

History of Butler Presbytery

A Historical Sketch of the Presbytery
of Allegheny
AND

Its Legal Successor, the Presbytery
of Butler

BY

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STATED CLERK

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Expansion and Organization of the Churches

Mr. Robert McGarrah was licensed by the Redstone Presbytery, October 19, 1803, and "was granted leave to itinerate six weeks in the bounds of Erie Presbytery." He had the pioneering instinct, for we find him laboring among the isolated settlements of what is now Clarion county, then belonging to Redstone Presbytery. He had gathered two congregations, New Rehoboth and Licking, and accepted their calls October 16, 1805, but for various delays was not ordained or installed until November 12, 1807. Owing to the great distance from the more thickly settled portions of the Presbytery, Rev. McGarrah, at a meeting of the Synod of Pittsburgh on October 4, 1811, "requested that he with the congregations under his care might be detached from the Presbytery of Redstone and annexed to the Presbytery of Erie." The Synod agreed to his request and ordered "that the Red Bank Creek from the mouth up to the south branch to the boundary line of Synod shall hereafter be the line of division between the Presbytery of Redstone and the Presbytery of Erie."

It will be observed that no northern boundary is suggested, that would indicate where the claim of Redstone's jurisdiction terminated. But all this region east of the Allegheny River and northward became a part of Allegheny Presbytery at its formation in 1821, at which time the only other organized church besides Rev. McGarrah's was East Concord and it was a result of this pioneer's efforts as was the beginnings of the other churches. The church owes a great debt of gratitude for such pioneer ministers of foresight and who enlarged the tents of Zion.

During the first score of years after Allegheny Presbytery was erected no less than a dozen churches were organized in the missionary region of Clarion and Jefferson Counties. In their order they are:

Rockland, Richland, Brookville, Beechwood, Pisgah, Bethesda, Perry, Seneca, Callensburg, Mt. Tabor, Clarion and Greenwood. This expansion of the work and the increased number of churches necessitated the organization of a new Presbytery which was authorized by Synod in October, 1841, to be known as Clarion Presbytery, and was directed to meet on the second Tuesday of January, 1842. This was the first curtailment of the territory of the Presbytery of Allegheny and removed five ministers and 1258 members. In this same period only four churches were organized in other parts of the Presbytery, viz. Tarentum and Freeport in Allegheny County; Upper Bull Creek, now Westminster, in Butler County, and Clintonville, in Venango County.

The next score of years, 1841 to 1861, the organization of churches was wholly different from the missionary efforts just described. The new organizations were formed as nearly midway as possible between the pioneer and the well established congregations. Two chief causes originated this movement which soon became popular, almost a habit. The territory embraced in these earlier congregations was from four to eight miles square and the pastoral care required in such fields was very great for the most hardy and energetic pastors. People had such long distances to travel on Sabbath to attend the long services at the sanctuary that it was late evening when they reached their homes, and this was a hindrance to regular attendance. This movement did not complete its evolution until 1880 and by this time the mother churches were encircled by many healthy upstanding daughters, but like the summer bee hive, the swarms weakened the membership and deprived the mother congregations of much promising missionary territory.

Besides other denominations had established flourishing churches in various parts of the territory of these mother churches, thus further curtailing the territory and creating in effect, competition, if not rivalry and open hostility. And now at the close of the century is it not the necessary and imperative duty of all denominations at work in this area to plan to co-ordinate and consolidate the work wherever possible and practicable? The Lord will not hold Christians guiltless if any region is over-churched by one denomination or several denominations. Is not the handwriting already appearing on the

wall?

The eight mother churches in alphabetical order are Amity, Bull Creek, Butler, Concord, Mt. Nebo, Plain Grove, Plains and Scrubgrass. The encircling movement is as follows.

AMITY 1800

	Organized
New Hope	November 17, 1879
Millbrook	October 7, 1890
Centertown U. P.	

BULL CREEK, 1793 (or '94)

	Organized
Tarentum	1832
Freeport	July 3, 1833
Deer Creek	
Upper Bull Creek	July 12, 1835
Westminster	July 12, 1835
Buffalo	August 3, 1843
Natrona (?)	1864

BUTLER, 1813

North Butler	January 18, 1848
Jefferson Center	May 2, 1864
Unionville	October 30, 1877
Second Church of Butler	October 11, 1897
East Butler	September 27, 1908

CONCORD, 1803-1805

Pleasant Valley	(Before) October 21, 1845
New Salem	July 12, 1847
North Butler	January 18, 1848
West Sunbury	September 4, 1860
Fairview	August 12, 1875
North Washington	May 18, 1880

MOUNT NEBO, 1805

White Oak Springs U. P.	
Portersville	October 13, 1820
Evans City	February 19, 1833
Prospect, received from C. P. and reorganized	July 8, 1877

PLAIN GROVE, 1796-1800

Rich Hill	1840
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Centerville (Slippery Rock)	April 18, 1854
Leesburg	April 25, 1856
Harlansburg	June 19, 1875
North Liberty	June 21, 1880

PLAINS, 1806

Zelienople	November 6, 1846
Evans City	February 19, 1883
Crestview	August 20, 1890
Hope Evangelical Lutheran	1916

SCRUBGRASS, 1802-1803

	Organized
Ebenezer (Parker City)	1819
Clintonville	February 9, 1841
New Salem	July 12, 1847
Allegheny	May 20, 1875
Eau Claire U. P.	

