

BEAVER CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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There were two groups of Baptists, the Tunkers and Seventh Day Baptists who mingled and exchanged ministers to such an extent that a distinct division was not necessary.

A group of Tunkers, originally from French Creek in Pennsylvania settled in the area of Beaver Creek in 1748 and by 1759 had associated for religious purposes.

Morgan Edwards, one of the earliest and most respected Baptist historians, traveled through the back country of the middle and southern colonies gathering material for a history of the Southern Baptists. In 1772 he wrote - "Beaver, a little branch running into Broad River - They hold their worship from house to house. The families number about 25, whereof 50 persons are baptized. They had their beginning in this manner. About the year 1748 Micheal Miller, Jacob Conomore and Laurence Free, with their wives arrived hither from Connecocheaque; after them came Rev. George Martin and Hans Waggoner and their wives. These united in communion the month of July 1759."

Edwards said of Rev. George Martin that he bore an excellent character and had the happy cast of mind, in that he was facetious and devout at the same time.

Hans Wagner, one of the founding fathers of the Beaver Creek congregation did not come directly from Connecocheaque. As he migrated southward he spent several years on the Yadkin River in N. C. In a journal kept by the Moravians who settled Wachovia he is mentioned several times. One entry dated Feb. 21, 1754 states that one of the Brothers returned from the Yadkin where he had ordered some meal from Hans Wagoner. Upon his arrival in S. C. he settled on the west side of Beaver Creek at the junction of Reedy Branch.

Here he constructed a fort for the protection of his family and the other settlers of the area. He continued to pursue his trade as a miller.

It is interesting here to note that at least one present member of Beaver Creek Church is descended from Hans Wagner.

The Beaver Creek Baptist Church was organized in 1797. There are no early official church records. The earliest records surviving start in 1863, consequently, information regarding the first building is traditional. It is thought to have been 2 or 3 miles south of the present location.

On Feb. 21, 1832 a deed was executed from which I quote, "I, Enoch Griggs, Sr. in consideration of the sum of \$20.00, to me paid by the Beaver Creek Baptist Church, which is composed of members of Chester and Fairfield Districts have sold unto the aforesaid Baptists a tract of land containing 4 acres for the purpose of building a church thereon." The boundaries are described as beginning at the spring. The deed was proved by William Halsee and delivered to Samuel Fant and William Jenkins.

There was no plat recorded with the deed, but a resurvey was done March 2, 1844. However, the plat was not recorded until 104 years later in 1948.

In 1877 plans were made to construct a new building. The money needed was raised in one month. The names of the donors and amounts contributed are recorded in the church minutes. Logs were donated by members and the lumber sawed locally. The contract was let for \$849.50, leaving a balance in the Building Fund of \$14.80. The dedication service was held in July 1881.

A few years later a Baptistry and dressing rooms were built at the rear of the church. Prior to this time baptisms were performed at a pool maintained at a spring north of the church.

A tract of land was inherited by the church in 1894 and a parsonage

erected. It was first occupied by a pastor in 1901.

During the period of 1971-1985 the following projects were undertaken and completed. A pastorium was build jointly with Blackstock First Baptist, the rear of the church was redone, the interior painted, new pews, carpet, a heating system and air conditioning installed, the exterior was brick veneered, 90 acres of land cleared and replanted with pine trees and the roof rebuilt.

One writer has said, "Trace the history of Baptist of any place or time and you will find that we are a unique people with a rich heritage." The Beaver Creek Congregation has a heritage of which we can be proud. If we follow the example set for us by our forebears and exercise faith, diligence and perserverance we will have a bright future.

References:

Morgan Edwards Manuscript - Furman University Library
History of Wachovia - Clewell
Mills Statistics
Colonial Land Grants - S. C. Dept. of Archives and History
Fairfield County Records - Plat Book 4, Page 152
Chester County Deeds - Book Y, Page 447