

THE SOUTH FORK BAPTIST CHURCH

A History

August 1979

Commentary: Recently while reading for the first time the minutes of the early meetings of The South Fork Baptist Church I became so intensely interested and impressed by the significance of what I was reading that I felt impelled to take notes of things I personally wanted to remember. Then it occurred to me that many others who would have no opportunity to read the minutes would be interested and that we all might benefit by having a record of our "Roots". This history is the result of my conviction that we owe a great debt of gratitude to our forefathers and others who, in spite of hardships, difficulties, and oft-times human failings, adhered to the Christian principles as taught in the Bible as a way of life, and established and kept alive this church as a fulfillment of their belief. We have a priceless heritage passed on to us by God-fearing men and women who sought to live and rear their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord so I am writing this LEST WE FORGET.

Mildred Wilson Rife

The South Fork Baptist Church is an organization belonging to the Harrisville Association. Its place of worship is near the Ritchie County line in Southwest District of Doddridge County, West Virginia, and is situated on the ridge road connecting the communities of Oxford, on the South Fork of Hughes River, and Summers, on the Middle Fork of Hughes River.

At different times of the church's history, the postoffices at Oxford, Holbrook, and Summers served the neighborhoods where most of the members lived. The postoffice now serving the area is West Union (Route 1).

The authentic date of the organization of the church is believed to be November 1, 1841. That date was written in one of the books of minutes as the time of the church's organization and, since that clerk was a direct descendent of some, and personally acquainted with others, who were charter members, it is reasonable to assume that the date is authentic. The minutes of the meeting held, more than two years after that date, on February 27, 1844 is the first written record we have of its activities. Minutes have been faithfully kept of the transactions at the business meetings for most of the years since that time.

The first fifteen names on the church roll in the book of minutes starting in 1844, were probably the charter members. At least the records show that all fifteen were members prior to 1844. The names are as follows: George W. Zinn and his wife Sarah Gray Zinn, Thomas S. Gray and his wife Rachel Zinn Gray, William Gray and his wife Nancy Gray, Jonathan Miney and his wife Rebecca Miney, Bartlett Waldo and his wife Jane Waldo, Godfrey Carroll, Samuel G. Rodgers, Elizabeth Gray, Rachel Miney, and Sophia Amelia Zinn.

Three of the charter members, George W. Zinn, Rachel Zinn Gray, and Sophia Amelia Zinn were the son and daughters of John and Ruth Gandy Zinn, early settlers in the area. Through the years many others of the John Zinn family became members of the church and there has never been a time since the church was organized, including the present, that there were not descendents of that family numbered among the active members. Sophia Amelia Zinn married Thomas E. Davis and lived at Harrisville. She became the mother of Thomas E. Davis, Jr.,

grandmother of Thomas J. Davis, Sr., and great-grandmother of Thomas J. Davis, Jr. All three were Harrisville lawyers and Thomas J. Davis, Jr. is still practicing there. She was also the grandmother of Winifred Davis, wife of Judge Homer B. Woods, and has had nine descendents who have practiced (or are still practicing) law or who married lawyers.

Another son of John and Ruth Gandy Zinn who was a pioneer member of South Fork was Granville M. Zinn. He and his wife, Rosetta Lowther Zinn, were received by baptism in 1845 and were still active members until his death in 1891 and hers in 1912.

The first minutes were written by Samuel G. Rogers who married Narcissus Zinn, another daughter of John Zinn. They lived near Oxford and had two sons. After her death he remarried and moved to Preston County being granted a letter of dismission in 1856.

The first church building was a log cabin built near the present location of The Oxford Baptist Church, which is approximately three eights of a mile from the South Fork of Hughes River on the road that follows Sugar Run South-eastward. The building was probably erected soon after the church was organized and at first had seats made of split rails with pegs driven in them for legs. Although meetings were held there regularly the building was not finished for several years as the following excerpts from the minutes indicate:

Jan. 20, 1849 - "Resolved that Bro. G.W. Zinn, Bro. S.G. Rogers, Bro. T.S. Gray be appointed to attend to getting the material to finish the meeting house."

Resolved that Bro. G. Carroll get all the help he can to do the work on the meeting house."

Jan. 28, 1854 - "On motion, appointed Bro. G.W. Zinn to collect money for the purpose of finishing the meeting house and fencing in the cemetery and to superintend the work."

Jan. 26, 1856 - "Paid Bro. T.S. Gray for filling the windows with glass, \$1.00."

March 1858 - "A deed of Conveyance for meeting house lot and graveyard was read and, on motion, received."

"On Motion, appoint by ballot Deacon T.S. Gray, G.G. Griffin, and Jacob Mason as trustees of said property."