MUDDY CREEK

West Sunbury	September 4, 1860
Unionville	October 30, 1877

ECCLESIASTICAL CONNECTIONS

The Synod of New York and Philadelphia exercised original jurisdiction over the Presbyterian Church until the fourth Wednesday of October, 1788, at eleven o'clock when the Synod of Virginia was constituted. Presbytery formed a part of the Synod of Virginia from 1788 to September 29, 1802, when the Synod of Pittsburgh was organized. Then the Synod of Pittsburgh exercised authority of that part of Pennsylvania west of the Allegheny Mountains until the territory was divided and the Synod of Allegheny was erected October, 1853.

The relation to the Synod of Allegheny continued until the Synods were reorganized by the General Assembly of 1870 when the Synod of Erie was created and ordered to meet in the Park Presbyterian Church of Erie, July 7, 1870. On July 9, 1870, the Presbytery of Butler, covering the territory of Butler county and the southern tier of townships of Venango county with so much of Mercer and Lawrence counties as would complete the rectangle, was erected into Butler Presbytery.

The Presbytery of Butler continued to report to the Synod of Erie until the consolidation of the Synods in the State in 1882. Hitherto every minister was expected to attend the meetings of Synod as faithfully as he did the Presbytery in which he was enrolled, but since 1882 the Synod has been a delegated body.

PRESBYTERIAL LINEAGE

Redstone——”At a meeting of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia held at Philadelphia, the 16th of May, 1781, The Revd. Messrs. Joseph Smith, John McMillan, James Powers and Thaddeus Dodds having requested to be erected into a separate Presbytery to be known by the name of the Presbytery of Redstone, the Synod granted their request, and appointed the first meeting to be held at Laurel Hill Church, the third Wednesday of September next at eleven o’clock A. M.” It will be observed that no boundaries are given and no churches named and Redstone is therefore the mother Presbytery west of the Allegheny Mountains and exercised its authority throughout Western Pennsylvania and outlying settlements.

Ohio—Relative to the organization of the Presbytery of Ohio there are two minutes for our guidance. The first is by Redstone Presbytery: “On April the 19th, 1793, Presbytery agreed to request Synod at their next meeting to erect the Revd. John Clark, John McMillan, Thaddeus Dodds, Joseph Patterson, James Hughes and John Brice, together with the Churches on the west side of the Monongahela River, into a separate Presbytery to be known as the Presbytery of Ohio.” The response to this request is the following minute: “At a meeting of the Synod of Virginia at Winchester, Virginia, September 25, 1793, the Synod granted the request and appointed the first meeting to be held at Buffalo on the fourth Tuesday of October (22) next, at 12 o’clock.” The authority of this Presbytery extended north and west of a line from the mouth of the Monongahela River to Presque Isle, now Erie.

Erie—Owing to the long distances to the meetings of Presbytery and the great need of pioneer itinerating and owing to a growing desire for a new Synod, we have the following minute: “At a meeting of the Synod held at Winchester (Va.) October 2nd, 1801, at the unanimous request of the members present from the Presbyteries of Redstone and Ohio, the Synod did and hereby do erect the Rev. Mssrs. Thomas Hughes, William Wick, Samuel Tait, Joseph Stockton, and Robert Lee together with all the congregations north and northwest of the Ohio and Allegheny Rivers unto the place where the Ohio crosses the western boundary of Pennsylvania, into a separate Presbytery, to be called the Presbytery of Erie and appointed their first meeting to be held at Mount Pleasant on the second Tuesday of April next. In compliance with this order the Presbytery was organized April 13, 1802.

Allegheny—Agitation for the division of Erie Presbytery began in 1807, but it was not until October 29, 1820, that the following action was taken: “Resolved that the Presbytery of Erie request the Synod of Pittsburgh its next meeting, to set off a new Presbytery beginning at the mouth of Little Neshannock Creek, thence up the Big Neshannock to the mouth of Yellow Creek, thence up Yellow Creek to Hosack’s Mill, thence along the Mercer Road to Franklin, thence up the Allegheny to the State Line; to include the Rev. Messrs. John McPherrin, Abraham Boyd, Robert McGarrah, Cyrus Riggs, Reid Bracken and John Reddick and all of the congregations south of that line, to be known by the name of Allegheny Presbytery.” This request was granted by Synod, October 4, 1820, and the first meeting “to be at the town of Butler on the first Tuesday of April, 1821, at 12 o’clock.”

Butler—In reorganizing the Synods and Presbyteries following the reunion of the Old and New School bodies in November, 1869, the Presbytery of Butler was constituted by the Synod of Erie, July 9, 1870, and was declared to be the legal successor of the Presbytery of Allegheny.

