



ORIE W. SHIRLEY

Orie Shirley descends from Daniel Shirley born about 1792 Pennsylvania and died April 10, 1872 in Jackson County Iowa. Daniel married Nancy Flynn May 31, 1818 in Berkeley County Virginia, (now West Virginia). [see Oct 1980 page 6 of the Shirley NEWS for family info].

Orie Shirley and his wife attended our Shirley meeting in Portland Oregon earlier this year, June 7th. We welcome them to the Shirley Association. They did not know Daniel Shirley was Peter Van Shirley's father. Orie Shirley brought Peter Van Shirley's medal of honor for his service in the Civil War.

Peter Van Shirley History

Peter Van Shirley was born November 27, 1837 in Ohio, where he spent his childhood. He moved to Jackson County, IA, where he married Samantha Eads in 1860. They had a son and a daughter before he joined the Army in 1862. He was in "Co. A" of the Iowa Infantry where he served in the Civil War. His son Ulysses Grant Shirley was born while he was still in the army on May 13, 1865. Peter Van Shirley was wounded and discharged in June of 1865.

Three more sons were born to Peter and Samantha before they left Andrew, Jackson County, IA. Their daughter, Stella, died in Iowa at about the age of twenty years.

Peter, Samantha and their five sons, John, Ulysses, Norman, Morris, and Miles came to Nebraska in 1885 in a covered wagon. They homesteaded south of Wellfleet.

He left the farm and moved to Wellfleet in the early 1890's. He ran a little grocery-hardware store in Wellfleet. His wife, Samantha, died in 1918. He retired and moved to Hayes County with his son, Ulysses in 1920. He lived with them until his death on January 25, 1921.

Peter's other sons, John, Norman, and Morris all moved to California and died there. Miles moved to Colorado and lived there until his death. By Herbert L. Shirley



Ulysses and Della Shirley

Ulysses Grant Shirley Family

Ulysses Grant Shirley son of Peter Van and Samantha Eads Shirley was born May 13, 1865 at Canton, IA. He came to Nebraska with his parents and four brothers in 1885. He was united in marriage to Della Blanche Chinn on July 3, 1893. She was the daughter of John Grafton Chinn and Susan Smith Chinn, born March 2, 1872 at Colfax, IA and came with her father and stepmother by train to McCook. Her family homesteaded about twenty miles

southwest of Wellfleet in Hayes County. Della taught in a sod school house known as Evergreen in 1891 and 1892.

Ulysses and Della resided on his homestead eight miles southwest of Wellfleet in Hayes County and farmed until 1944 when they moved to Curtis. They were the parents of thirteen children: Laura Edith, born August 4, 1894, died October 11, 1928 in a car accident, married to Ray Marash. She is buried at Wellfleet.

Mattie Mildred, born January 29, 1896, she still lives in North Platte, she married Neal Schrecongost, he died in 1940. They raised seven children, one child died in infancy. She later married Delbert Welch, he died in 1969.

Manley John, born September 12, 1897, died October 1973, is buried at Maywood. He married Bessie Corlett, she died March 16, 1980 and is buried at Maywood. They raised three children.

Clair Willard, born June 12, 1900, died January 9, 1976 is buried at Madrid, NE. He married Lavada White, they raised six children.

Virgil Duane, born February 27, 1902, died October 1, 1978, is buried at Maywood. He married Daphina Shepherd. Later married to Jessie Corlett Porter.

Herbert Leslie, born January 13, 1904 and lives in North Platte. He married Zora Fern Corlett, she died December 23, 1977, buried at Maywood. He married Dorothy Bollwitt.

Floyd Charles, born October 9, 1905, died February 20, 1984, buried at McCook. He married Agnes Johnson, she died December 1961. They raised four children.

Vera Blanche, born October 1, 1907, died March 1, 1980, buried at Maywood. She married Philetus (Bud) White. They raised seven children.

Kenneth Eugene, born March 4, 1909, died August 15, 1972, buried in Denver, Colorado. He married Eleanor Mogensen. They raised two children.

Baby Boy born January 24, 1911, died April 7, 1911.

Homer Roland, born July 25, 1912, died June 25, 1985, buried at North Platte. He married Florence Simms. They had three children, one died at six years.

Harold Sidney, born March 17, 1915. He now lives in Curtis. He married Betty June Lewin, they raised four children.

Clyde Stanley, born August 22, 1921, died August 29, 1979. He is buried at Wellfleet.

Ulysses and Della endured many hardships while raising a large family. Della will be remembered for her jolly good nature and her deep devotion to her children and grandchildren. She was always ready to lend a helping hand to their friends and neighbors, and was called upon, many times to be a midwife.