The first minister was Rev. James S. Griffin who lived at Lumberport in Harrison County and was one of the pioneer ministers of the Baptist church in what is now West Virginia. His field of work was in Harrison, Doddridge, Ritchie and surrounding counties extending as far as the Kanawha Valley. He served the South Fork Church off and on from its beginning through October 1853 with a record of one sermon preached in November 1866.

In the spring of 1852 Rev. Griffin's son, George G. Griffin and his wife, Juan Fernandez Zinn (another daughter of John and Ruth Gandy Zinn) with their two daughters, Virginia and Caroline, moved from Harrison County and located in Doddridge County near the Ritchie County line on the head of Bear Run. They were received into the church by letter in June 1852. They bought and cleared a farm (later owned by their grandson, Homer Wilson) and here they had eight more children. In 1878 they moved to Holbrook where they lived the rest of their lives. Eventually all ten of their children became members of the church and some of their descendents are still active members.

In each new book of minutes the first item to appear was a copy of the Church Covenant and Articles of Faith setting forth the principles of Christian belief and with the stipulation that they be read to the church on request. Added to that was "Rules of Decorum" a list of rules which, in one case in 1859, was written by the pastor and deacons, then discussed (at great length) in business meetings, then finally adopted by the church. The first of these rules were instructions for the order of conducting business meetings.

Some of the other Rules of Decorum which seemed to be rather rigidly enforced were as follows:

"No member shall cast any reflections or make remarks on the slips, failures, or imperfections of any other member on pain of the censure of the church."

"In-as-much as order and decency becomes the House of God no whispering or laughing in the time of a speech, no loitering or lying down in time of a session will be expected."

"Any member failing to attend three church meetings in succession will be required to give satisfaction to the church for their absence."

"Whereas there is much evil attending the use of intoxicating liquors, Resolved therefore that we make the manufacturing, selling and drinking of ardent spirits as a beverage a test of fellowship."

In 1880 the rule concerning missing three meetings in succession was struck from the books.

We are told that, in the early church, discipline was strict and the church was concerned about the life and conduct of its members. That Statement is borne out by a look at how some of these rules were enforced. A true story (handed down by word of mouth) from the days when it was very improper to laugh in church and when parents believed that to spare the rod was to spoil the child, concerned the two sons, eight and nine years of age, of one of the deacons of the church. One night while an elderly man was praying in a slow drawling tone of voice, outside an open window, a cow "bawled". The old man lifted his head, looked around and said, "Who's thata mockin' me?" The little boys laughed and were spared a "whipping" by their father for laughing in church only because their mother intervened.

Besides parental discipline, the church members had ways of disciplining each other. If there were "differences" between members, if someone was reported as having committed

some act unbecoming a church member, or had missed three meetings in succession, a committee was appointed to investigate. Often the specific charge was not recorded. If the minutes read, "The committee reported and was discharged" and the next motion read that the one who had been visited by the committee was to be "Excluded", one could only assume that the report had been unfavorable. If the committee recommended that ~~either~~ one, or both, of those having difficulties make acknowledgement before the church and they failed to do so, they were usually excluded. If the committee of church members failed to resolve the difficulty, neighboring churches or the Association were asked to send a committee to investigate. A few were excluded for intoxication, or as one clerk put it "For getting drunk and using bad language", a few for adultery, several for "absenting themselves from the church" (being absent more than three meetings), and some for "contempt of the church" (failure to acknowledge their wrongs). The frequency with which such incidents were recorded in the early minutes shows a conscientious effort on the part of the members to carry out this section of the church covenant: "Walking together in brotherly love, we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully warn, rebuke, and admonish one another.....". There is evidence that occasionally in their zeal for "warning, rebuking, and admonishing" they forgot about "walking together in brotherly love". The fact that so many did "acknowledge their wrongs" as the church required them to do, showed not only a kind of courage and seriousness of purpose in living a Christian life but also a determination to remain church members and carry on the work of the church.

The Civil War years was a time of great turmoil, with many families and churches divided by their opposing views. This proved to be a stormy period for The South Fork Baptist Church. Apparently factions had developed in the church, so in the fall of 1861 the church