MOUNT NEBO

A revival on the Red River in Eastern Kentucky in 1789 was destined to affect this region deeply and later gave rise to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. This revival was the religious reaction against the lawlessness and infidelity that became so prevalent after the Revolutionary War. It soon overflowed its local bounds and ceased not to spread until it had reached nearly every part of the country. It passed through the scattered settlements of Western Pennsylvania in the years 1802 and 1803. In the latter year Rev. Robert Johnson, the first pastor of Scrubgrass Church, had an experience of it and left an account of "the falling exercises" that occurred in his church. The territory later embraced in Mount Nebo Congregation shared in this revival and the physical phenomena accompanying it. This instance is narrated by Andrew W. McCullough: "Stephen Crawford was a blacksmith of great physical strength and impulsiveness of mind and entirely out of harmony with the idea that these physical exercises were attributed to any other cause than the powers of darkness. When he reached the place some one told him before he entered the building that a neighbor of his, naming him, had just fallen over and was lying as if dead. He immediately lost his temper and replied, 'I'll soon wake him up when I go in and take hold of him.' He pulled the door open with a jerk and lo he fell prostrate by the side of his unconscious neighbor and there the two strong men lay oblivious of everything about them. That was the conversion experience of Stephen Crawford, and from that time forth his whole manner of life was changed. From a self-reliant and boastful man he became as humble as a little child and was a faithful, devoted Christian from that hour until he closed his earthly career. Who can measure the influence of this revival upon the life, customs and piety of multitudes in this county?"

Although people had often gathered at McLure's spring for worship before the revival, it was the latter that created a desire for the stated means of grace. The field was white to the harvest but there was no reaper. Some nameless minister gathered the people into a congregation for the name of Mount Nebo is found first in the report of Erie Presbytery to the Synod of Pittsburgh, October 4, 1805.

The laborers were few and God seemed to test the faith and try the sincerity of the people and, severe as this test was, they profited by waiting on the Lord. It was in the summer of 1806 that Licentiate Reed Bracken, after traveling a year in Ohio and Virginia preached to vacant congregations, came first to this shepherdless flock. At once the hearts of the people of Plains and Mount Nebo Congregations were knit to the young man and his message as was the heart of Jonathan to the heart of David. A united call was prepared and the hearts of the people were gladdened when Mr. Bracken signified his readiness to accept their call. His promise having been given and though ecclesiastical machinery moved very deliberately, they were content with his presence and services. It was on April 20, 1808, that Mr. Bracken became pastor of Mount Nebo parish with a radius of ten miles, in connection with Plains congregation of like extent. Quite an undertaking for the young minister to bear the word of life to one-third of all the Presbyterians in the county, many of them thoroughly grounded in the doctrines once delivered unto the Saints. Though he was more than six feet in height, of stalwart frame and thirty years of age with mind matured and with settled convictions and life principles, he trusted not in man nor the excellence of speech, but in God and the atoning work of Jesus. He was eager to be used of the Holy Spirit to convert sinners and to edify believers and through a long ministry he was not disappointed.

Mr. Bracken bought a farm and cleared much of it with his own hands, often spending four or five days' each week in toil to secure the necessities 'for his family. All the while his mind was active for he was a clear and accurate thinker and on Saturday he retired to his room for final study and did not like to be disturbed. After more than eleven years of faithful service at Plains he was released October 7, 1819, but in September of the next year he became pastor of Middlesex Church. For twelve years he gave

Middlesex one-half of his labors, traveling more than thirty miles in making the trip on alternate Sabbaths. Meanwhile he was ministering to neglected and outlying settlements such as Zelienople and Portersville. He really resigned from Middlesex in order to supply Portersville. In all these changes Mr. Bracken continued to serve Mount Nebo; then the Christian warrior, after thirty-six years of faithful service, gave place to a more vigorous worker. Five years later he fell asleep July 29, 1849, on his own farm and rests among the people he loved so well.

Within the first decade of his ministry Mount Nebo was severely tested on the question of Psalmody. Rouse's version was adopted by the founders of the church and was very precious in the eyes and to the hearts of the older and more conservative members. Many favored the smoother and more melodious Version of Watts. The addition of Watts' Hymns abounding in gospel truth and spirit which were so effective in evangelistic services appealed almost irresistably to the younger and more progressive members. Especially was this true of those who possessed musical taste and judgment and whose voices had been trained by the singing masters of the time. So acute became the question that families who had worshiped together for years and had eaten as brothers at the Lord's table, separated and walked no more together. The sadness of this division is that it was not a result of difference in doctrine and policy but a single constituent of public worship, the matter of praise and not the manner of it. And the sadder fact remains that this division has continued for more than a century except for intermarriage. Mr. McCullough estimated that one hundred and fifty persons were lost to the congregation by this controversy. When members were few and meant so much to pioneer churches about eighteen members withdrew and assisted in the organization of the White Oak Springs Associated Re'formed Presbyterian Church.