Della passed away October 21, 1953 at Moorefield, NE and is buried at Wellfleet. Ulysses passed away January 26, 1957 in Denver, CO and is buried in Wellfleet. By Herbert L. Shirley

JAMES SHIRLEY

My great grandfather, James Shirley, was married in the County Carlow, Ireland, and died there early in life. His wife apparently accompanied my grandfather and his wife Catherine McDonald and their young son Herman early in 1858. They settled in the Township of Bathurst on a homestead about 9 miles from Perth. My great grandmother soon met and married a Mr. Anderson who was running a sawmill and he also pre-deceased her. She was commonly known as "Granny Anderson". From first hand information, she is buried near Fallbrooke, Ontario, about 12 miles from Perth, Ont. My grandfather James was born in 1835 and died in 1884. His tombstone is in the 3rd last row (north) almost central in the old section of the Catholic cemetery - about ½ mile north of Perth. His wife Catherine McDonald was born in Ireland in 1831 and died in 1917 in the American Soo. She was buried in Perth, Ont. and her name appears on the tombstone with grandfather's. Their place of marriage in County Carlow is not known.

After my uncle Herman Shirley, the only one of the family born in Ireland, in 1856, my aunt Mary was born soon after their arrival in Canada in 1858, about 9 miles from Perth, Ont. as stated above. Besides Mary, there were Annie, Martha and Katherine (Kate the youngest of the family). I have met them personally. The other children were Paul, Michael, Joseph, James, Thomas, Patrick and Richard.

During the 1870's they moved to Bay City, Michigan and the American Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, U.S.A.

JOHN HERMAN SHIRLEY

He was born in 1856 in county Carlow, Ireland and came to Canada when only 2 years old. He married Mary Ann Nagle in 1884. Mary Ann Nagle was born at Bathurst, Ont. about 12 miles S.W. of Perth, Ont. in 1854. She was daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jos. Nagle who farmed at Bathurst. She died in Perth July 20th, 1896.

All children of Herman Shirley were born of his first wife. They were: Mayme, Ethel, Anne Loretta and William.

John Herman married again to Jane Nagle (date unknown), daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Nagle and she died Sept. 23, 1919. He married a third time to Mrs. Catherine Sheridan about two years later. She died at Hotel Dieu, Kingston in 1948. He died at Perth Feb. 11, 1924.

PAUL SHIRLEY

Born in 1859 and died single in 1883 . . . killed in an accident in a shanty in upper Michigan, by a tree falling on him. He is buried beside his parents in Perth and his name is also engraved on their tombstone. My father James Shirley brought back his body for burial.

JAMES SHIRLEY

Born April 18, 1862 and died December 21, 1931. He married Elizabeth Jane Kearns at Perth, Ontario on September 26, 1888. She was born on May 24, 1860. and died November 4, 1953. James is buried in Saskatoon and Elizabeth is buried in the Catholic cemetery of Perth beside their son Earl as requested. There were ten children born to this marriage, but four died in infancy. Those who lived are as follows: John Patrick, Vincent James, Thomas Charles Earl, Mary Veronica (Mae), (Rev.) Lawrence Herbert and William Leo.



Michael Shirley - died in Spokane, Wash.
Born: March 24th, 1861

MICHAEL JOSEPH SHIRLEY

Born March 24, 1861 - died in 1920. (59 years old.) He married Annie Waite - (1865 - March 7, 1903, (37 years old.) in Perth, Ontario in May 1882. They had two children - Katherine Isobel and May. After the children were born they moved to Eldoro, Iowa. Two years later in February 1902 they moved back to the American Soo where Mrs. Michael (Annie Waite) died. In 1904 Michael married again to Clara Theresa Shandonay, in Michigan. In 1909 the family moved to Spokane, Wash.

TOM SHIRLEY

Married and went to Winnipeg to become proprietor of the Oriental Hotel there until his death. He was buried in Winnipeg. He had two sons at least.

Albert: Became famous in the early 1950's as Inspector Hearthstone of the death squad. This was sponsored by the Aspirin Tablet Co.

PATRICK SHIRLEY

Lived in Vancouver, B.C. and died in the early 1940's.

RICHARD SHIRLEY

Lived in Chilliwack, B.C. and died in the early 1940's.

MARTHA SHIRLEY

Died about 1947 at East Tawas, Mich. She married Pat O'Brien.

From your editor:

The IRELAND/CANADA Shirley info is from material that was given to me by Donald Shirley at our Shirley meeting in Seattle Washington.

Can you see how important it is for me to hold these meetings? I would not have met Don and we would not have this information to share in the NEWS or to add to our files for future reference.

