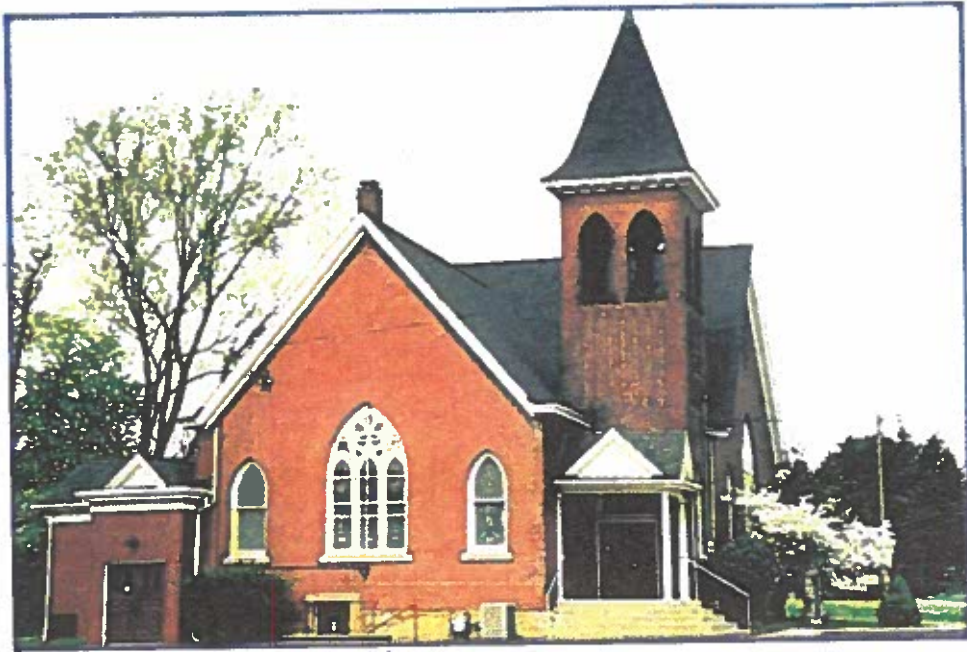


**Rock Hill  
Presbyterian  
Church Congregation**



**200th Anniversary  
1809-2009**

***"We are fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord, And in Him you are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."***

***Ephesians 3:19-22)***

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## Introduction and Purpose

As a congregation we were well aware of the importance of this occasion and have planned for this event for almost two years. The Rock Hill congregation is one of the oldest continuous congregations in Belmont County.

The Committee, which consisted of Co-Chairs, Bob Willis and Kathryn Simon, Sheryl Willis, Marguerite Brinker, Pat Mehlman, Wilma Nelson, Tina Mehlman, Diane Conroy, Mary Louise Cowen, Vera Stroup, Elizabeth Bowman, Shirley Mayer, Helen Pinzone, Carole Krebs, Jeff Nelson and others who joined us at various meetings, have met monthly. Without the help all of those who volunteered, or donated in some way, this event would not be possible. Special thanks also go to Jim Chase, Russ and Greg Mehlman, Elsie Wise, Alice Null, Joann Perry, Judy Morgan, Juanita Keyser, Tammy Angus and Catherine Maxwell for their help with the rummage sale that became a very successful beginning to this project. Jim Denham has been such a great help in all of our projects that he has to have a special word of "THANKS." *May God bless everyone who made the commitment to make this weekend a special Rock Hill celebration.*

It was our purpose to have a weekend of remembering and worshipping together, with a blend of new and old memories of Rock Hill Presbyterian Church, that has been the basis of life-building experiences for so many.

We have written a history which incorporates items from many of the old booklets of the church. Also, we have attempted to bring everything up to date through pictures and accounts of activities that have happened more recently. We have also preserved old pictures and put them into a scrapbook and made a photograph album of recent church events. We wish to continue to update both of these so that they will help to retain the history of Rock Hill.

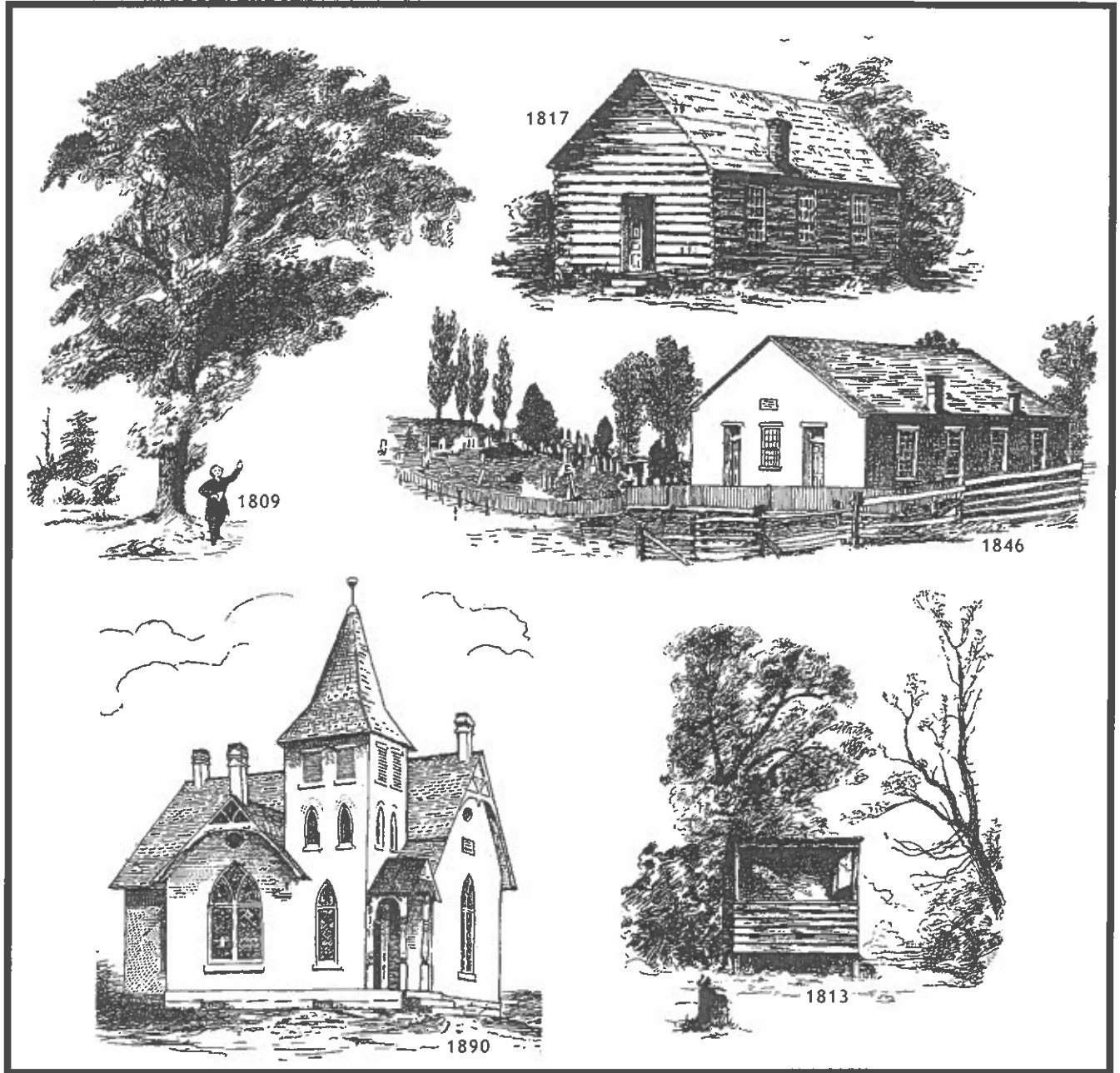
Memories from members and friends were added to this booklet to give it a personal touch. They serve as an example to the youth of today of the significance of participation in a church family. Memories are a precious treasure.

As an added activity and tribute to this congregation we sought and eventually were honored with acceptance of Rock Hill Presbyterian Church into the National Historical Register. All forms and accounts of this process are also assembled into an album.

None of this would be have been possible without many fundraising activities and many hours of work which is a tribute to the unselfish people who serve this church and their Lord so willingly. Thank you to all who contributed in any way.

May God bless this congregation, its families and friends as they continue to serve Him.

## Historical Sketch



Excerpts from: A Historical Sketch written for the Seventieth Anniversary Reunion in 1882 and an Account Prepared for the 1912 Centennial

On the north side of McMahon's Creek, nearly a mile above its mouth, seventy years ago stood a large elm. The site where this tree stood is not far to the north side of the B & O Railroad at the point where is now situated the dwelling of Mr. David Klee. Under this elm in the summer of 1809, as nearly as can now be discovered, on a pleasant Sabbath morning was gathered together nearly all the folk from the countryside, for word had gone out that a Presbyterian minister was to preach that day. There were present on that

occasion some who came from curiosity that they might see what a Presbyterian minister looked like. They felt the need of the preaching of the gospel. It was this feeling that brought together those assembled that Sabbath day under that old elm tree.

In the army of immigrants that invaded our land in its formative years were certain persons from Ireland, bearing the names of Cunningham and Moore and Livingston; and from Scotland by the names of McKimmons, McAllister, and Simpson; and others, whence we know not, by the names of Merritt, Paxton, and Kelsey; and of course there were others whose names we do not have. All of these settled in our eastern country until the Lord again set them going with their faces westward, a part of an army which no man could turn back. Finally they founded homes in that region which is now within a five-mile radius.

