



## History of New Lebanon Cooper County Missouri Chapter IV

### THE NEW LEBANON SEMINARY AND THE NEW LEBANON PRESBYTERY OF THE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

#### THE NEW LEBANON SEMINARY

Before leaving the earliest years of New Lebanon history, an account of that remarkable institution, The New Lebanon Seminary, must be given.

The remote and far-flung, yet rapidly growing settlements, kept a steady pressure upon the demand for ministers. One preacher on circuit could bring the Word to all too few people. Travel was difficult where not dangerous; and in the winter truly impracticable. To bring a reasonable-sized group to one site for exhortation took much advance preparation; e.g. for a camp meeting. Frequently the circuit rider would preach to very small groups, sometimes the members of a single family. Such ministrations were a welcome respite to those so favored but obviously this quite thinly spread the minister's ability to reach all who might benefit by his service. As we have seen, the very rise of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church itself was in part a response to the need for men to proclaim the gospel. Thus it is not surprising that we find a seminary established at New Lebanon.

Webster's Dictionary defines a seminary as an "institution for the training of candidates for the priesthood or ministry." This was what Rev. Finis Ewing and Rev. Robert D. Morrow founded at New Lebanon in 1821. This "pioneer theological seminary" was, so far as is known, the first established west of the Mississippi River. Most of the Protestant denominations demanded the 'back-East' or classical seminary training for their ministers, and the priests ministering to the Spanish-speaking Catholics of the far west were usually sent out from Mexico if not Europe.

Rev. Morrow, the first (1819) official missionary sent to Missouri by the Cumberland Presbyterian church, and who would later become president of Chapel Hill College, taught the science courses. "Science courses" included English grammar, geography and astronomy. Rev. Ewing taught the theology courses. It was principally for the purpose of teaching the young men studying at this school that Rev. Ewing prepared his famed Lectures on Divinity. These Lectures, written at New Lebanon, contained the germ of the creed of Cumberland Presbyterianism and were widely circulated.

No charge was made for the candidates' room, board or tuition. They usually boarded with the Ewings. Since the Ewings' home was a focal point for not only visiting preachers but also for talented men from many walks of life, one can easily imagine the superlative learning opportunities thus presented to the young potential ministers. To participate, if only with the auditory senses, in discussions among gifted men offers a distinct advantage to students of any ilk.

In teaching his pupils Rev. Ewing was not an easy master. With his own family he was a rigid disciplinarian. From his pupils he demanded faithfulness. "The most trivial fault was observed and reprov'd with a stern integrity" and paternal authority.

During the long summer vacations, which Ewing and Morrow largely spent on preaching tours and at camp meetings, the young would-be preachers rode beside their mentors reciting their lessons as they proceeded from place to place. The candidates assistance at the large gatherings was valued and, for them, the practice was invaluable. Under the eyes of their professors the students could come face to face with the problems of preaching and come to appreciate the immense satisfactions to be gained from converting the sinner to the way of Christ. No amount of study in a sterile classroom could have created the enthusiastic and dedicated ministers such as were developed by this pioneer seminary at New Lebanon.

In the final analysis, of course, the Presbytery determined the fitness of a would-be-preacher to become a candidate for the ministry (and not all applicants were accepted). And after becoming an official candidate under the care of the Presbytery, that person would also then receive assignments for written discourses on various, but specific, verses of the Bible. Such an assignment received at one session of Presbytery, would be delivered at the next succeeding session (six months later) and judged by the members present as to whether it was acceptable, and if so, whether acceptable as a 'part of' trial' (in which case the candidate received another assignment), or as "popular to licensure" (in which instance a date was fixed for licensing him to preach). All of which is to say that the Presbytery decided which students "graduated" into the ministry.

HPCPC says: "The roll of young men taught [at the New Lebanon Seminary] includes many cherished and honored names, and one must read the history of the whole Cumberland Presbyterian Church to appreciate the precious fruits of this school."

A footnote to the New Lebanon Seminary: In 1823 Robert D. Morrow went to Lafayette Co. Mo.: in 1832 Finis Ewing also moved there. At least by 1840 Chapel Hill College was operating in Lafayette County; and the record shows Robert D. Morrow as President of the reorganized Chapel Hill College in 1849. Chapel Hill College is recognized as the predecessor of Missouri Valley College in Marshall Mo. Hence, the point does not need undue stretching to state that the New Lebanon Seminary was the spiritual, if not the actual, antecessor of Missouri Valley College.

