

Church of the Brethren, Ladoga Congregation

Source: Winger, Otho History of the Church of the Brethren in Indiana, 1917, Brethren Publishing House, Elgin IL pp 71-75

THE LADOGA GROUP OF CHURCHES Including Ladoga, Mt Pleasant, Bethany and Little Walnut Largely Written by W. R. Harshbarger and E. N. Goshorn In the year 1826, William R. Smith and Mary Smith, his wife, moved from Darke County, Ohio to Putnam County Indiana, and settled on the Big Raccoon Creek. He was a bishop in the German Baptist church. Elizabeth Roberts, Jacob Ronk and Hannah Ronk, his wife, Henry Moss and Frances Moss, his wife, all moved the same year, with others. We have no papers showing the date of the organization of the church, but it was doubtless organized at once, with William R. Smith as its first Bishop.

William and Sarah Guilliams, Mary Smith and Christian Landis came in the fall of 1827. In the autumn of 1829 an election was held for the deacons. Jacob Ronk and Alexander Smith were chosen. The letters of Jacob Garver and Sarah Garver, his wife, are dated September 26, 1830. In his letter he is recommended as "house father and bishop with us on Obion Creek". It does not give the name of the church, county or state. It is signed by Brethren James McRoy Spea, Joseph Moyers, Abraham Miller, William Souder and William Pringle. About 1820 Daniel Miller and wife moved from the Four Mile Church, Union County, Indiana, and located near the east line of Park County, Indiana, on Big Raccoon. He was a bishop. Thomas Miller and wife, Sally, moved from Four Mile church with letters dated July 21, 1832. They located in Putnam County, Indiana.

An election was held in the Raccoon church district in 1835 for the election of minister. Brother Thomas Miller was elected. He moved to Missouri in 1847 or '48. In 1837 an election was held for minister and deacon. Francis Myers was called to the ministry and Samuel Britts to the office of deacon. In their early days they had their troubles. Elder W. R. Smith wanted to hold church meetings publicly. Deacon Rouk and others said that it was not according to the rules of the Brethren. To settle the difficulty they sent for Brethren Boenin and wine, of

Virginia. They came on horseback to the little organization on Raccoon Creek. They heard the case and decided that the Ronks were right and that Smith was wrong. For this and other reasons the church was put under the care of Daniel Miller.

In the thirties the Harshbargers, Myerses, Britts, Graybills, Pefleys, Stoners, and Ronks came from Virginia and settled around Ladoga. This was quite encouraging to the little church. August 21, 1846, at the home of Elder Jacob Garber on Raccoon Creek, Jeremiah Wooden was called to the ministry. Elder William Gish moved into the church in 1847 and became its third elder. About this time Daniel Miller and Francis Myers moved to Iowa, where they died. In 1848 the first churchhouse was built in the south part of Montgomery County, called Cool spring meetinghouse. In 1853 Daniel Himes and Evesley Burk were elected to the ministry. August, 18857, John Guilliams and George Stover were elected deacons. Matthias Frantz, who came from Botetourt County, Virginia, was ordained in 1836. He lived to the nearly 90 and died in 1898.

August 16, 1858, an election was held for two speakers. Robert H. Miller and Daniel Stoner were elected. (Daniel Stoner was the brother of David Stoner, Samuel Stoner's father.) this election was in charge of Hiel Hamilton, Samuel Murray, Daniel Himes and Wesley Burkett. At this time Brother Matthias Frantz was bishop as fourth in line from the beginning. We have no date of his taking charge. The papers showing the date of Robert Miller's advancement and installation are lost. His house was burned in 1863, with all its contents, including valuable church papers. He was bishop of the church from some time in the early sixties till October 22, 1880, as fifth bishop in line. In September, 1864, an election was held resulting in the calling of Martin Neher to the ministry and Jacob Neff to the office of deacon. April 27, 1867, Jacob Mahorney and William R. Harshbarger were elected to the ministry. October 8, 1867, David Peffley and Samuel Rettinger were chosen deacons. August 12, 1871, William R. Harshbarger was advanced to the second degree, and Jacob Neff was elected to the ministry. At this time William Frame, John Neff and Jacob Himes were elected deacons. October 22, 1880, William R. Harshbarger was ordained and the church put under his care as sixth bishop.