Mount Nebo's fidelity to family worship and memorizing the Shorter Catechism was largely due not only to parental interest and fidelity, but also to frequent reminders of this responsibility from the pulpit. In most of the homes the Sabbath Day closed by repeating the Shorter Catechism; some parents becoming so proficient that they could ask the questions without the book. Many times through the week mothers labored with the younger members in memorizing new questions and repeating the ones already learned. Nor was the pastor negligent. In the autumn of each year he passed from neighborhood to neighborhood inspecting the work done in the Catechism. The places and times of such reviews were announced from the pulpit. In much fear and trembling the students entered the lists, for all knew that accurate work must be done. The kindly counsel to those who were not quite perfect and the pastor's joy over those who were successful were long remembered by all who were present. And in the pastoral visitations the Catechism would be recited by pastor, parents and children together, each taking the question in turn. Some blessed with retentive memories mastered the Larger Catechism and all of its details, while many others memorized many of the Psalms and large sections of the New Testament. This congregation became well indoctrinated and could give a reason for the hope that was in them. This church has had a notable body of Elders. They were men of strong natural gifts, rugged personality and resolute convictions. Such men thoroughly imbued with biblical principles, knew what they believed and believed what they knew with the certitude of Moses. Some of these men for acumen, penetration and power of persuasive argument would have graced the judicial bench.

This church celebrated its Centennial on September 20, 1905, and Mr. Andrew McCullough, a grandson of Andrew Spear White, one of the original members of the church, himself a member and an Elder for some years, read an excellent historic and reminiscent paper which was published later. Mount Nebo has performed well its work in the past but its duties to the present generation require equal courage, fidelity and zeal to that which animated the past generation.

The following young men became ministers: Newton Bracken, Loyal Y. Hayes, and Henderson H. Hayes.

BUILDINGS

From the first Mount Nebo was one of the most prosperous sections in the county. The congregation manifested its delight to honor God by rearing a hewn log house of worship in 1802. The floor and pulpit were made of boards, while each family made its own bench. This church was considered the best in the country, but the congregation, in spite of the division, so overcrowded the building that in 1827 bids were received for a stone building forty by sixty feet. This house was completed in 1834 and stood just in front of the log building. It was furnished in harmony with the congregation's prosperity and devotion to God. Either the foundation was not deep and strong enough or the mortar used to bind the walls was too weak for the walls warped, mortar fell out and this splendid building was regarded as unsafe after the use of a quarter of a century. Then the congregation began the erection of the brick house of worship still in use. It is no longer crowded and even the names of many families who worshiped in the log church are not found on the present rolls. Mount Nebo has contributed generously to the formation and upkeep of surrounding churches, but those who remain are still true to the Covenant which the founders made with God in the "Little Clearing" in 1805.

PASTERS

Rev. Reed Bracken, 1808-1844; Rev. Lemuel F. Leake, 1845-1849; Rev. Alexander Cunningham, 1852-1860; Rev. William P. Harrison, 1863-1867; Rev. Samuel L. Johnston, 1870-1882; Rev. Jonathan W. Miller, 1884-1887; Rev. Watson J. Young, 1890-1893; Rev. Melzar D. McClelland, 1895-1897; Rev. Wilson H. Sloan, 1897-1904; Rev. George P. Stewart, 1904-1907; Rev. Charles S. McKinney, 1911-1917; Rev. George Timblin, S. S., 1918-.

ELDERS

James Plummer, Joseph McPherrin, Isaac Gibson, Robert Hays, John Dick, James Welsh, Thomas Cratty, John Brandon, James Scott, Thomas Bracken, James D. Anderson, James Brandon, Bryson Black, John W. Brandon, Andrew W. McCullough, John Cratty, Dr. W. N. Clark, John Martin, John Weigle, Elliot Robb, Henry C. Welsh, John A. Brandon, Reed Nesbit, Reed B. Gibson, Jacob Shiever, Robert S. Hays, Archibald G. Stewart, William F. Stewart, William W. Brandon, and Frew H. Stewart
Present Session: John Welsh, Greer McCandless, Cyrus Blaney, and Edwin P. Campbell.

PLAINS

The origin of Plains Church is not clear. At the first meeting of the Presbytery of Erie, April 13, 1802, there is a "supplication" for preaching at Breakneck which some have thought refers to the settlement near the present church. The first official reference is that Mr. Reed Bracken, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Ohio, went "in the year 1806 to Butler County where he received calls to the pastoral charges of Mount Nebo and Plains."

The church fathers worked leisurely and deliberately. They required their licentiates and even those who had completed their theological instruction to itinerate among the vacant churches for several months to prove their capacity for ministerial work and their

acceptability to these needy congregations. They laid their hands suddenly on no man. It was not until April 20, 1808, that Mr. Bracken was ordained and installed in these congregations. He served at Plains until October 7, 1819, when he was released. No reason is assigned but probably the congregation remained small and was unable to provide the part of the salary promised. This often occurred in early times when the people were satisfied and regretted the move. After Rev. Bracken withdrew the church depended upon supplies. Rev. John Andrews preached frequently during this interval.