## THE NEW LEBANON PRESBYTERY

Many of the records of the New Lebanon Presbytery have been preserved; however, for lack of space, only the minutes of the first meeting will be recorded here. Nonetheless; as a bridge between the foregoing records and the available records of the New Lebanon Cumberland Presbyterian Church (which start in 1848) a "Synopsis of New Lebanon Presbyterial Meetings" from April 1832 through March 1852 and a "Synopsis of Candidates, Licentiatees, and Ordinations of the New Lebanon Presbytery" are given on adjoining pages.

The minutes of the First Session read: "According to the resolution of the Missouri Synod, the members appointed to constitute the New Lebanon Presbytery, met at New Lebanon Meeting House Cooper County Mo. on the First Friday in April A.D. 1832. Opened by a sermon delivered by Rev. Archibald McCorkle from Jeremiah 23rd & 28th.' Constituted by prayer. Members present: A. McCorkle, Robert Sloan, James L. Wear. Representatives: Robert Kirkpatrick from New Lebanon, Lawrence Hall from New Salem, James S. Berry [James Smith Berry was a son of James Berry, early Cooper County settler. James S. Berry married Jan. 1, 1822 Cooper Co. Mo, Martha Kirkpatrick.] from Harmony, & James G. Wilkerson from Bowling Green [in the minutes Bowling Green is spelled 'Boling Green'] Congregations.

"Rev. A McCorkle was chosen Moderator according to appointment and Robert Sloan was chosen Clerk, Licentiatees in the bounds of the Presbytery: Laird Burns & Abbott Hancock. Candidates: John Reed.

"John Reed read a discourse from a text assigned him by the McGee Presbytery, which was sustained as part of trial, ordered that he prepare another discourse from Nehemiah 2:17 to be read at the next stated session of Presbytery.

"Rev. Daniel Buie, a member of the McGee Presbytery, being present, was invited to take a seat as a corresponding member which he did accordingly. Presbytery adjourned to meet tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. Concluded with prayer.

"Saturday. Presbytery met pursuant to adjournment. Constituted by prayer. Members present as on yesterday. On motion, resolved that all Licentiatees and Candidates under the care of this Presbytery, be examined on Divinity & English grammar at each of her stated sessions. Presbytery appointed Rev. A. McCorkle & L. Hall (an Elder) commissioners, to the next General Assembly of the C.P. Church.

"Whereas there has been much inattention by the several church (sessions) in our bounds with regard to keeping a Regular Record of their proceedings, it is therefore On Motion resolved that said church sessions be careful to keep a Regular Record, as required by our discipline, and that the said sessions be careful to send said Records by their Representatives to each Stated Session of the Presbytery for examination.

"Whereas there has been generally a very small representation in the Missouri Synod from the Eldership in the bounds of said Synod, It is therefore On Motion Resolved, that each ordained minister belonging to this Presbytery, apply to some church Session, at least one month before the time of starting, for an Elder to attend and sit with him in the Synod, and it shall be the duty of the Sessions so applied unto, to appoint an Elder to accompany said minister.

"Samuel Wear [Rev. Samuel Weir (spelled Wear in the Presbytery records) was an early Cooper Co. settler. He was born April 9, 1791 in Blount Co. Tenn. He was the first candidate for the ministry accepted by the New Lebanon Presbytery. He was licensed to preach April 6, 1833 (and ordained by the Ozark Presbytery in 1844). His history may be found in DVKM. In the spring of 1840 Samuel Weir decided to move to Dade Co. Mo. (witness his dismissal from the New Lebanon Presbytery on April 11, 1840).

