

Purity and Its People

*A History
of
Purity Presbyterian Church
Chester, South Carolina
1787 — 1987*

Edward Hood Dawson

*By order of the Session in commemoration of
the BICENTENNIAL*

Purity had attempted to call as
gations, located mainly in the
hdrew to join the new denomi-
blished churches left as well,
Church, less than two miles
ent Presbyterian Church.

egation of Purity was able to
stone wall in 1813. Members
inal document gives testimony
hat time.

ibed do promise to pay unto
in Douglas, John Walker and
in office. Being an appointed
hundred feet square and four
ent burying ground at Purity
the sum ascribed to his or her
oner if required by the Com-
ment this 12th day of January

subscribed is given in the back



VIEW OF OLD PURITY
CHURCH IN 1813.

...of 1787, and a major force
...he left a significant bequest
...1804, designated his wife
...his entire estate was to go
...by James Allen, Charles
...Kennedy and Agnes
...and appoint my be-
...executors." Margaret and

James Kennedy made another will the day before his death. His wife, Margaret White Kennedy, had preceded him in death a short time before, August 5, 1820. Kennedy specified a sum of \$200 to be used: one-third to a Bible Society, one-third to a Missionary Society, and one-third to a Society for the purpose of aiding "poor and pious young men for the ministry of the Gospel." He bequeathed to his negro boy Prince the sum of \$50. The remaining part of the estate, after payment of debts, was left to Purity.

The executors of the second will were Major John Walker and William White, Jr. The will was witnessed by Charles Boyd, George Hardin, and Matthew McClintock (his "mark"). The monetary value of the estate to Purity is not clear. It probably amounted to between one thousand and two thousand dollars. Its helpfulness was incalculable. From the account book of his nephew, John Walker, who handled the estate for more than forty years, entries show money paid for the upkeep of the graveyard as well as money "paid for preaching." In order to settle the estate, a vendue (sale) was held. Appraisers sheets listing items and giving estimated values are in the records of Purity.

With this bequest, John Walker and the leaders of Purity were able to hold the little congregation together during the perilous and divisive years of the early 1830's. There is no record of what became of the principal. It is probable that it was wiped out as Confederate money or securities. The fund did not seem to be in existence in 1874.

After Mr. Porter left in 1816, John B. Davies served as supply from 1817 to 1821. He is mentioned in the will of James Kennedy as the one to oversee the \$200 bequest to the various societies. Mr. Davies may well have penned the will, as there is a memorandum with the initials "J.B.D."

In 1823 Purity united with Concord Church in calling James Biggers Stafford, a native of North Carolina. He had served as supply for Purity and a congregation near Beckhamville, as well as other churches in the area, during the preceding twenty-four months. Stafford was twenty-nine when he first began to preach at Purity. After he accepted the call in 1823, he made his home two miles southwest of the church and remained there during the ten years of his pastorate. One who knew him well described him as:

A man of large frame, slow of speech, and slow of tongue, neither very eloquent or persuasive in his manner; slow in forming opinions, and equally slow in yielding them up when formed. His co-presbyters regarded him as a sound, orthodox theologian; but being naturally timid and unpretending, he displayed in the pulpit no extraordinary gifts or ability. (Douglas, *History of Purity*, 1865, page 16)

9 to erect a new building for
f 72 signatures is in the records
t the end of this volume. This
near the log structure of 1796,
in and painted without, and
ompleted in 1832. Elder John
criptions for the building show
ther supplies, as well as a nota-

wenty-five dollars for building

le by John Douglas, Sr. for the
his building.



WORSHIP—Wooden
erected by fire in 1904.

nullification, which swept the
and 1832, affected Purity as
Carolina witnessed many mob
of the church, approximately
including three elders. Some
few miles from Purity, which
North.¹⁷ A record of some of
in the form of an interview
with his aunt, Mrs.
Thomas Casky. The old lady
of the troubles of 1832. She

and Margaret (White),
and (White), Jimmie

McClintoch and his wife Elizabeth and daughters Peggy and Katti,
and Elizabeth McClintoch's sister, Elsie Wilson, and her sons George
and Robin (and perhaps her sister Ann Sarvis), Abram Ross and his
wife Ann, Frank White and his wife Wherry, Mrs. Jennet Knox.

Two of the elders, James McClintoch and Abraham White, men-
tioned above, were leaders in forming Pleasant Grove Church. Elder
Matthew McClintoch left without applying for his dismissal. Existing
records do not indicate whether the remaining sixty members of
Purity were for or against nullification.¹⁷ The bitter quarrel in the
congregation depressed and discouraged the minister, Mr. Stafford.
At the meeting of Bethel Presbytery in November 1833, he asked to
have his pastoral connection with Purity dissolved; however, he was
willing to remain with the more peaceful Concord congregation.¹⁸
In 1834 Mr. Stafford left Concord Church also and moved to
Mississippi.