

NORTHERN KENTUCKY VIEWS PRESENTS

HISTORY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH, AUGUSTA, KY.
1803-1929



By

T. Duke Williams

Just about twenty years after the Revolutionary War ended in those trying years of the young republic, settlers in and about Augusta and Germantown felt the need of Divine Guidance and help. They also were among those who came to America in search more for God, than for gold.

In 1873 Philip Buckner moved down the placid waters of the picturesque Ohio and selected the present site of Augusta for the establishment of a colony. It was thru his generosity that the town of Augusta received a plot of land 600 acres in extent and became an established settlement in 1797, to which a desirable constituency was attracted.

These were days of hardship not unlike the privations which fell to the lot of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England. Indians, wild and savagely ferocious, resented the intrusion of the pale faced Englishmen. Poisoned arrows often darkened the sky, and settlers little knew when they might be ambushed by marauding bands or their homes attacked and burned.

Then there was the difficulty of clearing the land and preparing the soil in order to secure sustenance. Shelters must be quickly thrown up to protect them from the on-coming winter. Supplies of food and fuel must be laid away. The women and children had to be provided for.

All of these hardships only served to whet the brave spirit of Kentucky pioneers. Close to their powder horn and hunting knife they also carried the Testament in which they had not forgotten the encouragements to pray and worship together. In obedience therefore to their impulses inborn from Puritan heritage they brought out the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms—and as soon as society was sufficiently settled, they organized a church according to Presbyterian custom doctrine and law. No doubt some of the members of this church were heroes of the Revolution, and had seen service under our great First President, George Washington.

Others were soon to come to their country's aid in the War of 1812. Others would again take up arms in the Mexican War and when the country was divided in 1860, Kentucky drew many loyal sons from the ranks of the church. The church furnished steady aid in the late World War and some of her sons, now her staunchest members, saw service for many months on the Western Front.

From a small band of settlers in 1803 the church has grown to a present membership of 355, active and inactive, and occupies a prominent position in the civic and religious life of the community and county.

Who can fathom the depths of her devotion? Who can measure the services performed to individual, community, and nation? Thousands have passed in and out of her doors in the half century now coming to a close. Within these walls truth has been heralded by seven active pastors and scores of evangelists and workers. From these sacred precincts the prayers and votaries of hundreds have ascended silently

to the Throne of God, and on these altars sacrificial offerings have been laid, dedicated to the extension of His Kingdom. The church has been the ready servant to keep alive in the home the knowledge and practice of true religion, without which there is no stability in private or public life. The church has been a nursery of noble youth, receiving children from their parents and consecrating them to the Lord by the sacred rites of Baptism, then to follow on with the work of confirmation.

At these altars the sacred vows of love have been made and new homes established. From these doors have gone many faithful servants to their final resting places. She has met life in its initial and final stages with a benediction.

Is the church a constructive force in the community today? Surely, as Paul has said, the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, the temple of the living God and the bride of Christ.

I love thy church of God,
 Her Walls before thee stand,
 Dear as the apple of thine eye
 And graven on thy hand.
 If e'er to bless thy sons
 My voice or hands deny,
 These hands let useful skill forsake
 This voice in silence die.

It is a solemn hour when hard earned money is laid on the altar for God; a Soul is consecrated and born unto the Kingdom; hearts are united in holy wedlock; remains of loved ones are consigned to nature again; new life is dedicated, like Samuel, to service of God.

The church stands at the cross roads in life today. She is the great patron saint of learning and religion. She has stood as a beacon light to warn off the rocks and to pilot struggling souls into the haven of peace and rest.

She has lived in the Providence of God through every crisis of history—and now her brave spirit moves on to higher and nobler undertakings. As Jesus said "The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against It" May God accompany us as we face the future, is the earnest prayer of your present pastor.

T. DUKE WILLIAMS

1803—June

The detailed history of the church is given herewith:

By DR. C. G. STEEN

The people in and about Germantown having invited the Reverend Robert Wilson to preach for them, founded the church of Germantown with forty members enrolled, some were received upon certificate and some upon examination.

The record examined shows that the first meetings of the Presbyterians in Augusta, occurred June 6th, 1812. And the meeting place was the Augusta Court House, with Robert Wilson as Minister.

From some of the early records we find that various members were cited for their non-appearance upon regular services, and some after repeated negligence were suspended.