Before the day of that first gathering, a neighbor had kindly drawn together some logs which were arranged in parallel lines across which he laid a number of poles--on these the people sat to hear the Word. They had assembled there not only to listen to the preaching of the gospel, but also to be organized into a church. Then on that Sabbath day under that old elm was effected the organization which has since been known as Rock Hill Presbyterian Church.

Such an organization had for some time been desired by these pioneers. Years before they had left their old homes in Pennsylvania and Virginia where they had heard the Word preached regularly, and they would not give sleep to their eyes until they had found a place for the Lord's House. And what a fit place that was to organize a church! Near by were the cool running waters; overhead the broad and graceful arms of the elm, a tree whose wide spreading branches, graceful curved limbs, and massive trunk were well suited to represent the future wide spreading influence and strong power their young church was destined to exert in this community. It was under an elm that William Penn made his famous treaty of peace with the Indians, and where he afterward laid out Philadelphia. It was under an elm that George Washington assumed the command of the Continental Army. And under an elm Rock Hill was organized! How beautifully this grand old tree is associated with the history of our country! How reverently it ought to be associated in our minds with what is strong and good and true.

To Reverend Abraham Scott belongs the honor of being the first to bring a Calvinistic sermon to this community. What a strangely quiet spell must have settled down that morning upon that lovely valley as those early pioneers united their voices in the songs of praise! If we only knew which Psalm they sang! What a new experience for these woods and hills. Long had they echoed to the song of the Indian maiden as she wandered along the shore of the creek; often had they resounded with the wild shout of the Indian hunter as he joined in the dance of his return from a successful hunting season; again and again had they reechoed with the fierce war whoop of the painted savage, for just across the creek was the camping ground which is called to this day (in 1882) "The Old Indian Field."\*\* But never before had these hills and valleys heard a congregation lift up their voices in the songs of Zion. We know that those plain, simple-hearted people were glad for the privileges they enjoyed that day.

\*\*"The Old Indian Field" was located between McMahan's creek and what we now know as West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Bellaire.

When the sermon was ended, and prayer and singing had again engaged their hearts and voices, the minister called on all who desired the organization of a Presbyterian church in their community to rise. In a few moments twenty persons stood up in the congregation. The minister then put to these persons the form of questions usually adopted on such occasions. There they were all answered with a ready good will that showed their hearts were in the work. The next step was to complete the organization by election of elders who should rule over their spiritual interests.

They chose two men known in the community for their integrity and piety, John Cunningham and John Moore, who were then solemnly consecrated by prayer to the office of Ruling Elder. Then followed a prayer for God's blessing to rest on the work which had just been done in Christ's name. They prayed that their work might remain a strong and living monument for Christ; that its power might be felt for generations to come. How this prayer has been answered we are witnessing today. The solemn service was concluded with the benediction. All went away feeling that a great and good work had been done for the community.

The folks who had gathered this day and organized a church neglected to choose a clerk and so we have no written record of their names or proceedings. But tradition says their names are as follows: John Cunningham, and wife; John Moore; John Simpson, and wife; William Merritt, and wife; James Simpson, and wife; Mrs. McKimmons; William Moore, and wife; John Livingston, and wife; Rachel Wiley; Mrs. Elizabeth McAllister; Mrs. Paxton; Mrs. Kelsey; James McGregor, and wife.

(In an article printed in the Presbyterian Banner in November of 1912 it is stated: "Of the names of the original members, said to have numbered twenty, we now know certainly only sixteen." Those omitted from the above list are Rachel Wiley, the wife of James Simpson and James McGregor and wife. It has been learned that the naturalization papers of James McGregor and wife are dated 1817)

While looking at the growth of this church, we must bear these facts in mind; the country was but thinly settled; very little of the land was cleared, indeed it was probably not all entered yet; money was very scarce, which always makes hard times; and there were few ministers and hence their work was much scattered. All these discouraging features constrain us to say the great wonder is not that it grew so fast, but that it grew at all.

For some months the congregation worshipped at the same spot where it was organized. During this time, on bad days and in winter weather, they met in the house of Elder John Cunningham, which stood a few rods north of the old elm. It was soon found however that this place of meeting was not central. It was therefore agreed to move up the creek a mile and erect a "booth" near the southern end of the ridge on which the church (of 1882) now stands. That structure stood almost over the tunnel of the B & O Railroad north of Mr. John Robinson's house and directly east of Mr. Wallace's mill. The site is now marked by a few graves--the only witness that once a place of worship was there. In this little cemetery some of the original members of Rock Hill were laid to rest. The ridge at that point was very rocky, hence originated the name.

The "booth" here erected was a little board structure about five by twelve feet. Four posts were planted, a cover put on, and boards were nailed around leaving a space in the

side large enough for the minister to look out. The congregation sat on the outside and took the weather as it came. Hard by this "booth" was the forks of the road. Tradition states that here stood a row of three buildings, one of which was a blacksmith's shop. Next to the shop was a small dwelling where the minister lived and where Rev. Arbuthnot built himself a little study about twelve by fourteen feet. Here he forged his theological thunderbolts while his next door neighbor's anvil rang out with blows more material.

In the course of time a new "tent" was erected near the summit of Rock Hill where divine services were held until the summer of 1817. (This new "tent" was located about the center of our present cemetery. How early preaching was commenced here is unknown but since the organization date is now recognized as early as 1809 it is possible this "tent" was used from four to seven years prior to 1817.) A gravestone here bears the date of February 1814, it being on the grave of Mr. Jacob Wise who was killed when thrown from a horse. The next grave was for Phillip Wise, a little child of Mr. George Wise, who was accidentally shot in 1816.

In 1814 the church having grown stronger began plans to build a regular house of worship. They accordingly took a lease of one acre of ground for ninety-nine years from Mr. John Wallace. (This lease covered one acre, the site of our present cemetery.)

In the year 1817, early in the Spring, the congregation turned out, cut down trees, hewed logs, drew them together, raised them, and there stood the first church edifice ever built in this immediate vicinity. Its dimensions were about twenty-eight by forty feet. For a time it was used without a floor, and many years passed before it was ceiled overhead. This old house had walls of a good height, three windows on each side, and doors in the eastern end. Stoves were later added to give warmth in winter. Here the people sat in families--each family making its own pew. Some of these were high and some low, some were long and some short, some were rough and some smooth. What crooked aisles those must have been! From the well-made pew of the cabinet maker to the rude slab bench of the common farmer was a wide contrast. Here the congregation worshipped from 1817 to 1846.

Rev. Benjamin Mitchell in 1834 became the first pastor of the church. All previous preaching had been done by stated supplies. Soon the capacity of the church was exhausted, the membership having increased to about eighty. They then decided to build a new and more pretentious house of worship. Some of the congregation objected to building on ground which they held only by a ninety-nine year lease, thirty years of which were already passed. Accordingly Mr. Joshua Keyser was appointed to visit all the numerous heirs of the Wallace family and get them to sign the deed which made Rock Hill Church the absolute owner of the acre which it now (1882) occupies.

So in 1846 the old house was torn down and a new brick church, forty-five by fifty-five feet, was erected in its place on the same site. It was no doubt equal to any country church in Eastern Ohio, and for forty-four years it reflected credit and honor upon those who at that time said, "Let us arise and build."

(The church erected in 1846 stood on the spot identified, in 1962, by the gravestone of George K. Wise, Hugh Giffin, Alva A. Wise, John K. Wise, and others.)

The building of this church in 1846 marked the halfway point in Dr. Mitchell's ministry. He began his labors here as stated supply in the spring of 1834. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1835 he was installed pastor, which office he most faithfully filled for over twenty-three years. It was during this pastorate that ten young men answered God's call to them to do ministerial work.

In her gradual development, Rock Hill reached out her arms in all directions until she embraced nearly fifty square miles. The Ohio River was the eastern boundary; Wegee Creek and Jacobsburg, the southern; and Wheeling Creek, the northern. Take this ten miles of river line on the eastern border and let it sweep back parallel with the river the distance of five miles and you pass over nearly the extent of her territory.

In 1890, owing to the fact that the walls in the church were cracked and the foundation broken, it was torn down and a new, though smaller, building was erected a little further up the hill on a higher and more commanding site. This church was of modern build, of cruciform shape, with large memorial windows in each end, one to the first two elders, the other to the sainted first pastor, the Rev. Mr. Mitchell. Some of the older men said when this church was being built that this time they would build for the young people and hoped it would last a hundred years. It was dedicated June 3, 1891. Rev. W. V. Milligan preached the sermon. It had been a hard struggle for the handful of people with depleted wealth to build this house.

(The site of this church built in 1890 is marked now by the grave of Frank J. Nelson, Jr. The three structures erected in the respective years of 1817, 1846, and 1890 are all within the bounds of our present cemetery as we know it in 1962.)

But in a little over twelve years, during a terrific rain and electric storm, it was struck with lightning and burned on June 25, 1902. That was a time when the strongest heart might shudder. Nevertheless there were those who could say amid all the darkness, that a missionary church never dies, and that God ever leads his people on. Then going back to the schoolhouse to worship, they took courage, went forward and the church in which we now worship was built, furnished and paid for before it was offered to the Lord our Master on August 26, 1903, at a cost of thirteen thousand dollars.



Notice the faith with which this congregation acted. On July 1, 1902, only six days after the destructive fire, it voted to build a new church and seek a new location. The



insurance carried amounted to \$2,400.00 on the building and \$600.00 on the furniture and had been adjusted to \$2,825.00

After many pros and cons, as is always the case when a momentous decision must be made, on July 22, 1902 the congregation voted to build the new church at the intersection of the Tunnel Hill Road and the Rock Hill Pike (which had been rerouted at this point) on land donated by Mesdames Mary and Ermina Galloway. It is felt by many that this choice of location has played an important part in keeping our church in prominent existence.

