

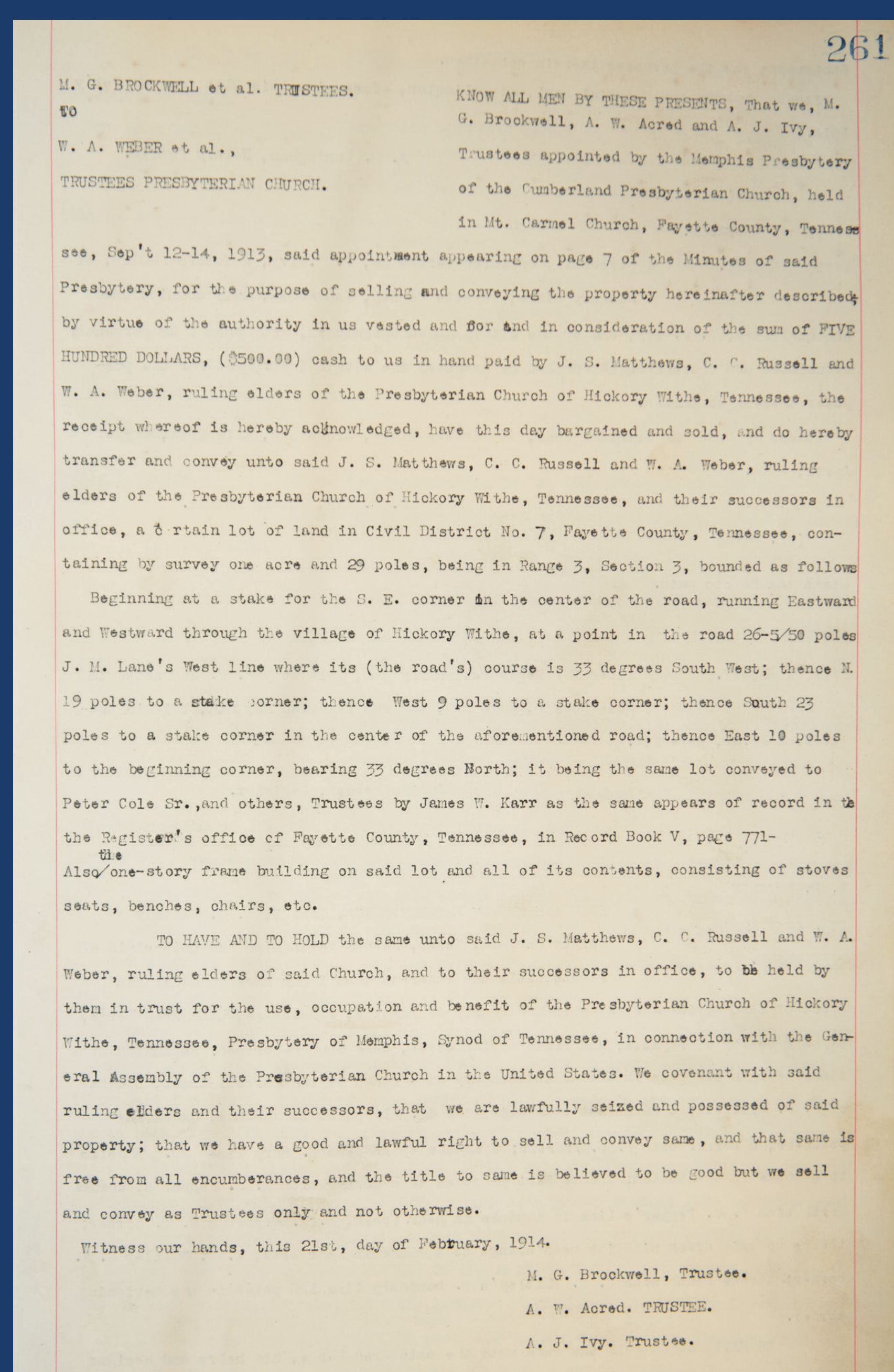
Hickory Withe Presbyterian Church Building 1861 – 1915

The current Hickory Withe Presbyterian Church (HWPC) building was constructed under the leadership of Reverend Marion Zellner and the Memphis Presbytery of the Cumberland Church. In 1861, worship services for the Hickory Withe Cumberland Presbyterian Church were being held in the newly built sanctuary.

