

The following article was written by Daniel G. Stinson and compiled and sent to us by Richard L. McDonald of Champaign, Illinois who is a great, great, great grandson of the Reverend Thomas Donnelly.

A SKETCH OF THE COVENANTERS ON ROCKY CREEK, S. C.

The earliest settlement of this part of Chester county took place in 1750 and 1751, by a few emigrants from Pennsylvania and Virginia. Among these were Hugh and John McDonald, with their families. Hugh settled where Mrs. Moore now lives, on Little Rocky Creek, five miles from Catholic Church. John settled a plantation known as David Wilson's, at the mouth of Bull Run on Big Rocky Creek; he and his wife were both killed in 1761 by the Cherokee Indians, and their seven children carried off.* (*Mrs. Ellett's "Women of the Revolution," 3rd vol., article "Catherine Steele.") In 1755 there was a considerable increase in the settlement; and also by correspondence to Ireland there commenced an immigration by the way of Charlestown. The settlers were a mixed mass as to religion; they were Reformed and Presbyterian, and Seceders.

Rev. William Richardson, of Waxhaw, was the only minister within a hundred miles. They applied to him to supply them with preaching; he consented, and directed them to build a church, as he would preach for them on week days. The first preaching day was on Monday; he named the church (which they had built according to his directions) Catholic. It is situated fifteen miles south-east from Chester Court House, near the Rocky Mount road.* (*Dr. Howe's "History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina.")

Rev. William Martin emigrated from Ireland at least as early as 1772; he was the first covenanting preacher in the settlement. I have in my possession, from Henry and Margaret Malcolm, a letter written to their son-in-law John Lin, in which they refer to Mr. Martin as being over here in this Rocky Creek settlement. This letter is dated May 30th, 1773, County Antrim, Ireland, in answer to one from his son-in-law, John Lin. The reference to Mr. Martin is in these words: "We hear it reported here that Mr. Martin and his Covenanters had ill getting their land, and John Cochrane had the occasion of all their trouble." I suppose that this trouble about land was, that they expected to settle all down close together in a colony; but such was then the situation of the country that they had to scatter and select lands at a considerable distance from each other. They were entitled to bounty lands, a hundred acres to each head of a family, and fifty to each member. Those who had means bought from the old settlers. Rev. William Martin bought from William Stroud a plantation one mile square, six hundred and forty acres, on the north side of Big Rocky Creek, on which he built a rock house and a rock spring house. The place selected for a church was two miles east of Catholic on the Rocky Mount road, near the house now occupied by Mrs. James Barber Ferguson. It is described as having been a log building; was burnt down by the British in 1780.* (*Mrs. Ellet's "Women of the Revolution," 3d vol., article "Nancy Green," also Dr. Howe's "History of the Presbyterian Church," article "Mary Barkley.") After Martin was released by Cornwallis at Winnsboro, owing to the disturbed state of the country, he went to Mecklenburg, N. C. There he met a Mr. Grier, also a refugee, from Georgia, whose child Isaac he baptized. Isaac was said to have been the first Presbyterian minister born in Georgia. He was afterwards minister at Sharon, Mecklenburg county. He was the father of Robert Calvin Grier, who was president for many years of Erskine College, Due West, and his son, William Moffatt Grier, is now president of that college.

After the war, when Mr. Martin returned to Rocky Creek, he was employed as supply at Catholic for three years. He was dismissed by the people of Catholic on account of becoming intemperate. He, however,

