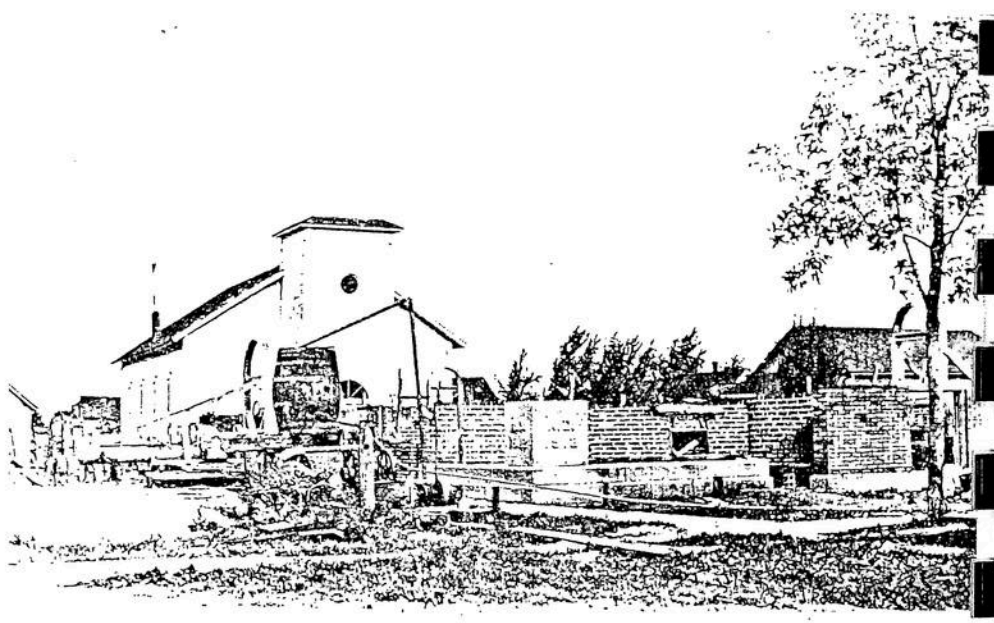
One of the Ferris's was also a Circuit Rider



HISTORY OF THE GROVER HILL ZION METHODIST CHURCH

The true history of a church involves more than can be found in old records or in reminiscences. How is one to tell what has happened in the hearts of its people through the grace of God? Perhaps the better way is to look at the practical results of their dedication.

We pay honor to all those who made this history and thank all who have helped to record it.

The Rev. Emanuel Kauffman, a Methodist minister, preached the first sermon in Latty township. He formed a Mt. Zion class prior to the Civil war which met in the District 7 school house one mile south of what is now Grover Hill. Among its members were Hannah Kohn, A. T. and Margaret McClure, and James and Lucinda McClure. Years later the large east window in our sanctuary was given in honor of James and Lucinda McClure by their son Gordon.

During the Civil war this class was disbanded.

In 1866 Philander Gilbert moved his lumber mill from Franklin county to Latty township, one and one-half miles south of here and a small settlement grew up near it. A Post Office, called Gilbert's Mills, was established here in 1873.

Here in 1875 the Zion class was reorganized and again they met in the school house under the leadership of the Rev. Harrison Harper. In 1880 this Methodist group decided to build a church. It was dedicated May 1, 1881, with the Rev. L. M. Albright, District Superintendent, officiating. This frame building measuring 32 by 50 feet was built by James K. Polk Shively whose daughter Mirtha, years later, went as a missionary from our church to Malaya.

From 1881 until 1895 this society grew and prospered.

During this time the Findlay, Ft. Wayne, and Western railroad was completed and the town of Grover Hill had its beginning.

Some of the Methodist folk in Grover Hill started a class and at first it, too, met in an old school house. Later they obtained a room above a saloon in the Eaton building which was located where the Didrick Funeral Home now stands.

Early in 1895 the congregations from Grover Hill and Gilbert's Mills, realizing that in union there is strength, decided to merge. The church from Gilbert's Mills was moved to town, located where our church now stands, and remodeled.

