

A  
HISTORY OF SALEM OR "STONE CHURCH"  
FISHING CREEK VALLEY  
YORK COUNTY  
PENNA.  
1844--1908  
by  
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## A HISTORY OF SALEM OR "STONE CHURCH"

### A. Early History

Fishing Creek Valley was settled as early as 1734. Newberry Township was formed in 1742, seven years before York County was organized apart from Lancaster County and one year before York was laid out.

Fairview Township, which embraces this locality, was set apart from Newberry Township in 1803. It was so named from the beautiful scenery which the landscape presented from the adjacent mountain elevation. Fishing Creek was first named the Y Creek, from its branches and the finny tribe which were found in its waters.

### B. THE ENGLISH FRIENDS

The early settlers of Fairview Township were English Friends from Chester County, Pa. Their places of worship were at Newberrytown and in Warrington Township. A meeting was later formed and held in Fairview Township, or the locality so named. This, however, was after a time discontinued.

The upper end of the county north of the Conewago Creek contained over 2000 Friends more than a century ago. Their number after a time was greatly diminished by deaths and removals. Their meeting houses in the upper end of the county remain as memorials. A number of their descendants, however, still remain in the communities.

### C. EARLY CONGREGATIONS AND CHURCHES

For over 100 years from the original settlement of Fishing Creek Valley there was no church building proper alone devoted to religious services within the limits of what is now known as Fishing Creek Valley--or even, perhaps, Fairview Township, except the meeting houses of the Friends, aforesaid. One of the latter houses was located in Newberrytown, the second in Redland Valley west of Fishing Creek Valley, from which it is separated by what were formerly termed the Horseshoe Mountains. The third was situated in Warrington Township, in the Conewago Valley near what is now known as Wellsville. Redland Valley had churches at Lewisberry of the Methodist and Lutheran denominations.

The schoolhouses in various localities were utilized for religious services. When these were not opened to evangelists they, here as well as elsewhere in Pennsylvania, used the steps from which to address the people. The schoolhouses used by congregations were the "River Schoolhouse" at the upper end of Goldsboro, which among others was used by Rev. John Winebrenner, and Lorenzo Dow also preached in 1825 to a large multitude in this locality. Yocumtown Schoolhouse was used for preaching by various representatives of different denominations. Newberrytown and vicinity Schoolhouses were most used by the Church of God and the Evangelical denominations. However, no church was erected in Newberrytown before 1856, and at Goldsboro in 1857. All other

churches now existing in Fishing Creek Valley were built later.

The Prowell Schoolhouse, a short distance above Salem Church, was used for preaching purposes, as was the schoolhouse at the Cross Roads, to the North of Salem Church. Across the Mountain, yet still in Fairview Township, at what has since become New Market, in the old schoolhouse near where Mt. Olivet United Brethern Church now stands, religious services were probably first conducted by the United Brethern in Christ. Rev. John Fohl, then stationed in Strinestown, probably initiated these meetings. He later preached in a frame schoolhouse in Redland Valley. He was invited to preach at Prowell's Schoolhouse, near the well known Mill of that name, in 1842, which services were continued there for two years.

#### D. SALEM or "STONE CHURCH"

Previous to this time some persons from this locality had attended services at intervals in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties. The meetings at Prowell's Schoolhouse were successful and encouraging to such an extent that a church building was considered necessary.

A church building was determined upon by the congregation at Prowell's Schoolhouse. The building was begun, finished and dedicated in 1844. This building was the first church erected within the bounds of Fishing Creek Valley. It was also the first church built by the United Brethern in Fishing Creek Valley, perhaps the first built in Fairview Township, with the following explanation.

The present Mt. Olivet Church of the United Brethern at New Market was erected in 1860. Shortly after the Revolutionary War, about 1785, land was obtained from one of the Mosser farms, on which was built a Union meeting house and a schoolhouse combined. No services were to be held "during candle light". This historic building was torn down in 1860. It had been used by the United Brethern Congregation. However, the new church and cemetery was built and laid out in 1860.

The Salem or "Stone Church", then would seem to be the pioneer church in this section, which has been followed by other churches and other denominations.

The church was built of brown sandstone, which was procured from the farm of Jacob M. Haldeman, now owned by H.M. Cohen. The materials for the building, both stone and lumber, were hauled by members and friends of the congregation and the workmen on the building were also boarded by them free of charge. A spirit of good feeling prevailed in the community and all aided and assisted cheerfully in the work. A spirit of liberality also prevailed among the people and thus the work went on and was accomplished. A half acre of land had been purchased and on it was erected the church, the remainder being used for a graveyard, which has since been twice enlarged.

#### E. THE CHURCH BUILDING

It is estimated that the original cost of the building, if given out by contract would have amounted to \$1,000.00.

No account of the expenditures nor of the contributions is in existence, neither are the names of the contributors.