A great part of the money that paid for this church was raised from ice cream socials and from suppers (oyster, chicken-waffle, and so on) given by the ladies in their homes.

The membership of our church in 1903 was one hundred eighteen, with one hundred sixty-four enrolled in the Sunday School.

In the nearly nineteen years of Rev. Walter L. Alexander's pastorate, Rock Hill built two churches at a cost of \$19,000 in labor, material, and money, and contributed to the Lord's work a total of \$34,612.00, an average of \$326.50 per member. Of this sum, \$5,073 was for missionary uses, and average of \$47.58 per member. The average membership for the nineteen years was one hundred six.

For three years of Rev. J. P. Stoop's pastorate (1909 was the year he came to Rock Hill) the contributions for missions were \$1,259.00 or \$415.00 per annum; and \$4,594.00 for entire contributions for three years. The average membership was one hundred eighteen.

Rock Hill has never been a large church. At one time one hundred ninety names were reported to Presbytery, yet the average membership for seventy years is close to one hundred twelve. This large list of names, in all probability, included the membership of Hope Chapel.

Since her organization in 1809 until 1882 Rock Hill had received into her communion about 600 members, had baptized about 600 persons of whom over 400 were children.

The Rev. R. H. Hollyday organized the First Church of Bellaire in 1860, it taking forty-one members from Rock Hill. Rev. J. J. Lane organized the Coalbrook Church, it taking fifty members from Rock Hill, and sixteen others following in a short time, making sixty-six in all. Also from Rock Hill has gone forth part of Wegee Presbyterian Church (now the Shadyside Church) and part of Kirkwood Church. All this sorely taxed her strength, but her work continued and grew.

On October 14, 1962, our membership numbers one hundred sixty-four. Our 1961 Sunday School report showed one hundred twenty members. Our total church receipts for 1961 was \$9562.00. Of this amount \$1,116 went to benevolences.

There had been no altering to the exterior of our church over these sixty years with the exception of new cement steps and curb, and the addition of the pines to the landscape. The large pine was planted in 1946 by the Builders Class as a memorial to Chester C. Braun, Jr., who gave his life for his country in Belgium in January of 1945.

When the church was built in 1903 it was decided not to have a basement - only a furnace room. In 1952 it was apparent we needed more Sunday School room and felt a basement was now the answer. Since we were now using two new gas furnaces installed in 1948 it was possible to go ahead with the basement idea. Most of the planning and work was done by church members and the board of trustees. Digging and removing the dirt was one of the first steps, and it was during this process that some more of Rock Hill's famous rocks came to light. Everyone labored hard and long and the project was successfully completed and dedicated by Rev. Howard L. Weir at the morning service on August 12, 1956. It would be hard to evaluate the labor but \$446 in cash was given by former members to help finance this project.

At the dedication of this church on August 26, 1903, there was also dedicated a lovely reed organ to "the deceased pastors, elders, and ministerial sons of our church." Rev. Fred O. Wise of Toronto, Ohio had taken a great interest in an organ and had done a lot of work canvassing and raising the money to put this instrument in the new church. But after many years of rendering beautiful music, it was beginning to present problems and our thoughts turned to a new organ. The old organ had been hand-pumped by young men of the congregation but in the early 1950's Rev. Howard L. Weir put an electric motor on it, thus relieving the young men of this chore. But there came a time when the old instrument had completed its useful service and plans were made for the purchase of the new Hammond organ which now graces our sanctuary. The purchase price was raised by canvases and donations and was dedicated August 31, 1958.

By the late 1950's the metal walls of the choir loft and church front were rusting through and after much deliberation that part of the church was renovated with beautiful wood paneling and new lights in the choir. A beautiful picture of Sallman's Head of Christ was placed on the back choir wall as a gift from Mr. and Mrs. J. McClellan Thomas. This work was completed in 1961.

Reference: "History of Rock Hill Presbyterian Church 1809-1962"

Footnote: Most of these first pages have been the historical accounts of earlier writers, identified in the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church Scrapbook. Subsequent material was compiled to bring this account up-to-date.

## Importance of Historical Committees

We would like to recognize those who have contributed to maintaining the church records and preserving its history through the years.

The first person we are grateful for is Helen Keyser, who served for many years as a teacher in the Bellaire Schools, Clerk of Session for the church and organist for many years. It was through Helen's efforts, as clerk of Session that Session records and membership records dating back to 1841 were professionally bound preserving them for posterity. Many of these records were in deteriorating condition and could have been lost if not for her efforts.

We also would like to recognize the 100<sup>th</sup> and the 175<sup>th</sup> History Committees. The church is indebted to those who served on the 100<sup>th</sup> History Committee, which consisted of, Loretta Greenlee, Katherine Nelson, Russell Giffin and Theodore Wise. There are over a dozen descendants from that committee on the 2008 membership roll.

Those serving on the 175<sup>th</sup> History Committee included Wilma Nelson, Glenn Giffin and Juanita Slater. All these committees performed extensive research into the history of the church and recorded it for future reference.

Finally, as we approach the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the church we would like to recognize Bob Willis for his vision, hard work, and dedication in having the Church accepted for placement on the National Register of Historical Places. Bob Willis currently serves as an elder for the church and is retired from Bellaire Schools as a teacher.



**Historical Committee, 1962**  
Loretta Greenlee, Katherine Nelson,  
Russell Giffin, and Theodore Wise

**Co-chairs of the 200<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary Committee, 2009**  
Bob Willis and Kathryn Simon



**Historical Committee, 2009**  
Marguerite Brinker, Bob Willis,  
Mary Louise Cowen, Elizabeth Bowman,  
Wilma Nelson, Pat Mehlman,  
Kathryn Simon, Sheryl Willis, and  
Diane Conroy (not pictured)

**Technology Team for  
Historical Committee, 2009**  
Diane Conroy and Sheryl Willis



## Ministers

	<u>Years of Service</u>
Abraham Scott, Stated Supply	
John McMillan, D.D. (organized St. Clairsville in 1798)	
Jacob Lindley, Stated Supply	
James Arbuthnot, Stated Supply	
Joseph Anderson... (Installed at St. Clairsville in 1798)	
Mr. Reed, Stated Supply	
Benjamin Mitchell, D.D., Pastor	1834-1857
R. H. Hollyday, Pastor	1858-1860
John Moffat, D.D.	1861-1863
J. D. Fitzgerald, Stated Supply	1863-1864
D. H. Laverty, Pastor	1865-1867
J. J. Lane, Pastor	1868-1879
J. G. Black, D.D., Pastor	1880-1886
J. A. Bower, Pastor	1887-1889
Walter L. Alexander, Pastor	1891-1908
James P. Stoops, Pastor	1909-1916
Robert Grant, Pastor	1917-1918
James Clark, Pastor	1919-1921
James A. Norris, Pastor	1922-1929
B. James Long, Pastor	1929-1939
Louis E. Campbell, Pastor	1941-1943
Paul N. Elbin, Ph.D., D.D. Interim Supply	1943-1962
Herbert Fuller, Pastor	1944-1946
Howard L. Weir, Pastor	1949-1957
L. Earl Barthow, Pastor	1957-1961
Rev. S. James Kocsis	1963-1967
Rev. Arthur Campbell	1968-1970
Rev. Gary Warren	1972-1976
Rev. John Brownlee	1977-1982
Rev. James R. Chain	1984-1990
Rev. Susan Foxall	1992-1993
Rev. Kenneth Hollenbaugh	1993-1994
Rev. Arby Conn, Interim	1994-1998
Pastor Don Cordery	2000-2008

Rev. Benjamin Mitchell served both Rock Hill and Mt. Pleasant Churches for twenty-three years. When his age no longer permitted him to serve both churches, he resigned at Rock Hill and gave full time to the Mt. Pleasant congregation.

The Reverends Hollyday, Moffat, Fitzgerald, and Laverty served both Rock Hill and Bellaire until a time in 1866 when Rev. William Gaston was called to Bellaire.

We also shared Reverends Lane, Black, Bower, and Alexander with the Coalbrook church, Rev. Lane having effected their organization in 1875.

Rev. J. P. Stoops helped with the ministry at Hope Chapel.

Rev. B. James Long ministered at the Warnock church when his pastorate was at Rock Hill.

Dr. Paul N. Elbin was President of West Liberty State College, West Liberty, West Virginia, and in that capacity alone is a very busy man. But he has graciously given of his time to fill our vacant pulpit on many occasions since October 17, 1943. His thought provoking and inspiring sermons have done much to hold our congregation together at intermittent times over a nineteen year period. His one hundredth sermon, delivered on October 13, 1957, introduced two main thoughts; the second one was given to us the subsequent week, October 20. His text was the sixth verse of the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew taken from the parable of the sower and the seed. "And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." Certainly for all who would listen he has helped us sow deeper spiritual roots so that we may not fall when we meet temptation. At the October 14, 1962 celebration of the founding of the church, Dr. Elbin gave his one hundred forty-first sermon at Rock Hill, the equivalent of three years of service to Rock Hill Church. All who knew Dr. Elbin have a warm feeling in their hearts for him and realized his sincere and daily service to his Master.

Rev. James Kocsis was installed as pastor of Rock Hill on July 28, 1963. He brought to the church a desire to minister to the youth of the community as well as the seasoned members of the congregation. He was the first minister to move into the newly built manse. There were a large number of teenagers in the church active in Westminster Fellowship. One member of this group, Carol Polivka, went on to become a minister of the gospel. Carol was taken under the care of our session and Muskingum Presbytery in March 1964 and later was ordained in Rock Hill church in December of 1967. Others of this group of young people are now serving or have served as deacons, elders and trustees of Rock Hill Church.

