

HISTORY OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION

West Middletown, Pennsylvania

By Roy M. Thompson

"Much obscurity rests on the origin of this Congregation." These are the first words of the history of the West Middletown Congregation, which was written by Mrs. Mary Taggart Clark of Washington, for the Centennial Celebration which was held Sept. 1, 1910--and also the first words of the history written by Miss Lucy Hemphill, and read at the 125th anniversary celebration of the congregation on June 19, 1935. Mrs. Clark and Miss Hemphill, both members of the West Middletown Congregation, have been called to their reward.

To the above named persons I am indebted to a great degree for the material I use in compiling the history for Sesquicentennial Celebration. Others who have written, and from whose material I gathered information, are Dr. John T. Brownlee, Dr. J. B. Jamison, Mrs. Margaret J. Caldwell, who wrote the Address of Welcome for the Centennial Observance, and Mrs. Rhoda Elliott Thompson who wrote a history for a parent teacher group meeting in 1923. From the paper prepared by Mrs. Thompson, I quote the first paragraph, "The early settlers of West Middletown were not slow to recognize the need of a spiritual life, for scarcely had the earliest families established their homes here and built houses for shelter did they meet together for religious services and worship, never forgetting the sacred exhortation 'Forget not the assembling yourselves together for worship'".

Some of the fathers of the church were not careful to keep exact records and preserve for posterity an account of their doings; yet, there is a veneration for them as pioneers of the good cause, men who were earnest in maintaining the "faith that was once delivered to the saints". They furnished the germ from which have grown congregations in various parts of our land. The early pioneers were so busy making history in Western Pennsylvania in general and West Middletown in particular, they had no time to write it. It is therefore left for us to recreate the past by putting together with imaginative insight bits and pieces from old letters, lines from old minute books, articles from yellowed journals, and histories and stories from local newspapers, twenty-five and fifty years old. It is a rewarding task for a writer, even if no one read the story or was really benefitted by it. To read authentic history is for the reader to live again in an era that is past.

From what we can learn the first place of worship was a tent, and we are informed it was placed directly south of the present building. It was in 1818 that what was then described as a substantial building was erected on an eminence in the edge of the village, a little east of the present building. There are no statistics given us as to the size, cost, or other facts concerning this structure. We would like to know, but suffice to say, it satisfied the needs of the congregation and was occupied by them for forty-two years.

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The present building was erected, and the stone high in the west end of the building gives the date 1859. We learn that the cost of this structure was \$4,100. The building, 50' by 75', one hundred years old, is still in a good state of preservation. It did not then, and does not now, bear comparison with many costly buildings that have been erected since; yet, those who have gone before us, and we ourselves, think it a pleasant and comfortable house of worship.

The origin of the congregation of West Middletown, according to Dr. John T. Brownlee in his history written in 1877, is traceable to the year 1802, where Rev. John Riddell, D.D., by appointment of the Second Associate Reformed Presbytery of Pennsylvania, preached the first sermon ever to be preached by an Associate Reformed minister in that place on the first Sabbath of May 1802. Dr. Riddell was from the Associate Reformed Church of Robinson's Run. From that time forward the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Monongahela continued to nourish this infant preaching station by occasional dispensations of the ordinances with Rev. Alexander Calderhead taking up the work as Circuit Rider, and holding services at intervals as stated supply for the united charges of West Middletown and Short Creek for the period 1803-1805. Others whose names are not known, evidently served as stated supplies under appointment of Monongahela Presbytery until 1810 when a congregation was organized and up to 1814, when Samuel Findley, then a young man, was called to the united charge of Cross Roads, Short Creek and West Middletown.

Samuel Findley was ordained and installed as pastor of the united charge at the age of twenty-eight years on June 22, 1814.

