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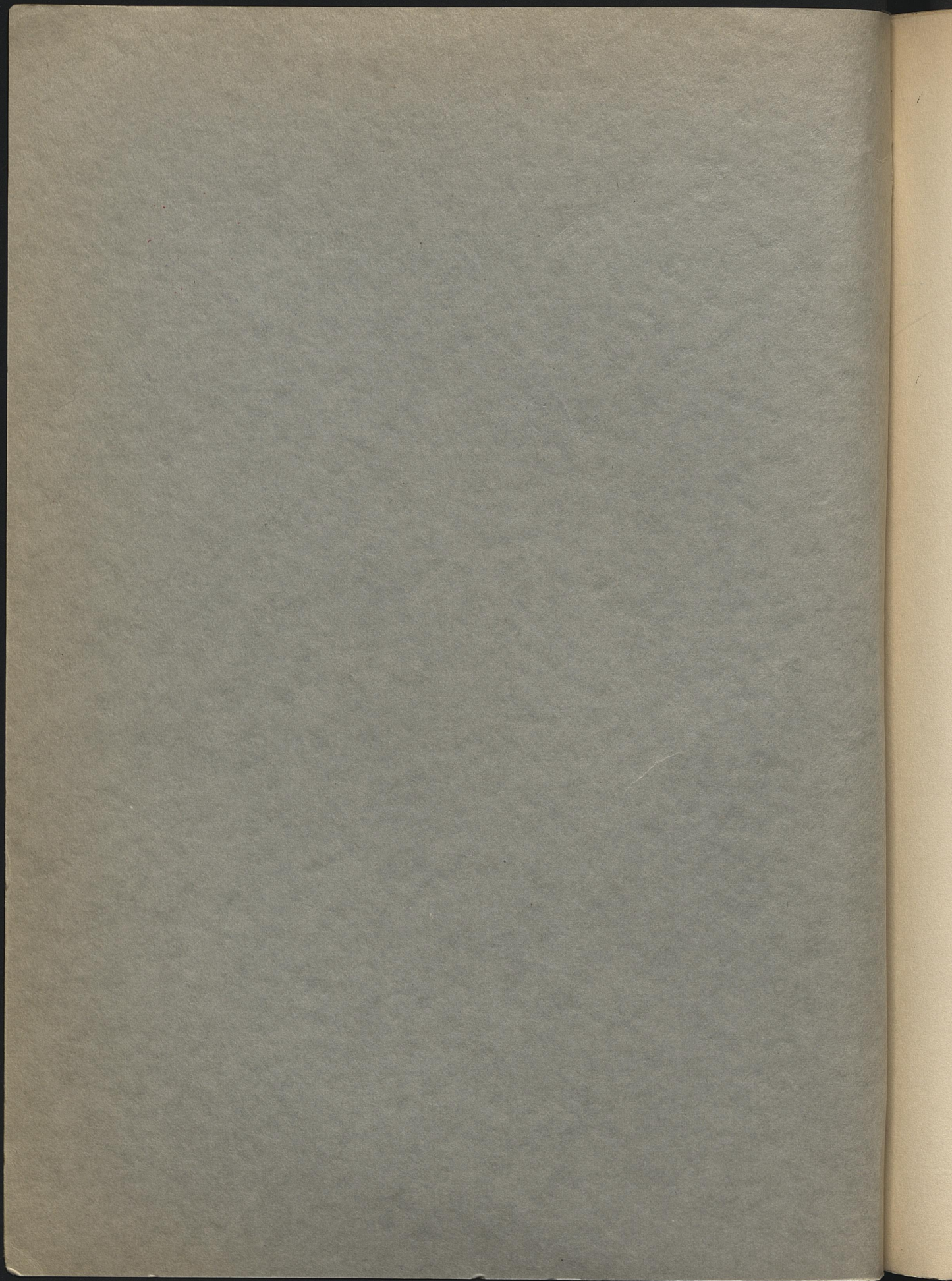
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BETHEL CHURCH MINUTES  
(Second Reprint)

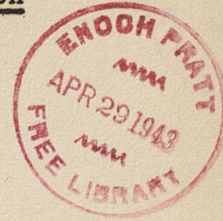
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HISTORICAL RECORDS SURVEY  
WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION



BETHEL CHURCH MINUTES  
Reprinted From  
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE BETHEL CHURCH  
and  
EARLY DAYS WITH THE CHURCHES



Prepared By

MISSOURI HISTORICAL RECORDS SURVEY  
DIVISION OF PROFESSIONAL AND SERVICE PROJECTS  
WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

Second Reprint

St. Louis, Missouri  
June 1941



FOREWORD

Bethel Baptist Church, 1806, was the first permanent Protestant Church to be established west of the Mississippi. Its records are of special significance and interest in that they throw much light on the religious life, customs and conditions incident to pioneer times in early Missouri.

