

## EARLY HISTORY OF THE RENOWNED BEECHWOODS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

An interesting Sketch of Persons and Events now Almost Forgotten.  
Written by Our Townsman, Ninian Cooper.

The following early history of the Beechwoods Presbyterian church was written by Ninian Cooper, of Reynoldsville, and published in a recent issue of the Brockwayville Record:

On the 29th day of July, 1841, Rev. John Wray and Miss Georgiana Dennis were married in Philadelphia, Pa. Shortly after they were married they decided to go to India and devote their efforts to the cause of missions. They left Philadelphia in a sailing vessel, going by the way of London and the Cape of Good Hope. It took them six months to get to the end of their destination, and they landed in a place called Allahabad, where they settled down and took up the duties of an appointment. Mr. and Mrs. Wray started in with determined and devoted hearts to the work of their calling, first learning the native tongue of the people and very diligently and successfully preaching to and teaching the natives. They soon gained the confidence and respect of the people in their charge, and spent eight interesting years in the work.

During that time three children were born to them, two sons and a daughter. The eldest son died in infancy. The second son, William, who now lives with his sister, Mrs. Ross, in DuBois, was then in poor health, and on his account thinking the change in climate would be beneficial to him they decided to return to the home of their nativity. In the summer of 1849 they returned to America and located at Philadelphia where they remained during the fall and winter of that year. About the first of May, 1850, they came to Clarion county where Mr. Wray had a brother living.

At that time there was no Presbyterian preacher in the Beechwoods and Mr. Wray learning of this fact, decided that he would take a trip up through this section, see the Beechwoods and its people and as he was desirous of securing a charge, look up the prospects in that direction. So out he came arriving at the home of Elder Joseph McCurdy May 25, 1850. Coming highly recommended by Rev. Montgomery, of Clarion, and Dr. Cummings, of Brookville, Mr. McCurdy went around with him for several days. They called on a number of the people and several members of the church, and the officers

of the church. Rev. Wray seemed to be well pleased with the people and they with him, and he expressed his desire to preach to them on the coming Sabbath. There was no available place to hold services at that time as the new church was then in course of erection, that is the church which was built and used up to the time of the erection of the present church at Beechwoods.

The Baptist church on the hill above James Cooper's was engaged, and the old log school house, near the Waite farm, which had been used for a union meeting house by all denominations, professions, sects and colors for fifteen years previous to that time, was engaged and there was no place for Mr. Wray to preach. In 1845 just five years previous to the time that Mr. Wray came to Beechwoods, James Ross had built himself a new frame barn which was counted a very fine barn in those days, and it wouldn't be a bad barn if it were new to-day. So a few of the members of the church got together and decided they would have Mr. Wray preach in the barn. The place was swept out and they put in blocks, boards, benches, chairs and anything that would make a seat. They rigged up a stand about 18 inches square for a pulpit. Mr. Wray and the congregation assembled at the barn on Sunday morning and proceeded with the services. Rev. Wray first explained the 23rd Psalm, then he preached from the text, "For God speaketh once; yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not," Job 33, 14.

At this time there were only about 60 or 65 living members in the Beechwoods Presbyterian church and they felt very poor. They had just built the church which cost was very heavy on the small congregation. Finally the members and supporters of the church and friends got together and they decided to make Mr. Wray an unanimous call to the pastorate of their church and offer him \$250 a year for preaching one half of his time in their church, and the balance of his time he would be free to do missionary work or whatever he should choose to do. He accepted the call and at once moved his family to Beechwoods. The church was not quite finished at that time and he preached around the congregation. In the Baptist

church and in the schoolhouses until the church was complete.

From the first organization of the Beechwoods Presbyterian church, December 2, 1832, by the Rev. Riggs, there were ten members: Robert and Mary McIntosh, William and Martha Cooper, William and Margaret McConnell, David and Martha Dennison, Robert Morrison and Susan Keys. The elders elected that day were Robert McIntosh, who died May 4, 1834; William McConnell, who died Feb. 8, 1840; Robert Morrison, who died Feb. 6, 1848. The next election for eldership was April 24, 1837, when John Hunter and Joseph McCurdy were elected. I have no

Clarion, 1 in Brookville and 1 I know not where.

