

# The Peeled Oak Christian Church

(Formerly The Peeled Oak Union Church)

The original church was first organized by Coleman Graves around 1845-1850 when he moved to Bath County from Fayette County. The plot of land was donated by Warren Green, great-grandfather of Nancye Keller, Elizabeth Reid Davis and Newton Paul Reid. Some of the others interested in the church were Dr. Thomas Walker and Alfred Crooks, Sr., who lived nearby. Most of the lumber in the building was donated by Graves and the pews came from the Macedonia Church in Fayette County. They were used until the new building was erected in 1902.

As the community was sparsely settled at that time, the Peeled Oak Union Church was used by the Disciples of Christ, the Presbyterians, the Campbellites and the Methodists, who always worshipped together harmoniously holding services with their own minister alternating appointments. The first organ was donated by a Mrs. Herd who resided in Texas but spent the summers with her relatives, the Graves family. In 1902, the present building was erected but was only completed and dedicated in June 1903. The old building was removed from its foundation and purchased by Mr. and Mrs. N. P. Reid.

The main contractor and architect for the present church building was Frank Carpenter, an uncle of Buford Dennis, one of the church members. A few of those serving on the building committee as remembered after many years were Henry Graves (son of Coleman Graves who helped establish the first church), William Durham, Robert Myers and Pressley Jones.

Dedication services were held at the church in June 1903 and an estimated 1,000 people attended. Ministers present and participating were Rev. J. M. Rash of Winchester; T. S. Tinsley, minister of Owingsville Christian Church; Elbert Dawson, former minister of the church; and Rev. E. O. Gruerrant of Wilmore, Ky. Rev. Tinsley delivered the dedication sermon and Rev. Gruerrant delivered a sermon in the afternoon. A bountiful dinner was served on the grounds at noon. The chandeliers for the new church were presented by Sarapta Ewing of Owingsville, a friend of members of the church. About three years after completion of the new building, the organist was authorized to select a new organ to replace the old one. Bessie Botts chose the present organ and played it until February 1911 when she became ill and was rushed to a hospital for surgery. While there, her mother, Amanda Botts, died suddenly from a heart attack. The home was broken up and Bessie never returned to the community, but lived with relatives for a while. Jessie Myers Young, with slightly more than two years musical training at that time, took over playing the organ and played for a great many years.

Peeled Oak was well-known for its outstanding children's day programs which were presented annually on the first Sunday in June. The offering was always sent to the United Missionary Society to be used for foreign missions. Great crowds always came out from Owingsville to attend these programs in early days. Special effort was always taken to maintain order at all the services as the board members of the church insisted.

In 1949, the first two smaller Sunday school rooms were added to the main sanctuary. The rooms were completed and dedicated October 30, 1949 with the Rev. Jack Irvin giving the dedication sermon and Charles Bare serving as regular minister. Then in 1959, two more rooms were added and dedication services were held on November 29, 1959. Pastor Robert Hayes gave the service along with ministers of neighboring churches. Among the other pastors were Robert Ricks of Salt Lick; Rev. George C. Frey, Owingsville; Rev. John N. Williams, Mt. Sterling Christian Church; Rev. Gene Kearns, Antioch Christian Church; and Rev. Goff Bedford of Bethel Christian Church. The following year, in 1960, the vestibule was added.

Only a partial list of ministers has been recorded throughout the past years. In 1963, the church purchased a parsonage for a resident minister and it was occupied by Gordon and Znettee Reid but after two years, the church board decided they no longer wanted a parsonage and it was sold back to Mr. and Mrs. Claude Young, the former owners. Since that time, all the ministers have been secured from K. C. C. in Grayson and have commuted on Sundays as no resident minister has been in the community.

For more than 50 years, no other denomination has used the church and it became listed only as the Peeled Oak Christian Church by the church board and also on county records.

Many fine young people have faithfully attended the church and since gone on to places of leadership in the community, business and in various churches elsewhere.

Most of the church history is incomplete as few records were kept during the past years and many worthwhile events have likely been forgotten along the way.