

Beartown



The true spirit of Methodism which sent the Colonial circuit rider onto the front porch of the pioneer cabin fartherest out continued to burn in the hearts of preachers when Beartown was only one point on a large circuit of the Southern Methodist Church.

This circuit included Churches from Bland Court House, Virginia, to Welch, Beckley, Oceana, etc., in West Virginia. Brother Handy Workman, the first preacher which can be remembered lived at Bland Court House, Virginia. He would take an entire month to travel the large circuit, staying at homes one night during the month. His preaching place was in the homes of the people and in log school houses where they were available. The circuit rider not only preached on Sundays, but once or twice during each week day. The salary was the same as in the days of Wesley, \$60.00 per year. Brother Workman was the first preacher after the Civil War.

The first place of worship in this community was an old log school house which stood where the road now is, near Harry Blankenship's store. A number of different denominations made use of this building until a hewed

log church building could be erected. The log Church was used until the early part of the 20th century. The log Church was put up during the pastorate of Brother Raider, about the time this nation was entering the "gay nineties." "Uncle" Ellis White reports seeing Henderson Burton's father and many other old men shout until their hands were bleeding from striking the top of the low building. People would kneel and pray in the fence corners, for lack of room inside due to the large crowds which would gather for miles around. Brother T. K. Lambert and his neighbors would walk from the top of Crumpler Mountain to Beartown to services after a hard day's work. On one occasion he was so happy when one of his friends was converted that he went into the woods shouting the praises of his Blessed Redeemer.

Although Brother Lambert was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church he never let that fact interfere with fellowship of his brethren of his sister denomination. Brother Romans was one of the first preachers "Aunt Telia" White ever heard preach. Perhaps it was the same Brother Romans who was preaching when your Pastor's mother was converted as a child of sixteen years.

Brother Robert Sawyer Sheffey played a very important part in the establishment of the Church. Brother C. D. Blankenship and perhaps a few others can remember hearing him preach. Brother Sheffey was born, as he puts it, "naturally and the son of Henry Sheffey and Margaret White. July 4, 1820, in Wythe County, Virginia, near Ivanhoe, and was born of the Spirit January 9, 1839, in the third story of John C. Greenway's store house in the town of Abingdon, VA" "Uncle Cage" Blankenship remembers seeing him dismount his horse to turn over a bug in the road which by some means had got on its back, and would have died, had it not been for this act of mercy. He also remembers seeing and hearing him shout when he found honey on the table at "Uncle John" Bailey's home. "Uncle Cage" further relates how Brother Ellis Bailey and Sheffey

came for services on one occasion, and no one came for worship. On leaving the place of worship, Sheffey remarked to Brother Bailey, "A great calamity will be visited upon these people." In less than a month small-pox were raging, killing entire families. One family of five members was all dead at one time. The epidemic was so severe that burial arrangements were made before people died. There was such shortage of labor and help that some of the people saw their caskets brought into the home while they were still living (Draw your own conclusions. I am reporting facts as they were given to me). Brother Sheffey made his home at John P. Bailey's, the father of Brother C. C. Bailey.

Brother Sheffey departed this life on August 2, 1902. His final resting place is in Wesley Chapel Cemetery, Giles County, Virginia. Among his last articulate words were these: "The prettiest and brightest things I have ever seen. How beautiful and bright my star. I am in a good way. The sweet angels. Praise the Lord." With these thoughts and visions he quickly and quietly sank to rest, and slept as a little child to wake in heaven.

As nearly as we are able to ascertain, the present Church building was erected about 1900-1905. Bro. Mastin Bailey made the deed to the property. Bro. Mastin and Bro. John Bailey did most of the carpenter work, while the other men of the community helped with getting the lumber in and the finances. Bro. Simpson was preacher in charge when the building program was in full sway. Bro. E. L. McConnell was here when it was painted and a roof put on. When the congregation was moved in to the new building the name of the Church was changed from Bailey's Chapel to Beartown.

When this building was young one was reminded of the days when the large city authorities would not permit a Methodist Church to be erected in the main part of the residential district, because their shouting would "disturb their peace." During the days of Brothers Bruce, B. C. Wise and H. M. Boyd meetings, around 1910, people could be heard for almost a mile away, it is reported. Sometimes services of praise and prayer would continue until one and two o'clock in the morning. From one of this type of meetings Brother John William Watson Bailey was called to find the burning ruins of the once lovely home he had left a few hours previously. Instead of becoming despondent or discouraged, he knelt and thanked God for the preservation of the lives of his family.

Instead of the parked cars one sees parked by the side of the road now, in those days horses would be hitched to the bushes and in the fence corners, many of them with "side saddles" for mother. A very familiar sight was Brother Henderson Bailey with his team of oxen and wagon loaded with people.