did not quit preaching. He preached at a school house at Edward McDaniel's, about a mile or two west of the place, at which a brick church was afterwards built. He also went down to Jackson's creek in Fairfield, and preached there. I recollect that Richard Gladney was a Covenantan in that neighborhood, and doubtless there were others. He was also in the habit of crossing the Catawba river and preaching at the house of William Hicklin, who had moved from Rocky Creek to Lancaster. He frequently preached at other places, often at private houses. A congregation afterwards built him a church two miles east from the site of the one formerly burnt down near the Rocky Mount road, on a beautiful hill, in rear of what was called Earle's House, in a fine grove of trees. The lands are now all cleared up, and there is a negro house now on top of that hill, where the church once stood. In that hill and dale country it can be seen for miles. He must have continued to preach there until near his death. I have frequently heard him preach at that place as well as at my father's. Some two years before his death his rock house was burnt down. It was in the early part of the night; I suppose most of his property was saved. He after that lived in a log cabin. He sold his plantation for six hundred dollars, one hundred to be paid yearly. After his death his widow received the payments. He had been three times married, but left no children living. His only daughter, married to John McCaw, had died before him. Shortly after his coming to this country he took up about four hundred acres of vacant land, which he made a present to his nephews, David and William Martin. The land is now owned by Mrs. Gaston. Mr. Martin often staid at my father's for days or a week at a time. I do not remember ever seeing him under the influence of liquor but once. That was on a day in which he came in company with some wagons. It was a wet day. My mother, with the assistance of two negro women, got him to the back door, and bringing him in put him to bed. She came out, I remember, with a very long face. The last visit he ever made to my father's, after crossing the creek at Stroud's mill, in some way he got his horse's head turned up the creek by a path. He fell off in a branch; being old and feeble he was unable to rise. He was found by Mr. Thralekill; was said to be in the act of praying when found. Mr. Thralekill understood from him where he wanted to go. My father sent for him and had him brought to the house. He had fever and lay there for more than a month. In the delirium of fever he constantly quoted Scripture, and spoke of the crossing of Jordan. My mother became alarmed and sent for my father, thinking Mr. Martin was near his death. But he recovered and became able to walk. My father mounted him on a horse and took him home. He soon became again confined to his bed, and died in about six months, in the year 1806. He was buried in a graveyard near his own house. Whether there is a stone to mark it, I do not recollect, though I have seen the grave. He was a large, heavy man. By those who knew him, he was said to have been an able divine. He came from County Antrim, Ireland. In the same party with him came my father and his brother, James Stinson, then called Stevenson; William Anderson and his wife, Nancy; Alex. Brady and his wife, Elizabeth; I think the Linns, and possibly the Kells. Mr. Martin owned two negroes, I recollect, Savannah and Bob by name; so did some others of the congregation. Some who owned slaves refused, in 1800, to submit to the regulations made by McKinney and Wylie, believing that the Scriptures justified the possession of the heathen, whom they as teachers were civilizing and christianizing. It would be, they thought, as cruel to free them as to turn a child out to buffet with the world.

The next minister of the Covenanters was Rev. Wm. McGarragh. In 1791 he settled on the north side of the Beaver Dam, a branch of Big Rocky Creek. His first wife died shortly after his coming, leaving one daughter, who was married to Henry Linn. Mr. McGarragh marrying badly

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the second time, was the cause of his being for a short time suspended. By the second marriage he had sons--James, William, Joseph and David--all long since removed to the North-west. Mr. McGarragh died about 1816 and was buried in what was called Paul's graveyard. His wife died soon after, and was buried at the same place. That graveyard is on the road above Mount Prospect, a Methodist Episcopal church, South. More Covenanters are buried here than at any other place in the South. Rev. Mr. King arrived here in 1792. He settled on the south side of the Beaver Dam, near Mount Prospect church, on the plantation now owned by Mrs. Backstrom. He died in 1798, and is buried at the Brick Church.

Rev. James McKinney was the next in order. Where his residence was, I do not know. He was pastor of the congregation at the Brick Church, and preached at most of the other churches. He died in August, 1803, and was buried at the Brick Church.