The floor of the sanctuary was built with a slight slope. According to Terry Himebook, HWPC Director of Music,

“The sanctuary’s sloped floor was constructed to allow sound to carry farther during the era of no sound systems. This architectural feature was common in Europe, going back to the Roman Empire. By building the back of the room higher than the front, less sound was blocked by the congregational members. In the days before sound equipment, this was the best way to make certain that the preaching was clearly heard by all. For a musician, as well as a preacher, the acoustics in the sanctuary are ideal. The builders planned well.”

There was a small slave gallery in the back of the church that slaves accessed by stairs on the two sides of the church foyer. Today, the two small rooms on the right and left of the foyer have openings in their ceilings where the stairs were located.



Land Deed for Purchase of Cumberland Church and One Acre for \$500

Following the merger of the Cumberland and PCUS churches in 1907, the combined church worshipped in the PCUS church at the southeast corner of Highway 196 and Donelson Road. On September 13-14, 1913, at the Cumberland Presbytery meeting, a committee that investigated the situation at Hickory Withe reported that there was no prospect of maintaining a church in Hickory Withe. It was decided that the Cumberland church building and contents be sold for \$500 to the ruling elders of Hickory Withe Presbyterian Church, PCUS, and their successors.



From 1913 through 1915, the former Hickory Withe Cumberland Presbyterian Church, now owned by the session of Hickory Withe Presbyterian Church, PCUS, was remodeled and the slave gallery was enclosed. The original Hickory Withe Presbyterian Church, PCUS, located on the southeast corner of Donelson Road and Highway 196, was demolished. In 1915, the newly remodeled church was dedicated and Dr. O. W. Wardlaw installed as pastor of the united congregation.

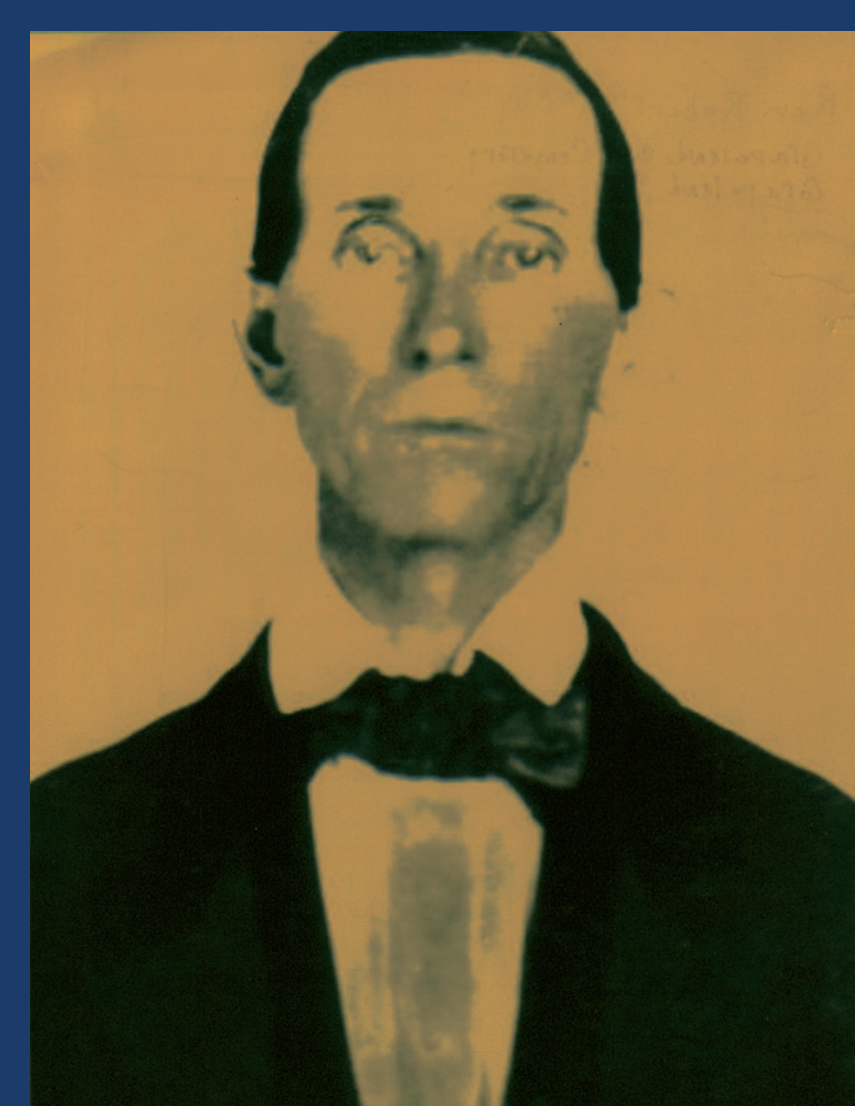
Prosperity Presbyterian Church Early Pastors

