

HISTORY OF THE ARCOLA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA

By

William R. Harshbarger



Arcola
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Prologue

The Arcola church evolved from the land-hungry pioneers who bet their lives on surviving at the edge of the Grand Prairie and the woodlands beside the Kaskaskia River. Although primarily preoccupied with building log cabins, planting crops, hunting, raising livestock, making fence, breaking the prairie, building roads, and cooperating with their neighbors, they also worked diligently to create law and order and pursued the benefits of religion. At the same time, the eastern Presbyterian churches aggressively produced licensed ministers and educated theologians who followed the pioneers into the wilderness.

This story is taken from the bits and pieces of recorded history, county histories, formal histories of the church, and artifacts found in the church itself. Some current church members contributed their personal experiences to the history. And most of the year-by-year facts came from the excellent work of Rev. Don Winch, who compiled information from the church minutes and the records of memorials and gifts.

No history is complete, or completely accurate. This narrative corrects some previous errors, but, no doubt, generates others. Only a small part of the story can be told. One must acknowledge the shortcomings of the work, regret overlooking important events, and apologize for errors. This account explored some of the pastors' lives more deeply than others. The research reveals that much more can be said. It provokes the nagging concern that not enough has been written here to do justice to the quality of their lives or the depth of their achievements. Still, by looking beyond their limited experience with the Arcola church, one can gain a broader sense of life, the passage of time, the connections to people, and the colorful fabric of their lives. One can also appreciate the meandering and unpredictable way that faith is created and endures.

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Arcola, Illinois 2016

History of the Arcola Presbyterian Church
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The prairie pioneers packed up their faith with their families, tools, and livestock to build their future. They believed in their skills, trusted their environment, and relied on their community; but, for the unpredictable accidents, diseases, troubles and hardships, they clung to faith to give them peace.

Religious people started America. Ancient philosophers, scholars, and old, European churches provided the intellectual skeleton and the reassuring ritual to sustain the faith. Soon after they arrived in the New World, colonists built colleges to educate new leaders and to grow the faith. The fearless pioneers, however, cut their way into the western wilderness from generation to generation, and, in isolated clusters of log-cabin communities, they cleared a space where faith took root and grew.¹ The transformation of the west from fragile, scattered communities into a vibrant, productive society depended on the growth and stability of law and order, schools, and the churches.

The history of the Arcola Presbyterian Church evolved from the trickle of pioneers who took various routes to the Illinois Country. Some followed the old French routes through the Great Lakes, to Green Bay, Wisconsin and into the Mississippi settlements of Alton, St. Louis, Kaskaskia, and Cahokia—the fertile region called the “American Bottom.”² Some followed the Miami River in Ohio to the Wabash, settling in the old French city of Vincennes. Others from Virginia and Pennsylvania took the Potomac River to the Ohio River, then to Shawneetown. Those from Western North Carolina took the Cumberland River and the Tennessee River to the Ohio.³

The Presbyterian faith in America started with the first Presbyterian church organized in Snow Hill, Maryland in 1684 by Francis MaKemie, of Rathmelton Donegal County, Ireland.⁴ The first Presbytery was at Philadelphia, formed in 1705 or 1706 by Francis Makemie, John Hampton, George Macish, Samuel Davis, John Wilson, Jedidiah Andrews, and Nathaniel Taylor. The First Synod was formed by a division of the Philadelphia Presbytery into three: New Castle, Snow Hill, and Philadelphia. They joined the new Presbytery of Long Island to constitute the first Synod. After differences between “Old Side” and “New Side” created a temporary separation of the Presbyteries, they eventually re-united. The “New Side” set up Princeton College; the “Old Side” created a school at London, Pennsylvania. After the Revolutionary War ended and in 1788, they organized a General Assembly and established “The Constitution of the Presbyterian

¹ Norton, Augustus Theodore, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Illinois*, Vol. I, St. Louis: W. S. Bryan, publisher, 1879, pp. 8-9

² Parrish, Randall, *Historic Illinois: The Romance of the Early Days*, Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1905, pp. 209-211; Perrin, W. H., A. A. Graham and D. M. Blair, and Judge William E. Adams., *History of Coles County*, Chicago: Wm. Le Baron, Jr. & Co., 1879, p. 124; Myers, Douglas K., *Foreign Immigrants in Illinois 1850*, Illinois Periodicals Online <http://www.lib.niu.edu/1998/ih519815.html>;

³ *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History.*, pp. 8-9.

⁴ Foote, William Henry, “Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical. [[Foote's Sketches of Virginia \(First Book\) Home](#)] “Rev. Francis Makemie and his Associates,” 1850, p. 41; *Wikipedia*, “Makemie Memorial Presbyterian Church” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Makemie_Memorial_Presbyterian_Church. Some assert that he first preached at Rehoboth, in Coventry Parish.

Church in the United States of America.” The Presbyterians wanted to send educated pastors into the western wilderness.

John Evans Finley, the first Presbyterian minister to travel to Illinois, was born 26 July 1753 at White Hall, in Cecil County, Maryland. He traveled down the Ohio and up the Mississippi in a keel boat, landing in Kaskaskia in 1797. He worked mostly with Indians and mostly west of the Mississippi. He was forced to leave when the Spanish government threatened to draft his group into military service. He served as minister in Mason County, Kentucky and, later, Red Oak, Ohio. He died in Brown County, Ohio in 1818.⁵

In 1812, the two Presbyterian ministers, John F. Schermerhorn and Samuel J. Mills, briefly touched the shores of Illinois at Fort Massac, on the Ohio River. The Massachusetts and Connecticut Missionary Societies and the Bible Societies sent them on a southwestern tour to observe religious conditions and report. They traveled down the Mississippi with boats under the command of General Andrew Jackson and observed conditions along the way. In their report, they said that the Illinois territory contained more than 12,000 people, but there was no Presbyterian or Congregational minister. The people, however, were anxious to have ministers and bibles. Authorities published their reports in the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* and the *Panplisist*, opening the eyes of the eastern population to the opportunities in Illinois.⁶

The Bible Society of Philadelphia, the Assembly’s Committee of Missions, and the Massachusetts Missionary Society paid Samuel J. Mills \$2,000 to return. In 1815, he traveled with David Smith to Cincinnati, and then veered into Indiana arriving at Vincennes, where he met Rev. Samuel T. E. Scott, a Presbyterian preacher who had been working there for six years and had seventy members in his church. Mills traveled down the Wabash River to Shawneetown. He got a letter from Judge Griswold to introduce him to Governor Ninian Edwards and others at Kaskaskia. Mills met the governor. At the time, Kaskaskia had eighty to one hundred families with only four or five bibles among them. There was still no Presbyterian church in the territory. He returned to Shawneetown, then home by December 20. He recommended sending bibles to Kaskaskia and St. Louis. He also reported that several settlers in the American Bottom were Presbyterians, but were compelled to work with Methodists and Baptists preachers. Mills graduated from Williams College in Massachusetts in 1809, and Andover Theological Seminary in 1812. After his travels to Illinois, he took his ordination at Newburyport, Massachusetts on 21 June 1815, and signed up to do missionary work in Africa as an agent for the American Colonization Society. He died at sea on 16 May 1818, aged thirty five. “He was one of those rare men whose ambition was satisfied by setting in motion great agencies, while himself unseen and unknown.”⁷

From 1813, and for a period of at least twenty-five years, travelers recognized Shawneetown—a pioneer town on the Ohio River located just a few miles below the mouth of the Wabash—as the most important city of the Illinois Territory and State. In that western destination, La Fayette stayed in its hotel, the first Illinois bank was established, the second newspaper was published, Robert G. Ingersoll studied law, and John A. Logan was married. Later, Mark Twain immortalized Colonel Sellers who once worked financial miracles in that town. Many

⁵ *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, pp. 11-12.; Find a Grave, Find A Grave Memorial# 95959020, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=95959020> .

⁶ *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, pp. 12-13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Norton, pp. 16-17.

Presbyterian pioneers passed through that place, as they spread out across the sparsely settled parts of Illinois.⁸ The tours by Mills and Schermerhorn in 1812 and Mills and Smith in 1814 revealed an unanswered need and a significant opportunity for Presbyterian ministers and the creation of new churches.

In September of 1816, an experienced preacher, well-educated in both the Calvinist doctrine and in the gritty realities of back-woods, frontier life, started the first Presbyterian Church in Illinois. Rev. James G. McGready organized pioneers in a small, log-cabin structure called the “Church of Sharon,” in a wooded area of White County in Southern Illinois, across the Ohio River, not far from Henderson County, Kentucky. The location was about one-quarter mile from Peter C. Miller’s House, in Section 21 of Township 5, Range 8, East of the 3rd Meridian. It had one window and was roofed with clap-boards. Approaching from the south, one passed through dense woods on gradually descending ground. Settlers created an opening around the hewed-log house that faced southward with a door on the south side. In the clearing they had built a stand—a raised platform between two trees. Split puncheon logs and slabs were arranged in the shade for the congregation to sit. Inside they placed the pulpit on the east end. Near the center, they put a flat rock in the floor on which they could burn charcoal in the cold weather. Benjamin F. Spillman, an early, well-known Presbyterian minister, was ordained there.⁹



Church of Sharon. The first Presbyterian Church in Illinois. Founded in 1816. Photograph by Bill Harshbarger, 2016.

Through their history, the congregation built four structures for worship. They set up the last church at a cemetery and next to the stagecoach road. Services continued there until 1987, when the structure no longer worked for the congregation. However, in 2010 the community restored the building and reopened it for special services. Tourists today—two hundred years after the Church of Sharon began—can find it 3 ½ miles south of the Enfield intersection and 3 miles north of Norris City. Those using U. S. 45 can turn east on County Road 1050 North, travel about one-half mile, and turn left on a lane.¹⁰

James G. McGready, the minister who started Illinois’s first Presbyterian church, commands a significant place in the history of the faith. In Logan County, Kentucky, in 1797 through 1805, his ministry transformed the region from an unfriendly place known for its desperadoes, desperate and dissolute characters—a place called “Rogues-Harbor” —into a powerful movement called the “Second Great Awakening” or the “Revival of 1800.”¹¹ The extraordinary episode

⁸ *Op. Cit.*, Parrish, *Romance of the Early Days*, pp. 443-445; *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, “Letter of Samuel Wiley,” “Diary of Mrs. Permellia Burr,” pp. 52-54.

⁹ Norton, Augustus Theodore, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Illinois*, Vol. I, St. Louis: W. S. Bryan, publisher, 1879, pp. 18-20.

¹⁰ “Old Sharon Church reopens Friday Night,” *The Carmi Times*, <http://www.carmitimes.com/article/20100917/NEWS/309179908>

¹¹ *Wikipedia*, “Revival of 1800”, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revival_of_1800; Grider, J. S., D.D., “Red River Meeting House, Logan County, Kentucky: The Mother of Kentucky Churches.” <http://www.cumberland.org/hfcpc/churches/RedRivKY.htm> ; *Wikipedia*, “James McGready,”

shook the foundations of the western Presbyterian church. It also stirred his contemporary Methodist ministers—Francis Asbury, the famous Methodist circuit rider, for example—to bring their congregations into a dramatic, new relationship with their faith.¹²

Church meetings, where only twenty-five or thirty once met, overnight became camp meetings, where crowds, ranging from 1,000 to as high as 20,000, came from as far away as one hundred miles with wagons full of people. The reprobates and rogues confessed their sins and cried out for help. Well-educated observers—ministers from Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches, and skeptics and doubters—came from a wide area and wrote about what they saw and heard and how the experience changed them. Separately, in their own words, they confirmed similar displays of inexplicable human behavior at many different locations. The behaviors included being “slain in the spirit,” where many members simply fell to the ground and remained there in various conditions; but, then recovered, displaying a happy or even joyous demeanor.¹³ Other behaviors were described as the “jerks,” which were uncontrollable, with such intensity that they often appeared to be dangerous, but rarely led to injury. Other behavior included rolling, running, dancing, and barking, and also visions and dreams. Participants often wept and shouted out and declared their sinful ways, seeking help to be saved.¹⁴

The critics renounced the revival by focusing on the strange behaviors; but, that was only part of the transformation. After individuals endured their “bodily exercises,” they often turned to prayer and exhortation, and the many “ministers found their strength soon taxed to their utmost to keep pace with the demands of this intense excitement.”¹⁵ Lives were changed. The communities across Kentucky, Tennessee, and other Southern States were changed. Those

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_McGready; Finley, Alex C. (1878). *The History of Russellville and Logan County, Kentucky, Which is to Some Extent a History of Western Kentucky*. p. 6. Smith, James. *History of the Christian Church, From its Origin to the Present Time*; Compiled from Various Authors. Including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Drawn from Authentic Documents. Nashville, Tenn.: Printed and Published at the Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835, pages 672-673.

¹² Wikipedia, “Revival of 1800”, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revival_of_1800. Asbury, Francis (May 25, 1796). *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, Vol. 2*. Retrieved 30 April 2014; McGready, James (Feb 1803). "A Short Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Logan County in the State of Kentucky and the Adjacent Settlements in the State of Tennessee from May 1797, until September 1800". *New York Missionary Magazine and Repository of Religious Intelligence*: 74. Retrieved 30 April 2014. P. 197; note Harp, Scott, “History of the Restoration Movement, James McGready,” <http://www.therestorationmovement.com/states/kentucky/mcgreedy.htm#d> Baptists were not so much involved. “Their principles and polity have usually disposed the Baptists to avoid union meetings, and, during this revival, as at other times, they held their own meetings, and labored in their own quiet, unpretending way. There may have been a few instances in which some of them took part in the great ostentatious meetings, but these occasions, if indeed such occasions occurred at all, were rare, and were exceptions to their general rule of action. The wisdom of their course will be unquestioned, when the history of the great revival and its fruits is studied.”

