



1883

140 Years Presbyterian Building



2023

First Presbyterian Church

CHERRY AND NORTH STREETS
MOUNT GILEAD, OHIO

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR HISTORY

THE BEGINNING

What is now this First Presbyterian Church of Mt. Gilead was organized November 2, 1831, by the Reverend Henry Shedd. At that time, this area was just becoming settled and developed. Open war with the Indian tribes had ceased only 16 years before, and there were still tribes in the area.

Swamps and forests that had covered this area were being emptied and cleared for farming, and people were building homes, barns, churches, schools and dirt roads.

Wildlife was still abundant. It included: wolves, deer, wild hogs, mink, raccoon, otter, groundhogs, squirrels, and pheasant. Even a panther or bear might still be sighted. They all provided important sources of meat and fur.

So, it was in this frontier setting that this church was organized. Actually, it was first called the Presbyterian Church of Morven because it was located in Morven Township, Marion County, in a little settlement called Whetstone. In 1829, Whetstone had five buildings, eight families, and about thirty people.

In the years prior to the organization of this church, preaching, Bible classes and prayer meetings were held in the homes of interested people. Then in October of 1831, residents presented to the Presbytery of Columbus a request to organize a church here. The request was granted and a committee, consisting of E. Barber and Henry Shedd, was appointed for that purpose.

On November 2, 1831, the committee duly organized the Presbyterian Church of Morven. It took place in the home of G. D. Cross because they did not have a church building. Twenty-six persons entered into membership and three Ruling Elders were elected.

Thus began this Presbyterian Church.

Presented to Church Congregation September 17, 2006

EARLY NAME CHANGES AND THE DIVISION

Following the organization of the Presbyterian Church of Morven on November 2, 1831, by the Reverend Henry Shedd, the church and area soon underwent a name change. First, in 1833, the state legislature changed the name of the little settlement of Whetstone to Mount Gilead. Then Morven Township was changed to Gilead Township in June, 1835. So, in October 1835, the Presbytery of Marion followed along by changing the church's name to the Mount Gilead Presbyterian Church.

A great division occurred in the Presbyterian Church of this nation during the 1830's between the Old School and the New School believers. It came to a head at a national assembly on June 5, 1837, when the Old School believers, holding a clear majority, voted the New School believers out of the church.

The Old School believers believed in a strict Calvinistic approach to Presbyterianism. This included a literal interpretation of the Bible, strict discipline of members, and church structured social life for members. This was the prevailing view of Presbyterians in the Mid-Atlantic and Southern States.

On the other hand, the New School believers, followed a more liberal theological view of Presbyterianism. They believed in revivals, interdenominational cooperation, and active participation in the life of the community. Many were also active in the abolishing of slavery. The New School believers were strongest in New England, New York State, and on the western frontier.

Many congregations throughout the nation did not divide, but our church did. On November 12, 1838, the Old School and the New School decided to have their own churches. They remained divided until October 2, 1865, when they resolved their differences and reunited. This set the stage for a growing and vigorous church.

Presented to Church Congregation September 24, 2006

CHURCH BUILDINGS

When this church was organized in 1831, it did not have a building in which to worship. Therefore, the congregation worshipped in homes and a Methodist Meeting House until 1835 when the construction of a building was completed.

When the division occurred in 1838, the New School retained it for their religious activities. In 1857, the New School congregation was given an unfinished Baptist Church located on the Northeast corner of the South Square. One of the conditions of the gift was that it be moved, which they did, to 111 North Cherry Street on property now owned by the Porters. The New School believers occupied it until reuniting with the Old School October 2, 1865.

Where the Old School Congregation worshipped from the time of the division in 1831 to 1851, was not found in the records. One report indicated that they used the homes of their members and vacated buildings. However, in 1851, they began worshipping in a new church they erected here on this property, 55 North Cherry Street. When the two branches reunited, the New School sold their church and moved into the facility located here.

On June 3, 1883, the cornerstone for the original part of this church building was laid, the old church building having been sold and removed. This was a major step forward.

Then in 1926, at a cost of \$30,000, a religious education addition was constructed along with major remodeling. The result included new classrooms, a remodeled fellowship hall/dining area, an enlarged kitchen, and a sub• basement for the furnace.

In December 1997, another new addition was completed. It included the elevator, Commons Room, and the west entrance. It cost approximately \$117,000.

The Manse was constructed in 1913 for \$5,000. Ray Tennant, a member who recently died, worked on this project.

Records show that several significant remodeling / renovation / parking projects were also undertaken and completed over the years.

