

Hopewell-Keowee Presbyterian Church

est. 1789



OLD HOPEWELL-KEOWEE CHURCH was established in 1789 and burned down in 1797. Soon after the war was over Andrew and Rebecca Pickens moved to Hopewell on the Seneca River, near where the Blue Ridge railroad crossed that stream. General Andrew Pickens built the original church on his property, 80 rods east of his dwelling, on the Keowee River. It's believed that the stone foundations that were found on the north side of Seed Orchard Road are those of Hopewell-Keowee and the Wesley Methodist Chapel (also built by General Pickens). The church was in union with the Carmel Church, which was located a few miles east on 23 Mile Creek in the Pendleton District.

According to Howe's *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, the first reference to the Hopewell Church was in the minutes of the Presbytery of South Carolina for October 13, 1789. According to the minutes, "A people on Seneca apply to be taken under our care and receive supplies" (supplies in this case meaning supply preachers). John Simpson, who was then serving as a missionary on the western frontier of South Carolina, was appointed to preach to them one Sunday a month. At the time he began this ministry, there were only two Presbyterian churches in the area: Broadway and Richmond/Carmel. Simpson, a hero of the Revolutionary War, was to change this, founding so many churches in the area that he was known as the "Father of Presbyterianism" in Anderson County.

The church itself was organized near the village of Pendleton by a group of men from Abbeville, described as "not so numerous as the people of Carmel, but better united, more catholic in the principles and disposition, and liberal in their sentiments. A few of their number are wealthy and very forward to support the gospel." Among these more wealthy members were undoubtedly **ANDREW PICKENS and ROBERT ANDERSON**, revolutionary war heroes and friends who are buried in the churchyard. A log church was built in the early 1790s, located east of Ezekiel Pickens' residence on the north side of the road. The church was named Hopewell after the residence of Andrew Pickens. Due to the existence of other Hopewell churches in the Synod, it was usually called Hopewell-Keowee in church records, because of its location near the Keowee River.

The early ministers of the Hopewell congregation served both Hopewell and Carmel churches. At first the churches were only occasionally supplied; ministers included Simpson, Hunter and Mecklin. The first permanent pastor was the **REV. THOMAS REESE**, a native of Pennsylvania and a graduate of Princeton, who had been serving at Salem on Black River. Rev. Reese described the congregants of Hopewell Church as "remarkable for the great simplicity of their manners, the plainness of their dress, and their frugal manner of living. At the distance of 250 miles from the Capital, they are strangers to luxury and refinement. Blessed with a healthy climate, brought up in habits of labor and industry, and scarce of money, they are for the most part clothed in homespun; nourished by the produce of their own farms, and happily appear to have neither taste nor inclination for high and expensive living. There is a quiet degree of equality among them. There are few slaves among them, and these are treated with great kindness and humanity."

The original church building was destroyed by fire in 1796, and work on a second building was begun in 1797 on 16.94 acres donated by printer John Miller. Miller had come from England to Philadelphia in 1783, and later moved to Charleston, where he was printer for the State of South Carolina. In 1795 he moved to Pendleton, where he founded the area's first weekly newspaper, *Miller's Weekly Messenger*. This second building was to be constructed of stones gathered from nearby fields. Among the major subscribers were Andrew Pickens, Robert Anderson, George Reese, William Steele, Capt. McCaleb, Major Taylor, Mr. Neale, William McGuffin, Hardy Owens, Mrs. Whitner, Mr. Calhoun and General Earle. Pickens was an early elder of the church, and donated the pulpit and pews. The new stone building, completed in 1802, was described in the Pendleton Messenger as a "commodious" one, which will "stand as an enduring monument of the workmanship of **JOHN RUSK**." Rusk, the builder, had been a soldier in the Revolutionary War.

In 1824, the congregation decided to build a more convenient church two miles away in the village of Pendleton, and preaching was transferred to this location. The name was changed from Hopewell to Pendleton Presbyterian. While the history of the Hopewell congregation continues in Pendleton, it can no longer accurately be considered the history of the Old Stone Church itself.

The church and cemetery were allowed to run down. One description of the grounds referred to the plank fence that enclosed the graveyard as “fast rotting out of sight.” Shrubbery had run wild, and “the brier and Cherokee rose vied with each other in the race for preemption.” While the cemetery was still used for burials, “the air of neglect and forgetfulness which hung the scene was more than ethereal one could cut it with his knife.”

THE OLD STONE CHURCH AND CEMETERY ASSOCIATION was formed 1893 at the instigation of Dr. O.M. Doyle of Seneca and Capt. J. Miles Pickens of Pendleton. In 1901 an endowment committee was formed to appeal for funds to be spent in the care and improvement of the cemetery grounds. At this same meeting, it was reported that a stone wall had been built around the cemetery at a cost of \$516.66. In 1903 the Pendleton Church transferred the care of the church, grounds, and its cemetery to the Cemetery Association (For further information on the earlier history of the Old Stone Church, see Richard Newman Brackett's *The Old Stone Church, Oconee County, South Carolina*. Columbia: Bryan, 1905.)

Source: SCGenWeb/OldStoneChurch