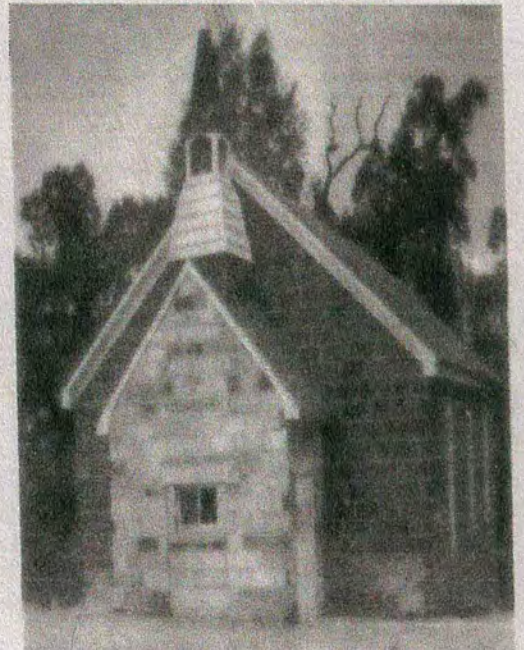
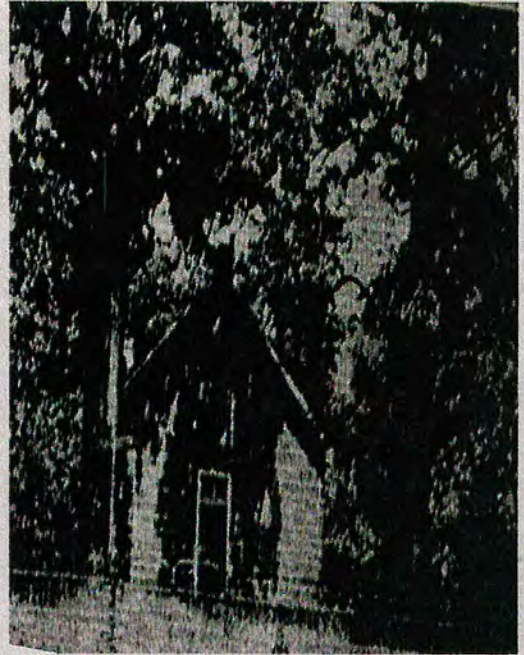
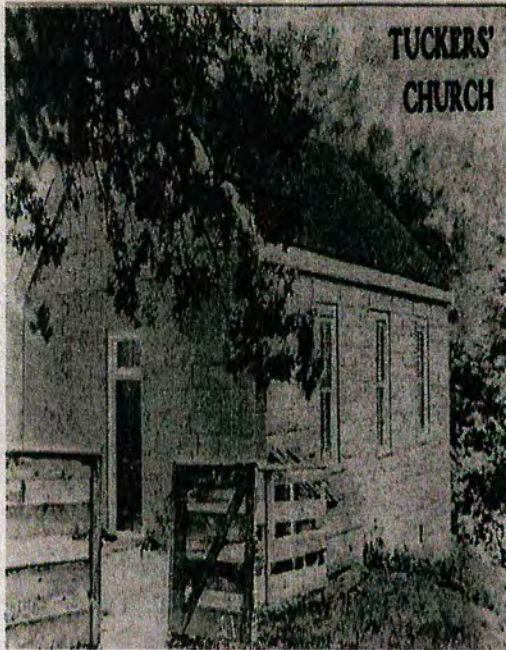


Tucker United Methodist Church

**“Celebrating 175 Years of Service”
1824-1999**

Courtesy of Fort Vance Historical Society



Tucker United Methodist Church
May 2, 1999 2:00 PM
"Celebrating 175 Years of Service"
1824 - 1999

INTRODUCTION

It could be called the "little church by the side of the road." Or it might be referred to as the "Tucker Meetinghouse," or even "The Old Stonepile." But whatever phraseology is used, Tucker Methodist Church, in Hanover Township, Washington County, Pennsylvania, is "Home" to the unnumbered descendants of the old pioneers who endured untold hardships to establish the church, and who have long since gone to their reward.

The history of the Tucker Methodist Church dates back to the days before the Revolutionary War. Although the building itself was not erected until the year 1824, Methodist meetings were held regularly for nearly forty years prior to the construction of the house of worship. Before the introduction of Methodism into the area, the early settlers embraced the Quaker or the Episcopalian faith with which they had crossed the perilous mountains, and faced the daily hardships of the wild frontier.

