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THE BELL SPRING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The earliest church in our area is generally conceded to be the New Dublin Presbyterian Church. Its congregation was organized about 1769 near Dunkard's Bottom. It is not clear exactly when they built a church or when they moved to their present site.

The second organized congregation had a pastor and a building. It was Page's Meeting House of the Methodist Society, built by Edward Morgan in 1773 on land belonging to Alexander Page. Many ancestors of the members of our present day Bell Spring Church attended both churches. Bishop Francis Asbury came here in 1801 and ordained Reverend Morgan who continued to serve the congregation until his death.

There is no record of a second minister coming to it. In 1876 its successor church was built near the New River Depot and named for Reverend Edward Morgan. Decendents of Reverend Morgan gave the land for the new church. The land where the original church stood still belongs to the Holston Conference.

In the early eighteen thirties a serious division developed in the New Dublin Presbyterian Church where Reverend George Painter was then pastor. The abolitionists were becoming vocal and antislavery agitation was making the slave owners self-conscious. Whatever the immediate cause of the rift the church was divided between what became known as "new school" and "old school". Reverend Painter took his stand for the "new school" ideology and was able to carry most of the congregation with him. In 1839 many members left the church and those living near Page's Meeting House began attending services there.

Among those who left New Dublin was John Hoge who had long been an elder. His influence was surely great among the Presbyterians attending Page's Meeting House. By the time Rev. Morgan died in 1844 they were a separate unit within the congregation.

In October of 1843 when the Presbyterian Synod of Virginia convened in Lewisburg, in present day West Virginia, it resolved to form a new presbytery. Montgomery Presbytery was formed out of the southwestern section of Lexington Presbytery. It held its first meeting at New Castle on the 19th of November 1843. At their second meeting in April of 1844 they designated specific members to go as missionaries to Giles Courthouse, Floyd Courthouse, Wytheville and to the "White Glade" in Pulaski County. The Reverend Messrs. H. H. Paine and N. Chevalier were to come to the "White Glade", hold a meeting and organize a church. The group at Page's must have been in correspondence with the newly formed Presbytery.

When the missionaries arrived in Pulaski County all went as planned and the White Glade church was organized. Tradition says that the New Dublin Church is our "mother church." We do not know exactly what this implies but we can find no evidence that the New Dublin church was instrumental in the formation of the White Glade Church. The earliest records state simply that the White Glade Church was organized August 17th, 1844 by the Rev. Messrs. Henry H. Paine and Nicholas W. Chevalier, with the following seventeen members: viz.

1. John Hoge, Elder
2. Elizabeth Hoge
3. John M. Hoge
4. Moses H. Hoge

5. Nancy R. Hoge
6. Moses B. Lloyd
7. Matilda Lloyd
8. Elenor Hoge
9. Eliza Hoge
10. Julia Cecil
11. Nancy L. Trinkle
12. Zacharia W. Cecil
13. Mary A. Cecil
14. Chuster Carbock
15. Cathy Carbock
16. Catharine Anderson
17. Rebecca Hoge

It has been hard to determine the exact location of the White Glade, but from the wording of the reports of the Presbytery meetings it was probably a community. We have found several early deeds that place it as being near the Alexander Page land. When driving toward Radford in the early morning hours along State highway 624 the cleared land near the Page's Meeting House site seems to have a white sheen that differentiates it from the surrounding area. Now the wooded areas are gone and it is impossible to tell what part was a "glade" but we believe that our present Hickman Cemetery is in this area. A congregation did not have to own a church building in order to operate officially as a church and there being no evidence to the contrary we believe the new White Glade church continued to meet in Page's Meeting House. After the 17th of August 1844 the 17 Presbyterians met as the congregation of the White Glade Presbyterian Church. Mr. Herndon in his "Historical Sketch of Bell Spring Church" says "their place of worship being Page's old Meeting House, a Methodist Church near a farm of John Hoge." This would be about midway between the present Bell Spring church and what is now New River Depot. Mr. Herndon was speaking about their place of meeting at the time the church was formed but there is no indication that they had a separate building.

A note following the statement of their organization says, "This church was without the stated means of grace from its organization in August 1844 to September 1845 when the Rev. Wm. P. Hickman commenced his labours as "Stated Supply." Evidently Mr. Hickman worked without salary until sometime before October 16, 1848 when the Presbytery met and wrote in the minutes that "The session of White Glade church reported through their delegate, that they had entered into an arrangement with the Rev. Wm. P. Hickman for one third of his ministerial service, for which the congregation proposes to give him the sum of \$75 and they request that Presbytery sanction the arrangement, which request was, on motion, granted."

The minutes do not say, and we wonder what period of time the \$75 covered. Judging by other known ministers' salaries it was probably for a year. The remainder of his salary came from the Blacksburg and Wytheville churches which he also served. He was expected to supplement this nominal salary by farming which he evidently did, because even in that day \$225 was not much.