Rev. Thomas Donnelly was licensed to preach at Coldenham, June, 1799. He settled first somewhere near Little Rocky Creek. He afterwards bought Stephen Harman's place on the north side of Big Rocky Creek, a plantation now owned by Mr. Geo. Heath. I recollect hearing him preach at a stand near his own house, some time in the year 1804. From this date, he was the only minister until the arrival of Mr. Riley in 1813, and preached at most of the churches that will be hereafter mentioned. After the Covenanters had generally removed from the country, Mr. Donnelly preached at Old Richardson, a Presbyterian church; a portion of the time at his own house, there still being some of his people scattered in this country. His eldest son, Samuel, became a Presbyterian minister, now residing in Florida. His father frequently visited him when he lived at Liberty Hill and preached in his son's church. Mr. Donnelly died in 1847. His family after his death removed to Illinois; it consisted of John (Thomas married John Cathcart's daughter) and his daughter Nancy. She married, in Illinois, Riley Linn, the son of Henry Linn. Mr. Donnelly was buried at the Brick Church, by the side of McKinney and King; his wife was also buried in the same place.

The next minister, Rev. John Riley, came into South Carolina in 1813, settled on the south side of Big Rocky Creek, about a half mile from Martin's first church, the one burnt. He was a popular preacher. His places of preaching were the Beaver Dam, the Brick Church and Richmond. He died in 1820; is buried at the Brick Church, some distance from the other ministers. All have appropriate tombstones.

The Brick Church, situated three miles from Pleasant Grove, on the plantation now owned by John Hood, has all been removed; nothing but the grave-yard left. There was considerable immigration to this country after 1785, but whether this church was built before Mr. King came or not, I do not know. It was first a log building. The brick building was put up about the year 1810. Hugh McMillan came to this section of country after 1785. His brother Daniel came at the same time. Daniel and his family went into the Associate Reformed Church, Hopewell. Hugh had sons--Daniel, a merchant, John, David, James, Gavin and Hugh. The last two were ministers of the gospel--all Covenanters. There was a family of Coopers, McKelvys, Robert Hemphill--brother to the Rev. John Hemphill--Darrance Woodburne, Montfords and Nesbitts, were some of the names composing a part of this large and flourishing congregation of Covenanters.

The Beaver Dam Church was on a branch on the north side of Big Rocky Creek, on a plantation now owned by Stephen R. Ferguson. The church is not more than a mile distant from Mr. King's and Mr. McGarragh's residence. When organized, I don't know; but most probably about the time that Mr. McGarragh arrived in 1791. In the bounds of this congregation were the Ewins, the McHenry's, the Ervins, the Kells, John

Rock, the Linns, the Littles, the Bells, Paul Guthrie, the Gillespies, the Steeles, the Martins, the McFaddens, the Simpsons, and many others. In Mr. Riley's time that congregation was very large. The church and people have all long since disappeared.

The Richmond Church was situated near the dividing line between Chester and Fairfield. This was Mr. Martin's church, and was removed three miles south to a more convenient situation for the neighborhood. Members of this church were the Dunns, Daniel Wright, the Hoods, Sprouls, Hugh Henry, James Stormont, the Cathcarts, John and William McMillin, and the Richmonds.

The McNinch Church was situated three miles east of Chesterville; built after 1813, by John McNinch himself. Of the congregation, which I think was numerous, I now can remember but one name, Andrew Crawford.

The Smith Church was on Little Rocky Creek, on the southside, about five miles south-west of Catholic Church. In that congregation were several families of the name of Smith, who were relatives of Rev. Thomas Donnelly.

A church, called Turkey Creek Church, in York county, was situated about two miles west from McConnellsville, on the Chester and Lenoir railroad; in the bounds of the congregation of this church were some families of Wrights and Wilsons.