This is another family of Shirleys from County Carlow Ireland who came to Canada. We will be working on these families to see what their relationship is and report it in an upcoming issue of the NEWS. As of this moment, we have not determined the exact relationship.

Because of space, I have condensed the info Donald gave me. It contained later generations and charts etc. Our thanks to Donald Shirley for sharing this with us and to Rev. Shirley who compiled it.

James Shirley and Catherine McDonald were in the Old Leighlin Church records in County Carlow Ireland.

MARY SHIRLEY

Married Mr. James Tovey in Perth, Ontario and later moved to Bay City, Michigan. They had three children. They are: Kate, Mayme and Tom.

ANNIE SHIRLEY

Married a Mr. Cuyler of Harrisville. Annie died April 13, 1949 and is buried in Michigan. They had a son, Hazen.

Hazen: He was a famous ball player nick-named Ki-Ki Cuyler who is listed in the Sport's Hall of Fame. He died February 11, 1950.

KATE SHIRLEY

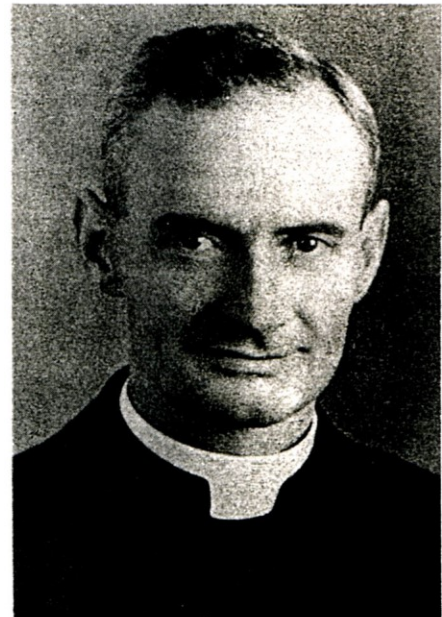
Born February 6, 1878 and married a Mr. Poliquin and later a Mr. Gill. She died April 7, 1950.

Her son: Croswell, Michigan.

Gene — deceased in 1966. Wife - Margaret . . . children: Patricia, Mary & Ed.

Her daughter:

Mrs. Irene Williams - a widow who lives at Highland Park, Michigan.



(Rev.) Father Lawrence Herbert Shirley -
son of James Joseph Shirley.

(Rev.) FATHER LAWRENCE SHIRLEY

The recorder of this genealogy was born August 23, 1900 and was ordained a Diocesan priest on June 14, 1930. He worked in many parishes throughout Saskatchewan and is presently living in Saskatoon, Sask. after returning from Creston, B.C.

REPORT ON WASHINGTON AND OREGON SHIRLEY MEETINGS OF JUNE 6 & 7TH

I left my home very early on Thursday, June 4th, and drove to Redding California where my niece, Barbara, lives. I had a coke, and we loaded her things into my rented car, and we were on the road in less than 45 minutes.

The night before I left, Wed., I had called one of my husbands cousins who lives in Ashland Oregon to say I was coming thru and wondered if I could stop in to meet them. They went one better, they invited us for dinner and to spend the night. When we got there, they had a yard full of relatives and picnic tables spread with food they had all brought in. This was such a nice experience on such a short notice. We spent the evening looking at family photos and telling stories.

The next morning we continued towards Washington, stopping occasionally to call Shirleys who lived near the road we were traveling. So few were home. We stopped in Roseburg Oregon and found Brian Shirley in the phone directory. We went to his house and met him and his son, Donald, who was busy doing some carpentry work. We introduced ourselves and asked who their Shirley ancestors were. He said his father was Donald Shirley born about 1898 and his grandfather was Leslie Shirley. He knew they were from Pennsylvania and that was all he really knew.

We traveled a couple of hours more, making a few more stops. When we saw a cute community with several antique shops, I said to Barbara, we deserve a break. Let's take a look around in some of the shops. We allowed an hour for this and how fast the time flew. As we were leaving the town, I noticed one of the shops we had not had time to look in and I said we should take 5 minutes to look in this and then we won't look anymore. We'll just go back to the freeway and away from temptation..HA!

This last shop was where we were suppose to go I guess as I found some items I did not know existed. [I don't know how many of our readers know about **Anne of Green Gables** and that she is **Anne Shirley** in the story books and video/TV production]. Anyway, in this shop I found Anne Shirley doll, and various products with Anne's label. Of course I purchased some of the lesser expensive items for keepsakes. As the clerk was packaging these items we told her we were Shirleys and that we were on our way to hold some Shirley meetings etc. She said one of her part time helpers was married to a Shirley and wondered if they might be coming to our meeting. I left some info and asked her to encourage them to attend. When we came back into Oregon for the Sunday meeting, this couple came up and introduced themselves as that couple and that is how they heard of the meeting. To add to this story, he was a brother of Brian Shirley who we had met in Roseburg, Oregon. We just couldn't get over this coincidence.