As many of the older members of the Church moved away and others joined the Church Triumphant on the "other side of the river," Beartown entered into a period which was not quite so prosperous. At the beginning of the Conference year, October 1941, the church was in bad need of repairs. The roof was practically gone, paint was almost non-existent, window panes broken, and the passerby would think from the bulge of the sides that the

It Is An Art

What a blessed thing it is that we can forget. Today's troubles look large, but in a week they will be forgotten and buried out of sight.

If you should keep a book, and daily put down the things that worry you, and see what becomes of them, it would be a benefit to you.

The art of forgetting is a blessed art, but the art of overlooking is quite as important.

building was suffering from internal inflammation. The Sunday school was on the verge of going into "winter quarters" to be resurrected in April or May, and the general attendance at the Church services was poor. Our faithful former Pastor had visited the people and preached faithfully, but the people were slow to respond. The faithful few were trying to get the Church repaired with radio entertainers' programs. The missionary vision and zeal was buried beneath a blanket of indifference and spiritual apathy.

On your present Pastor's arrival and observation of the situation, a revival meeting was started at the first preaching appointment, quite a shock to the people as well as a new experience for the preacher. In this meeting all diplomatic language was laid aside and the unvarnished truth was not withheld. The shouts of the redeemed could once again be heard. This meeting resulted in sixteen new additions to the fellowship of the Church. A new metal roof was placed on the building as well as a covering of paint from top to bottom, both inside and out. Other badly needed repairs were made at a total cost of nearly five hundred dollars, including the free labor donated so generously by the men of the community. Since that time the Sunday School has been running both summer and winter with good interest and attendance. The church continues to carry an evangelistic and missionary passion.

During the past five years forty-eight new members have been added to the church rolls. The total Church budget has been increased nearly 100 percent, and this year that budget was paid three months ahead of schedule. They are now supporting and educating five children in India as well as paying the full time support of a native evangelist and his family. They now have a Woman's Society of Christian Service which averaged giving ten dollars per member last year for all purposes. Few prayers will be heard in the regular services which do not include our missionaries and the needy peoples throughout the world. The light from the little church windows can be seen for several miles around from the tops of these mountains. The warmth of its love and prayers is being felt the world around. A good "nest egg" is now in the treasury for the improvement of the old building or the construction of a new and more modern one.



Mr. and Mrs. Andy Parsons

Brother and Sister Parsons were received into the fellowship of the Church on Nov. 9, 1941. All three of their children have been brought to the Church for Infant Baptism. Janice has already been received into the Church. Brother Parsons is our Church Treasurer, and sees that each month's budget is met to the penny and on time. This couple is always ready for service to their Church wherever possible. They are good foundation material for any church.



Mr. and Mrs. Willie I. Mitchem

You'll have a mighty difficult task in convincing this preacher that we have much better Christians than Brother and Sister Mitchem. Despite Sister Mitchem's difficulties,

she never lets the weather or the mountain climb prevent her from teaching her Sunday school class. Sickness has not prevented her from attending her Church more than a half dozen Sundays since she joined it, along with her husband, on November 9, 1941. Someone has said that to be in her presence was like taking a dose of spiritual vitamins. Her big heart of love wins friends for Christ wherever she goes. Brother Mitchem's physical condition prevents as regular attendance at church as his wife, but his spirit and service are wonderful. Never a call for service is given but what Brother Mitchem is ready with his part and a glad heart. The spiritual glow he carries on his face is an inspiration to us all. One never has to guess where this couple will stand on an issue of right or wrong. Tender memories of the lovely fellowship with this family will be carried in your Pastor's heart throughout the years to come.



Mr. and Mrs. Lomas Blankenship

Brother Lomas is now a Church Trustee, and good quiet supporter of his Church. Mrs. Blankenship, or Thelma to most of us, has always stood by the program of the Church and her Pastor since she joined the Church, we'll not say how many years ago. This girl could not do otherwise from the Methodist blood that flows in her veins. She has been Superintendent of our Sunday School for the past several years and she sees that the job is well done.

The Little Things

Life is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles and kindness, and small obligations given habitually, are what preserve the heart and secure comfort.

Addendum 2007 by Patricia Smith

Additional Photos that relate to persons mentioned in this Beartown History article
added by Patricia Smith webmaster: <http://www.mccomaswv.com> November 2007

From Mercer County History -2002
Mercer Co. Historical Society, Princeton, WV



Bob Sheffey

Rev. Robert S. Sheffey, born July 4, 1820 in Wythe County, Va., an
licensed by the Methodist Church (Holston Conference) in 1855, traveled
as a "missionary" through the Mercer County area in the 1880s to "camp
meetings" and is credited with the founding of many of the older churches
hereabouts, namely, New Hope, Riverside, Shiloh, Princeton First, Blue
field, Concord, Spanishburg and others.