Among the first settlers in the area were the Potts, Jackson, Hanlin and Tucker families, who had emigrated from the East. John Tucker, who later deeded the land on which the church stands, was born in Massachusetts, and moved to Maryland while he was young. There he married, and moved with his wife back to Massachusetts. When she became ill, he took her back to her native Maryland, where she died, leaving him with two small sons, John and Samuel. No record has been left of her name.

He then married a woman whom we know only as Henrietta. It was this little family, John, Henrietta, little John and Samuel, who precariously made their way across the mountains in the company of the other families, and who gave thanks to God upon reaching the fertile lands of what is now Hanover Township. Official records reveal that this was in the year 1775.

John had made a previous visits here, and had marked out a tomahawk claim of four hundred acres. This he named "Grace Tract." It is believed that he selected this particular spot of ground because of the hardy grove of chestnut trees which grew upon it, indicating fertile land. He had even decided upon a location for his cabin, on the northern side of the watershed, about three-fourths of a mile from the trail, which later became Route 22. There they would be comparatively safe from the observation of the Indians. A spring was nearby, and the land lay to the south and east, making it favorable for crops.

The path where the little family made their way through the brush upon arriving at their new home, is now the lane leading to the Thomas Perkins home. The cabin which they built stood near where the Perkins house now stands. But until the completion of a cabin, they had to be content to live in a tent. Land had to be cleared, crops planted, cultivated and harvested, for themselves and their livestock for the coming winter.

It is believed that the families had made their way west by way of the old Cumberland Trail, which is parallel to what is now Route 40. Since this trail did not come all the way to Washington County, they made their way to what was then the "village" of Pittsburgh, then along the old Indian trail, now known as Route 22.

J.H. Beers' "Biographical Record of Washington County" describes John Tucker as "a large man and as straight as an Indian, a despiser of the lazy man and the rascal, and was an honest Quaker." He carried a staff that was about twice as tall as he. He called it a "vaulting stick," and by clutching it near the top, he could fling himself for a distance of at least ten feet,

leaving only a few tracks, thus confusing the Indians.

He was deeply devoted to his work and to his religion. He set up his own family devotions, as did the other settlers, and conducted worship services in his own home. Later, various families gathered for the devotions, making a small group of worshippers in the little cabin.

Among the pieces of furniture brought from the East was a beautiful chest of drawers, of the Hepple-white design. It was highly prized by Henrietta. During the week, she kept it covered with a horse blanket. On Sundays, the cover would be removed, and the family Bible, contained therein, was opened and read by John Tucker. Those assembled would comment on the readings; thus the family devotions were conducted.

History states that John Tucker hated a liar. Yet, on one occasion, as has been handed down to posterity, he nearly told a lie by keeping silent. It was on a Sunday. He had gone to the "salt spring" not far from the cabin, looking for a deer. Because of his labors throughout the week, Sunday was his only day in which to hunt. When the deer came to the spring, he killed it with one shot. He slung the deer over his shoulder and started for the cabin, where he flung it under the house. As it was nearing time for the Sunday services, his neighbor had already assembled, and were terrified at hearing the shot, fearful that Indians were near. He avoided telling them that it was he who, fired the shot, and simply stated, "Maybe they are." No one must ever know that he had been so "worldly" as to fire a shot on Sunday!

Day and night, someone had to keep watch for the Indians. As a further precaution, sleigh-bells were kept on the horses. A quick jingling of the bells indicated that prowlers were near, and the prowlers would probably be Indians. One night the bells jingled, and the warning was given to the sleeping household. One version says that friendly Indians in the area gave the warning to the sentinel on guard, the "warriors from Ohio" were headed this way. It matters not just how the little family received the message. There was still only one thing to do - flee to Vance's Fort.

Vance's Fort was ten miles from the Tucker cabin, and was near where the village of Cross Creek now stands. One or two little girls (accounts vary) had been added to the Tucker family. Together, they made their way through the dark forest, walking all night. By morning they had reached the fort. No account is given of how long they remained, but it was at the Fort that John and Henrietta's first son, Jonathan, was born. Later, upon their return to their cabin, life resumed as usual, with no sign of the Indians having been there.

BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

Years passed into decades, and those decades brought with them many changes. The colonies had declared their Independence; the Revolution had taken place; the United States had been born. The Indians in this part of the country had been quieted forever.