In Seattle Washington we met several new to us Shirleys. I was pleased to find Chuck Shirley who is a descendant of the Ambrose Shirley line. I asked him if he knew Captain John Shirley of Annapolis Maryland as this is his line. Chuck did not know of John and I insisted he give John a call. This he did and they have been exchanging information. I have had a very nice letter from Chuck and he certainly has put a lot of thought and interest

into his Shirley family since we met him in Seattle this summer.

Another person we met in Seattle was Jack Shirley. After talking to Jack about his family, I realized he was related to Newlin Shirley of Alabama and suggested he get in touch with him. In a recent letter from Jack he says, "Your recommendation that I get in touch with Newlin Shirley was a first rate suggestion. I called Newlin to let him know that Young Jack and I were making plans to be in Georgia and Alabama in July. Newlin became enthused when we talked and plans were made to meet in Rome Georgia. The day we spent together was a highlight of the trip. Newlin shared with us the story of George Shirleys's Bible, pictures and miscellaneous ancestor information. He guided us out to where old George Shirley was buried, we visited with the Pastor of the Friendship Baptist Church and had a fine time together. I am enclosing a family portrait of Henry Thomas Shirley, Jr. and family taken about 1904. Henry is the grandson of old George Shirley. The family moved from Fayette Alabama 1904/05 and settled on a piece of land in the neighborhood of Anson Texas not far from Abilene. Enjoyed the get together in Seattle, a nice group of people. We are (my son and I) are planning on Abbeville South Carolina next year." [See Shirley NEWS July 1991 Page 2 & 3 for old George Shirley (b. ca. 1796 family info]. Old George is a grandson of John Shirley and Elizabeth Barmore.

We thank everyone who came to meet us in Washington and Oregon and welcome all of you who are new to the Association. We appreciate all of the new Shirley material you have given us.



L/R: **HENRY JACKSON**, **ANNA** (sitting), **HENRY THOMAS SHIRLEY JR.**, (father), **EARLENE**, (sitting), **ERA M.** (STANDING), **ELLA** (mother), **JOHN** (sitting in mothers lap), **Lloyd** (standing).

BEGINNING OF MT. PONEY BAPTIST CHURCH IN CULPEPER CO. VIRGINIA

By Barbara Peterson

1774-1779; BEGINNINGS

The Mt. Poney Baptist Church was planted in Culpeper County by David Thomas and Nathaniel Saunders in 1774. At that time His Majesty, King George III, and his parliament were trying desperately to maintain rule over rebellious American colonies. Lord Dunmore, Royal Governor of Virginia, had twice dissolved the House of Burgesses to which Henry Pendleton and Henry Field were Culpeper representatives. St. Marks Parish, under the Rev. Edward Jones, claimed all the religious authority vested in the Established Church.

Dissenters, though growing in number, were harassed in many ways. Dissenters and their meeting houses were required to be licensed and only one meeting house could be licensed in a county. The minister must also pass an examination by a clergyman of the Established Church. In 1768, licenses were no longer issued by counties but had to be obtained from the General Court in Williamsburg. They were issued only twice a year. Regular Baptist ministers were inclined to go the legal path but the Separate Baptists, of whom James Ireland was an adherent, felt "they should obey God rather than man" and continued to preach from place to place with or without authorization. Local bullies, aching for a fight, joined the constabulary in making life hard for dissenters. The patrol was a mounted guard that arrested and punished Negroes found away from home without a written pass from their owners. James Ireland tells of an experience in Culpeper when patrolers were let loose upon negroes in the Sunday congregation. "The poor negroes were flying in every direction, the patrolers seizing and whipping them." At another time, Samuel Harris was set upon by a gang in Culpeper while he was preaching and had to be rescued by friends.

So it must have taken considerable courage on the part of Nathaniel Saunders to co-sponsor the Mt. Poney church for he himself was threatened with arrest in 1770 if he preached in Culpeper and had been imprisoned in the Culpeper jail in September 1773. Nathaniel Saunders had been pastor of the Mountain Run Baptist Church in Orange County from the founding date of 1768 and continued as pastor there until dissolution in 1782. Mt. Poney was taken off from Mountain Run Church in 1774 and Mr. Saunders served as supply pastor during its early years while continuing his ministry with the Mountain Run Church.