The site of the church was selected on the main public highway, which leads through the Valley from Middletown Ferry, earlier termed Hussey's then Etter's Ferry, to Lisburn and Carlisle. It is five miles from Goldsboro, two miles west by north from Yocumtown and five miles south of New Cumberland.

The front of the church faces the highway on the north and presents a frontage of 34 feet. There were two doors of entrance at the front. These have been replaced by a double door at the center and by two windows. The pulpit is erected at the south end of the church. Two aisles proceeded from the doorways; but the changes now made leave a single aisle. There was a row of seats on either side, each holding five or six persons. The church has a seating capacity of about 300 persons, although at times many more can be admitted. The ceiling has a height of twelve feet.

The building is heated by two stoves. The edifice is a substantial and neat structure. The walls were built by William Groom and sons, and the carpenter work was done by Henry May.

The church is a conspicuous landmark, from all points. It contains a marble date stone at the front, on which is inscribed "Salem Church of the United Brethern in Christ, 1844". The building was erected without a cornerstone. Of the ceremonies of dedication no account has been handed down.

The first general repairs of the church were made in 1887. Two new stoves were replaced in the house. The whole expenditure was \$130.

The second general repairs were made in 1889. A second cabinet organ replaced the first one which had been procured in 1883. The whole expenditure for those repairs, the organ included, was \$135.

The building had a second roof placed upon it in 1891. This roof was destroyed by the great storm which done so much damage in York County in October, 1896. The roof was replaced with an outlay of \$108.

The building has now, in 1908, undergone the third general repairs. This includes general renovation with a cupola and bell, which adds much to the general appearance and also the general convenience. The repairs were made at a cost of \$500. This was subscribed by the membership, their friends in the community and at distant points. The thanks of the congregation are heartily tendered to these kind friends, one and all, for their liberality and assistance.

#### F. MEMBERSHIP

The original membership at Prowell's Schoolhouse from 1842 to 1844 was twenty. The names can no longer be obtained fully. Before 1872 such records as were made have been lost. Consequently much of the early history of the congregation must be gathered from traditional sources. Not a single member of those early days

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remains, but all have passed away.

Among the early families that composed the congregation were those of David Fisher Sr., John Weitzel, John S. Prowell, Michael Baylor, John Fisher Sr., James Reed, and Jacob Burich. Later came the families of William K. Fisher, D.S. Kauffman, George M. Prowell, John W. Prowell, J.F. Snyder, John Snyder, Alfred W. Prowell, Samuel Miller, Samuel Shupp, Robert Baker, Daniel Kellar, Lorenzo Kautz, John Fetrow, Joseph Wichersham, and those of Messrs. Quigley, Hartman, Dessenberger, Arthur and others not mentioned owing to lack of information. What the total membership has been would amount to a large number.

The membership of the church has fluctuated from time to time being influenced by deaths, removals and otherwise. It is believed that the congregation had its largest membership from 1885 to 1896. Its lowest number was from 1872 to 1877. The services have been continuous from the beginning, in 1842 to the present time. Services were held every two weeks, alternately morning and evening. The attendance has varied, being generally a hundred and upwards.

During quarterly or protracted meetings the attendance has always been large.

During the earlier period of the last twenty-five years the membership increased very much, but during the latter period it has somewhat diminished through deaths and removals.

The largest revivals were held in the year 1865, 1879, 1886, and 1890. These years were also followed by the largest additions to the membership.

But the changes produced by deaths and removals are so great as to materially influence neighborhoods, and at the same time these changes may also be expected to affect church membership.

The changes of population are so great in many portions of the country as to produce entire change of nationality in some sections. This has been made evident in New England, in the Cumberland Valley, in certain sections of Dauphin and Lancaster counties and in various sections of our southern states. Many old time churches have thus been almost abandoned and remain as memorials within their walls.

#### G. CHURCH AFFILIATIONS AND OFFICERS

Salem Church, more familiarly known as the "Stone Church" has never been strong enough numerically in membership to support its own resident pastor. It has, therefore, been affiliated with other charges or embraced in circuits.

At a meeting of the quarterly conference in Fishing Creek Valley on April 22, 1844, John S. Prowell, Henry R. Kauffman and Jacob Miller were appointed or elected trustees of the congregation already formed.

Mr. Prowell served in this capacity for 45 years until his death, which occurred in 1889. Other trustees since then have been David Fisher Sr., James Reed, Michael Baylor, David Kauffman, George W. Prowell, D.S. Hartman, John M. Shuler, John Garman, John Eichinger, John W. Prowell, David M. Fisher, Ira Schell,

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Henry Kautz, William G. Fetrow, and Robert N. Bayler. To the latter the writer is indebted for much information and materials incorporated in this paper.