In 1898 the main part of the parsonage was built with a kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom added in 1916.

The congregation continued to grow and in 1912 it was decided to build a new church. The cornerstone was laid in the summer of 1912 and the present church was dedicated May 25, 1913.

The following account of this dedication was taken from the Grover Hill Reporter, May, 1913. William Pletcher, Editor.

DEDICATORIAL SERVICES

Of the Zion Methodist Episcopal Church were held Sunday morning, afternoon, and evening.

The Dedicatorial services of the M. E. Church Sunday drew large crowds from the surrounding country and near-by towns.

Sunday school was opened at 8:30 A. M. and on account of the services to be conducted by Bishop Moore, very little discussion of the lesson was had. Nearly all the classes talked over the subject of how much they could give or pledge themselves for. After the close of the Sunday School, which numbered 350, the largest in the history of the church, Bishop Moore assisted by District Superintendent J. F. Harshbarger began the solicitation of the pledges to wipe out the $7000 indebtedness. From the large audience arose many voices, voicing their gifts which ran all the way from $500 down. Every one seemed to give with a good will, knowing they were giving for a good cause. At the close of the meeting at 12 o'clock, all the money had been raised except about $1200.

The service in the afternoon drew an equally large crowd, and in a short time, the remaining $1200 had been pledged.

The evening service had been announced to begin at 7:30 and as early as 6:30 people began pouring into the beautiful new church. At 7:30 the building was packed. A count made by the ushers at the close of the service showed over 900 and counting those that left by way of the choir entrance, it is safe to say that at least one thousand people heard Bishop Moore's sermon which was full of deep thought, and from the faces of the large audience, it could be noticed that every one present was enjoying a great feast.

Following the services, Sacramental services were held. The new church with its beautiful illumination, was a picture that none will forget. Everything was in perfect harmony, and from the entire congregation, could be heard the remark, "Isn't it grand?" Nothing adds more to a community than a beautiful church. The entire membership of the church wishes to express their thanks and unbounded appreciation to all those who contributed, and by so doing helped to secure the beautiful ediface. Thanks are also presented to J. K. P. Shively for the beautiful clock presented by him to the church.

The contractor for this church was Henry Gekler, father of the late Fred Gekler. Only two members of our church who worked on this project are living. They are Elwood and Philander Gilbert who are still faithful members.

Can one imagine the dedication and devotion required of those people who planned, worked, gave of themselves and of their possessions to build a church of this size in so small a community? Certainly the members, and especially the building committee, stepped out on faith in this undertaking.

Taken from the Grover Hill Reporter, May 1913:

The following resolutions drafted by the Board of Trustees and the Building Committee shows their sincere appreciation.

In appreciation of His divine guidance and blessings we heartily as an official Board of Zion M. E. Church most reverently thank the Captain of our salvation Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour for His divine guidance in our undertaking. The Official Board in session has passed the following resolutions: Resolved that we return to our beloved Bishop Moore and our District Superintendent Dr. J. F. Harshbarger, our heartfelt thanks for their efficient and effective labors in our dedicatorial services and most devoutly ask God's continual blessings upon them.

Also be it resolved that we greatly appreciate and wish to thank our beloved Pastor H. D. Yant for his diligent self sacrificing labors in our

behalf. Also to our contractor and his co-laborers we owe a debt of gratitude greater than words can express for the faithful performance of their work which has made this temple a building of beauty. Also to the faithful work of our singers and especially to the leader, Miss Jennie Pfeiffer, in their patient labor in preparing the music for the occasion. Also to Mr. Shively for the beautiful clock presented to the church, and lastly to our friends who have so nobly contributed of their means which has made possible the completion of this building for the worship of Almighty God, upon all of which we most earnestly pray God's richest blessings.

Committee:

H. H. Mowers
B. J. Gilbert
N. B. Mericle
J. E. Eaton
J. H. Busick
Alfred Kohn
G. C. McClure

Preceding the evening Dedicatory Services a wedding was performed in the church. An account of this ceremony, taken from the Grover Hill Reporter, May 29, 1913, follows.