John and Henrietta's children married and had families of their own. During those years of raising a family, clearing and cultivating the land, and conducting family worship in the various cabins, one of John Tucker's most cherished dreams was the erection of a house of worship. He had already met the circuit riders, and been introduced to Methodism. Prior to

this time, he had been respectfully addressed by his neighbors, the Quakers, as "Father Tucker." Upon the arrival of the Methodists, and the conversion of the Quakers to the new religion, his cabin was given the name of "Tucker Methodist Station." They continued to meet there, and later, at the home of Jonathan, as well as in the other cabins.

In the year 1823, a stone church building was begun. Four brothers from Island Creek, Ohio, by the name of Minesinger, were the leading stone masons of the day. They were hired to erect the stone building, which stands today, and in which many generations of the pioneer families received their spiritual guidance. One account states that the cost of the building was \$75. Another says it was erected at a cost of \$85.

The stone was quarried on the grounds below the church, cut and squared by hand, and artistically formed into a building measuring 33 by 44 feet. It was completed in the following year, 1824. The ground on which it was erected was a part of the original Tucker tract, which John Tucker had set aside for that purpose, on the north side of the highway. In the year 1822, he had deeded the ground for religious purposes, and also stated in his will, that it was to be used for no other purpose.

John Tucker died on April 6, 1830, only six years after the completion of his beloved "meetinghouse." At the age of 100, he was laid to rest in the church yard near by. His wife, Henrietta, died two years later, at the age of 96. Her body was laid beside that of her husband. Plain sandstone slabs mark their graves today.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Tucker Church has had a number of special events in its history which have been worthy of celebration. One was in the year 1925, and was called the "celebration of the beginning of the second century." Having been built in 1824, the edifice was one hundred years old the previous year. According to a transcript from the "Official Record Book," it was held "on the first and second days of August, 1925."

The celebration opened by the gathering of six or seven hundred people from about twenty different states of the Union on the morning of the first, and after an extensive lunch served to all, the lunch including ice cream and chicken as well as the other foodstuffs that accompany a picnic, a service of greetings and messages progressed for over two hours.

The account states that almost \$180 was received, which greatly helped in clearing off a debt of a couple years' standing. Pastor of Tucker at that time was Rev. William Gilbert Nowell.

The next record of a celebration was on August 15, 1949. Members of the Tucker clan gathered for a reunion, which marked the 125th anniversary of the church building. Descendants of the family, whose settlement pre-dates the Revolutionary War, held both morning and afternoon services at the historic old meetinghouse. Rev. William Shaffer, pastor of the Tucker and Midway churches, conducted the services.

Although family reunions were held annually for a number of years, special anniversaries and dedication services are worthy of note. No doubt a special service was held each time a new improvement was added to the old stone church. Accurate records on such events have

not been kept. It is known that a man by the name of John Hays cut the windows to twice their original size. At that time, also, new pews were placed in the church, the pulpit was remodeled, and the old-time heating stoves were replaced by a furnace.

Other steps in keeping up with the times were the introduction of the kerosene lamps, and later the installation of electricity. These improvements made the days of the individual tallow candles quite antiquated indeed.

Painting and plastering of the interior was done at necessary intervals. At one time, prior to 1938, the man who refinished the interior offered the sum of \$4000 for the building. He had intended to tear it down and clean up the debris, because he wanted the particular type stone used in the walls. But the membership stood firm in keeping the building intact. This repudiated the quote made in 1861 by the Rev. Thomas M. Hudson, "It is a large and durable stone structure. and at the time of its erection, was considered a superior building. In all its internal arrangements, however, it partook largely of the imperfection and discomfort of the church architecture of that day, and unfortunately, it can never be improved."

Still another improvement, of which Rev. Hudson probably never dreamed, was the addition of a basement. On April 11, 1954, Dr. F. O. Christopher, District Superintendent, was the guest speaker when the church was re-dedicated, with the new basement being the latest project to be completed at that time.

In 1965 more improvements were underway. A louvered steeple, designed by Frank Dimmack, and built in three sections by John Selmon, was raised to the top of the newly constructed stone vestibule. A historic old bell, owned for many years by Grover Fulton, and donated by him, had added a touch of nostalgia, as at last, the plain rectangular building with the simple gable roof, has taken on the true appearance of the little country church that it is.