Reverend Peter Randolph Bland

Prosperity Presbyterian Church was founded near Oakland, TN, on December 28, 1834, by Reverend Peter Randolph Bland and twenty-nine (29) believers. Reverend Bland was pastor from December 1834 until August 1835 and again from November 1840 until April 1841. Reverend Bland was originally from Nottoway County, VA, and settled in the Mason area of Fayette County in 1829. The Bland family was a First Family of Virginia and prominent political family in U.S. history.

Prosperity Church Organizing Members

<i>Jas. Alexander</i>	<i>Colonel Guerrant</i>	<i>Elizabeth Thompson</i>	<i>Jacob Young</i>
<i>Ozeriah Alexander</i>	<i>Elizabeth Guerrant</i>	<i>George Thompson</i>	<i>James Young</i>
<i>Elizabeth Allen</i>	<i>Rebecca Hunter</i>	<i>Barney Torrence</i>	<i>Jane Young</i>
<i>John Allen</i>	<i>Samuel Hunter</i>	<i>Rebecca Torrence</i>	<i>Mary Young</i>
<i>Margaret H. Allen</i>	<i>Esther Karr</i>	<i>Jas. H. McWhorter</i>	<i>Sarah Young</i>
<i>Mary M. Allen</i>	<i>William Karr</i>	<i>Lina McWhorter</i>	
<i>Sam C. Allen</i>	<i>Louisa Neals</i>	<i>Louise McWhorter</i>	
<i>Wm. Allen</i>	<i>Sam'l J. Neal</i>	<i>Wm. McWhorter</i>	