¹³ Harp, Scott, “History of the Restoration Movement, James McGready,” <http://www.therestorationmovement.com/states/kentucky/mcgreedy.htm#d>, see, for example, “A True Account of a Great Meeting held in the District of Spartanburgh, South Carolina, July 7, 1802, by Ebenezer H. Cummins.”

¹⁴ Harp, Scott, “History of the Restoration Movement, James McGready,” <http://www.therestorationmovement.com/states/kentucky/mcgreedy.htm#d>; See notes 27-33. In particular note: McNemar, Richard, *A Short History of the late extraordinary out-pouring of the spirit of God, in the western states of America, Cincinnati: Albany Reprinted by E. and E. Hosford, 1808, pp. 51-52.*

¹⁵ Smith, James. *History of the Christian Church, From its Origin to the Present Time*; Compiled from Various Authors. Including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Drawn from Authentic Documents. Nashville, Tenn.: Printed and Published at the Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835, p. 134.

attending the revival returned to their far-flung communities and exhorted friends and neighbors to join them.¹⁶

One cannot overstate the impact of the Second Great Awakening. In 1796, the same year McGready came to Kentucky, the Methodist leader, Asbury, quoted in his journal the dismal prediction he had heard about the region: “The ministers in Kentucky will be a curse to each other, and the people too; good religion and good land are not so easily matched together.”¹⁷ After the Revolution ended in 1783, the socio-religious conditions in Kentucky reflected the conditions and attitudes of most of the country. When he arrived, McGready complained that Kentuckians were worldly people whose conversations were “of corn and tobacco, or land and stock.... the name of Jesus has no charms; and it is rarely mentioned unless to be profaned.”¹⁸ In July and September of 1798, McGready saw some flickering of the revival spirit; but James Balch, a Presbyterian minister, arrived and strongly opposed McGready’s work, ridiculing the whole concept of revival and formed a party against it, creating “disputation and confusion,” bringing the whole work to a halt, and causing the people to sink back into “darkness and deadness.”¹⁹ Then, starting in the Red River Church in Logan County, Kentucky,²⁰ from 1800 to 1805, something remarkable happened to change the lives of thousands of people across the boundaries of several states.

The movement eventually provoked the regional Presbyteries. In 1805 the officials demanded that McGready, along with Revs. Messrs. William Hodge, William McGee, Samuel McAdow, and John Rankin, appear before the Kentucky Synod, where they were cited for “not submitting the young men for reexamination to the Commission of the Synod.”²¹ The Synod’s decision to reject the extraordinary activities and changes associated with the “Revival of 1800,” though verified by credible witnesses, unintentionally drove many of the southern Presbyterians into the formation of the Cumberland Presbyterian church.²² McGready, who initially stood with the revival party, faltered when confronted by the Synod. He was a Calvinist of the old order. He was trained by Dr. McMillan and the old Red Stone Presbytery, who were among the sternest examples of Presbyterianism. And by a dedicated focus on his message, by the enormous, even jaw-dropping response by the people, and by the belief that he was faithfully doing his duty, he had no idea that the episode would cause such complications or become embarrassing.²³ McGready accepted the 1805 censure by the Transylvania Presbytery and the loss of his license.

¹⁶ Harp, Scott, “History of the Restoration Movement, James McGready,” “The Great Revival and the Accompanying Phenomena,” <http://www.therestorationmovement.com/states/kentucky/mcgreedy.htm#d>; Wikipedia, “Revival of 1800”, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revival_of_1800; McGready, James (Feb 1803). "[A Short Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Logan County in the State of Kentucky and the Adjacent Settlements in the State of Tennessee from May 1797, until September 1800](#)". *New York Missionary Magazine and Repository of Religious Intelligence*: 74. Retrieved 30 April 2014, p. 195, 198.

¹⁷ Asbury, Francis (May 25, 1796). "[The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, Vol. 2](#)". Retrieved 30 April 2014.

¹⁸ Eslinger, Ellen (1999). *The Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press. p. 170.

¹⁹ *Op. Cit.*, Smith, *History of the Christian Church*, pp. 567, 568.

²⁰ McGee, John (1821). "[Letter to the Rev. T.L. Douglass](#)". *The Methodist Magazine* 04:. Retrieved 30 April 2014, pp. 189-191;

²¹ *Op. Cit.*, Smith, *History of the Christian Church*, pp. 672-673; Wikipedia, “Revival of 1800”, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revival_of_1800; Grider, J. S., D.D., “Red River Meeting House, Logan County, Kentucky: The Mother of Kentucky Churches.” <http://www.cumberland.org/hfcpc/churches/RedRivKY.htm> ;

²² McDonnold, B. W., *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 4th ed., Nashville, Tenn: Board of Publication of Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1899. “Second Period,” Chapter X, The New Church, pp. 83-84.

²³ *Op. Cit.*, Smith, *History of the Christian Church*, pp. 672-673.

In 1806 the organization restored his credentials as a Presbyterian minister. He left Logan County in 1809 and moved to Henderson, Kentucky.²⁴

James McGready was born in Pennsylvania of Scotch-Irish descent, and moved to North Carolina while still a boy. His uncle, visiting from Pennsylvania, noticed his remarkable, conscientious regard for religious duties, and decided to help him train for the ministry. The family raised money and sent him to Joseph Smith of Cross Creek and the Buffalo congregation in Pennsylvania. In Smith's kitchen, McGready studied the classics and parsed the nouns and verbs of Latin. At Washington County, Pennsylvania he studied theology under the direction of Dr. John McMillan, and was licensed by Red Stone Presbytery in 1788. He returned home to North Carolina to a congregation in Orange County. He was married in about 1790 and preached with energy and success; but, he made an enemy whose associates burned his church and wrote a threatening letter in blood.²⁵ McGready soon left for Tennessee. Other ministers—those who became significant leaders in the Great Revival—followed: William Hodge, John Rankin, William McAdow, and the brothers John McGee and William McGee.²⁶ After preaching briefly in Tennessee, he moved to Logan County, Kentucky where he worked from 1796 until 1805 with the congregations in three churches: Gasper River, Red River, and Muddy River. After launching the Second Great Awakening and after receiving his censure by the Presbytery of Transylvania, he moved to Henderson, Kentucky in 1809, where he finished his work. He died in 1817. His friends buried him in Henderson's "Old" Fernwood Cemetery; but his final location was lost—either the tomb was not well marked or those handling the bodies were not careful, when moving the old cemetery to the current Fernwood Cemetery.²⁷

Emigrants to Illinois passed through the Coles County area prior to 1820. They followed the Vincennes trace—a major route from Vincennes, Indiana to Kaskaskia in Southwestern Illinois. In flood times, the water pushed travelers northward, forcing them to move through an area just south of today's city of Charleston. The topography encouraged travelers to settle. Charleston is located on the edge of the "Grand Prairie," between two major rivers, the Embarras on the east and the Kaskaskia (Okaw) on the west. The timberlines by each river encouraged settlers to stay and to build.

In 1824 a small group of men from Crawford County crossed the Wabash River and settled in what is now Hutton Township near the Embarras River. John Parker and his sons—Daniel Parker, Benjamin Parker, Silas Parker, George Parker, and James Parker and their families were in the group. Benjamin Parker built the first cabin on the east bank of the Embarras River. The Parker group arrived a few months before Seth Bates and his sons, David Bates and John Bates and his stepsons, Levi Doty and Samuel Doty, who settled where the town of LaFayette developed. By 1830 the population had grown large enough to ask to be a county. The

²⁴ Conkin, Paul K. *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. P. 156.

²⁵ *Op. Cit.*, Smith, James (1835), *History*, pp. 672-673; Harp, Scott, "History of the Restoration Movement, James McGready," <http://www.therestorationmovement.com/states/kentucky/mcgreedy.htm#d>; Grider, J. S., D.D., "Red River Meeting House, Logan County, Kentucky: The Mother of Kentucky Churches." <http://www.cumberland.org/hfcpc/churches/RedRivKY.htm>.

²⁶ *Op. Cit.*, Smith, James, *History of the Christian Church*, pp. 672-673

²⁷ *Op. Cit.*, Harp, Scott, "History of the Restoration Movement"; *Op. Cit.*, Conkin (1989). *Cane Ridge*, p. 156.

Note: Scott Harp asserts his death date to be 1815; Conkin says 1817. Church records show McGready founded the church of Sharon in 1816.

legislature granted the wish on Christmas day of that year, and named the county after Governor Edward Coles.²⁸

On June 13, 1835, Revs. John Montgomery and John McDonald organized the first Presbyterian Church built in Coles County. It was in Charleston. Among its twelve members were James A. Mitchell, the father of Robert A. Mitchell, and James Lumbric, elders.²⁹ Rev. John McDonald was the first minister for one-half time until the spring of 1843. The church hired Rev. Henry Isaac Venable for the years 1844-1845, during which time the church building was completed. Rev. Venable returned to the church in 1853 until 1856. In the years 1849 to 1853, Robert A. Mitchell, licentiate, served as minister for the church. He returned again in 1856 until October of 1870.³⁰

Both Henry Isaac Venable and Robert A. Mitchell were instrumental in starting the Arcola Presbyterian Church.

Rev. H. I. Venable was born in Shelby County, Ky., June 28, 1811 and died in Paris, IL, May 22, 1878. He joined the Presbyterian Church in Danville, Ky., at the age of 17 while studying at Center College, from which he graduated in 1830. He studied at Princeton Seminary, NJ, but completed his course in the Union Theological Seminary of Virginia. He earned a Master's degree from Hampden Sidney College in September 1833, and was licensed by the Presbytery of West Hanover, April 19, 1834. He was ordained to the ministry by the Presbytery of Transylvania in session at Danville, KY, October 21, 1834. Rev. Venable married Miss Martha A. Martin in 1834. He and his wife served four years as missionaries to Africa where they were arrested, experienced native wars, and, with failing health, were compelled to return to America. Soon after their return, Rev. Venable became minister of the Presbyterian church of Paris, IL, a post he held until 1841, when he resigned to start Edgar Academy. With energy and success he devoted himself for about nine years to the students before seeking a broader purpose in his work.

Unfortunately, shortly after leaving the academy, his lofty aspirations ended when he suffered a buggy accident, inflicting an injury, from which he was slow to heal. After recovering, he became a missionary to the "feeble and destitute churches," gathering scattered members into active groups. During the next twenty-five years, he touched several churches, including Arcola,³¹ Charleston, Humboldt, IL,³² Oakland, IL, Newton, York, Pleasant Prairie, Kansas, IL,³³ and Wakefield. His last work was in a "mission, Sabbath school, and preaching station" in a poor ward in Paris, IL.³⁴ During his last month, he suffered an attack of acute rheumatism. On the 21st he seemed better, conversed with friends, and wrote letters. About 8 p.m. he suffered a stroke, became unconscious and paralyzed, and died before dawn. Rev. R. D. Van Deursen

²⁸ "History of Coles County," Coles County Regional Planning, 2016, <http://www.co.coles.il.us/genInfo.html> ; Perrin, W. H., A. A. Graham, and D. M. Blair, Com., *A History of Coles County Illinois: Containing a History of...* Chicago: William Le Baron, Jr. and Co., 186 Dearborn St., 1879. Reproduced by Windmill Publications, Inc. Mt. Vernon, IN 1990, pp. 231.

²⁹ *Op. Cit.*,

³⁰ *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, pp. 240-241.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, p. 275.

³² *History of Coles County*, "Humboldt Township,," Chicago: Wm. Le Baron & Co., 186 Dearborn Street, 1879, pp. 469+, http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ilcoletp/history/history_of_humbolt_township.htm.

³³ *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, p. 523.

³⁴ *Ibid.* Norton, *History*, p. 291.

assisted by Rev. R. A. Mitchell of Kansas, IL, S. J. Bovell of Ashmore, and J. Crozier of Athens, (the last two former pupils of Rev. Venable), conducted the services. Six of his old students bore the remains of their revered teacher and friend to the final resting place.³⁵

Robert A. Mitchell was born on April 6, 1829, near Jonesboro, Washington County, E. Tennessee. His father, James A. Mitchell, was an elder in the church of Jonesboro. Both parents were strong Calvinists. They moved to Charleston, Illinois in 1833 in the year known for “star-falling,” an unusual, meteor-shower phenomenon, which young Robert observed. He also saw the excitement among neighbors who came running, fearing that the end of the world was near.³⁶ His father was an elder in the first Presbyterian Church in Coles County. Revs. John McDonald and John Montgomery started the church in Charleston, IL in 1835. Robert A. Mitchell studied under McDonald and, later, became the preacher for the same Charleston church. He would also help organize the Okaw church near Fillmore in Douglas County. Robert worked on his father’s farm until his parents sent him to Washington College, Washington County, Tennessee. There he studied under the renowned Rev. Samuel Doak, Jr., D. D, who was known as “the Presbyterian Bishop.”