David Thomas, the senior co-constituent of the new church, had been the licensed pastor of the Broad Run Baptist Church in Fauquier County since its beginning in 1762. Nathaniel Saunders was among the first seals of his ministry. Thomas' ministry was not confined to one church but was the beginning of their years of preaching tours throughout Northern Virginia resulting in many conversions, new churches and the setting apart of young pastors for them.

Laymen also played an important part in laying the ground work for the church. Peter Cornwell, who lived on Broad Run, was one of the principals persuading Thomas to settle in Fauquier County. Allen Wiley of Flint Hill, then part of Culpeper County, brought Thomas to preach in his home in 1763. Later, in 1765, he persuaded Samuel Harris, a Separate Baptist Evangelist, to come to Flint Hill. Violence drove both preachers away. Joining first Broad Run and then Mountain Run, this dedicated man helped to establish these and other churches.

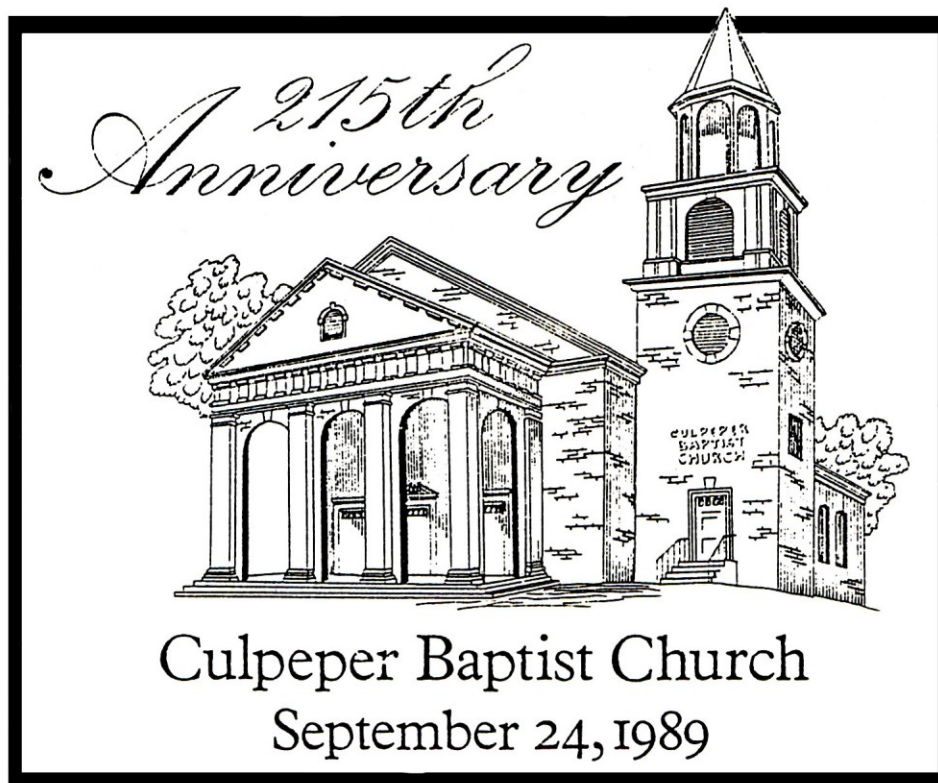
Unfortunately there are few clues to the names of the founding members of the Mt. Poney Church. Semple says 47 members of Mountain Run were sent off to Mt. Poney in 1774. There must have been added converts won in both Regular and Separate Baptist evangelistic tours in Culpeper and neighboring counties. It was not unusual for the Gospel-hungry folk to travel many miles to hear a preacher.

The church got its name from its location on the historic little mountain some two miles out of town. The site was not far away from the base of the hill. The land was deeded by Reuben Long to Anthony Foster and James Jett "for and in behalf of the Baptist Brethren.... & is the place whereon a Baptist meeting house is already erected and known by the name of Mount Poney meeting house. About 3/8 of acre. Price 5 shillings." Dated Feb. 16, 1777 and recorded Feb. 17, 1777.

Mt. Poney joined the Kettocton Association and hosted the meeting as early as 1776, at which time the association represented 20 churches with a total membership of 1,341. The churches of the day were usually small frame buildings, unheated, and the congregation sat on long wooden benches.

Baptists, in general, were on the side of the patriots in the Revolutionary War and we may assume that young men from the Mt. Poney membership were enlisted in the company raised by Cap. William McClannahan. The good captain was a Baptist clergyman living in Culpeper. "His recruits", we are told, "were principally from his own denomination and in conformity with the wishes of the legislature, who invited the members of particular religious societies, especially Baptists and Methodists, to organize themselves into separate companies, under officers of their own faith."

