

SKETCH OF AIMWELL CHURCH PRIOR TO THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

The exact date of the organization of the congregation of Aimwell on Cedar Creek cannot be stated, but probably it is some few years later than the planting of the Lebanon Church on Little River, in Fairfield District whose annals begin as early as 1765. An approximate time however, is fixed by the celebration of the semi-centennial of the church of Aimwell in the year 1840, thus placing the actual organization about 1790. Nevertheless, it was nine years after this supposed time of birth to-wit, on 25th of October 1799, when it was received within the care of the original Presbytery of South Carolina and recognized as a church organization. It is interesting, in passing, to note that the meeting of the State Presbytery when this took place, which was held at Beersheba Church, in York District, was the last state session prior to a division into First and Second Presbyteries of South Carolina.

There were only about thirty members of Aimwell when they first formed a congregation, and the house of worship was erected upon a plot of ground donated for that purpose in 1798 by Mr. Francis Robinson about the site of the present residence of Mr. Ed Mellichamp, on Third Avenue in this town. The feeble church shortly became under the care of the Rev. George Reed, whose relationship continued for a space of seven years, when he removed to Camden. Mr. John Rosborough was ordained as the first and Mr. William Robinson as the second elder, in 1801. The memory of Mr. Rosborough, the patriarch and shepherd of the flock, its virtual founder and chief mainstay for over a generation, is entwined indissolubly with the history of the church he loved and served so long and faithfully. Till his death in '42, in and out of season, in depression of spiritual life, with intermissions frequent of pastoral charge and then as well as at times when the church awoke to its mission and served fully the people in its reach Mr. John Rosborough was ever true and zealous in good works, and he died a servant of the Lord full of

grace and lamented by the entire community in which he moved.

The early history of this little corner of the state that embraces Airmwell is that, mainly, of the families of the Rosboroughs, the Robinsons, the Kennedys, the Craigs and Walkers, though the Hoods and Hunters, the McQuatters and others are not to be omitted.

For a long time Mr. John M. Goza who was ordained elder in May 1843 and died in 1865 filled a position of prominence in the church. The family appears to be extinct hereabouts in the male line, only leaving as a curious reminder the quaint old time dwelling so prominently set upon the hill as one goes down the Long town road, and always called the "Goza" house.

Major George R. Hunter was another elder long in office, being ordained with Goza, and surviving the War Between the States. Mr. Hunter was an educated man of prominence in this section, a son of the well known Presbyterian divine of Revolutionary times the Rev. Humphrey Hunter of Lincoln County, N.C., who for nearly forty years preached to the souls and gave medicine to the bodies of his congregations, after first serving his country as a soldier of distinction. Maj. Hunter's father was an Irish immigrant and his mother was the daughter of the well known Dr. James Ross of Laurens district.

Maj. Hunter built and resided in the dwelling just east of town now owned by Mr. Geddings, and his family also is extinct as to this section.

There appears to have been three buildings in succession to the original church erected on the site given to the congregation by Mr. E. G. Palmer, which is now the cemetery on the Winnsboro road, when the edifice then in use was taken down and removed to be used again as a church by the colored congregation of Presbyterians on the Smallowood road.

This last building known strictly as Airmwell was dedicated by Rev. G. W. Boggs on Friday, Nov. 18, 1859. It is held in affectionate remembrance by many devout members of advancing years who lament the changes of

the passing of time.

Early in the twenties, when the Rev. Anthony Ross served as pastor in connection with Winnsboro and Lebanon, removing to Pendleton district however as early as 1822, the church of Aimwell must have been still feeble, and the services quite infrequent. For it is a tradition that this pastor preached only twice one summer and that at Mr. John Rosborough's home, and during this period of neglect the church building caught fire from the old field straw and was entirely consumed. In the place of this ^a building of logs was erected, which our oldest living citizens remember being told was taken down about the year 1833 and used as the framework of the residence occupied by Mrs. Mary Ellen Kennedy, mother of our esteemed fellow citizen, Mr. Jas. A. Kennedy, which is still standing about four miles toward Winnsboro on the public road. It is probably at this period that the original site was exchanged for the location now known as the cemetery lot, donated for church property by Mr. Edward G. Palmer of ValAcia.

Aimwell church, like many other Presbyterian churches in South Carolina previously to 1840, did not possess regularly kept books of records. Thus, beginning about the time of the pastorate of the Rev. Mr. Mitchell Peden, which began in May 1838, its history may be traced much more fully and satisfactorily. When this minister assumed charge the membership was only 32 communicants, one of whom was a slave.

Aimwell church is a body corporate, under the style and title of "The Trustees of Aimwell Church in Fairfield District", the following being the trustees denominated in the Act of December 1841: R. R. Rosborough, Alexander Robinson, Jas. F. Craig and Geo. R. Hunter. The trustees were the same in 1850 with the substitution of Alex. G. Kennedy for Alex. Robinson, deceased. In 1865 the Board was: Geo. R. Hunter, R. R. Rosborough, A. H. Craig and Col. H. C. Davis.

Extracts from Sketch by R. A. Meares