Beautiful Wedding at the new M. E. Church, Sunday evening, at 7:30 P. M. — Drummonds-Foor.

What more appropriate time would there be for the union of hearts than at the dedicatorial services of a beautiful new church, when the hearts of the whole community are going out to their fellow men? Love is the formation of all that is good and pure. The new church with its electric illumination was indeed beautiful. When Miss Marie Foor, sister of the bride at the piano commenced the music the church was filled to its capacity, and when the bride and groom came down the aisle, preceded by attendants, the scene was one of great beauty. The bride was dressed in white and the bridesmaid in cream white. At the conclusion of the ceremony which was conducted by the Dist. Supt. J. F. Harshbarger, the bridal party occupied seats at the left of the church, which had been reserved for them.

The bride was a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Foor. She is a young lady of many graces of mind and person, an accomplished teacher of music, and who is capable of filling the home she will adorn with happiness and will prove to be truly a helpmate and companion to the husband she has chosen to honor with her hand.

The groom is a widely known young minister, having held this charge about three years ago, and has a great host of friends who extend to him and his bride their hearty congratulations. The Reporter is greatly pleased on this occasion to add its hearty good wishes to those being so freely extended.

A beautiful three course supper was served at the home of the bride's parents at 6:00 o'clock. The following friends, the bride and groom, and the immediate family of the bride partaking: Mr. Drummonds and friend of Cridersville; Mr. and Mrs. J. Murphey of Scott, Ohio; Mr. Harry Medaugh of Warren, Ohio; Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Duckwall of Paulding, and Mr. and Mrs. O. W. Medaugh, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Dull, Stephen Beard and Calvin Mericle. Mr. and Mrs. Drummonds are at their home in Continental.

The Ladies Aid was a very active and important part of the church. Their pledge of one thousand dollars to the new building was raised by serving bountiful chicken dinners at 35 cents per plate for adults. Popping corn on Saturday nights in the entrance way of the Foor and Baldwin Hardware added to this fund. The president of the Ladies Aid at this time was Mrs. Henry Foor who was known throughout the community for her delicious biscuits served at the above mentioned dinners. A list of the members of the society can be found on page 18.

The Epworth League was organized April 4, 1896 with Drell Glaze as president. He later became a minister in the Nazarene church.

The Ladies Aid continued to play an important part in the church and in the nineteen thirties a Junior Aid was organized. The church also had a very active Missionary Society. These three groups were combined to form the Woman's Society of Christian Service. The first meeting of this organization was held in the church prayer room Sept. 26, 1940. Mrs. Glen Myers, the wife of our minister, was our first president. Minutes of this meeting can be found on page 20.

Unfortunately, not more than half of the charter members were ever active. In spite of this the society never failed to meet its very generous pledges. From this time on emphasis was put on individual giving rather than the serving of dinners et cetera.

During the pastorate of the Rev. Glen Myers the Methodist Youth Fellowship was organized in Dec. 1941.

The M.Y.F. has always been very active in our church. They have never failed to meet their Conference pledge. In one year, we have had as many as twenty-six go to the Lakeside Senior Youth Camp, and a great many of the youth have graduated.

Our group played a big part in the fact that the Paulding County M.Y.F. led the Conference in attendance, percentage-wise last year.

The leaders at this time are Mrs. Lawrence Volk and Mrs. Dale Ferris. The officers are, Pres. Barbara Grimes; Vice Pres., Donn Grubaugh; Sec. & Treas. Miriam Ferris and Pianist, Maureen Ferrell.

The Rev. Glen Myers initiated our first observance of Good Friday. He served us longer than any other minister [1934-1942] and it would be impossible to list all his accomplishments. One of the first things he did was dig out the old stumps and plant maple trees in front of the parsonage. He not only sanded the sanctuary and class room floors but laid all the hardwood floors in the parsonage.

Under his leadership the Grover Hill charge was the first charge in the Defiance district to raise its quota in the Million Dollar Unit Drive. We led the Conference in subscribers to the Christian Advocate. He also was instrumental in bringing Merton S. Rice, of the Metropolitan Methodist Church of Detroit, to Grover Hill where he spoke to an overflow crowd in the school gymnasium.

