

BLAIRSVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

[Extracts from historical sermon delivered by Rev. George Hill, D. D., June 21, 1871.]

This church was organized September 21st, 1822, by Rev. Francis Herron, and at that time received the name of West Union. There were thirty-three constituents, sixteen males and seventeen females, of whom but two remained on earth in 1871, one of whom, the aged Henry Barnes, still lives (1880); the Other, Mrs. Martha Moorhead, mother of Rev. W. W. Moorhead, having prior to this time removed to Greensburg.

The first ruling elders were Michael Campbell, Daniel Smith, and John Cunningham. The next was John McCrea, June 5th, 1830. W. T. Smith, Samuel Matthews and Mathias Lichtenthaler were ordained September 8th, 1838. These were reduced by removal and death till in 1854 there were none but Judge Cunningham left, and on June 25th of that year James Speer, H. A. Thompson and Matthew George were added to the session, the latter by ordination, the others by installation, having been ordained in other churches. In March, 1861, James H. Fair, Joseph Moorhead, Jacob Zimmers and J. M. Turner were ordained and installed, and on April 26th, 1868, Joseph Henderson, Jesse A. Cunningham and Samuel M. Bell were added, the former by installation, the latter two by ordination and installation. Of these seventeen Dr. Hill says in 1871, "but five now remain with us; five others are office bearers in other churches, and seven have gone to their reward in heaven."

In 1855 the congregation for the first time elected a board of deacons consisting of James Baird, David Lintner, James H. Fair, Samuel Kennedy, W. A. Loughrey, Thomas Campbell and Jacob Zimmers, and subsequently to fill vacancies James Alexander, E. G. Still, Thomas Hatham. S. M. Bell, Samuel Barr, M. H. Hassock and Wm. Lintner.

The pastors have been, Rev. Thomas Davis, who labored in the field a year previous to the organization, and continued his labors here in connection with other congregations until 1839, when feeling his strength failing, the services of a co-pastor was decided upon and the labors of George Hill secured a year later, and this condition of pastor relation continued till the death of the Rev. Mr. Davis, May 28th, 1848, and since that time Dr. Hill alone has had pastoral charge of the congregation. On the thirtieth anniversary of his pastorate the congregation and friends assembled at the house of the pastor and Thomas D. Davis, D. D., grandson of the former pastor, in behalf of their many friends presented an elegant silver table service of nine pieces inscribed,

“PRESENTED TO

REV. DR. AND MRS. A. H. HILL,

by the

LADIES OF THE BLAIRSVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

With their affectionate regards, on the 30th anniversary of his
pastorate, June 21, 1871.”

The Rev. Adam Torrence, the only living representative of the Presbytery now a member of it, that belonged to it when Blairsville church was organized, presented a silver ice-pitcher, goblets, bowl and salver bearing inscription which explains itself:

“TO

REV. GEO. HILL, D. D., AND WIFE,

FROM

HIS MINISTERAL BRETHREN OF THE PRESBYTERY OF BLAIRS-
VILLE,

On the 30th anniversary of his pastorate, June 21st, 1871.”

The first church building was a frame building, and was so far finished in 1822 as to be occupied, but for years afterward the carpenter's work-bench constituted the pulpit. The location was about one-half mile northeast of town, on lot now attached to _____ Laughlin farm, and adjoining the Farm of James Wiley.

This was occupied for about nine years, but Rev. Mr. Davis, preached in the town. On evenings of the Sabbaths, he visited the church at West Union, as interest began to be manifested, holding the services in private houses, and later in the log school house, and in 1828, measures were taken to build in town. This was at first opposed by a part of the congregation, but was ultimately successful, and in 1829, the building was completed, and the next year presbytery changed the name West Union to Blairsville.

There are 250 names on the subscription list for funds to erect the house, and but two exceeded twenty-five dollars, yet the aggregate amount was \$1,200.

The average increase of membership from 1822 to 1840, was 16 ½ per year, and from 1840 to 1871, 22 ½ per year. The increase from 1822 to 1871, was 971 – this amount of course subject to usual decrease by death, removal, dismissal, &c., so that the comparative exhibit of actual membership results thus: – in 1822, 33 members, and in 1871, total members in communion, 222.

The contributions of the church as by comparative statement, show for two years, 1840-1, the sum of \$161 20, and for 1870-1, total for two years, \$3,114 15. The contributions for benevolent purposes for a period of thirty years from 1841 to 1871, show an average per annum of \$487 85, not including private donations, expenses for house of worship, poor fund, Sabbath school, nor pastor's salary.

The Sabbath school was started in 1820 or 1821, and has been continued ever since with excellent results to church and community.