

March 13, 1912 "Reminiscences
of the Past No. 2"

The winter of 1855 - '56, was more severe than the present one, though some may disagree with me on that point. Snow began to fall in December and the ground was not free of snow until March. Like the present winter, it would fall on Saturday evening at night or Sunday morning. I remember one Saturday afternoon in January '56, it began to snow and fell very fast till about midnight, then came a thunderstorm with hail and rain mixed. Next day there was a slick crust on the snow that made walking very difficult and tiresome.

I was going to school at Pleasant Hill, George Albright being the teacher. I was boarding in a house built by Martin Staley for his son George Washington, at the time George Washington had died. His first wife Margaret Hinshaw, died before he did, and his second wife Louise Wells, had married Ira Hinshaw. The house I slept in was being moved away and Pidelius Hornaday is now using it for a barn. Henry Staley was my companion while going and coming from school. He lived with his grandfather Martin at the time. When his mother Margaret died she left two sons, Henry and William. Wm. was taken by his aunt Betsey Coble, but was accidentally shot. Henry at this time had no father or mother. I was nearly grown but he was a small boy not half grown.

Martin Staley died July 19th, 1859, and his wife Nelly died May 2 1860, and I lost sight of Henry till the summer of 1870. I was at the house of Freeman Nelson in Wayne county, Ind., one Sunday we saw a buggy coming up the road towards the house. I said it was my buggy but I did not know who was in it. When it came close it proved to be Henry Staley. Henry had married Mary, daughter of Isham and Lavina Cox, Freeman Nelson married Dinah Hinshaw and she was Henry's aunt. They went from Indiana to Kansas and settled there, naming their place "Primrose." I saw both of them about a dozen years ago. They were on a visit to their people in North Carolina. In August of 1903 I received a letter from Henry. (Note JMC: Only copied the first half of this letter, since nothing else in it pertained to N.C.)

were Durham, William, Mila, Irving, and Solomon. John Moran lived north of Joe 's. He married,, a daughter of David Walker. His children were Delia, Jesse, Caroline, Ary, and —. Ratcliff Smith also lived near here. He married Nancy Dorsett, a daughter of Russell Dorsett. I boarded with him in the summer of 1858. Nancy was a good women. Their children were Daniel, David, and Joe.

CORNHILL

"Reminiscences of the Past No. 17 August 12,1912

Pleasant Hill was the closest church to go to when I was a boy and Pleasant Hill was the closest church to go to when I was a boy and the one that I attended the most, and I believe I was carried there when I was an infant. This church belongs to the denomination called; Christians and was established about the year 1824. Nicholas P. Barum first began to preach at Martin Staley's house and I believe the church was first organized there. Shubal Green Evans, a young man who was living with Martin Staley and learning the blacksmith's trade, was licensed to preach in 1824, and became a popular preacher and preached in a great many places in the state. He married Mary Nelson, but had no children. Martin Staley was also licensed to preach and he was known far and wide for the eccentricity of his character and the many anecdotes he used to relate. He was a blacksmith, millwright and wagon maker and a man of considerable property. He married Eleanor Bennett. His children were: Haywood, who married Abigail Hinshaw; Mary, who married Malcolm Murchison; Elizabeth, who married George Coble; Eliza, who married Isaac Fogleman; George Washington, who married Margaret Hinshaw and Eliza Wells; James Madison, who married Kezia Teague; and Sarah, who married John Smite.

Ashbel Stodrick Nelson, a young man who married Rosanna Kimes, was licensed to preach. After his wife died in 1849, he married Martha Williams on and moved to Moore county; his children by his first wife were James, Roxana, Mary Jane, and John Holt. All three of these were ordained and remained faithful till death. A meeting house was built about the year 1825, and was called the Ponds Meeting House on account of two ponds of water just a short **way** south of the church. I was told by John Overman that a tent meeting.

was held after the house was built, the tents being built of logs on the north-west and west side of the meeting house. *This* was about 10 years before I was born. John Allen succeeded Nicholas P. Barum as traveling minister and he proposed calling the church Pleasant Hill and it has been called that ever since.

Hiram Vestal deeded a parcel of land east of the church land for a camp ground. A stand was built and the 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's rays and most of the seats were made by splitting logs, called puncheon seats.