So far as we can learn, there was no special secretary or clerk from 1842 to 1872. After that period Michael Baylor performed that duty, and a minute book was begun and continued until the present time. The records now made will be available for future material bearing upon the history of the church.

#### H. THE FINANCES OF THE CHURCH

Michael Baylor was secretary and treasurer of the church from 1872 to 1879, since which time David M. Fisher has continuously held the position.

The sum contributed by Salem Church towards the support of the ministry from 1842 to 1879 was \$40. yearly. Since that time it has been from \$100 to \$125 yearly, for all purposes has been \$175 or over. The church in its early years was associated with the Shirmanstown Charge. Later it was connected with the New Cumberland and Mount Olivet. Still later it was on what was called the Yocumtown Circuit; then with that of York Haven and lastly it has been connected with the Dover charge.

#### I. THE CEMETARY

The sextons of the church have been David Fisher Sr. and family from 1844 to 1887. Later came David Weitzel, who it is believed prepared the largest number of graves in the cemetery. Later came George W. Prowell, John W. Prowell, Jacob Beck, Harrison Shuler, William K. Fisher, Ira Schell, Robert N. Baylor and David M. Fisher.

The cemetery of the church, after its second enlargement, now embraces nearly two acres. The original fence has been twice replaced. The last enlargement of the Cemetery was made in 1890. It has been incorporated according to the laws of Pennsylvania. The plot extends along the highway eastward from the church a distance of 21 rods in length. It extends southward in a breadth of 13 rods. At its centre from the highway there is a driveway extending due south.

The graveyard, especially the new addition, is laid out in plots containing four lots, each lot being 16 x 9 feet. These plots are bounded on each side by avenue of 4½ feet in width.

The graves as a rule, are made due east and west. The number of interments made from the beginning in 1844 to the present, a period of 64 years, is 335, based upon the records and the evidences. This is an average of five yearly. The first person buried in the new cemetery in 1844, the year of its completion, was John Weitzel, a member of the congregation. It is recalled that when the church and the cemetery was completed that he made the natural surmise as to whom would fall to be buried first in its precincts. Mr. Weitzel was in the prime of life and died after a brief illness with typhoid fever. Two of his children were buried in the family plot shortly afterwards.

Among the names of the heads of families, some of whose members are interred in the cemetery are many who were not members of the congregation. The names of 86 different heads of families are given as follows: David Fisher Sr., John Fisher Sr., Samuel Fisher Sr., John Weitzel, Michael Shuler, John M. Shuler, Milton K. Brubaker, Samuel Miller, George Betz, Samuel Fortenbaugh, Henry Fortenbaugh, Andrew Sipe, Andrew Hykes, William Brubaker, Dr. Andrew R. Prowell, Jacob Willis, John W. Creep, Joseph W. Prowell, Martin Fisher, Charles Yinger, George Lichenberger, John Lichenberger, Joseph Wickersham, Samuel N. Prowell, Hiram N. Prowell, James N. Prowell, James B. Prowell, Henry Creeger, Lorenzo Kautz, D.L. Hartman, Michael Kister, John S. Prowell, John Wacker, John Lewis, Jacob Mickey, Dr. R.D. Swiler, Jacob Eurich, Peter Hoffstodt, George Rudy, Peter Snyder, Jacob Gantz, Jacob Miller, Henry Lichtenberger, Peter Shindle, Jacob Wickersham, Peter Good, John Sweeney, John Yinger, William Prowell, Henry W. Prowell, David N. Prowell, Tobias Hartman, Daniel Coleman, Kossuth Willis, Jacob Keller, Henry Snyder, Joseph Packer, Benjamin F. Kirkwood, Elijah Garretson, Jacob Rudy, William Hoffstodt, David Hartman, Peter Spangler, William Spangler, Henry Wagensell, Aaron Coble, Henry Millard, Daniel Kautz, John Oren, James Snyder, Solomon Dirk, Isaac Harro, David M. Fisher, Jacob Kauffman, John Souders, Samuel Rupp, Samuel F. Prowell, Benjamin Beshore, David Miller, Amos P. Newcomer, Adam H. Zinn, John T. Harig, Benjamin Deardorff, Robert N. Bayler.

#### J. SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday schools, it has been claimed, were originated at the Ephrata Cloister by Ludwig Hacker and his daughter Petronella in 1738-47. In England it is claimed they were originated by Robert Raikes in 1782. It has also been claimed that the Sunday schools by the pastor Stuber and Oberlin of the Lutheran Church originated at Steinhilf Alsace in 1767.

While these claims of priority are conflicting, it is now admitted that Sunday Schools began in York County as early as 1817. A Sunday school existed at Salem Church from the beginning in 1844. There would seem to have been no formal organization during this early period until 1861. Michael Bayler, John M. Shuler and John S. Prowell were then appointed a committee to draft a constitution and by-laws, which were adopted.