But above all this, Mr. Myers was the exemplification of the highest type of Christian living.

During the ministry of the Rev. Frank Sanderson, whose son Robert is still an active member of our congregation, the Junior church was started. Mrs. Verlin Grimes gave flannelgraph talks once a week and later she and Mrs. Lawrence Volk conducted services in the basement for the children during the regular preaching hour.

Our church has enjoyed good music through the years. A long and faithful leader was Miss Jennie Pfeiffer. A stringed orchestra and brass group accompanied the music during the Sunday School hour in the years soon after the Dedication. At one time the late Judge Raymond Smith was the choir director. Subsequent directors were Hollas Dindot, Herbert Jones, Frank Blough, and Abbie Stratton. For the later choirs much credit goes to Charles Stenger and Mrs. Bruce Elliott. During Mr. Stenger's leadership the choir robes were purchased.

In the late forties the Woman's Society of Christian Service decided to start a separate fund for an organ. Several members and former members contributed to this fund in the form of small war bonds. A five hundred dollar gift given by Rex Baldwin in honor of his mother, Emma Gilbert Baldwin, sparked a solicitation by several interested members of the Home Builders class and as a result our Hammond organ was dedicated by our District Superintendent Kenneth Leary in 1950. Mrs. George Mericle served as our organist until 1960. At the present time Mrs. Thurman Johnson and Pamela Volk are the church organists. Karen Stratton, Miriam Ferris, and Mary Alice Ashbaugh are the Sunday School pianists.

In 1947, Mr. John Wistner, father of Gale Wistner and grandfather of Mrs. Ray Volk, Mrs. Paul H. Bidlack and John Wistner gave belfry chimes to the church. They were appreciated and enjoyed for several years but unfortunately, due to the lack of qualified repairmen, their use has been discontinued.

MEN'S CLASS ORCHESTRA



Front row, left to right: Henry Foor, Arthur McClure, Clyde Miller, deceased, Lawrence Coil, deceased, Henry Bechtol, deceased. Second row: Farmer Kohn, Charles Wunder, Earl Wunder, deceased, Calvin Mericle, Don Gillespie, Clarence Stemen and Alva Grant. Third row: Drell Glaze, O. W. Wright, deceased, Fred Gekler, deceased, Forest Houchin, Fred Bray, Willard Wilson, deceased, Roscoe Klinger, deceased, Vincent Lackey, deceased, Ford Owens, Clarence Mericle, Sylvester Tuohy, deceased, Nelson Prentice and Oscar Wyatt.

PASTORS WHO HAVE SERVED THE ZION SOCIETIES

AND THE GROVER HILL METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. C. G. Ferris 1879-1800
[grandfather of Dale Ferris]

Rev. Horace Kohn & M. German 1880-1882.

Rev. John Bowers 1882-1883

Rev. Robert Snodgrass 1883-1884

Rev. Mosier German 1884-1885

Rev. Houtby 1885-1886

Rev. James Sultz 1886-1888

Rev. S. Snodgrass 1888-1889

Rev. Aiken 1889-1890

Rev. J. Houtby 1890-1891

Rev. A. Barker 1891-1892

Rev. G. McNeeley 1892-1894

Rev. Lafferty & Knees 1894-1895

Rev. S. S. Clay 1895-1896

Rev. J. B. Smith 1896-1898

Rev. O. D. Wagner 1898-1900

Rev. W. Dean 1900-1901

Rev. F. Gamble 1901-1902

Rev. N. Bigelow 1902-1903

Rev. J. Hodge 1903-1906

Rev. L. Smith 1906-1908

Rev. R. Drummond 1908-1909
[groom at the first wedding in our church]

Rev. D. Rhodes 1909-1910

Rev. H. Yant 1910-1913
[Pastor at the time the church was built]
Rev. Yant was born in Allen Co., Ohio on May 29, 1866. He began his ministry in the year 1905, serving for 50 years. He died in Pontiac, Mich., on June 6, 1955, burial at Lindsey, Ohio.]