The following reprint from the original minute book of the church is sponsored by the Missouri Baptist Historical Society. The quotations have been taken directly from the original manuscript book of the church.

Bethel Church was located in Cape Girardeau County, about two miles southwest of Jackson, Missouri.

*A. Loyd Collins*

A. LOYD COLLINS  
State Supervisor  
Missouri Historical Records Survey

St. Louis, Missouri  
June 1941

BETHEL CHURCH BOOK.

Thomas Bull Church. Writing Clerk  
Transcribed by Thomas P. Green

Commenced May 7, A.D. 1821, at 12 o'clock.

2nd page.

Record of Bethel Regular Baptist Church.

Transcribed by Thos. P. Green in the summer of 1821.

Impressed by the propriety of leaving on record this origin of our community, we introduce the records of our proceedings as a church with a brief account of the first of our Brethern that in this part of this world.

Bethel Church is situated of that section of the country formerly known by the name of the Upper Louisiana and District of Cape Girardeau, held alternately by the King of Spain and Republic of France, but ceded in the year of our Lord 30 April, 1803 by the Republic of France to the United States and now in 1821 known by the name of Missouri State, Cape Girardeau County. The meeting house stands near the county seat of Jackson. The first of our denomination that moved to this quarter were Thomas Bull, wife, Mother-in-law, Mrs. Lee, in the year 1790; the two last died before any church was organized. The next were Enos Randoll and wife in the year following, 1821. The next was Mrs. Abernathie, the wife of John Abernathie, Esqr. They lived several years in a forlorn and desconsolate manner without regular or even occasional religious worship, a few times excepted. Once they expected to leave the place or submit to the Roman Catholic established religion, but God, who intended to raise up a people to save him here, protected these

few scattered sheep who were emphatically in the wilderness, partly by the then ruling Commandant's clement temper and partly by their own peaceable demeanor. The Commandant promised them his protection.

In the year 1799 Rev. Mr. Thomas Johnson of Georgia visited this part and preached. He found a Mrs. Blues (Ballew) professing a hope, and baptized her in Randol's Mill Creek near where John Abernathy, Esq. now lives, giving her a certificate. In the year 1805 Rev. Davis Green, a native of Old Virginia, but then residing in Kentucky, who had lived and preached in both the Carolinas, visited this place.

The change of government now having taken place, the door appeared opened and evidently it is that God had selected him to be the instrument in planting His name here. There were by this time others moved here of the same order; he preached amongst them and returned to Kentucky, but could not remain there satisfied, but came the next spring with his family and remained here until his death on 9 December, 1809. He was buried on the plantation of Capt. Charles G. Ellis on Randol Creek.

From this church, either directly or indirectly, sprung the first churches that composed the Bethel Association, which was constituted in 1816 at Bethel Meeting House of the following churches: Bethel, Tywappity, Providence, Barron, Bellview, Thanic (designated Dry Creek). The following persons were constituted into a regular Baptist Church on the 19th day of July in the year of our Lord 1806 by Rev. David Green; George Lawrence and Henry Cokerham, Deacons, viz: David Green by letter, Jean English by letter, Agnes Blue (Ballew) by certificate, William Smith baptized, Thomas Bull restored. Brother Bull was excluded

in Kentucky by an Armenian Church for holding the predestinarian principles, Edward Spears restored, Addison Rogers restored, John Hitt by letter, Catherine Anderson by letter, Clary Abernathie by letter, Catherine Anderson by letter, Rebecca Randol by letter, Francis Hitt by letter, William Matthews by letter.

The constitution of the church having been adopted, Closs Thompson, Thomas Bull and Furguyson Hale were appointed to draught a Rule of Decorum which was adopted in June, 1811. Article 2 of the Rule of Decorum provides that the moderator "invite visiting brethren and sisters that are in good standing in their respective churches to seats with us". Item 5 makes it the duty of the moderator "to inquire if any of the male members are absent". Article 7: "No person shall interrupt the meeting by whispering or otherwise, nor any members leave the meeting without leave". Article 8: Male members missing two meetings shall be cited to give their reasons. Females shall attend as often as convenient, and when it is believed they have opportunity and will not, they also shall be cited to give their reasons".