Rev. Arthur Campbell and his wife Judith moved into the manse June of 1968. To our regret, he decided to take a call nearer his home in Pennsylvania after only two years with us.

Reverend Gary Warren was the next young minister to serve at Rock Hill. It was during his time here that the library was built. The back porch was enclosed to make this addition to the church with the work being done by members of the congregation. Mr. Zygmunt Rataiczak, a good neighbor and member of Bellaire Presbyterian Church constructed the built shelves covering one wall of the room. Rev. Warren put out a church newsletter named The Rock Hill Report. Rev. Warren also preached one Sunday a month at Warnock Church. Rev. Warren left to answer a call to Ligonier, Indiana in 1976.

Our church was asked by the Presbytery if we would consider a yoke ministry with First Bellaire Presbyterian Church. With a vote of thirty-four in favor and eight against the sharing of a minister, a search was begun for a minister. Rev. John Brownlee answered the call and in December 1977 he began his services at our churches. Rev. Brownlee retired in October 1982 and he and Evelyn headed south to enjoy the Florida sunshine. Their daughter Betty and family live in Colerain, Ohio.

Rev. James R. Chain became the minister of the two churches in January 1984. He and Clara retired in 1990 going to the Cincinnati area.

The worship service to ordain and install Susan Foxall to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament was held at Rock Hill August 2, 1992. A joint meeting of the two sessions of Rock Hill and First United was called by the Presbytery's Committee of Ministry to present Rev. Foxall's request to dissolve the pastoral relationship due to Rev. Foxall's recent illness.

Rev. Kenneth Hollenbaugh accepted a call from the congregation on September 19, 1993. It was during Rev. Hollenbaugh's tenure at Rock Hill that session committees were established. A Scottish service was planned for July 19. The session, by call of the Executive Presbyter, met on June 2, 1994 for the purpose of pastoral concern. Rev. Hollenbaugh presented his letter of resignation as Pastor of First United and Rock Hill effective August 15, 1994.

The session hired Reverend Arby Conn as interim pastor on October 1, 1994 for 25% of fulltime. Rev. Conn was an employee of Martins Ferry Hospital. Youth Group was begun, a new member's class met on Sunday mornings to study Presbyterian history and a Sunday morning social hour. A computer was purchased for the church and a handicap chair installed. A monthly worship service was held at Mark Kennedy Park on Sunday in the afternoon. A reception for Jennifer and Arby was held at the Rock Hill Firehouse on July 3, 1995 celebrating their marriage. The newlyweds traveled on their motorcycle for a vacation. Rev. Conn accepted a call by First Presbyterian, Wellsburg, WV on June 15, 1998 as designated pastor and Session voted to release Rev. Conn two weeks early from his contract to accept the call.

At the April 23, 2000 session meeting the Pastor Nominating Committee asked the session to dissolve the committee and for the session to employ Don Cordery as student pastor of this congregation. Pastor Don was an associate pastor of Bellaire Methodist and supply pastor at Belmont Presbyterian. At that time he was a student of Pittsburgh Seminary. The first combined worship service of the churches of Rock Hill and Belmont was held on August 6, 2000 at Camp Presmont. Pastor Don became a Commissioned Lay Pastor at the Presbytery meeting held January 25, 2003. Pastor Don, his wife Debbie, and two daughters, Tara and Tonya, lived at their home on 64850 Beth Drive, Bellaire. Rock Hill saw an increase in membership and attendance over the years that Pastor Don was here. Active Membership roll increased to 210 in 2007. The average attendance for 2007 was 99 from a low of 65 in 1997. The recording of attendance at worship service was begun in 1990. While Pastor Don preached at both churches, we held an annual church picnic, shared together a Thanksgiving dinner, the children's Christmas Program and Vacation Bible School. Later when Pastor Don worked for a national organization called Sports World, he found it necessary to limit his time to one church, that being Rock Hill. The session accepted Pastor Don's resignation as pastor July 27, 2008.

On August 24, 2003, Rock Hill Church celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this building. A lawn reception followed the special worship service.

## Moderators

Ministers who have served as moderators when we have been without a pastor are Rev. Joseph Byrne, Rev. Larry Armstrong, Rev. Mary Jane Knapp, Rev. Jay McMillen and Rev. Dr. Roberta Croker.



**Rev. Dr. Roberta Croker, 2009**



## National Register

*What a blessing for our little church!* After more than a year of work by the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, Rock Hill Church became a National Historic Building on December 5, 2008.

Bob and Sheryl Willis made the initial report and as other questions were asked of us, more paperwork followed. We were also represented by Steve Avdakov from Heritage Architectural Associates who had an excellent team of individuals who were experienced in completing the work necessary for this whole process. Hundreds of pictures were taken, both inside and outside the church. Blueprints were submitted (we actually had the originals).

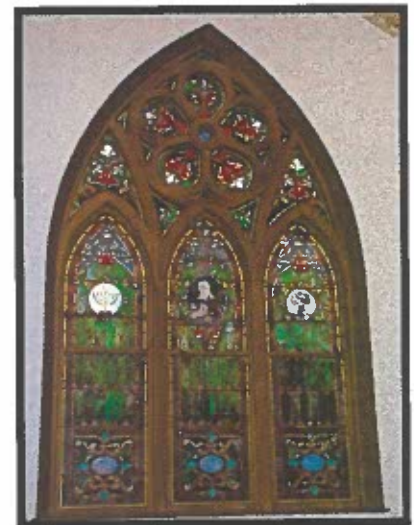


Measurements were made, inside and outside the church, to verify that no drastic changes had been made to the building. Many forms were completed and many revisions were made over the year. The architectural firm researched all aspects of the application and kept us advised on each additional step.



Bob and Sheryl Willis and Kathryn Simon attended a meeting at the State Library of Ohio in Columbus to meet with the Ohio Historic Preservation Advisory Board. Twelve places were being considered that day and Rock Hill was the ninth to be presented. Needless to say, the day was very long as Bob, Sheryl and Kathryn listened intently to all who were questioned on very minute details of the sites they were representing. Our church did not come up on the agenda until after lunch.

Finally, Rock Hill Church had it's time of consideration. A power point presentation was done by the advisory board using some of the photographs submitted. Individual board members had a packet of all materials that we had submitted and copies of all pictures, prior to the meeting, so they could study our little church and decide on its worthiness. Bob, Sheryl and Kathryn were introduced to the board and Bob spoke as a representative for public support about the Rock Hill Church nomination. The architect, his secretary, and the historian stood ready to answer any detailed questions that might arise. However, no questions were even asked and nothing needed any further verification.



God has blessed this congregation once more as the vote was taken and it was unanimous. **Rock Hill Church “spoke for itself.”** One comment from a board member was, “What you see from outside does not compare to what’s inside.” They were talking about the pressed tin used in the ceiling and walls, the beautiful stained glass windows and so much of the woodwork and furnishings being original. However, our faithful Rock Hill congregation is what is **“on the inside”** that has kept this church such a well maintained historical building for 106 years and a faithful group serving our Lord for over 200 years. **Praise be to God!!!**

## Church Board Members

Below are the Church Board members serving in 2009:

### Session/Elders

Kathryn Simon (Clerk of Session), Jeff Nelson, Jane Keyser, Doris Ciofani, Jim Cowen, and Carole Krebs

### Board of Deacons

Susan Nelson, Lori Vinka, Sheri McAninch, Pat Mehlman, Roger Conroy, and Debbie Cordery.

### Board of Trustees

Rick Wise, Jeff Stolz, Bruce Cowen, Chester Giffin, Robert McAninch, and George Kaldor  
We also have the following three dedicated men with whom we cannot do without:  
Bob Willerton, Don Brinker and Tom Rataiczak

## Sunday School

The Sunday School program has been an important part of our church. There was a time when it was held only in the summertime as was the case in 1878. There were fifty members enrolled in 1879; by 1889 the number had increased to seventy-two; in 1962 the enrollment was one hundred twenty. There is a record of the first annual Sunday School picnics observed in 1900, and were still being enjoyed in 1962. It was held on the church lawn with long tables set under the trees for the food. After the noon dinner, there were games to play and booths setup to sell ice cream and other treats.

The Sunday School roll had sixty-five names in 1962. There were six classes: one adult class and five classes for youth through high school. The classes were held Sunday morning before worship service. In earlier years there had been a men's class and several women's groups that met on Sunday morning for Sunday School.

At this time there is one adult Sunday School class that meets before worship service and two children's classes. The children's Sunday School is held during worship service following the children's sermon. The average attendance to the children's classes number around thirty.



Easter 1991  
Christmas

The children's Christmas Program is an annual event requiring much preparation and an opportunity for the congregation to hear once again the great story of the birth of our Lord.

Through out the years Children's Day had been observed in May and the Youth Group has held the morning worship service.



"Members of the Builders Class 1956"  
Seated: Mable Wise, Helen Giffin, ?????, Nell Stolz, Standing: Bertha St. John, Bessie Giffin, Katherine Nelson, Christine Braun



## Vacation Bible School



Jeff Stolz, 2007

Vacation Bible School has been held every summer for about sixty-seven years. In fact it is recorded in the 1935 annual report of expenses for Vacation Bible School. The study has a Bible theme with crafts, songs and games to enhance the Bible stories. An auction has been held for the last four years on the final day of Bible School. Gift baskets and baked items are donated for the auction and Jeff Stolz serves as auctioneer. It is a fun time for all, young and old.