dismissed their pastor and disbanded, not meeting again in the church building until the summer of 1864. During that period some of the members began to meet and hold services in the Ridge School House, a log building approximately three miles Southeast of the original church building. After passing the church building the road ascended the hill at the head of Sugar Run and, for about a mile and a half, followed the ridge that separates Bear Run and Lower Run. The Ridge School House stood in the field (now owned by Enid Zinn) a few hundred feet from where the ridge road started to descend the hill toward Summers following Zinn Run to Middle Fork of Hughes River. At a service held in the Ridge School House in June 1864 several young people confessed their faith in Christ and expressed a desire to unite with the church. Since they had not been meeting as an organized church, the group decided to make an effort to get the South Fork Church together again. A meeting was held at the church building on July 23, 1864. A discussion was held as to whether they should consider themselves The South Fork Baptist Church. The clerk wrote, "We decided we are the church". For about a year they carried on the work of the church, calling a pastor, receiving new members, etc. But there were protests because in September 1865 the group calling themselves the church asked three neighboring churches to send men for a committee "to adjust the differences between us and those that have dissented from us". The committee decided that the group that had been meeting was the true South Fork church. However, that did not settle the matter as is indicated by the minutes of November 1866; there is record of another committee of three deacons from other churches being called to decide "who is the South Fork Church proper". This time both sides agreed to abide by the decision of the committee. After a very thorough investigation the

committee reported that both sides had been too hasty, that there had been hard sayings on both sides, effected a reconciliation between the two factions, and declared that the majority, or the ones who had been meeting, were the church.

From 1864 for over four years the church held most of its meetings in the original church building during the summer months and in the Ridge School House during three or four of the winter months. After the summer of 1868 the church did not return to the church building but continued to meet in the Ridge School House for a period of about four years. At the meeting on December 7, 1872 the church voted "To move her place of worship to the school house on Lower Run below B.L. Wilson's." (That log school house still stands across the road and near the W. Frank Osborne residence.) The church met in the Lower Run school house for several months until a new church building was completed in 1873.

In March 1870 the church voted "To appoint a committee to take into consideration the propriety of building a church house and pick on a location". The committee consisted of G.M. Zinn, S.V. Brown, M.B. Zinn, Joshua Wilson, and G.G. Griffin (who was later replaced by Joseph A. Summers). The new church house was a frame building 30 by 40 feet and was built on a half acre lot that was deeded to the church by S.V. and Sarah E. Brown in 1871. That lot is now a part of the South Fork Cemetery. The committee made arrangements to have the lumber sawed at the old mill at Holbrook and secured Andrew Yaler and the Yaler Brothers to build it with the help of the members and friends of the church. The first meeting held in the new building was on September 28, 1873.

The South Fork Cemetery began its existence in 1889. The minutes for May 11, 1889 contains this sentence, "On motion the church return their thanks to Sister Brown

for the offer made to the church for a half acre of land adjoining the church property for burial purposes". The deed was not secured until two years later but the land came into immediate use for its intended purpose. Homer Wilson often told that, at the age of 16, he helped dig the first grave in the cemetery, that of his cousin, Allison VanHorn, and later planted at the head of the grave a cedar shrub that had been supplied by his mother, "Jennie" Wilson, who said that would probably be the only monument Allison would ever have. The slender shrub grew to be about eight feet tall and remained there seventy years. In 1959 it was cut down and replaced by relatives with a small bronze plate to mark the grave. There are other tombstones in the cemetery on which the date of death is indicated as prior to 1889 but those bodies were moved from other burial places.

An iron fence was built around the cemetery in 1904 at a cost of \$250.00. Since then that fence has been repaired and finally all replaced but still remaining from the original fence is the arch over the entrance bearing the name, South Fork Cemetery. Additional land has been added to the original half acre. When the present place of worship was built in 1909, the old church building was torn down and the lot on which it had stood was taken into the cemetery. In 1929 a triangular plot of land on the Southeastern side of the cemetery was acquired from Homer Wilson, who then owned the "Brown" farm and in 1960 an additional plot at the back or Northeastern side was obtained from Homer Wilson's estate.

The present church building was erected in 1909 and dedicated June 26, 1910. It was built across the road from the old structure on one end of the grove which had been purchased for \$25.00 from R.A. McClain and wife and J.A. Summers and wife in 1871. The building committee consisted of J.K. Wilson, J.M. Osborn, Lee Campbell, Ezra Bell, and William Campbell. The committee named M. Homer Wilson as foreman

and he planned and built the sanctuary with the help of many members of the church. The total cost of the structure was \$2275.00, all of which had been collected before the dedication, except \$316.77 which was raised at that service. The dedicatory sermon was presented by Rev. Marshall A. Summers, the dedicatory prayer by C. Ernest Wilson, who also gave the sermon in the afternoon service. Both of them were former members of the church and both had been ordained to the ministry at South Fork.

An article clipped from a newspaper of 1910 had this about the dedication: "The crowd attending the dedication was estimated at from 1500 to 2000 people.....The church is a beautiful onewith twelve elegant memorial windows with cathedral glass, all placed by friends in memory of departed ones, most of whom were for years members of the Old South Fork Church.....One of the best bells in the country is on the church and can be heard for miles around".

