

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF ELDER'S RIDGE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

[By A. Donaldson, Pastor.]

Elder's Ridge Presbyterian Church, in Young township, Indiana county, near the line of Armstrong county, where prayer meetings and other services had been held by Rev. Joseph Harper, of Saltsburg, was organized by order of the Presbytery at Redstone, by Rev. Thomas Davis, of Blairsville, August 8, 1830. From Ebenezer were received by letter fifty members, as follows: James Smith, Esq., and Mary Ann his wife, John, Jane, and Margaret Smith, Jacob Weamer and Barbara his wife, David Elder and Julia Ann his wife, James Elder, John Elder and Elizabeth his wife, Joseph Harbison, Esq., and Rebecca his wife, Sally Harbison, Joseph Cunningham, Archibald McMeans and Elizabeth his wife, Andrew, William, and Robert McMeans, Mary Davis, Margaret, and Sarah McMeans, Samuel Cochran and Nancy his wife; Mary Elder, Robert Elder, John Reed, Sr., and Jane his wife; Alexander Reed and Lucy his wife; John Reed, Jr., and Jane his wife; Abel Findley and Eliza his wife; Catharine and Ann Harbison, Matthew Harbison, Margaret and Joseph Patterson; Hannah McCombs, Sr., Hannah McCombs, Jr., Charles McCombs and Mary his wife; William McCombs and Jane his wife; Robert Wray and Abigail his wife. Of these, only six still live in the communion of this church, viz: John Smith, Robert Elder, Andrew McMeans, William McMeans, Margaret McMeans, and Sarah Ewing, and belonging to other churches, Sally Cunningham, Jane Reed, and Joseph Patterson. Joseph Harbison, Esq., and David McComb were elected elders, and ordained November 6, 1830. The organization was reported and the church enrolled in Blairsville Presbytery at the first meeting after it was organized.

Four acres of land had been donated for church purposes by James Smith, Esq., Allen McComb, and Charles McComb, where their farms cornered together. In the fall of 1829, on the portion given by J. Smith, Esq., a three-length log church had been erected, at an expense of about \$300. Its length was 60 feet; its breadth, 30 feet at the ends and in the centre 36 feet. The pulpit and pews were unpainted and ununiform.

In the summer of 1845 the second house was erected at the north end of the former one. It was a brick 56 by 46 feet, with square windows, and a story only fourteen feet high. The cost was about \$1,600. The contractors were Samuel M. Taylor and Daniel Wilson. During its erection the congregation was accommodated by the Associate Reformed Church at Olivet, Armstrong county, with the use of its house of worship. This house was the scene of several precious revivals, and will be hallowed eternally in the hallowed memories of God's best people born and trained in it. Owing, however, to its unshapeliness, together with the failure of its roof and sleepers, May 13, 1878, it was torn down, scarcely thirty-three years after it had been erected. A few feet from its northwest corner, on land now donated by Robert Elder, was erected a tasteful two-story brick edifice, 70 by 48 feet, fronting eastward, at a cost of \$8,000, besides the old church building. The contractors were John Oliver, Esq., and James H. Diven, of West Lebanon. During its erection the church and Sabbath school put up with crowded quarters in the halls of Elder's Ridge Academy. The basement of the new church was first used by the congregation May 30, 1878, and dedicatory services were held November 20, 1879. In point of beauty and worth, the house excels any other country church in the Presbytery.

For the first four years the church had only occasional supplies from Presbytery. Then it was stately supplied one half the time by Rev. David Kirkpatrick. Falling back to the use of the Scotch Psalms in praise, he drew in many members, of whom but few continued when afterwards the New Testament Psalmody was resumed.

April 8, 1838, Alexander Donaldson, but four days after his licentiate preached to the congregation which had expected again to hear Mr. K. After supplying occasionally that summer, and stately one-third of the time during the winter following, in the spring of 1839, he was called there for one-half his time, and ordained June 20, 1839. Having procured fifty acres of land close by, he made it his residence over since, and for several years preached part of the time at Currie's Run.

In 1853, the congregation having been so divided as to constitute on one-third of its members a new church at West Lebanon, which secured one-third of his time – two-thirds were given Elder's Ridge for five years. Now for twenty-one years both churches were served on each Sabbath day; Elder's Ridge at 10:30 o'clock, A. M., and West Lebanon at 2 o'clock, P. M.

Joseph Harbison, Esq., and David McComb, were the first elders. The present session consists, besides the pastor, of William Fritz, Simon P. Townsend, Alexander McComb, S. Judson Craighead, David Findley and John Smith.

The membership numbers at present 171. The Sabbath school, which in 1846, developed from the pastor's Bible class with about fifty scholars in about five classes, now numbers about 200, including persons of all ages – nearly all that attend church – in 14 classes.

No serious disaster has ever occurred to the interests of the congregation. Miss Lizzie Culbertson, while a member of the church, went as a missionary teacher to the Indians at Wapaunucka, Indian territory, in 1858, and was driven back by the outbreak of the war in 1861. Then having married Rev. Hunter Corbett, she went with him in 186_ as a missionary to China, when, after nearly ten year of faithful, pleasing, successful labor, she was relieved of the cross and received her crown, August 20, 1872.

Rev. Alexander H. Donaldson, son of the pastor, with his wife, and three daughters under six years of age, started for a new mission among the Navajoe Indians at Fort Defiance, Arizona Territory.

From Elder's Ridge Academy, in this church, and under the control of its pastor, have gone forth 137 ministers of the Gospel, and ten foreign missionaries.

A lady member of this church, Mrs. Letitia Ewing, completed in October, 1879, the one hundredth year of life. All her descendents in this region, three sons with their wives, thirteen daughters and six sons, with the wives of two of them – as also one great grand daughter, are members of the church, and with a single exception, are all Presbyterians.