

History of the Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

By Sharon Morris

History of the Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church located in Ohio Township, Crawford County, Indiana, is fragmentary, due to lack of records of the early church, but it is known that on May 1, 1858, a small group met in the old log school house on the James East farm for the purpose of organizing a Baptist Church. As a bond of Christian fellowship, they united together and agreed on articles of faith, church covenant and rules of decorum.

When the question of a new church arose, it is said that Justus Gleason suggested "Pleasant Ridge" saying that he and his wife came from a church in Ohio bearing that name. The name found favor with the group, and it was accepted.

It is believed that Rev. Loren Hazen was the first pastor of the church but it is not known how long he served.

The old log school house, known as the Sheckell school, that furnished the church's first home stood on the East farm one-eighth mile northeast of the present church building. The Baptists worshipped for some time in the building, with its seats made of split logs. Light was furnished by tallow candles.

Sometime later, a new school building of frame construction was built. This building was large enough to have an enrollment of one hundred, and was apparently planned for both school and church use. A pair of large double doors in the front, and a raised platform across the front of the room made it useful for community gatherings. This building burned about 1890.

Soon after the erection of the school building, members of the United Brethren church that stood almost across the road from the school invited the Baptist to use their building. This most gracious invitation was accepted, and for perhaps twenty years the two congregations shared the building.

The building of the new church became a community project, and all worked with a will. Rev. John Winchell was the general supervisor of the work. Builders were used for a strong foundation and Nicholas Coleman contributed much to this work.

An untoward incident occurred during preparation for the erection of the church. As the popular logs were being rolled over the river bank to be floated to the Peckinpaugh and Harrison mill at Alton, one went out of control and crashed into Uncle Jack East. Only the soft sand of the bank saved his life but he carried the effects of the accident all the rest of his days.

The building went up steadily. Mr. Bullock did the finish work. The plasterer, Norman Whitehead of Rockport, put on several layers of plaster, then put on a top coat of plaster-of-paris that gave a gleaming white finish. The flooring went in, and it was said that the floor was made from planks from a single ash tree.

Installation of the bell in the belfry produced another incident that avoided tragedy only by the quick action and strong fingers of Mr. James Cummings. The bell was contributed by the Alton Baptist Church. The Bible stand now in use was hand-wrought by Mr. Brashers of Alton. Rev. Allen Hill of Kokomo preached the dedicatory sermon. It was in 1892 or 93 that the first musical instrument was purchased which was purchased of Charles Conrad agent of Idlewild Harrison of Evansville, grandfather to the present Conrad's of Corydon. The cost of the organ was \$65.

It was evident that a basement was greatly needed and work began in 1956. The cost was \$1,364.70.

On May 21, 2023, the church will celebrate its 165th year.