

**HENRY COUNTY'S
LOW DUTCH MEETINGHOUSE**

WINDOW INTO THE PAST

Presented to
The Henry County Historical Society
At the rebuilt Low Dutch Meetinghouse
On the farm of Sam and JoAnn Adams
In the Low Dutch Tract
Near Pleasureville, Henry County, Kentucky

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by
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It is a great honor to speak tonight in the rebuilt meetinghouse where my mother's ancestors once worshiped here in Henry County's Low Dutch Tract. I have heard that the Irish have a concept of "thin spaces" here on earth where we mere mortals are closer to heaven. Well, I believe we meet tonight in one of those *thin spaces* where we are perhaps closer to heaven, but certainly are closer to our history!

This meetinghouse is a window—a kind of portal—into Kentucky's Low Dutch history. And it is truly a marvelous history! This meetinghouse sits right on the ancient path of the great buffalo road from Drennon's Lick. The meetinghouse also sits in almost the exact geographic center of the 12,000 acre tract that Squire Boone claimed northeast of his Painted Stone Station. In 1786 Boone's claim formed the major portion of the Low Dutch Tract. The Tract was

the culmination of a dream of a Dutch colony on the frontier where they could preserve their language, church, customs and ethnic identity. This meetinghouse itself was built in 1824 in an attempt to stem the exodus to cheap lands on the next frontier in Indiana.

Tonight I'll give you a glimpse into the history of the Low Dutch and operation of this meetinghouse as it would have been in the early 19th century. Finally, we'll close with questions you may have.

As the word "Dutch" would suggest, the Low Dutch who built this meetinghouse were descendants of Holland Dutch, but with a good many French Huguenots mixed in. Their ancestors were some of the earliest European settlers in America, having all immigrated to New Amsterdam during the decades before the English took over and renamed it New York in 1664.

The Dutch colony of New Netherlands was very different from its English neighbors. New Netherlands was a trading colony built and governed by a diverse and transient population mostly of adventurers from the West India Company intent on enriching themselves before returning home. There were relatively few farmers and families who came with the intention of permanent settlement as was typical of the English colonists. But those few farmers who did come were a very sturdy breed who continued to cling tenaciously to their Dutch language, religion and traditions long after the English took over New York. One group, those who came here to Henry County, spent a century running away from the English, trying to avoid being sucked into the great American melting pot. They had a dream of forming a Dutch colony on the American frontier. And with that dream, they rode the crest of the great wave of pioneers moving the American frontier ever westward.

As they spread out first into New Jersey and then Pennsylvania, they adopted the name "*Low Dutch*" to identify themselves as coming from the low lands of Holland and France and to distinguish themselves from the more numerous Germans or *High Dutch*. On the frontier, anyone who spoke broken English was called "Dutch"—usually referring to Germans. The Low Dutch were comparatively better educated and did not like being confused with the Germans.

The idea of forming a Low Dutch colony on the frontier actually originated with the French Huguenots. These Protestants had fled to Holland in the late 16th century to escape religious persecution in France. Prominent Huguenot families among the Kentucky Low Dutch were the Demarees, Durees and Montforts. Most of the school teachers and ministers of the Low Dutch were drawn from these families. In 1677 the "original" David Demaree in America attempted on the New Jersey frontier what the Low Dutch would attempt in Kentucky nearly 100 years later. Demaree acquired thousands of acres called the French Patent where the Huguenots hoped to avoid being absorbed by their more numerous Holland Dutch neighbors. But they were eventually assimilated

into the close-knit Dutch community where they quickly attained positions of leadership while still maintaining many of their unique French characteristics. They were leaders in the Low Dutch quest for a colony on the Kentucky frontier.

In the 1760s the Low Dutch formed a large colony called Conewago near present-day Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. A smaller off-shoot colony was formed in Berkeley County, Virginia (now West Virginia). But these were temporary stops for only a generation for most of the families. During the American Revolution, they realized a move across the mountains would be necessary to find enough land to build their colony.

The Low Dutch were one of the largest groups of connected families ever to make the dangerous trek to frontier Kentucky. They initially came in two large groups who made the trip by two very different routes in the spring of 1780. One group—led by Samuel Duree—came by land, through the Cumberland Gap and over the Wilderness Trail to Nathaniel Hart's White Oak Spring Station in the same bottom of the Kentucky River as Fort Boonesborough.

The other group—led by "Father" Henry Banta—came by flatboats down the Ohio River from Fort Pitt to the Falls of the Ohio at present-day Louisville. That group rented lands from Col. John Floyd along Beargrass Creek in the present-day suburb of St. Matthews east of Louisville. Here they built the Low Dutch or New Holland Station at a large spring that can still be located at the SE end of the J. Graham Brown Memorial Park, tucked right beside the Watterson Expressway. Dutchman's Lane that runs through that area, derives its name from the Low Dutch.