Dr. Doak (August 1, 1749-December 12, 1830) was educated under Robert Alexander who later founded the Academy of Liberty Hall, which is now Washington and Lee University. He graduated from the College of New Jersey, which is now Princeton. After serving as a circuit riding pastor and being ordained, he settled in Washington County, where he founded several Presbyterian churches in Eastern Tennessee. Before Mitchell arrived, Dr. Doak had been educating ministers for fifty years at Washington College, which he founded as St Martin’s Academy in 1783.³⁷

Mitchell took the regular course at the Theological Seminary, New Albany, Indiana, which is now the Northwest Theological Seminary of Chicago. The Presbytery of New Albany licensed him on November 1848. Immediately after receiving his license at the tender age of nineteen, he supplied the young church at Charleston, the home of his parents and other relatives and friends. The Palestine Presbytery ordained him on April 23, 1854, just two months before he and Rev. H. I. Venable started the Okaw church in the Bourbon and Fillmore area. Although he was eighteen years younger than Rev. H. I. Venable, he shared common, pioneer-prairie experiences with him in Coles, Douglas, and Edgar Counties. Rev. Venable may have been his mentor, providing guidance, discourse, and advice. At the same time that he worked with the Charleston Presbyterian church, he also worked with the church of Pleasant Prairie for about five years. Then he served in the churches of Oakland and Hebron (which was at Ashmore) for three years. By 1856, when he was twenty-seven, he returned to Charleston where he remained until 1870. The later years of his career were at Kansas, Illinois, when he also supplied the churches of Chrisman and Redmon, both in Edgar County. In 1849, he married Ann E. Roberts, a native of East Tennessee. They had several children.³⁸

The Arcola Presbyterian Church grew out of pioneer experiences similar to most prairie churches. The first settlers built log cabins along the tree-shaded rivers that snaked through a

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, pp. 290-291.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, p. 443.

³⁷ Samuel Doaks. In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved June 2, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Doak

³⁸ Norton, Augustus Theodore, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Illinois*, Vol. I, St. Louis: W. S. Bryan, publisher, 1879, pp. 91, 159, 443-444.

vast prairie. They created small communities of farms and stores, shared the work, and took a living from the natural resources around them. They quickly developed the basic institutions of law and order. Most nurtured some religious spark that motivated them to satisfy their spiritual needs.

In 1839, twenty years before the area became Douglas County, and before there were any towns by the name of Fillmore, Bourbon, or Bagdad, a committee of twelve Presbyterians from Palestine, IL came for a visit. They were representatives of the Presbytery, which is the governmental organization for area Presbyterian churches. Together, with the forerunners of the Arcola church, they created a church called “Okaw.” The Palestine Presbytery officially received the church on October 10, 1839.³⁹ For seven years, under the leadership of Rev. Henry Isaac Venable,⁴⁰ the followers met in homes during the winter and under the trees during the summer, until the Presbytery dissolved the church in 1846.⁴¹

After a hiatus of eight years, on June 17, 1854, the Presbytery at Palestine created another church, also called “Okaw,” which was located in the area of the new town of Fillmore, started in 1848. After Camargo, it was the second oldest town in Douglas County. H. Russell laid out the village at the north line of Section 35, Township 15, Range 7. The town

depended on Caleb Bales, who established the firm of Bales & Trowbridge, later Bales, Osborne & Co. He controlled the trade of a large area. Fillmore was about half way between the Hermitage Inn on the Springfield Road and north to Bourbon Point, or 1 mile northeast of present-day Chesterville.⁴² The small “Fillmore Cemetery” in a remote wooded area beside the Kaskaskia River, one mile north of Chesterville, is the last vestige of this town



From: *The Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Douglas County, Illinois*, Edwardsville, W. R. Brink & Co., 1875, np. The town was about one mile north and east of Chesterville, Illinois. The location is “N. E. Corner, NE1/2 N.W ¼, Sec. 15, T. 15. N. E. Map was made by H. C. Niles.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, p. 275.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, p. 275.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, p. 275.

⁴² Niles, H. C., *History of Douglas County, IL, Bourbon Township*, F. A. Battey & Co, Publishers, 1884. Township Histories by H. C. Niles, Reproduced from the Originals and Contributed by Larry M. Burmeister, ©May, 2004, p. 276; Gresham, John, *Historical and Biographical Record of Douglas County, IL* Logansport, IN: Wilson, Humphreys and Company, 1900, p. 75; Battey, F. A., *County of Douglas, Illinois: Historical and Biographical: with an Outline Sketch of the Northwest Territory and of the State of Illinois*, Chicago: F. A. Battey & Co., Publishers, 1884, pp. 280; for a biography of Caleb Bales see: *Ibid.*, Battey, F. A., *County of Douglas*, p. 398.; Centennial Celebration, 1954, Church Artifact, in the Presbyterian Church of Arcola, 1954, p. 1; Fillmore, Douglas County, Illinois. In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved June 4, 2016 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fillmore,_Douglas_County,_Illinois.

today.⁴³

The Hermitage Inn was located on the Springfield Road two miles west of present day Arcola and a short distance east of the Kaskaskia River. It was on land owned by Jacob Moore and, later, by his son, William T. Moore. The Hermitage Inn was a coach stop and an inn on the Springfield Road that ran from Terre Haute, Indiana to Springfield, Illinois. Later, it became a post office known locally as "The Hermitage." The last proprietors were John and Sarah Louthan, whose daughter, Margaret, married William T. Moore in 1856.⁴⁴ The young couple called their farm the "Woodland Home." Located one-half mile north of the Springfield Road, "Woodland" still stands today.

In 1854, the Revs. Henry Isaac Venable, 43, who started several pioneer churches, and Robert A. Mitchell, 25, who had served in pioneer churches, and elder, Israel J. Monfort, met with the ten residents of Fillmore to create the second Okaw Church. The ten members were: Richard W. Hawkins, Jane Hawkins, Mary Logan, Amanda Moore, William H. Randolph, Dorcas Rice, Mary Kingery, Robert McCaig, Noble J. Braun, and Elizabeth Welch.⁴⁵

Amanda Moore was the wife of Jacob Moore, Sr. who settled in the area in 1835. Their daughter, who was also named "Amanda" married John K. Louthan, a well-off land owner in the same area. John and Amanda Louthan's daughter, Mary E. Louthan, married Samuel Logan. So, grandmother Amanda Moore and granddaughter Mary Logan were among the founders of the second Okaw Church.⁴⁶ Rev. H. I. Venable was the church's first regular pastor. He served for four years.⁴⁷

Dorcas Rice had married Abraham Rice in 1835. In 1845 they came to Coles County, where Abraham died in 1846—the same year that the first Okaw Church was dissolved. Mrs. Rice was among those who organized the second Okaw Church in 1854.⁴⁸ W. H. Randolph and Richard W. Hawkins were elected and installed as elders. Robert McCaig was the new church's first deacon.⁴⁹ Seven years later, in 1861, Richard Hawkins and Jane Hawkins, and family, worked with Rev. H. I. Venable to organize the first Presbyterian church in the Humboldt area.⁵⁰

⁴³ For photographs and list of burials see: <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gsr&GScid=2204318>

⁴⁴ Watson, Brenda Black (2002, April 6) *Moore-Louthan 1881 Family Bible (IL) with Rush*. Retrieved June 4, 2016 from <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/RUSH/2002-04/1018110490> ; Black, Brenda. (2008, October 25). *John L. Louthan*, Retrieved June 4, 2016 from: <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=30848842> ; *An Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Douglas County, Illinois*, "Township 14 & 15 North, Range 14 West of 3rd Principal Meridan, Bourbon, Fillmore." Edwardsville: W. R. Brink & Co., 1875. Retrieved June 6, 2016 from <https://archive.org/stream/illustratedhisto00brin#page/n35/mode/2up> np.

⁴⁵ *Op. Cit.*, Norton. *History*, p. 275; Centennial Celebration, 1954, Church Artifact, in the Presbyterian Church of Arcola, 1954, p. 1; Ridenour, Eva Elizabeth Monfort, *Amazing Arcola: The Little Town that Could and Did*, Armstrong, MO: The B & E Publishing Company, printed by Carol Stream, IL: Publishers' Graphics, 2005, p. 203; *Op. Cit.*, Centennial Celebration, 1954, artifact, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Battey, F. A., *County of Douglas, Illinois: Historical and Biographical: with an Outline Sketch of the Northwest Territory and of the State of Illinois*, Chicago: F. A. Battey & Co., Publishers, 1884, pp. 135-136, 272. 431-432.

⁴⁷ *Op. Cit.*, Centennial Celebration, 1954, p. 1; *Op. Cit.*, Ridenour (2005), *Amazing Arcola*, p. 203.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Battey, *County of Douglas*, p. 490.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Battey, *County of Douglas*, p. 490.

⁵⁰ *History of Coles County*, "Humboldt Township," Chicago: Wm. Le Baron & Co., 186 Dearborn Street, 1879. Pp. 469+ Retrieved June 6, 2016 from http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ilcoletp/history/history_of_humbolt_township.htm.

Elizabeth H. Welch was born on July 25, 1825 in Ohio. She married Elias “E.B.” Welch on October 9, 1842. Elias was an early settler in the Kaskaskia area. He was born on April 9, 1819 in Harrison County, Ohio and died of Bright’s disease in Arcola on March 25, 1898. He lived one mile west of present-day Arcola. During the early 1900s the Arcola Township built the one-room “Welch” school at the same location on the south-east corner of the intersection. The Welch family may have donated the land. It’s most likely that the Township named the school after this family. The school was removed around 1952. The Welch family had several children: Lawrence W.; Nira E.; Rezin Chandler Welch (1845-1916); David Barclay Welch (1848-1930); and John Calvin Welch (1851-1929). Both Elizabeth and her husband are buried in the Arcola Township Cemetery.⁵¹

William H. Randolph was born on October 30, 1819, in Mercer County, Kentucky. He moved to Parke County, Indiana in 1842 and farmed. In 1850 he moved to the Fillmore area. He bought 160 acres of land, built a log cabin, where he lived until he was able to build an improved, \$800 house in 1863. He was married to Sarah Randolph, who was also born in Mercer County, Kentucky, on February 18, 1824. They had eight children.⁵² He helped organize the Okaw Church, and served as one of the first elders.

During the years from 1854 until 1858, the congregation of the Okaw Church held meetings at various places: Flat Branch—a stream west of Humboldt that ran into the Kaskaskia—Bourbon Point, Fillmore, and Arcola. During the cold months the meetings were held in cabins or school houses; but, in the summer, many meetings were held under shade trees—“the groves, God’s first temples.”⁵³ In Arcola the followers met in vacant warehouses after the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad in 1855.⁵⁴

The Illinois Central Railroad came through the area one year after the new church was formed. It interrupted everything. New towns grew up along the tracks. Whole communities like Fillmore and Bagdad disappeared. Caleb Bales, who arrived in the area in 1849, one year after H. Russell laid out the town of Fillmore, moved his very successful trade business --Bales, Osborn & Co—to Arcola in 1860, effectively destroying the town of Fillmore.⁵⁵ Overnight farmers could market their products to large Eastern cities, but, they also experienced the strain of international competition and the effects of monopoly control over shipping rates. The population grew rapidly on the Prairie. And, by 1859, the legislature carved Douglas County out of Coles County.

By 1858, the Okaw Church disintegrated. In that year, with the approval of the Palestine Presbytery, William Randolph, C. E. Randolph, Phebe Randolph, Dorcas Rice, Mary Kingery,

⁵¹ Swede, (2012 December 29) Find a Grave, Elias B. “E.B.” Welch. Memorial # 102804446. Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=102804446> ; Romine, K, (2013, August 18) Find a Grave. Elizabeth Chandler Welch. Memorial # 115672595. Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=115672596> ; Welch, Elizabeth H. (1880) *1880 United States Federal Census*, Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from Ancestry.com .

⁵² *Op. Cit.*, Battey, *County of Douglas*, pp. 487-488.

⁵³ Perrin, W. H., A. A. Graham and D. M. Blair, and Judge William E. Adams., *History of Coles County*, Chicago: Wm. Le Baron, Jr. & Co., 1879, p. 262.

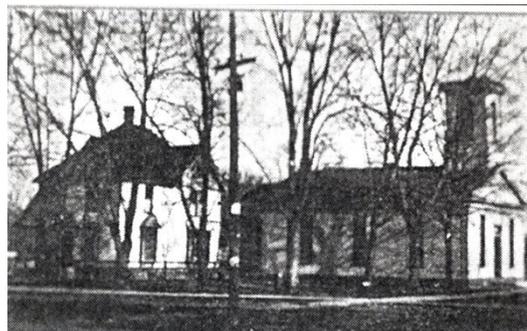
⁵⁴ *Op. Cit.* Norton, *History*, p. 275.

⁵⁵ Gresham, John, *Historical and Biographical Record of Douglas County, IL* Logansport, IN: Wilson, Humphreys and Company, 1900, p. 75; *Op. Cit.*, Niles (1884), *History...*, *Bourbon*, p. 281.

Silas Miller, Hannah Miller, Robert. McCaig, Amanda McCaig, and Susan Gruelle asked to be dismissed from the Fillmore Church to join the Tuscola Presbyterian Church.⁵⁶

By 1861, the “Okaw” members, who lived where the Flat Branch flowed into the Kaskaskia River, formed the first Presbyterian church in Humboldt under the leadership of Rev. H. I. Venable. James W. Junken and family, Thomas Danner and family, Richard Hawkins and family, James Boyd and family, G. W. Woods and wife were among the early members. By 1870 they had built a frame church which was dedicated in February 1871 with Rev. D. M. Stewart officiating.⁵⁷

On May 3, 1858, church leaders from Arcola discussed building a permanent structure.⁵⁸ On June 18, 1858, with Rev. John A Steele and Rev. Venable officiating, the congregation at Arcola received eleven members and held communion.⁵⁹ A few months later, on June 9, 1859, for the first time on official records, the people referred to the group by the name “Arcola.”⁶⁰ When they decided to build, Elder David H. Campbell donated the site. Dr. F. B. Henry gave a deed to Trustees of the “old school” Presbyterian Church for Lots 15 and 16 in Block 4, of Henry’s Addition on August 15, 1860.⁶¹ That same year the congregation installed Rev. James W. Allison as pastor. They drew up plans and started construction, finishing a church building in 1862 that cost about twelve hundred dollars.⁶² Mr. Calvin Jones and his sons hewed and hauled the heavy sills and timbers for the frame building. The Blackwell lumber-yard supplied the rest of the lumber.⁶³



The 1862 Arcola Presbyterian Church with the Manse that was built in 1895. The congregation replaced it with the stone church built in 1910. Photograph from Ridenour, Eva Elizabeth Monfort, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 204.