Dr. Palmer Findley of Omaha, Nebraska, a grandson of Rev. Samuel Findley, has supplied us with a lengthy history of the Findley Family. We are specifically interested in the part pertaining to Rev. Samuel and like much other material, the difficulty is to know what to leave out. I quote, "Samuel Findley was born on a Butler County, Pennsylvania farm. When a boy he helped his father clear the timber on the farm, and at the age of fourteen he dedicated himself to the service of his Master. It was then that he heard a sermon by Dr. John Black of Pittsburgh, and so impressed was he that he resolved to prepare for the ministry. There were no public schools in those days and Samuel was compelled to rely upon his own devices. He clerked in a store which contained some text books and among them was a Latin Grammar. For a year and a half he studied it pages, literally tying the book to the handle of a plow, to study while plowing, and sitting on a three-legged stool while reading by candle light well into the night. Before breakfast he would walk a mile to recite to Rev. Alexander Calderhead (before mentioned), a Presbyterian minister and a graduate of Edinburgh."

When he was ready to start to Theological Seminary, his father gave him a pony to ride to New York, allowing him to sell the pony and use the money to pay his expenses. The last of the money,

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five cents, with which he started from home was paid for crossing the Hudson River, and the pony was very dull sale. However, he got some work and soon met a friend who assured him of a little help, so he entered the seminary.

The pony was sold, and when Samuel finished his first year's work he walked with a friend, a distance of five hundred miles, to their homes in Allegheny County, Pa. He was able to earn some money during the summer by taking the census of his county and returned to New York to pursue his studies in the School of the Prophets, conducted by Rev. John Mason.

These incidents show us that Samuel Findley was a determined man, a man of iron will and of moral courage; a man who could ride the whirl wind and direct the storm, living a life of self-denial and ever battling for the cause of righteousness. He had abounding faith in the righteousness of his calling. His religion was unadulterated orthodoxy. While condemning the sinner to the torments of hell, he held out to the faithful the hope of salvation. He, after serving the West Middletown Congregation for a period of eight years, was released in June 1822, and spent most of his later life in preaching in Antrim, Ohio. He was also in charge of Madison College. An imposing monument stands in Antrim Church burial ground to the memory of one who served so long, so nobly.

Rev. William Wallace was called to the united charge of the West Middletown, Short Creek and Wheeling. His installation took place November 12, 1828, at which time Rev. John Riddell preached the installation sermon and Rev. John Brown addressed the pastor and people. There is no record of the number of communicants during the pastorate of Rev. Wallace. We are informed that West Middletown received half the time of Rev. Wallace. In April, 1833 at the urgent desires of the Wheeling branch, but much against the will of the West Middletown people, he saw fit to demit his charge here after a period of five years and moved to Wheeling where he spent the most of his labors, although he finished his course at Canonsburg, Pa. In connection with his duties as pastor at the Canonsburg church he was professor of Moral Science in Jefferson College. He passed away Jan. 31, 1851. It is interesting to note in passing that he, Rev. William Wallace, was listed as an agent for the "Christian Intelligencer" representing the State of Virginia while he was located in Wheeling. Many men in the early days were given the name William Wallace (W.W.) being namesakes of Rev. Wallace.

Rev. Samuel Taggart (the third pastor) to minister to the West Middletown Congregation was Rev. Samuel Taggart, and his ministry covered almost one-third of the one hundred and fifty years of the life of this congregation.

Mr. Taggart was born in Ireland in 1803, just seven years before this congregation was organized. When a young man he came with his widowed mother and several other children to this country

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and settled in Pittsburgh. He soon began to make preparations for his life's work and the gospel ministry. He finished his college and theological courses of study in the Western University of Pa. and Allegheny Seminary and was licensed to preach April 1, 1834. Equipped with horse and saddle bags, the bags containing his very meager outfit, he soon made his way to the village of West Middletown. The congregation was so impressed by the conviction that this man had been sent by the Lord to continued his service among them that they made him a call. On the 22nd of October 1834, Rev. Samuel Taggart received and accepted a call to the united charge of West Middletown and Mt. Vernon and was ordained and installed among them on Apr 14, 1835. This Mt. Vernon Congregation was a new congregation formed nine miles east of here. It was located in Smith Twp. near the Smith-Mt. Pleasant Twp. line. West Middletown was to receive two-thirds and Mt. Vernon one-third of Rev. Taggart's services. This relationship continued for ten years, when for reasons deemed sufficient, the Mt. Vernon Branch of the united charge was demitted and the entire time given to West Middletown. It took a stalwart man to do the work Rev. Taggart did, and had imposed on him by the labors of two congregations, with a distance of nine miles to travel. This was done on horseback over ridge roads with many handicaps. Rev. Taggart has been described in appearance as one of medium height. He had broad shoulders and a massive chest. His head was large, and broad forehead was surmounted by hair standing erect and giving the appearance of loftiness and dignity. In dress he was scrupulously neat and teateful. He was a user of the weed but so circumspect and careful in the use of it that even the most fastidious could hardly blame him for the indulgence.

