

## EBENEZER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CONEMAUGH COUNTY.

There is but little known of the early history of this church, and notes of its progress we shall quote largely from the historical sermon preached by its pastor, Rev. D. J. Irwin, July, 1876, who in prefatory remarks, says, "we must rely largely upon tradition for the early history of the church."

"The church was organized about 1790 or 1791, and in connection with Bethel, formed a pastoral charge." It is not known by whom organized, but Rev. Marquis preached for the congregation in 1793, but how often, or how long a time is not known.

The first elders of whom we have any account were Patrick Jack, S. Coulter, John Marshall and John Robinson, and the first record of membership we have any account of was made in 1832, over forty years after its organization; and of this list of 165 names, there were but nine remaining in fellowship in 1876, viz: "Mrs. Nancy Marshall, Mrs. Rebecca Kerr, Mr. Leslie Hazlett, sen., Mrs. Mary Jack, Mr. Robert Ewing, Mrs. Elizabeth Ewing, Mrs. Margaret Elrick, Mr. John Barclay and Martha Ewing." Of the 31 members received during the same year there remained in 1876 but Messrs. "Tobias Bricker, Isaac Keenor and Mrs. Dorcas Irwin." To these two lists may be added Mr. Thomas Anderson, sen., Mrs. Rebecca Rosborough and Mrs. Polly Elder of the present Clarksburg church, and Mr. Samuel Nesbit and Mrs. Jane Nesbit of the Livermore church.

In addition to the three elders first named we name others now dead or removed to other churches, viz: James Marshall, James Coulter, John Douglas, John Ewing, Samuel Marshall, William Leard, John G. Thompson, James Tulton (or Fulton), William Conney, William Moore, John Miller, John McCurdy, and William Wray. The present session (1876), John Barclay, Robert Ewing, Samuel G. Miller, Tobias Bricker, Francis Harbison, James Jack, Robert Wray, R. E. Laird, S. P. Marshall, and James Barclay.

It is not settled whether the congregation has any settled pastor till Re. Joseph Henderson settled within its bounds. He "probably preached here first in 1797, and in 1799 became settled pastor." We give a sketch of this good man in sketches of the pioneers of the county. He served the church until 1824. Rev. Jesse R. Smith succeeded Rev. Henderson and served the church four years.

In 1832 Rev. David Lewis, a native of North Wales, became pastor, and served the church until his death, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1844. Of this man, Dr. Donaldson says: "He with the writer had made arrangements for alternately preaching once in two weeks in the village of Clarksburg, on the contiguous border of our charges. On the first evening, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1844, both were to be present, but a member of his session from the village failing on that day to attend church, he said 'if it is too far for the elder to come in daylight, it is too far for the pastor to go at night.' so he stayed at home and preached a tender stirring sermon, and by daylight the next morning 'he was not, for God took him.' " During Rev. Lewis' pastorate Watt's version of the Psalms was introduced instead of Rouse's, creating some dissatisfaction, and some withdrew from the congregation on account of this "innovation."

Rev. John Cross, succeeded to the pastorate after the death of Rev. Lewis, and remained till 1850, and in 1851, Rev. George Morton, became pastor, but by his own request was relieved in 1854; however, he was induced to remain, and in 1855, was again settled as pastor, serving till 1859, when he was dismissed by his own request.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, 1861, Rev. D. J. Irwin, was called to the pastorate "and on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1861, was ordained and installed pastor by the Presbytery of Saltsburg."

"The first place of preaching was a tent of rough boards used only on wet and stormy days;" when fair, the services were held in the grove. "The first house of worship was about twenty-five feet square and was built of hewed logs, the seats of split logs, and had neither fire place or stove." The second house was an improvement only in the point of size, and a loose board floor, "and for several winters had neither stove or fire place." These people "walked to the church and listened to the sermon without any fire in the house." The next building was of brick; size 65 by 45 feet. The building now occupied was erected during the years 1870 and 1871, at a cost of probably \$8,500, (this was the contract price), and the material in old building. It is two stories, 68 by 48 feet, and in comfort "is surpassed by few country churches."

The membership had increased to 220 in 1876.

A Sabbath school was organized in 1820 – was suspended for a few years, but another organized in 1830, continuing to the present, and its members now number considerably over one hundred.