"R. H. Miller went to Ohio to take the presidency of Ashland College in September, 1880, and in January, 1881, he moved there and also became the associate editor of The Gospel Preacher along with S. H. Bashor and J. H. Worst. July 26, 1881, he was given full control of that paper. He moved to North Manchester, Indiana, April 1, 1882, and in the following fall became the bishop of the church there. He died in Mount Morris, Illinois, March 8, 1892, where he had gone to give a series of doctrinal sermons in connection with the work of the school in that place. His remains were laid to rest in the cemetery near the West Manchester church, Indiana. His talent as a preacher of the word was of a high order. He was systematic and logical in his discourses and was a great debater. He was keen and analytical, calm and self-controlled in all his debates. "

December 6, 1881, there were elected to the ministry William Lauter, Thomas Watkins and Thomas Everson; January 7, 1884, they were advanced to the second degree. William Lauter died in California, Thomas Everson died in the Ladoga church. L. T. Holsinger and family moved into this church sometime in the year 1888, and rendered valuable service during their seven years' stay. October, 1890, Samuel Stoner was called to the ministry, advanced to the second degree October, 1899, and ordained to the eldership January 4, 1904. H. H. Keim and wife came here from Pennsylvania January 19, 1891. He was a minister in the second degree.

He was ordained to the eldership May 22, 1897. January 13, 1891, the following deacons were elected: William Hicks, Jesse Ronk, Frank Rose, John Hime and Wilfred Harshbarger. May 31, 1900 E. N. Goshorn was chosen minister and Charley Kaylor deacon. May 31, 1906, E. N. Goshorn was forwarded to the second degree of the ministry and Clayton Mahorney was chosen deacon.

February 29, 1908, E. N. Goshorn was ordained to the eldership, succeeding William Harshbarger, and in January, 1909 was chosen bishop of the church, which position he still holds. He became the bishop of Mount Pleasant Church July 3, 1909, and held that position until July 15, 1911. In 1857, the second house was built in Putnam County and called Little Walnut. In 1869 the third house was built, one mile north of Ladoga, and called Bethel. In 1888 Mount Pleasant churchhouse was built, about four and one-half miles east of Ladoga in Montgomery County. In 1894 the fifth house was built, in Boone County, about eighteen miles east of Ladoga and ten miles south of Lebanon. It is known as Bethany. John A Miller, of Nettle Creek, is elder. William Hicks and Oscar

Harrison are deacons. The Little Walnut church was organized as a separate church December 1, 1892, with fifty members.

William Harshbarger was bishop and Zimri Marker and Hiram Heady deacons. Its membership is now quite small. The Mount Pleasant congregation was organized January 4, 1904, with eighty-seven members. Samuel Stoner, bishop; Jesse Ronk and Charley Kaylor, deacons. Since then David Stoner, R. H. Miller Jr. , Jesse Ronk and Charles Ronk have been called to the ministry. Jesse Ronk was later ordained and is now presiding elder. These churches, having thus been organized as separate congregations, left ninety-one members in the Raccoon church. In 1804 the name of Raccoon church was changed to Ladoga.