This has all resulted in well-kept, respectable facilities for worship services and fellowship, and for housing the minister and his/her family.

Presented to Church Congregation October 15, 2006

MUSIC IN OUR CHURCH

Music has always played a major role in the worship service of the Presbyterian Church. This church has tried to follow that tradition.

Although early records are sketchy, we believe this church was using a reed organ for worship service well before 1900. Having an organ indicates that it had a formal music program, and that music was an important part of the worship service.

In 1900, the first pipe organ was purchased for \$2,000.00. Mayme Beebe, the church organist, had to go to summer school to learn to play it. It was much different from the reed organ she had been playing.

The importance of this new pipe organ is shown by the fact that its dedication made the front page of the local newspaper. The paper reported that a "magnificent" Dedication Recital was held featuring prominent musicians from Columbus. It was a major event.

That first pipe organ served this church until 1964, when the present organ was purchased and installed for \$14,950.00. Again, a Dedication Recital was held, this time featuring Martin Luther Mitchell, a prominent organist in this area, who directed the choirs in our church.

What about choirs? We know from old records that there was a choir in the 1880's. In addition to congregational singing during worship services, adults, youth and children met before and after Sabbath School classes (as they were then called) where "singing was enjoyed and new songs learned." Old Session minutes beginning in 1901 lists organists, assistant organists and choristers as part of the Sabbath School Staff.

AND, did you know that this church once had an orchestra? We have a picture of a 15-member orchestra taken around 1919. We thought that was quite interesting.

So, we can safely say that this church has had active music programs since well before 1900, and that the congregations of this church have appreciated and supported these programs in bringing God's Word to our worship services through the joy of music.

Presented to Church Congregation October 22, 2006

PRESBYTERIAN MEN'S CLUB

The Men's Club was officially organized November 28, 1918, at the home of W. C. Batchelor. The idea of a Men's Club was promoted by Dr. D. H. Cramer, Pastor of this church. Not only was it a great success in this church, it was a model for the formation of many similar clubs in the Marion Presbytery. Our Men's Club not only helped many of these clubs organize, but also helped in the formation of a Men's Club at the Presbytery level. The Presbytery Club really thrived. The attendance at some of their meetings was over 200. This club faded away after the Marion Presbytery was absorbed into the Columbus Presbytery in 1952.

It should be noted that W. C. Batchelor was one of the men from throughout the nation who met in Chicago in 1946 to establish the National Council of Presbyterian Men.

The local club has been relatively inactive in recent years, but there is some interest to revive it.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S CLUB

The first women's organization in the church was the Women's Missionary Society organized August 1, 1874. Mrs. Milton McMillan, wife of the Pastor was elected president. In about 1927, it merged with the Ladies' Aid Society to form the Presbyterian Women's Organization. Three other women's organizations were also involved in the final formation of the Women's Organization. This club was associated with the United Presbyterian Women until the early 1990's.

We now have a local organization called the Women's Ministry. This organization sponsors a yearly Mother / Daughter Banquet and raises funds for special projects. Their main source of income is the Election Night Supper, which has a long history.

Presented to Church Congregation October 29, 2006

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

The Columbus Presbytery was formed in 1821 and the Marion Presbytery in 1835.

The Morven Presbyterian Church was the fourth Presbyterian Church organized in this area. Harmony Presbyterian Church was organized in 1824, and the Canaan and Center churches in 1829.

During the early years over 15 Presbyterian Churches were organized in the area that became Morrow County in 1848. Only two remain: Iberia and Mount Gilead.

Twenty-six people joined this church when it was organized November 2, 1831. Today, there are still three members of this church who are descendants of an original member. They are Don and Mike Bachelder-Sarah Campbell; and Jean Poole-Joseph Axtell.

Reverend Henry Shedd's wife, Mary, started the first school in Whetstone (Mt. Gilead) and was its first teacher. She died in 1835.

There were 75 members of the church at the time of the division in 1838. In the Marion Presbytery, 600 remained in Old School Churches and 760 joined New School Churches.

When the reunification of the Mount Gilead Church took place October 2, 1865, fifty-nine Old School and thirty-four New School members signed their names to the Conditions of Reunion.

Discipline in the Old School Church was quite strict. The personal lives of members were scrutinized and action taken against any who deviated from Church Standards. It was not unusual for a member to be dismissed from the church.

To receive communion, a person had to receive a token from the Session.

Presented to Church Congregation October 29, 2006

CONCLUSION

This concludes this seven-part series on the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Gilead. What has been presented is only a small sample of its rich history. You are urged to carefully view the large quantity of information that will be on display.