Rev. Allison served from 1860 until he was released during a special ceremony, when the Palestine Presbytery met at the Arcola church on December 15, 1868. The members gave the “highest testimony to his integrity, faithfulness, and usefulness.”⁶⁴

⁵⁶ Winch, Don *Arcola Presbyterian Church (USA) A History from Session Minutes from Bethel Chapel, 1885-1910*, Notebook in Library of Arcola Presbyterian Church, p. 4.

⁵⁷ *Op. Cit.*, Perrin, *History of Coles County*, p. 476.

⁵⁸ *Op. Cit.*, Centennial Celebration, 1954, p. 1

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, p. 275.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, p. 275.

⁶¹ Niles, Henry Clay, *History of Douglas County IL*, Arcola Township, Reproduced by Larry M. Burmeister, May 2004, F. A. Battey & Co., Publishers, 1884, p. 216.

⁶² Niles, Henry Clay, *History of Douglas County IL*, Arcola Township, Reproduced by Larry M. Burmeister, May 2004, F. A. Battey & Co., Publishers, 1884, p. 216; *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, p. 275 says the completion year was 1862. *Op. Cit.*, Battey, *County of Douglas*, p. 112 also says it was 1860; Centennial Celebration, 1954, Church Artifact, in the Presbyterian Church of Arcola, 1954, p. 2.

⁶³ *Op Cit.*, Centennial Celebration, p. 2.

⁶⁴ *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, pp. 298, 523, 640; See also, *History of Coles County*, “Humboldt Township,” Chicago: Wm. Le Baron & Co., 186 Dearborn Street, 1879. Pp. 469+ Retrieved June 6, 2016 from http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ilcoletp/history/history_of_humboldt_township.htm; The 1884 history of Douglas County gives the name as “Jos. Allison”; See also, *Op. Cit.*, Battey, *County of Douglas*, p. 112.

Rev. Robert M. Roberts served from 1869 to 1873 and again from 1880 to 1885. Roberts was born in Jonesboro, Washington County, Tennessee on May 22, 1823. Both of his parents were Presbyterians, his father of Welsh descent and his mother, Scotch-Irish. He earned his college credit at Washington College, East Tennessee under the presidency of Rev. Samuel A. Doak, Jr., D. D. and his theological education at Northwest Theological Seminary, which was then located at New Albany. The Palestine Presbytery licensed him at Paris, Illinois, in October, 1848. He started his work in Bedford, Indiana. Rev. Roberts and Dr. Lucas were the only preachers to serve the Arcola church twice.⁶⁵ Rev. Roberts's organized an interesting revival during the winter of 1871-72 that added more than forty persons to the membership.⁶⁶

The next pastors were W. H. Jeffries, 1874-75; John Locke Martin, 1876, student; and J. W. Cecil, 1877-79.⁶⁷

Before serving one year at Arcola, Rev. W. H. Jeffries served briefly in 1874 in the Carlinville Church, which had been organized in 1834 by Rev. Gideon Blackburn, D. D.⁶⁸

J. W. Cecil served in Arcola during the years 1874 to 1875.⁶⁹ After leaving Arcola, he was the minister of the Georgetown Church in Randolph County from October 1875 to March 1876. Starting in January of 1877, Cecil served for thirty Sabbaths in the Pleasant Ridge church in Chester, Illinois.⁷⁰ In 1878 he returned to Arcola, but had to demand that the congregation organize a subscription to pay him \$800 for his salary. On 27, October 1878, the congregation voted 18-3, to leave the pulpit empty until the church debt to Rev. Cecil was paid and to organize a reliable subscription to pay the minister for one year.⁷¹

Rev. Wilson W. Tait, who was born Sep. 7, 1855 and died on Sep. 17, 1934, came to Arcola in 1905 at age 50 with his wife, Sarah, and daughters, Minnie S. Tait (19) and Elsie Means Tait (14), and son, Henry W. Tait, (10).⁷² Both of Rev. Tait's Scottish parents moved to England where he was born. He thought he wanted to be a sailor and traveled on one sea voyage with his brother as a cabin boy. They arrived with no money in Philadelphia and begged for bread until they could get established. His brother became a prosperous Pennsylvania farmer. Tait became an apprentice watchmaker in Philadelphia earning room and board and fifty dollars a year, eventually rising to one hundred fifty dollars. He experienced a conversion and resolved to educate himself for the ministry. He managed to push himself through college, completing the course at Danville Theological Seminary, Kentucky.⁷³

⁶⁵ *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, p. 439. *Ob. Cit.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 205, see also note 1017, *The Arcola Record-Herald*, October 14, 1954.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, p. 275.

⁶⁷ *Op. Cit.*, Centennial Celebration, p. 5.

⁶⁸ *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, p. 207.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Centennial Celebration p. 5; *Op. Cit.*, Norton, *History*, pp. 207, 275.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Norton, *History*, pp. 411-412., 518.

⁷¹ Winch, *Don Arcola Presbyterian Church (USA) A History from Session Minutes from Bethel Chapel, 1885-1910*, Notebook in Library of Arcola Presbyterian Church, p. 5.

⁷² (2016), Wilson W. Tait in Ancestry.com, retrieved on June 10, 2016 from http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=xkz58&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&gss=angs-g&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=Wilson%20W.&gsfn_x=0&gsln=Tait&gsln_x=0&MSAV=1&_83004003-n_xcl=f&cp=0&catbucket=rt&uidh=2k1&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=15587676&db=1910USCenIndex&indiv=1&ml_rpos=2

⁷³ *Op. Cit.*, Ridenour, p. 204.

His first work was among the mountaineer people in the Ebenezer Presbyterian Church on Cabin Creek in Lewis County, Kentucky, where Rev. Richard McNemar brought the unsettling influences of the Second Great Awakening in 1801. McNemar soon dissolved his connection with the church and joined the Shaker religion, becoming well-known for his writing and music composition.⁷⁴ Rev. Tait did not arrive in the church until around 1884. In that year he published a sermon that is also a history of the church. An original copy of that sermon can be located in the Kentucky Gateway Museum Center in Maysville, Kentucky.⁷⁵

He came to Arcola in 1905 and served both the Bethel and the Arcola churches; but, stayed only seventeen months. He left just as the congregations of Bethel with the Arcola were discussing consolidation and a plan to replace the 1862 church building in Arcola. In May 1905 the congregation gave Rev. Tait and Sarah a surprise, twenty-five-year-anniversary party that included gifts of silver from the Bethel Chapel and money from the Arcola Church.⁷⁶ R. A. Clisby gave a speech for the congregation. During the 1905 Memorial Day Celebration that honored three living Arcola Civil War Veterans—Seth Lewis Woodworth, J. H. Louthan, and W. M. Pfeifer—forty members of the I. O. O. F marched “in a body” to the Presbyterian church where Rev. Tait gave an “able” address.⁷⁷

Later in 1905, more than fifty delegates from the Mattoon Presbytery attended a three-day meeting at the Arcola church. When he left in 1906, Rev. Tait went to Obedbolt, Iowa.⁷⁸ He later served in Minden, Nebraska, and retired to live with his daughter in Lincoln, Nebraska where he died in 1934 at the age of 79, outliving his wife by three months. They are buried in Wyuka Cemetery in Lincoln.⁷⁹

Bethel Chapel

In December 1883, when Rev. Robert M. Roberts had returned to Arcola for his second term, some of the early Okaw-Fillmore families who still lived near the Kaskaskia River wanted to form a church closer to their homes. William T. Moore and his wife, Margaret *Louthan* Moore gave land to locate the new church on a knoll on the Springfield road just west of the old “Hermitage Inn”—an inn once owned by Margaret’s parents. Fifteen people by letter and one by confession made up the charter membership list. Four of them were daughters-in-law of one of the original founders of the Okaw church at Fillmore. The congregation elected Mr. Claus Stolley and J. F. Bough as the first elders. Rev. Roberts served as pastor for both churches. The new members solicited subscriptions for the building starting on June 25, 1883. By July 7, they had determined the structure of the building and engaged Allen Todd and J. F. Bouch to build it. On September 25, 1883, just ninety days from the first subscription, they completed the building. The congregation dedicated the building on October 7, 1883 without owing any money. Rev. Roberts assisted by Rev. Mitchell conducted the services and named the church “Bethel Chapel”.

⁷⁴ Grant, Jerry V. (1989). *Shaker Furniture Makers. Hancock Shaker Village..* Brother Richard's account of the Kentucky Revival (1807) was the first bound book published by the Shakers, p. 70.

⁷⁵ Tait, Rev. Wilson W. *Historical Sermon: In which is presented a brief sketch of the history of the Ebenezer Presbyterian Church, on Cabin Creek in Lewis County, Ky.* Delivered in Ebenezer Church. Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9jyWdFz3fdvWDITSmRJbTRZRFk/edit?usp=sharing>

⁷⁶ *Op. Cit.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 204; *The Weekly Arcolian*, May 27, 1905.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Ridenour, p. 175.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Ridenour, p. 204. *The Weekly Arcolian*, May 5, 1906,

⁷⁹ Lloyd, Tony & Cindy (2011, August 9) Rev. Wilson W. Tait, Memorial # 74665359. Retrieved on June 10, 2016 from <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Tait&GSiman=1&GScid=101647&GRid=74665359&>

The cost was \$2,000.00. On March 30, 1894 they started the first Sabbath school.⁸⁰ Jacob Rice Moore gave considerable support to build the church. He was the son of an early settler, was born on September 18, 1836, died June 2, 1899, and married Mary Bacon, of Bourbon on December 31, 1862. He was one of the directors of the First National Bank of Arcola.⁸¹

The session minutes for the Bethel Chapel from April 1888 showed that there were five officers, six Sunday School teachers and fifty nine students—a total of 70 attending. The average attendance at church was fifty, twenty-two received full communion. The church baptized four students. The membership from December 1, 1883 to April 1, 1905 totaled eighty-two. The 1904 minutes revealed difficult times, expressing concern about the number of deaths and removals. The Rev. W. W. Tait and elder Leroy Wilkins called for a Bethel Chapel congregational meeting for April 16, 1906, announcing the start of a new epoch—meaning that the church would close and consolidate with the Arcola members. The salary of the pastor for that year was \$250.00 and he was expected to “hold preaching services on Sabbath afternoons during good roads.”⁸²

Manse

In October 1895 the session instructed the trustees to raise not less than \$1,200.00 to build a parsonage on the church lot. They also asked for subscriptions from the Bethel Chapel members, who shared the pastor, and said that the Bethel Chapel should “forever hold an interest in the parsonage.” By November of 1895, they changed the quarterly subscription system to a weekly, envelope system.⁸³ The manse lasted until 1962, when it was replaced by the new manse. In 1988 the session expanded the manse and filled in the cistern. In 1995, the congregation added new siding and guttering, and paved a portion of the north parking lot. They also replaced the heating and cooling system. In 2001 they replaced the roofs on the manse and the shed.⁸⁴ In 2016, the session discussed selling the manse; but, rented it instead.

New Arcola Presbyterian Church, 1910

By 1906, the Presbyterians considered a new building. By 1908, they committed to a building of “pure Gothic design,” estimated to cost \$18,000.⁸⁵ The members pledged \$10,000 at the first meeting, virtually assuring its construction.⁸⁶ Samuel B. Blackwell donated the northern part of the church property.⁸⁷

Rev. Edgar Charles Lucas

The twenty-eight-year-old pastor, whom the congregation selected to build the church, also built his family at the same time. Encouraged and supported by Mel Crews, a prominent farmer and

⁸⁰ *Op. Cit.* Centennial Celebration, pp. 2-3. *Op. Cit.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 204.

⁸¹ *Op. Cit.*, Batty, *County of Douglas*, pp. 229-230.

⁸² Winch, Don *Arcola Presbyterian Church (USA) A History from Session Minutes from Bethel Chapel, 1885-1910*, Notebook in Library of Arcola Presbyterian Church, “1888 report” and “1904 minutes”. p. 2.

⁸³ Winch, Don *Arcola Presbyterian Church (USA) A History from Session Minutes from Bethel Chapel, 1885-1910*, Notebook in Library of Arcola Presbyterian Church, p.7.

⁸⁴ *Op. Cit.*, Winch, *Session Minutes*, pp. 7, 25, 28, 31, 32, 49, 52, 56.

⁸⁵ *Op. Cit.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, pp. 204-205; *The Weekly Arcolian*, May 5, 1906;

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 204; *The Weekly Arcolian*, December 10, 1908;

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 204. *The Weekly Arcolian*, November 4, 1909.

member of the Arcola congregation,⁸⁸ Rev. Edgar Charles Lucas (1878-May 1969) came to the pastorate in 1906. He was born in Wales and immigrated to the United States in 1901. When he arrived in Arcola, he was not married. Soon, however, in 1907, he married Hulda Amalia Vitz Lucas (1888-1949), and by 1909, their son Robert Chana Lucas was born.⁸⁹ Rev. Lucas plunged into the swirl of activity related to conducting church services while dealing with the nuances of building a new church.