In the years 1777-1778, John Leland served as pastor of Mt. Poney for a short time. Mr. Leland was a Separatist, originally from New England. He himself admitted, "My stay in Culpeper was not a blessing to the people. I was too young and roving to be looked up to as a pastor! Difficulties arose, the church split, and I just obtained a dismission and recommendation." Disagreement arose over manner of dress but the chief difficulty was that the church ordained him without the "imposition of hands". This being contrary to the rules of the Kettocton Association, when the church sent its delegates to the next association meeting, they were rejected. After Mr. Leland's departure, the church was readmitted and reunited, Nathaniel Saunders again filling the pulpit.



BROAD RUN BAPTIST CHURCH IN FAUQUIER COUNTY VIRGINIA

This church was constituted on December 3, 1762 by David Thomas and John Mark with ten members being near Broad Run in Fauquier County Virginia. The next day twenty three members were received by baptism and under David Thomas leadership became a center of light. The church continued to grow and in 1764 several Negro slaves were added by baptism.

Broad Run Baptist Church, considered the Mother of many new churches, and David Thomas were responsible for sending members to start:

- 1765 a number of members moved to Halifax County Virginia
- 1766 Chappawamsic church started with 55 members of Broad Run
- 1768 Little River church in Loudon County with fifteen members of Broad Run Baptist Church
- 1768 Meeting house in Mountain Run in Orange County VA
- 1771 Meeting house, Pontomac (Hartwood) in Stafford County VA
- 1773 Meeting house in Brent Town in Fauquier County VA
- 1774 Mt Poney Baptist Church in Culpeper County VA**
[see article in this issue of the NEWS].
- 1776 Meeting house in Occoquan in Prince William County VA

[Shirleys were members of Broad Run Baptist church and some were dismissed to Culpeper and many of these same Shirleys are to be found in Abbeville South Carolina at Turkey Creek Baptist Church by 1785 when it was constituted. It is interesting to learn about the origins of these churches].

THE TRAVELING CHURCH FROM SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY VIRGINIA TO KENTUCKY

Baptist ministers were persecuted for preaching with out permission in these early times. One Elijah Craig had been imprisoned in Culpeper County VA in 1768. Later he was again imprisoned in Orange County. He continued to preach in Virginia and by 1780, the persecution had subsided. But the Virginia countryside was devastated by the Revolutionary War. The people were anxious to try their fortunes in the new land beyond the mountains.

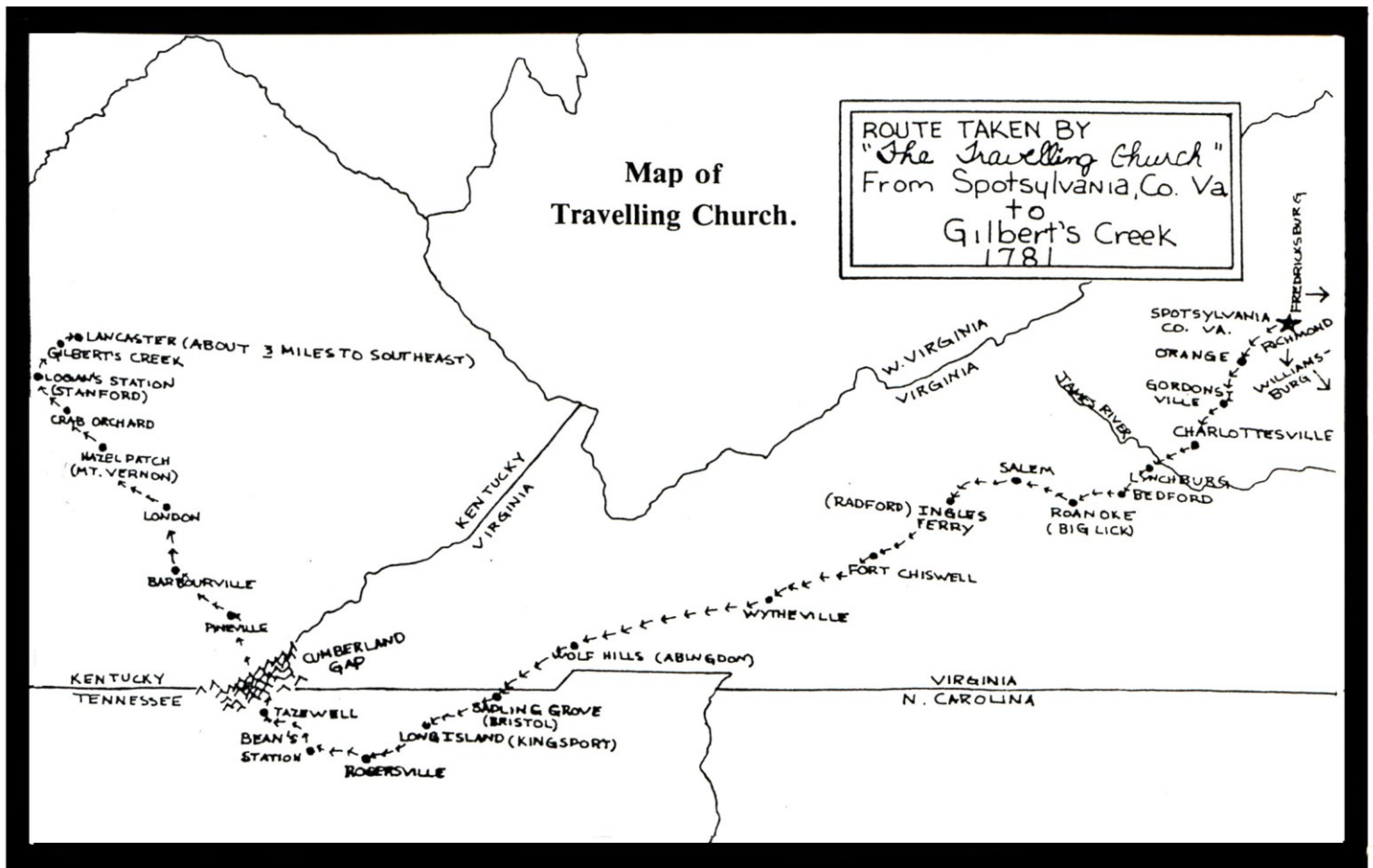
One Sunday morning in September of 1781, the entire congregation (about 500 people) of the Upper Spotsylvania Virginia Baptist Church departed with their pastor, Elijah Criag, on a long journey to Kentucky. They took their church records, communion service and pulpit Bible.