New doors have been added; a new carpet has been laid up the center aisle and on the platform; and attractive drapes have been hung at the plain glass windows. With a new coat of beige paint on the walls, and a fresh coat of varnish on the pews, the interior has been brightened considerably. The ends and the backs of the pews were painted white, giving the seats a "New England" touch.

Stone for the vestibule was donated by William Phillips, of Weirton Heights. It was cut to match the old stone finish on the church property, and is an attractive addition to the building. It was laid by Harry Krausslach, stone mason, who also gave Tucker church its first donation toward the remodeling project.

Those who gave freely of their time to help in the recent remodeling process were Ernest Lewis, Victor Wright, Sam Reed, Mr. Wright's two sons, Victor and Larry, John Selmon and Frank Dimmack. The ladies who did the painting were Mrs. Ernest (Arlene) Lewis, Mrs. B. L. (Mildred) Boocks, and Miss June Campbell.

Pastor at this time was Rev. Glenn A. Dague, of Washington. Dr. James A. Gaiser was the scheduled speaker for this Dedication Service, held Sunday afternoon on October 3, 1965. Several additional gifts were dedicated at this time: the altar candlesticks were given by Mr. & Mrs. Frank Neely in memory of their parents: Mr. & Mrs. R. P. Gardner and Mr. & Mrs. J. L. Neely.

The baptismal front, two offering plates and the cross were given by Mr. & Mrs. George Fullum. Other additions were carpet for the middle aisle and front area of the church. New draperies, altar, and swinging doors at entrance to the sanctuary. An organ was purchased

shortly after the dedication serviced of 1965 and has added much to the services. A hymnal for use by the organist was given by Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Bee.

Other gifts since 1965 have been the lighted picture of Christ from Rev. & Mrs. Glenn A. Dague. Lighted outdoor bulletin board from the Methodist Youth Fellowship. Silverware from the Methodist Youth Fellowship and United Methodist Women. Basement clock from Methodist Youth Fellowship. Candlelighter from Rev. & Mrs. John J. Haney. Refrigerator from Mr. & Mrs. James McNinch. Stove from Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Lewis.

On Wednesday, October 3, 1973 there was held a special "Service of Dedication and World Wide Communion." The Rev. John W. Lofgren of Waynesburg was our guest minister. He dedicated many items and served communion.

Six stained glass windows were designed and hand-crafted by Charles Holste. Plaques were placed by each window which read as follows:

Mr. & Mrs. Dudley L. Ferguson
In Memory of Their Daughter
MADONNA M.

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Bee
and Sons
Geary, Mark, James, David

In Loving Memory of our Parents
Mr. & Mrs. J. L. Neely
Mr. & Mrs. R. P. Gardner
Given by Mr. & Mrs. Frank Neely

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
BRENDA LEE GATES
Given by
Father, Mother, Sister & Brothers

Jas. Wm. McNinch
Family

Given in Honor of
RALPH RYAN
Pastor 1961 - 1964
by
Mr. & Mrs. John A. Moore

There were a number of other items dedicated at the same service: new roof, oil burning furnace, painting of the Church Sanctuary (pale pink), ceiling tile in the social room, repair and painting of social room by Samuel Reed and B. L. Boocks, Construction of altar rail, box for communion supplies and window screens by John Selmon, city water became available and plastic pipe was donated by John O'Palka.

The PARKING AREA has been enlarged and there are plans to further enlarge it in the future. John O'Palka generously provided a bulldozer to help with this project.

The BASEMENT ENTRANCE has been enclosed which provides much needed protection from the weather. The work was done by Joseph Vincenti and his son with assistance from Samuel Reed and B. L. Broocks. Materials were provided by Samuel Reed and Frank Neely. The church paid for labor and some materials.

Two new United Methodist Church SIGNS have been erected east and west of the church on old Route 22. These signs were given by Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Bee and Mr. & Mrs. Donnie Grey.

Congregational dinners are held several times a year with good attendance. These have proven a very strong factor in developing Christian Fellowship. DISHES have been purchased

recently by: Mr. & Mrs. B. L. Boocks, Mr. & Mrs. Donnie Grey, Mr. & Mrs. John Moore. The Dishes will facilitate the preparation of these dinners in the future.

An interesting and perhaps a little known fact concerns our COMMUNION BREAD. It is made from a recipe that has been handed down over the years for an undetermined length of time. Mrs. Donnie Grey provides the materials and makes the bread as part of her duties as Communion Steward.