Before demolishing the old church, the members held one final service called “the Harvest Home Service” in early November 1909. Mr. H. U. Potter prepared the program of music and literary items and included children in the program. The building was decorated with “fruits, grain and corn stalks, arranged in a graceful manner.”⁹⁰

The Session selected a Cleveland, Ohio architectural firm to design and build the church. By the year 1906, Sidney Rose Badgley (1850-1917) had become a well-known architect from Cleveland, Ohio with years of experience building churches for the Methodists, Methodist Episcopal and Presbyterians. He and his partner, William H. Nicklas (1866-1960), created the firm of Badgley and Nicklas, which built many churches in the Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois area. They steered away from the “pure Gothic” style requested by the Arcola church leaders, and, instead, promoted the Richardsonian-Romanesque style popularized by Henry Hobson Richardson in 1877 in the Trinity church, in Boston, Massachusetts. It features a slate roof, heavy, rough stone exterior—often made from Bedford stone from the Indiana town of the same name—heavy arches, and a massive tower. He also used the “Akron Plan” to arrange the rooms. The Arcola church was a simpler form of that arrangement that included a rectangular sanctuary separated from Sunday School rooms by a sliding door that could open to enlarge the assembly space. It also has a second story balcony that most Akron plans included.⁹¹ Badgley and Nicklas created many churches in the Midwest that are strikingly similar to the Arcola church.⁹²



Arcola Presbyterian Church, 2016. The building was constructed in 1910.

⁸⁸ “Mel F. Crews, 84, Dies; Rites are Held on Monday,” *Arcola Record Herald*, Vol. 82, No. 3, October 16, 1947, pp. 1, 6., Lucas preached a glowing eulogy at Crews’s funeral. See the reference to Lucas being an “intimate friend” of Mel Crews.

⁸⁹ Francis, Lucille (2012, February 3), *Find-A-Grave*, Rev. Edgar Charles Lucas Memorial # 84441056, Retrieved June 9, 2016 from <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=84441056&ref=acom> .

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 204;

⁹¹ Akron Plan, in *Wikipedia*, Retrieved on June 6, 2016 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akron_Plan ; see also, Cleveland State University, “The Gamut: Cleveland Sacred Landmarks, Special Edition, 1990” (1990). The Gamut Archives. Book 38. http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/gamut_archives/38.

⁹² Keiser, Robert, (2014) *Cleveland Architects Database, Cleveland Landmarks Commission*, Retrieved June 9, 2016 from http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/landmark/arch/pdf/CLC_Architects2015.pdf. Note the extensive list.

Badgley selected the leading firm of Flanagan and Biedenweg & Co. from Chicago to produce the remarkable stain-glass windows that distinguish the Arcola Presbyterian church from most others. Joseph E. Flanagan (1858-1928) started working in a commercial glass shop in Louisville, Kentucky when he was twelve. He joined William C. Biedenweg, a skilled German glassworker, and founded Flanagan & Biedenweg & Co., in 1878.⁹³ Soon they created the largest stained-glass firm in Chicago at a time when that art form was its peak.⁹⁴ Flanagan and Biedenweg offered both European and American style of glasswork; but, they favored the American style, which was characterized by the use of opalescent glass, conventionalized landscapes, and pastel colors, with painting restricted to faces, hands, and a few details.⁹⁵

They liked “themes,” the story-telling scenes with figure groupings and facial expressions borrowed from famous works of religious art. In the Arcola church they created three scenes: The south wall shows the women at the tomb. The west window tells the story two followers who were unaware that they were walking with Christ on the road to Emmaus. The small window in the north depicts Christ praying at the Garden of Gethsemane.⁹⁶ To produce realistic figures they painted the faces, hands, and other fine details, but used thick, ripple-textured drapery glass—called “Tiffany glass,” produced in Kokomo, Indiana—to simulate folds in gracefully flowing garments. Clouds, Sky, stones, trees, shrubbery and architectural detail were created by the use of expanses of appropriately colored opalescent glass.

Although they often produced an American-style of window, the general glass art form was known as “Munich School Windows,” which was characterized by highly realistic figures, painted in the German Baroque style, utilizing the traditional *trace and matte* technique of glass painting. The scenes were extended from one lancet to another. While actual imported German windows rarely used enamel-based glass, Flanagan and Biedenweg preferred it. Usually, as is the case with the Arcola windows, but not in all of their windows, the Munich School artists framed their scenes with elaborate white and gold columns and canopies.⁹⁷



During construction, at the end of August, 1909, the church members held a ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone. Rev. Henry A. Thompson of Tuscola gave the address.⁹⁸

When the builders finished construction in 1910, the final cost was \$21,076.68. The congregation of ninety-four members raised all of the money. When they dedicated the church

⁹³ Darling, Sharon S. *Chicago Ceramics & Glass*. Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois, 1979, p. 110.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Darling, *Chicago*, p. 128.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Darling, *Chicago*, p. 143.

⁹⁶ *Op. Cit.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 206; *Mattoon Journal-Gazette*, November 11, 1994.

⁹⁷ (2013 April 2) Munich School Windows, Retrieved on June 6, 2016 from <http://www.cecblf.org/munich.html>

⁹⁸ *Op. Cit.*, Centennial, p. 3.

on June 19, 1910, it was debt free.⁹⁹ In spite of “torrid weather,” the dedication drew capacity crowds to both morning and evening services. Mrs. R. F. Beazley prepared special music. Rev. B. L. Hobson, D. D., delivered the message. In the morning the leaders announced that Bethel and Arcola were consolidated and no money was solicited at the Sunday services.¹⁰⁰

After leaving Arcola in 1911, Rev. Lucas went to New Albany, Indiana, the home of McCormick Seminary. He became pastor of The First Church of New Albany and continued his studies, graduating in 1916.¹⁰¹ He took a new post at Beatrice, Nebraska where, at Nebraska Hastings College, he earned his Doctor of Divinity degree.¹⁰² In 1930, he was the minister for the First Presbyterian Church of Louisville, Kentucky.¹⁰³

Bethel and Arcola Consolidate

At the end of May in 1910, the Arcola church petitioned the Mattoon Presbytery to consolidate with the Bethel Chapel. The new name would be the “Arcola Presbyterian Church.” The officers of each church would hold similar offices in the new church. The real estate would be vested in the consolidated board of trustees. On June 18, 1910—one day before the new church building was dedicated in Arcola—the Presbytery of Mattoon approved the petition to consolidate the congregations. It established a new church, allowing all officers of the old organizations to retain their titles.¹⁰⁴

The new church included George Logan, Modesta Scott, Florence Packard, Mary Munson and fourteen others who were received into full membership. On June 9, 1918, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Coombe transferred into the church by a letter from the Mt. Zion Church in Mt. Zion, Illinois. On April 1, 1920, Louise Munson and Samuel M. Black, who was baptized, were received into membership. On June 4, 1922, Gertrude Dimond was voted into membership based on a letter from Kewanee, Illinois First Baptist Church. On November 2, 1924, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Forest Smith presented their infant daughter, Phyllis Gertrude Smith, for baptism. Rice J. Moore, Clerk of the Session, signed the papers. Robert C. Coombe was baptized and added to the membership on March 30, 1930. In 1934, the church confirmed Phyllis Smith as a member. In 1937, the Session identified other early church members when it appointed Mrs. W. R. Dimond, Mrs. Catherine Gray, Mrs. Fred Wesch, Charles Ray, Fred F. Munson, Ed Alison, and Ralph R. Shores on a committee to decorate the church. In March 1946, they also added Oscar Wahl, Marie Wahl, Phillip Wesch, and Robert Coombe to the roll of communicant members because of the certainty of their membership.¹⁰⁵ On April 6, 1952, Robert Arrol, Jr. and John Douglas Mulligan were received into membership by Baptism. Arthur Beazley and Roger Logan joined by confession of faith. Next year, on May 24, 1953, Georgia Herrington and Lianne Allen joined the membership by confession of faith.¹⁰⁶ Sam Blackwell, Jr., Ken Beazley, and Bob Foster joined in 1957.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ *Op. Cit.* Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 204.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 205; *The Weekly Arcolian*, June 23, 1910.

¹⁰¹ *New York Observer*, Volume 91, January 18, 1912, New York, p. 91; *The Continent*, Vol. 47. March 2, 1916, Chicago: The McCormick Publishing Company, p. 286.

¹⁰² *Herald and Presbyter*, Vol. 91, No. 26, June 30, 1920, Cincinnati, OH, p. 13.

¹⁰³ *The Courier-Journal*, Louisville, Ky., 3 May 1930, Sat, p. 20

¹⁰⁴ *Op. Cit.*, Winch, *Session Minutes*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ *Op. Cit.* Winch, *Minutes*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Winch, *Session Minutes*, pp. 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17-20, 22.

¹⁰⁷ Blackwell, Sam, Jr. Email to William Harsharger, July 22, 2016.

The Presbyterian women contributed to the church through their organizations. In the early years they worked through the Ladies' Auxiliary and the Bethel Foreign Missionary Society. In later years, they served through the Westminster Society and the Missionary Society, which were later combined. The World Service Guild was another active group.¹⁰⁸

In 1911 the women organized a successful "Dutch Market" that provided entertainment, a lunch, and a dinner. It earned \$187. The women served a large group at both lunch and dinner. The demands of the evening crowd threatened to exhaust the supplies. The women, of course, asserted that the disappearance of their food simply proved that the crowd liked their cooking. Congressman William B. McKinley of Champaign, Illinois, a guest of Mel F. Crews, gave a short speech about his recent visit to Rome.¹⁰⁹

As the members settled into the unification of two churches and enjoyed the splendid elegance of the castle-like, Romanesque church, they decided to add a pipe organ. They contacted the firm of Gratian Organ Company of Alton, Illinois, known for its excellence. Joseph Gratian, the founder of the firm, who had created several organ innovations and had built many organs for the

Alton-St. Louis area, had been struck by flying debris in a 1896 tornado and suffered a stroke. He died in 1897. His son, John William Gratian (1861-1933) took over the business and created the 1916 Arcola Pipe Organ. John passed the business on to his son, Warren Burke Gratian (21 June 1891-June 1980), who moved it Bunker Hill, Illinois in 1838, then to Decatur, Illinois. After Warren's death in 1980, the estate sold the assets to Schneider Workshop and Services.¹¹⁰ The beautiful, 1916 pipe organ in Arcola had 748



L-R Front Row: Trombone—Ivan Wainescot; Trumpet—J. R. Peak; Trumpet—Lucien Rugh; Organist—Cora Heeb; Violin—Mrs. W. G. Rowe; violin—(sitting) Helen Clark; Violin—Dorothy Peak; Violin—Rice J. Moore; Violin—Clifford Gray; Back Row: Saxophone—Kenneth Johnson; French Horn—Gus Sitz; Cello—Prof. L. C. Francisco; J. W. Spelman; Rev. E. J. Sabin.
Church members who joined later: Phyllis Smith, Violin; Paul Kutz, Clarinet; Raymond McDowell, trumpet; Harriet Shores, Trumpet; Raymond Holterman, Trombone; Lois McDowel, Trombone; Eleanor Beazley, Pianist; Conductor, Gene E. Dilliner.
Presbyterian Orchestra, (1926, October 28) Artifact from the Arcola Presbyterian Church library. Retrieved on June 29, 2016.

pipes in its construction that varied from one-half inch to seven or eight-inches in diameter. The Gratian Company carefully coordinated the woodwork, finish and design to the pews and pulpit

¹⁰⁸ *Op. Cit.*, Centennial, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁹ *Op. Cit.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 205; *The Weekly Arcolian*, November 23, 1911.

¹¹⁰ Bush, Douglas E., and Kassel, Richard, *Organ: An Encyclopedia*, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 200, p. 230.

furniture, producing a result that enhanced the company's reputation and the prestige of the Westminster Society of the Presbyterian Church through whose efforts it was purchased.¹¹¹

The church could have been destroyed in 1923 when a short-circuited electric wire shot a 2,300-volt current into the switchboard and started a fire. Rev. and Mrs. Hinkle had returned from a reception and Mrs. Hinkle noticed the scent of electrical insulation burning. They investigated and found the location of the fire. It was extinguished quickly causing no more than \$1,500 of damage. The church had recently been redecorated at the cost of \$975. There was concern that the pipe organ might have been damaged by the heat. However, everyone was happy that the fire was discovered during the day when the church could be saved.¹¹²

In 1914 the session placed Cora Heeb, 45, in charge of music, a position she held for eleven years. Mrs. Mel Crews led the choir during that time. Clifford Gray played violin for the church orchestra. His son and business partner in Gray's construction business, Allan Gray, participated in the choir during the early years. The Session appointed him Choir director in 1933. He directed briefly, but continued his affiliation with the choir almost until his death on December 16, 2009. He also served as elder, deacon, and trustee.