## Music and Choirs

Music has played an important part in our church services from the time of the presenter on down. We would like to recognize the choir directors and organists who have given to this endeavor. There have been others, we know, whose names we do not now have, who have served this way. The choir directors we know are: John Keyser, Charles W. Wise, Charles Nelson, Mrs. Donald (Wilma McAllister) Nelson, and Marilyn Parker. Our organists: Jessie Wise (Lydecker), Josephine Giffin (Drum), Helen Giffin (Dunfee), Eleanor Wise (Goldsmith), Mildred Giffin (Duck), Mrs. Lucy Wise, Mrs. Virginia Galloway, Mrs. Helen Keyser and Judy Greenlee (Kuryn).

Reference: History of Rock Hill Presbyterian Church 1809-1962

**GOD BE WITH YOU TILL WE MEET AGAIN**  
J. E. Rankin      *God Be With You 9889 With Refrain*      William Gould Tomer, 1882

1. God be with you till we meet a - gain, By His coun-sels guide, up-hold you.  
2. God be with you till we meet a - gain, 'Neath His wings-se-cure-ly hide you.  
3. God be with you till we meet a - gain, When life's per-ils thick con-found you,  
4. God be with you till we meet a - gain, Keep love's ban-ner float-ing o'er you.

With His sheep-se-cure-ly fold you, God be with you till we meet a - gain.  
Dai - ly man-na still pro-vide you, God be with you till we meet a - gain.  
Put His arms up-hold-ing 'round you; God be with you till we meet a - gain.  
Smite death's threat'ning wave be-fore you; God be with you till we meet a - gain.

**REFRAIN**  
Till we meet, Till we meet, till we meet, till we meet, Till we  
meet at Je - sus' feet; Till we meet; Till we meet, till we  
meet, till we meet, God be with you till we meet a - gain. A - MEN.

Information from "History from 1903-2003" booklet follows:

During 1979 Helen Keyser, organist for 36 years and Wilma Nelson, choir director for 27 years both resigned. Judy Greenlee took over as organist and Marilyn Parker as choir director. When Marilyn became ill, Wilma returned. After Judy married and moved away we had many pianists and organists taking turns. The choir, not having a regular organist or pianist to practice with, dissolved. Jennifer Smolenak has been our pianist for a few years now and our choir sings occasionally. In the Spring of 1981, Dale and Mary Heil presented the church with chimes which were added to the organ. When Alice Wise Null substitutes for our pianist, she sometimes plays the beautiful chimes with the organ.



## Youth Service

During this time without a minister Jeff Nelson has led the morning worship service several times. Jeff filled in for Pastor Don Cordery when Pastor Don was on vacation and has continued to lead as needed. He and his wife, Susan, and son, Jeffery, returned to Rock Hill a few years ago from Dayton, Ohio. Jeff is the son of Donald and Wilma Nelson. Jeff's talent for public speaking and faithfulness to God became apparent when he spoke at his father's funeral. Jeff is a lay pastor of Upper Ohio Valley Presbytery and an active elder of Rock Hill Session. He is a welding engineer.

Brenda Dunlap has stepped up to lead the worship service when the need arose in the past.

Nancy Cowen DeStefano has led the morning worship service while we are without a pastor. Nancy is employed by the Upper Ohio Valley Presbytery and is a student at the Pittsburgh Presbyterian Seminary.

Also, the Youth Group has led the congregation in worship to the delight of all.



**Jeff Nelson,**



**Youth Christmas  
play practice  
with Director  
Debbie Cordery**

## Monday Morning Bible Study

The Monday Morning Bible Group started at the home of Kathryn Simon on March 6, 2006 to begin the 40 Days of Purpose by Rick Warren. The study was a six week spiritual growth campaign supported by Rock Hill Presbyterian Church and started during the Lenten season.



The original members were:

Kathryn Simon  
Wilma Nelson  
Margaret Dawson  
Edie Blacker  
Robert Blacker  
Sheryl Willis  
Catherine Maxwell  
Shirley Mayer  
Virginia Stewart

After the six week program was completed, it was decided by the group to continue a religious study program. Videos and various individual studies were completed until it was decided to choose a program to study the Bible. That is where the group is now.

Changes have occurred over the three years. Virginia Stewart is no longer able to attend due to the illness of her nephew. On July 16, 2006, Bob Blacker passed away and Edie has been unable to return to the class. Bob was instrumental in continuing the program. On May 11, 2008, Margaret Dawson passed away and she is greatly missed. When it was decided to support a program to purchase Bibles for the second graders, Marge was the first one to open her checkbook.

Good changes are that we prayed for the health of Shirley Mayer's friend, Helen Pinzone. Helen has since joined our group; however, she is again fighting cancer. We continue to pray for Helen. Also, Carole Krebs, Emmie Giffin, Pat Mehlman, and Rev. Dr. Roberta Croker have joined our group.

We continue to donate to the Children's Bible Fund. We have fixed meals for Habitat for Humanity, helped serve funeral dinners and purchased an eight-foot table for the church.

We meet in Christian fellowship where our faith and love for God is first and our love of family, friends and community is next.



## Women's Association

The women of the church have always been an important part of the church as evidenced by the following text from an earlier book of church history.

The Session minutes of April 7, 1868 show that the ladies of the congregation indicated they would pay \$50 of the \$800 preacher's salary and that they would pay for papering the church. The committee to solicit contributions for papering the church was made up of Mrs. James Alexander, Mrs. Peter Neff, Mrs. Robert Nelson, and Mrs. William Thomas. This was surely the first movement of the Ladies' Aid spirit and the subsequent benefit they have been. Our church has always been carpeted from wall to wall, and besides the original it has had new carpeting twice. The money raised by the Ladies' Aid. A few of the other things they have done over the years are here mentioned. Various things have been purchased for the parsonage, paper, blinds, paint, linoleum, heating stove, to mention a few; napkins and plates for the communion table; choir robes for the junior choir; paid for installing gas in the Sunday School room and purchased a heating stove and hot plate; sponsored a community Halloween party for over twenty years; did Red Cross sewing and knitting during World War II.

Funds for these projects have been raised by rummage sales, resale of merchandise, traveling baskets, and lawn fetes. For the last eight years the Ladies' Aid has raised about \$800 annually. In addition to the things mentioned above, they have paid almost the entire cost of paneling the church front and choir loft, new cupboards in the Sunday School room, new chairs purchased for the basement room and the upstairs Sunday School room, and \$500 on the purchase price of the new organ. There is always the good fellowship enjoyed while doing this work together.

In a bound journal of Women's Missionary Society dated 1932 - 1952, there are recorded minutes of all-day quilting sessions held monthly at the Grange Hall. Members listed were Nannie Wise, Minnie McAllister, Mrs. Edgar E. Wise, Loretta Greenlee, Mrs. Frances Giffin, Katherine Nelson, Leota Wise, Hazel Tarbet, Lucy Nelson, and Bessie Giffin. These are hand written accounts of each meeting.

In the April 20, 1944 minutes new members were Mrs. Helen Keyser and Mrs. Loretta Greenlee. The minutes of the August 14, 1946 held at the home of Mrs. Roy Givens, records that Almeda and Alice Wise sang, "Rock of Ages".

In March of 1964 the Ladies' Aid and Missionary Societies were replaced by The Women's Association. Circles were formed within the group for Bible study and any business matters would be decided by the entire association. Thus gradually the other groups disbanded; the Ladies Aid, then the Missionary Society, by 1967 the Builder's Class, followed by the Semper Fidelis Class in 1969.

The Women's Association has supported our denomination programs through Thank Offering, Summer Medical Offering, Hunger Program and has continued its support of the local church with monetary gifts for carpeting, manse drapes, money for the piano fund,

Bibles for graduating seniors and Christmas mitten tree. The association donates mission money to many organizations and special projects each year. Those serving as officers this year are: Catherine Maxwell, Moderator, Joann Perry, Treasurer and Mary Louise Cowen, Mission Co-Coordinator.

December 13, 1970

In the absence of our President Mrs. Frances Kiffin, Mrs. Florence  
 their own Vice President, <sup>took charge of</sup> ~~opened the~~ meeting when the Home's Missionary  
 Society met for their December meeting at the home of Mrs. Patricia  
 Nelson. Mrs. Kiffin opened the business session by reading a poem.

The Secretary's report was read and approved.

The Treasurer's report was read and approved.

Mrs. Bessie Kiffin made a motion that we give \$25.00 extra  
 this year to be divided between the Foreign and National Missions.

Motion carried by Mrs. Carl Meyer.

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this year to be divided between the Foreign and National Missions.

Mrs. James DeBlasio was a guest at this meeting at the  
 home. Mrs. Neely was presented with a candlewick quilt  
 basket in appreciation of her visit to our society and  
 the interesting talk she gave us.

It was announced that the next meeting would  
 be at the home of Mrs. Roy Stevens; devotional leader,  
 Mrs. Theodore Hise; program leader, Mrs. Helen Keyser.

Loetta Eckenles, Secretary

The Ladies Missionary Society of the Rock Hill Presby-  
 terian Church met Aug. 14, 1970 at the home of Mrs.

Roy Stevens with 15 members and 2 visitors present. Mrs.  
 Theodore Hise had charge of the devotions in keeping with the  
 program theme "Upstream and Downstream". She heard a story,  
 scripture and songs, and Mrs. Eva Lark led in prayer and  
 devotions were closed with Almida & Alice Hise singing  
 "Rock of Ages". Mrs. Helen Keyser led the program which was  
 opened by scripture reading by Florence Eckenles. Several of  
 us reviewed articles concerning the health and political program  
 we are making in several of our home mission fields.

Mrs. Herbert Fuller, president, took charge of our business  
 meeting. She read a letter from Mrs. St. L. Neely, who at-  
 tended our last meeting, thanking us for our consideration  
 and gift, and encouraging our society to keep up and im-  
 prove our work which she commended.

