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Christmas 1960

HISTORY
of the
OLD GREEN RIVER
UNION MEETING HOUSE

at
Richardsville, Warren County, Ky.

By
Mrs. Nora Young Ferguson
947 Park Street



April — 1960

Many of the early Churches of this Land of Ours, the Grand Old United States of America, were founded by the descendants of the French Huguenots who fled from France on account of religious persecution in that period following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes about 1685 by Louis XIV. One of the first of these churches was the Green River Union Meeting House at Richardsville, Warren County, Kentucky, about ten miles North of Bowling Green. The first class of this Meeting House group was organized in the home of James Hudnall Jr. and his wife, Rhodah Chastain Hudnall, soon after they migrated from Buckingham County, Virginia to Warren County, Ky. They had a grant of 200 acres on Swan Creek in 1814. The first mention of the Green River Union Chapel in the Warren County Court records is of a road meeting held in the Green River Union Chapel in the house of James Hudnall. This Hudnall family first moved to McMinnville, Tenn. where several of their children were born. They are listed in the 1810 Census of Warren County, Tenn. This family with the Edens, Russell, Ayres, and Moss families were direct descendants of Huguenots from Manakintown, Va. The tombstone of Rhodah Chastain in a graveyard on the Hudnall land bears this inscription. "In memory of Rhodah Chastain Hudnall, daughter of Rene Chastain, born in Buckingham County, Va., 1775."

Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists all worshipped in the same Meeting House until each denomination built a Church of its own. The influence of these liberty loving people has ever been a mighty power for good in the entire population of America. Freedom of worship had never been their privilege. It was a terrible experience in France, one that we are happy to forget. When the Huguenots fled to England they found that the Church of England was a domineering group. The influence of the English Church was too much in evidence in the religious organizations of the Huguenots at Nanakintown and in Charleston, S.C. It must have been a wonderful feeling of freedom of religious expression in the hearts of these pioneers when they could walk in their own forests and commune with their God with no one to prevent them. It is a beautiful thought of how they wished to commune with their friends and neighbors and worship in a House of the Lord. As a beginning they organized Meeting Houses. This was a part of the Great Religious Awakening that spread over these parts in the early 1800's.

The objects of the Huguenot Society were (a) To perpetuate the memory and to promote the principles and virtues of the Huguenots among their descendants; (b) To commemorate publicly at stated times the principle events in the history of the Huguenots; (c) To discover, collect, and preserve the still existing documents, relics and monuments relating to the history of the Huguenots; (d) To gather and maintain a library of books, monographs, pamphlets and manuscripts relating to the Huguenots and support the aim of the National Huguenot society which are hereditary, historical, memorial, and religious; (e) To cause to be prepared and read before the

Society papers and essays on subjects relating to Huguenot history and genealogy; and (f) To cause to be prepared and published books, monographs, pamphlets and other publications relating to Huguenot history, life, manners, and customs.

Let me spend my own opinion concerning the early Meeting Houses. This particular one is an example of many others that were organized in the period of the Great Awakening. No doubt the Huguenot influence can be found in each organization. Let me ask each of you to search for the history of your community to point out these influences. They are there if we take the time to find them. According to the records of older people and Warren County Court records this Meeting House was the Community Center for many years of the Fork Country of Warren Co., Ky. It is interesting to note that Taylor Branch became Swan Creek after it crosses the Glasgow and Morgantown Road. This Creek is formed by the five large springs that were the source of the water supply for the Joseph Taylor lands joining the Hudnall land.

Joseph Taylor, a Revolutionary Patriot, had moved to his land from Edgecomb County, N.C., in 1803. They were Huguenots also. (The name was spelled Teller in Huguenot records.) A wonderful friendship existed between the members of these two families. No doubt the Taylors asked the Hudnalls to assist them in the organization of the Green River Meeting House. I like to think that the young people had an important hand in this organization. It is highly probable that the many marriages of these neighbors were culminations of friendships formed while going to meetings in either the Hudnall home or to others in other neighbors' homes. Rene Chastain Hudnall, older son of James Hudnall, married Sallie Taylor, daughter of Joseph Taylor. Joseph, the youngest son of Joseph Taylor the Revolutionary soldier, married Polly Ann Hudnall, daughter of James and Rhodah Chastain Hudnall. About this time the Penners and Millers came from Virginia. It is interesting to trace these families in their journey from Maryland to Pennsylvania to Virginia and down the Shenandoah Valley to Cumberland Gap, around the mountains, back to Ky., across the mountains to Madison Co., Ky., where they bought land and remained there a few years. Soon after 1800 they came to Warren County and secured large acreages south of Green River land. The Youngs and Runners were already in Kentucky. They lived on Indian Creek in Warren County. Peter Cartwright was a Circuit Rider who preached in the home of Jacob Miller. No doubt Peter Cartwright was a presiding elder at this time. James Young had married Louise Hudnall, another daughter of James Hudnall. His father, John Young was also a militant Christian with the idea that there should always be freedom of worship among Christians.