Cora was born in Arcola on September 14, 1869, the daughter of a prominent Arcola businessman, Seth Lewis Woodworth, who started an ice plant and an electric business in 1891. He owned the telephone company and the Woodworth building that was destroyed by the 1937 fire, which took the old Arcola State Bank Building, the offices of the Thomas Monahan Company, and the telephone exchange. He also started the first Building and Loan and was president.¹¹³ Mr. Woodworth also served in the 79th Illinois during the Civil War. Cora graduated from Arcola High School before she met and married Clement V. Heeb, in 1893. Initially, she lived with him in Nashville, Tennessee in a boarding house. Later they transferred to Birmingham, Alabama where he worked as an adjuster and a collector. The couple divorced after nineteen years. About the same time, when her father died on May 18, 1911, Cora returned to Arcola and lived with her mother and brother. Cora died on February 8, 1941.¹¹⁴

In 1918 the Arcola churches participated in the spontaneous celebration that erupted from the notice that World War I had ended. The war officially ended at 11 a. m. on the 11th day of the 11th month—Monday, November 11, 1918. Although the peace telegram arrived in Arcola at 3 a. m. to O. E. Connor, the telegraph operator, he immediately relayed it to Fire Chief Goggin, who ignored the hour and set off the City's fire alarm at five minutes after three o'clock. Very quickly, the church bells rang out, causing sleepy residents to come from all directions. Soon the happy crowd filled the streets. They marched and sang and shouted until they nearly lost their voices. Business was suspended during a remarkable day that burst with bright sunshine and cool, crisp weather, causing the biggest impromptu demonstration ever held in Arcola.

They built a bonfire at the intersection of Locust and Main Street. "Dignified business and professional men cavorted like kids, whooping and singing." Alderman W. H. Smith, Col. J. R. Beggs, Postmaster McCann, Dr. G. H. Moser, John S. Quirk, J. R. Smith, Ray Beazley, Ben F.

¹¹¹ *Op. Cit.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 205; *The Arcola Record-Herald*, January 6, 1916,

¹¹² *Ibid.* Ridenour.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, pp. 50, 109. *Op. Cit.*, Winch, *Minutes*, pp. 9, 14.

¹¹⁴ "Illinois Deaths and Stillbirths, 1916–1947." Index. FamilySearch, Salt Lake City; Ancestry.com. Illinois, Deaths and Stillbirths Index, 1916-1947.

Cox, and others threw their perfectly good hats into the flames. Col. Samuel B. Blackwell's light artillery, located in his front yard, started a heavy cannonading and people brought out flags and noise-making implements, including kettles and pans of every description.

The Presbyterian congregation hosted a peace service in the morning. Rev. L. E. Ellison, Baptist Church pastor, presided. Rev. C. M. Robertson of the Methodist-Episcopal Church did the opening prayer. Rev. Fr. Costello, of St. John's Catholic Church, delivered a plea to support the War Activities drive. Rev. F. B. Welton, pastor of the Christian Church, gave a spiritual reading. C. F. Kniker, pastor of St. Paul's Evangelical church, made a patriotic address. Other speakers included Mrs. Harriet Dorman, Mrs. Cora May Heeb, Dr. Moser, J. D. Bailey, Rev. Edgar, G. S. Tarbox, and others.

Rev. L. E. Ellison, marshal of the day, and Art Moore, of the United States Army, organized an afternoon parade of horsemen, followed by a parade of automobiles, along with a cow ridden by Jake Forner.¹¹⁵

During the 1920s, the membership of the church fluctuated between 105 and 132 members.¹¹⁶

The Great Depression began in 1929. It didn't change the membership rolls that remained around 128; but, it affected the finances. On January 3, 1926, the session elected Rev. Edward James Sabin to serve the church. Rev. Sabin was born August 1, 1875 in Troy, Illinois in Madison County. His father, Frank A. Sabin had been born in Maryland; his mother, Hannah, in Tennessee. When he was hired, Rev. Sabin was fifty-one years old. His younger wife, Jessie Gordon Sabin, was 37. They had a six-year-old daughter, Elizabeth A. Sabin.¹¹⁷ After his arrival, the leaders increased the size of the Board of Deacons and Trustees from three to six. Also Mr. W. N. Rugh resigned as Assistant Superintendent of Sunday School and asked to have his name removed from the records. The group accepted his resignation, but left his name. In February of 1927, the congregation decided to suspend their evening service, but announced that those still wanting to such an experience could walk one block to the Baptist Church at the same hour.

In August 1930, the congregation voted to borrow money to pay salaries. A year later, at a congregational meeting, Clarence Coombe, acting as moderator, made the following recommendation: For three months the janitor's salary would be \$10.00 per month. The minister would be suspended after a 90-day notice or by November 1, 1931. Mr. Coombe reported that the expenses of \$2,225.00 exceeded the \$1,150.00 of revenue. He also asked for any assistance in helping Rev. Sabin make future plans, and expressed regret that the congregation could not continue paying him.

On April 6, 1932, the church dissolved the relationship with Rev. Sabin for financial reasons. At age 57, with a twelve-year-old child at home, Rev. Sabin was unemployed at a time when few people were hiring. The church accepted his offer to hold services in church when he was in

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, pp. 138-139; *The Arcolian*, November 14, 1918.

¹¹⁶ *Op. Cit.*, Winch, *Minutes*, pp. 11-16.

¹¹⁷ 1930; Census Place: Arcola, Douglas, Illinois; Roll: 510; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 0001; Image: 718.0; FHL microfilm: 2340245.

Arcola and until he was permanently relocated. Three years later, by 1935, he was working in Prairie City, Illinois, where he died on December 27, 1949. He is buried there with his wife.¹¹⁸

On October 27, 1933, the session discussed sharing the Rev. Oliver Clayton Starn with Oakland and Ashmore. On November 7, 1933, the session met in the home of Mel Crews, across the street from the church, with Clerk Rice J. Moore acting as moderator. They engaged forty-one-year-old Oliver Clayton Starn. He served the church 1/3 of the time from November 26, 1933 to August 4, 1935.¹¹⁹ Rev. Starn had graduated from Yale in 1932. The Mattoon Presbytery received him from Stubenville, Ohio from the Church of the Brethren. Rev. Starn was married to Mary Edith Wood Starn, 41. Their son, O. C. Starn, Jr. was 11 at the time.¹²⁰ After leaving Arcola, Rev. Starn eventually became the pastor of the Valparaiso, Indiana Presbyterian Church, where he stayed for the rest of his career. During World War II, on October 25, 1944, a Japanese kamikaze pilot killed his son, Oliver Clayton Starn, Jr. aboard the *USS Suwannee* during the Battle of Leyte in the Philippines. His son was buried at sea and authorities placed his monument tablet in the Manila American Cemetery. Rev. Starn and his wife retired to Smithville in Wayne County, Ohio, where they are buried. Rev. Starn died on October 24, 1971; Mary, his, wife, died seventeen years later in 1988.¹²¹

On August 4, 1935 the congregation decided to join with the Tuscola Presbyterian church and share the same, young, twenty-nine-year-old minister, Rev. Glen Garber.¹²² Rev. Garber was born at Paris, Illinois in 1906. He married Lois M. Garber in 1929, at the beginning of the Great Depression. In 1930 they lived in Fannie M. Fries's boarding house in Dayton, Ohio along with Andrew J. Rupp and Milo Bixler. At the time, while going to school, Glen worked as a machinist in the auto industry.¹²³ They had a son, Robert Garber, born in 1935. They continued serving the Arcola church until September 24, 1937. By 1940 the family had moved to Libertyville, Illinois in Lake County. In 1983, at age 77, Glen died in Elyria, Ohio. His wife, Lois, lived to be 95 dying in 2001 in Rocky River, Ohio where she is buried beside her son, Robert.

The congregation decorated the church and planned a week of special services to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the church in 1937. The session appointed Mrs. W. R. Dimond, Mrs. Catherine Gray, Mrs. Fred Wesch, Charles Ray, Fred F. Munson, Ed Alison, and Ralph R. Shores to sort out the details of decorating.¹²⁴

In January 1938, Rev. E. Leroy Steffey of Mt. Carmel became the pastor for the Tuscola and Arcola churches—before the two churches separated in March 1939. In April 1939, Mel Crews and Clarence Coombe met with Eugene Dillner to discuss the resources needed for a Sunday

¹¹⁸ Jones, H. (2007, April 14) Rev. Edward James Sabin, Find A Grave, Memorial # 18926785, Retrieved June 11, 2016 from <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=18926785> ; 1940; Census Place: Prairie City, McDonough, Illinois; Roll: T627_839; Page: 5B; Enumeration District: 55-29.

¹¹⁹ *Op. Cit.* Winch, *Minutes*, p. 17.

¹²⁰ "Pana Man Named Presbytery Head in Mattoon Meet," *The Decatur Herald*, 22 Apr 1932, Fri, p. 4;

¹²¹ Names in Stone (2013, April 11) Rev. Oliver Clayton Starn, Find a Grave, Memorial #108340096. Retrieved June 12, 2016 from <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=108340096&PIpi=78124313>

¹²² *Op. Cit.*, Winch, *Minutes*, p. 18.

¹²³ 1930; Census Place: Dayton, Montgomery, Ohio; Roll: 1852; Page: 21B; Enumeration District: 0032; Image: 442.0; FHL microfilm: 2341586; Ancestry.com, "Glen M. Garber, 1930 US Federal Census. Retrieved on June 13, 2016 from Ancestry.com.

¹²⁴ *Op. Cit.*, Winch, *Minutes*, p. 18.

School orchestra and music for the church choir. Rev. Steffey left on April 12, 1940. Miles Leach followed him as pastor on May 12, 1940. He also stayed only two years, submitting his resignation on March 15, 1942. During the rest of the year and into 1943, Mel Crews and other members of the congregation worked to get another pastor. On August 10, 1943, Rev. Ellsworth Young became the “supply minister” for one year at the rate of \$1,400 per year plus \$100 for moving expenses.¹²⁵ Rev. Young was approved to be ordained. The Presbytery installed him as Pastor of the Arcola Presbyterian Church in May of 1944; but, they did not change his salary. When Rev. Young told the session that he had received a call from the Tolono Presbyterian Church, they agreed to raise his salary to \$2,000 per year, beginning on April 1, 1946.

In June of 1947, the congregation held a special meeting, seeking to call sixty-nine-year-old Rev. Edgar C. Lucas from Chiswick, PA. They offered to pay him \$2,400. Florence Smith led the music for several years prior to 1946 and had played the pump organ before it was removed. Mrs. Mel Crews also played for many years, and handed the job of Choir Director Mrs. P. M. Mace on February 24, 1946. Marilyn Wahl was the Church Organist, until Mrs. Max King took the job in January of 1951. Mrs. Kinney and Marilyn Wahl, also took turns as assistant organists.¹²⁶ Sometime during 1951, the session passed the organist job to Mrs. Ned Van Vohres. By 1951, the Men’s Roundtable, which had started around 1945, had grown to twenty members.¹²⁷

Rev. Edgar C. Lucas encountered unhappy circumstances during his second term in Arcola. His personal friend and benefactor, Mel Crews, died on October 10, 1947. Rev. Lucas preached at the well-attended funeral and expressed high tribute to a “great man” who understood business and was “strong, resourceful, and successful.”¹²⁸ Rev. Lucas also suffered the loss of his wife, Hulda Amalia Vitz Lucas, who died in Arcola in 1949 at age sixty-one.¹²⁹ Rev. Lucas worked with the congregation to organize the one-hundred-year, anniversary celebration in 1954. Afterward, Lucas retired to Louisville, Kentucky, and died there, ninety-one years old, on May 10, 1969. He is buried beside his wife in the Cave Hill Cemetery.¹³⁰

The church called Rev. Ronald T. Allin to complete the Celebration. Rev. Allin, 21, and his wife, Barbara, were relatively new to the ministry, starting in 1950.¹³¹ The popular, engaging Rev. Ronald T. Allin, had “depth and perception” and was viewed as an “intellectual.”¹³² During his time, the old organ was removed. In 1955, the organ committee of Hester Coombe, Nell Logan, Ray Beazley, Lanore Munson, Merie Mohr, Jane Allen, Florence Smith, and Mrs. Fishel recommended replacing it with the current Baldwin Organ. Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Coombe and others donated the funds. In December 1954, Rev. Allin recruited Shirley *McCann*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Winch, *Minutes*, pp. 19-20.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* Winch, *Minutes*, p. 21.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Winch, *Minutes*, p. 21.

¹²⁸ “Mel F. Crews, 84, Dies; Rites are Held on Monday,” *Arcola Record Herald*, Vol. 82, No. 3, October 16, 1947, pp. 1, 6.

¹²⁹ Francis, Lucille (2012, February 4) Find a Grave. Hulda Amalia Vitz Lucas, memorial # 84441445. Retrieved June 12, 2016 from <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

¹³⁰ Baker, Pat Harmatuk (2012, February 3) Find a Grave, Rev. Edgar Charles Lucas, Cave Hill Cemetery, Louisville, Kentucky, Memorial # 84441056, Retrieved on June 11, 2016 from <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi> ; Francis, Lucille, ((2012, February 3) Find a Grave. Hulda A. Vitz wife of Edgar C. Lucas, Memorial #84441445. Retrieved on June 10, 2016 from. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

¹³¹ Allin, Ronald T (2011, September 11) “Pastor Ronald T. Allin, Decatur.” Retrieved on June 14, 2016 from http://herald-review.com/pastor-ronald-t-allin-decatur/article_42b6070c-db09-11e0-b1ba-001cc4c03286.html

¹³² *The Decatur Herald*, (27 April 1980), p. 27.