The school was then known as the Salem Union Sabbath School until 1898, when it adopted the name of the Salem United Brethern Sunday School.

#### K. SUPERINTENDANTS OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

The superintendants of the Sunday school during the first 25 years cannot now be given nor recalled. Since 1869 the school has had the following list of superintendants, so far as can be recalled, viz: John M. Shuler, George W. Prowell, John W. Prowell, R.M. Bayler, Ira K. Schell, John W. Prowell Jr., and Henry Rupp. Some of the foregoing persons served for considerable periods of time.

The school is closed during the Winter season.

The Sunday school has been in a flourishing condition and good interest has been maintained. Superintendents teachers and pupils, one and all, have been interested in the work and have sought to carry it along the proper lines.

L. PASTORS OF THE CHURCH

Rev. John Fohl, then a young man and full of ardent zeal in the ministry, had charge of the Shirmanstown church, with which the Stone Church was connected. He served the church very acceptably and maintained a sustained interest among the membership. He died some years ago at Chambersburg at an advanced age.

Rev. John Dickson served the congregation in its early years. In later times he became a bishop of the church. He died at an advanced age at Chambersburg a few years ago.

Rev. J.C. Smith was also from Franklin County. He served the church in its early years very acceptably. He died a number of years ago.

Rev. Daniel Eberly was also one of the church's early pastors. He has since been prominent in educational work and has been chaplain in the National Guard of the State. He now resides in Hanover, and although advanced in life, he is a man of marked activity.

Rev. Kessler also served the church in its early history, but of him we have been unable to get any facts.

Since 1860 the pastors have been: Rev. J.C. Smith, Rev. Leacock, Revs. Jr. R. Hutchinson, Umberger, Tripner, Garman, Smith, Huber, Snoke, Dunkelberger, Diller, Wagner, Saul, Prowell, Jones, Grimm, Koontz, Shettel, Young, Quigley, Mean, Rexrhode, Sullenberger, Boyer, Lovejoy, Emenheiser, Houseman, and Schulyz. There are probably some omissions in the list.

The formidable array of names given shows the working of the itinerant system in the ministry, thus producing a variety of thought and work. It also shows the unconscious lapse of time that has occurred during the long years that have passed. The foregoing list embraces 28 names. Some of the pastorates were brief and many were supplied for brief periods of time.

M. PRESIDING ELDERS

Of the early presiding elders we have been unable to obtain any information. Undoubtedly much information could be obtained on this and other points by referring to records of the churches with which this church was associated. Among the presiding elders of later periods we may mention such names as that of Revs. J.C. Smith, Z.A. Colestock, J.H. Young, C.T. Stearn, A.H. Rice, J. L. Washinger, Peters and Beamer. There are doubtless omissions in this list, owing to the lack of a continuous system of records. These records would be invaluable if they could be resuscitated.

What may seem of little importance at the time becomes an interesting historical link when we seek to reconstruct the chain. However, so many facts have been obtained for this report that the results even now seem surprising.



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The time for the gathering of the material in hand seemed opportune at this period. Many reminiscences have perished with those who were able to relate them. They have passed away and we now regret that the work of gathering this matter was hopeless by being delayed.

#### N. REFLECTIONS OF THE PAST

But these early records and events possess intense interest, not only for the historian, but to the antiquarian. They are besides, matters of general and local interest, not only to members of the congregation, but to the local community in which this old church stands, a silent witness to the past. Let another 64 years elapse and the interest will be manifold. This church and cemetery have a genealogical interest. Already our graveyards are being visited to obtain data to complete family rosters and to fill in the gaps in family genealogy. These records will also be links in the history of the church which will be written in the future.

The names enrolled and written in the church books which are now regularly and fully kept will be a mine of wealth to future generations. How eagerly we now scan the lists of thousands of names among our early immigrants. That which was looked upon as merely a formal record, made for purposes far otherwise to which they are now applied, throw light in dark places. At times they possess untold value. Our own will possess still greater value with the additional pulse of time.

In yonder churchyard are the memorials of those who have passed away from and among the living. Their names are inscribed on those monuments of granite and marble to perpetuate their memories among the living. They are a tender tribute from the living to the dead. These memorials of the past make their impress upon the living of the present and will pass onward to futurity.

This pioneer church in this large section of country, bearing the marks of the past, will be an inspiration for well being and righteousness. To the people who come hereafter we too shall pass away and become a memory. This church has been not only a landmark, but it has been a beacon light, as every church which has followed its advent has striven to the same end.

It has been a silent witness during 64 years of its existence, of the most momentous facts which have occurred in the history of the world. It has witnessed generation after generation depart and come upon the stage of life. Judging from the stability of its walls and foundations, barring accident, there is no reason why it should maintain its place in this community for numberless generations. Such must be the sincere hope and wish of all who have its welfare and stability at heart.