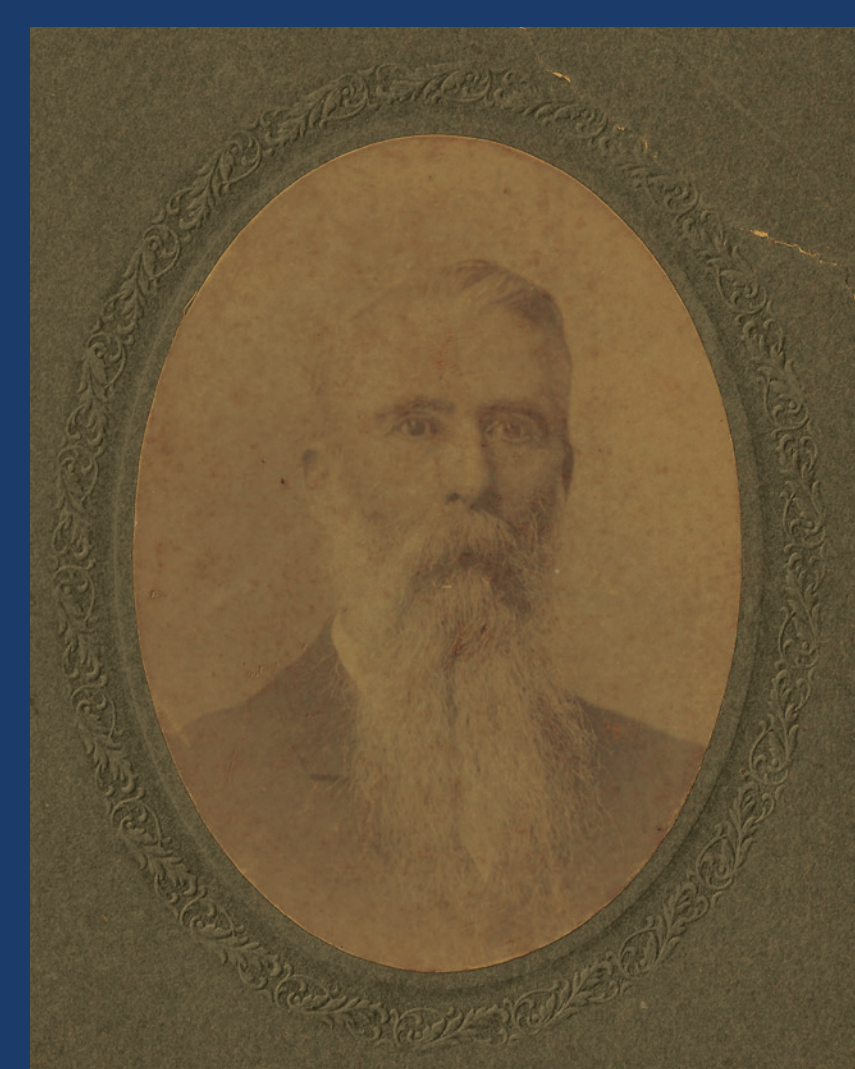


Reverend Robert McCoy

Reverend Robert McCoy

Prosperity Presbyterian Church was divided by the Memphis Presbytery in 1850 into two separate congregations, one going to Hickory Withe and one to Macon. Reverend Robert McCoy was pastor at Hickory Withe from 1850 until January 1854 and from April 1858 until January 1860.

Family records state that his oldest daughter, Mary Martha, often proudly told the story that in the gold rush days, her father bought a mule, filled his saddle bags with Bibles, and set out for California to show the greedy seekers for gold that they had better be laying up treasures in Heaven! No one knows how successful he was, but his trip was a matter of pride to his daughter, and no one in the family seemed to question the venture.



Reverend Sidney Smith (S.S.) Gill

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Reverend Sidney Smith Gill was pastor of Hickory Withe Presbyterian Church (HWPC) for 44 faithful years from January 1861 – April 1905.

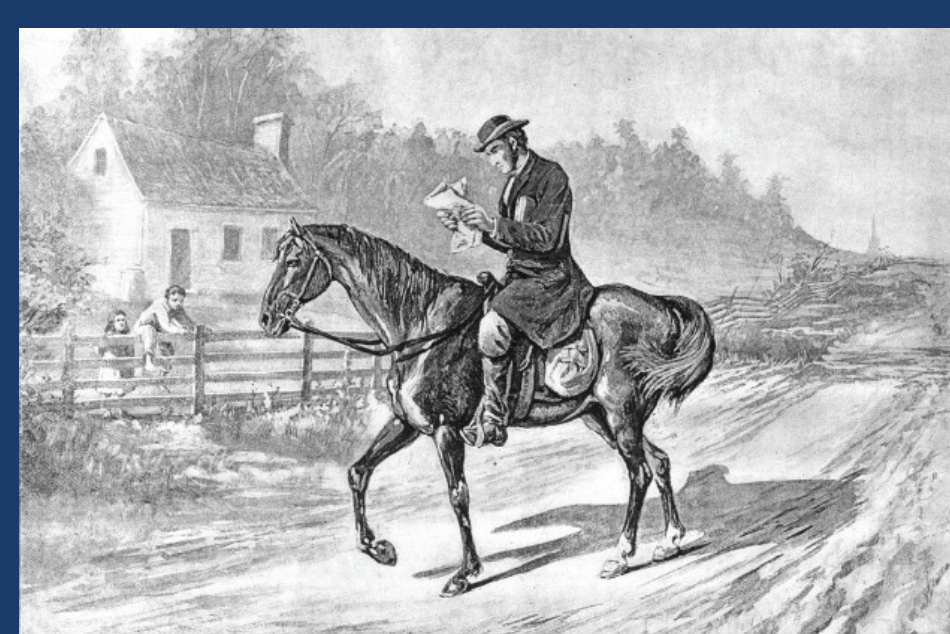
In addition to his long-standing service at HWPC, Reverend Gill was authorized by the Presbytery of Memphis to organize Oakland Presbyterian Church and played a vital role in the church’s early years.

Mount Pleasant Cumberland Presbyterian Church Early Pastors

Reverend Rueben Burrow, Jr.

Reverend Reuben Burrow, Jr. was installed as the first pastor of Mount Pleasant Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Hickory Withe on October 4, 1841.