The quarterly committee was announced for the next  
 meeting which is to be at the home of Mrs. Carl Kiffin with

## Cemetery Board

A Board of Trustees for the cemetery was established in January 1969. Serving on the first Cemetery Board was J. Edgar Wise, Stanley Fraley, J. Ernest Giffin and Carl Giffin. This board is appointed by the Session and is responsible for maintaining the grounds and the financial business of the cemetery. Others who have served over the years on the Cemetery Board are Paul Greenlee, Donald Nelson, Bob Cowen, Bruce Dunlap Jr., Dick Giffin, and Don Brinker. Those serving on the current board are Rick Wise, Jeff Nelson, Bruce Dunlap III, and Don Giffin.



**Congregational Dinner, 2009**  
Don and Paula Giffin presented  
To the church a deed to land  
adjoining the cemetery.

## Church Newsletter & Worship Bulletin

A church newsletter has been written and sent to members over the history of the church. Sheryl Willis is the current editor. Tootie Greenlee previously held the position of writing the newsletter for many years.

It is recorded that a newsletter was sent to members in the military during World War II. Also, when Rev. Warren was pastor he wrote a newsletter named the Rock Hill Report and it was printed by James Russell.

Linda Rataiczak has faithfully typed the church bulletin for many years. She coordinates with visiting ministers to make sure the bulletin contains the items they are planning to incorporate into their sermons. She keeps everyone up-to-date with a schedule of activities each week.

## Prayer Chain & Rock Hill Website

A prayer chain was implemented in 1998 by the Deacons as a way to communicate during the week for important situations or concerns of church members. Prayers are asked for those experiencing illness or death in the family. It also serves as a way to notify members about cancellation of meetings caused by weather conditions. Sheri McAninch, currently sends out an e-mail concerning church events and concerns to all who have e-mail addresses.

The e-mail address is [www.rockhillprayerchain08@comcast.net](mailto:www.rockhillprayerchain08@comcast.net). Also, she recently created a fantastic and informative web page for the church that is a wonderful link to those who live away from Rock Hill and a great source of pride to those who are here every week and experience the many activities of the church. It has a section for the following: Home, History, Photos and Contact. The address for that site is [www.rockhillchurch.net](http://www.rockhillchurch.net)



**Sheri McAninch, Linda Rataiczak, Sheryl Willis, 2009**

## Quilters

Have you seen “quilter’s fingers?” The finger tips on the left hand are callused by the prick of the needle coming through the fabric. Around 1974 some women of the church who had been meeting for Bible study, wanted to do some special charity work. It was decided they could accomplish this by quilting and raising money toward this goal. They met once a week at the home of Hazel Caruth who had a large unused room upstairs where frames could be set up and fabric could be stored. They now meet in a cozy room built in the newly purchased house. A room was built in the basement with new lighting,



dry wall, paint, and carpeting. Most of the work was done by church members and gifts. The original stone fireplace was fitted with a gas log insert to make a cozy area for quilting. There are three quilt frames set up on which the quilters work. Sadly some of the original members have passed on. The current quilters are Vera Stroup, Dot Stolz, Flo Grammer, Mary Louise Cowen, Joann Perry and Becky Keefer.

It is estimated that \$40,000 has been made and given to mission projects at home and beyond. The lovely tradition of giving a baby quilt to the first baby born of parents who are church members was begun about 1976.

Some members of the group enjoy their craft of quilt making at home and have received prize ribbons for their talent at the Belmont County fair.



**Quilters on March 11, 1987  
at the home of Hazel Caruth**

**Seated in Front:**  
Frances Giffin, Flo Grammer,  
Dot Stolz

**Seated in Middle:**  
Juanita Slater, Helen Keyser,  
Isabel Greenlee

**Standing:**  
Libby Dewey, Vera Stroup,  
Hazel Caruth, Ann Polivka,  
Mary Lou Cowen

## Old Manse

The historical information on the previous manses states the old manse was acquired by the church, along with a stable, from James Alexander in December of 1867 for the price of \$5.00. This was paid for by George K. Wise, William Greenlee, Hugh Giffin, and Trustees of the Presbyterian Church of Rock Hill. The land was to be used only for a parsonage and should the church cease to use it for that purpose, it would revert back to James Alexander or his heirs.

In April of 1963 the old manse and barn was dismantled at no cost by Barton Contractors. The Board of Trustees proceeded to secure plans for constructing a new manse on the same site. Approval for this project was given from the Muskingum Presbytery.

By September 15, 1963 house plans had been approved and an estimate for construction was received in the amount of \$19,500. The Presbytery approved a mortgage of \$8000. There was a building fund established by the estates of Esther and Flora McDonald, their gift being the sum of \$10,000. J. Ernest Giffin also made a contribution to this fund.

A construction contract was let in early 1964. The new manse was dedicated in May of 1964. The total estimated cost was \$17,500, with the mortgage being retired in January 1969

This manse served the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church until 1998 when it was used as rental property until it was sold in 2008. The church at this time decided to sell the old manse, and to purchase the new manse next to the church. The Trustees hired Attorney Alan Banker and he examined the old Quit Claim Deeds from the Alexander heirs and then advertised in the newspapers for any heirs who might claim the property as stipulated in the original order for sale. Finally, Mr. Banker petitioned the court so that we could legally sell the property.

Church members worked diligently to ready the old manse for sale by painting, cleaning, and removing wallpaper. Electric work that needed to be done was performed by Rick Wise. The dedicated work of these individuals helped to sell the manse quickly. The manse sold for \$133,000 to Charles and Florence Miller on May 31, 2008. After cost, the church sale netted \$131,254.60 part of which was used to pay off the \$100,601.26 loan on the new manse.

## New Manse

At a Congregational Meeting 2006 it was agreed as recommended by the Trustees to the purchase of the property adjoining the west side of the church property. This home was built by Paul and Gilda Duffy and included approximately six acres of land, behind the church. This new manse will give us room for future expansion of both parking and a septic system. Also, we now have additional office and classroom space. The purchase of the house by the church was completed February 27, 2007 for \$125,000. The church had a loan in the amount of \$100,601.26 on the new manse which was paid off with the money from sale of the old manse.

Much cleaning, painting, and repair work needed to be done and was accomplished by faithful volunteers from the church. A new room was built in the basement of the new manse for the quilters to use. A new furnace had to be put in the house and the windows were replaced. A memorial gift of \$10,000 was received and other gifts were given for the building of the new room in the basement.



## Pavilion

The Rock Hill Memorial Pavilion, as it would come to be called, was built next to the church in 2006 with each access off the parking and handicap accessibility. Plans for the pavilion were drawn Trustee, Rick Wise, were then given to K & K Construction who built the pavilion.

The Rock Hill Memorial Pavilion was completed and dedicated on Sunday, June 11, 2006 after the regular church service that day. Trustee, Bob Willerton, made the presentation of the pavilion to Pastor Don Cordery and the Rock Hill Congregation. Lynn Lukehart played a trumpet solo and Rev. Dr. Roberta Croker gave the benediction. That evening a covered dish dinner was followed by a concert of praise hosted by Lynn Lukehart of Lynn Lukehart Ministries.



Vacation Bible School, was held June 26-30, thanks to Tom Rataiczak, Jeff Stolz, Bob Willerton, Byron Thoburn, Rick Wise, Bob Willis and Dan Palicka, who worked very hard on a Saturday morning to build picnic tables to fully equip the facility just in time for the children and teachers.

In July, church members and friends assisted Elder Jane Keyser and Pastor Don Cordery to present the leadership course, "Beyond the Sidelines," to the Bellaire Big Reds' Football team and coaches at the pavilion. Over 80 people attended a covered dish picnic to celebrate the event. The pavilion was certainly being used to its fullest advantage!

A congregational picnic was held on Sunday, August 13, 2006 and a wonderful time with fellowship and games was held. The warm summer weather even allowed the pavilion to be used for Junior Church on many occasions. The first Vesper service was held in the Memorial Pavilion on Sunday evening, September 17, 2006.

We are blessed to have so many talented, faithful individuals that gave so unselfishly of their time and abilities to serve our church. We hope this will always be a fitting tribute to our loved ones. A plaque will be displayed in the pavilion, which will list the names of all who are to be memorialized or honored through its construction.

We continue to plan for future improvements to our Rock Hill Memorial Pavilion. May God bless all those who have helped to make this dream a reality.



## Excavation of Church Basement

### Basement Construction at Rock Hill Church by Congregation, 1955

Men and boys of the Rock Hill Presbyterian church constructed a basement under the building where rooms and other facilities were installed. The excavation started in early October and was completed by volunteer laborers who worked most nights and on Saturdays.



Rev. Weir, pastor of the church, reported that at times there were as many as 25 people working at the same time. There were at least 50 members of the congregation assisting in the project at one time or another.

The work was greatly facilitated by the use of an elevator owned by Paul Greenlee. A tractor and scoop from Dale Heil also proved useful as did Ernest Giffin's electric hammer and other tools furnished by individuals.

The women of the church also took part in the project by taking turns in bringing sandwiches, cookies, cakes, coffee and fruit drinks to the workers. They also held public suppers, lawn fetes and bake sales to raise money to complete the project.

The work was done under the supervision of the trustees, Melvin Huffman, Carl Giffin, Donald Nelson, Russell Giffin and J. McCellan Thomas.