A daughter of Jacob Miller had married John Honaker in Butler County, Ky. When she died they brought her body to her father's land on a

sled. She was the first woman buried in what is now Green River Union Cemetery, by the side of her mother, Margaret Miller. Their stones are crumbling rapidly. Soon after the organization of the Green River Union Meeting House they built a small log house on the land near the graves of these early pioneers. I have heard one dear old lady say that "Jimmy Young notched every corner of that log house."

On the first day of August, 1835, Joseph Herrell and his wife, Peggy Lindsey Miller Herrell, made a deed to Matthew Young, John Young, Elijah Upton, Allen Taylor, and Peter Penner and their successors, Trustees of the Green River Union Meeting House, for the sum of \$1.00 in hand paid. The successors mentioned now number eleven and they represent every Protestant denomination in this area. We have 180 contributors who are scattered all over the United States. We have had a gift of one and one half acres more land; have bought another acre. All together we have nearly five acres of land. The deed gives a right to a fine spring. The Association is incorporated and since it was deeded to a Meeting House it cannot be sold. We think it is a wonderful Historic Shrine.

Another very prominent resident of this section, Thomas Starrett, who had a mill on Indian Creek had moved on 1000 acres of land on Indian Creek from Butler County, Ky. He was a Presbyterian and wanted to help establish the Mt. Olivet Presbyterian Church so he traded his poor land for what is now known as the Starrett Place. James Young was happy with his trade for his new land was nearer the Meeting House. Then he had been hearing about John Wesley through the travelling preachers. No doubt Peter Cartwright had influenced this movement. The Youngs, Penners, and Millers formed a Methodist Class in this Meeting House. James Hudson Jr. and Joseph Taylor were Class Leaders and Local Preachers

About 1845, after the travelling preachers had each secured for themselves a following and many young families were becoming established in this community, three new churches were planned to be built; one at Mt. Zion, Christian, where the followers of Alexander Campbell were forming a class. The younger members of the Allen Taylor family joined with this group, possibly it was for economic reasons that this branch of the Taylor family joined with this class. Another large land owner had built a large mill on Barren River where the Greencastle Post Office was located. He was William Brown and earlier court records indicate that he was very public spirited. This Mt. Zion Meeting House undertaking was sponsored by him and the sons of Allen Taylor. The new Church was built on the Brown land. Elijah Upton had married a Huguenot, Anne Faure (Ford) daughter of Absalon (sp. ?) Ford and they reared a large family who in the main have remained attached to the Green River Union Meeting House. The younger generation wishing to have meetings and especially Sunday School nearer their homes, built a log Church at Oak Forest where the

Baptists had a congregation. The Green River Baptist Association worshiped there and at Green River Union for many years. Oak Forest Log Church is still in good shape and it is used for Church services. The present Mt. Pisgah Church was established several years ago after the idea of a Republican Methodist Church was brought by missionaries from Ohio Conferences and other Northern States. Soon the Southern Methodist Church came into existence. While the leaders in these two divisions were often at odds with one another over practices in these two Methodist Churches, the members of these Methodists at home had the idea of everybody working together. This wonderful heritage of the Huguenots prevailed and there was for many years, both a Northern Methodist and a Southern Methodist Circuit Rider with one Sunday each month. All four of these Churches as well as the Presbyterian and Christian Groups had Sunday Schools that are functioning to this day. All these days there prevailed a spirit of cooperation among these descendants. In court records of early dates we find references to road meetings and other community gatherings being held in "Green River Union Chapel in the house of James Hudnall." The first mention of a post office is in a letter written by Allen Taylor to the Clerk of Warren County Court in which he gives his address as Swan Creek Post Office, Ky.

