A building fund of \$666.00 was secured during his pastorate. Dr. Bennett was followed by Rev. D. J. K. Maddox, who remained with the church three years, 1893 to 1896. When Brother Maddox began his work the church was considering the building of a new house of worship. Their first was a log house, three miles West of Livia, on the Glennville road, known as Tan-ners Meeting House. Later, 1840 to 1841, they moved to a point one

mile West of Nuckols, and built on the hill, known ever since as Buck Creek Hill, another log house. In 1856-57 they built on the same lot a good neat frame house which they finished paying for in 1860. In 1892 they determined to build again. There was much difference of opinion as to the best location for the new house. An attempt was made to secure funds and build on a lot West of, and adjoining the o'd lot. The subscription was never made large enough for the purpose and the plan was abandoned. In February 1894 the church ordered the building of the present house, on the Owensboro and Livermore road, on the lot that had been selected. At the regular business meeting in June 1894 the Church decided to hold it's meetings, in the future, in the new house on the Livermore road, where the first meeting was held July 7th of that year, and since that time it's meetings have been held in this house. There was much dissatisfaction and dissension in the Church in regard to moving to this location. Claims were made that the plan had not been legitimately carried out, and a large number of the membership continued to meet in the old house and to transact business under the name of Buck Creek Church. Both bodies sent Statistical letters and Messengers to the meeting of Daviess County Association, which convened with Oak Grove

Church, Utica, Kentucky, in August 1894. The Association appointed a Committee of seven visiting Brethren who were chosen from among those who were unprejudiced by local conditions or present or past relationships. The Committee was Dr. S. H. Ford of St. Louis, Dr. Authur Yager of Georgetown, Dr. W. H. Ryland of Russelville, Rev. J. T. Casebier of Rockport, Ky., Rev. B. T. Mayhew of Huntsville, Rev. A. J. Ashburn of Louisville and Rev. H. T. Lampton of Rockport, Ind. The Committee called for all the records and evidence of both claimants, and held a meeting to examine and hear the same. After a thorough examination the Committee unanimously reported that the decision to move to the new location was a legal and binding act of the Church, and that therefore the body meeting in the house on the Livermore and Owensboro road was Buck Creek Church, and as such her Messengers were entitled to seats in the body. The report was adopted by the Association unanimously, and her Messengers seated, her statistical letter accepted and reported in the minutes. And they have been so received every year since. The Association then volunteered to make suggestions looking to a harmonious adjustment of differences prevailing, through the adoption of the report of a special committee, which suggested that, 1st. All members of both par-

ties were members of Buck Creek church, and as such they be cordially invited to continue and worship and work with the church at it's new location. But 2nd. If any preferred to take letters and constitute a new church at the old location, or elsewhere, such letters be granted them. And 3rd. In the event they preferred to constitute a new church, they be permitted to use the old house until they could provide themselves with one that suited them better, January 1st., 1895 being the date fixed by agreement, and that the old house should then be sold and the proceeds divided equally between them, and that the old church lot should be added to the adjacent cemetery grounds, and that the Mother Church would then deed to the new organization a half interest in the cemetery lot, to be permanently held and controlled by the two jointly, for the use of both. Buck Creek Church cordially agreed and submitted to the disaffected members the above proposition. They chose to call for letters and constitute another church, which was done, and the property divided as above stated. On September 8th. following, sixty nine were granted letters of dismissal and a few weeks later a new church was constituted at the place from which Buck Creek Church had moved, which was named Old Buck Creek.

In October of that year the church held a meeting of great Spiritual power. Pastor Maddox was aided by Rev. T. M. Morton. There were many conversions, 46 baptisms and 69 additions, bringing the membership back to the former number, but of course they were young and untrained and lacked much of replacing the loss of real strength. But the growth of the church was regular, rapid and vigorous. Brother Maddox who had guided and directed the church through one of the most critical and difficult periods of it's history, resigned in 1896. He was followed by Rev. T. M. Morton, who about that time developed into one of the most successful pastors the state of Kentucky has produced. He served the church from 1896 to 1902, and again from 1903 to 1906. Rev. J. J. Clore being the pastor 1902-03. It was the privilege of the writer to aid pastor Morton in five revival meetings. They were all successful, resulting in from 15 to 32 additions. And all except one resulting in a thorough revival. Under the leadership of Brother Morton the church enjoyed a season or remarkable prosperity. The membership reaching the highest point in her history. During his second pastorate and that of Brother Clore there had been at work that strange, inevitable movement that costs so many churches so dearly—the movement of the country people to the towns. It has