Rev. William P. Hickman was born February 23, 1810 on Back Creek where his father, Samuel Hickman had a farm. His mother, Margaret Thompson, was the daughter of William Thompson also of Back Creek. William P. was evidently

named for his grandfather who was the son-in-law of Colonel James Patton, the original owner of the 3000 acres, part of which passed to William P. (Later it became Gordon Gloyd's, then David Kent's land. David Kent built his beautiful Oakdale home on the same site where William Thompson had built a Fort for defense against the Indians.) The P. in William's name probably stood for Patton.

William P. Hickman graduated from Washington College in Lexington, Virginia then attended the Union Theological Seminary in Fries Edward, Virginia. He was licensed and ordained in 1842 by the Lexington Presbytery and sent as a missionary to Pulaski County. He possibly knew the New Dublin and Page's Meeting House Presbyterians at that time. He became the "stated supply" minister in Blacksburg in 1843 and the "pastor" in Wytheville in 1846. He was serving both of these churches in 1848 when the White Glade church began paying one-third of his salary. (He had been serving as their "stated supply" since September 1845.) The young congregation was operating on very meager funds and possibly Rev. Hickman served without pay until 1848 when they "entered into an arrangement" with him.

Reverend Hickman had married Miss Margaret Hoge on July 18, 1843 - the year after he was ordained. The young couple made their home on land belonging to John Hoge where our Hickman Cemetery is located. This land adjoined Alexander Page's and John Cecil's land.

The Hoge land originally belonged to Thomas Pickens who it is interesting to note, married Sarah Brown, daughter of Abraham and Margaret Brown of Bell Spring. In 1794 Pickens sold the land to Thomas Cecil. In 1812 John Hoge bought the land from Cecil. His daughter, Margaret Hickman, deeded 2 acres of this same land jointly to our church and the River View Presbyterian church for a joint cemetery. The Rev. Hickman is buried here. It is interesting to note also that Pepper's Ferry Road came up the hollow past Asa Chumbley's home and across the cemetery. The young couple built their home East of the cemetery and there raised their family. They had 9 children.

The first recorded meeting of the session of the White Glade church was held on June 14, 1846. At this meeting William E. Hoge and his wife, Mrs. Jane Hoge, were received into the church membership. On August 9, 1846 Giles S. Cecil was received and on October 4 James Hoge and Mrs. Margaret Hoge, his wife, also Mrs. Mary B. Hoge, wife of John M. Hoge. These early records are signed by William P. Hickman, moderator.

Mr. John Hoge, the church's only Elder at this time, died on June 24th, 1847. The following memorial was entered on the minutes of the session:

"This church sustained a great loss by the death of Mr. John Hoge which took place June 24th, 1847. Mr. Hoge had for many years been a ruling elder in New Dublin and at the time of his death was the only elder in White Glade church. His last illness was short, but very painful, which he bore with great patience and Christian resignation. Death was disarmed. His end was peace. He died on his birthday, aged 76. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

Mr. Hoge's death left the church without an elder. A congregational meeting was called for October 2, 1847 when John M. Hoge, William E. Hoge,

and Giles S. Cecil were elected and ordained as elders. On the following Sunday Moses M. Hoge was also elected and ordained to the same office.

New names were being added to the church roll at each meeting of the session. Among the early members were Daniel B. Cecil and his wife, Mrs. Ardelia Cecil, Mrs. Elizabeth Pearis, who transferred from New Dublin, (again the words "New School" appear after the church's name) Catharine Brown, Mary Brown, Andrew G. and Mary Jane Mathews, Richmond Landers, a "colored" man was received into the membership. He was the first of about 10 negro members admitted. It is of interest that right from the beginning, long before they were emancipated by the Civil War, these negroes were dignified by the use of a surname in our church records, which according to all evidence was considered "old school."

Rev. Issac Naff succeeded Rev. Painter of the New Dublin Church, His political views must have been more distasteful to the congregation than even Rev. Painter's. Members continued to leave and many came to our church. Among them:

Mrs. Eliza Kent
 Mrs. Elizabeth Kent
 Mrs. Pauline McGavock
 Mr. Asa Chumbley
 Mrs. Eliza Chumbley
 Mr. George R. Hudson
 Mr. Issac Hudson
 Mrs. Clementine Hudson
 Wm. M. and Elizabeth Hudson
 Mr. James R. Hudson
 Mr. John Rice Hudson
 Miss Sarah Hudson

In 1850 a brick church was built near the growing community of Bell Spring. It is amazing that nowhere in the records is the building of the church mentioned. The only clue given is that Presbytery, meeting in Salem on October 12th, 1850, passed a motion wherein the name of the "White Glade" church was changed to "Bell Spring". At the same session they resolved to hold their next meeting "at Bell Spring church on the last Friday of April 1851, at 12 o'clock."

This must have been a great occasion for the new church. The sermon was delivered by the Rev. Henry H. Paine who was one of the missionaries sent down in 1844 by Montgomery Presbytery to organize the White Glade church. We are sure he was proud of the results of his efforts. The church now had a membership of 27 and a new brick building. It was a day of rejoicing! Rev. N. Chevalier who accompanied Rev. Paine was also present but he evidently did not take an active part in the proceedings.

