

HISTORY BIG CREEK CHURCH.

Big Creek Records from 1801 to 1850.

Editors Anderson Intelligencer:

It is difficult to find out who were the first settlers in almost any neighborhood. The territory that now forms the Counties of Greenville, Anderson, Oconee and Pickens was ceded to South Carolina by the Cherokee Indians in 1777—one year after the Declaration of Independence. But this section of country was sparsely settled before this cession was made. In the woods, not far from Wilson's Mill, there are faint signs of an old graveyard. Old people tell us that there used to be several graves at this place, but only four can be seen now among the bushes and trees, and these are recognized by slightly sunken places in the earth. At Big Creek Church there are a great number of graves. One tombstone is marked "S. R. 1812." As I walked over this cemetery some time ago, I heard an old man say to his full grown grandson, "John, take this bucket and hoe and put some sand on your great-grandfather's grave." So we see that this has been a burying place for several generations.

When the lower Pelzer dam was built there were faint signs of an old chimney near the western end of the dam. This small pile of stones marked the place where the house of Moses Holland stood. The place is still known as "Holland's Ford." The road that leads to the power-house used to be a public road. Perhaps Mr. Holland was attracted to this spot because the river could be forded here, or by the spring that still bubbles from under the hill. Moses Holland was born in Virginia, and served in the Revolutionary war. He was present at the surrender of Lord Cornwallis. Mr. Holland was a Baptist, and through his influence "Big Creek Church was constituted in the year of our Lord 1788." To us young people that year, 1788, seems to be in the long ago. [South Carolina adopted the United States Constitution in 1788, and it was April 30 of the next year that Washington took the oath of office as the first President of the United States.] In 1812, Mr. Holland and Elisha Bennett could not agree concerning some business transaction, the amount in dispute being five dollars. Bethesda Church seemed to take sides with Mr. Bennett and sent a letter to Big Creek asking that the matter be settled. The Association would not allow Big Creek to be represented in that body on account of this disturbance. A committee was sent by the Association to investigate the matter. This committee decided against Mr. Holland, and, although Big Creek dearly loved and revered Mr. Holland, he was finally declared "out of our fellowship." At the next Church meeting "Brother Holland requested information how he should be restored to fellowship." Answered by repentance according to gospel in Luke 17th and 4th, which reads thus: "And if he trespass against thee seven times in the day and seven times in the day turn again to thee saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Two years later "Brother Holland offered for fellowship and was received without a dissenting voice." Mr. Holland served Big Creek from the time of its foundation to the time of his death in 1829—a period of nearly forty-two years. He served the Association as Moderator twelve times, and had a place on its most important committees. A log meeting-house was built about a half mile below the present Church building. After some years, a framed house was built near the site of the present brick Church, but a little nearer the public road. Still later, an addition was made to this building. When the brick Church was built in 1873, this old Church was sold. The older part of it was bought by Mr. J. I. Holliday and is now used for a barn. The newer part of that same building may be seen just in front of Mr. Frank Welborn's, where it is used for a wheat-room and a general storehouse for the farm.

The early records of Big Creek Baptist Church are lost, but the records from 1801 to 1850 furnish some interesting reading. Some of the quotations below show us some of the questions that our forefathers had to deal with. We can but admire the candor and earnestness with which they dealt with each other. During the time these records cover, their meeting days were the first Sunday of each month and the Saturday preceding, the years 1844 and 1845 being excepted. They still meet on the first Sunday and Saturday preceding. About 1801, there was a considerable revival in this community. This continued for about two years, and many were added to the Church. On August 23, 1801, the number of male members was forty-one, and the female members numbered sixty-seven—total 108. Note that over sixty-two per cent. were women. Out of the sixty surnames met with in this list, twenty-four are still frequently met with in the community.

Each member present had to vote for or against every motion brought before the Church, as the following rule indicates: "Those in favor of the thing proposed shall rise to their feet, and those against it shall keep their seats. The moderator shall pronounce the decision before the standers take their seats." Nor could people interrupt their Church conference by leaving: "No person shall depart the service of the Church without leave." The older members still obey this rule: "The appellation of brother shall be used in our address one to another."