continued until probably two thirds of our best trained members and almost as large a proportion of our most promising material has moved away. Since May, 1906 the writer has had the honor and pleasure to serve as the pastor. While the weakening of the church explained above has been painfully seen and felt, yet there has been constantly a gratifying growth in Spiritual power and efficiency on the part of many that remain. Several good meetings have brightened and blessed our labors. All our meetings during the present pastorate have been held by Church and pastor without other human help. Never was a pastor more loyally supported in such work by his church. Recently the tide of removal seems to have turned in our favor and we have been strengthened and encouraged by the coming of some choice spirits among us.

Frederic Tanner was the first church clerk of whom we have the record. He served in that capacity until he entered the ministry in 1830. When M. W. Sharp for a short time was clerk. James S. Jones served as clerk from the early 30s until 1849. B. B. Malin 1849 to 1853. M. B. Tichenor was elected Clerk 1853 and with rare faithfulness did the work until he moved away in 1876. In that twenty three years only three times was he absent. The present Clerk,

Brother W. C. Underood has been clerk since 1876, and for thirty six years has shown himself the worthy successor of Brother Tichenor.

Brother S. C. Tichenor son of M. B. Tichenor was elected assisstant clerk and served in that capacity until he moved away in 1911.

Did time and space permit, it would be a labor of love and joy to record the official work of the Deacons and to trace through the records the families who have for generations been connected with our history. The Athertons were among the honored eleven who constituted the Church, and they have been for 100 years, and are today, among it's most valued, loved and useful members. The Tanner family was also in the constitution and has been closely linked with the life of the Church ever since, and today we thank God for Aunt Lydia Tanner, her life, her labor, her children, grand-children, great-grand-children and great-great- grand-children, here and elsewhere. "And What shall I more say; for time would fail me, to tell of" the Taylors, Laytons, Porters, Whitakers, Vances, Tichenors, Humphreys, Howards, Hillsmans, Tuckers, Nuckols, Nalls, Owens, Ashers and scores of others as noble and as worthy.

The Church has always aligned herself with the denominational work. We do not know when she became

a member of Goshen Association. In 1824, the first year of which we have the records, She elected Messengers to that body and has always elected her Messengers every year since, to that, or Daviess County Association, of which she was a constituent member in 1884. The Association met with us in 1852, 1865 and 1907. In 1878 she dispensed with the service of traveling Agents and began, and has continued since to collect her own Mission Funds. As early as 1866 she sent her pastor to the Southern Baptist Convention.

All Sunday School and educational movements in Daviess County Association have been recognized by the church, and her official representatives have been sent to all conferences called for such purpose. She was one among the first churches in Kentucky to make education a regular object of contribution, and now has a committee for that work. Whenever any important question has been before the denomination this church has been found on the right side; Among the first to open the fight on Anti-Missionism; sounded an early warning against any proposed union with Campbellism. In 1870, by a clear-cut resolution, she declared: "Immersion in water of a penitent believer—one saved, by an administrator duly authorized by a church, according to Scripture teach-

ing, the only valid baptism, and therefore Pedo-baptist and Campbellite immersions are not valid.'

Since 1867 she has had a committee on obituaries, and lovingly commemorates her dead.

Buck Creek has been a prolific mother of churches. Green Briar, her eldest daughter was constituted in 1820, Mount Liberty in 1840, Brushy Fork in 1846, Oak Grove in 1854, Glennville in 1865, Woodwards Valley in 1879, Livermore in 1885 and Old Buck Creek in 1894. Several of these were composed partly of members of other churches, but Buck Creek is mother or Grand-mother of them all, as she is also the Grand-mother of the score of churches between Green River and the Ohio.

Her membership has never been a large one, the number has varied from 11 to 300, but quality and not quantity counts most in church membership as in most other things.

As her pastor, permit me to say she is loyal to her Lord, herself and her pastor. As to support she has paid me more than my salary every year, in money, besides the wagon loads of other good thing provided.

A hundred years of labor and achievement are behind us. How shall we build on the foundation laid. We can not turn back, if we would.

We would trample upon the graves of our heroic ancestors. From the past comes the inspiration for the future. Therefore, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," let us "Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

**J. A. BENNETT, Pastor**