We will now go back to the close of the Revolutionary War. Martin's church being burned down, he preached as a supply to the congregation of Catholic through the years '82, '83 and '84, at the same time visiting and preaching to different societies of his own people, as heretofore stated. In the year '87 Matthew Linn, of the A. R. Church, came and commenced preaching at the school house near E. McDaniels; afterwards at the stand where Hopewell Church now is. A large majority of the Covenanters at this time went into the A. R. Church, leaving a few still scattered over the bounds of the different congregations. From the year 1785 until 1812 there was a considerable immigration coming every year from Ireland, filling up the congregations. At the time Mr. Riley came, in 1813, they were pretty numerous. The restrictions on the subject of slavery took some Covenanters out of the church. Mr. Riley, however, received into the church Mrs. Isabella Hemphill, and her sister, Mrs. Jane Cloud, together with her daughter, Mrs. Sarah Hicklin. These ladies had been members of Mr. Martin's church. He had baptized their children, and each of them had a son called for him. They were received into the Richmond Church, notwithstanding their families were large slaveholders. Mr. McGarragh, after he was restored, preached for a few years at the Beaver Dam Church, but not after the arrival of Mr. Riley in 1813.

Mr. King preached at the Brick Church, and probably at other small societies scattered over the country. After the arrival of Mr. Riley at the Brick Church, Mr. John McNinch was tried in the session, and the congregation became dissatisfied with Mr. Donnelly, which was intrinsically the cause of the churches, Smith and McNinch, being built.

John Orr immigrated to the United States after 1790. He was a classical scholar, and had taught in Ireland before coming out here. It is said that Rev. Samuel B. Wylie and Rev. John Black, of Pittsburgh, commenced their literary course with him in Ireland. After coming here he continued to teach. A good many young men started the classics with him, among them James A. Hemphill and Alex. Curry, both afterwards physicians. Rev. John Kell, after being prepared by John Orr, went to Scotland and graduated there. Judge John Hemphill, of Texas, was also among his scholars. Mr. Orr had a numerous family of sons and daughters. He removed from the State of Ohio in the year 1832. It was said that although over eighty years of age, he walked every step to Ohio, refusing to ride.

Rev. Hugh McMillan and Robert Mondford were graduates of the South Carolina College. McMillan commenced preaching in 1822 at the Brick Church, where he had for a number of years a large classical school. He preached one-third of his time at Turkey Creek Church in York county. About the same date Rev. Campbell Madden commenced preaching at the Richmond Church and at the stand at John Orr's. He also taught a school near Gladden's Grove. He had studied medicine before he came out here. He spent a winter at Lexington, Kentucky, where he received a diploma; he commenced the practice of medicine, but did not live long. He married a Miss Cathcart, and left children, a son and two daughters, now living in Winnsboro. Rev. Hugh McMillan must have left the country as early as 1831, removing to the North-west. The Covenanters commenced emigrating soon after the death of Mr. Riley, and continued to do so from year to year, until the congregations became weak. Revs. Fisher and Scott supplied the churches in South Carolina in 1832, that is during the winter of that year. Revs. Black and McMaster in the winter of '33; these were licentiates. Rev. Gavin McMillan was here in the spring of '32, and held communion, assisted by Fisher and Scott. John Kell, in the spring of 1833 held communions, assisted by Black and McMaster. The few Covenanters that remained in time went into the A. R. Church. There were some who never entered any other church. Hugh Henry is the only one I now recollect who remained a Covenanter until his death, which took place in 1867; his family are now in the A. R. Church. He has now a grandson in his second year in the Theological Seminary at Due West. Mrs. Madden, her son and two daughters, have, within a few years, connected themselves with the A. R. Church.

REMARKS.--In 1801 Mr. McKinney and Mr. Wylie, with other ministers and elders of the church, held a presbytery at the house of John Kell. One of the Kells owned a negro; at this time he freed her. He probably was the only Covenanter that owned a negro, except those heretofore mentioned. Mr. Martin was asked what he thought of slavery; his answer was that he had owned a boy, Bob, who was unmanageable, and for that reason he had sold him.

Rev. Samuel W. Crawford was raised within three miles of Beaver Dam Church until he was nine or ten years of age. In a letter directed to me, he states that while living at John Wylie's he went to the spring to bring up a pail of water. While there he heard a cow bell, and looking up he saw a negro driving a cow. In great terror he ran to the house as fast as his feet could carry him. He says: "You may imagine what I thought it was. I got no sympathy; they merely said it was a negro belonging to some one lately removed into the neighborhood. As I had never before seen an African, you may know they were not numerous in that section." At that period but few of the sons and daughters of Ham had cast their dark shadows over the country; instead thereof it was thickly settled by an industrious and energetic white population.