In the year 1844 history tells us that some dissatisfaction arose in the Mt. Vernon Branch of the united charge on the grounds of a sermon preached by Rev. Taggart on the subject of slavery. Mr. Taggart stated his sermon would not advance the cause of Henry Clay was equally adverse to the aspirations of Mr. Polk. Some of the Mt. Vernon people were fearful about mixing politics and religion, so under the circumstances Mr. Taggart considered it his right and duty to propose to presbytery the demission of that branch of his charges. Presbytery pursued the constitutional steps and dissolved the pastoral relations.

West Middletown then asked for the full time of their pastor, and the request was granted. He remained in the single charge for a period of ten years or until 1855, when by mutual agreement he gave up the work and moved to Illinois, while his wife and children remained with relatives in Tarentum, Pa. In a little more than a year he became convinced that the fertile prairies of Illinois, however grateful they might be to the husbandman, suited him no so well as "the good land of brooks of water of foundations depths that spring out of the valleys and hills," in Western Pa. This word was in some way ascertained by his former parishioners in West Middletown, and the result was that in striking attestation of their appreciation of his former ministrations, he was called to

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RESUME HIS WORK AGAIN IN THEIR MIDST. The call was accepted and after an absence of seventeen months he resumed charge of the congregation Sept. 25, 1856. Mrs. Taggart and children, Robert, John, Sammy and Mamie, were all happy to have him return and once again establish a residence in West Middletown, rather than in what was known then as the far west in Illinois or Iowa.

Mrs. Clark, who was a daughter of Rev. Taggart, tells in her history of 1910, on the occasion of the Centennial Celebration that these were very strenuous times for both the preachers and the congregations. The order of service was very much different from what is known to us in this present generation, as to the formal worship service. It was customary to explain the psalm sung at the opening of the service. This involved an exercise occupying anywhere from ten to thirty minutes. The praise service was under the care of a precentor who stood in front of the pulpit and read a line of the psalm and then sang it with the congregation. This process was compelled by the scarcity of Psalm Books. The precentor in all Psalm-singing churches was very much restricted in his choice of tunes, as a collection of only about 12 had the stamp of approval.

The following were among the early directors of music in this church: Hugh Reed, John Jamison, Giles Lawton, William Denny, and James Hemphill. This practice of "lining out" was abandoned here about the year 1865 when David Ross gathered together some of the discovered "good singers" of the congregation and formed a choir.

After prayer and praise service there were two sermons with a brief intermission between. In course of time, a Bible Class was formed to meet in this interval. In this church there were two classes; one taught by Mr. Taggart, who examined those in his group on the morning sermon, and the other by Mr. James Thompson, and elder for forty-six years, who taught the catechism.

On communion occasions, Thursday was set apart as a fast day. The Communion was held on the Sabbath, often in the afternoon, when four or five tables of communicants were served. In that day the pulpit stood between the two east windows. A very wide aisle led from the pulpit to the front door directly opposite, and it was in this aisle that the narrow communion table was set with benches at each side. "Token", little square of metal, were given out a preparatory services on Saturday afternoon. These were lifted by the elders on Sabbath as they fenced the tables. The use of tokens was discontinued about 1876. The common cup was used until a much later date. Many in our congregation can recall seeing the common cup being used until individual cups came into universal usage.