The two groups of Low Dutch had agreed to link up to build their colony on lands claimed on Muddy Creek in present-day Madison County, SE of Richmond. They did in fact build Banta's Fort on Muddy Creek in the spring of 1781, but it was never occupied because of the two problems that would plague the Low Dutch for years—Indian troubles and land title disputes. Several of the Durees were massacred by Indians in Madison County. And the land title was eventually lost to Green Clay after decades of litigation—litigation loaded with depositions that provide much of the detailed history of the early Low Dutch settlement attempts.

After failure to settle their colony in Madison County in 1781, the Low Dutch formed another station on lands rented from yet another famous character of Kentucky history—James Harrod, founder in 1774 of Harrodsburg, Kentucky's first permanent settlement. In 1781 Harrod lived a few miles south at his station at the Boiling Spring near the present-day Mercer-Boyle County line between Harrodsburg and Danville. In this relatively safe area near Harrod's Station, the second Low Dutch Station was built as a base of operations from which to search out a tract for the Low Dutch colony.

I think you can see the Low Dutch were all over the map of early Kentucky. In fact, their very name was imprinted on the map of frontier Kentucky—literally! John Filson's famous 1784 map of Kentucky included both the Low Dutch Station on Beargrass Creek as well as the Low Dutch Station in central Kentucky near Harrods Station. But these stations were on rented lands. The Low Dutch were farmers who wanted their own lands.

In 1782 the Low Dutch took their dream to Congress—the Continental Congress—in the form of a petition asking for a grant of land on the northwest side of the Ohio River. They described how they had come to Kentucky in the spring of 1780...

“...with a view and expectation to procure a Tract of Land to enable them to settle together in a body for the conveniency of civil society and propogating the Gospel in their known language...”

Instead, the Indians had confined them to stations or forts where they were always in danger and frequently on military duty. Many had been killed or captured while being barely able to support their families. Worse of all, the best lands had been monopolized and were only available at an advanced price. They asked Congress...

“...to enable them to settle in a body together...to put their intended plan and purpose in execution, they having principally in view the Glory of God, the promotion of Civil and religious society, educating and instructing their rising generation in the principals of religion and morality...”

The petition is signed by 46 inhabitants already living in Kentucky and then by 105 “Intend Friends” in Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey who intended to move west if a grant was obtained. This booklet contains a copy of the signature pages of the petition.

It probably will not surprise you to hear Congress took no action—some things never change! Congress tabled the petition and the Low Dutch turned to yet another famous name of early Kentucky to fulfill their dream—Squire Boone.

Squire Boone had built his Painted Stone Station a few miles north of present-day Shelbyville in the spring of 1780. A vast triangle of uninhabited land—including present-day Henry County—stretched north of Painted Stone bounded on the NW by the Ohio River and on the NE by the Kentucky River. It was unsettled because the Indian menace was so severe. But it was also the perfect spot to find the land for the Low Dutch Colony! The Low Dutch on Beargrass Creek—especially the Demarees—were well acquainted with Boone. Some of the Demarees moved to Painted Stone and were at the Long Run Massacre September 13, 1781 when the station was temporarily abandoned

because of the Indian menace. Low Dutch were also at Floyd's Defeat the next day.

Despite the dangers, the Low Dutch found in Squire Boone the best hope for obtaining the lands on which to build their colony. Boone had a claim for 12,335 acres "...No East of the painted stone about 6 miles..." where the buffalo road from Drennon's Lick crosses the first branch of "the big creek running into Kentucky 6 miles above Drennon's Lick Creek..." This description noted in other early claims on Six Mile gave the creek its name. And Six Mile Creek, in turn, later gave this meetinghouse its original name—the Six Mile Meetinghouse.

Boone's 12,000 acres was a square sitting at a 45-degree angle with its four tips on the N, S, E and W prime compass points and each of its four sides running about four miles. Unfortunately, as was the case with many of Squire Boone's land claims, there were several conflicting overlapping claims. Some were sorted out before the Low Dutch made their purchase—including thousands of acres on the south end claimed by David Griffith, personal surgeon as well as pastor to General George Washington.

After a couple years sorting out conflicting claims, the Low Dutch ultimately purchased 5,610 acres from Squire Boone. The price was 935 pounds sterling—250 pounds down and the remainder due in seven annual installments of 97 pounds 17 shillings payable "...in produce such as hemp Tobacco flour pork & Baken to be delivered at the Falls of the Ohio at Market price..."