It is of interest to note that the name of one of the charter members of the church, Godfrey Carroll, appears on one of the memorial windows. His wife, Mary, became a member in 1845, four years after the organization of the church. Other pioneer members whose names are on one of the memorial windows are Granville Zinn and his wife (Rosetta). They were also received into the church in 1845.

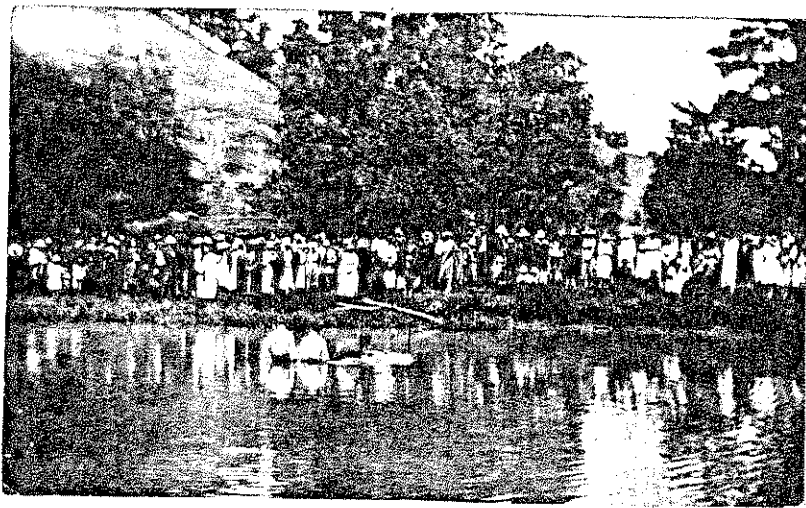
Many customs have been followed consistently throughout the life of the church. From the first, the church, regularly each year, has sent delegates to the Association. In early days the moderator appointed three delegates, appointed someone to write a letter to the Association (sometimes the clerk, sometimes someone else), appointed a committee to examine the letter, had the letter read to and adopted by the congregation; then, after the Association, heard a report from the delegates who attended. The church still participates in Associational work.

Seldom was any mention made of the name of the Association or of where it was to meet. One reference in pre-Civil War days was made to the Northwestern Association. Whether or not South Fork remained a member of that Association until joining The Harrisville Association is unknown. In August 1889 a motion read, "That the clerk insert in the letter to the Association a request for a letter to join the new Association". Since the first meeting of The Harrisville Association was held in 1889 the South Fork delegates were probably present at that meeting. In the South Fork minutes for August/1890 we read, "On motion, electing delegates by ballot to The Harrisville Association that meets with The Union Baptist Church at Cairo, August 20, 1890." G.G.Griffin was treasurer of The Harrisville Association for a period of 15 years.

Where the Associations had met in previous years is unknown but the first record we have of its having been held at South Fork is in 1893. The minutes for June 2, 1892 include, "on motion to ask the Association to meet with us next year". In the minutes for July 3, 1893 we read, "On motion to appoint a committee of three for arrangements during the Association". One item, however, was not left for the committee to arrange as can be seen by this quote from the minutes for August 12, 1893, "On motion that the church grants B.J.Hudkins privilege of furnishing lemonade and water on the grounds during the Association." The committee for arrangements for the Association was J.K.Wilson, H.C.Zinn, and S.G.Zinn.

Another event faithfully arranged each year has been the holding of a revival. In early years a revival was often called "A meeting of days", a "protracted meeting", or as one clerk so aptly put it, "We protracted our meeting from day to day". Revivals were usually held during the winter months until the automobile began to replace horses as a means of transportation when it became the usual thing to have revivals while the weather was "good" before the roads got "bad".

Until the early 1900's it was the usual practice to baptize those who presented themselves as candidates for baptism without any delay even though it meant breaking the ice on the water in the creek to be able to "hold the baptising". Often, the minutes reveal, if someone presented themselves for baptism in a service the congregation "repaired to the waters" immediately after that service where the ordinance of baptism was administered. For most of the present century it has been the custom to wait for warm weather before holding baptismal services. As a result a "baptising" was often held only once or twice a year. At least during the early part of the present century the announcement that a baptismal service was to be held would often result in its being attended by a sizable crowd. Even though the customs pertaining to "baptisings" have changed somewhat the ordinance of baptism by immersion still remains one of the cherished Baptist beliefs.