Rev. Taggart writes for Crumrine's History that in 1834, when he accepted the charge, there were about 80 members. In has varied from that number up to 175 in 1882. There were admitted to membership 644 names. During the same period he reports he conducted 117 funeral services of members, 10 of which were ruling elders. The same personal diary records that he performed 131 marriage ceremonies. Several of these were colored folks in the community.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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At the close of Rev. Taggart's long pastorate, Sept. 9, 1884, the members had, one by one, passed away till at length a year or two before the semi-centennial but one name on the roll of 1834 remained. As the months of the final year were joining the past she too was gathered to the dead. The pastor, now in his 82nd year, was well preserved and strong and seemingly as fit as at any time before for the continuance of his work. As he looked around him and saw his congregation of half a century all gone, he knew the infirmities of age were gathering around him. It is not strange that he should ask to be released from further public work. The presbytery met in the West Middletown Church and after appropriate services suggested by so unusual an occasion, he was released from the pastorate September 9, 1884. He passed away October 21, 1885, and was laid to rest in the church cemetery. His grave is located directly beneath the spot occupied by the pulpit from which he preached so many years.

After Rev. Taggart's passing, the congregation was vacant for a period of four years. During this period one hundred candidates were heard and several calls presented and declined. October 11, 1888, a call was presented to Rev. Ralph E. Lackey, and by him accepted. His pastorate lasted eight years. As a preacher he was earnest and active, the gospel being faithfully preached and practiced by him. Rev. Lackey was deeply interested in the Sabbath School, and the school was kept open the entire year. Before, the school was closed for the winter months. During his pastorate, both country and village prayer meetings were held and the Young Peoples Christian Union flourished. One hundred and twenty members were added to the roll and six members elected to the session. It is understood that the use of the communion tables was discontinued during Rev. Lackey's pastorate. He left us to accept a call to Traer, Iowa, 1896.

On September 14, 1896, a call was presented to a young man, John Hunter Moore, from Alabama, as he was entering the Allegheny Theological Seminary for his senior year. He came to the West Middletown Church in June 1897, shortly before he had reached his twenty-second birthday and continued as pastor until he was suddenly called to his reward April 14, 1904. Brief as were his labors here, the people saw his worth and loved him.

It was during his pastorate that an organ was secured. The privilege of use of an instrument in connection with the praise and prayer services of the United Presbyterian Church had been granted by the General Assembly in 1882. It was not until February 7, 1903, some twenty-one years later, that the congregation of West Middletown petitioned the session to take steps to learn the will of its members in regard to this matter. The request was granted and a vote of the congregation was taken June 13, 1903. The vote at that time was one hundred six to six in favor of the use of an instrument. The session,

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therefore, appointed the trustees to procure money to purchase an organ, and Rev. Mr. Moore, Mr. James B. Manson and William A. Ross were to select it. They bought the organ which was used for many, many years. At the earnest solicitation of the congregation, Andrew Carnegie paid half the price. During his pastorate Lewis S. Liggett, David A. Scott, and W. Collins Brownlee were elected elders.

On the 20th of December 1904, a call to become pastor of the congregation was presented to Rev. J. Walter Watson, and by him accepted. It was during Rev. Watson's stay here that extensive repairs and alterations were made to the building, which then was half a century old. These changes and alterations included new seating, a lecture room, new lighting, vestibule, upstairs Sabbath School room, stained glass windows, all of which added to its appearance. Two elders, William Craig and James B. Manson, were added to the session. The church roll contained the names of one hundred eighty-nine members and records show that during his pastorate seventy-eight names were added. While serving here, he was married to Miss Mary Cameron of Washington, Pa. Rev. J. Walter Watson was interested in our Sesquicentennial observance and looked forward to this days, but was called to his reward within the past year. Mrs. Watson survives, as does one son, John Watson. The Centennial observance in 1910 was held during his pastorate. Rev. Watson resigned in 1911 to accept a call to the Second U.P. Church in East Liverpool, Ohio.

The Rev. Edwin L. Eagleson became our church's next pastor, coming to us from a united charge in Belmont County, Ohio, taking up the work in November 1912. He was extremely interested in the Sabbath School and young people's work and community activities, but above all else his preaching of a sound and practical gospel would come first. Even if his sermons had been taken down correctly as they fell from his lips, they could not afterward be appreciated, because neither the stenographer nor the printer has any type by which to express his tones, his emphasis, his Holy function or the Holy vitality of his soul. During his pastorate these men were elected to the session - A.H. Scott, Samuel T. Denny, Robert B. Lowry, Joseph B. Smith, and James M. Dinsmore. Rev. Eagleson never married, yet one of the things he loved most was to be in the homes of the congregation and the community mingling with parents and children in the family circle. It was on June 12, 1927, when he was thought to be recovering from an operation in a Wheeling Hospital that he passed away rather suddenly. His passing was mourned by the congregation and also by the community and presbytery.