1815—August

Meetings continued to be held both at Germantown and Augusta. Session of Germantown met at its regular place of worship, with Robert Wilson presiding, upon motion carried, voted that the Germantown church be hereafter known by the name of Augusta church. The first annual report of this church showed a total membership of forty-six. Second annual report showed fifty-five members. This congregation continued to grow and in 1819 reported a membership of eighty-two.

No records of the financing nor the erection of the Church building on Upper street is to be found, however, the best information available is that in this year of 1818 the building on Upper street was erected, and many of us recall the old building.

1819—May

The session in union with Rev. W. L. Macalla, set apart a day for petitioning the Throne of Grace, concerning the propriety of issuing a call for Rev. W. L. Macallā. This day was observed in September and a copy of that day's proceedings follows:

"The congregation of the Augusta Presbyterian church being well satisfied with the ministerial qualification, of you, William L. Macalla and having good hopes from our past experience of your labors that your ministration of the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interest do earnestly call and desire you to undertake the pastoral office of this congregation promising you in the discharge of your duties, all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and obligate ourselves to pay you the sum of five hundred dollars, in regular quarterly payments during the time of

your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church. In testimony whereof we have respectfully subscribed our names this the 28th day of September, 1819.

WILLIAM BUCKNER
WILLIAM LOGAN
JOHN FEE, Senior
THOMAS SHARPE

Attested by JOHN R. MORELAND Moderator

In October next the call was presented to Presbytery and in November Rev. W. L. Macalla was regularly ordained and installed as pastor. During these times the Session of this church seems to have acted as a Court for fractions of contracts between its members. Numerous citations were issued for the sin of imbibing too much in ardent spirits.

1820—Membership 114

So called Tea parties were found to be dances, which aroused the ire of the session members and several prominent members were cited to appear before the session.

1929—Several Colored people were admitted to membership by examination.

1831—First Deacons to be elected were Wm. Buckner James Fee, Johns E. McCormick.

1832—First record of Presbytery meeting at Maysville.

1833—Mr. and Mrs. Scott McKibben and Amanda McCormick were admitted to membership upon profession of faith.

1834—Session of Augusta church met in Sharon meeting house, and received upon examination, James C. Best and wife; Carolina Kelsay, Nicholas Talliferro, Frances Katherine Jennings, Mary Taylor, Amanda Sharp, Mary Ann Day.

1840—John E. McCormick and Joseph McKibben were duly elected Elders—Joseph T. McKibben was elected clerk of the session and held that position with honor many years.

1844—Samuel Boudé and John McCracken were elected Elders.

1848—Session took knowledge of the delinquency of some members, and each Elder was appointed a committee to visit a named person and try to bring them back into the fold.

1849—Thos. S. Orr, and wife, Mary Lucy Orr, were received as members from the Presbyteian Church of Covington.

A certain member was charged with gross irregularities such as, neglect of public duty; being engaged in horse racing; whipping his wife This member confessed to these charges, but showed a repentant spirit and the session refrained from expelling him. Mrs. Elizabeth S. Cleve-

land, an exemplary member died. Rev. J. H. Henderson, pastor.

1852—F. L. Cleveland and Alexander Case were received as members upon examination and profession of faith.

1851—Miss Virginia Clark, was received by certificate from Presbyterian church of Clarksville, Penn. Thomas S. Orr and Peter H. Rudd were elected Deacons. David C. Irwin became stated supply.



Detailed History by Mrs. M. A. LAUDERBACH

In 1852, it is recorded that Rev. D. C. Irwin was the pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Augusta. Joseph T. McKibben was the clerk of the Session. It seemed that the membership was under strict discipline at that time.

Rev. Irwin was requested by the Session to state from the pulpit the entire disapprobation of dancing as a social amusement; playing with gambling cards was also forbidden in those days. There was a list of members who had died or been suspended or dismissed. Members were reprimanded for neglecting the ordinances of the church and absenting themselves from public worship. They frequently expressed regret for sins of omission and commission and promised amendment for the future.

Rev. George W. Coons became the minister in 1855. During this time a member was reproved for attending a shooting match. Several were reprimanded and threatened with suspension for intoxication. The Session states that it can not, in one instance act upon the complaint of a member because they were aware of her unhappy disposition and her habit of complaining. Another prominent member apologized to the session for taking part in a raffle. Many at different times apologized for being intoxicated and also for using profane language.