The weakness of human nature were, to a large extent, the same in olden times as they are now, if we may judge by the offenses named in the records. We find a number of members excluded for drunkenness. Only one case of this kind against a woman. Sister N— was excluded "for drinking too much of spirituous liquor." They were very particular to appoint brethren to "admonish" absentees "for neglecting their Church meetings." The following quotations will show how careful they were on this point: "All members belonging to Big Creek Church must, on every meeting day, attend by 12 o'clock or they will be dealt with, except a good excuse be given." "Agreed that we send brethren — to Bro. H— to know why he does not come to Church meeting." "It was renewed that any male member of the Church missing two or more Church meetings should give their reasons for so doing." "Church met at our usual time. Called up the reference concerning our members that did not come to their meeting—5 in number—and they are no more of us." The members were very fair in their dealings with each other. If a person was not present to hear a complaint against him, they would put the matter off and appoint some one to "go labor with him," or "to cite him to the next meeting." They would usually have some case of reproof or discipline to attend to at every meeting on Saturday before the first Sunday. Occasionally there was "no meeting. The day was wet." Now and then there was no meeting "on account of a general muster." "The Church met, all in peace. Nothing particular to labor upon." This question was sent to the Association for an answer: "Shall we hold a member in fellowship that sells corn at one dollar per bushel?" The Church was not pleased with the answer sent back by the Association, but "some of the members were dissatisfied concerning their old distress" [one-dollar corn.] This matter caused discussion and some ill feeling for at least a dozen meetings. Various questions were asked and discussed at the Saturday Church meetings. "Is it not wrong when we hear of anything evil against our members to speak it abroad in the world without first taking gospel steps with them?" Answer, "It is wrong." "Is it worthy of dealing with a member for starting to market with his wagon and team or rolling hoghead on the Sabbath day?" Answer, "We disapprove such conduct." A member was appointed to go labor with a brother for not paying a note, but, as he promised to settle the note at an early date, the matter was dropped. "Brother W— reported to the Church his own conduct for getting intoxicated at the tax-paying, for which the Church forgave him." "Inquired for the peace of the Church and found not in peace from common report on Brother C—, concerning a debt—for a cow and calf." After this case was investigated, Bro. C— was "excluded for sin." Dec. 3, 1803, "a complaint brought forward against Brother W— for bringing a stray hound dog home with him on his way from Abbeville District—not being his own property—for the same was excluded out of fellowship." "A complaint came forward against Sister Elizabeth R— for going to a shooting match, and for associating with bad company and for same excluded out of fellowship." One member was accused of "drunkenness, swearing and shooting for beef;" but, as he "gave satisfaction," he was not further dealt with; while another member was excluded for "going to an unlawful assembly and shooting for a prize." "Brother B— declared out of fellowship for refusing to take gospel steps with some of the brethren that he said he was hurt with." One brother did not do work according to promise and charged too high for it. He was excluded after a committee had examined the work and reported to the Church. One sister was reported because "she had been angry and said bad words with other reports. She confessed her faults, denied the report and was continued in fellowship." A complaint brought forward by Brother B— against Elizabeth W— for saying that Elizabeth and Mary C— were liars and she could prove it. Sister W— failing to substantiate the accusation has fallen

under our censure until such time as she makes her accusation good." "The case of Brother C— was brought forward and strict inquiry made, and we find that Brother C— applied to the Church and got a letter; after that told lies, ran away and left his debts unsettled." Matters were well considered before any one was excluded. The case of Sister G— was taken up and labored on the chief of the day, then the Church unanimously rose for her excommunication." "The peace of the Church was inquired for and found Brother F— in disorder in as much as he has applied for a warrant against Brother H— for trading with negroes; and, after some dealing, Brother F— gave Brother H— satisfaction and the peace returned to the Church again." The Church would not consider a certain charge because "Brother H— had not taken gospel steps with Brother F—." "Brother C— brought a charge against Brother G—. It was not taken up, but sent out of doors, and brethren were appointed to go with them, and it was settled." A member was excluded for "fishing on Sunday, cursing, swearing and drinking." Members were urged not to bring cases before the Church "until they have taken private measures, and in all cases to have recourse to the 18th chapter of Matthew." "Joseph K— came forward and confessed his wrong, the Church agreed to bear with him." Nov. 6, 1841. "Took the vote of the Church to try to put down all manner of trade and traffic on meeting days." Brother K— brought an accusation "against himself for trading on the Sabbath. After some labor on the subject and his acknowledgement, he was acquitted."

