

LOYALHANNAH BAPTIST CHURCH.

The Loyalhannah Baptist Church was organized at Saltsburg, Indiana county, November 29, 1828, by concurrence and advice of a council of ministers appointed for the purpose by the Redstone Baptist Association, namely: Rev. James Frey, of Big Redstone. Rev. James Estep, of Forks of Zough, and Rev. John Thomas, of the Two Lick Church, Indiana county.

Its constituents were the nine following persons, to-wit: Mrs. Mary Johnston, Andrew Johnston and his wife Martha, John Johnston and his wife Anna, George Hunt and his wife Mary, Mrs. Betsie Nicholson, and Stephen Drury.

The first business meeting was held June 20, 1829, at which time Andrew Johnston was ordained deacon, and Rev. William Shadrach, recently ordained to the ministry, was chosen as pastor. He accepted their call and entered upon the service immediately, dividing his labor equally between this church and the church at Mount Pleasant, Westmoreland county, where on the 10th of December preceding he had been ordained and settled.

During the greater part of the first year of its history the little church, through the kindness of their Presbyterian brethren, had the privilege of holding their services in their meeting-house; but this arrangement not proving quite agreeable to some members of the session of the Presbyterian Church, the little band withdrew, and held their worship at such places as they found to be most convenient. Sometimes they met in private houses; sometimes they accepted the tender made to them to use a meeting house at New Alexandria, at which place some of the members resided, and here they occasionally held the communion service.

In the opening of the spring of 1830, the church erected a tent in a beautiful grove, some three miles from Saltsburg, near the road leading to New Alexandria. This spot was selected as the most eligible on which to build their sanctuary, whenever they should deem themselves able for the undertaking. Around this preaching stand, in the open air and under the canopy of heaven, large assemblies gathered to pray and praise and hear the word.

In 1832, having been greatly strengthened in the meantime by accession to their number, they erected a neat and commodious brick building, and dedicated it to the worship of God, free of Debt, and having now a "local habitation," they took to themselves the name of the Loyalhannah Baptist church. This location was well suited to the convenience of the congregation, as the greater part of the membership, both of the original constituents and of those who subsequently united with the church, resided on the Westmoreland side of the Conemaugh.

In March, 1835, their first pastor, after having served the church for five years and ten months, resigned the pastorate. To take charge of a newly organized church in the city of Allegheny – then called Allegheny town. This parting of a young church with its youthful minister was the severance of tender ties, mutually painful to both; but the call of duty seemed to demand the sacrifice, and to this demand they mutually yielded. At this time the church numbered one hundred and thirty communicants.

On the 6th of April, 1836, the church elected to the pastorate Rev. Benoni Allen, who served in the office until August, 1839. This proved to be before its close a very unhappy pastorate. Under it a spirit of discord was engendered among the members, parties were formed, proper discipline was neglected, and in the midst of this disorder the pastor withdrew, without being regularly dismissed. For a long period the strife continued, and terminated finally by the exclusion of as many as twenty-one members from the communion of the church. This occurred February 15, 1842. Through the years of 1840 and '41, frequent efforts at reconciliation had been attempted, but without effect. In the meantime the disaffected part had withdrawn from the church and organized a separate body, under the name of the Livermore Baptist church. This proceeding, being regarded as fractious and disorderly, did not prevent the church, in the exercise of its discipline, from expelling them from its fellowship. After the lapse of some years a better spirit prevailed, and a good degree of brotherly concord was bestowed, a calm succeeding the storm. The Livermore church, by removal, death, and otherwise, has become extinct.

From 1840 to 1849, the church was served for brief periods, either as pastors or supplies, by the following name ministers: Isaac Winn, John Parker, Milton Sutton, John P. Rockafeller and Edward M. Miles. Not anything of special note took place during this period. In June, 1849, the church called to ordination Mr. P. M. Weddle, a licensed preacher, who by the advice of council called for that purpose, was ordained to the full work of the christian ministry, and served the church till June, 1852. He was soon succeeded by Rev. T. J. Penny, who held the office until April. 1855. During his pastorate, the church resolved to change their location, and, in 1853, they built themselves a house of worship in the borough of

Saltsburg, and assumed the name of the Saltsburg Baptist Church; not, however, without providing for holding occasional services at Loyalhannah.

Mr. Penny was followed by Rev. D. W. Hunter, who ministered to the church from August, 1855, to April, 1857. The next year the church was without a pastor.

In March, 1858, Rev. J. R. Morris devoted to the interests of the church the one-half of his time for one year. April, 1859, Mr. W. T. Johnston, a licentiate, was called by the church to ordination, and served it as pastor from April of that year until April, 1862.

From 1862, to 1864, the church received pastoral services from Rev. Samuel Furman, then pastor of the church at Indiana. In March, 1864, Rev. A. H. Taylor was called to the pastorate and remained in the office until failing health compelled him to retire, March, 1866.

From the last named date, until May, 1867, the church was without a pastor, at which time they extended a call to Rev. A. Shadrach, who accepted the call, and served the church for a period of eight years, when he resigned to take the financial agency of the Mount Pleasant Institute, in Westmoreland county. During his pastorate the church deemed it advisable to occupy more fully the ground on the Westmoreland side of the river; accordingly, in 1872, thirty-six members were dismissed for the purpose of organizing a new church, under the old name of the Loyalhannah Baptist Church. They built, that year, a new and commodious church edifice and united under the same pastoral charge with the Saltsburg Church. At the close of Rev. A. Shadrach's pastorate, April, 1875, Rev. G. W. Baker was called to the pastorate of the Saltsburg Church, served it for one year; and in April, 1876, Rev. John Burke became pastor of Saltsburg and Loyalhannah churches. He continued in the pastorate until April, 1879. Near the close of Mr. Burke's ministry, a new church was constituted, at one of his posts, and eleven members were dismissed from the Saltsburg Church, who together with eleven others, dismissed from the Loyalhannah Church, became the constituents of the new body, under the name of the Kelly's Station Baptist Church.