South Fork Baptist Church Baptismal Service
June 30, 1918 - Rev. Ofa Bennett, Pastor
(Middle Fork - Near Jacob Spiker residence)

From the beginning of the church for nearly a century it was the usual custom to have meetings (with a sermon followed by the business session) on one Saturday a month, with a worship service, often called "preaching", on the next day, Sunday. During the first quarter of this century the regular schedule (the majority of the time) was business meeting at 2:00 P.M. or 2:30 P.M. on the Saturday before the fourth Sunday in the month, Sunday School at 9:30 A.M. (every Sunday during the six "summer" months), and "preaching" following Sunday School on the fourth Sunday. In 1928 the time of the business meeting was changed to Saturday night. Since then there have been many changes in both the time and frequency of the meetings of the church to suit changing circumstances.

The Sunday School is believed to have been organized in 1852 although the minutes of the church give no hint that there were any Sunday School meetings until in 1910 a motion passed that the church elect officers of the Sunday School. For the most part, the Sunday School has been considered a separate organization from the church which may explain why there was little or no reference made to it in the early minutes. In a genealogy of the Griffin family the statement is made that G.G. Griffin, in 1852, helped organize the first Sunday School in his neighborhood, which has been in session every summer since. Proof that the Sunday School was indeed organized by 1852 and also an indication of what the early meetings were like is found in an old book (among the books of the church minutes). This book was evidently a Sabbath School record book. Under the date July 1852 is a list of names of those who had "paid to the Lyberry" (library). (Probably today that would be called paying for literature.) Then follows a list of female class members and male class members with a number after each name indicating how many Bible verses they

had "learned by heart". Then later they had Testament classes, No.1, No.2, etc. In this same book we read, "Sabbath School organized on May 3, 1963 at the school house on the ridge by electing Joseph A. Summers, Supt. J.H. Pierce, Assistant, and Jacob A. Mason, Librarian". Then follows a list of class members and a list of those who had paid for the library.

By the early 1900's the program of most sessions of the Sunday School followed this routine: First was opening exercises led by the superintendent. Then the classes assembled in different corners of the building to study the lesson. There were four classes, the primary or "card" class (named for the picture cards given each Sunday to each member of the class), the Junior Class, the Young Peoples Class and the Adult or "Old Folks" Class. Following the lesson, the closing exercises included the report of the secretary who told how many were present in each class and the amount of the collection. Then an opportunity was given for the little children to give recitations or Bible verses that they had memorized. A beloved teacher of the "card" class for many years was Mrs. Bettie Griffin, who died in 1916.

Several young men have been licensed to the ministry of the Gospel by the South Fork Church. Perhaps the action was not equivalent to granting a license but in the minutes for June 1844 we read, "Resolved that we liberate Bro. G.W.Zinn to exhort when he chooses".

The names of those granted licenses are: William G. Zinn in 1869, Marshall A. Summers in 1882, Alexander S. Holden in 1889, C. Ernest Wilson in 1904, Strother Campbell in 1908, W. Frank Osborne in 1929, and Lawrence McCloy in 1920.

Three of those granted licenses have been ordained at South Fork. All three had been

brought up in this church and were members at the time of their ordination.

The first to be ordained was Marshall A. Summers, son of Joseph A. and Nancy Wilson Summers. He was licensed on September 10, 1882 and ordained on February 8, 1885. An item of interest is that Marshall Summers was received into the church and was baptised following the first worship service that was held in the "new" church building on September 28, 1873, then thirty seven years later gave the dedicational sermon for the present church building in 1910. Sometime after his ordination Mr. Summers left the state returning in 1903 and worked for several years for the Baptist General Association of W. Va. (now the W. Va. Baptist Convention). In the February 1979 issue of the West Virginia Baptist in the article, "Looking at Our Roots" (a summary of Baptist work at the state level), by the Rev. Bryce W. Griffith, President of the West Virginia Baptist Historical Society, is the following:

"A call was extended to Marshall A. Summers to become General Missionary (as the position was then called) by the Executive Board in July 1903. Mr. Summers had been a missionary for the Minnesota State Convention but was apparently a West Virginia native. After a visit to inspect the new field, he entered upon the work immediately. Mr. Summers held this position for eight and a half years leaving in January 1912 to accept a similar one in Oklahoma.

In a comparison of 1903 and 1911 the author of the above named article points out the great strides made under Mr. Summers' leadership in many areas of the Baptist work during that period and among other things mentions that "150 new churches had been organized and 160 new church buildings erected, 79 of them dedicated by Summers". One of the 79 was The South Fork Baptist Church.

An account of the dedication of the South Fork church that appeared in The Baptist Banner in 1910 read thus: "Rev. M. A. Summers preached the dedication sermon. He was born and raised in this community and the people feel justly proud of him and his work".