In 1828 Rev. John Moore is reported pastor of Pine Creek, Cross Roads, Cranberry Plains and Deer Creek. He was released from Plains April 5, 1831. The congregational supplies became irregular and the church was practically disbanded for it is not named in the reports for several years. Rev. Aaron Williams, a teacher in the School of Manual Labor at Zelienople maintained by Pittsburgh Presbytery, preached some in the vicinity of Plains. The church was revived under the preaching of Licentiate Leland R. McAboy and united, January 1, 1838, with the Cross Roads church in issuing a call to Mr. McAboy and he became their pastor September 25, 1838. At that time there were thirty-two members, eleven men and twenty-one women: William Graham, Sen., Elizabeth Graham, Hannah Graham, Matthew Graham, Margaret Bowman, Eleanor Wilson, James Garvin, Ann Covert, Margaret Boggs, Jane Boggs, Margaret Dunbar, Susanna Staples, Margaret Richardson, Andrew Boggs, John Covert, Mary Rowan, William Graham, Jr., David Graham, Jane Simpson, Mary Graham, Jane Wallace, Rebecca Cooper, Nancy Garvin, Robert Boggs, Sr., Samuel Boggs, Ann McGrigger, Job Staples, Joseph Richardson, Mary Coats, Mary Ann Boggs, Mary Covert, Rebecca Bolender. The congregation prospered under Rev. McAboy's ministry. The church and pastor were transferred by Synod to the new Presbytery of Allegheny in 1853. Automatically Plains Church returned to Butler Presbytery at the close of Rev. McAboy's pastorate.

June 28, 1864, Plains Church was transferred again to Allegheny Presbytery. This was effected during the brief pastorate of Rev. John W. Patton. The Reunion of 1870 returned Plains Church to Butler Presbytery. The minute of Session for September 5, 1879, reads: "Whereas attendance upon the meetings of Butler Presbytery have been found to be much more inconvenient and expensive than Allegheny; and whereas there is now a good prospect of forming a pastoral connection in Allegheny Presbytery, Therefore, Resolved, That our delegates to Synod be instructed to take whatever steps may be necessary to secure the transfer from the Prsbytery of Butler to the Presbytery of Allegheny." Synod granted the request and transferred the church October, 1879, but it was returned again to Butler Presbytery June 14, 1898.

FORMATION OF OTHER CHURCHES

Plains has contributed many members in the organization of other churches. On February 18, 1883, the Session granted letters to thirty-nine persons and these were organized into the Evans City Presbyterian Church. On August 10, 1890, the following minute is recorded: "A petition which had been handed to J. M. Covert by Rev. R. C. Yates was read asking for certificates of dismissal for the following named persons to organize a church at Callery Junction. 'Resolved that the certificates be granted on condition that the paper containing the individual signatures be presented.' " This paper having been received, Session issued Certificates of Dismissal to the following named petitioners: James Staples, Mandana Staples, Maude Staples, William Staples, Joseph West, Maria West, Fleming West, Margaret West, Ida West, Mary West, Andrew West, Annie L. West, Seth P. Staples, Nicol Allan, Nancy Allan, Annas Metz, Mary Metz, Alfred Richard-son, Elizabeth Richardson, Annie Richardson, Sarah Richardson, Joseph Davis, Jane Davis, John Vandivort and Tillie Goehring.

After this group withdrew the church had one hundred thirty-five members on its roll. Rev. J. E. Hutchison was called March 15, 1894, at \$500 for half time but the call was

declined. Dr. William Taylor held a communion service April 28-30, when thirty were received on examination and three by certificate. This large addition greatly encouraged the congregation which called Rev. J. M. Thompson June 11, 1894, and he served the congregation for two years.

A better feeling having developed between the mother church and the daughter at Callery Junction, a desire to be reunited under one pastor prevailed. Rev. Henry E. Snyder was installed May 10, 1897.

A third exodus from the mother church occurred in 1916. This unfortunate division resulted from Rev. Snyder's preaching in the homes of some of his loyal adherents and baptizing some children after Presbytery had terminated the pastorate. Some persons became highly incensed at this action of Presbytery and showed their displeasure by withdrawing without seeking regular dismissal. About thirty persons withdrew and cast their lot with the Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church which was organized in spite of the earnest protest of the Presbytery. Not only was the mother church weakened, but a small congregation of another denomination was established in its bounds with little prospect of growth.

HOUSES OF WORSHIP

The congregation worshiped for some years in a log tent. Between 1820 and 1824 a log building was erected on a plot of ground donated by Benjamin Davis. In 1839 a brick church was built beside the old log church. The brick building was torn down in May, 1878, and the present frame building was dedicated November 3, 1879. Rev. William H. Jeffers, D. D., of the Western Theological Seminary, preached the sermon upon this occasion.

MINISTERS

Rev. Reid Bracken, 1808-1819; Rev. John Moore, 1828-1831; Rev. Leland R. McAbey, 1838-1853; Rev. Newton Bracken, 1859-1860; Rev. John W. Potter, 1863-1866; Rev. Samuel R. Kerr, 1868-1869; Rev. Levi Risher, 1870-1876; Rev. Robert J. Creswell, 1877-1879; Rev. James M. Thompson, 1894-1896; Rev. Henry E. Snyder, 1897-1900; Rev. John Waite, 1902-1907; Rev. Plummer R. Harvey, 1908-1913; Rev. J. Harris Moore, 1914-1915; Rev. Hugh S. Shaw, 1916-1919; Rev. W. Lamont McMillan, 1920-.

ELDERS

James McClelland, John Crawford, Emmet, Morris Covert, Benjamin Garvin, William Critchlow, John William Graham, Sen., Andrew Boggs, James W. Garvin, William Vandivort, Thomas W. Boggs, John Graham, Josiah Covert, James Thompson, Robert A. White, James Sutton, John Goehring, J. Milton Covert, O. Palmer Graham, Matthew Graham and Christian Hoehn.