The music at these Church services was led by some one of the group. They sang hymns either in long meter or short meter. One of the first hymn books was called Southern Harmony. The plan of the present buildings of these three Churches built between 1840 and 1850 called for an Amen corner to the right and the left of the pulpit. The one to the right was for the women, to the left for the men. These seats were placed facing the sides of the pulpit. The main auditorium has two aisles; the middle row of seats was divided by a strip of wood nailed to the top of the seats all the way down. The elderly ladies sat together and the elderly men did likewise. The young people of the Church usually sat in the middle row of seats. Frequently visitors came and they would sit in the side rows. There were back seats on which the colored people sat. It is wrong to accuse the white people of being snobbish or unkind to the colored people at this time for even in slave times, the owners wanted their slaves to be trained to do work such as weaving, sewing, knitting, and other arts and crafts. They wanted them to worship the God of all human kind. In King William's Parish Register no mention is made of slaves. A number of Negroes are mentioned. Many of the early grave stones in the family grave yards of the Huguenots are made by slaves. In the Hudnall Graveyard there is a beautiful little monument marking the grave of a child. This monument was made by the house servant of Mrs. Sarah Best Taylor. The brick in many of the fine old houses in this region were made by slaves trained in the art. The Tom Sterret house with the slave quarters still standing is an example. Huguenots did not believe in slavery. The deep religious natures of these Huguenots caused many of them to free their slaves.

In the old log smoke houses in these early days could be found vats for salting hams carved from limestone. This particular limestone lent itself well to the making of grave stones and hearth stones. Door steps were made from this beautifully dressed stone. The wide stone steps at all four doors of Green River Union Church are still very beautiful. The wood in the Church is of Yellow Poplar. There are three hand-hewn Poplar posts down the center of the building. They are about 14 inches by 14 inches and they are the height of the ceiling which is 12 feet. The walls are as plumb as ever. The walls are wainscoted to the top of the seats which are made of hand-hewn poplar. The windows are spacious and their small panes show the Huguenot influence in the architecture. There is a remarkable resemblance of the windows and outside trimmings of this house to the Manakintown, Va., Huguenot Church. The pulpit was made with a raised platform having a wooden enclosure. There were two doors, one on each side of the Bible stand. There were shelves under the Bible stand and along the top of the wall for the reception of the printed matter that they were fortunate enough to secure. Unless the preacher was a very tall man he could not be seen any too well. The building was heated by wood stoves. They're still there with their fan shaped hearths and upper doors. Behind each stove, located near the Amen corners is a clever little seat on which the older people sat in winter time. The most devout people sat near these stoves. Many a sympathetic tear was shed as old friends met on these long looked for Meeting Days. They had an honest way of asking one another how it was with their souls. In these good old days the Presiding Elder held a Love Feast in which bread and water was passed and the doors were closed against curiosity seekers. Christians could talk freely to his neighbor about the joys and the sorrows of his life. Always a spirit of forgiveness of the past and hopefulness for the future prevailed and the weeks following the Quarterly Meeting were happy ones. They usually had a two days meeting of fasting and prayer every three months presided over by a Presiding Elder. No night was too dark nor no day too stormy for one of these groups to go to a neighbor's rescue in time of trouble. They were called the Peace Makers.

At present this spacious old white building with its four large windows on each side is an historical shrine. It belongs to posterity and it is gratifying to know that the younger generation is proud of its history. It is remembered for the part it has played in the religious life of the region. At present the Methodist Church has a beautiful new stone church valued at \$35,000 built on land donated by the Campbell family, descendants of Peter Penner. Although the Cherry's, Huguenots from North Carolina, lived on the south side of Big Barren, they worshiped here until they built churches at Barren River and Hall's Chapel. Barren River was the home Church of the Fords in the Green River Baptist Association. Hall's Chapel was on the Richardsville Charge of the Methodist Church. The Cherry's, Whites,

Taylor, and Subletts were closely related to the Hudnall's, the Youngs, the Chastains, and the Uptons.