The first communion held by Mr. Wray in the church at Beechwoods was on Sept. 22, 1850. On that day 17 new members were received into the church, 13 of whom have died, and 4 survive. The deceased are: John Patterson, Isabella Patterson, Margaret Patterson, Georgiana Wray, Jane Dougherty, James Patton, Eliza Jane Patton, Mary Ann Morrison, Ellen McConnell, Eliza Jane Wann, Jane Crawford, Eliza Stevenson and Nancy Jane Cooper. The survivors are: Martha Stevenson-Kyler, of Brandy Camp; Mary Waite-Hutchinson, of Falls Creek; James S.

of his time in the Beechwoods church and did a great deal of missionary work all over the country, in Clarion, Elk and Jefferson counties. He organized the Presbyterian church in Reynoldsville and preached there frequently.

At this time there were only two acting elders in the church, and no deacons and no trustees. There had been three elders, but for some reason or other John Hunter had resigned and was not an acting member of the session any longer, so there were none remaining but Joseph McCurdy and John Millen. The time came when they thought they should have additional elders and some deacons, and notice was given that on the 16th day of December, 1853, there would be a congregational meeting and election for three elders and two deacons. The elders elected that day were: James Smith, John McIntosh and John Hutchinson. They are all dead now including the three former elders. Joseph McCurdy died Feb. 26, 1862; John Hunter died Apr. 30, 1869; John Millen died Dec. 7, 1869; James Smith died July 13, 1865; John McIntosh died Dec. 28, 1872; John Hutchinson died April 19th, 1883. The deacons elected that day were James Shaw and William Smith. James Shaw died Aug. 9, 1883. William Smith was elected elder July 3, 1862, and is still acting in that capacity. James McCurdy and Robert Morrison were elected elders at the same time. Robert Morrison ceased acting as elder in 1871. He died Feb. 10, 1892. James McCurdy remained an elder up to the time of his death Oct. 27, 1902. William Patton and myself were elected deacons Feb. 22, 1863. Mr. Patton served up to the time of his death Dec. 29, 1899. I remained a deacon until Dec. 19, 1876 when I moved to Reynoldsville. William Cooper, with his wife, united with the church Nov. 26, 1852, and he was elected elder Sept. 24, 1864, and he served in that capacity until his death Aug. 6, 1875.

A serious obstacle to Rev. Wray in his work was the failure of his eyesight in 1868. His condition became such that he could not see to read or write with glasses or without, and he was advised to go to Philadelphia for treatment. November 4, 1868, he went to Philadelphia and an operation was performed on his eyes, which proved successful, and he was able to see and read. Unfortunately, before he was able to leave the dark room in which he was confined, he was neglected by the nurse in charge which resulted in the setting in of inflammation and he became totally blind. He returned home and with great difficulty preached for two years and a half. Mrs. Wray did all the reading for him and assisted in getting up the sermons. Rev. Wray preached until April 23, 1871 when he handed in his resignation, and recommended a young man from the Seminary named Elison, to take his place. Mr. Elison was accordingly called to succeed Rev. Wray, and he came to Beechwoods and preached his first sermon to the congregation May 7, 1871. He used for his text "For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," 1st Cor. 6-20.