The congregation did not own a parsonage up to this time. Because of a combination of facts, a parsonage was secured. One fact was that a property was available, and that this property lay adjacent to the Church grounds. Another factor entered into the purchase of this property, and that was because a pastor was being called who was a married man with a wife and

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two small daughters. The property was purchased from Miss Alma Simpson. Needed changes and improvements were made at once to make it in readiness for the Rev. J. Earl Hughes family, who came to us during the years of depression and these were not easy years. His sympathetic understanding and patience in these difficult days, and his hard work and earnestness are remembered by all who knew him. During his pastorate three elders were elected to the session: namely, Robert D. Craig, James W. Carl and Roy M. Thompson. Rev. Hughes was here when the 125th Anniversary Celebration was held on June 19, 20, 21, and 23, 1935, with appropriate services, and was very helpful in the detailed work necessary in such a celebration. At this time, the roll contained two hundred and twenty-five names. Rev. Hughes remained with us until 1938 when he was called to Evans City, Pa. to minister, leaving with the best wishes of the congregation. Rev. Hughes and family always receive a welcome hand from the West Middletown Congregation, and we are happy to have him bring us the Sesquicentennial Communion meditation on Sabbath, August 14, of this observance program.

Again we called a single man to minister to us. In the spring of 1938, a senior named Walter J. Ralston was extended a call, and upon completion of his theological training in Pittsburgh-Zenia Seminary was ordained and installed by Chartiers Presbytery. Rev. Ralston was a fine singer, and is remembered by all who knew him as one most dedicated to his life work. During his pastorate the congregation benefited by having, on two different occasions, two men for a series of meetings. These men were Rev. Wade C. Smith, and Arthur B. Whiting. These were evangelistic meetings and in each series several made profession of their faith in Christ, and many rededicated themselves to Christian service in the congregation. The Sabbath School work prospered, the young peoples' organizations received an impetus for better work, and all remember Rev. Ralston's most helpful prayer meetings.

During his pastorate he was married to Miss Jean Smith of Swissvale, and after the parsonage being vacant for a time it was again occupied. In 1942 Rev. Ralston accepted a call extended him by Tabernacle Congregation of Youngstown, Ohio.

Once again the West Middletown congregation turned to the School of the Prophets for a pastor. In 1943, we welcomed another student to our midst. Rev. Fred McClellan, a graduate of Monmouth College and Pittsburgh Xenia Seminary was ordained and installed as pastor in May 1943. During Rev. McClellan's pastorate an election of elders was held resulting in the choice of W. French Mustard, C. Herbert Hutton, James C. Wilson, and J. Stanley Craig. Rev. McClellan displayed not only his physical ability to work, but his executive ability to organize men, and get them to work in the excavation for a church basement. This was no small project, and not done in a fortnight. However, the work was done and we would hesitate to estimate the number

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of manhours contributed by, not only men of the congregation, but by others of the community interested in the work. We can say that the complete cost in dollar outlay amounted to approximately \$10,000 for a completed basement, new gas furnaces, rest rooms, kitchen, and other improvements. Today it is constantly used as Sabbath School class rooms, for social activities, youth and scout groups. Although not wholly completed during Rev. McClellan's pastorate, the need was seen, the plans were evolved and goodly part of the work done. During the early part of Rev. McClellan's pastorate he was married to Miss Barbara Handford, giving the manse a mistress. Rev. McClellan left us, going to Des Moines, Iowa, an assistant to Dr. William Orr in 1946.