In conclusion, you can be proud of those ministers and members who caused this church to evolve from almost nothing to bring Presbyterianism to this area. We pray that their efforts are being rewarded by this church being ever vigorous in promoting Christianity among its members and in this community.

Presented to Church Congregation October 29, 2006

First Presbyterian Church Celebrates 175 Years

Part I: Origins to 1886

By Mark Phillips, with Eileen Gladden

If one travels to 55 North Cherry Street in Mount Gilead, a wonderful discovery can be made. Here is the beautiful and historic First Presbyterian Church, which will celebrate its 175th anniversary on Nov. 4 and 5, 2006. Reverend Dennis Braun is the pastor, and the public is welcome to attend several fun and educational activities over the two day period. The 175th anniversary celebration is entitled "He Leadeth Me."

The First Presbyterian Church has been vitally important to both Mount Gilead and all of Morrow County since the first half of the 19th Century. Reverend Henry Shedd, D.D. (1803-1886), first rode into the thick beech and oak forests of eastern Marion County as a home missionary during 1829. Morrow County would not be formed until 1848, and Shedd came into the wilderness of central Ohio to preach the Gospel of Jesus.

Shedd was born on May 16, 1803 in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, the son of a blacksmith and farmer. His parents were John and Susanna White Shedd, and his paternal grandparents were Abel and Ruth Haskell Shedd from Massachusetts. Young Henry worked hard to receive an education, and he taught school so that he could afford to attend Dartmouth College. He graduated from that institution in 1826, and half of his graduating class would go on to become ministers. Salmon P. Chase (1808-1873), who would later become a Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, was one of his Dartmouth classmates.

Shedd next studied for three years at the Theological Seminary in Andover, Massachusetts, and graduated in a class of 34 during 1829. While a student there he would hold religious meetings in neighborhoods that did not have a church, organize Sunday Schools and visit with people from house to house. Shedd was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Newburyport in April, 1829. He also did missionary work in Manchester, New Hampshire during 1828 and preached 44 times in various places. Shedd was ordained by the Presbytery of Newburyport in the Park Street Church, Boston on Sept. 24, 1829.

Shedd married Mary Gerrish from Canterbury, New Hampshire on Sept. 28, 1829. They were to eventually have two sons in their family: John, who became a missionary in Persia for 50 years and Charles. Shedd was then appointed by the

Executive Committee of the American Home Missionary Society (A.H.M.S.) to preach the Gospel in Ohio. Shedd and his wife left Leominster, Massachusetts on Oct. 7, 1829 for the Buckeye state. They first went to Schenectady, New York by stage and then continued to Lockport by a canal boat. The Shedd's next traveled by stage again to Buffalo and then by steamboat to Cleveland. They arrived by carriage in Granville on Oct. 28.

Years later, Shedd wrote in his memoirs that, from Nov. 5 to 26 of 1829, "I took a horseback trip of three weeks, exploring the missionary field of Marion County for a location, and concluded to take the eastern part of the county as a field of labor." On Dec. 11, 1829 Shedd and his wife arrived in Morven Township, eastern Marion County, from Granville. The newlyweds rode their horses into the village of Whetstone, and their goods eventually followed them by wagon. They quickly found that life in the wilderness was difficult.

The area had been a hunting ground for the Shawnee people, and they had a burial site near the bluffs of the Whetstone Creek. The Shawnee often camped east of the present site of Mount Gilead, until white settlers arrived after the War of 1812. Other local tribes included the Delaware, Ottawa, Potawatomi and Wyandot. The natives sold the land by 1820, and it became part of Morven Township in the newly formed Marion County by 1824. When settlers first arrived the native peoples that remained were helpful and very friendly. The first pioneers ate heartily of roasted ears of corn, hominy, corn bread and "wild meat" (usually groundhog, venison and turkey). Their beverages consisted of milk, apple cider and sometimes the luxury of coffee sweetened with wild honey. Clothing was made of deerskin or calico, and shoes from groundhogs.

The American citizens who originally came into the area were from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the Mid-Atlantic states. Many of these pioneers were of English, Scottish, and Welsh ancestry. Revolutionary War veteran Lodwick Hardenbrook (1756 - 1845) arrived in Ohio from New Jersey during 1816, and he owned land where Mount Gilead is now located. Pioneer Hardenbrook, his wife and 11 children found natural springs in the area and the soil excellent for farming. He was laid to rest in the old Presbyterian Cemetery, or Founders' Cemetery, which is in the southeastern part of present-day Mount Gilead.