## Synopsis of Meeting of the New Lebanon Presbytery from 1822 through 1852

DATE	PLACE	MODERATOR	OFFICERS: SECRETAR
1st Friday April 1822	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Archibald McConkie Robert Sloan	Archibald McConkie James B. B.
1st Friday October 1822	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	James B. B. Robert Sloan	Robert Sloan Oct. 1822
July 3d 1823	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Wm. M. C. Kessinger John B. B.	---
Sept. 19, 1823	Mr. Cannon Cooper Co.	John B. B. Archibald McConkie	---
1st Friday April 1824	See Friday's Meeting Co.	John B. B. Archibald McConkie	John B. B. Tim. B. B.
Sept. 26, 1824	Mr. Cannon Cooper Co.	James I. Moor Charles R. Jones	---
Nov. 2, 1825	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Robert Sloan William B. B.	James I. Moor MAY 25-7
Nov. 7 1825	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	John B. B. Archibald McConkie	---
Apr. 15, 1825	Mr. Cannon Cooper Co.	Archibald McConkie L. Burns & S. D. Davidson	---
Oct. 10, 1825	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	John B. B. Samuel C. Davidson	James I. Moor ---
Apr. 15, 1827	Mr. Cannon Cooper Co.	James I. Moor Samuel C. Davidson	James I. Moor 2:15 1827
Oct. 10, 1827	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	John B. B. James I. Moor	---
Nov. 10, 1827	Minor Meeting Cooper Co.	John B. B. James I. Moor	---
Nov. 7, 1828	New Lebanon Cooper County	John B. B. David Logan	---
Apr. 21, 1828	Mr. Cannon Cooper County	John B. B. David Logan	---
Oct. 3, 1828	Pleasant Grove Cooper Co.	William B. Moor David Logan	---
Apr. 8, 1829	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	John B. B. William A. Miller	William A. Miller Nov. 2:15
Oct. 17, 1829	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Samuel C. Davidson Garnett Melley	Samuel C. Davidson John. B. B.
Apr. 9, 1829	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Benjamin Conditon William C. Moor	James B. Moor Nov. 1 & 16
July 26, 1840	Pleasant Grove Cooper Co.	James B. Moor William C. Moor	---
Oct. 1, 1840	Mr. Cannon Cooper Co.	John M. Foster Felix E. Foster	John B. B. ---
Nov. 5, 1841	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Benjamin Conditon Samuel C. Davidson	Samuel C. Davidson ---

SYNOPSIS OF MEETINGS OF THE NEW LEBANON PRESBYTERY FROM 1822 THROUGH 1852

### Synopsis of Meeting of the New Lebanon Presbytery from 1832 through 1852

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Oct. 7, 1841	Hopewell Morgan Co.	Samuel C. Davidson Peter G. Rea	Benjamin Carrahan 2 Lin. 2-19
Apr. 14, 1842	Pleasant Grove Cooper Co.	William B. Weir Samuel C. Davidson	Samuel C. Davidson 133 Psalm
Oct. 6, 1842	Salt Fork Saline Co.	Peter G. Rea Samuel C. Davidson	William B. Weir John 2:15, 16 & 17
Apr. 6, 1843	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Minor Beale Peter G. Rea	Peter G. Rea Acts 20:34
May 12, 1843	Pleasant Grove Cooper Co.	Minor Beale Samuel C. Davidson	---
Dec. 6, 1843	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	William B. Weir Samuel C. Davidson	---
Apr. 5, 1844	Ht. Vernon Morgan Co.	Minor Beale Samuel C. Davidson	Samuel C. Davidson Math. 19:27
Oct. 12, 1844	Union Saline Co.	William B. Weir Daniel Weeden	Daniel Weeden Isa. 27:13
Nov. 1, 1846	Ht. Vernon Cooper Co.	Peter G. Rea Isaac A. Ferguson	William B. Weir Math. 15:13
Oct. 2, 1846	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Daniel Weeden William C. Sherman	Peter G. Rea ---
Apr. 2, 1846	Pleasant Grove Cooper Co.	John Burns Hugh A. B. Weir	Daniel Weeden ---
Oct. 3, 1848	Benjamin Gilchrist's Morgan Co.	William B. Weir Peter G. Rea	William B. Weir ---
Apr. 3, 1847	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Peter G. Rea John E. Weir	William B. Weir Rom. 10:1
Oct. 2, 1847	Peter G. Rea's Saline Co.	Minor Beale Thomas A. Ish	Peter G. Rea 1 Tim. 2:15
Apr. 7, 1848	Ht. Vernon Cooper Co.	Daniel Weeden Peter G. Rea	Daniel Weeden Eph. 3:8
Oct. 7, 1848	Pleasant Grove Cooper Co.	John McDowell Finis A. Witherspoon	Peter G. Rea Peter 1:5
Apr. 2, 1849	Salt Fork Duncan Co.	Peter G. Rea Finis A. Witherspoon	Finis A. Witherspoon Sol. Song 5: 6
Oct. 5, 1849	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	John E. Weir Finis A. Witherspoon	John E. McDowell 1 Cor. 1 & 3D
Apr. 9, 1850	Priscilla Dickson's Cooper Co.	Daniel Weeden Finis A. Witherspoon	John E. Weir Mal. 2:2
Oct. 5, 1850	Ht. Vernon Cooper Co.	Finis A. Witherspoon Granville L. Wood	Daniel Weeden John 1:29
Apr. 2, 1851	New Lebanon Cooper Co.	Peter G. Rea Daniel Weeden	Hugh A. B. Weir Math. 19:27
Oct. 4, 1851	Pleasant Grove Cooper Co.	Daniel Weeden Finis A. Witherspoon	Finis A. Witherspoon Psalm 119:11
Mar. 13, 1852	Ht. Vernon Cooper Co.	Daniel Weeden Peter G. Rea	Daniel Weeden ---