Amber White, the Magistrate of this district for many years and a Huguenot descendant has done a great deal in the way of preserving the traditions of this historical spot. It was through his influence that the Ky. Highway Department built wider roads and landscaped the South Hill that was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bertram Cherry. Besides the well known Cherry Bros. there have been many other literary people from this group. Among them we recall having information concerning the following: Rev. Edward Maxey, Rev. James Hudnall, Rev. Joseph Taylor, Rev. John Wesley Hudnall, Rev. Robert Daugherty, Rev. William Sublett, Rev. Jerry Cherry, Rev. William I. Taylor, Rev. Nicholas Rene Taylor who with his younger brother, Joseph Irvin Taylor, founded Taylor Hall at Baker University at Baldwin City, Kans., Rev. Samuel Cherry, Rev. Homer Young, Rev. Cecil Runner, Rev. Phillip Merryll Runner, and Rev. John Richards who never left his home for long at a time. He served in a very important manner in the religious life of the community. These men of God and many teachers together with a great number of political leaders have gone to other parts of the country to carry on the principles taught them by their Huguenot ancestors. We're proud of our Paul Richards who is manager of the Baltimore Orioles, Edward Whallen of Frankfort, Ky., the late Hubert Meredith, Attorney General of Ky., the late E. G. Young, member of the Ky. State Legislature, J. David Francis, Commonwealth Attorney, and Dr. Rue Overton Basham, a well known physician of Bowling Green, Ky.

On the 30th day of May each year this cemetery has more than two dozen American flags marking the graves of five war casualties. One of them is the grave of Patrick Whallen, a soldier of the Revolution.

Huguenot is a nickname formerly applied by the Roman Catholics to the Protestants of France who were nearly all Calvinists, and converted the appellation into one of honor instead of reproach. France came near adopting Protestantism in 1512 A.D. Switzerland did begin the Reformation in 1516; Germany in 1516. It was in France that the controversy became so violent that the Huguenots took up arms to achieve religious liberty. The wavering control of the Royalty in France caused the trouble to keep up for a century or more. Many people were in sympathy with the Protestant Movement, called the Reformation in Europe. In 1561, one year after the accession of Charles IX, the Huguenots were prohibited from preaching. The two most notable incidents in this struggle were the Massacres of St. Bartholemew and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Edict of Nantes is an edict by which on April 13, 1598, Henry IV of France granted Toleration of his Protestant subjects. It was revoked on Oct. 22, 1685, by Louis XIV. This unwise act caused the expatriation of about 50,000 Protestant families,

who carried their industries to England and other lands. (This historical review is found in Collier's New Encyclopedia.)

A great many of the descendants of the Huguenots in this part of Kentucky and of Eastern Kentucky are from the refugees who came first to Manakintown, Va., and surrounding country. Many of these refugees who came first to Manakintown fled from France after Louis XIV ordered them to embrace the official state religion, and forbid them leaving the kingdom on threat of death. Death they risked, however, for their conscience sake, and departed by thousands, many of them seeking refuge in England. There they found a friend in the reigning sovereign, William of Orange, the Dutch Prince who toppled James II from the throne. As King William III, that Dutch Prince realized that he owed much of his success to the support of exiled Frenchmen; and when therefore, Oliver, Marquis de le uce, importuned him to provide an American haven for his impoverished coreligionists stranded in England, his Majesty was graciously pleased to accede to the request. Moreover, he personally donated three thousand pounds from the royal purse in order to aid the movement in the New World. The Governor of Virginia was directed by the Crown to render the newcomers all assistance possible and to settle them on lands lying "betwixt Virginia and Carolina." The first Col. William Byrd who was always desirous of getting a foothold in lands in the New World, agreed that it would be best for the emigrants to go to a place about twenty miles above the Falls of the James River, commonly called Manakintown. These Huguenots came to Virginia about 1700, some 500 to 600 of them landing in four successive debarkations. They found that the local government was well disposed to smoothe their path to colonization. The General Assembly granted them 10,000 acres of land as an outright gift (this to be redistributed among individual families), established them as a distinct Angelican parish, and exempted them from all but Parish taxes for seven years. However, they began to suspect that they were being used as a buffer between the Indians and the older portions of the Colony. Since Col. Byrd owned much of the land they began to think that he had them in an economic position that would swell his own coffers. They were forced to buy their ground meal from his mill. They were disgruntled to learn that they were to continue to be subservient to the Virginian Colonial Government politically. They had sense enough to know that they could excell in the craft manufacturing, etc. But they were not planning to be dictated to by any one lord nor to even a large land owner. For these reasons French refugees refused to go to the colony and therefore they scattered throughout the land. In later years as lands were discovered they came to Kentucky and other states.

Their spirit of cooperation and desire for self government was beautifully exemplified in the log rollings, house raisings, corn huskings, sugar camps of by-gone-days.