In the following pages are some excerpts, chosen at random, from the RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CHURCH:

Oct. 11, 1806. "Agreed to build a meeting house on Thomas Bull's land".

Sept. 3, 1808. "excluded Lydia Wright for holding orroncous doctrine of falling from grace, and trying to lead others into the same error. Also Rebecca Wright for joining the Methodist Society".

March 9, 1810. "Brethern Matthews and Thompson to talk with Sisters McDaniel and Watkins for their neglect of church meetings".

Sep. 7, 1811. "Bro. John Reynolds taken under dealings for joining the Free Masons".

Oct. 12, 1811. "John Reynolds excluded for joining the Mason Lodge. Also Ann McDaniel for insulting the church and violating the rules".

Dec. 10, 1811. "On Monday at 3 o'clock in the morning a great and tremendous earthquake commenced which broke many places of the earth in New Madrid County. It continued shaking very hard all this winter".

Sept. 12, 1812. "Resolved to build a meeting house for the church of the size of 30 ft. by 24 ft, of hewed logs." Isaac Sheppard, John Sheppard and Thomas Bull, building committee.

Oct. 9, 1812. "Joseph Lockhart excommunicated for unlawful marriage".

Nov. 21, 1812. "Samuel Foster excommunicated for drinking too much".

Dec. 12, 1812. "Stephen McKenzie excluded for drunkenness, swearing and offering to fight. Jean Shields excommunicated for disorder".

Jan. 9, 1813. "Allen McKenzie excluded for neglecting to hear the church".

Feb. 13, 1813. "Ithamar Hubble excommunicated for drunkenness".

Oct. 9, 1813. "M. Bird's negro woman Viney excluded for telling a falsity and for refusing to hear the church".

Apr. 8, 1814. "Resolved that no court shall be held in the meeting house".

June 18, 1814. "Resolved that the meeting house be given up to hold court in until there can be a house on the permanent seat".

July 9, 1814. "Sarah Masterson excluded for joining the Methodist Brethern".

Nov. --, 1814. "Excluded Amy Gollon for bad conduct and setting at naught the church".

Dec. --, 1814. "Brethern McMillin and Bull write to the Association to remove the court from the meeting house".

Feb. 11, 1815. "A dispute between Sister Thompson and Brother Blount concerning a horse which he had sold her for a place. Appointed the following seven Brethern to settle the dispute, viz: Thomas Bull, J. Randol, F. Hail, A. Randol, R. English, P. Franks and R. Waller, who report that Bro. Blount take his horse and Sister Thompson her place".



Apr. 7, 1815. "James Blount excluded for not complying with the rule of the church".

Sep. --, 1815. "Abraham Keeny and Deborah, his wife, excluded for the doctrine of man's purity at birth".

Oct. --, 1815. "Appointed Ezekiel Hill and Anthony Randol to visit Sisters Blount, Watkins and Foster to know the reason why they do not attend the church meetings".

Oct. 7, 1815. "Brother Anthony Randol reported an excuse for the three sisters he visited. Which was accepted."

Nov. 11, 1815. "From report Bro. Henry Poe has been drunk. Appointed Simon Poe, Sr., to cite him to next meeting to answer charge".

Dec. --, 1815. "Bro. Henry Poe's case taken up. Brethern Abraham Randol and John Hitt appointed to labor with Poe against next meeting. Brethern T. Bull and Isaac Sheppard to write to Bro. Wm. Johnson of the Arm on Turkey Creek, concerning card playing".

1816

Jan. 13, 1816. "Took up the affair of Henry Poe, concerning his getting drunk, and he refused to hear the church. Excluded him."

Feb. 9, 1816. "Brother Bull to write to Furgerson Hail to come to church."

Jul. 13, 1816. "Rebecca Hubble excommunicated for leaving her husband and going off with another man. Jemima Hall excluded for the same crime. Green B. League taken notice of for not attending meeting."

Oct. 12, 1816. "James P. Edwards engaged to fill the meeting house cracks and point them with mortar for which he is to receive \$13.

Nov. 9, 1816. "Bro. Forest to stop preaching. Resolved that Sister Hannah Edwards be allowed to wear gold ear rings for the benefit of her eyes."