In 1974 all the pews were repaired and repainted by Samuel Reed and B. L. Boocks. A white altar frontal and pulpit scarf have been given by Mr. & Mrs. John Moore in memory of their granddaughter, Mrs. Darlyn Mullins. The Sanctuary Clock by Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Reed.

IMPROVEMENTS & GIFTS

1974 - 1999

Organ . . . In memory of Mrs. Ruby Moore

Organ Hymnal . . . In memory of Mrs. Gladys Cain

Sanctuary lights & fans . . . In memory of Bernard (Bill) Boocks

American & Christian Flags . . . In memory of George Fullum

Advent Wreath . . . In memory of Tom & Rachel Perkins

Large Acolyte . . . In memory of Kilti Yoder, granddaughter of Mr. & Mrs. J.W. McNinch

2 small Acolyte . . . In memory of Amanda Craig, grandmother of Gladys Bee

Nativity set (for outside). Ceramic Nativity set. Christmas tree. Christmas lights for outside.

The pews were re-upholstered. Renovation of the chancel area. Carpeting, folding doors, new front doors, screen doors for basement, storm windows for the screened area of the sanctuary windows, front sidewalks and new wiring in the chancel area are all new improvements around 1992.

More gifts for the church were:

Choir robes, banners, table skits, curtain in the vestibule, table and chairs in the nursery, attendance pad covers, bulletin board in the vestibule, lighted cross in the vestibule, dust buster (hand held sweeper), 3 hole punch, apple peeler, church road signs, easel, music folders, filing cabinet for music, tenebrae candle holders (6), copier machine cover, wooden cabinets (downstairs), telephone stand, misc. bathroom fixtures, portable lectern, lawn mower, weed wacker, pulpit light, copier machine, filing cabinet (for church records), PA system and tape deck, microphones, refrigerator, numbers for the hymn board and Sunday school registry and the communion bread plate.

The following improvements & gifts were acknowledged at the 1995 dedication service.

Communion table . . . In memory of Valerie Ann Grey

Pulpit bible and stand . . . In memory of James M. Bee

Communion trays (2) . . . In memory of James M. Bee

Outside crosses and flower bed . . . In memory of James M. Bee
Reversible paraments (Christmas/Easter) . . . In memory of Fred Speer
Reversible paraments (Advent/Communion) . . . In memory of Glenn Ramsey

The following gifts were given to the church: dehumidifier, sweeper, tape player, photo albums with pictures, and the memory album.

The following improvements and gifts will bring us to the present time:

Brass communion service . . . In memory of John & Ruby Moore
Four tables and 16 chairs . . . In memory of Sue Todd
Red hymnals . . . by members in honor & memory of loved ones & from the Betty Neely Fund
Advent wreath . . . In memory of Tom & Rachel Perkins
Brass altar flower vases . . . In memory of Valerie Ann Grey
Brass cross & candlesticks . . . from the Nancy Thompson Memorial Fund & her family
(2) door wreaths (Easter/Christ) . . . In honor & memory of Nancy Thompson

The church has purchased 6 acres behind the church. The members have added a pavilion on some of the ground purchased.

The following gifts have been given to the church: toaster, kitchen stove, tape recorder, sweeper, coffee pot, chair carrier, baptismal font & umbrella stand, altar picture, riding lawn mower, parament scarf and white dossal curtain, bells and tapes and music for the bells.



It is of course impossible to list the names of all those persons who have helped to keep the doors of Tucker Church open for worship through the years; however, in the minds of those living today, certain names will always remain outstanding. Some of these have given of their talents through teaching or singing. Some have gone out into the world to bring the wandering back to the fold. Others have given or bequeathed money for the preservation or improvement of the church property. All have given of themselves.

The list is not exhaustive, for we are all aware that the names of many persons instrumental in keeping the light of the Gospel alive at Tucker have been lost in the dust of of obscurity. Concerning those whose contributions are not herein acknowledged, it can be said with certainty that there is One with whom nothing is ever forgotten - One who remembers the cup of cold water given to the stranger, the box of ointment, and the widow's mite. He who has numbered the very hairs on the heads of each of His children whom He has created since the beginning of time, will not fail to reward those who remained loyal to His name. Only eternity can make the list complete.

Tucker United Methodist Church looks forward to the future with hope and with the determination to further God's work and to continue the tradition of service that has been passed on to us.