Rev. William A. Hadden of Oakdale, a Muskingum College graduate of 1927 and Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary, was pastor for the period 1946-1950. Rev. and Mrs. Hadden and their two small children, Bobby and Mary Ann, moved into the parsonage and the members were again happy to have children in our minister's family. Special meetings were held during the period March 14-March 18 inclusive. These will be remembered as the Pre-Easter Evangelism preaching series with the Rev. Jacob Prins, D.D., of the Reformed Church of America, as guest preacher. Another activity of the congregation during the pastorate of Rev. Mr. Hadden was a campaign conducted to raise funds for our quota for our Synodical Camp at Ligonier, Pa. The camp was named Camp Fairfield, and our congregation has sent many young people to conferences there in the past years.

These words are transferred from the pageant story presented to this history. We quote, "Rev. Mr. Hadden found his eye sight failing in 1950, and he has since made a new life for himself--even finer than that he knew before, for his cheerfulness, patience, and uncommon perservance under his handicap have given him more insight from the heart than can be seen by many human eyes."

Rev. Hadden and his fine family left us in the spring of 1950 to assume work at a joint charge of Bolivar and Bethel, and he and Mrs. Hadden assumed charge of our Synodical Camp Fairfield.

Having had good ministration from two former seminary seniors, we again turned to the School of the Prophets and selected David A. Campbell, a graduate of Muskingum College and Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary. He was with us as student pastor for a while before graduation and ordination. Mrs. Campbell was formerly Miss Edith Jane Miller of Pittsburgh, Pa. While student pastor, he had Dr. Gordon Jackson for a series of services for one week. These meeting were very fruitful, as some of our good workers

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today came into our membership at this time. During Rev. Campbell's pastorate a new electric organ was installed, and we participated in the Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary Relocation Campaign Fund and contributed \$1,005 to it. Rev. Robert Hinman, of Peters Creek, conducted a series of evangelistic meetings in 1953, with good interest and results. During Rev. Campbell's pastorate the following men were added to the eldership: Verner Smith, Arthur Wolf, Curtis W. McGaughey, Ralph Hunter, Donald B. Farrer, and Ewing Wilson. The change was made from Life to Limited Term eldership during this pastorate. Rev. Campbell resigned to accept a mission appointment to a new church at Fairless Hills, Pa. in 1954.

Faced again to look for one to lead us in the capacity of minister, we turned once more to our seminary and found Gerald R. Wheat, a native of New York State, a graduate of Maryville College and the Class of 1955 of the Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary. He served as student pastor for a while before graduation, and often had Dr. J. T. Vorhis supply the pulpit. Rev. Wheat had the distinction of having been graduated in Pittsburgh, Pa. married in Coropolis, Pa. ordained at Hamburg, N.Y. and installed at West Middletown, all in a very short time.

During Rev. Wheat's pastorate, an election of elders was held resulting in the election of Donald K. Smith, Bernard Kimble, and David E. Patterson. It was during Rev. Mr. Wheat's pastorate also, that much work was done on our building, getting it in readiness for Sesquicentennial. The walls were painted, new lighting installed, an exit made in the south wall, and a storm entrance erected. These all add to the appearance of our church.

The help mate to Rev. Wheat was the former Mildred Vorhis, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. J.T. Vorhis, who were with us on many occasions and helped in our services.

It is significant to note what ties two Eastern Ohio counties have had with our congregation in the choice of pastors. Rev. J. W. Watson was born in Fairpoint, Ohio, and West Middletown was his first charge. Rev. E. L. Eagleson came to us from Uniontown and Unity Congregation in Belmont County in 1912. Rev. J. Earl Hughes, whose home was in New Athen, Harrison County, was pastor for eleven years.

We turn to Belmont County, O., again when we needed a pastor for this flock, and selected David Wallace, a member of the Calvay United Presbyterian Church of St. Clairsville, O. David Wallace, a graduate of Sterling College and Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary, was called at Student Resident Pastor while still in school. He and his wife Elaine Lawrence Wallace, of Colorado, resided in the parsonage while Mr. Wallace completed his Theological training, and carried the pastoral responsibilities of the Church.

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Graduating in May 1960, he was ordained and installed June 26, 1960. Rev. Wallace has been very active and helpful in making the plans for the 150th anniversary observance program. We look forward to years of a happy relationship between pastor and people, and may our Church under his able leadership grow, not only in numbers, but in grace.