Dec. 7, 1816. "Bro. Cox came forward and confessed that he had been fighting. Laid over till next meeting."

1817

Jan. --, 1817. "Bro. Cox gave the church satisfaction and was restored."

Mar. --, 1817. "What will the church do with a member who suffers gambling in his house, such as card playing? The church believes it to be wrong."

May 10, 1817. "Brother Jonathan and Mary Hubble laid in a charge against Ezekiel Hill for profane swearing and raising a riot".

July 12, 1817. "Bro. E. Randol brought a complaint against himself for plaining "fines". Bro. Anthony Randol excluded for getting drunk, fighting and profanely swearing".

November --, 1817. "Bro. E. Randol laid in a complaint against himself for striking a man. By making a proper acknowledgment was forgiven. Florah, a black sister, to give satisfaction to the church for shouting in time of public worship".

Dec. 13, 1817. "Appointed Brethern Isaac Sheppard and John Sheppard to obtain a deed for one acre from Bro. Bull, including the meeting house, burying ground, and half the spring."

1818

January --, 1818. "Bro. Simon Poe brought charge against himself for drinking too much. He is forgiven."

May 9, 1818. "Resolved that the case Ebenezer Hubble marrying a second wife and his former wife living, be taken up. The church on hearing that he from reports believed his first wife dead, were satisfied. Committee appointed to examine whether or not a shade be made for negroes or other method will be best."

June 13, 1818. "Agreed that the black members have the seat behind the white male members at all times".

1819

March 13, 1819. "Bro. Ezekiel Randol made acknowledgment that he drank too much spirits, forgiven."

April 10, 1819. "An accusation is laid against Bro. Richard Waller for having drank to excess, and for stripping to fight".

Aug. 7, 1819. "Brethern Isaac Sheppard and Thos. Bull to get price of the baptismal dresses".

1820

Feb. 12, 1820. "Is it wrong for parents professing Christianity to allow their children under their control to go to balls and frolics? Answer Yes". Brethern Thompson and Blount to cite sister Watkins to next meeting and to find out whether the reports of we hear of her suffering balls and frolics in her house and her children dancing are true.

March 11, 1820. "If a member is constrained to shout, will the church bear with him? Answer, Yes."

Oct. 7, 1820. "Ferguson Hail excluded for having married while his first wife was alive and for not attending meeting after the church had wrote him."

1821

March --, 1821. "The committee reported that Sister Stout has been guilty of impropriety toward Bro. Bull, and a majority of them believed her acknowledgment ought to be satisfaction. The report received and taken up by the church. In the examination of the case Sister Brown stated that Sister Stout had voluntarily told her of James Randol's killing Sullivan and report of her having been begging which Sister Stout denied on the trial, but said Sister Brown drew it out of her by question after question. When the committee's report was received Sister Brown complained of the contradiction. Sister Stout rose and denied that she had contradicted Sister Brown on which she was unanimously excluded."

July, 1821. "Charges against John Dowty, shewed unchristian spirit towards Mrs. Stout when a member by passing her and not speaking".

Nov. --, 1821. "John Massey's case taken up. Resolved that he be interrogated why him and his wife lived in adultery, which at first he refused to answer but afterwards said was correct. He was excluded for drinking too much, taking part with gamblers, and putting away his wife."

Dec. 8, 1821. "Bro. Hill to answer to charge of his hunting on Sunday".

June 1, 1822. Bro. Ezekiel Hill laid in a complaint against himself for killing a deer on Sunday and was forgiven".

July 13, 1822. "Bro. Ezekiel Hill stated that it was reported that he had traded his mare on the Sabbath, but Bro. Benjamin Thompson stated that Bro. Hill told him that Leven Watkins traded his mare for a gun and watch and he did not receive property for his mare until Monday. He was restored".

April 10, 1824. "A petition was presented by seven members praying to be dismissed to for a church in Jackson. Their request is granted.

EARLY DAYS WITH THE CHURCHES

By

A. Loyd Collins, A.M., L.L.D.  
State Supervisor, Missouri Historical Records Survey

The Baptists were trail blazers in Missouri. Bethel Church, 1806, near Jackson, Missouri, was the first permanent protestant church west of the Mississippi. Another prominent pioneer church, Fee Fee, is still functioning in Pattonville, Missouri. It was founded 1807. The second church founded in the vicinity of St. Louis was Cold Water Baptist Church, 1809.