Sept. 6, 1823—"Appointed the Friday before the first Saturday in November to consider the State Constitution or Convention to see whether they would approbate it or not." Nov. 1, 1823—"As to the resolution of the Association as to the way of spending the fourth of July. We leave every one to their own will."

Nov. 3, 1835—"Brother M— wished to know of the Church if they did wish to have the Constitution of the State Convention read next meeting for information, and it was agreed to."

"The Church convened. The peace of the Church inquired for and all in peace. Thank God, for we had long been biting one the other."

"Sister E— applied for a letter of dismission, and, at the same time, said she was not satisfied with the Church's conduct in turning out her husband; and it was refused her on that ground."

It now seems strange to children to read that the negroes and white people once belonged to the same Church. On one side of Big Creek Church there was a shed running the whole length of the main building. In this shed, the negroes worshiped, a railing separating them from the white people. The negroes had no surnames and they were designated in various ways, as "Black Tom belonging to John Taylor," "Black Mary," "our old black sister Anna," was reported "as being an orderly person, which we were glad to hear."

"Washington, ferry black Wash, was received by experience." "A door was opened and there came and was received by experience Wm. Copeland's black girl, Sally, and Brother H. Wilson's black boy, Lohill." "Inquired for the peace of the Church when Brother Wilson let the Church know of the conduct of his black man, Willis, he was therefore excluded for pilfering." A report was brought "against Black Lucy for stealing meat, and appointed Brother Holland to cite her to our next meeting and make report. Church met. The case of Lucy brought for-



It is the primary duty of every woman to wear in her face the lilies and roses of health. It is one of woman's natural missions to please, and one of the first attributes of a pleasing woman is a complexion that shows the bloom of health. No matter how beautiful a woman may be at the outset, if she suffers from weakness and disease of that delicate and important organism that is the threshold of human life, she will soon show traces of suffering in her face, and very shortly become haggard and homely. She will lose her animation of manner, the sparkle will fade from her eyes and the roses from her cheeks, her form will lose its roundness and her step its sprightliness. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription imparts strength, health, vigor and vitality to the feminine organism. It allays inflammation, heals ulceration and tones the nerves. It makes weak women strong in a womanly way and able to bear the burdens of maternity. It banishes the suffering of the period of gestation, and makes baby's advent easy and almost painless. It restores the lost complexion and imparts strength, vitality and health to the entire system. "I am very thankful for what Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription has done for me," writes Mrs. E. E. Smith of Grenola, Elk Co., Kans. "About a month before I was confined I had such pains that I could stand up only a little while at a time. I could not rest at night or at any other time. I could scarcely eat anything. I began taking Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription after the second day of gestation, and from then until I was confined I carried all the water that was used up a long hill and worked in the garden every day besides my other work and did not feel at all bad. When the baby was born I had a very easy time. The women said I had an easier time than any one of my other confinements. The baby is very healthy. I got up when she was five days old. After two days I began my own work and felt stout and healthy."

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ward, and she being present, made her confession, and was restored to fellowship again."

