

## **Early History**

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Rev. John Alien of Orange County, became distraught over the need for a church following a visit in this area. He began preaching and was soon followed by preachers from different parts of the county. Their preaching was attended with power to the awakening and conversion of many souls. Rev. Nicholas P. Barum first began to preach at Martin Staley's house and Pleasant Hill Church may have been organized there. Six members began the church in 1823 and they were Martin Staley, Shubel Evans, Susanna Tyson, Elizabeth Coble, Mary Murchison, and Celia Way.

In 1824, Martin Staley got subscriptions for the purpose of building a meeting house. Five acres of land were deeded by Martin and another 5 acres were deeded by Lovina Vestal. The first meeting house was a one room frame structure and was located opposite the cemetery from the present building. It was completed in 1825 and may have originally been called "Ponds Meeting" because of two ponds located just south of the building. Soon after it was named "Pleasant Hill" possibly after a nearby school with the same name.

Benjamin Way and Shubal Evans were the first deacons and were ordained in 1827 by Rev. Alien. Until 1829 no regular services were held, but a motion was finally made to hold regular services on the first Sunday of each month. For the first eight years, Lewis Craven, John Alien, Shubal Evans, Martin Staley and Alfred Isley preached regularly at Pleasant Hill.

## **Camp Meetings**

Hiram Vestal deeded a parcel of land east of the meeting house for the purpose of a camp ground. A stand was built and tents were moved and erected in a square around the stand. A brush arbor was built around the stand to protect

the congregation from the sun. Most seats were made by splitting logs. Camp Meetings were held for many years until the campground began to fall in disrepair. It was decided in 1844 to build a new brush arbor. The Friday before the third Sunday in August , 1844, camp meeting began on a regular basis at Pleasant Hill.

Every morning around sunrise, William Nelson would blow a small tin horn and the "tenters" would assemble for morning prayer. There would be four sermons which took place at intervals during the day and into the night, with tallow candles being lit for the evening sermons. When mourners came to the altar there would often be loud singing, shouting, and clapping of hands that could be heard for miles away. According to Abel Way, " The women used to shout very loudly at these meetings and sometimes men would shout. The 3:00 meeting on Sunday was the usual time for shouting to began and would last until the meeting broke. My mother was a great shouter as was my grandmother, and I cannot condemn it because they were good women." Singing was an important part of the camp meetings and hymns were memorized. Rev. Alfred Isley liked to sing "There's a happy land", Jesse Cole sang "Old Ship of Zion", and Martin Staley's favorite was "Attend Young Friends While I Relate the Danger You Are In". Unfortunately, due to the war of 1861, camp meetings ceased to exist at Pleasant Hill. "These camp meetings were grand times for small boys, for they had nothing to do but carry water and keep the hogs away. I don't believe I ever saw a happier time I my life." .....Abel Way in 1912.

Sources: Mr. Abel Way "Reminiscences of the Past" written in 1912 and "The Christian Sun" 1925

## Other important events

- 1833            Temperance Society began
- 1871            The first Sunday School was organized.
- 1883            A new meeting house was built and dedicated the first Sunday in September.
- 1912            It was decided to hold regular revival the first Sunday in September.
- 1913            Sunday School rooms and entrance way at the front of the building were erected.
- 1920's           -Women's Fellowship was organized  
                  -Christian Endeavor organized  
                  -one room was built on each side of the meeting house
- 1940's           first parsonage built
- 1953            A block building was erected as a Boy Scout Hut in memory of Henry Overman.
- 1959            On February 1<sup>st</sup> the meeting house burned.
- 1960            The present church building was completed, and the first service was held on May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 1966            Present Parsonage Built