They certainly experienced many difficulties on their journey. At Fort Chiswell they had to leave their wagons because from this point there was no road, so they had to travel on foot. Furniture or supplies that could not be carried or loaded on the horses had to be left behind. They had to clear brush and rocks from the narrow path. About three weeks into their journey they were told not to go any further as the road ahead was infested with hostile Indians. This delay meant they could not complete the trip before winter set in. In November they were able to continue but it was colder and the roads were slippery with mud

with mud or ice and the streams were partially frozen. About the first day of December they crossed the Cumberland Gap. They met with an attack by the Indians and lost some of their cows and horses, but they finally reached Gilbert's Creek in Garrard County Kentucky. They built their homes and established their church. The pioneer members of the Gilbert's Creek Church did not stay there. Many moved on to South Elkhorn, Great Crossings and eventually to Stamping Ground, in Scott County Kentucky.

In 1785, the Baptist Church at Great Crossings was constituted. Elijah Craig became the pastor of this church in 1786. About five years later, 1791, a new preacher, Joseph Reding, moved into the neighborhood. Reding soon became so popular that a large part of the membership wanted him to be their pastor. The interesting thing about this is...Joseph Reding was the pastor of Turkey Creek Baptist Church of Abbeville South Carolina.

[from your editor: I have told this story at most of our Shirley meetings. I found this map in a book that shows this groups travel from Spotsylvania, and thought you would find it interesting. Remember...Shirleys were in these places and members of these early churches].



Reprinted with permission from Phyllis Mattingly, *A History of South Elkhorn Baptist Church*.

England's Country Churches

Continuing the search for the hidden
gems in our Christian crown...

by MATTHEW BYRNE



Some years ago (*This England*, Autumn 1986) we visited the church at Breedon Hill in Worcestershire. This time we come to the similarly sounding parish nearly 100 miles to the north of that on the Leicestershire-Derbyshire border. The hill referred to in the name of the village is a curious geological structure. The land around here is fairly flat and from a nearly circular base the hill rises steeply to a broad plateau at the top. It looks for all the world like a plum pudding sitting on a plate.

The name is something of a misnomer as far as the village itself is concerned for it sits *under* its hill. Most of the houses are at the base; just a few tentatively climb the lower slope. The church on the other hand is very much *on* the hill, in the centre of the plateau at the summit. It is the more impressive in being alone there in splendid isolation. It is a magnificent site: from below, the silhouette of the church is visible for miles around against the skyline; from the church the view is extensive to all parts of the compass, perhaps 20 miles from north to south and almost as much from east to west. As well as a large grassy churchyard there is plenty of room for car parking and open common ground. Local people come up here to walk or play or simply to sit and admire the view. Fine as this is for motorists and the able-bodied, the position of the church must be a problem for the elderly (and not so elderly!) without cars when they are attending services. Presumably those with cars are generous with lifts.