Caesar was a negro preacher who is said to have had considerable influence. Some of our older citizens tell us that Caesar preached well. He was a slave, but saved all the money he could get and bought his freedom for \$400 or \$500. He afterwards bought the freedom of his brother. The land just above Rush and Vandiver's planing mill, on each side of the railroad, was once owned by Caesar. He was buried in the field in the rear of the Williamson Female College. Some of the records in regard to Caesar may be of interest. "Brother Caesar made application to the Church for permission to go to Brother E. River's to hold meeting and exercise his gift, but it was denied him for some reasons." Caesar was "excluded from fellowship for persisting over the head of the Church in taking another wife." A little later he was restored to fellowship. "We allow Brother Caesar to use his gift where he is called or as far as his master will allow him to go for one year, provided he preaches sound doctrine." "After worship by Brother Caesar, a few members met in peace, and, as there was nothing before the Church, we spent the day in religious conversation." "Caesar applied for a permit to travel into the State of Georgia and exercise his gift. Brother Holland was appointed to write his permit." "The peace of the Church was inquired for. Brother Caesar came forward to give satisfaction for knocking down his fellow servant with an ax, for which he was excluded." After four months Caesar was restored, and a little later "a motion was made by Brother John Gambrell for Brother Caesar to exercise his gift in preaching and exhortation, and the Church tolerated him to do so within the bounds of sister Churches." "Took up a report concerning a black man of Mr. Maxwell's, and Brother Caesar agreed to labor with him and report next meeting."

The Church tried to settle difficulties between master and slave. At no less than thirteen different meetings a disturbance between a mistress and a slave was brought up, but it was found very hard to arrange the matter satisfactorily. Finally a committee that was appointed to consider the matter, reported "that they could not decide, and they requested the liberty to send for help." Accordingly, members from Neal's Creek, Dorchester, Shady Grove and Washington met to try to settle the difficulty.

Many Churches of this section have been "arms" of Big Creek Church. As far back as 1803, a petition was received "from Twenty-Six Mile Creek, (now Hopewell) arm of this Church, requesting a dismission in order to become a constituted body to themselves. The petition granted if found able to keep house for the Lord." A few months before Neal's Creek had sent in a similar petition and had re-

ceived a like answer. As these Churches were set off, they would frequently ask that Mr. Holland serve them as pastor. Perhaps this founding of other Churches accounts for the few members left at Big Creek, for we find that there were only twenty-eight members in 1820. Dec. 3, 1831, "a great many exhortations and prayers were made for sinners." During the next year, many members were received. Eighteen were received at one meeting. By December 11, 1833, we find the number of members had increased to one hundred and sixty-three.

Other denominations seemed to be working in the community also; for in 1809 we read: "Kessiah Hand declared out of fellowship for voluntarily leaving us and joining the Methodist society." "The case of Sister Kelly was taken up, she being present, was examined to know whether she was a Methodist or not, and she declared that she was a Methodist indeed, and that she received more satisfaction with them than with us, for which she was excommunicated to be a member with us no more till she alter her principles."

It seems strange for children of this generation to read that a collection was taken and some members gave 12, 6, or 18 cents. It is rather awkward to count money with so many fractions in it. Edward W. Musgrave was a Baptist preacher who was received by letter into the Church. He was strongly opposed to missions, and immediately upon being received into the Church, objected to a missionary deacon serving the Church. The Church became very much wrought up, and finally divided into two parties that were strongly opposed to each other. One party formed themselves into a separate body that would have nothing whatever to do with missions. After five or six years, this division seems to have passed away.

A few more quotations may be of interest. "On the night of our next meeting, we agree to go into washing each other's feet." "Brother John Nickelson petitioned to exercise his gift in public, so as to hand forth light from the word of God as God might give him light and liberty. His petition granted in the bounds of the Church as long as may be to the glory of God."

"The Church came together, being in love and union, having no dealings on hand." "We agree to lay down all our former hurts and grievances, and desire to live in peace and love and watch over each other according to the gospel for time to come." The following have served as pastors at Big Creek during the one hundred and ten years of its existence: Moses Holland from 1788 to 1829—41 years. Robert King from 1830 to 1838—8 years. John Vandiver from 1838 to 1844—6 years. Wm. P. Martin from 1846 to 1873—27 years. R. W. Burts from 1873 to the present [1898]—25 years. Without pastor—3 years. This makes an average of a little over twenty-one years for each pastor. GEO. S. GOODWIN.

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