The church now has sixty members, with E. N. Goshorn and William Harshbarger, elders; David Pefley, John Himes, Frank Rose, Oliver Miller and Wilfred Harshbarger, deacons. Congregations in the Ladoga (Raccoon Creek) area of Montgomery county Cool Spring established 1848 in Southern Montgomery Co Little Walnut established 1861 Putnam Co Bethel established 1869 1 mi north of Ladoga Mt. Pleasant established 1888 4+ miles east of Ladoga Bethany established 1894 10 Miles no of Lebanon Ladoga was first called Raccoon Creek these comments (by Merle Rummel): Tobias Miller, son of 'Potter' John Miller, moved from the Four Mile Church, Union Co IN, across the state to the Raccoon Creek in Park County Indiana in 1818. He was followed by most of his brothers and sisters. 'Potter' John (son of the well known Elder Jacob Miller -of the Beaver Dam Church in Frederick Co MD, who in 1773 went to Franklin Co VA and in 1801 came to Montgomery Co OH) followed in 1823, although he returned to the Four Mile to the home of his son, Minister Daniel Miller, about 1848, before he died. Potter John had been originally seen on the Great Miami River near Dayton Ohio a few years before 1800, with a "Gingrich", certainly his brother-in-law, Joseph Kingery.

These were the first two Brethren to come to the Four Mile: Joseph Kingery in 1803 to College Corner OH/IN near Huston Woods State Park in Ohio and John Miller to Indiana Territory in 1805, just south of town. William R Smith came from the Four Mile Church, Union County IN (according to his land records at Vincennes IN, not from Darke Co OH). He is identified as the William Smith of

Franklin Co VA, who traveled with Elder Jacob Miller and preached in English while Elder Jacob preached in German. As such, he is identified as a British soldier of the Revolution, who remained in Virginia. He followed the children of Elder Jacob Miller to the Four Mile Church about 1816.

The Elder Daniel Miller (son of Elder Jacob Miller) was a pastor at the Lower Four Mile church, before moving to the Raccoon Creek. He became a leader of a migration in 1855 to Monroe County Iowa. There is a Harshbarger letter of a couple years previous, stating that Daniel was then in Arkansas, looking at land (which he seems not to have taken). Henry Moss and Francis Moss (brothers), John Fosher and the minister, Thomas Miller were also from the Four Mile church. Henry Moss' wife was Francis Wilkerson, Francis Moss' wife was Mary Webster, Daniel Miller's wife was Elizabeth Shideler, John Fosher's wife was Elizabeth Landis, Thomas Miller's first wife was Susan Young. Thomas Miller was son of Col John Miller, a nephew (unproven) of Elder Jacob Miller. Thomas Miller's second marriage was to Sarah Ronk, daughter of Jacob, and they moved to Cedar County Missouri. (Thomas Miller was still at Fincastle in 1849 – per family letters of the day, but the 1850 Census has him in Missouri.) Family traditions here at Four Mile, say that Thomas was shot during the Civil War Bushwhacker raiding in Missouri, while trying to escape to Kansas, he died there of 'consumption' in 1863. The membership letter of Joseph Garver was from the Obannon Church, Clermont County Ohio (founded 1795, where I pastor [now the Stonelick Church of the Brethren -surviving meetinghouse] – while I do not recognize the name of James Spea -Joseph Moyer, Abraham Miller, William Stouder and William Pringle were main member families at Obannon). Joseph's father was the well known Elder John Garber of the Beaver Dam church, Frederick County Maryland, who in 1776 went to the Flat Rock church, Rockingham County VA. Obannon Church records stated that Joseph had gone to Shelby Co OH, but this indicates he came on to Ladoga. Joseph had first come as a minister to the Ten Mile Church near New Richmond OH, then moved up to the Obannon church near Goshen OH. Elder R. H. Miller was of another Miller family, but is one of the Great Ministers of the Brethren Church in his day.

His son, R. H. Miller Jr, was a long time Professor of Bible at Manchester College, North Manchester Indiana (my Bible professor). I was a college classmate of Dr Richard Harshbarger, Business Department chairman at Manchester College, recently retired, and made several contacts about these Four Mile/Ladoga

families to his father, Albert Harshbarger, retired at the Timbercrest Home, a school principal from near Ladoga. Information on these Four Mile families is in my book:

The Virginia Colony, found on-line at the Union County IN Library site: <http://www.union-ounty.lib.in.us/Gen.../TableofContents4M.htm> -this includes an appendix section on the Miller Letters (of which 3? are from Thomas Miller, at Fincastle). Feel free to ask any questions - I'll try to answer - Merle C. Rummel=