On November 25th of 1851, Moses B. Lloyd and Michael Brown deeded to the church the land upon which it was already built although the deed says for the "erection of a Presbyterian Church." It had been built the previous year and dedicated. The Long Hollow starts on present day State road 624 and extends down to the New River. The indenture is between the two donors and the trustees of the church at the time - Asa Chumbley, Crozier Eaton Moses, G. C. Hoge, James Brown and James Kent. The deed specifically states that the Missionary Baptists are to use it on the first Sabbath in each month. The Methodists are to use it whenever the other two denominations aren't using it.

We herain copy the entire deed to preserve it as well as for its historical interest. It is recorded in Book 2, page 418 in the clerk's office of Pulaski County:

This indenture made the 25th day of November, 1851, between Micheal Brown and Moses B. Lloyd of the one part and Asa Chumbley, Crozier Eaton Moses, G. C. Hoge, and James Brown all of the county of Pulaski and James Kent of Montgomery County of the other part witnesseth that said Micheal Brown and Moses B. Lloyd hath gratuitously given one acre of ground in the Long Hollow of their land in the County of Pulaski for the erection of a Presbyterian church with the understanding that it is to be used by the Methodists when not occupied by the Presbyterians and Missionary Baptists and that the Missionary Baptists are to occupy it on the first Sabbath in each month exclusively. The said acre of ground commences at a White Oak in the long hollow by the road side thence So W 15 poles to a stake S 84 E 15 poles to stake N W 15 poles to a hickory sapling S 84 W 15 poles to the beginning. The said Micheal Brown and Moses B. Lloyd doth grant unto the said Asa Chumbley, Crozier Eaton Moses, G. C. Hoge, James Brown and James R. Kent as trustees to the said church and their successors to be appointed by the congregation worshipping at said church and their right title and interest of and to the said piece or parcel of land as above declared and do hereunto defend same from the claims of them and their heirs and all persons whatsoever. In witness whereof the said Micheal Brown and Moses B. Lloyd hath put their names and affixed their seals this day and date above.

Micheal Brown
Moses B. Lloyd

Pulaski County to wit:

I, John D. Howe a justice of the peace of the County aforesaid and State of Virginia do certify that Moses B. Lloyd and Micheal Brown whose names are signed to the writing wherein bearing date the 25th day of November 1851, have acknowledged the same before me in my state aforesaid. Given under my hand this the 24th day of February, 1852.

John D. Howe, J. P.

Virginia at a court held for Pulaski County the 4th day of March, 1852 this deed dated the 15th day of November 1851 was presented in court and with the certificate of acknowledgement annexed and admitted to record.

Teste

Lynch A. Currin

In the session meeting of May 22, 1850 Elder Wm. E. Hoge was "Excluded from Church Communion." It seems that he had been brought into the Pulaski County court by William Anderson on a small debt charge. The court case which Mr. Hoge said was unjustified became rather heated and at one point it was reported that Elder Hoge threatened to shoot Mr. Anderson. He also was

reported to have used profane language in court. He was charged with these errors in session and excluded from Communion on May 22, 1858. He did not appear in session to answer the charges. On September 24, 1865 he was excommunicated and stricken from the rolls for "contumacy" which means, according to Webster's dictionary, "obstinate, contemptuous disregard of or opposition to lawful authority." The matter came to a head when Elder Hoge joined the New Dublin church, (evidently by confession of Faith since he had not been given a letter of dismissal from our church.) This treatment of an elder of the church disturbed the membership. Many felt that the session had been too hasty in their judgment. Years later in a meeting of the session held on April 8-9, 1876 the case was brought up again and this time they wrote in the minutes, "Whereas it appears from the action of the session of this church on the 24th of September 1865 that William E. Hoge, formerly a ruling elder in this church, was formally excommunicated this session deems it due to the said Wm. E. Hoge to state that the act of excommunication was not based on any immorality on his part, but on the fact of his having connected himself with another branch of the Presbyterian Church while in a state of suspension, and whereas there has since been a union of the two branches of the said church and the said Wm. E. Hoge not only showing commendable consistency as a private member of the Church but also as a Ruling Elder in a sister Church, we accord to him full fellowship as an office bearer in the church of Christ and esteem him as a brother beloved for his work's sake" ——— It appears to us rather remarkable for the session to rectify an error of a previous session after so long a time.

In 1851 Mr. John M. Hoge was elected clerk of the session. He served for 32 years after which he left our church with the group who organized the River-view church in 1883.

In the minutes of the session of April 13th, 1852 something unusual is given. Moses and Matilda Lloyd are "stricken from the role" because they joined the Baptist. This is barely 5 months after the joint deed to the Presbyterian Church.

In the session of April 24th, 1852, Sara Black, a "colored" member was called before the session and issued a "citation" for the use of profane language. It is interesting to note that after her name on the membership roll it says she "joined the Methodists."