The settlement that was to become Mount Gilead was laid out, at an old Indian trail, as Whetstone on Sept. 30, 1824 by Jacob Young, and it was named for the Whetstone Creek. The area of the original settlement can be seen today as the

south public square, or the intersection of South Main and Marion Streets. The first settler in Whetstone was Charles Webster, also the first postmaster, who built his 18 by 24 foot log cabin on the northeast corner of the south public square in December, 1824. The legendary Johnny Appleseed was reportedly very active in Whetstone, and he planted apple trees to the north in what would later be known as the "school lands."

George D. Cross, who was to serve as justice of the peace for over 40 years, arrived in 1828 and built the fifth frame house in Whetstone. It is still standing and is located near the southeast corner of the south public square on East Marion Street. The building is owned today by the Morrow County Historical Society. By 1830 Whetstone had four cabins, five frame houses and a population of 60. The population of Morven Township in 1830 was 764 and Marion County had 6,547 residents.

When Dr. Shedd and his wife arrived on Dec. 11, 1829, Whetstone was situated in a thick beech forest with muddy trails and no bridges. They boarded with the family of Henry Ustick until Dec. 1, 1830. During this time Shedd was the Supply, or Acting Pastor for two Presbyterian churches, one located several miles east of Whetstone and one west in Canaan Township. The Shedd family then boarded with Cross and his wife for most of 1831. He would later write that "Mrs. Cross was one of the excellent of the earth." Shedd organized the First Presbyterian Church of Morven on Nov. 2, 1831 in the Cross house with originally 26 members. He served as the first pastor, and his wife Mary also taught the first school in the building during 1831.

The name of the village was changed to Mount Gilead in 1832 and the township to Gilead. Shedd and his congregation built a 40 by 40 foot wooden frame church on ground donated by Jacob Young near the old Presbyterian Cemetery in 1835, and it was also in October of that year that the congregation was renamed the "First Presbyterian Church of Mount Gilead." A temperance society was formed during the 1830s, and in 1840 an anti-slavery society with 40 members was created at the First Presbyterian Church.

Services were eventually moved to frame churches on North Cherry Street. Morrow County was formed in 1848, and the Presbyterians in Mount Gilead assisted the Society of Friends from southern Morrow County with the exciting activities of the Underground Railroad prior to the Civil War. Runaway slaves from southern states would be moved and hidden, usually by night, along a route of safe houses from Kentucky to Canada and then freedom. The slaves would

travel, with the help of Quakers in Peru and Gilead Townships, to the Presbyterians in Mount Gilead and then north to the Iberia Presbyterians and eventually to Oberlin.

The Shedd's rented their first home from Webster in 1832. On Oct. 15, 1832 they bought 40 acres with a house south of Whetstone for \$300. Shedd's income for 1832 was \$300:

\$185 came from his congregation and \$115 from the A.H. M. S. His first wife was "frail and cultured," and died from consumption, or tuberculosis, on March 12, 1835. This left Shedd to care for their two small sons until Sept. 13, 1838, when he married Lucretia George of New England. They were to have four sons and a daughter.

On Nov. 4, 1881 Dr. Shedd delivered the 50th anniversary address during a celebration for the church. The cornerstone of the present brick church building on North Cherry Street was laid on June 2, 1883, and the honored, elderly pastor also spoke during the ceremony. Shedd died on June 17, 1886. Funeral services, led by Rev. W.S. Eagleson, were held at the Shedd residence in Mount Gilead and also at the First Presbyterian Church, which was draped in mourning. A large crowd of friends and various ministers were present, and Shedd was laid to rest in the Rivercliff Union Cemetery on East Marion Street.

The Neal brothers, publishers of *The Morrow County Independent*, wrote in Shedd's obituary that "there were few truer friends of humanity. Aside from his whole-souled devotion to the cause of Christianity, he took active interest in every condition or event effecting the welfare of mankind." They also noted that by 1864, Dr. Shedd had preached

4,011 times, administered the Lord's Supper 221 times, baptized 340 persons, married 107 couples and officiated at 223 funerals.

J.W. Griffith, writing Shedd's obituary for *The Morrow County Sentinel*, added that "With heroic fortitude he braved the dangers surrounding the life of a frontier minister, laboring in this work at various points near and distant until years after the country had become thickly populated, when the infirmities of old age drove him to the rest of a quiet home which he had so well earned. He began his ministry in poverty and in debt, and through the whole of his ministerial service of 32 and a half years his compensation averaged but

\$280 per year." Finally, Presbyterian historian Reverend A.C. Crist, in 1908, wrote that Dr. Shedd was "a scholarly man, a good theologian, an eloquent speaker and a humble, devoted Christian man."