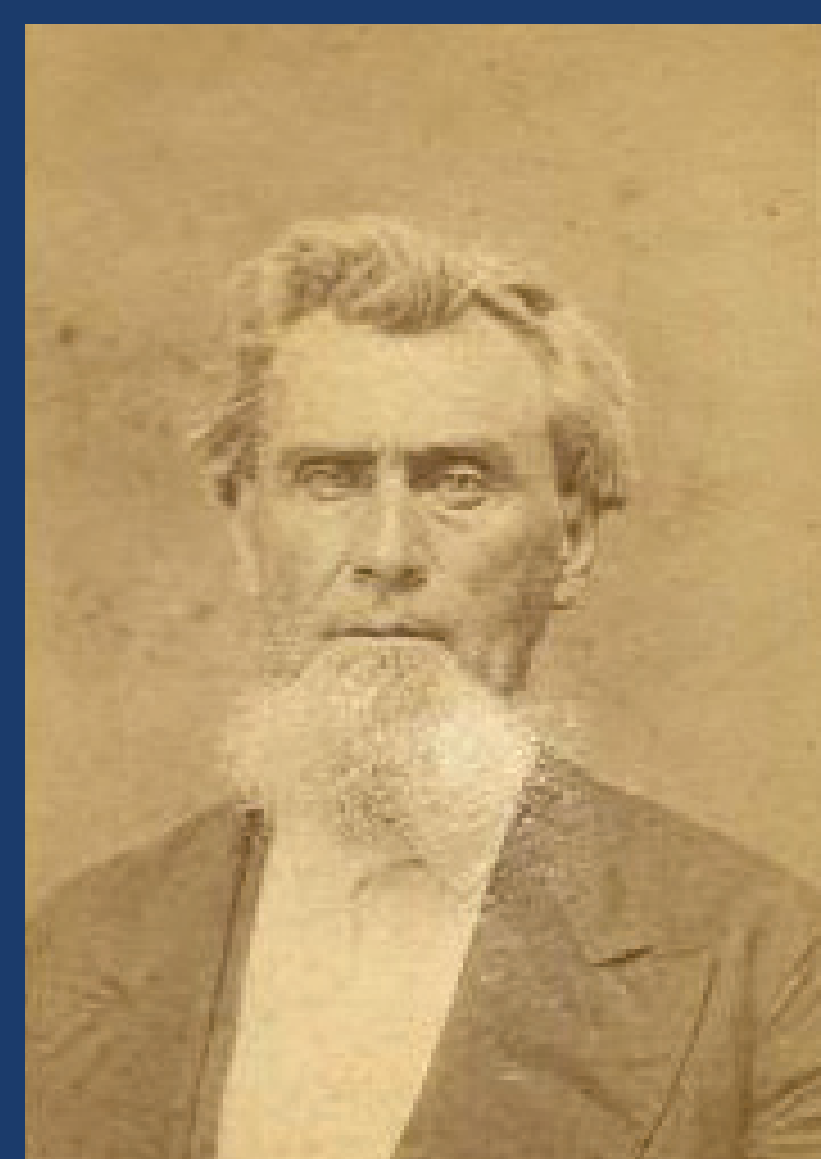
Reverend Burrow was a circuit rider for the Somerville area. Circuit riders were essentially missionaries for the Cumberland church in newly settled areas. The circuit riders preached the gospel until churches were organized and assigned a preacher. The Somerville Circuit included several counties and often required preaching three to four times in one day with hours of horseback riding between locations.



Sketch of a 19th century circuit rider

Reverend Marion Zellner

Reverend Marion Zellner was pastor of the Cumberland Presbyterian church in Hickory Withe from March 6, 1859, until he resigned on May 6, 1865. Under his leadership, the congregation relocated from Mount Pleasant Cemetery to a new building on Donelson Road which was completed in 1861 and is the current Hickory Withe Presbyterian Church.



Reverend Marion Zellner

The Civil War and the Presbyterian Church

1861 – 1865

The Civil War was America’s bloodiest conflict with an estimated 620,000 military casualties or approximately 2.0% of the U.S. population in 1861. To put the numbers in perspective, 2.0% of the 2023 U.S. Population would yield approximately 6.8 million casualties.

The South had a significantly lower population than the North which heightened the impact of its approximate 260,000 casualties. The southern casualties combined with the physical destruction of the war propelled a decades-long period that challenged every aspect of life including religious institutions.

The War’s Impact on Ministry

The minutes of the Presbytery of Memphis note the difficulties of holding Presbytery meetings and sustaining ministry candidates during the war as all of the young men under the presbytery’s care had joined the Confederate Army. Also, since pastors served as chaplains during the war, many churches did not have a pastor or had their pastor’s time reduced. Reverend Marion Zellner was Chaplain of the 12th Regiment of the Tennessee Calvary, and Reverend Robert McCoy served as Chaplain of the 6th Tennessee Regiment. Chaplains were needed on the battlefield, but they were greatly missed at home as their congregations suffered mightily during the war.

The Presbytery of Memphis Exits PCUSA

On June 13, 1861, the Presbytery of Memphis dissolved its relationship with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America due to the PCUSA’s adoption of the Gardiner Spring Resolutions at its May 1861 General Assembly in Philadelphia. The resolutions pledged the denomination’s allegiance to the Union.

