

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"History of the Pipe Creek Brethren Church"

Carroll County Times Article for 11 September 1994

by Jay A. Graybeal

"Situated on Sam's Creek, two miles from Linwood, and on the boundary between Carroll and Frederick counties, is the village of McKinstry's Mills." So wrote J. P. Garner as he introduced his history of McKinstry's Mills published by the Taneytown Carroll Record newspaper in 1895. Mr. Garner wrote about the early history of his community which he stated was "largely the history of the flour mills located there." He also lamented that "McKinstry's Mills is one of the places which has likely passed the zenith of its greatness. Like hundreds of other villages in the east, which have been missed by the railroad, the depreciation of business interests has been slow but sure, and the place is simply a feeder for larger towns."

Mr. Garner also devoted considerable space to the history of the Pipe Creek Congregation of the German Baptist Church, known today as the Church of the Brethren. This section was written by Dr. Lee Royer, a member of the congregation.

As near as can be ascertained this congregation was organized about the year 1770. In the quite early history of the church no records were kept, and after a lapse of a century and a quarter, many dates and interesting facts are obliterated. The best sources of knowledge extant on the subject lead to the conclusion that this date can not be far wrong. Certain it is, however, that it was the first German Baptist church in Maryland, and is the great pioneer of all the churches of this denomination in the eastern district of Maryland. Her founders were plain earnest people, and their work has been abundantly blessed.

Prominent in the earliest history of this congregation were Daniel Saylor, (or Seiler as the name was then spelled) and Philip Englar. The first meetings were held on the farm of the latter, either in a log school house or in his home, and were known as the Pipe Creek congregation.

Daniel Saylor came from Pennsylvania. He was baptized by Michael Pfoutz in the old Conestoga church on the 27th. of November, 1750, and shortly afterwards moved to Maryland within the limits of the Pipe Creek congregation of which he was for many years bishop. Later on, when the Beaver Dam congregation was organized, the Saylor's all emigrated thither, leaving the work in the hands of Philip Englar, who was an Elder during Saylor's administration, and in warm sympathy with the work.

The ministers of the annual meeting show that he succeeded Sayler as bishop, and continued in office until his death in 1817. David Englar of Priestland Valley, son of Philip, was the next bishop. Jonathan Plaine and Christopher Johnson were ministers about his time. Following David Englar is a period of a few years in which the congregation seems to have been without a bishop, probably under the oversight of a bishop of a neighboring congregation.

Then came Philip Boyle, who was ordained bishop in 1844, and served for upwards of 30 years. He was assisted during this period by Jesse Roop, Michael Petry, Jesse Royer, David Miller, Howard Hillery, Hanson Senseney, Solomon Stoner and others. Hanson Senseney followed Boyle as bishop, and served until 1880, when he disagreed with the church on doctrinal points. The ministers of this period were Solomon Stoner, E. W. Stoner, Wm. Franklin, Amos Caylor, Joel Roop, and Uriah Bixler.

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Solomon Stoner was the next bishop, and still continue in office, E. W. Stoner, who has served in the ministry since the 20th. of April, 1860, was ordained a bishop in 1885. The present ministers are Greenbury Ecker, and Philip Englar, a great grandson of the honored founder of the church. It is a matter of rejoicing that he has taken up the ministerial work, leaving but a gap of one generation in the Englar line of ministers. It is the ardent hope of the church, that he may be a worthy successor of his predecessors, and in labors more abundant than they.

In 1806 a brick meeting house was erected to meet the demands of the increasing congregation. In 1866 the building was remodeled and enlarged. It was then a plain brick structure with a seating capacity for 600 people. In 1891 this was found too small for the membership, notwithstanding the half dozen congregations already formed from it. The present brick building though not pretentious in point of architecture is commodious, and substantial, in full harmony with the plainness of their belief. It now furnishes seating capacity for over 1000 persons.

Eleven years ago a Sunday school was organized with Greenbury Ecker, John E. Senseney, and Uriah Englar as Superintendents. This was somewhat of a venture at the time and was not approved by some of the more conservative members. It has succeeded admirably and has continued under the control of the same officers till this spring, when Philip Englar was elected superintendent; the school numbers nearly 200.

From this parent congregation have sprung, Beaver Dam, Rocky Ridge and Locust Grove congregations. The Rocky Ridge church was organized by Daniel P. Saylor, a man widely known and honored. In 1885 the original Pipe Creek congregation numbering nearly 700 members, was divided into three congregations with the home one, the new points being Meadow Branch and Sam's Creek.

The following are the congregations with their respective bishops; Beaver Dam, George Sappington; Rocky Ridge, Dan. R. Saylor; Meadow Branch, E. W. Stoner; Sam's Creek, Wm. Franklin; Locust Grove, Samuel Utz; Frederick, George Brunner; Pipe Creek, Solomon Stoner. Thus from one small congregation in a new country, have grown seven flourishing ones, with a membership in the aggregate of nearly 1500.

A large cemetery is near by; recently it has been enlarged and surrounded with a substantial iron fence. Of late years a large number of young people have been brought into the church, who have increased its strength and activity. Foreign mission work is beginning to claim their attention. This denomination has also in Denmark and Sweden, of which the Pipe Creek congregation is a liberal supporter.

They are also actively engaged in home mission work. James Quinlan is conducting a successful mission school and Bible class in Baltimore; likewise in Chicago active work is being done. Two annual meetings have been held at this point, the first in 1827 and the second in 1867.

Mr. Garner's history of McKinstry Mills will be included in the Historical Society's new publication entitled "Carroll Record Histories of Northwestern Carroll County Communities."

Photo caption: Pipe Creek Church of the Brethren built in 1891 on the site of earlier brick structures of 1806 and 1866. Historical Society of Carroll County Collection, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert McKinney, 1980.