Rev. H. E. Thomas became the minister in 1859. Again, constant care and advice is admonished by the session in regard to the deportment of the members of the church. All through the annals of the church young people whose names are familiar as the heads of families prominent in after years, appeared humbly before the Session with confessions and promises of future adherence to the rules and regulations of the church.

In 1863, Rev. B. M. Hobson became the minister. During these days the fruits of strict religious training and the fervent zeal for the Christian Faith brought young and old into the church as a regular ordinance and not as the result of evangelistic service or revival preaching.

The young people of Augusta were educated and refined for those were the college days when Augusta was known for her culture and social refinement.

In 1864 the church numbered 84 in membership and 75 in the Sab-

bath School. Stormy days were approaching and outside influences were entering the sacred boundaries of the House of God. The War was over, but the differences between the North and South had spread from the General Assembly to the Synod, and from Synod to Presbytery and from Presbytery to the congregation, arousing individual opinions and dissensions. In 1868 the die was cast at a meeting of Presbytery. Rev. B. M. Hobson, the minister of the Augusta church, was not recognized in the church records. Rev. Hobson had united with what they designated as the Independent Synod of Kentucky. Mr. Sylvanus McKibben was the only elder who was in sympathy with the pastor, in his decision, but a majority of the congregation were with them in their determination. They declared themselves as representatives of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the United States. Mr. A. C. Armstrong and Mr. J. P. Reese were elected elders to act with Mr. S. W. McKibben. The eldership then became S. W. McKibben, A. C. Armstrong, and J. P. Reese and they each continued in that capacity until they were each called to their Heavenly Reward. Men of devout noble principles, leading exemplary lives before the world and devoid of offense to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The two congregations continued to worship in the same church edifice for eleven years with different pastors preaching on alternate Sabbaths.

In 1872, Rev. B. M. Hobson, the faithful minister who had been with his congregation through the period of storm and stress, by his own request was released from his service in this church. The congregation was strongly fortified. The church was growing in wealth, and in numbers. It was on a solid basis. Rev. W. L. Bailey was called to the church in 1873. This relationship was dissolved two years later. Rev. Bailey had made a great fight against intemperance.

In 1875, after one of the most successful revivals in the history of the church, Rev. J. M. Evans was called to fill the pulpit. In 1879 he led the movement to build this edifice. Those were great days of rejoicing and prosperity for our beloved church. Our beautiful music, our fine organ, our intellectual membership all were conducive to the splendid co-operation of the congregation.

In 1882 Rev. Evans resigned to enter the Evangelistic field for which he was peculiarly adapted.

Dr. E. H. Harding of North Carolina was then called to the pulpit, a very scholarly man. Mrs. Harding organized the women of the church in their first Missionary Society, thus inspiring the zeal of the other good women of the church which has never ceased, but has grown in intensity to the present time. Owing to ill health Dr. Harding resigned in 1884.

Rev. E. E. Biggers filled the pulpit most acceptably until 1891.

Previously in 1889 the two General Assemblies had recommended a consolidation of the two Presbyterian churches of Augusta into one Society to be more efficient and to exert a better influence in the community. Comitties were appointed and an agreement for a union of the two churches carrying the officers of both congregations with full rights and privlges into the church which was to belong to the Presbytery of Ebenezer of the Presbyterian church of the United States. In the words of Mr. S. W. McKibben, clerk of the Session, the members of the First Church were to be received with cordiality and joy praying the blessing of our Lord to rest upon us all united in his love. This union was fully accomplished in 1891 while Rev. F. P. Ramsey was the pastor.

In 1894 Mrs. Belle R. Cleveland of the Augusta church presented a plan to a number of consecrated women of the church to bring them together for more effective work through Presbyterial organization. First asking the permission of Presbytery and receiving their approval circulars were issued inviting the ladies societies in the various churches in the presbytery to send representatives to a meeting to be held in Augusta in April 1894 and in response many came from other churches and so was organized the first Presbyterial union of Women's Missionary Societies in the State of Kentucky. Mrs. Cleveland was its first President. This organization became the Presbyterial Auxilliary which now exists this change being accomplished when Mrs. Marion Lauderbach of the Augusta church was President of the Presbyterial organization.

Rev. F. P. Ramsay continued to be the pastor until 1897 when Dr. W. C. Clark was called by the church.

In 1904 Sharon and Augusta churches resolved to separate, dissolving a union in pastoral services which had existed for many years.

Shortly after this time Dr. Clark resigned his charge and Rev. L. F. Swallow of Missouri accepted the call to the Augusta church in 1905. Mr. Swallow resigned in 1908 and Dr. J. C. Cowan became the pastor, until his resignation in 1912.