Present Session: Audley M. Covert, William Owens, Edwin Ramsey, William Vandivort, Stewart R. Croft and Louis Goubeaud.

EVANS CITY

The pioneer churches were located near the main routes of travel. This was before the counties were divided into townships with a centrally located village. As the villages attracted tradesmen they became social and business centers and exerted a strong influence on the older churches. As the population increased many village dwellers had no way of attending the church except by walking and this created a need for more churches. Notably was this true in regard to Evansburg, now Evans City. Many of the members of the Plains Church resided in Evansburg and vicinity and the generosity of the Plains Session is shown toward their fellow worshippers in the following minutes: "Session met at the home of James Sutton,, October 15, 1877, and after full and free discussion of all the interests involved it was resolved to establish a praise and prayer meeting on Sabbath evenings at Evansburg. R. A. White and James Sutton were appointed a committee to secure a building for such services." The minute for January 4, 1878, has a significant statement of progress: "Preaching services in the Baptist Church part of next week." After about three years Rev. Gilbert M. Potter, who was serving as Stated Supply of Plains Church, preached alternate Sabbath evenings in the Evansburg School House for nearly a year. A church seemed a prime necessity, so on February 19, 1883, a church consisting of thirty-nine members who brought letters from the Plains Church: viz., William Dunbar, Margaret Dun-bar, Andrew Boggs, James Boggs, James Sutton, Dorcas Sutton, Alva Sutton, Lizzie Sutton, B. F. White, Clara B. White, Lottie B. White, W. R. Nesbit, Laura D. Nesbit, Solomon Stamm, Euphemia Stamm, William Irvin, M. D., Elizabeth Irvin, Anna Irvin, Henrietta Irvin, S. John Irvin, Maggie Irvin, Lizzie Gelbach, Daniel Barto, Lizzie Barto, Mary B. Dunbar, Thomas W. Boggs, Calvin West, Emily West, Mrs. Mary J. Boggs, Elmira Boggs, Henry Behm and Selinda Behm, was organized by the Church Extension Committee of Allegheny Presbytery. The members of this committee were Dr. E. E. Swift, Rev. R. S. VanCleve, Rev. G. M. Potter, and Rev. E. Ogden, of Butler Presbytery. The first Elders were Thomas W. Boggs, Andrew Boggs, James Sutton and R. A. White. A building committee appointed in 1882, composed of R. A. White, B. F. White, James Sutton, and James Boggs, erected a frame church costing \$1,800 and seating 275 people on a lot donated by James Sutton. The church was dedicated on the first Sabbath in January, 1883, by Dr. E. E. Swift and Rev. G. M. Potter.

Rev. G. M. Potter continued to supply the church from its organization until April 1, 1893, but also cared for the church until it received its first pastor in September, 1894. It was during Rev. Potter's pastorate, January 10, 1889, that a Sabbath School and Mission was organized to supply religious services for a number of families of the Glade Run oil field. A preaching service was conducted there also on alternate Sabbath evenings. The Mission flourished until there were about thirty members of the church in the vicinity. The Mission was discontinued when many of the workers in the oil fields moved to newer oil fields.

Dr. William M. Taylor conducted evangelistic services in the church February 16-20, 1894, and eighteen persons were received on examination.

The church being in Butler County, Butler Presbytery requested its transfer, which was completed June 14, 1898

MINISTERS

Rev. Gilbert M. Potter, 5. 5., 1883-1893; Rev. J. M. Thompson 1894-1896; Rev. Thomas R. Lewis, 1898-1906; Rev. Angus J. MacInnis, 1910-1912; Rev. George C. Muller, 1912-1913; Rev. J. Harris Moore, 1914-1915; Rev. Hugh S. Shaw, 1916-19 19; Rev. \V. Lamont McMillan,

1920-

ELDERS

Thomas W. Boggs, Andrew Boggs, James Sutton, Robert A. White, William Irvine, M. D., Greer McCandless, James P. Boggs, Prof. M. A. Sutton, Andrew Wible, Hugh McClelland, Samuel David, Samuel Q. Blair, Leander M. Wise.

The Rotary System of Elders seems to have been adopted November 8, 1908, and continued until February 19, 1913. During this period Messrs James Boggs, William S. Stewart Samuel Q. Blair, William C. Douglass, Samuel H. Hill, Fred Pepper, Solomon Stamm and William Allen served the church. When the Permanent System was restored James P. Boggs, Samuel Hill, William Stewart, Fred Pepper, Solomon Stamm and James Davis were chosen. W. L. McKisson and Glenn Russell were added later. Present Session: James P. Boggs, Fred Pepper, William Stewart, James Davis and George Cole.

