

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

The Bracken Meeting House

by

unknown

www.nkyviews.com

BRACKEN MEETING HOUSE

Per History of Kentucky Baptists, by J.H. Spencer, 1886, the Bracken Church or Bracken Meeting House was located in the village of Minerva and was gathered by Lewis Craig in the summer of 1793. The following names were dismissed from the church at Washington to constitute this church: Philip Drake, Ann Drake, Bernard Thompson and wife, Mary Lewis, Mary Downing, Thomas Kelsor, Elizabeth Murphy, Hannah Kelsor, Dennis Murphy and probably others. By 1795, this church was received into the Elkhorn Association, with 45 members.

On Saturday, 28 May 1799, messengers from eight churches met at the Bracken Meeting House for the first meeting of the Bracken Association. The Bracken Association was the eldest daughter of the Elkhorn Association, which had organized on 1 Oct 1785, with Rev. Lewis Craig as the Moderator. He is considered the father of the Bracken Association. According to History of Kentucky Baptists, by J.H. Spencer, 1886, five churches attended this first meeting and they were: Washington, Mayslick, Bracken (now Minerva), Stone Lick and Locust Creek. When they joined with the Bracken Association in 1799, they had 156 members.

It must be noted that Philip Drake, mentioned above, was a pioneer minister in the Bracken Association at least until the year of 1812. It is not known which churches he tended to.

Around 1805 the church split over different views of slavery. William Holton was the pastor of the Pro-slavery church and James Thompson was the pastor Anti-slavery church. Both congregations used this building for their services. In September of 1807, James Thompson's church joined with the Baptized Licking-Locust Association, which later called themselves an Abolition Society. The split between these churches was finally healed by the dissolution of the Abolition Society around 1818. From 1815 to 1829, Jesse Holton was the pastor of this church. In 1829, he turned to the followings of Alexander Campbell and left the church with 214 of its members, leaving only 37 remaining. Gilbert Mason was then called to this church and he stayed for several years. While he was here, he convinced the members to discard its Articles of Faith, because he too had been preaching Campbellism. In 1840, A.D. Sears, a missionary, came to this church and under his direction the Articles of Faith were restored. The church was at peace with itself again and soon prospered. Alexander Warren Larue succeeded Sears in 1842. This was his first pastorate, and was ordained by A.D. Sears in December of 1842. His wife was the granddaughter of Lewis Craig. By 1850, this church had baptized into its fellowship a total of 618 people. From 1850 through 1875 the church had eleven different pastors, their names not known at this time.

It has been said this church had a balcony in the rear where blacks were permitted to worship from. The bricks for this church were burned on the site and then later that location was turned into a baptismal pool. The church dissolved in 1900. In later years it was used for a tobacco barn.

Also was found an article in the Bracken County News, dated May 1930, that stated the old brick Baptist Church at Minerva was sold on 26 Apr 1930 to N.B. Brooks. He paid \$160 for the church and \$120 for the lot that had been intended for burial use. At this time the Bracken Association had intended to erect a monument to mark the last resting place of Pioneer Baptist Minister, Rev. Lewis Craig. This article states that it is not known the exact date of death of Craig but somewhere around 100 years ago. Lewis Craig was buried on the Tobin farm in a private cemetery, between Minerva and Dover. According to the Kentucky Encyclopedia, by John E. Kleber, Lewis Craig died in 1825 and he was buried in a private cemetery. It also says that he built the church at Minerva in 1793.

According to McCane family researchers, there was a McCane/McCann that came into Mason County with the Traveling Church. At the time when this church was being built, Lewis Craig was sick and could not leave his bed. He gave instructions to be carried out for the building procedures of this project. It was said he told them to stack two bricks one direction and then turn two bricks in the opposite direction. Lewis Craig was a stone mason, as well as a preacher of the gospel.

Some of the known ministers of this church were: Lewis Craig, William Holton (1805-?), James Thompson (1805-1818), Jesse Holton (1815-1829), Gilbert Mason (1829-?), A.D. Sears (1840-1842), and Alexander Warren LuRue (1842-?).

*Check deed book on Bracken Meeting House.

Mason County