Dr. W. O. Cochrane then was called and continued in faithful service as a beloved pastor until 1928. Mrs. W. O. Cochrane organized the Womens' Bible Class in the Sabbath School, which has been of efficient service in the church. Mrs. Cochrane was the teache of this efficient service in the church. Mrs. Cochrane was the teacher of this class and when God called her to her reward in the Heavenly home, Mrs until she too entered into Eternal Rest.

Today we have our Bro. Williams, full of youth and enthusiasm inspiring us again to renewed service in the continued up-building of our church.

May Heaven's richest blessings continue to follow in the pathway of this procession of Saints who have gone before us and may we honor them by practicing their virtues.



The following greetings were received from two former living pastors, Rev. I. F. Swallow, and Rev. W. O. Cochrane D. D.:

Rev. T. Duke Williams and Congregation of Augusta, Ky.: We deeply regret we cannot be with you at your anniversary service. We assure you we are with you in spirit and wish you and your noble people a most joyful day with God's richest blessings and un-numbered years of growth in His power and grace.—Mr. and Mrs. I. F. Swallow, Kansas City

Dear Brother Williams:—As a former pastor for sixteen years, I want to congratulate you, and through you, the officers and members of the church, on this auspicious occasion. One hundred years of history is a long and eventful period in the life of any church. The Century plant blooms but once and dies: not so with the church. "One day with Jehovah is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day" So may you all remember "This day is holy unto the Lord our God; do not mourn, nor cry, but be glad." No doubt there are tears in many eyes today, because of pleasant memories and hallowed associations of many great and good men and women who have served their day and generation and gone home to their reward. They look down upon you today, and bid you "carry on." May the century on which you now enter be the greatest and the best. My best wishes and prayers are with you today. Very cordially and sincerely.—W. O. Cochrane, Penny Farms, Florida.



THE NEW BUILDING

The above history was recorded in connection with the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the building of the present church auditorium on Fourth Street near Upper—1879-1929. This Anniversary Service was held in the church on Sunday evening December 1, 1929.

At the same time the new Sunday School building was in the course of construction. In the spring of 1929 the congregation, feeling the need of more adequate equipment for the work of religious education, subscribed the sum of \$15,000, for the erection of a brick building about seventy-five feet long and thirty-five feet wide, with a basement for heating facilities, and two stories above ground. The lower floor was to be used as an auditorium, for the Sabbath School, and the up-

per floor for Class rooms.

Work was begun on this building in the summer of 1929. It has been erected on the lot immediately in the rear of the present church auditorium and a door in the wall of the present church will connect the two buildings together.

The new building is of red brick, with cut stone for window sills and arches, and with its Gothic architecture, makes an imposing edifice in the heart of Augusta's finest residential district.

The congregation of the church has long looked forward to the erection of just such a building as this is. It is a concrete embodiment and fulfillment of many prayers, longings and hopes, and it is with the keenest joy and satisfaction that the members of the church are now experiencing the realization of these hopes. They are to be highly commended for the readiness and enthusiasm with which the \$15,000 was raised and this building will long remain a monument to their heroic faith and sacrificial devotion.

The congregation is deeply indebted to Mr. T. A. Weldon, Trustee, for his untiring efforts in the construction of this building. The Building Committee of which Mr. Weldon is chairman, consists in Mr. A. Robbins, Dr. C. G. Steen, Mr. T. E. Milner and Mr. J. D. McKibben. It has been due to Mr. Weldon's services as Contractor, and the sturdy construction and attractive lines of the exterior have been carried out and there is universal gratitude to him for his painstaking economy and care

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- 1803—REV. ROBERT WILSON.
1819—REV. W. L. MACALLA.
1849—REV. J. H. HENDERSON.
1852—REV. D. C. IRWIN.
1855—REV. GEORGE W. COONS.
1859—REV. H. E. THOMAS
1863—REV. B. M. HOBSON.
1873—REV. W. L. BAILEY.
1875—REV. J. M. EVANS.
1882—REV. E. H. HARDING.
1884—REV. E. E. BIGGER.
1891—REV. F. P. RAMSAY.
1897—REV. W. C. CLARK.
1905—REV. I. F. SWALLOW.
1908—REV. J. C. COWAN.
1912—REV. W. O. COCHRANE.
1929—REV. T. DUKE WILLIAMS.