Rev. C. Ringgenberg 1913-1915

Rev. C. Chiles 1915-1918
[Father of Dr. Paul Chiles, Van Wert.]

Rev. S. Whiteman 1918-1919
[Father of our speaker today, S. Lee Whiteman.]

Rev. F. Houser 1919-1921

Rev. S. Wilkens 1921-1922

Rev. W. Cordrey 1922-1926

Rev. R. McColm 1926-1928

Rev. R. Hurley 1928-1930

Rev. O. Smith 1930-1931

Rev. W. Piper 1931-1934

Rev. Glen Myers 1934-1942

Rev. Frank Sanderson 1942-1948
[Father of Robert Sanderson.]

Rev. Clarence Wallick 1948-1954

Rev. C. Taylor 1954
[He served here only three weeks and two days. The first person to die in the parsonage.]

Rev. Raymond Daniels Jr. 1954
[Student pastor, filled vacancy left by Rev. Taylor.]

Rev. C. Webster 1954-1956

Rev. William Myers 1956-1961

Rev. Paul Miller 1961-

ONE OF THE FIRST CIRCUIT RIDERS

One of the first circuit riders to visit Paulding County was Elnathan C. Gavitt, who in after years became a presiding elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and resided at Lima. The following sketch is given by him in an address before a meeting at the Maumee Valley Pioneer Association, at Defiance on the 22nd of February, 1878.

He says, "I was born in Ohio. My parents emigrated to this state in 1805. This is my native home; here are the graves of my parents, wife and children. Many are the attachments and fond recollections which cluster around the scenes of my early days. My first missionary work commenced among the Wyandots at Upper Sandusky. This mission was first established by a colored man, Rev. John Stewart, a local minister of the Methodist Episcopal church, in 1816, and was the first Protestant mission this side of the Alleghany mountains. My missionary work commenced among them in 1832 in connection with Rev. Thos. Thompson. At that day it was the policy of the church to hunt up all the white settlements and carry the gospel to them. Emigration to northern Ohio had commenced, the Maumee valley was fast filling up, and hence our missionary work was not wholly confined to the Indians, but extended over a large territory now included in the following counties: Crawford, Marion, Hardin, Auglaize, Allen, Van Wert, Hancock, Putnam, Paulding, Defiance, Williams, Fulton, Lucas, Henry, Wood, Ottawa, and several appointments within the bounds of Sandusky and Seneca. Traveling most of the time without roads or bridges, fording streams or swimming our horses, and sometimes lodging in the wilderness, preaching from two to three times a day, and all this had to be accomplished every four weeks so as to reach the Mission at Upper Sandusky by Saturday night, as one of the missionaries had to remain until the other returned, to superintend the house, farm and school, having from sixty to eighty children to be provided for. Let others think as they may to Christianity and the gospel ministry, it was the love of souls, the moral and religious improvements of these new settlements that prompted the ministers to make the sacrifices they did, and not the love of fame or wealth. My colleague, being a married man, was allowed a salary of $200 per year; but being a single man, I was only allowed $100 but this amount was not to come from the Indians, but must be secured from the whites; and each member was expected to pay 25 cents per quarter, which was called quarterage. The country being new and the people poor, the minister generally received about one half his salary. The five years of my itineracy I did not receive more than $40 or $50 per year and much of this was in articles they could conveniently spare. However it was customary for all the membership to pay something according to their ability, but such families as were destitute of means were cheerfully excused, providing they kept on hand a good supply of yellow legged chickens.

Most of the time I was at the mission I provided for myself, cooking and lodging in the school house. My food was of the plainest quality, consisting principally of deer or bear meat, coon or opossum, with some dried corn or cranberries sweetened with Indian sugar, but not always free from hair or feathers. My bed was composed of skins, my pillow a calico sack filled with dry grass, the covering, my horse blanket or cloak. I preached on the Sabbath, taught during the week, and doctored at night except in extreme cases."