C. Ernest Wilson was the second minister to be ordained at South Fork. He was licensed on the date March 5, 1904. His ordination service was conducted October 29, 1904. He was the son of James K. and Virginia Griffin Wilson, and for about fifteen years had been a teacher. For one year after deciding to enter the ministry he was pastor of the Cove Baptist Church resigning in the fall of 1905 to attend Crozier Baptist Theological Seminary at Chester, Pennsylvania. He and his family spent the summer of 1906 at their farm home (the home once owned by Samuel V. Brown). There his wife (Ella Maxwell Wilson) died on August 1. Mr. Wilson returned to school and graduated from Crozier in the spring of 1908. He immediately became pastor of a Baptist church at Wellsburg, West Virginia and had an apparently very successful ministry of three years duration. It was while he was pastor of the church in Wellsburg that he participated in the dedication program at South Fork. The article from The Baptist Banner reporting the dedication (referred to previously) had this to say about him: "In the afternoon Rev. Ernest Wilson preached a splendid sermon. Rev. Mr. Wilson is one of our rising young ministers and has a bright future before him".

A little less than two years later he died at the age of thirty eight, only four years after graduating from the seminary, cutting short what promised to be a ministry of great service. He had remarried and left his wife, the former Ida Nestor, and an infant son. His son, Ralph Wilson, is now a member of the Vienna Baptist Church, Vienna, West Virginia.

The third to be ordained to the ministry was W. Frank Osborne. He was granted a license to preach the gospel at the business meeting held October 26, 1929. His ordination service was conducted at South Fork on August 30, 1931. He began his ministry fifty years ago in August 1929. His first church was Smith Chapel which he served while attending high school in Harrisville.

In the course of his ministry Rev. Osborne has been pastor of 17 churches in six counties, Ritchie, Doddridge, Harrison, Wirt, Calhoun, and Pleasants. He served as pastor of Cairo Baptist Church 40 years, Straight Creek 23 years, Prosperity 20 years, Spruce Creek 20 years, and South Fork 10 years.

He served as moderator of the Harrisville Association for six years (1943-1948).

He has performed 650 wedding ceremonies.

The esteem in which he is held by his many friends and those he has served as pastor is attested by the number of funeral services he has been asked to conduct. During his 50 years in the ministry he has conducted 1317 funeral services.

Rev. Osborne and his wife, the former Sylvia Cutright, have lived for many years on Lower Run a short distance down stream from the farm on which he was reared.

The ministers who have served the church as pastor with the approximate dates of their pastorates follow: James S. Griffin (served the church off and on from the date of its organization until 1866), A.C. Holden (1844), Wilford Drummons (1850-51), John Woofter (1855-57) (He was the grand father of Emery J. Woofter for so long pastor of the Salem Baptist Church), Joseph Smith (1857-61), Tillman Kemper (1864-66), J. Bennette (1867-68), George A. Woofter (1869-76) (He was a nephew of John Woofter, the former pastor, and was a Civil War veteran, enlisting soon after his ordination. He was pastor during the erection of the church building in 1872-73

and later married Orvilla Summers, daughter of Joseph A. and Nancy Summers, whom he had baptized while he was pastor), G.H. Gaines (1877-78), John Stump (1880-87), L.D. Hall (1887-88), A.J. Robinson (1888-1902), W.S. Monroe (1902-07), Ben P. Holden (1908-13) (was pastor when the present building was erected in 1909), Ofa Bennett (1914-20), J.E. Elliott (1921-22), Edwin Waggoner (1924-26), Nelson H. Bartlett (1928-33), J.A. Young (1933-38), John A. Kyre (1939-40), H.V. Layhew (1940-42), W.R. Griswold (1943-44), J.W. Burch (1945-46), W. Frank Osborne (1948-58), Ray Bartlett (1959-1964), N.H. Bartlett (Interim 4 mo. in 1964), Ray Bartlett (1964-68), Arthur Spring (1970-1973), Arthur Cox (1974-still serving).

There have also been many ministers who supplied the pulpit at various times but were not designated as pastor. Some of those whose names appeared in the early minutes were Joseph Barnett, W. Whitehead, Thomas Drummons, Aaron Barnett, E.M. Hall, and Allison Barnett. James Woods, grandfather of Judge Homer B. Woods, often assisted John Woofter in revivals. In more recent times some of the names of ministers who conducted one or more services were William S. Oliver, L.S. Vannoy, Clyde Curry, Henry Langfit, B.A. VanHorn. Many other ministers have preached at South Fork whose names did not appear in the minutes.

The church clerks have been: Samuel G. Rogers (4 years), Jonathan Miney (3 years), Godfrey Carroll (1 year), G.G. Griffin (6 years), Richard Hickman (8 years), Samuel V. Brown (37 years), M. Homer Wilson (20 years), W. Frank Osborne (4 years), Earl Zinn (1 year), Eva Griffin (2 years), Carson Gaston (10 years), Enid Zinn (37 years).