In defense of its exit from the PCUSA, the Presbytery of Memphis wrote the following letter to President Abraham Lincoln.

To his excellency Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States
Whereas the Gen. Assembly at its annual meeting in Phila in the month of May 1861, did adopt the following resolution of their loyalty, viz: "Resolved that this Gen. Assm. in the spirit of that Christian patriotism, which the Scriptures inspire, which has always characterized this Church, do hereby acknowledge and declare our obligation to promote and perpetuate as far as we are able, the integrity of these United States and to strengthen uphold and encourage the federal govt. in its exercise of all its functions under our noble Constitution & to this Constitution in all its provisions and principles we profess our inviolable loyalty." And whereas the Presbytery of Memphis did at any adjourned meeting on the 13th of June following, unanimously repudiate the aforesaid resolution of loyalty, and declare themselves as "unconstitutional and unchristian" and did furthermore resolve that in the fear of God, and in view of all the circumstances we hereby renounce all their confessional supervision and declare our connection with the Gen. Assn of the U.S. dissolved." And whereas furthermore

in obedience to the call of the Presbytery of Memphis accompanying this their act of ecclesiastical secession, a Genl. Assembly for the South was formed in the month of December following entitled "the Genl. Assm. of the Presb. Ch. of the Confederate States of America." And whereas the property held by these churches was originally dedicated to the religious uses of Presb. churches in connection with the Genl. Assn. of that assn. in the belief from which it is now shown in violation of the trust under which alone it can be lawfully held. Therefore Resolved that the whole decl. organization of the South as far as the Presb. Ch. is concerned is a political organization based upon political secession and pledged to its support as the facts clearly show.
Resolved that in the opinion of this Presbytery the political and rebel church organization of which the southern portion of our Church is one, as specimens and a part in the evil arm of the rebellion and that its destruction is not only consistent with all the essential principles of religious liberty but is absolutely necessary to the suppression of the rebellion itself.

Resolved 3d
That in order to the destruction of this rebel Church and the restoration to the authorities of Presbyterian Churches in connection with the Genl. Assembly of the Presb. Ch. in the United States of all such property, violently taken from us by the grasp of secession, it is by no means necessary that the Federal Government assume to "run churches" or to appoint supervisors or trustees for the same but only so far to protect our rights as to put our property as fast as reclaimed from the rebel flag back where it was subject to the control of those lawfully entitled thereto being the authorities of the Presb. Church in connection with the general assembly in the U.S. and to see to it that it may so be held on the ground until the assembly can, by her agents or commissioners take formal possession of it and order and arrange so that it be used for the purposes of legal Christian worship as formerly.
4. Resolved that to this end this Presb. Mat earnestly requests and hereby petitions his Excellency the Pres of the U.S. to direct forthwith by a general and

and uniform order that in every point and in all our reclaimed territory the military authorities allow no ministerial church session or function to hold and use any church edifice or other property without in connection with and under the control of the Genl. Assm. (old school) of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. until the same shall first renounce the authority of and all connection with the Genl. Assembly of the South which was first organized in Decr 1861 in the City of Augusta Georgia and shall agree and promise to hold the same henceforth subject to the authorities of the Chhles in connection with the Genl. Assn. in the U.S. and declaration shall be duly recorded; and provided those holding said property in any given locality refuse thus to renounce the authority of the Rebel Church it shall be given to those who may lawfully hold and use it subject to the control of the proper church authority in connection with and under the supervision of our Genl. Assm. and in accordance with her declaration of loyalty made at Phila in May, 1861.
and for which we will ever pray.

Organization of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America

The Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America (PCCSA) was organized on December 4, 1861, in Augusta, GA. As a member of the Presbytery of Memphis, HWPC is now aligned with the PCCSA.

The War’s Aftermath

The Presbyterian church in the South struggled after the war. Churches were financially devastated and often unable to pay a pastor. There was also a shortage of pastors due to young men postponing their education to enlist in the army as well as the vast casualties of the war.

These struggles and common suffering during and in the aftermath of the Civil War likely contributed to the 1907 merger of the Cumberland and PCUS congregations in Hickory Withe.

Organization of the Presbyterian Church in the United States

Following the South’s surrender, the PCCSA held its General Assembly in Macon, GA, on December 14, 1865, and changed its name to the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS). HWPC was under the Presbytery of Memphis, PCUS until November 11, 1980.