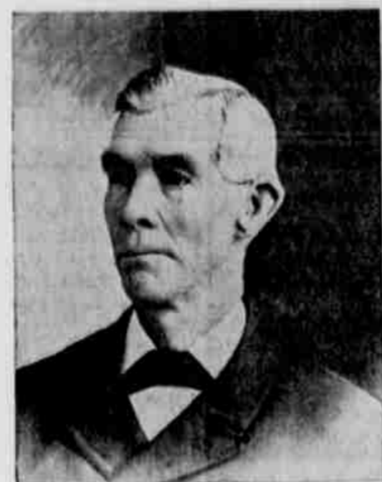
Rev. Wray was the regular pastor of the Beechwoods Presbyterian church for 21 years. During that time he held 56 communions in the church. During his pastorate there were 238 added to the membership of the church. During

the 21 years there were three communions in which there were no additions made to the church roll, March 3, 1861, Oct. 5, 1869, June 12, 1870. During that time there were nine communions at which there was but one added to the roll each time: July 1, 1860, James Patterson; Oct. 8, 1861, Barbara Walte; Aug. 23, 1861, R. B. VanLew; July 10, 1864, Samuel Maxwell; Feb. 28, 1865, Isabella Harker; June 21, 1867, Martha Hutchinson; Mar. 22, 1868, Lucinda Daugherty; Feb. 12, 1870, Elizabeth Waterhouse; Oct. 4, 1870, Jane Wilson.

During that time there were twelve communions at which there were but two each time taken into the church: Nov. 24, 1854, William Thorp and Mary Ann Ross; Feb. 23, 1856, Mary Ann Campbell and John Ross; Oct. 9, 1857, Margaret Shaw and Mary Groves; Oct. 12, 1862, Elizabeth Daugherty and Martha Jane Ross; Jan. 3, 1864, John and Catherine Trimble; Oct. 8, 1865, Chas. D. Calhoun and Margaret J. Morrison; Nov. 9, 1866, William Buchanan and Robt. M. Millen; Feb. 10, 1867, Josephine McCurdy and Martha Patterson; Sept. 24, 1868, John Atwell and Elizabeth McClure; Feb. 12, 1869, Wm. Marshall and Catherine Harker; July 10, 1869, Catherine Milton and Sarah Stevenson; Feb. 26, 1871, Margaret Smith and Isabella Patton.

In the fall of 1873 Rev. Wray moved from Beechwoods to Brookwayville. He died August 16, 1883, aged 89 years.

NINIAN COOPER.



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recollection when John Miller was elected elder. From the first organization of the church to the time Mr. Wray took charge in May, 1850, was 17 years and six months. During that time 83 had enrolled their names on the church books. Of that number there are only five living namely, James Cooper, Ann McCurdy, Sara Jane Patton, Margaret Jane Tobin, and Elizabeth Smith. Of the 83 who were members of the church at that time 64 are laid in the Beechwoods cemetery, 2 in the state of Iowa, 4 in Prospect Hill cemetery near Reynoldsville, 2 near Luthersburg, 2 in Brookwayville, 2 in

Smith, of Pancoast, and myself. Clarion Presbytery met the following Tuesday and appointed a committee to install Mr. Wray to the pastorate of his new charge. The members of the committee were Mr. Core, Mr. Montgomery, of Clarion, and Dr. Cummings, of Brookville. Mr. Core failed to attend, but according to the order of Presbytery Mr. Montgomery and Dr. Cummings met Nov. 5, 1850, and installed Mr. Wray, the first Presbyterian preacher installed in the Beechwoods. Mr. Wray took up the work of his new charge with earnestness and zeal and was very successful. He preached half

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Guaranteed.  
I agree to replace, free of charge, any Sunbeam or Black Hawk Gas mantle proving defective or shall burn out within two months from purchase. Double wire capped 20 and 25 cents. C. R. Hall.

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For Sale—A driving horse and buggy at a bargain. Inquire at STAR office.  
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Farm for sale—The George Henry farm in Winslow township. It contains 100 acres; 60 acres cleared, balance in second growth timber. House, barn and wagon shed almost new; fine orchard; good water. For particulars inquire of A. G. Millren, Reynoldsville.

For Sale—A seven room house, lot 90 by 150 feet, in West Reynoldsville. M. E. Weed.

