

BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CENTRE TOWNSHIP

The origin of this church dates back to about the year 1790. The first substantial building was erected in 1797. This was succeeded by a large frame structure which was finished in 1842. This house having undergone repairs at different times, is still occupied.

The first settled pastor was Rev. J. W. Henderson, whose labors commenced in 1798, and continued until 1823. His successors have been: Rev. Jesse Smith, eight years; Rev. Robert Johnston, about eight years; Rev. John Cross, 1845 to 1850; Rev. Franklin Orr, 1953 to 1877; and Rev. John Gourley, the present pastor.

The following are the names of those who served as ruling elders: Gen. Michael Campbell, Gen. James McCombs, John Allison, George Sample, John Lewis, Major James Laughlin, William Hamilton, John Robinson, William Anthony, Thomas Hamilton, Evan Lewis, Joseph Henderson, James Hunter, Alexander McMullen, James McKee, William Carson, N. P. Turner, Wm. Johnston, James Reed, Robert McCluskey, J. L. Robinson, G. W. Johnston, Jeremiah Lomison, John Shields, and Daniel Wilson.

The communion service used by this congregation, is so old that the time of its introduction cannot now be ascertained.

In some stray notes furnished to the press some years ago,* we glean the following: "Bethel Church is situated seven miles southwest of Indiana, and was the first Presbyterian church in the county. The first house was built of logs, and no doubt some of our older readers remember the old building with nothing but benches, with no backs, on which to sit; and also the immense ten plate stoves for heating the church.

"It was during the ministry of Rev. Henderson that the temperance question was first agitated. At that time it was the custom for almost everyone to indulge in spirituous liquors, and especially at log rollings, raisings, etc. The result was that it was nothing uncommon for the greater part of the crowd to become badly intoxicated.

"Mr. Henderson saw the evil of drunkenness and preached a sermon on the subject. At the close he called upon all that were willing to sign the pledge to come forward. Five persons did so, their names being: Major Loughrey, James Todd, James Hunter, Alexander McMullen, and Joseph Campbell; Judge Campbell was the last survivor, and he died in the spring of 1879.

"This was the beginning of the temperance agitation which has not yet ceased. All the early meetings were held here or in the vicinity. Looking back over the past years, one cannot help but contrast the public sentiment of 1880 with that of 1798 to 1823.

"During the ministry of Mr. Johnston, the present building was erected. In the latter part of the ministry of Mr. Orr, the house was thoroughly repaired and refurnished.

* Judge Joseph Campbell furnished the Information.