The records in the original manuscript minute book of the old church were written with a quill pen and have faded with age, but they contain many interesting entries which throw much light upon the religious conditions of that time. Three pages in the front of the book are devoted to the history of the founding of the church and to a discussion of conditions under which the Baptists had to labor in the State in early times. Because of the importance of this contemporary account, it is here given in full as follows:

"The Western shores of the Mississippi being the residence of the Catholic, Spaniard and Frenchman, no protestant was permitted without interception publicly to worship God --- no Protestant minister was allowed to preach or settle in the province....This was owing to the possession of the Country by the King of Spain and consequently the introduction of the Catholic religion.

"By reason of this the first Christian in becoming a resident in the county found it necessary to his stay, and even to personal safety that he voice not his objection to the established church.

"In this condition things remained until the purchase of the Country by the United States, whose laws gave to the professed Christian the invaluable privileges of worshipping God as appears to him most consistant with revelation 'under his own vine and figtree,' to exercise the dictates of his own conscience.

"For some considerable time then there was in this part of the Territory only one small Baptist Church called 'Feefee Creek.' This little band and their surrounding territory was often visited by ministering brethren from the Illinois Territory--this being...within the limits of the United States.

"Through William Patterson an invitation was tendered by preachers to such as-----were on the Lord's side to manifest it by certificate, experience or otherwise.

"In consequence of this invitation several presented letters from sister churches and Brother Allen on the relation of his experience was baptized. In this condition they remained about three or four months some advising to become an arm of the Baptist Church of Feefee Creek and others thought that we ought rather to be regarded as an arm of a church on the East side of the Mississippi in the Illinois Territory but the ministering brethren gave still different advice and accordingly it was agreed that we should ourselves be constituted into a visible church of the Lord Jesus."

The articles of faith of the church are interesting. They are recorded in the minute book as follows:

ARTICLES OF FAITH

"We believe

1. In one only living and true God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
2. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the work of God and the only rule of faith and practice.
3. In the fall of man and the corruption of human nature.
4. That Saints will preserve through grace to glory and none of them be lost.
5. That Saints are justified in the sight of God only by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ and that good works are the foe of faith....
6. That Baptism by immersion is the only mode and that believers are the subjects.
7. That none but regular baptized members of a church have right to Communion at the Lord's table.
8. In the resurrection of the dead and general Judgment and the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked will be eternal."

The members of the church in 1809 are listed as follows: John Allen, William Patterson, Sarah James, Sarah Allen, Susannah Jones, Elizabeth Hubbard, Hannah (black), Margarete Jessey, Jacob Eastwood, and Kitty Eastwood. William Patterson was the first clerk of the church. One year the church did not send delegates to the association because of trouble with the Indians. Charges were also cited against one brother because he did not send his Negro slave to church. The following interesting entries are selected at random from the quaint old minute book.

April 14, 1809.

"Agreed that our regular meetings be on the third Sunday in every month and the Saturday before, at William Pattersons on Cold Water."

July 15, 1809.

"Agreed that we attend the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at our quarterly meeting in November."

August 19, 1809.

"Rec'd. Hannah (woman of color) the property of Wm. Folley by experience."

April 19, 1810.

"Agreed that when any male member be absent from a regular church meeting he shall at the next meeting give a lawful excuse of his absence or be liable to church censure."

Dec. 17, 1810.

"Requested the Clerk to see Bro. Peter Ellis on behalf of this Church on the subject of non-attendance."

March 10, 1811.

"Rec'd. a contribution from Brethren Allen and Patterson to purchase wine for our quarterly meeting."

September 14, 1811.

"The church declined sending delegates to the association on account of the disturbance with the Indians and the prevailing sickness in that quarter."

September 20, 1813.

"Bro. J. Allen and J. McDonald appointed a committee to visit Sister Hubbard to know the cause of her absence from church and reports."

February 18, 1815.

"Appointed Brother Patterson to cite Jordon Whiteside again before the church...and also to write to Thos. Ellis requesting him to come and give the church satisfaction concerning some reported misconduct."

March 18, 1815.

"Jordan Whiteside excluded from the fellowship of the church."

April 20, 1817.

"Bro. Allen who was requested to write Judge Tucker on the subject of the absence of our Black Brethren belonging to him reported favorably of. "

May 16, 1818.

"The charges of Br. Patterson were called and he giving satisfaction was acquitted."