The treasurers have been: Thomas S. Gray, Granville M. Zinn, J.K. Wilson, H.C. Zinn, J.M. Osborn, Okey Zinn, E. Wilson Osborn, Judy Grimm Moran, and Barbara Ball.

The trustees have been: Thomas S. Gray, G.G.Griffin, Jacob Mason, George W. Zinn, S.V.Brown, Richard Hickman, J.A.Summers, Jessee Leason, Samuel G.Zinn, M.Bruce Summers, Lee Campbell, William Hudkins, C.C.Dillie, Jacob Spiker, Clyde Gray, E.Wilson Osborn, Lester Grimm, Donald Grimm, Wallace Haught, Miles Ball.

The deacons have been: Thomas S.Gray, Samuel G.Rogers, Godfrey Carroll, G.G.Griffin, Joseph A. Summers, George M. Zinn, James K. Wilson, A.H.Knight, A.E.Hudkins, C.E. Wilson, J.M.Osborn, Jacob Pierce, Audra E. Wilson, Clyde Kemper, Jamie A. Williams, Earl Zinn, Bradford Spiker, E.Wilson Osborn, David Locke.

The following quotes from the minutes of various dates reveal some great changes that have taken place during the 138 years since the church was organized:

1864 - "Motion that we meet at the Ridge School House at early candlelighting time".

1856 - "On motion we appoint G.G.Griffin to furnish candles and keep the meeting house lighted during our protracted meeting."

1874 - "On motion the church tenders her thanks to E.W.Summers for 1 bracket light (oil)."

1902 - "On motion we adjourn till next Sat. night at early lamplighting."

1946 - "On motion the moderator appoint a committee to look after securing electricity for the church and the material for the wiring."

1889 - "Whereas we are aware that the pastor has no horse to ride to do his work, therefore resolve that the church pledge themselves to raise \$25.00 to purchase a horse, and notify the other three churches where the pastor preaches and request them to do all they can in helping to purchase the horse."

1891 - "On motion that the church arranges to buy an organ."

1931 - "The president of the Womens Mission Circle presents a piano to the church."

1855 - "Member agrees to furnish fuel for the church house for one year for \$10.00."

1855 - "The treasurer reports \$9.70 collected for the first quarter (for church expenses)."

1855 - "Call an extra meeting for the purpose of raising money for paying the pastor a year and appoint a committee to procure subscription for same."

1855 - "Amount collected for missions \$4.60 (for the year)."

1888 - "The church appoints three missionary collectors, names to wit, Ella Griffin, Grace Summers, and Ada Brown." (Three months later the committee reported that the amount collected was \$1.30 for home missions, \$2.43 for state missions, and \$2.43 for foreign missions).

1907 - "Mission money collected for the year, \$26.23."

1877 - "On motion to buy 1 dozen cheap hymn books for use in the church."

1928 - "Budget system adopted."

1928 - "The Womens Mission Circle was organized". The mission circle still is active and the church has been greatly benefitted by the interest and accomplishments of the circle in the more than 50 years of its existence.

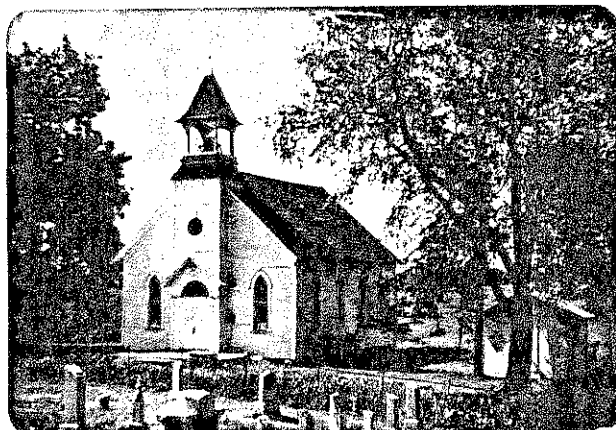
After 1900, from time to time, there were more marked increases in the church budget than had occurred before. Before the turn of the century, when pastors salaries were mentioned it was always as \$75.00 or \$100.00 a year. Gradually, however, the pastor's salary was raised as well as the wages for the sexton and the caretaker of the cemetery. From the first it was customary to appoint a committee or an individual to collect money for each item of the church's expenses such as pastor's salaries or missions, until the budget system of handling church finances was adopted in 1928. This soon proved to be

more effectual than other methods of raising money for the expenses of the church. The report sent to the Association in 1962 is representative of the modern day budget. The church budget has continued to increase gradually until the present time even though membership has decreased. The 1962 report included the following: Missions and other benevolences \$393.70, Associational Expenses \$8.00, Operating Expenses \$180.00, Salaries \$400.00, Total \$981.70.