When I was a boy going to school, the camp meeting had ceased, tents and arbors had rotted and a great many of the poles had been carried to "the school house and burned. This was when George Daffron taught school. Instead of a camp meeting they had a protracted meeting which embraced the first Sunday in October just as long ago as I can remember. I expressed a desire to my mother to attend the protracted meeting but she said I had no clean breeches. As I had but one-pair and they were made of tow I waited till dark and after supper I went to the spring, built up a fire, warmed water in the wash pot and washed them, brought them to the kitchen, built up a fire and dried them and the next morning my mother pressed them before I awoke, and although there was a white frost that morning I went to meeting bare footed with tow breeches and a flax shirt on and was as happy as if I was a prince.

In 1844, a Christian Minister, Daniel W. Kerr, started a paper called the Christian Sun at Hillsboro, and in that paper I read that -a camp meeting would begin at Pleasant Hill on Friday night before the third Sunday in August. A new brush arbor was built, new tents were built, my father's being in the northeast corner of the square. Oh, how anxious I was for the time to come when we would all move to the camp ground. As well as I remember the preachers were Joseph A. Murry, Alfred Apple, Lovick Lambert. The women used to shout very loudly at these meetings and sometimes men would shout. The 3:00 sermon on Sunday was the usual time for shouting to began and would last until the meeting broke. My mother was a great shouter and so was my grandmother, and I cannot condemn it because I believe they were good women. 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 in my life-

August 28, 1912

"Reminiscences of the Past No.

12"

The year 1845 was known as the dry year and there was no camp meeting that year on account of the scarcity of water but from 1846 up until the breaking out of the war in 1861, there was a camp meetii every year at Pleasant Hill in August. Every morning about sunrise Wm. Nelson would blow a small tin horn as a signal for the tenters to assemble at the arbor for prayer; a song would be sung, a prayer would follow and then they would go back to the tent for breakfast. There would be four sermons during the day and night: at 9.00a.m. a short sermon and a recess; then at 11:00 or 12:00 a big sermon by some noted preacher; dinner would follow the sermon; at 3:00 another sermon and then supper about sunset. At dark the arbor would be lit up with tallow candles for people did not use oil then. A man would be appointed to keep these candles snuffed. The exercise at night would often be kept up till the late hour. The order of exercises would •usually be first a song by the congregation from the Christian Companion, a hymn book published by J.T. Lemay, then the preacher would read a hymn from this book, then he would read two lines and then the congregation would sing them and so on till the hymn was ended, then

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a prayer would be offered up and then the sermon would be next. An -
exhortation would almost always follow the sermon an alter call by -
some minister who would- be called to follow. -

If mourners came to the alter there would after be loud singing, -
shouting and clapping of hands that could be heard miles away; the -
saying, as noisy as a camp meeting. The shouting would not always -
be confined to the arbor but would break out sometimes at tents or
on the road or at the homes of those that did not tent. Sometimes
after the meeting would be over we would hear shouting in the neigh-
borhood and we would take our song books out and sing for them. The
Preaching was much louder than it is now and Joseph A. Murray was once
heard by Alex Nelson who lived where Jimmy Jones now lives. I one
heard Alfred Isley(JMC note: Alfred Isley was my great-grandfather
and was ordained at Pleasant Hill in 1834), preach and could hear
words distinctly though I was at home setting by a window upstairs
or a mile away.

I never saw any preacher use notes at any of these camp meetings. They used no instruments while singing and everybody took part in the singing that wished to. Some minister usually led the singing and there was no giddy young people invited up to the front to do the singing. I memorized almost all of the songs sung in those days and often a preacher would sing a new song and then nearly everybody would learn it.

Jesse Z. Cole sang the "Old Ship of Zion," Alfred Isley sang "There's a Happy Land," Rev. Neuse Sang "In The Sweet Fields of Eden" Ashbel Nelson sang "There is a Glorious Fountain," Shubal G. Evans sang "Show, Pity, Lord, Oh Lord, Forgive," and Martin Staley's favorite was "Attend Young Friends While I Relate the Danger You are In."

In my last John Smite should be Daniel Smith, Rosanna Kimes should be Rosanna Kinney, and it was 1844 and not 1884 that Daniel W. Kerr started publishing the Christian Sun.

October 2, 1912

"Correspondent of Grit Dead"

We regret to hear of the death of Mr. A.M. Way, of Route 2. He lived in a cottage alone, and was last seen alive Saturday afternoon. Monday afternoon he was found lying just outside his door dead, so it is not known when he died. The funeral was held at Pleasant Hill Thursday., conducted by Rev. T.F. Andrews. Mr. Way was an original character and a good man. He wrote a score of articles to the Grit dealing with Reminiscences of the Past, signed himself Cornhill and Via, and his letters were always quaint and interesting. The Grit has lost a good friend. Peace to his soul.¹ His wife and two daughters died several years ago.