**Excavation of Church Basement**  
Jack Hamilton, Russell Giffin, Theodore Wise, and David Wise

## Important Dates

- 1809 Rock Hill Church is a continuation of a church founded at McMahon's Creek.
- 1817 Log church erected at site of our cemetery.
- 1846 New brick church built, forty-five by fifty-five feet, on the same site. The spot is identified by the gravestones of George K. Wise, Hugh Giffin, Alva A. Wise, John K. Wise and others.
- 1865 - 1866 The manse was built.
- 1866 The church was incorporated, certainly a step not many congregations took in those early days.
- 1890 Congregation voted to build a new church building and it was dedicated June 1, 1891. The site of this church is marked by the grave of Frank J. Nelson, Jr.
- 1902 Lighting struck and burned the church on June 25.
- 1902 The congregation voted to build a new church on the intersection of the Tunnel Hill Road and Rock Hill Pike on land donated by Mary and Ermina Galloway. This is the site of the present church. A great part of the money that paid for this church was raised from ice cream socials and from suppers, before it was offered to the Lord our Master on August 26, 1903 at a cost of \$13,000.
- 1943 & 1945 We published a monthly four page newspaper and it was sent to members and former members serving in the Armed Forces.
- 1956 The basement was dedicated at morning worship service on August 12.
- 1958 The Hammond organ was dedicated August 31. The purchase price was raised by donations.
- 1960 The creation of a "Manse Fund", made possible by a gift from the estate of Lizzie Nelson Bickerton, the main thought being that this would be a basic amount to build on for a new manse in the future.
- 1964 A new Women's Association was formed. This was an organization that combined two former ones, the Ladies Aid Society and the Women's Missionary Society.
- 1964 The new manse was dedicated in May at a cost of \$17,500.

- 1976 The Lexan glass covering for the stained glass windows were installed. The original front doors were replaced by metal ones. The swinging wooden doors were not energy saving. The back porch was enclosed for a library. Most of the work was done by the men of the church and Zygmunt Rataiczak built the shelves.
- 1977 Rock Hill Church was yoked with First United Presbyterian Church in Bellaire and shared a minister's services.
- 1984 Speakers were installed
- 1985 Parking lot paved by Lash Excavating for \$970.
- 1986 Ceiling fans and choir robes were purchased.
- 1988 Exterior repairs were made on soffits, gutters and windows.
- 1991 Basement was carpeted.
- 1993 Basement steps & wall repaired, exterior painting, \$6,749 and porch column done.
- 1994 Belfry repaired. Folding doors were installed in the basement.
- 1994 Ceramic floor installed in vestibule.  
Scottish Service was held on June 19.
- 1995 Metal basement doors installed. A computer was purchased. The yoke between Rock Hill and First Presbyterian Church was broken. A reception was held for Jennifer and Arby Conn.
- 1996 A storage shed was built at the manse by several adults and youth members.
- 1997 Chimneys repaired, cost \$750.
- 1998 Painting of basement, cost \$149. Remodel of bathrooms, cost \$ 618. Front porch, steps & sidewalk, cost \$5,200. After school program was held.
- 1999 Ceramic floor installed in bathrooms, \$429. Church roof shingled, \$20, 595. Library roof repairs, \$960. File cabinet, \$458. Choir chairs \$2,072.
- 2000 Chair lift was a grant, \$3590. Sanctuary and upstairs of the church building was painted, cost \$10,860. Fans, \$352.
- 2001 Sound system, \$3,390. Carpeting of upstairs, \$13,420.

- 2002 New furnaces and air conditioning installed. Cost \$13,401. Septic repaired a cost of \$2,135. Clip on mikes.
- 2003 Steps built outside to the lower yard, \$435. Copier & stand purchased \$1,275. Exterior of church painted, \$3,240. Gutter repair, \$851. Vent & pipe, \$1,289.
- 2004 Chairs for back room, \$4,770; Seal & patch lot, \$2,807; Roof on old manse, \$4,800;
- 2005 Hymnals, \$2,863
- 2006 Pavilion & tables, \$52,325.
- 2007 Library roof repair by T. M. Klempa, \$1,275. Pew Bibles and bible racks were made and installed on the pews by Tom Rataiczak and Don Brinker, cost \$406. Furnace was purchased for the new house, \$2,195. Supplies for basement room, \$2,103.
- 2008 New manse - The quilter's room was built by the men of the church including the electrical and plumbing work. Carpet for the room was \$800 and donated by a member. There were other donations of \$1,650 for the building of the room. New energy saving windows were installed throughout the house with the removal of old windows and installation done by men of the church. The windows cost \$3,956 and the window trim was \$408. There were costs of \$665 for repairs to the upstairs and basement bathrooms with the work being done by men of the church.
- 2009 Two computers purchased for use by the treasurer and Clerk of Session, \$1,962.

## Memorial Fund

Many gifts have been made to the church in memory of loved ones. We have a very generous congregation that is dedicated to Rock Hill Church, not only in gifts of money, but also with time and talent in the preservation to the structure and historical changes over the years. A listing of projects funded with Memorial Fund money and gifts given in memory loved ones follows:

- 1945 Gold cross on the altar in memory of Chester C. Braun
- 1962 Gift of brass door handles in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Weir
- 1974 Baptismal Font in memory of Theodore Wise
- 1975 Church was heir to money from estate in memory of Flora & Esther McDonald
- 1975 Sunday School furniture in memory of Wilma Kreis Nelson.
- 1992 TV, VCR, re-winder & stand from the Memorial Fund
- 1992 Manse refrigerator from the Memorial Fund
- 1994 Modern fold doors in the basement from the Memorial Fund, \$3,536.
- 1995 Computer from the Memorial Fund, \$2,774.
- 1995 Metal basement doors
- 1996 Chorus books and choir books from Memorial Fund
- 1998 Front steps, porch and sidewalk from Memorial Fund, \$5,200.
- 1999 Choir chairs & file cabinet donation in memory of Doris Dunlap
- 2001 Carpet upstairs given by donations & Memorial Fund, \$3,300.
- 2001 Sound system donation given in memory of Jack Stroup, \$3,399.
- 2003 Copier, \$1,275, 4 ft. by 8 ft. tables.
- 2004 Old manse roof, \$4,800.
- 2005 Cubby units & storage, vinyl flooring in basement \$1219 in memory of David Wise
- 2006 Pavilion, \$27,800 of the \$50,639 cost.
- 2007 Bibles, Furnace in new manse, \$2,195 part of gift in memory of David Wise.
- 2008 Windows in new manse, \$4,364 part of gift given in memory of David Wise.

Other recorded gifts made to the church are; kitchen remodel, choir chairs, offering plates, outside bulletin board, chimes, riser in choir loft, pulpit Bible, altar scarf, kitchen range, flatware, altar vases & carpet for quilter's room.

## Memories

*The following are selections from some of the memories of the Rock Hill congregation, past and present:*

*An entire booklet, with the complete versions, is a part of the church memorabilia that has been compiled for this anniversary event.*

My earliest memories are of Sunday school. These classes met in the back room of the sanctuary and the huge wooden doors were always closed. The whole body of attendees gathered at 10:00 AM in the main sanctuary where opening exercises were held. We sang and truly made a joyful noise for about (I guess) fifteen minutes then we went to our classes. The little ones met just inside the door to the porch. We sat on little wooden chairs in a circle. The first teacher I remember was my cousin Mildred Giffin. There were quite a number of us.

- *Mary Louise Cowen*



Rusty and Matt both went to Bible School, Sunday school and participated in Christmas programs. Doris Dunlap, Tootie Greenlee, Mary Louise Cowen, Glenn Giffin and Flo Grammer were some of their teachers. I remember Barb Bailey clapped loudly as Rusty played his guitar to "Rudolph" and "Jingle Bells" in a Christmas program.

- *Dee Major*

John and Bessie Kreis probably moved to Rock Hill in the late 1920s. They had five daughters who survived: Christine (Braun), Wilma (Nelson), Bessie (Giffin), Helen (Giffin) and Carolyn (Greenlee). Christine, Bessie and Helen remained on 'the hill' for their entire lives. The Kreis family is also related to the Tarbets and Weiss families. Their family life revolved around the Church where they were very active and so were their children.

Church was community, and you gave to the community: Sunday school, Sunday Church Service, the choir, Christian Endeavor, Sunday School Picnics, Lawn Fetes, meals served to families who lost someone or who just needed help, and prayers. The Kreis girls were known for being hard workers, good cooks and being outspoken. The men married to these outgoing women also gave time to projects around the church, some of it backbreaking work. Lots of prayers were part of the Kreis girls' lives, and they passed it along to their children, who in turn passed it along to succeeding generations who live all over the country.

Many members of our family are buried in the Church Cemetery where visits to place flowers is a tradition. We are proud of our connection with the Rock Hill Church.

- *The Kreis Family*

I remember serenades of newly married couples...Pounding on pots and pans!!

- *Joan Giffin Belt*

I got a new Easter suit every year for church. We have a picture of Bruce, Greg and I dressed up in our suits, overcoats and hats. WE LOOKED LIKE LITTLE GANGSTERS!

- *Jeff Stolz*

The Braun children Betty Lou Burlingame, Donald Braun, Kenneth Braun and Janet Braun Lewis immediately responded that it was the Rock Hill Church Christmas Eve activities. As youngsters during the 1930's depression years, the Christmas service was held on Christmas Eve. The church was decorated with pine and a fully decorated Christmas tree. Parents would put gifts under the tree.

Following a traditional religious service, the sound of reindeer bells would be heard, and Santa Claus would appear through the back door. Most Rock Hill residents were suffering financially because of the depression; therefore, the children were very grateful for anything that they might receive. Each child was given a small decorated box filled with hard candy and occasionally a chocolate vanilla drop. Many times they would also be given an orange which was much prized during these depressed times. Betty always said that the fruit was important to remember because it represented 'abundance'. Donald loved this special treat. Later generations of Braun children would receive an orange in their stockings, and to this day at Braun Christmas gatherings fruit is always served.