Another change occurred in the year 1950. For more than a century no weddings were held in the church sanctuary. The first wedding was on the afternoon of Thursday, November 30, 1950 when Janice Zinn, daughter of Enid and Earl Zinn, and David Dale Ball, son of Sylvia and Toy Ball were united in marriage. The wedding had been scheduled for the Saturday before but on Friday there fell the deepest snow known to have struck the area. It was impossible to travel so the wedding was delayed for several days until it was possible to reach the church by walking or traveling in a horse drawn sled. The Rev. W. Frank Osborne was the officiating minister. Since then many weddings have been held at South Fork including those of the daughter and both sons of the ones who started the trend, Janice and Dale Ball.

South Fork has always been a small church with a hundred members or less. It was organized with about fifteen members and in approximately twenty years the membership had increased to sixty. There is no record giving the membership year by year except for most of the years since 1906 which seems to have been the peak year with 105 members reported to the Association. Like many rural communities, the area is more sparsely populated than it once was, the family units are smaller, and many of the younger people

have left to live elsewhere so the membership has dropped, more or less gradually, for many years. The number of members reported to the Association for 1978 was 52.



The South Fork Baptist Church
In the year 1953

The members of the church have always taken pride in keeping the property in good repair and in adding improvements when it was feasible to do so. It may be of interest to list some of the major repairs and additions with the dates when those things were done:

1915 - A new roof was put on the church building at a cost of \$77.17.

1916 - The side walls of the church were repapered. The paper cost \$7.00.

1920 - A gas line was laid to the church building and gas stoves installed.

1922 - The cement platform at the front of the church building was constructed. This includes a monument to "the horse and buggy days" in the form of a block of cement rising above the level of the platform at one corner for the convenience of horseback riders in mounting and dismounting.

1946 - The building was wired for electricity.

1955 - The papered sidewalls were covered with Celotex paneling.

1956 - Plans were made for a cinder block addition, 28 by 32 feet, to be added to the back part of the church building. This room was to serve as Sunday School rooms, kitchen and dining room. The estimated cost for materials was \$1450.00. Clyde Gray was the carpenter and planned the room.

1963 - The ceiling of the sanctuary was refinished with celotex replacing the embossed metal ceiling (which had deteriorated) used when the church was built in 1909.

1962 - The gas stoves were replaced by floor furnaces.

1964 - A water system was installed and rest rooms were finished in the cinder block addition.

1979 - A gas forced air furnace was installed.

Much of the life of a church is not recorded in the minutes since they are primarily a record of the formal transactions. The spiritual life of a church is evidenced in the zeal and devotion of its members in carrying out the purpose of the church and is reflected in the daily walk of those who have pledged themselves to follow the principles of living a Christian life as revealed by the Holy Bible. Down through the years there have been faithful and consecrated men and women who have helped to keep the true spirit of the church alive. Many may not have been those whose names appeared in the minutes, or some never may have been known to "speak out in church", but by dedicated lives and according to their talents they contributed much to the spiritual life of the church.

The hundreds of church meetings held through the years, the sermons preached, the Sunday School lessons taught, the hymns sung, the prayers offered, the revivals attended, the baptismal services conducted, the meetings of the mission circle held, the contributions of money or time made, the fellowship enjoyed while partaking of food spread on improvised tables in the grove, the working together on a clean-up or repair project, and the friendships formed are only some of the aspects of church life that have contributed in varying degrees to furthering the way of life for which the church stands. The influence of The South Fork Baptist Church upon the lives it has touched, in its long history, and the extent of that influence is immeasurable.

Afterword

After completion of the foregoing pages the following information pertaining to South Fork's affiliation with an Association (referred to on page 11) was obtained:

"The Broad Run Association was organized October 16, 1835 (six years before the organization of the South Fork Church). At the time of its organization, Broad Run Association comprised about one-fifth of the area of West Virginia and included the counties of Harrison, Lewis, Upshar, Webster, Braxton, Clay, Gilmer, Roane, Doddridge, Ritchie, and part of Barbour, Tyler, and Monongalia.

There is a record in the Associational minutes of "messengers" T.S.Gray, G.G.Griffin, and Allison Barnett from the South Fork Church attending the 19th Annual Meeting of the Broad Run Association in 1883.

The 43rd Annual Meeting of the Broad Run Association was held August 31-September 1, 1881 at the South Fork church."

The above would indicate that South Fork Church was a member of the Broad Run Association from the time the church was organized until joining the Harrisville Association in 1889.

Before the Civil War there was a North Western Virginia Baptist Association that furnished missionaries for parts of the area.

Perhaps that is the Northwestern Association referred to in the church minutes for October 15, 1853.