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## Retreat Presbyterian Church

John (school master) and Mary McWhorter were one of the founding families of Bethel Presbyterian Church in 1805, along with Mary's brother, John McWhorter (black smith).

The families of John McWhorter (school master) and Francis Jinkens become yet again founding church families. This time, it's Richland in 1834; with John McWhorter (school master) and Francis Jinkens as the first two ruling elders.

Beginning in 1840, Rev. Andrew Brown began to preach at a log house two miles south of Westminster. Rev. Brown, a graduate of Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia, had previously been in charge of Little River, Duncan's Creek, Bethlehem, Cane Creek and Bethel churches, many of which he founded.

According to Jones' and Mills' *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, services were then held from house to house until John O. Green donated seven acres of land for a church. Rev. William McWhorter supplied the Richland Church frequently throughout its history, including from 1853–65, 1868–71, around 1875, and 1877–81. Between 1877 and 1881 he was listed as “without charge” at Bachelor's Retreat.

Rev. William McWhorter, the son of John (black smith) and Elizabeth, supplied both Bethel and Richland at various times. On March 9, 1851, the Richland Session met, and Reverend William McWhorter acted as moderator. Elders present: Francis Jenkins, Simpson Dickson, Dr. James McElroy, Rhodum Doyle, and L. H. Verner. Thirteen persons were dismissed to be organized into a Presbyterian church at Retreat.

Retreat, located in Center Township fifteen miles southeast of Walhalla, and was originally known as “Bachelor's Retreat.” According to an article published in “Names in South Carolina” in the winter of 1961, the name resulted from the fact that Samuel Verner lived there with his three sons, Ebenezer, Lemuel, and David, who were longtime bachelors. Although Ebenezer and Lemuel eventually married, the name stuck. Among other early residents of the area were the McQuarters and the McClannahans, whose homes still stood in 1961. The “Bachelor” part of the name was in time dropped. Apparently the community never approached the size of a village or small town. There was a post office located in the area between 1812 and 1827, but at that time it was moved to Claremont. Other structures included the church, a house, and a store/post office.

There are different accounts of the origins of the church. Deed records indicate that in 1836, Joshua Perkins, Leonard Powers and James Johns deeded land two miles south of Westminster (near a branch of Choestoea Creek, waters of the Tugaloo River) for the purpose of erecting a meeting house. No mention of the name of the church is given. Some accounts indicate that a log meeting house was erected on this site.

Details concerning the land on which the church was to be built differ from Jones' account. According to three separate deeds filed in 1859, Leonard Powers, James Johns and T.S. Miller deeded a little over an acre apiece to church trustees Leonard Powers, F. R. Shelor and E. P. Verner for the erection of a Presbyterian meeting house to be called “Retreat Church.”

Presbytery minutes indicate a new house of worship was “nearly completed” by October of 1859, and “better times are looked for there.” By 1860, this “new and commodious house of worship” had been completed.

Other early ministers included: Robert McKemie Kirkpatrick (1885–88, Westminster and Retreat), Newton Smith (1892–96, Westminster and Retreat, stated supply Tugaloo), James Joseph Harrell (1904–1908), Morris Elmore Peabody (1909–1912, Westminster and Retreat), Joseph Edward Wallace (1914–1917, Westminster and Retreat), A.N. Littlejohn (1919–21, Westminster and stated supply at OakWay, Tugaloo and Retreat), Thomas Davidson Cartledge (1923–25, pastor Westminster, stated supply Retreat and Tugaloo).

By 1925 the church had less than twenty active members, in part due to the formation of nearby Westminster Church, and in part due to the fact that many parishioners had left the state. While Sunday School was being held every Sunday, preaching was only provided once a month. From 1927–31, Jeremiah Stephen Crowley supplied Retreat and Tugaloo.

A report of the Committee on Church Extension in 1957 indicates that “Retreat is having regular services under the leadership of Mr. Holmes Simons, who is making a wonderfully fine contribution there.” That same year, Westminster Church was asked by Presbytery to try to revive the work at Retreat, but this effort did not succeed. By 1961, the church was seldom used, and there were less than twelve living members. It continued to struggle in later years, and was officially dissolved on October 1, 1968.

The church and grounds were repaired and cleaned up in 1979, and again in 1994. At this latter time, a sign, made from the original porch flooring, was erected at the entrance to the church grounds; this was apparently the first sign ever to be put on the grounds. (Some of the information in this sketch was obtained from Frederick C. Holder's *Historic Sites of Oconee County, 1991*; Carla J. Martin's sketch on the church in *Heritage of Oconee County*).

Source: SCGenWeb/RetreatPresbyterianChurch