Sanders, a high-school student, to play the organ and piano. She continued until 1968, alternating with Sally Kibler and Hester Coombe. Rev. Allin also moderated the services related the one-hundred-year celebration in 1954. During Rev. Allin's leadership, the Session promoted a "White Christmas" experience involving the young people and the entire church. They gathered gifts, travelled as a group, shared a picnic lunch, and gave presents to the residents of Kemmerer Village, a Presbyterian Child Care Agency in Assumption, IL.¹³³ In September of 1957, Rev. Allin passed the pastors' baton to Rev. Russell Caylor, of Wilmington, Ohio. After leaving Arcola, Rev. Allin served in Detroit, Whitehall, PA, Columbus, OH, Lansing, MI, and Decatur, IL. In 2002 he was living in Wallingford, PA. After the 9/11 disaster struck New York City in 2001, Rev. Allin and his wife, Carolyn, went to the damaged site, and helped console people in that community for several months.¹³⁴

The Session received fifty-year-old Rev. Lewis Russell Caylor's two sons, Robert, 21, and Eugene, 28, from Wilmington, Ohio on February 5, 1958. Rev. Caylor was accompanied by his second wife, Clenna Marie *Kneidel* Caylor, 41, who was from Newcastle, Indiana.¹³⁵ The congregation began discussing the manse during this time. On June 9, 1960, Modesta Scott donated a kitchenette, upstairs in the small room north of the fellowship hall, in memory of her mother and aunt.¹³⁶ Shortly after Rev. Caylor left Arcola on August 1, 1961, the congregation decided to replace the old manse. They finished it in 1962.¹³⁷ While stationed in Marshall, Illinois, in 1966, Rev. Caylor died at age 57 in the Veteran's Hospital at Indianapolis, Indiana. He rests in the South Mound Cemetery in Newcastle, Indiana.¹³⁸

The Rev. Gary Hickok, a twenty-six-year-old minister, and his wife, Marijo, high school sweethearts from South St. Paul, Minnesota, were the first to live in the new manse, starting on February 13, 1963. A year later, in the midst of the 1960's Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr., the Session denied Rev. Hickok permission to go to Hattisburg, Mississippi to participate in voter registration demonstrations. Rev. Hickok next asked to involve the church in a relationship with Rev. John Cameron, an African-American minister from Hattisburg. The Session voted not to be involved in any capacity. In June 1964, however, after rebuffing him twice, the Session granted Rev. Hickok a vacation from August 16 to August 30. After his return, he distributed a booklet, *The Crisis in Race Relations*, to the elders for comments to be recorded and sent to the General Assembly. In October of 1964, Rev. Hickok sent a letter to the members, proposing a new form of congregational life and responsibility for the church. The Session did not change church policy. The Session altered the budget proposal in November to remove a \$1,000 "General Mission" item and allow members to subscribe voluntarily with a limit decided by the budget committee. In August of 1965, when the church membership still held steady at 131, Rev. Hickok announced that he was called to Niles, Michigan First Presbyterian Church.¹³⁹ Although at times he left the pulpit and even though he was employed as a manager for Carson-Prairie-Scott and became a mortgage banker, he kept his relationship

¹³³ Blackwell, Samuel B., Jr. Email to William Harshbarger, July 22, 2016.

¹³⁴ Allin, Ronald T (2011, September 11) "Pastor Ronald T. Allin, Decatur." Retrieved on June 14, 2016 from http://herald-review.com/pastor-ronald-t-allin-decatur/article_42b6070c-db09-11e0-b1ba-001cc4c03286.html

¹³⁵ Kost, Marilyn. Ancestry.com. Clark/Garrett-Walser Family Tree. Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/73501135/person/40439075952/family> ; Caylor, Clenna Marie (1996, February 6) Indiana, Death Certificates, 1899-2011. Retrieved on June 19, 2016 from Ancestry.com .

¹³⁶ *Op. Cit.*, Winch, *Minutes*, p. 30.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, Winch, *Minutes*, pp. 31-32.

¹³⁸ "Lewis Russell Caylor," *The Terre Haute Star*, 11 January 1966, p. 2.

¹³⁹ *Op. Cit.*, Winch, *Minutes*, p. 32-35.

with the church, serving voluntarily at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Oak Park, Illinois and maintaining his membership in the Twin Cities Presbytery.¹⁴⁰ Later he served in Severna Park, Maryland and retired to Fergus Falls, Minnesota, where, by last accounts, he still lives.¹⁴¹

In May, 1966, the congregation accepted thirty-six-year-old Rev. Robert Kaeiser and his wife, Mary Joan, as the new minister family. During his term, Harriett Herrington and Marjorie Ghere became the first women elected to the Session. Sally Kibler, who graduated with a music major from Eastern Illinois University in 1962, organized a choir in June 1963. She continued her music commitment in 1970 with Hester Coombe as organist. During the 1960s the church was blessed by having three organists available. Lynne Harshbarger briefly led the Junior Choir until Mary Keeney took over in December of 1970. During Rev. Kaeiser's tenure, the church used the Tamara Sue Kibler Memorial Fund to build a nursery room in the basement. The church also purchased new hymnals from member contributions and the Mrs. Samuel Blackwell, Sr. Memorial Fund. In 1971, Jack and Joann Downs donated an Everett piano for the sanctuary in memory of their child, Jalena. Several years later, the Session moved the piano to the choir room. In 1970 and 71 the Presbyterians and Methodists shared services in July and August. In May 1971, the Session voted to pay the pastor full salary for a year while he attended school full time. A year later, in September of 1972, Rev. Kaeiser asked to be relieved from service.¹⁴² Rev. Kaeiser also left the Presbyterian Church and eventually became a Quaker. He retired to Manitowoc, Wisconsin where, at age eighty-five, he celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary in 2015.¹⁴³

By May 1973, the Session received the thirty-one-year-old Rev. John Faires and his wife, Jan Faires, and three children: Catherine, April, and Joel. During the winter, a severe storm forced fifty-three people to spend the night in the church. The annual report stated that membership was 128. In 1975, the Session purchased a sound system from Rennels TV in Charleston, Illinois. Other changes during these years included tuck-pointing of the church, cleaning and varnishing the beams in the sanctuary, and using the Donald Coombe Memorial Fund to purchase chimes. In 1977, after four years, Marvelle Cole retired from being the Treasurer. She was reappointed in 1981 and still serves as treasurer.¹⁴⁴ After serving in Arcola, Rev. Faires became a teacher and, later, an automobile mechanic. He suffered a brain tumor and lived as an invalid until his death in Neoga, Illinois on October 7, 2002. He is buried in the Lone Tree Cemetery in Johnson County, Iowa with his parents.¹⁴⁵

William S. Yanney, a military chaplain in the National Guard, became Arcola's pastor in June of 1978. The forty-eight-year-old pastor had previously served in the Kirkmont United Presbyterian Church in Xenia, Ohio. Rev. Yanney brought his twenty-three-year-old wife of two years, Carmen Jane *Donaldson* Yanney, to help serve. Rev. Yanney stayed until 1980 and resigned to accept a call in Hamilton, Illinois. During his term, the church purchased new pew

¹⁴⁰ Buchanan, John, *In the End, Our Beginning*, (1998, November 15), Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago. Retrieved on June 16, 2016 from <http://www.fourthchurch.org/sermons/1998/111598.html>, "The Woman's A Co-Pastor," *The Daily Herald*, (24 February 1971), p. 60.

¹⁴¹ Hickok, Gary (2016) Public Records. Retrieved on June 16, 2016 from <http://www.publicrecords360.com/people-search/hickok/gary>; Anderson, James, *More Light Update*, (July-August 1999) Volume 19, Number 6.

¹⁴² *Op. Cit.* Winch. *Minutes*, pp. 35-40.

¹⁴³ Personal letter to Sally and Jon Kibler, Christmas 2015.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

¹⁴⁵ Behrend, Cheryl. (2003, November 2) Find A Grave, John Eugene Faires. Memorial # 8052498. Retrieved on June 17, 2016 from <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=8052498&PIpi=100370690>.

bibles in 1979.¹⁴⁶ In July 1981, the congregation acquired two octaves of handbells through the Gertrude Diamond Memorial Fund.¹⁴⁷ Later, Cathy Wesch donated a third octave of handbells in memory of her father, Myron Whisnand.¹⁴⁸ After leaving Arcola, Rev. Yanney served in Hamilton, LaGrange, Dayton, Ohio, Lakewood, Florida, and Sioux City, Iowa. He retired in Sioux City where he lives today at age eighty-six. The couple separated in 1992. Carmen returned to Lebanon, Indiana, the hometown of her parents for a few years, married Bruce Edward Cumbee in 1998, and moved for a time to Indianapolis, Indiana.¹⁴⁹ Rev. Yanney also served as an advisor to pastors seeking second jobs. In 2004 he and Tricia Yanney created a not-for-profit corporation in Florida and Sioux City, Iowa called Yanney Ministries, Inc. It became inactive on April 4, 2011.¹⁵⁰

In August of 1981, the church received the young couple, Rev. Matthew Medford and his wife, Carol Medford. During his term, in March 1983, the Northern and Southern Presbyterian Churches were reunited. The congregation painted the sanctuary during this time. Edna Daniels was hired to do custodial work in August 1984. Rev. Medford left in January 1985. During that year the congregation paid for pew cushions, a copier, and used a memorial fund to buy five bell tables. The name of United Presbyterian Church was changed to Arcola Presbyterian Church USA.¹⁵¹ Rev. Medford moved to Courtland, New York for a time as associate pastor. In 2009 he took the position as Senior pastor at the First Presbyterian Church in Hubbard, Ohio, where he remains today. Their two sons, Aaron and Nate, graduated from college.¹⁵²

In 1986, Rev. Donald Winch--born in Elmira, NY on April 19, 1944, the son of Carl D. Winch and Marie Winch--and his wife, Flo, and his young children, Katrina *Winch* (Andrew Smith), Carl Winch (Nigel Maltby), and Amy *Winch* (Nicholas Bumgarner), were received. The popular minister, who still loves music, played the saxophone and bassoon during his early school years. He continued studying music at Ithaca College School of Music in Ithaca, NY, graduating in 1966. After undergraduate school, he completed a masters' degree in 1967 in Applied Woodwinds with performance on flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon.

After teaching in West Genesee High School in Camillus, NY and playing the bassoon in the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra from 1967 to 1977, he worked in Real Estate in Montgomery, PA. until 1983. The Presbyterian church in Syracuse, NY ordained him as a Deacon in 1973.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁴⁷ Winch, Don. *An Historical Compilation for the Arcola Presbyterian Church: Memorials and Gifts*. Notebook in Library of Arcola Presbyterian Church, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Report of Sally Kibler, Cathy's friend, June 2016.

¹⁴⁹ "Beavercreek Graduation," *Xenia Daily Gazette*, (May 29, 1976) p. 9; Edsall, Charlotte Hill (1965, July) *LaGrange Standard*, Indiana. Frank Church Funeral. Retrieved on June 2, 2016 from <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~inlagran/lgobit8.html> ; Baughan, Kathryn (2006, November 5) *Dayton Daily News*, Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dayton/obituary.aspx?n=kathryn-baughan&pid=19817413&fhid=5162> ; Lewis, Jean (2015, June 24) *Sioux City Journal*. Obituary. Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from

http://siouxcityjournal.com/news/local/obituaries/jean-lewis/article_e0e71120-a3c0-5f5d-840c-29715d2984c4.html

¹⁵⁰ Yanney, William (2012) Bivocational Pastor. *Rhema Alumni Association*. Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from http://www.rhema.org/alumni/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=181:tips- ; Yanney, William ((2011) Yanney Ministries, Inc. *Bizstanding*, Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from

<https://bizstanding.com/directory/FL/YA/349/>

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

¹⁵² Medford, Matt. (2016, June) Facebook. Retrieved on June 29, 2016 from

<https://www.facebook.com/matt.medford> .

The Presbyterian church at Watsontown, PA ordained him as an Elder in 1980. He was called to Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton where he graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in 1986. He studied theology with Dr. Daniel L. Migliore and the Old Testament with Dr. J. J. M. Roberts.

Rev. Winch was installed at the Arcola Presbyterian Church on September 1, 1986 with his former pastor from Watsontown, PA, Rev. Timothy Halverson, delivering the sermon. During his twenty-eight years in the pulpit, Rev. Winch steered the church through several changes. Improvements included remodeling the Manse, the garage, and the church basement. Other changes provided a new sanctuary carpet, new lighting, the creation of a church library, and an upgrade in the electricity for the church. Handbell choir robes were donated by Dean Sanders and Shirley Sanders in memory of Cathy Wesch in 1993. Several families contributed to the Yamaha sanctuary piano in honor of Cathy Wesch in March 1995. Shirley Sanders played it for the dedication.¹⁵³ The first “Chrismon Service” was held in November of 1988. A sound system was installed in 1995, and another in 2016.

In 1994, during the celebration of the 140th anniversary, the congregation acknowledged the long-standing members of the church. Twelve members had belonged 50-years or more. Modesta Scott and Florence Smith had been members for 83 years each. Alta Younger Walls, 79 years. Gladys Pyle, 73 years. Others noted for long memberships were: Betty Beazley, 54 years; Phillip Wesch, 55 years; Jane Allen, 54 years; Phyllis Smith, 60 years; Marjorie Ghere and Margaret Swickard, 63 years; Robert Coombe and Allan Gray, 64 years. The church has had thirty-six ministers.¹⁵⁴

In July 1997 Rev. Winch and Elder Robert Arrol helped close the Tuscola Presbyterian church. Allan Gray and a task force explored the variables related to building an elevator for the church. By January 1998, the church approved a significant building project that created a new western entrance, an electronic lift, and two bathrooms. The builders carefully reused and matched the old Bedford stone, preserved the original stained glass, and completed the project in March 2000. Phil Wesch donated a substantial portion of the funding in memory of his wife, Cathy. Ann Bacheldor gave a large donation for maintenance. Jon “Skip” Kibler and Rick Embry provided landscaping. In 2002, the Snyder Roofing of Tuscola repaired the church roof and bell tower.

