

Old Seceders Church

A group of settlers in Buckskin Township met in 1809 and organized themselves as a Presbyterian group. They built a log meetinghouse on Hop Run after 1811. This church was located near the present intersection of State Route 41 and Moon Road. Rev. Samuel Crothers became minister of this church before returning to Kentucky in 1818 to further his religious education.

The group was an Associate and Reformed branch of Presbyterianism formed from a union of the "Seceder" or Associate Presbyterian branch and the "Covenanters", or Reformed Presbyterian. They were known as the Seceders, thus the name Old Seceder Church. This group was against Sabbath desecration, profanity, use of charms, stage performances, slavery, secret societies, intoxicating liquors and promiscuous dancing among others.

In 1835 they built the present building on South Street in Greenfield. The abandoned Hop Run building was later used as an animal shelter. In 1836, after construction of the building, the trustees of the Associate Reformed Church purchased the land from James and Mary Blain.

The church is a one story stone building. No early descriptions have been found. It has two doors on the south side facing South Street. At some time stucco was added to the outside of the building covering the native limestone. There are four round columns in the interior space supporting the roof. Each of these columns was carved from a single tree. Four beams, each twenty inches by twenty inches and hewn from a single tree, run the full length of the building to support the roof. A central wall divided the building into two rooms with a door between the two. A chimney was located in the center of the building. The floor was constructed of whole logs laid on the ground with poplar planks covering them.

In 1835 some of the names involved with the church were Alexander Watt, Alexander Scroggs, Thomas Wallace, A. M. Blain, R. Collier, Allen Stinson and David Bonner. The first pastor of the new church was Rev. John Graham. In 1841 Rev. James Arbuthnot was listed along with subscribers that included Noble Crawford's name. This subscription was a pledge totaling \$200 to be paid to the reverend which, in the addition to money, included pledges of cornmeal, flour, beef, pork, firewood and hay.

The church was used by the congregation until 1867 when they moved into their new home just west of the church. They were now known as the United Presbyterians. This building is still standing at the corner of South Washington and South Streets and is the home of the Greenfield Masons.

In 1867, the United Presbyterians sold the old church to the Board of Education of the Greenfield Union Schools to be used as classrooms. The Seminary on South Washington had become too small and more space was needed. It was used for school purposes until 1884 when the school board sold it to Emma Miller, wife of E. H. Miller, a member of the Miller banking family.

The Miller family was an important element of the banking business of Greenfield from the 1850s until the Highland County Bank closed in 1930, a victim of the stock market crash of 1929. Upon the death of Emma Miller, the ownership of the building went to her heirs who included her husband, E. H. Miller, her son and his wife, D. O. and Madge Miller, daughter-in-law Nelle D. Miller and a granddaughter and her husband, Marjorie M. and Don S. McClain, a member of the prominent McClain Family.

Ownership then transferred to H. W. West and later Grant Hoffman until in 1921 D. O. and Madge Miller bought the building. The Miller's owned it until his death in November 1929. The property was on the list of assets sold off during the sale of assets of the Highland County Bank in 1936 when Wanda L. West bought the property.

Ownership of the building went through the following people in the time span from 1937 to 2005:

Harold O. & Winona W. Smith, Emma T. Hammond, Theda J. Hammond Shaffer, Clarice Jean & Robert J. Roberts.

The building was abandoned after a fire during the Roberts ownership. The Greenfield Historical Society purchased the building in the summer of 2005. At that time the building was in very bad shape. The roof had been destroyed by fire. The inside of the building was being damaged by the weather. The belongings of the last renters were still in the building.

Bibliography

A Greene Countrie Towne, Harris, Frank Raymond, Greenfield Printing and Publishing Company, 1954

Highland County Recorder Records

Highland county Probate Court Records

Phil McMurray, contractor on the reconstruction of the Seceders Church

Notebooks of Lillian Gossett located at the First Presbyterian Church of Greenfield, Ohio, and the Greenfield Branch of the Highland County Library.