

## HISTORY OF WEST UNION UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION.

For more than thirty years no record was preserved of the history of this congregation. The facts concerning its organization we have gleaned from the memory of those who in their childhood were among the worshipers, and who still survive, and from their former aged and honored pastor, Rev. David Blair.

The first religious services were held in the grove in which the church now stands. In the year 1814 the congregation was organized. Rev. John Jamison and others supplied them with occasional preaching. On or about the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, 1817, this congregation, in connection with Indiana and Conemaugh, then in the Presbytery of Chartiers, presented a call for Rev. David Blair to become their pastor. This was accepted on the condition the he should have the liberty of traveling for one year. Upon his return, he was ordained and installed in the congregations named, September, 1818. The elders in the congregation at this time were: James Smith, John Pattison, Robert Miller, John Black and William Calhoun. Mr. Blair continued his ministrations in this congregation every third Sabbath, riding through cold and storm, seldom failing to be present until 1820, when he was called by Presbytery to peach in the South. On his return, after an absence of five months, he found some charges preferred against him for preaching erroneous doctrine, these charges being made by some members of each congregation. He was tried and sustained by Presbytery. About this time Conemaugh Presbytery was organized, within the limits of which his congregation were located. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, 1852, Rev. Samuel Anderson was unanimously called by the congregations of Indiana and West Union, and installed as assistant pastor. In August, 1858, this union was dissolved at the request of West Union, Indiana taking the whole of Rev. Blair's time and this congregation Rev. Anderson's.

Being much reduced by the organization of Shelocta and Elderton, and also by the families being thrown into Jacksonville, Crete and Olivet by the union, at the request of Olivet, one-third of Mr. Anderson's time was granted to the congregation. He continued to preach and attend all the ordinances in both congregations until April, 1867, when he resigned. His resignation being accepted by Presbytery, this congregation, for the first time since its organization, was vacant. In the following month of May, Rev. J. C. Telford was called by this congregation, in connection with Olivet, and installed as pastor. Mr. Telford having, some time after this, resigned the charge of Olivet, his whole time was taken by this congregation, and he is now their pastor.

Since its organization the following persons have been chosen elders: David Hutchinson, Alex. Gilmore, Alex. Henderson, Alex. Patterson, William Lytle, \_\_\_\_\_ Smith, John Gilmore, Robert Hood, Alex. Graham, William Smith, James Calhoun, James Caldwell, John Olver, R. T. Hart, John Robertson, D. J. Blakely, John Wachot, S. T. Smith, William Miller and James Kier.

This congregation first worshiped in the grove, and logs were arranged for seats. The pulpit was about as rude in its construction, being a platform raised four feet from the ground, resting upon the same support. Its dimensions were about five by eight feet. In 1815 a log church was built; its size was 24 by 30 feet. The space between the logs was "chinked and daubed," the roof secured with "ribs and weight poles," and the doors fastened with wooden buttons. This being too small to accommodate the congregation, they frequently assembled, on pleasant days, in the grove, which came to be known throughout the neighborhood as the "Tent," a few years after this church was enlarged to accommodate their increase in numbers. Forty feet was added to its length, making a house of rather singular dimensions – 24 by 70 feet. It was named by their pastor, David Blair, "The forty foot Lane." There was a door at each end and one in the side of the church. The pulpit was placed in a recess opposite the side door. Its height was five or six feet from the floor, boxed in and overhung with what no doubt appeared, compared with the surroundings, an elegant "sounding board" The ceiling was twelve or thirteen feet high. A little lower and directly in front of the pulpit was another box of similar construction for the "clerks," one of whom, it is said (like the young man under the preaching of Paul), fell asleep, and resting too heavily upon the door, the "button" broke and he fell into the arms of a good brother, whose surprised ejaculation of "God bless you," is said to have interfered with the serious attention of the worshipers and even to have caused a smile to appear upon the face of the reverend minister. The pews seem to have been keeping with the surroundings. Some were slabs with backs set in. Others of a finer finish, but the aristocrat in that line was an old "chair maker" who rose to the dignity of a settee with "rungs and paint." In 1838 a large and commodious brick church was erected on the same site. This was removed in 1877 and the present very substantial and comfortable house was built.