Starting in March 2002, on Mondays, and continuing to the present, Lynne Harshbarger has led an ecumenical Bible study in her home that includes church members from the Presbyterian, Catholic, and Methodist churches.¹⁵⁵

In 2004, Rev. Winch moderated the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the church, during which three former pastors returned and reminisced about their time in Arcola.

Rev. Winch recalled several heart-warming and serious moments of his tenure in Arcola. His first funeral was for Kenneth Johnson in February 1987, first baptism, Alex Myers on April 5, 1987. He remembered the church’s encounter with cerebral palsy victim, Helen “Ducky” Scott whom the church membership gradually accepted. She took confirmation classes and joined the

¹⁵³ *Op. Cit.*, Winch. *Memorials and Gifts*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵⁴ *Op. Cit.*, Ridenour, *Amazing Arcola*, p. 205; Church Bulletin, 140th Anniversary Service of Rededication, November 20, 1994.

¹⁵⁵ *Op. Cit.* Winch, *Minutes*, p. 57.

church. Her struggle and her determination to live her faith inspired the congregation that mourned her passing in the spring of 2005 when she was in her 70s. He fondly recalled the church's five-year tribute and the celebration of his twenty-fifth, wedding anniversary in 1991. He enjoyed the privilege of conducting the marriage ceremonies of both of his daughters and baptizing three of his grandchildren in the Arcola church. Rev. Winch honorably retired from service in August 2014. He lives in Arcola today.

During Winch era, in 2003 Jon "Skip" Kibler and Sally Kibler developed the Prayer Memorial Garden at the south east corner of the church in memory of Harold Snyder. In 2004, the church started the process of purchasing computers and related technical equipment. Talese Swickard donated the first computer and supervised the purchase, set up, and training for the first operator, Rev. Don Winch, who came to the project "kicking and screaming."¹⁵⁶ Sally Kibler and Pastor Winch arranged to purchase "Synthia," the electronic accompanist, to be used when the organist is absent. They ordered the music device in August of 2011.¹⁵⁷ Sally Kibler continues her long music contribution to the church from 1963 until the present.

During the interim period that started in 2014, Rev. Rick Snyder, a retired minister from Champaign, Illinois, functions as the part-time, supply minister, conducting services and handling other church matters. He is a native of Pennsylvania. He graduated from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1974, has studied at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and has doctorates from both San Francisco and McCormick Seminaries. He has written three books and several articles. He is married to Mary Ann Snyder. They have two married sons, Erik (Alison) and Mark (Chrissy). He is a long distance runner, enjoys reading, needlepoint and sports.¹⁵⁸

The history of the church has always unfolded through the lives of the people and the pastors. The compelling salvation message that began with the sacrifice of God's son for the shortcomings of humanity continues to bring people together in ways that perpetuate the faith of those who hear the message and the faith of those who dedicate their lives to bringing it.

¹⁵⁶ *Op. Cit.* Winch, *Memorials and Gifts*, p. 12

¹⁵⁷ *Op. Cit.*, Winch. *Minutes*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁸ Snyder, Rick (2016) "Our Pastor" Retrieved on June 21, 2016 from <https://arcolapresbyterianchurch.wordpress.com/about/>

Alexander, Robert, **10**
 Alison, Ed, **20, 24**
 Allen, Jane, **25**
 Allen, Lianne, **20**
 Allin, Barbara, **25**
 Allin, Carolyn, **26**
 Allin, Ronald T., **25, 26**
 Allison, James W., **14**
 Andrews, Jedidiah, **3**
 Arrol, Robert, Jr., **20**
 Arrol, Robert, Sr., **20, 29**
 Bacheldor, Ann, **29**
 Bacon, Mary, **17**
 Badgley, Sidney Rose, **18, 19**
 Bailey, J. D., **23**
 Bales, Caleb, **11, 13**
 Bates, David, **8**
 Bates, John, **8**
 Bates, Seth, **8**
 Beazley, Arthur, **20**
 Beazley, Betty, **29**
 Beazley, Ken, **20**
 Beazley, Mrs. R. F., **20**
 Beazley, Ray, **22, 25**
 Beggs, Col. J. R., **22**
 Beidenweg, William C., **19**
 Bethel Chapel, **14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21**
 Black, Samuel M., **20**
 Blackburn, Gideon, **15**
 Blackwell, Mrs. Samuel, Sr., **27**
 Blackwell, Samuel B., **17, 23**
 Blackwell, Samuel, Jr., **20**
 Bouch, J. F., **16**
 Bough, J. F., **16**
 Bovell, S. J., **10**
 Boyd, James, **14**
 Braun, Noble J., **12**
 Campbell, David H., **14**
 Caylor, Clenna Marie *Kneidel*, **26**
 Caylor, Lewis Russell, **26**
 Cecil, J. W., **4, 15**
 Church of Sharon, **5**
 Clisby, R. A., **16**
 Coles, Edward, **9**
 Connor, O. E., **22**
 Coombe, Clarence, **20, 23, 24**
 Coombe, Donald, **27**
 Coombe, Hester, **25, 26, 27**
 Coombe, Robert, Sr., **29**
 Costello, Rev. Fr., **23**
 Cox, Ben F., **23**
 Crews, Mel, **17, 18, 21, 24, 25**
 Crews, Mrs. Mel "Del", **25**
 Crews, Mrs. Mel "Dell", **22**
 Crozier, J., **10**
 Cumberland Presbyterian church, **7**
 Daniel Parker, **8**
 Daniels, Edna, **28**
 Danner, Thomas, **14**
 Davis, Samuel, **3**
 Dillner, Eugene, **24**
 Dimond, Gertrude, **20, 24**
 Doak Samuel, **10, 15**
 Dorman, Harriet, **23**
 Doty, Levi, **8**
 Doty, Samuel, **8**
 Downs, Jack and Joann, **27**
 Downs, Jalena, **27**
 Edwards, Ninian, Governor, **4**
 Ellison, Rev. L. E., **23**
 Embry, Rick, **29**
 Faires, Jan, **27**
 Faires, Rev. John, **27**
 Fillmore, **11, 12, 13, 16**
 Fillmore church, **10, 12, 13**
 Finley, John Evans, **4**
 Fishel, Mrs., **25**
 Flanagan, Joseph F., **19**
 Forner, Jake, **23**
 Foster, Bob, **20**
 Francis MaKemie, **3**
 Garber, Lois M., **24**
 Garber, Rev. Glen, **24**
 Garber, Robert, **24**
 Ghere, Marjorie, **27, 29**
 Gratian Organ Company, **21**
 Gray, Allan, **22, 29**
 Gray, Catherine, **20, 24**
 Gray, Clifford, **22**
 Griswold, Judge, **4**
 Gruelle, Susan, **14**
 Halverson, Rev. Timothy, **29**
 Hampton, John, **3**
 Harshbarger, Lynne, **27, 29**
 Hawkins, Jane, **12**
 Hawkins, Richard W., **12**

Heeb, Cora, **22, 23**
 Henry, F. B., **14**
 Hermitage Inn, **11, 12, 16**
 Herrington, Georgia, **20**
 Herrington, Harriett, **27**
 Hickok, Rev. Gary, **26, 27**
 Hinkle, Rev, **22**
 Hobson, Rev. B. L., **18, 20**
 Hodge, William, **7, 8**
 Humboldt, **9, 12, 13, 14**
 Illinois Central Railroad, **13**
 Ingersoll, Robert G., **4**
 Jackson, Andrew, **4**
 Jeffries, W. H., **15**
 Johnson, Kenneth, **29**
 Jones, Calvin, **14**
 Junken, James W., **14**
 Kaeiser, Rev. Robert, **27**
 Kaeiser, Robert, **27**
 Keeney, Mary, **27**
 Kibler, Jon "Skip", **29, 30**
 Kibler, Sally, **26, 27, 28, 30**
 Kibler, Tamara Sue, **27**
 King, Mrs. Max, **25**
 Kingery, Mary, **12, 13**
 Kinney, Mrs., **25**
 Kniker, C. F., **23**
 La Fayette, **4**
 Leach, Miles, **25**
 Logan, George, **20**
 Logan, Mary, **12**
 Logan, Nell, **25**
 Logan, Roger, **20**
 Logan, Samuel, **12**
 Louthan, J. H., **16**
 Louthan, John K., **12**
 Louthan, Mary E., **12**
 Lucas, Edgar C., **15, 17, 18, 20, 25**
 Lumbric, James, **9**
 Mace, P. M., **25**
 Macish, George, **3**
 manse, **17, 26**
 Martin, John Locke, **15**
 Martin, Martha A., **9**
 McAdow, Samuel, **7**
 McAdow, William, **8**
 McCaig, Robert, **12, 14**
 McDonald, John, **9**
 McGee, John, **8**
 McGee, William, **7, 8**
 McGready, James G., **5, 6, 7, 8**
 McKinley, William B., **21**
 McMillan, Dr. John, **7, 8**
 McNemar, Rev. Richard, **6, 16**
 Medford, Carol, **28**
 Medford, Matthew, **28**
 Migliore, Dr. Daniel L., **29**
 Miller, Silas, **14**
 Mills, Samuel J, **5**
 Mills, Samuel J., **4, 5**
 Mitchell, James A., **9, 10**
 Mitchell, Robert A., **9, 10, 12, 16**
 Mohr, Merie, **25**
 Monfort, J., **12**
 Montgomery, John, **9**
 Moore, Amanda, **12**
 Moore, Jacob, **12**
 Moore, Margaret Louthan, **16**
 Moore, Rice J., **20, 24**
 Moore, William T., **12, 16**
 Moser, Dr. G. H., **22**
 Mulligan, John Douglas, **20**
 Munson, Fred F., **20, 24**
 Munson, Lanore, **25**
 Munson, Louise, **20**
 Munson, Mary, **20**
 Myers, Alex, **29**
 Nicklas, William H., **18**
 Okaw, **8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16**
 Packard, Florence, **20**
 Palestine, **10, 11, 13, 14, 15**
 Palestine Presbytery, **10, 13, 14, 15**
 Parker, Benjamin, **8**
 Parker, George, **8**
 Parker, James, **8**
 Parker, John, **8**
 Parker, Silas, **8**
 Pfeifer, W. M., **16**
 Potter, H. U., **18**
 Princeton., **10**
 Pyle, Gladys, **29**
 Quirk, John S., **22**
 Randolph, William H., **12, 13**
 Rankin, John, **7, 8**
 Ray, Charles, **20, 24**
 Rice, Abraham, **12**

- Rice, Dorcas, **12, 13**
 Roberts, Ann E., **10**
 Roberts, Dr. J. J. M., **29**
 Roberts, Robert M., **15, 16**
 Robertson, C. M., **23**
 Rugh, W. N., **23**
 Sabin, Elizabeth A., **23**
 Sabin, James Edward, **23, 24**
 Sabin, Jessie Gordon, **23**
 Sanders, Dean, **29**
 Sanders, Shirley, **26, 29**
 Schermerhorn, John F., **4, 5**
 Scott, Helen "Ducky", **29**
 Scott, Modesta, **20, 26, 29**
 Scott, Samuel T. T., **4**
 Second Great Awakening, **5, 7, 8, 16**
 Sellers, Colonel, **4**
 Shores, Ralph R., **20, 24**
 Smith, Andrew, **28**
 Smith, David, **4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 29**
 Smith, Florence, **25, 29**
 Smith, Glenn Forest, **20**
 Smith, J. R., **22**
 Smith, Joseph, **8**
 Smith, Phyllis Gertrude, **20**
 Smith, W. H., **22**
 Snyder, Mary Ann, **30**
 Snyder, Rev. Rick, **30**
 Spillman, Benjamil F., **5**
 Starn, Mary Edith *Wood*, **24**
 Starn, Oliver Clayton, **24**
 Steele, John A., **14**
 Steffey, E. Leroy, **24, 25**
 Stewart, D. M., **14**
 Stolley, Claus, **16**
 Swickard, Margaret, **29**
 Swickard, Talese, **30**
 Tait, Rev. Wilson W., **15, 16, 17**
 Tarbox, G. S., **23**
 Taylor, Nathaniel, **3**
 Thompson, Henry A., **19**
 Twain, Mark, **4**
 Van Deursen, Rev. R. D., **9**
 Van Vohres, Ned, **25**
 Venable, Henry Isaac, **9, 10, 11, 12, 14**
 Wahl, Marie, **20**
 Wahl, Marilyn, **25**
 Wahl, Oscar, **20**
 Walls, Alta, **29**
 Welch, Elias "E.B.", **13**
 Welch, Elizabeth, **12, 13**
 Welton, Rev. F. B., **23**
 Wesch, Cathy, **28, 29**
 Wesch, Fred, **20, 24**
 Wesch, Phillip, **20, 29**
 Westminster Society, **22**
 Whisnand, Myron, **28**
 Wilkins, Leroy, **17**
 Wilson, John, **3**
 Winch Marie, **28**
 Winch, Amy, **28**
 Winch, Carl, **28**
 Winch, Carl D., **28**
 Winch, Flo, **28**
 Winch, Katrina, **28**
 Winch, Rev. Donald, **28, 29, 30**
 Woods, G. W., **14**
 Woodworth, Seth Lewis, **16, 22**
 Yanney, Carmen Jane *Donaldson*, **27**
 Yanney, William S., **27, 28**
 Young, Ellsworth, **25**

