

SOME GLIMPSES INTO THE HISTORY OF PYRMONT SINCE 1828

About 1828, according to the Church of Brethren records there moved to this part of Indiana from Darke, Prebble and Montgomery County in Ohio several families among whom were the Ulreys, Shiveleys, Metzgers, Replogles, Studebakers and Wagoners. Many of these families bought land from the Government and settled around a little settlement known as "Wild Cat Corners" the name being derived from a stream running near by. The Wagoner families and perhaps others had come from a little village called Pyrmont in Ohio, so "Wild Cat Corners" was renamed Pyrmont. We are told that there is a Pyrmont, Germany and as the Wagoner ascestors were formerly from Germany it is thought the original name might have even come from there.

As this research paper is to be presented in this 1958 watch nite church service, I am therefore stressing, history. Since I know more of the history of my own denomination it follows that much of the early Church of Brethren history in this community will be included. However at next years watch nite service I hope we will be favored with history from two other pioneer groups who worked in this same community, namely the Luthern groups of St. John and the Bethel congregations and the E.U.B. group, who have a wonderful history book to draw from, written by a Rev. Fetterhoff, a grandfather of Orlando Fetterhoff, deceased. (This book can be obtained from Orlando Fetterhoffs daughter, Mrs. Ruth Houmard.

Why? Am I interested in the early church histories of you fellow Christians, because we find many of our early ancestors were not only interested in making a living - but interested in making a life as well. I would not want to live or work in a community where God had been left out, unless for the purpose of missionary work - which work we must continually be about or else lose the precious heritage handed down to us by our fore-fathers.

Shortly after the arrival of these early settlers, they must, of necessity erected water powered mills to saw lumber for their new cabins and grind into meal and flour. So, many mill races were dug and small dams built, so mills could be erected. If any of you ladies are proud of telling how hard you work, consider how much force you would be digging and shoveling dirt and pushing it some times quite a distance, in a large crude wheel barrow, as our pioneer mothers did have to help their men folks; About four of these mills were built and set in operation up and down North fork of the "Wild Cat Creek" near Pyrmont. They were the Lancaster, Fetterhoff, Wagoner and Swartz mills. The Wagoner mill being the one standing the longest and was still in 1929 faithfully grinding away, when fire totally destroyed machinery and the building. This mill stood almost directly south of Pyrmont and as of yet (1958) can be located by a small part of the foundation and the old mill race and dam back of it.

Now back to Church history. From 1828 on, for many years, worship services were just held in cabins and large new barns. The frame work of one of the barns is still standing where many of these services were held. It is across the road and west about 1/4 mile of where the Roy Welches now live. My mothers folks, the Stinebaughs, at one time lived on the farm where the Welches now live and mother used to tell me of how she often walked to Pyrmont to spend week ends with the Shultheis sisters - Mary to later married Allen Wagoner and Emma who married Doc. Campbell. In 1832, the church folks from Ohio and others converted since their arrival met and formed an orgainzation of "The German Baptist Brethren" as we were then called. This organization covered a large territory embracing the communities of Rossville, Heath and Edna Mills,

Owasco, Pymont, and all points west. At that time roads being only wilderness trails and rough stumpy, hewn out roads, travel was very slow and difficult, but families traveled for miles in crude wagons drawn by oxen and later horses - and many were the weary miles traveled on foot or horseback by the hardy pioneer ministers to call together for meetings of these different settlements that they might worship.

By 1845, the church had grown to such an extent that a decision was reached to divide the territory - a Rev. John Shively, took charge of the north fork branch of the church which was the Pymont territory and Rev. John Metzger took charge of the "Middle Fork" group which included the Rossville territory. In 1852, the first house of worship was erected in Pymont at the east edge of the village on a plot of ground donated by a Jacob Wagoner, grandfather of Mrs. Ella Fetterhoff, now 88 yrs. old. This was a large frame structure that served the community for almost 50 yrs., but was razed in 1900 and replaced by a large brick building used for worship until destroyed by fire in 1925 - replaced by the present brick building, in 1926 which with several remodelings is still in use. In 1872, the congregation near Heath was granted and thus the Fairview church and congregation came into being - along about 1880 many members across our brotherhood were not in sympathy with the progress of the church in establishing Sunday Schools and planning for foreign missions work and more forward movements. So across our entire brotherhood there was a split and in the Pymont congregation, about 80 members removed their membership and went 1/2 mile south of the village and erected a house of worship and became called the Old Order branch of our church. However, in 1908, when our brotherhood decided that we no longer spoke or held services in the German language, they decided to change our official name to "Church of the Brethren". But the Old Order branch of the church continued under the name of the German Baptist Brethren and prefers to be spoken of as such rather than the nic name "Old Orders"

Around the turn of the century, Pymont had become quite a husteling, busteling center. On the corner where the garage now stands there was a very substantial general store that was built and operated since the early days by Jim Allen, who lived in the home now owned by Glenn Liebert, and around 1900 Andrew Wagoner built a large new building which he rented to a Rev. L.T. Holsinger, who with his sons for several years operated a large department store where one could buy groceries, dry goods, hardware, implements and buggies or most any thing. This building stood just north of the Shultheis store which at that time was operated by Earl Paul as a furniture and undertaking establishment. After several years of operation by the Holsingers their store was taken over and run by the Retherford Bros, and in the mean time the Jim Allen store was bought and operated by Frank Smeltzer and James Dickerson. Besides all these places of business, 50 yrs. ago Pymont had 2 different carpet weaving shops, 2 black smith shops, a butcher and a shoe repair, and harness, barber shops and a creamery.

Around 1914, Curtis Dubes opened a general store in a building where the Ellen Blickenstaff residence now stands, from which he also operated a horse drawn huckster route or "store on wheels" out through the country side. Through all this time Pymont had had a post office usually in connection with one of the stores and continued this until a rural route out of Delphi replaced the local office. Sometime around 1920 the Lawrence Metzgers began operating a general store where the Retherford Bros had formerly been. This store building was later converted into a feed store and grinding business but now has been dismantled and torn down. The old Jim Allen store was destroyed by fire sometime in the

twenties and the garage now operates on that site. Twenty out of the last 50 years of this writer has been spent in Canada and away from this community. So I can not vouch that all these details are correct but nearly so as I was able to establish them.

Signed January 1, 1959.

Mary A Wagoner