Such a position attracts men at all stages of history. The hill at Breedon is the site of an Iron Age hill-fort, circa 100BC, whose outlines are still visible, a Saxon monastery, a Norman settlement, and continuous occupation and worship ever since. Position apart, the church is of great interest not only to the average church explorer but to architectural historians as well.

St. Mary's, Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire

A Saxon Foundation on a Spectacular Site

A Saxon monastery was founded here about 700AD, and the Venerable Bede describes the Mercian monastery at Brindun in his *History of the English Church*. This period has provided a unique legacy, a remarkable collection of Saxon sculpture, over 30 pieces in all. They take various forms: figure sculptures of Christ and the saints; naturalistic and grotesque animals and birds; foliage and interlace friezes of the type familiar from Saxon crosses and

manuscripts. They have been, and are, the subject of much scholarly study as to their varied dates and artistic sources.

The Saxon monastery was plundered by the Danes and not re-established until after the Conquest when the Normans founded an Augustinian priory. A parochial church was incorporated within this shortly afterwards. At various times in the Middle Ages the church was further enlarged and altered so that now, as in most English parish churches, there is a fascinating kaleidoscope of architectural history. Identification and dating of the various parts is so much a part of the pleasure of visiting these absorbing buildings. At the time of the Reformation the priory was plundered yet again like all others of its kind. Today no monastic buildings survive above ground, but the church, being parochial, survived and has remained in constant use.

The exterior of the church as we see it today has a compact ground plan, short and broad. This is also reflected within so that although it is quite spacious it has a pleasingly intimate atmosphere. The huge

▷ The massive 17th-century "horse-box" pew of the Shirley family.

▽ While the village nestles below, St. Mary's stands in splendid isolation at the top of a hill which has been occupied for defensive and religious purposes for about 2,000 years.



give the church a lightness and airiness characteristic of East Anglian churches. The nave is filled with simple but elegant 18th-century box pews. In some churches where these have survived (most were swept away by the Victorians) they can be oppressively tall. Here they are low enough to be quite acceptable for modern liturgy. The pulpit and west gallery are of the same date.

Prominent in one of the aisles is the huge 17th-century pew of the Shirley family who lived at the hall at nearby Staunton Harold. It is made of massive oak panels and posts with florid carving characteristic of the Jacobean period. At eight or nine feet high it completely screens those inside. Heraldic arms take it up another four or five feet. How appropriate is the name "horse-box pews" for this type of structure; contemporary 17th and 18th-century stables of great houses contain stalls which, if not so ornate, are yet not dissimilar. Several interesting monuments also relate to the Shirley family of the 16th and 17th centuries. Whatever the reservations we may have today about the lifestyles of the aristocracy of former times, we cannot deny that they have left much that is interesting and beautiful in our parish churches.

Although this area of the Leicestershire-Derbyshire border has no special distinction scenically, there are several places of outstanding architectural interest within a 15 minute drive of the hill. These

▽ One of the pieces of Saxon sculpture in the church, depicting the figure of Christ.



△ St. Mary's Church, which dates from the Norman and mediaeval periods. The churchyard provides distant views in every direction.

include the now famous Calke Abbey, 18th-century "time capsule" home of the Harpur-Crewe family, now owned and restored by the National Trust; the fascinating combination of house and church at Staunton Harold, former home of the Shirley family already referred to and now

owned by the Leonard Cheshire Foundation which welcomes visitors at certain times; the little Derbyshire town of Melbourne which has one of the finest Norman churches in England; and Repton church with its unique Saxon crypt, survival of yet another Saxon monastery. It is a pity that because this is not a popular holiday area, these, and so many other places, are not so well known to outsiders as they richly deserve. □

MEMBERSHIP IN THE SHIRLEY ASSOCIATION IS OPEN TO ANYONE WITH SHIRLEY ANCESTORS WHO LIVED ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD AT ANYTIME!

To join the Shirley Association, please send a check for \$20 if you reside in the USA. For UK members it is Twelve British pounds, and \$22 US currency elsewhere, for a one year membership.

You will receive 4 issues of the Shirley NEWS. Please send info about your earliest Shirley ancestor. I must have some clues to be able to help you. I need their name, county and state they were born or lived and approximate time they were there. Their spouses name would be helpful too!

Make checks payable to:

**SHIRLEY ASSOCIATION
10256 GLENCOE DR.
CUPERTINO, CA 95014 USA**