CRESTVIEW

Rev. Rudolph C. Yates, the Pastor of Zelienople Presbyterian Church, was supplying the Plains Church in June, 1885, and this relation was continued until October, 1888. At a congregational meeting on that date Rev. Yates' name was proposed for the pastorate. Fifty votes were cast in favor of Rev. Yates and forty-four were registered in the negative. This action of the congregation highly displeased Rev. Yates and his ardent supporters. Shortly afterward Rev. Yates began to preach at Callery Junction, which Plains considered a part of its parish. The Session at Plains regarded the conduct of Rev. Yates as revengeful after he failed to be chosen as pastor. His strongest sympathizers only strengthened this view for they became attendants at the services at Callery Junction and neglected their relation and duty to Plains. The sentiment of the Plains Session is expressed in the minutes of February 23, 1889, when it appointed "James Thompson, John Goehring and J. M. Covert to visit certain members who were neglecting the ordinances of the sanctuary." The minute of June 22, 1890, is "John Rowan was chosen as delegate to attend the Presbytery at Allegheny City and state the facts in regard to the efforts being made to organize a church at Callery Junction, which we believe to be in the bounds of Plains Church." Leaders of the Allegheny Presbytery realizing that Callery Junction was clearly within the jurisdiction of Butler Presbytery and that Plains was only temporarily under the care of Allegheny Presbytery, declined to interfere. It must be remembered in this connection that the salary of Rev. Yates at Zelienople was only \$450, and supply work seemed necessary when the door was closed for him at Plains.

At a meeting of the Presbytery of Butler July 29, 1890, a motion "to consider the matter of organizing a church at Callery Junction and to take such steps pertaining thereto as may be deemed best, was entertained. Fleming West, Frederick McNeill and Nicol Allen stated in their judgment a church ought to be organized, and after some discussion the motion was adopted. Rev. Messrs. E. Ogden, W. E. Oller, L. E. Keith and Elders James D. Anderson and James H. Graham were appointed to meet the petitioners at Callery on the 20th (lay of August at 1 P. M. and if the way be clear to organize a church. At the time appointed, the committee organized a church, which was named Crest-view. The Session of Plains graciously yielded and "dismissed August 10th, twenty-seven of its members to enter the proposed organization, viz, John Staples, Mrs. Mandana Staples, Joseph West, Mrs. Maria West, Fleming West, Mrs. Margaret West, Ida West, Mary West, Andrew West, Annie L. West, Seth P. Staples, Nicol Allan, Mrs. Nancy Allan, Annas Metz, Mrs. Mary Metz, Alfred Richardson, Mrs. Elizabeth Richardson, Mrs. Sarah

Richardson, Annie Richardson, Joseph Davis, Mrs. Jane Davis, John Vandivoort, Alfred Vandivoort and Tillie Goehring. Two members each were received from the Evans City and the Union U. P. Churches and one upon examination.

John Staples, Fleming West and Cyrus Hall were the first Elders of the new organization. Rev. R. C. Yates was Stated Supply from its organization to his death, August 3, 1896, resulting from blood poison in a wound received by a mowing machine. Since the death of Rev. Yates the mother and daughter churches have been united under the same pastor and have prospered in the Lord's work. The church building was completed and the congregation rejoiced when it was dedicated to the Glory of God June 14, 1891, and free of debt. President Isaac C. Ketler, of Grove City College, preached the sermon on this happy occasion.

MINISTERS

Rev. Rudolph C. Yates, S. S., 1890-1896; Rev. Henry E. Snyder, 1897-1899; Rev. John Waite, 1902-1907; Rev. Elbert Hefner, S. S., 1907-1908; Rev. Plummer R. Harvey, 1908-1913; Rev. John H. Moore, 1914-1915; Rev. Hugh S. Shaw, S. S. a Lamont McMillan, 1920-.

ELDERS

John Staples, Cyrus W. Hall, William B. Scott, James M. Little, William Metz, and Roy Croft.

Present Session: Fleming West, Charles W. Kiser, John E. Leise, Stewart E. Dunbar and Samuel C. Miller.

ZELIENOPE

Dr. Detmer Basse, a native of Frankfort, Germany, came to Butler county in 1802 and purchased ten thousand acres of land lying in Butler and Beaver counties. On his estate he laid out a village which he named Zeliénople for his daughter Zelié and built a wooden baronial castle and outbuildings of unique designs one-half mile west of the village site. He named his castle "The Bassenheim." In 1810 the little community built "an octagonal brick house on the Diamond for school and religious purposes." Tradition says that Rev. Reed Bracken, the young pastor of Plains and Mount Nebo Churches, preached in this building as early as 1810 to the few English speaking residents of the community. The settlers of Zeliénople were almost exclusively of families reared in strict Lutheran and German Reformed Churches. They used the German language in social and business intercourse, in school and in religious services. The isolated Americans were as aliens in the land of their birth and they longed for religious instruction in their own tongue.