Traveling Preacher Rev Robert Sheffey



Harrison Henderson Bailey (son of Mastin Bailey)



*Mastin Bailey (son of John and Nancy Davidson Bailey) and his
Rebecca Harmon Bailey*



*John P. Bailey
(son of Mastin and brother of Harrison Bailey)*

- Mastin Bailey donated the land for the church
- Mastin and John did most of the carpentry work on the church

Taken from the *Pastor's Assistant dated September 1946*, Pastor and Editor Rev. N. W. Looney
History of the Beartown Church addendum by Patricia Smith November 2007



Family of Addison Milam
(back) children Matilda (aunt Tilley mentioned in this article), Perry Allen & Laura
(front) Addison & wife Jane Bailey Lusk Milam

Beartown, WV Wyoming County 2007



Beartown Memorial Church September 2007 Pastor Scott Bailey (direct descendant of church founder John P Bailey)

- Scott David Bailey (listing his Bailey ancestors-founding members of Beartown Memorial Church to show his connection)
- Dennis Kermit Bailey (Scott's father and a member of the congregation)
- Carmen Bailey (President of Beartown Quilters Society – fund raiser for many years for this church)
 - Carmen was married to Clayton Bailey
 - Clayton was son of Everett Bailey who was well known in the logging industry of the area
 - Everett was son of Andrew Jackson Bailey
 - Andrew was son of John P. Bailey and a brother to Mastin Bailey below
- Oscar Bailey 1893 – 1929 (killed in coal mining accident) (Carmen's father)
- Edward P. Bailey 1871 – 1926 (Oscar's father)
- John P. Bailey 1833-1907 (Edward & Andrew Jackson Bailey's father)
- Mastin Bailey 1803 -
- John Bailey Sr. 1764-1836– John's offspring migrated to Barkers Ridge in the 1700/1800s)
- Richard Bailey 1735-1818 (the early settler of the Bluefield area (Bailey-Davidson Fort), was known for owning many thousands of acres of land in Franklin County, Va and in the areas of Lashmeet, Matoaka, Rock, Montcalm, Lorton's Lick, Bramwell, Spanishburg and possibly other areas of Mercer County and also large area in the surrounding counties- his offspring are numerous in this area of southern WV James Bailey – born in England 1714 – came to VA and died in Chesterfield, VA 1763

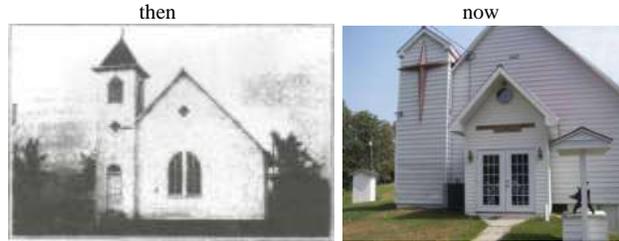


Inside Beartown Memorial Church September 2007

Many of the names listed in this History can be found in this listing of the Beartown Cemetery
Beartown Cemetery, Wyoming Co, WV <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/wv/wyoming/cemetery/bailey.txt>



Beartown Cemetery 2007



Nov 2007. Jim Smith said his father Elmer Smith and uncle Clayton Bailey changed the front door to the church in the mid 1900s. Before it was under the bell tower (as seen in the older photo above) – they removed the large front window and placed the new doors there. The problem was when funerals occurred they had difficulty carrying caskets in through the smaller door. In recent years church members Pastor Scott Bailey and his father Dennis Bailey along with other church members built the covered/enclosed front entry area. The large brass cross on the church today was donated in 2005 by Ron Bailey in memory of his uncle Donald Bailey who was a faithful member of this congregation. At night when the cross is lit you can see it for miles – from one ridge to another on surrounding mountaintops. The upkeep of the church is excellent these days. A new roof, new siding, heat pump, carpeting, seat cushions as an example have occurred and a planned new bathroom construction project which will replace the current outhouse seen to the left in the newer photo of the church. As you can see on page 15 above the interior of the church sanctuary looks very good.

The church has split from the Methodist Conference and is now an independent church. Its name was changed to the Beartown Memorial Church. The congregation had grown so small the conference had stopped supplying a Pastor. After much negotiating the congregation re-purchased the church from the conference. What was so sad their ancestors built the church, donated the land and the congregation over the past 100 years did 100% of the maintenance on the building but they still had to re-purchase it. Pastor Scott Bailey today is preaching in the building his great grandparents and uncles built originally and his 89 year old grandmother Carmen Bailey is witness and very proud to see him behind the pulpit in this church she loves so much.



Carmen Bailey 89 years young in front of the Beartown Church September 5, 2007
(back) Daniel Garland & grandma Pat Smith, Carmen Bailey and her daughter-in-law Sandra Davis Bailey
(front) sisters Katlyn and Allie Smith



Scott Smith in front of Beartown Church 2007