SYNOPSIS OF MEETINGS OF THE NEW LEBANON PRESBYTERY FROM 1841 THROUGH 1852 (cont'd) 561

Appropriate to that decision Samuel Weir sold his Cooper County land holdings to Samuel Burke on Apr. 10, 1840. He received in payment \$6,212. for a total of 748 acres situated as follows: 68 acres (part of SW 1/4 of sec. 17); 160 acres (SW 1/4 of sec. 20); 80 acres (E 1/2 of NW 1/4 of sec. 20); 80 acres (W 1/2 of NE 1/4 of sec. 21); 40 acres (N 1/2 of W 1/2 of NE 1/4 of sec. 30); 30 acres (E 1/2 of NE 1/4 of sec. 19); 80 acres (W 1/2 of NW 1/4 of sec. 20), all of the above in T-46-N R-18-W; and 80 acres (W 1/2 of SE 1/4 of sec. 24); and 80 acres (E 1/2 of SE 1/4 of sec. 26) located in T-46-N R-19-W.

In Dade County, Samuel Weir helped found Greenfield, the county seat of Dade; he died Oct. 21, 1848.] gave a relation of his experimental acquaintance with Religion, of his internal call to the work of the ministry, The Presbytery having testimonials of his good moral character and of his being in the communion of the Church, Received him as a candidate for the holy ministry. Ordered that he prepare a written discourse from 1st John 4:14 to be read at the next stated Session of Presbytery.

"The Presbytery examined her Licentiates & candidate on Divinity and English Grammar. Ordered that Rev. A. McCorkle supply, as a missionary, the whole of his time, after his return from the General Assembly, on the Cooper circuit until the next Stated Session of Presbytery. On Motion; Rev. Robert Sloan was chosen Stated

clerk of this Presbytery. Presbytery adjourned to meet at New Lebanon Meeting House, Cooper Co. Mo. on the first Friday in October A.D. 1832. Concluded with prayer. Archibald McCorkle, Mod.; Robert Sloan, Clk."

Also from the early Presbytery Records we can derive several points worthy of mention:

### ON TEMPERANCE

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church from the time of its formation was in the forefront of those advocating temperance. Indeed Finis Ewing has been called "the father of the temperance reformation in central and western Missouri." (LTFE). The minutes of the McGee Presbytery in April 1830 record: "Whereas it is becoming more and more apparent that the habitual use of ardent spirits of any kind has done and is doing more real injury to the souls and bodies of men than any other single evil in the world, and believing while ministers of the Gospel and other members of the church, continue what is called temperate use of this, that many by the example of touching, toasting, etc. have been and may be gradually led into an in-temperate and ruining use of them...; Resolved therefore: . . . "that we "will abstain" and "preach against the practice of dram drinking .... "

Within the minutes of the New Lebanon Presbytery various references soundly condemn the use of "ardent spirits". For example, in April 1837: "the making and vending of ardent spirits is an immorality." In April 1840: "Resolved, that we disapprove of the practice of professors drinking ardent spirits with the drunken, or in public companies." In April 1847: "Bro. D. Weeden was appointed to deliver a lecture to this presbytery on the evils of intemperance .... for the purpose of more fully enlisting all energies of this presbytery in the great temperance reformation." And in March 1853: "Whereas, the use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage is wholly unnecessary and injurious to both soul and body; Therefore, Resolved, that this presbytery for ever disapprove the use of such drinks by members of the church, especially, Ministers and Elders, and that we give our cordial assent and influence in the efforts that are being made in our State to have adopted the Main Liquor Law."

And from The Otterville [Cooper Co. Mo.] Mail dated May 19, 1899 we find the following under the headline 'Straight Talk On Temperance': "At the meeting of the New Lebanon Presbytery of the C.P. Church, held at Slater, April 1. their Committee on Temperance made a report, which is worthy of careful study and prayerful thought by all whether Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Campbellites, or what not. By the consent of some of the members of the Presbytery, we reproduce the report:

"We believe the time has come in which Christian America should throw off the yoke of bondage that is binding hand and foot so many of our young men annually, and casting them headlong into a drunkard's grave and a Devil's Hell. We submit that the Christian people, largely, are responsible for the open saloon--America's gate-way to Hell. The question is: Will we arise in the strength of the Lord and close these open gates to ruin, or will we go on resting at ease in Zion? If we do the former, many will rise up in judgment and call us blessed; if we do the latter, our brother's blood will cry out against us. It is a fact that we have the open saloon by right of franchise. In other words, we have just what we want. We have the open saloon because we want it. It is no excuse that our fathers ate sour grapes and our teeth are on edge. Our fathers voted the open saloon upon us, but we are responsible for its continuance. "Woe unto them \* \* which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him." --Isa. 6:22-23. Therefore we recommend: 1. That you urge upon your ministers and sessions the importance of striking the saloon power a blow at the ballot box, the only place to speak the truth in such a way as to show our brother that we love him. 2. That you discourage the use of tobacco, as a useless, filthy, expensive habit. J. B. Waggoner, Wm. A. J. Hyland, J. R. Cordry."

