

A Brief History of the Gap Church

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The following article regarding the history of the Gap Church was compiled by the assistance of several people but is much the larger part furnished by **Miss Bessie Hulbert** who searched the records and produced the facts and molded them into this article.

There are some facts in the history of the Gap Church that might be of interest to friends of the church. Its organization was effected in 1850 with the following charter members:

Pliny Colton
Rizpah Colton
James Whitcomb
Nancy Whitcomb
Laura Hulbert
David Dunwiddie
Cynthia Dunwiddie
William Frazee (or Fraser)
Lucretia Frazee (or Fraser)
Julius Hulbert
Sarah Hulbert

There was no church at the time and church was held in the residence of **Erastus Hulbert** on the farm now owned and occupied by **William Towns and family**.

In February, 1856 trustees were elected and authorized to build a house "32 feet wide and 44 feet long without a steeple to be done by the first of October next". We quote the foregoing from the minutes of the church clerk's book and from which we quote in other parts of this article. The work must have gone forward as planned for the "meeting house" as people called it then, was dedicated in September. It was near enough to completion in August so that a covenant meeting was held in the new building.

The year following the building of the church there were over forty members on the roll. That winter a revival was held and 65 members added to the church records.

In the old days of the Gap Church the covenant meeting was held monthly always on Saturday afternoon. This was in the nature of a testimony meeting and a business meeting usually was held in connection with it.

Not infrequently complaints would be made at these meetings against some person for breaking the covenant entered into when he or she became a member of the church. A committee was appointed to wait upon the offender and if repentant all was well, if not the word "excluded" was

written opposite their name on the church roll. Seventy years ago one brother against whom a complaint had been made, acknowledged that he had used spirits but would no more. The accusation against another was violating the Sabbath and not attending the meetings of the church.

The record of the covenant meeting held April 29, 1854 is in part as follows: "A very solemn time when we looked around on our little number. One whose place was always filled is forever vacant. **Deacon James Whitcomb** on the 22nd left the church militant for the church triumphant." Resolutions of sympathy for the family followed. **James Whitcomb was the father of Rufus and Mart Whitcomb.**

Instead of a covenant meeting, December 23, 1865, a funeral service was held for **Erastus Hulbert, father of Lorrain** of this village. On Christmas Day two years later we find this entry in the records.

"Our footsteps to the grave had not been obliterated before we were called upon to follow another of our members to his last resting place." **Webster Hulbert**, son of the above, was brought home from the army, a corpse and buried by the side of his father and mother.

For many years, **Elder Patton** lived at Juda where he was pastor and preached once in two weeks, the alternate Sunday at the Gap. At first the latter church paid him no stated salary but under the date of February 4, 1854 it is recorded that the church voted to raise \$100 for the salary.

Donations were often mentioned but no reports are found in the clerk's book as to the smallness of the potatoes nor the age of the butter. The story is told of a donation party in a distant city where two barrels were provided by the minister who had foresight enough to know that the bulk of the donated articles would be slippers. He sat near the barrels and would say to each comer "Rights in this barrel, lefts in that one". We hope Elder Patton's donations were not like that but as he had six or more boys the slippers might have been useful in more ways than one.

In 1887, some difficulty was experienced in raising the salary, the pastor then being **Elder Hill**. At a business meeting **Walgrave Atherton** was chairman and said he hoped the house would not be closed for the want of a few dollars. If necessary, he would add to what he had already pledged. Many readers will know that Walgrave Atherton was the father of the Atherton brothers of Albany.

Elder Hill being called upon, gave a brief review of his pastoral expenses showing that he was not hoarding up money. In view of the present day season, he would remain with us for \$150 unless the church desired to change the pastor.

In this year it was voted that **C.J. Stephenson** proceed to ascertain how much could be secured towards next year's church expenses. At an early date we read that it was moved and carried out

that **Mr. Smiley** act as beggar (**this means Daniel Smiley, grandfather of Robert and Harry Smiley**).

Some attention was paid to music. **J.A. Clemmer** was chorister for a time but resigned in 1872. It was voted that Brother Clemmer take the lead in singing and that Brother **Rufus Whitcomb** be his assistant, that the choir be invited to take the front seat in the body of the house, to be tried one year. In former years the choir had occupied the gallery.

A name recurring frequently on the pages of the record book is that of **J.W. Carver**. He served in many ways, sometimes as solicitor for pastor's salary; again as a member of some committee and sometimes as a delegate to the Association. We presume that Grandma Carver often accompanied him at these meetings.

When **J.W. Fuhrman** arrived on the field September 19, 1880 there was no parsonage but the church decided to build one. It cost, with some of the necessary equipment including a stable, \$719. In 1891 it was sold and removed with the barn to Mr. and Mrs. Hulbert's farm. The barn was remodeled and became a cheese factory but has since been torn down. The parsonage was a tenant house for some time. Recently **Jas. Stephenson** bought it to replace the house that burned on his place known to old residents as the **Aut Burt** farm.

Three years ago the people of the community planned for and held their first Fall Festival at the church and it proved to be such an interesting as well as profitable gathering socially and financially that it was decided to hold one annually.

At the second one held last fall in the new community house, which had been added to the church on the east through the generosity of **Marvin Hulbert**, and carrying out the wishes of his departed wife and the faithful work of the people of the Gap and others interested, was used as the hall from which those present selected from a cafeteria lunch the things they liked best. A good program was rendered from the porch of the church even though rain threatened to dampen the ardor of the crowd.