

Collection #
SC 2301

**CHURCH OF CHRIST CALLED LIBERTY (FAYETTE COUNTY, IND.)
RECORD BOOK, 1822–1891 (BULK 1822–1836)**

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Processed by
Charles Latham
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 item

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive 1822-1891; Bulk 1822-1836

PROVENANCE: Ralph E. Fuller, Sun Valley, Nev., 30 November 1990

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATIVE FORMATS: None

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The "Baptized Church of Christ called Liberty" was formed on 4 May 1822 by Rev. Adam Banks and James Smith. Other early members were Stephen Philpott, Thomas Moffett, John Treadway, and Joseph Hawkins. On 1 May 1824 it was "agreed that our future meetings be held at Liberty Meeting House on the waters of Williams Creek." Three years later the minutes refer to "the Church of Liberty on Ben Davis Creek," presumably an alternate name for Williams Creek.

Considerable research in available sources leaves the exact location of the church uncertain. There were several Baptist congregations in Fayette County, and in the early nineteenth century there was considerable shifting because of both doctrinal differences and population shifts. Fayette County histories mention a Williams Creek Baptist Church, but say that it started in 1832, a decade after Liberty. Williams Creek itself begins in Posey Township, flows south through the west end of Harrison Township, and then southeast through Connersville Township to effect a junction with the West Fork of Whitewater River just above Nulltown. Members of the congregation lived both in Harrison Township and in Longwood in the northwest corner of Connersville Township. There is a reference in the church book to "the old church, three miles west of Connersville" (in the vicinity of Longwood). The map in the 1885 Fayette County history shows two churches along Williams Creek in Harrison Township, one just above Longwood.

A tentative conclusion would be that the church met in a private home from 1822 to 1824, and then in 1824 built a meeting house in the southwest corner of Harrison Township, just above Longwood. The church records stop in 1836, which may or may not indicate the end of the church itself.

Early members of the Liberty church included men with responsible positions in the community. Rev. Adam Banks issued the first marriage license in Fayette County, on 19 February 1819, to Stephen Philpott and Rebecca Hawkins. James Smith owned land in Connersville, Harrison, and Jennings Townships. In 1814 he was a co-founder of the New Bethel Regular Baptist Church. Several times he acted as a visiting elder or as a representative of the presbytery. Stephen Philpott owned land in Harrison Township. He was the son of John Philpott, who arrived in the county in 1814 from Kentucky, and owned land and four houses in Harrison Township. The settlement around these houses, which he painted Venetian red, was known variously as Redville, Redtown, or Stumptown, and is a possible location for the Liberty church. Philpott built the first grist mill on Williams Creek, and ran two still houses.

Thomas Moffett, who settled near Longwood, bought Philpott's mill and ran another mill and a general store. In the 1840s he was a county commissioner, and in the 1860s he was postmaster in Longwood. Joseph Hawkins was listed as a justice of the peace in 1819 and 1824.

From the earlier and later associations of its members, it seems that the Liberty church was of the Primitive or Hardshell division of the Baptist church, believing that a divinely called ministry was to serve a congregation predestined to be saved. Church meeting came before the service. "Enquiry was made for the fellowship of the Church and found her at peace." If there should be strife between two members of the congregation, or if a member should be absent without cause or accused of sin, steps were taken to resolve the conflict, or to recall the recreant to righteous ways, or to expel him. When peace had been achieved, worship might begin.

Sources: Materials from collection

Barrows, Frederic I. *History of Fayette County*. Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen Co., 1917
History of Fayette County, Indiana. Chicago: Warner, Beers Co., 1885

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of the record book of the Liberty church, covering church history from 1822 to 1836, and then containing family entries, mainly for the Philpott family, up to 1891. The minutes of meetings record decisions made by the congregation, from deciding where to meet to receiving and dismissing members to resolving conflicts and disciplining offenders. In the right margin of each page are individual entries about members accepted, dismissed, etc. The book seems to have fallen into private hands after 1836. Several pages at the beginning are used for genealogical tables of the Booe, Moffett, and Glascock families, and several in the middle for births and deaths in the Philpott family. A few clippings are pasted in at the end, with written explanations. The record book gives a good picture of both the operation and the concerns of this early rural congregation. Church government was clearly by the congregation, and the methods of dealing with conflicts and errors are similar to those used by New England Congregationalists.

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2301).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.