Probably more space has been given to relating the facts of interest concerning Rev. Samuel Taggart, and his pastorage, than you may think necessary; but when we note the fact that his pastorate was a long one, as almost one-third of our history was made in those 50 years; and note that his pastorate was as long as the composite pastorate of Rev. Findley, Rev. Lackay, Rev. Moore, Rev. Watson, Rev. Ralston, Rev. McClellan, Rev. Hadden, Rev. Campbell, and Rev. Wheat. We feel justified in the space given.

Our congregation has had, during its 150 years, 57 men elected and ordained into the Eldership of the church, and again in looking over the records, we find sixteen of the fifty-seven were elected during Rev. Taggart's pastorate. Not only was it an age of long pastorates but an age of long elderships, for we note one elder served thirty-eight years, one forty-six, and another forty-one. In each case, eldership terminated in the death of the elder. These were the days before Rotary Eldership.

The present active members of the session are: J. Stanley Craig, C.H. Hutton, Bernard Kimble, Curtis W. McGaughey, David E. Patterson, Donald Smith, Arthur Wolf, Ewing S. Wilson, and James C. Wilson.

The records show us that several members of the congregation entered the Seminary to become ministers; namely, they are Rev. John Neil, Rev. Samuel Taggart, Rev. W. S. McClure, D.D., Rev. R.E. McClure, D.D., Rev. W. Howard Clark, and Rev. Wray W. Miller. A goodly number of the young women of the congregation married ministers and took their place in active church work with their husbands, while several found life work in the home and foreign mission stations and schools.

This congregation has seen two unions consummated during her lifetime. In May, 1858, the Associate and Associate Reformed Churches united to form one body, known by the name of "The United Presbyterian Church of North America." The union took place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The second union is more recent and took place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, also, when The United Presbyterian Church of North America and The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. united to form "The United Presbyterian Church of the United States of America."

It would be a mistake to complete a history of the West Middletown Congregation without mention of Mt. Hope Church in

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nearby Independence Township. The history of this Mt. Hope Congregation began in 1790. No exact date of formal organization is known, but it is recorded that Rev. Thomas Allison was ordained in charge in 1802. This church was of the Associate Branch, as compared with West Middletown, an Associate Reformed Branch of the Presbyterian Family.

The Church, which dated back 144 years; was among pioneers of the district. It was dissolved by Chartiers Presbytery of the United Presbyterian Church of North America in 1946, and the congregation disorganized with members giving their certificates to present churches of their choice. A monument today perpetuates the site of Mt. Hope Church, which had a rich heritage as well as an enviable record in the number of young men sent into the gospel ministry.

Mention is made of the above facts, because a goodly number of the members of the disorganized congregation chose to bring their certificates to the West Middletown Church. From this number since 1946 our congregation has elected four Ruling Elders, two of whom were selected to be clerks of Sessions. We have also elected congregational officers, trustees, Sabbath School officers, and teachers from the former members of Mt. Hope Church.

This history sketch shows us some of the lights and shadows through which we have passed during the One Hundred and Fifty years. Let us agree that there have been more lights than shadows. If the work at West Middletown has not been fruitful, we cannot complain that the time to perform it has been abbreviated. West Middletown has always been favored with a capable ministry, and we know that pastors are the most important human agency in the work of any congregation.

Does it not become all--pastor, elder, and people to strive to leave behind a monument more durable than brass or marble.-- a monument of efforts put forth for the salvation of souls and the glory of God.

History is important only if it creates enthusiasm in those who read and study it. While we are proud of our heritage and rejoice in this Sesquicentennial observance of the organization of our beloved Church, we do well to remember that with privileges come responsibilities, and with mercies come obligations.-- We shall go forward without ceasing, we shall rely on the Lord's strength, and shall hold uppermost and sustain by prayer means and by influence the enterprise of our Church that the heritage of those gone before, noble fathers and mothers, and grandfathers and grandmothers may be handed down to our children, and to generations yet to come.

"The past is past! In faith and patience taking

Its lesson, let us lay them on our hearts;

The chains' attenuated links are breaking!

Be earnest! Use the present ere it parts."

Article given by Homer R. Ross, Box 5, West Middletown, Pa. 15379