The four persons who were most active in securing occasional services were Thomas Wilson, his two sisters and Mrs. Sarah I-loffe. The first official reference to this little band is found in the minutes of Synod of Pittsburgh for 1824 where Zeliénople is listed with "vacant congregations not able to support a pastor." It is annually reported in this list until 1831 when the name disappears altogether. But the little band persevered in their efforts to secure the bread of life and they were not entirely forsaken. In 1829 Rev. William Nesbit, recently installed pastor of the Hopewell Presbyterian Church in Beaver county, supplied at Zeliénople for a year. From 1830 to 1836 Revs. Aaron Williams and

Hays preached frequently while employed as teachers in the Manual School established by the Presbytery of Pittsburgh in 1825 in the "Bassenheim." This school was for poor, yet worthy and capable, probably orphan, young men to secure an education with the privilege of working for their board and tuition. This experiment was discontinued in 1836 after the State Public School system was adopted in 1835 and the little band was again without a spiritual adviser. The Rev. Lemuel F. Leake prior to 1845 served one or more years as missionary for the Board of Domestic Missions at Zelienople and Harmony and other places. He became pastor of Mount Nebo in 1845 for one-half of his time and being a classical scholar and a teacher by instinct, he conducted a Select School in Zelienople where he lived. He doubtless encouraged the formation of a congregation and the first meeting with this end in view was held March 31, 1845, in the school house. A constitution was adopted consisting of seven articles for the conduct of the civil affairs of the congregation. The preamble of this document is worthy of record, viz.: "That for the purpose of securing regular and steady preaching by the ministry of the Presbyterian denomination we, the subscribers residing in Zelienople, Harmony and vicinity do agree to form an association to be styled the Zelienople and Harmony Presbyterian Congregation, subject to the provisions of the following constitution."

At a meeting of the congregation September 7, 1846, three resolutions were adopted, to-wit: 1st, "That as soon as the way is clear a Presbyterian Church shall be organized in this place; 2nd, That we apply to Presbytery for the same donation of \$75 to be continued for the coming year; 3rd, That a committee of five be appointed to solicit subscriptions and to become responsible to Rev. Leake for the sum of \$125 for his services as pastor of our church." The congregation must have presented its petition to Presbytery at the September meeting for the organization was effected November 7, 1846, by a committee composed of Rev. Reed Bracken, Rev. Newton Bracken and Elder Matthew Graham. The service was held in the Baptist Church and the following members were enrolled, nine from Mount Nebo and four others, namely, Thomas Wilson, Esq., Mrs. Nancy Wilson, Jane Wilson, Mary Ann Wilson, Mrs. Margaret Story, Mrs. Ann Wilson, Mrs. Mary Lusk, William Covert, John L. Welsh, Mrs. Jane Welsh, Mrs. C. R. Leake, Mrs. Sarah Hoffe and William Potter. Thomas Wilson and John L. Welsh were chosen Elders and were ordained and installed by the committee. Rev. Leake was only Stated Supply of the church he had founded until June 23, 1849. Twenty-three members were received but the membership at the close of his work was eighteen.

The church was vacant until November, 1852, when Rev. James S. Henderson consented to supply half time for \$150 per year in connection with the pastorate of Slippery Rock Presbyterian Church in Beaver county and his charge of a school in North Sewickley. This relation continued until October, 1855. It was under Rev. Davidson that the work of building a church was undertaken. On June 9, 1854, the building committee comprised of James Covert, Francis F. Wilson and Craig B. Wilson were authorized to take bids for a brick building thirty-four by forty-six feet and not less than sixteen feet high. This building was completed in 1855 at a cost of \$1500 and was dedicated with a debt of \$425, which was paid four years later. This building is the Sabbath School room since the new part was added in 1902, making a neat and commodious edifice. This addition cost \$14,000. Before the church was erected services were held in the school house, the Baptist Church and for the last several years in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Rev. Henry Webber supplied the church from the latter part of 1855 to 1865, giving one-half of his time at a salary of \$175. The church had thirty-eight members when he began work and thirty-one were added. Rev. D. D. Christy supplied the church one-half of his time for \$300 per year for two years, 1866 to 1868, when he returned to the United Presbyterian Church.

The church grew slowly in numbers and financial strength under the supply system of nearly twenty-five years, the period that especially needs the presence and wise counsel

of an approved workman. As the town prospered and enlarged the church grew apace. It has now its greatest membership, three hundred two, and is one of the most active, efficient and growing churches of the Presbytery under its capable pastor, Rev. C. N. Moore. The Sabbath School, Missionary Society and Endeavor Society have borne much fruit.

Sons of the congregation who have become ministers are: Samuel M. Goehring, Albert H. Goettman and Joseph R. Goehring.

PASTORS

Rev. Lemuel F. Leake, 5. 5., 1846-1849; Rev. James S. Henderson, 1852-1855; Rev. Henry Webber, 1855-1865; Rev. D. D. Christy, 1866-1868; Rev. Samuel L. Johnston, 1870-1882; Rev. Rudolph C. Yates, 1883-1895; Rev. Paul J. Slonaker, 1895-1901; Rev. Hugh Leith, 1902-1909; Rev. J. Claire Leech, 1910-1911; Rev. Ardo P. Bittinger, 1911-1915; Rev. Andrew F. Heitman, 1915-1917; Rev. Charles N. Moore, 1919-.

ELDERS

Thomas Wilson, John L. Welsh, Ferris Armour, Ethan Kelly, Robert Semple, F. S. Wilson, Thomas Potter, D. P. Boggs, R. S. Nichols, Albert Winter, Henry Buhi, E. J. Fithian, M. D., A. H. Wilson,

M. D., J. A. Osborne, M. D., George W. Mayes, Matthew Graham and J. B. McIntire.

The Present Session: David G. Bastian, W. Henry Gelbach, Samuel O. Wright, John E. Kocher, Charles H. Goehring and D. Ray Colmery.