In the bounds of twenty square miles there were four Presbyterian churches, two Associate, three Covenanter, one Baptist, and Smyrna, an Associate church. In every neighborhood there was a good school. The schoolmaster was abroad then. The Bible and Testament were the principal school books. The Catechisms were also taught. The Covenanters had no difficulties about the jury laws. Mr. Rosborough, the clerk of court, would state to the judge that they had conscientious scruples in taking the oath to serve as jurors; the judge would then order them to be excused. In the Revolutionary War there were no Tories among them; all fought on the side of the country.

Mr. Jonathan Henkle moved into the country about the year 1807. He states that on Sabbath he thought a cow bell could be heard twice the distance that it was heard on any other day, such was the stillness of holy day. John Rock, a Revolutionary soldier, was his near neighbor.

Mr. Henkle was with him when he died. When he was evidently dying he revived a little, and commenced, in a low voice, to sing one of the Psalms of David. When he ceased singing he breathed his last. Mr. Henkle's remark was, that "it appeared to him to be a foretaste of the joys of heaven." So died the old Covenanter.

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CHESTER COUNTY DEEDS
Copied by Jean C. Agee

Chester County - Will Book A

Page 1. Indenture made 19 Nov. 1786 between Micheal Dickson, of Camden District, Craven County, South Carolina, planter of the one part and John Service of the same, weaver- By a certain grant bearing the date 23 Jan. 1773, by Charles Granville Montague, Gov. of the Province of S. C., to Micheal Dickson of 150 acres- Now Micheal and his wife Sarah sells to John Service- land situated on the waters of Bull Run Creek in Craven County. Land bounded by John Walker and James McQuiston 50 acres of the 150 acres grant for 62 pounds 10 shillings current money of S. C.

Witnesses: William Boyd	Michael Dickson L. S.
John Miller	her
James McQuiston	Sarah X Dickson
	mark

Proven at County Court held 20 July 1785 at the house of John Walker-

Page 2. This Indenture made 16 May 1787 between John Walker and Jane, his wife, of Camden District, Craven County, S. C. of the first part and John Service of the same of the other part. The original grant made 19 Nov. 1792 to John Walker and Jane, his wife of 100 acres on the South Branch of Hickory Creek- Bounded south by Micheal Dickson, west by John Walker's land, all other sides vacant. Now John Walker sells John Service the 100 acres for 200 pounds lawful money of South Carolina.

Witnesses: John Campbell	John Walker (signed with mark)
John McLilly	Jane Walker (signed with mark)

Proved 20 July 1785 - term of court.

Page 7. 18 Aug. 1779 between Peter Wiley of the Parrish of St. Mark's in the state of South Carolina, weaver of the one part and Francis Wiley of the same, planter, of the other part. The original grant made 13 May 1768 to Peter Wiley, a plantation of 250 acres on a small branch of Rocky Creek, Craven Co., Bounded N.E. by Phillip Walker, all other sides vacant. Now Peter sells to Francis for 2000 pounds.

Witnesses: John Gaston	Peter Wylie
William Wylie	

Proved 21 July 1785 term of court

Page 10. Carries the lease of the above property from Peter Wylie to Francis Wylie. 7 Aug. 1779

Page 12. 7 June 1783- between Francis Wylie of Parrish of St. Mark's, S. C., planter of the one part and William Wylie of the same for the other part. Grant bearing date 13 May 1768 to Francis Wylie for 100 acres on small branch of Rocky Creek bounded S.E. by Robert McPerry, all other sides vacant - This sale was for 200 pounds paid by William Wylie.

Wit.: David Morrow	Francis Wylie
James Wylie	

Proved Chester Court 30 July 1785