### SYNOPSIS OF CANDIDATES, LICENTIATES & ORDINATIONS OF THE NEW LEBANON PRESBYTERY 1832 THROUGH 1853



The Presbytery zealously guarded its right to oversee matters judged to be under churchly authority. In one recorded case the Presbytery ruled the decision of a member church "illegal and unconstitutional, and therefore null and void" because the evidence in the case was sworn, in a written form, "before a Justice of the Peace or civil magistrate, and not before the Moderator of the Session."

As we proceed with this history of New Lebanon we will see that the church trials and reprimands continued, however infrequently, for decades. Along the way some members began objecting to the more temporal charges being 'spread in the minutes', and slowly the jurisdiction of the church was narrowed to offenses against 'Godly' concerns as opposed to 'worldly' trespasses. But the fact remains that strong ecclesiastical authority played a highly significant role in the everyday lives of the New Lebanon community and hence is an important and integral part of its history.

### **ON CIRCUITS OF THE NEW LEBANON PRESBYTERY**

Circuit riders were the first step towards evangelizing the area encompassed by a presbytery. Some parts of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church disliked the term "circuit rider" (a usage popularized by the Methodists) and preferentially utilized the phrase "itinerant missionary." But by whatever name, the early preachers rode circuits. The bounds of the circuits were established by the Presbytery and assignments for preaching in each were made at each of the semi-annual meetings. In the earlier days the circuit riders were often young men not yet ordained. Their mission was to spread the gospel in the circuit assigned to them and, when possible, to collect enough persons to form a church; later an ordained minister would come and formally organize the congregation.

After a church was organized a minister would be designated as "pastor", but the pastoral relationship was not that which we envisage today. For instance the pastoral assignments might be changed at any meeting (i.e. every six months) of the Presbytery. Also, one minister would probably have several churches assigned to him (often at great distances from each other and from his home), as well as other duties such as attendance at camp meetings and, if necessary, some circuit riding also. All in addition to farming or otherwise making his living. The latter was essential because neither missionary nor minister were paid more than a pittance, if that, for his labor in the service of the Lord. By the middle 1800s the Minutes of the New Lebanon Presbytery show a gradual change taking place whereby the "pastor" would not merely be assigned by the Presbytery but instead might enter into a mutual agreement for his services with whatever congregation was involved.

The first circuits designed by the New Lebanon Presbytery (April 1834) were the "Saline", "Cooper" and "Morgan", all probably corresponding more or less to the counties of the same names. Later (April 1838) we find three circuits defined: "that the first circuit be composed of Cole and Miller Counties including New Salem and Bethel Churches in Cooper County; that the Second Circuit be composed of the rest of Cooper and Morgan Counties; That the third be composed of Saline and Pettis and that part of Benton north of the Osage River."

In April 1839, the first and second circuits were divided along an east-west line coinciding with the Cooper-Morgan county line and renamed the northern and southern districts while the third district became the western district. In April 1844 another circuit, "all that portion of the Presbytery between Osage and Gasconade Rivers" was formed as the "Gasconade Circuit".

In April 1851, "Bro. H.B.W. Burns [was ordered to] form a circuit embracing each side of the Osage River, beginning at Tuscumbia and extending down to its junction with the Missouri River".

By 1853 the preaching assignments are nearly all to specific churches as opposed to circuits. In fact aside from definite congregations, the New Lebanon Presbytery's orders refer only to preaching, e.g., "as much as he can in the bounds of this presbytery" rather than circumscribing a more exact area. The day of the circuit rider was beginning to wane.

### **ON CHURCHES OF THE NEW LEBANON PRESBYTERY**

From April 1832 through October 1853 there were 27 churches (organized congregations) under the care of the New Lebanon Presbytery. At the time (1832) of its organization the Presbytery had six churches, to wit: New Lebanon, New Salem, Bowling Green, Liberty, Salt Fork, and Harmony. Hence, twenty-one other congregations were constituted during the ensuing twenty years. Unfortunately space does not permit setting forth here any of the history of these early-day churches.