### CHARTER NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that an application will be made to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on Thursday, the 22nd day of January, A. D. 1903, by W. H. Straney, J. C. King, R. B. King, W. H. Alexander, F. B. Smith, Solomon Shaffer, S. Reynolds, A. H. Swartz, L. E. Souley and Thomas McCright, under the provisions of the Act of Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, entitled "An act to provide for the incorporation and regulation of certain corporations," approved April 25th, 1874, and the supplements thereto for the charter of a proposed corporation to be called Bessemer Coal and Coke Company, the character and object whereof are to be the mining, quarrying, excavating, burning, and otherwise producing coal, fire clay and other minerals and substances, the manufacture of all said products and of all substances found in or upon any lands acquired by said proposed corporation, the shipping of the same to market and the sale thereof in crude or manufactured form, and to such an extent as may from time to time be necessary and convenient for said purpose to acquire, hold and dispose of real estate by sale, lease, or otherwise, and of constructing and disposing of dwellings and all kinds of buildings, erections, machinery and appliances, including lateral railroads, and the acquiring, possessing and enjoying of all rights, powers, privileges and immunities conferred upon such corporations by section 39 of the said Act of Assembly of April 25, 1874, and the supplements thereto, and for these purposes to have, possess and enjoy all the rights, benefits and privileges conferred by said Act of Assembly and its supplements. Signed at Star Office, Reynoldsville, Pa., December 31st, 1902.

WANTED—FAITHFUL PERSON TO TRAVEL for well-established house in a few counties calling on retail merchants and agents. Local territory. Salary \$1024 a year and expenses, payable \$10 a week in cash and expenses advanced. Position permanent. Business successful and rushing. Standard House, 34 Dearborn St., Chicago.

# January Sale of Muslin Underwear, White Goods, Embroideries

## SHEETS AND PILLOW CASES.

In keeping with the progressive spirit of THE BIG STORE we will, as has been our custom—a custom which we established in Reynoldsville about three years ago—conduct our

### Annual White Goods Sale Beginning Next Monday, January 5th, and lasting Four Days.

To those who have attended these sales in past years we need not emphasize the many advantages offered you, but we do want to add that this year we have made preparations to far eclipse anything yet attempted. Experience has taught us many lessons. We have secured a much better assortment of the DEFENEDR MUSLIN UNDERWEAR. We have secured the best values in WHITE GOODS to be had this year. And we have added to the White Goods Sale the best line of FINE EMBROIDERIES. Our line of SHEETS and PILLOW CASES is also exceptionally strong for this White Goods Sale. To those who have not had the opportunity offered by these WHITE GOODS SALES or have not availed themselves of the opportunity, we will say that at no other time during the year can such values be had.

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WHY THE SALE? WHAT THE INDUCEMENT?  
Not the accumulation of odd sizes and unsalable styles of the past season. Not a bit of it. Fresh from the best manufacturers of the land. No sweatshop rubbish from the dingy lofts in the tenement house. JUST THE REVERSE. It is the cleanest of underwear, fresh from clean, well-ventilated factories. It is the perfection of underwear cut by the best skilled artists of the cutting table. These garments are made at the time of year when factories would lie idle otherwise and the skilled laborers out of employment. Therefore we say the garments are the best that American labor can produce, being made at a time when factories are not over-rushed with work—being cheaper because they are made when cost of manufacture is at a minimum.

### White Goods

The advanced showing of White Goods gives you an opportunity to secure the goods that you may do your sewing before the busy rush of spring with its house cleaning and many other attentions. Our experience has been that best things are shown early.

Remember the time—  
MONDAY, TUESDAY,  
WEDNESDAY,  
THURSDAY,  
January 5th to January 8th,  
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There was a time when this valuable accessory to a lady's wearing apparel could not be had until summer was on—when everything was crowding itself for immediate attention. We shall not attempt to tell you about the Embroideries as it is necessary to see in order to appreciate. They are principally Swiss, Cambric and Nainsook; Edgirs and Insertings; Baby Widths, Medium Widths, and Flouncing Widths.

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