- *The Braun Children*



Since I was told as a high school student that I could not read the Bible because I would not be able to understand what I was reading and may interpret something wrong, I was totally fascinated by my first Sunday school class. It was the first time I had ever read chapters and verses from the Bible.

- *Emmie Giffin*

As a small child I remember sitting with my brother Bob in a circle on the "little" chairs. The first teacher I remember was Isabel Giffin and then Eleanor Wise. I had a big doll and I named her Isabel. That doll ended up in "doll hospital" many times to get a new head.

- *Lois (McAllister) Rogers*



We moved up here in October, 1999, and I didn't know there was a Presbyterian Church nearby. The few times we would go past it I never paid any attention. Then, just before

Christmas, I heard something coming from the front yard. There was a man, a woman and a group of teenage boys and girls. I didn't know them, but they were singing Christmas carols. When they finished singing the man gave me a brown bag. It had a tree ornament and a note inviting us to come to Rock Hill Presbyterian Church.

- *Elizabeth Bowman*

Rev. John C. Brownlee served as Pastor of Rock Hill Presbyterian Church from 1977 until October 1982. He was ordained as a yoked Pastor serving the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church and The First United Presbyterian Church in Bellaire. As a family, his wife, Evelyn, and daughter Betty, age 16, at that time, have many pleasant memories.

The Lord blessed us with a beautiful parsonage to move into (even in the snow)

- *Mrs. John C. Brownlee*

After my mother passed away and I had moved onto the hilltop, I attended Rock Hill Presbyterian Church along with my sister, Pat Creamer. We were greeted warmly by Glenn and Catherine Maxwell, Paul and Tootie Greenlee, Carole Krebs and Bruce Dunlap (an old family friend). When we came back the following Sunday, they all greeted us again and thanked us for returning. We felt welcome and started attending regularly and have been here ever since. Rock Hill is like an extended family.

- *Kate Simon*

Rock Hill Church is a beacon on the hilltop that shines brightly through its mission and service to all. We are honored to be a part of this historic congregation which has so many generations of Christians rooted in the teachings of their Lord from this beautiful building. The Rock Hill Church is a blessing to all who seek to serve their Lord through becoming part of this family in Christ.

- *Bob & Sheryl Willis*

There were many people involved in helping us feel welcome within the community, some still in the church today. There isn't any other place I would rather be and feel that Rock Hill Church is my home. The Women's Association is still a favorite and the Quilters are a haven for doing for others - a place to be yourself and know you are loved.

- *Vera Stroup*

I believe my great-great-great grandmother, Elizabeth McAllister, was among the founders of Rock Hill Presbyterian Church in 1809. What an honor to be one of the descendents of that hardy group. I was born and grew up on Rock Hill. My parents went with us every Sunday to Sunday School & worship service and at home we were expected to study our Sunday school lesson. I feel that my brother and sisters and I were raised in a good, Christian home and it served me well all my life.

- *Wilma (McAllister) Nelson*

My memories of Rock Hill Presbyterian Church include:

(i) Bible School with Bessie Giffin leading singing; (ii) church picnics, with delicious desserts and homemade lemonade(with bees); (iii) a time at Mission Band when Mrs. Weir boiled our cider so we children would not be drinking "hard cider". The boiled cider tasted lousy; (iv) Mary Lou Cowen, as a lively Sunday school teacher. She knew each of us by name; (v) Wilma Nelson, in choir practice; (vi) scraping crud off of the dishes at the



church soup suppers held at the Grange Hall; (vii) Boyd Nelson with his camera, and (viii) all of the others who so willingly gave of their time to raise us in the church.

- **Barbara Jean Polivka Omerod**

When I think of the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church, I think of the title of Hillary Clinton's book, "It takes a village..." The Rock Hill Church is certainly the village that helped so much in my growing up years. All of my memories are fond ones. My earliest memory is that of Alva Dennis stopping to pick up my sisters and me to attend Sunday school. Bea Parker was a favorite Sunday school teacher and neighbor. I still have an Uncle Wiggly book she gave me as a gift.

- **Marjorie Anne Polivka Strom**

Rock Hill Presbyterian Church was a meaningful part of my life. I remember the "just-right-size" chairs in the Sunday School Primary Dept. and the treasured leaflets with the colored picture of that Sunday's lesson. Also, the summer picnics - tables which suddenly appeared under the trees, the unforgettable chocolate cake and the "stand" where the ice cream cone was the best ever. The foundation of my faith was the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church.

- **Dorothy Nething Griffith**

I remember the beautiful flower arrangements that Bea Parker always would put on the pulpit. I looked forward to seeing them each week.

- **Flo Grammer**

My memories of Rock Hill Presbyterian Church have been over a span of many years and it has continued to be an important part of my life. Of the first 10 years probably what stands out the most is Christmas. I was so nervous for the speech that I had to say for the Christmas play. Mother would put my hair in long curls. The Children's Day program was an exciting time with the real roses my mother put on the fence placed on the stage at church. Don and I were married at RHPC March 21, 1954. Our four children attended church, said speeches and became members. Our eight grandchildren were baptized at Rock Hill and each has received the wooden replica of the church this past year. It is a reminder of his or her connection to Rock Hill Church where ever they go.

- **Marguerite Wise Brinker**

I remember the great food at the lawn fetes and playing with all the kids.

- **Donna Braun Harsch**

When they were building the church's basement, my grandma took food for the men and me to the church. I had my little red shovel and "helped" the men dig. Looking back on it, I'm sure those men were not at all happy to have me around. But my grandma wanted me to be able to say I helped build the basement.

- **Kreis L. Lewis**

During church services I loved looking at the stained glass windows and how the light would come through the different colored glass and the beautiful pews. No matter where I lived throughout the country, the memory of Rock Hill Church stayed with me - **It was my church.**

- **Beth Burlingame**

## Military Service

Although we are sure this is an incomplete list of members who have served in the military, here are the names of those that we have received. There is also a mailing list from the 1940's in the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church Military Book.

Lieutenant George M. Wise, September 5, 1841 - February 27, 1923. He served with the Forty-third Ohio Regiment during the Civil War organized late 1861 and 1862. Ohio's Official roster shows that the Forty-third Regiment participated in battle at New Madrid, Missouri, luka, Mississippi, Corinth, Mississippi, Decatur, Alabama, Resaca, Georgia, Kenesaw Mountain, Georgia, Nickajack, Georgia, the siege of Atlanta, the siege of Savannah, and at River' Bridge, South Carolina. - Reference: The Ohio Historical Quarterly, Volume 65, Number 1 January 1956

Webb Perry, "I was in the Army 4½ years. Of that time I was overseas 43 months. I spent my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday in the Philippines. I got my mother to sign papers saying I was 17 when I went in. I was all over the Pacific; Korea, Japan, Okinawa, Porto Rico, Hawaii and Alaska."

Wilbert Thomas Perry, Jr., U.S. Air Force

Wally Scott Perry, U.S. Army

Donald Edward Bowman joined the Army Reserves 1950 and retired 1990. He was in and out during that time but got his 20 years.

Sergeant First Class Donald R. Brinker served in the U. S. Army June 16, 1952 to June 16, 1954 with thirteen months spent in Korea. Don received two Bronze Stars for action while serving in Korean War. Other service data recorded beside Korean SVC Medal, are Combat Infantry Badge, PAR 5 SO#177 HQ 14Inf 26Jun51, United Nations SVC Medal and National Defense SVS Medal. - Reference: Report of Separation from The United States, Dept Army

Alvin Mayer, Master SGT Signal Corp. 1950 - 1952

Robert McAninch entered U.S. Army June 1982 at Ft. Sill, OK. Assigned as Artillerymen to Korea 1982 1983. He finished Active Service @ Ft. Riley, KS 1985. Enlisted into WV Army National Guard 1985. Accepted to U.S. Army Flight School 1987 @ Ft. Rucker, AL. Returned to WV Army Aviation as a pilot 1988 at Wheeling WV - Ohio County Airport. Since '88 to present flew UH-1, OH-58; UH-60 Helicopters. Performed many missions to include Drug Eradication, Disaster Relief and Iraq Deployment.

Wally W. Major, Spec 4<sup>th</sup> class, U.S. Army 1961

Russell L. Major, Staff SGT. U.S. Army 2002

Eric Slater, U.S. Air Force

Donald Carman, U.S. Air Force

James S. Cowen, U.S. Navy

Robert Cowen, U.S. Army

Glenn Edmond Maxwell, U.S. Army

Boyd Nelson, U.S. Navy

Donald Nelson, U.S. Air Force

Frank Jeffery Nelson, U.S. Marine Corps

Gerald P. Null, U.S. Navy



Julia Ritter, U.S. Army Nurses Corps

Betty Lou Braun Burlingame was one of the first Belmont County female residents to be commissioned in the U.S. Army Nurses Corps. She entered before World War II was declared.

Chester Carl Braun - served in the U.S. Army's gladder infantry unit. He was killed in action on January 4, 1945. A plaque at the corner of the church is a memorial to him.

Donald Dale Braun - served in the U.S. Army's Pacific Theater during World War II.

Kenneth Keith Braun - served as U.S. Army Guard ambulance driver in the European Theater during World War II.

Elizabeth 'Beth' Burlingame - served in the U.S. Navy as a journalist during the Vietnam War.

Kreis Lyle Lewis - An air traffic controller, served on active duty in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. He joined the U.S. Air Force Guard and has served in Afghanistan and Iraq.