To Boone's 5,600 acres they added another 3,000 acres of the overlapping adjoining claims, thus making their Low Dutch Tract 8,600 acres in total—about 3,500 acres in present-day Shelby County and 5,100 acres in present-day Henry County. The tract included the present-day communities of North Pleasureville, South Pleasureville, Defoe, Elmburg and part of Cropper.

The survey itself for Boone's portion of the Low Dutch Tract was run in February 1786. On the 200th anniversary of the survey, a friend and myself went around (by car) to photograph many of the roads and fences that grew up along the original survey lines. I have here glued together three sections of US topographical maps to show in black the 8,600 acre Low Dutch Tract. In orange, the great buffalo road from Drennon's Lick is shown climbing the ridge south of the springs along the same route as Kentucky 1360 past Franklinton, then south along the Bethlehem-Franklinton Road to present-day Highway 22 and then with it through the north corner of the Low Dutch Tract and then southwardly through the Tract. This map was put together 25 years ago based on Boone's survey and court cases that pinpoint the route of the great buffalo road. If you study the map after my speech, you will notice the buffalo road crosses US 421 at the exact site where this meetinghouse has been rebuilt!

The month after the survey, on March 14, 1786, the Low Dutch gathered at their station in Mercer County to witness the Signing of the Article of Agreement formally organizing the Low Dutch Company and setting some basic rules to be followed in the settlement of the Low Dutch Tract. According to the Agreement they had purchased their tract...

“...with an intent and Desine to inCourage and premote a Settlement of the Low Dutch Reformed Church Socity [and] now it is Covinated and agreed... That we will subscribe to and support the Low Dutch Reformed Church Socity by giving a Call and invitation to a Regular Instituted Low Dutch minister to assosiate in said Church...and that we will indeavouer to have our children Taught and instructed in the Low Dutch Tongue so that they may Read the word of God and understand the Gospel when Preached unto them...”

This Agreement lay folded up and forgotten for 150 years—filed away in an old Shelby County Circuit Court case. In 1974 I went through all the dusty old case files in the clerk’s office looking for Low Dutch history. With this Agreement I hit the mother load! The document measures 13 by 43 inches on four pieces of heavy parchment sewn together. It’s a constitution of sorts for the Low Dutch Tract spelling out their dream for an ethnic colony.

The Low Dutch organized immediately in the spring of 1786 to take possession of their Low Dutch Tract and make their dream a reality. Unfortunately, they were driven back by Indians from that and repeated attempts over the next few years to settle the Low Dutch Tract. There are several great Indian stories tied around these settlement attempts. I’ll tell just one which is typical—that of Sarah Cozine, step-daughter of Samuel Demaree. On August 9, 1790, this little 9-year-old girl and her 12-year-old brother Daniel were pulling hemp about 50 yards from Ketcham’s Station near the Low Dutch Tract when six or seven Pottawattamie Indians came running at them from out of a cornfield. The children were chased to a fence where the boy’s skull was crushed by a tomahawk. Sarah got over the fence but was captured by her pursuers who had to run off before they could scalp her brother’s dead body. This was unfortunate for Sarah, because once safely away the Indians missed the trophy scalp. As a consequence, they decided to scalp the little girl but spare her life. Scalping was an incredibly painful procedure involving cutting the skin along the hair line and then grabbling hold of the hair and ripping the scalp off the head. If the victim could initially survive the pain, the shock and the bleeding and then avoid infection, they could actually survive the scalping. Sarah Cozine was one such survivor. She was a captive of the Indians for five years, being released September 14, 1795 after the Battle of Fallen Timbers. She married, had children and lived to be an old woman. She wore a skull cap to cover her bare head which looked like dried beef. Family legend records that she was regarded as somewhat eccentric for following some Indian habits learned during her captivity like kindling her fires Indian fashion and preferring to live in a wigwam in the summertime.

Suffice it to say that successful settlement of the Low Dutch Tract did not come until after General “Mad” Anthony Wayne’s victory over the Indians in 1794 at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. By that time, the dream of a Dutch colony had come unraveled. The Low Dutch became geographically divided. Many families grew tired of waiting, bought farms in Mercer County and never moved to the Tract. This is why we see the same Low Dutch family names today in the Harrodsburg area as we see in Henry and Shelby Counties.

And what about the dream of a forming a Low Dutch Reformed Church Society where their children could be taught the word of God in the Low Dutch tongue? Unfortunately, this dream also came unraveled. The main problem was that the Kentucky Low Dutch were almost totally abandoned by their mother church. After repeated pleas to the church headquarters in New Jersey, they did get one young Dutch Reformed missionary in the late 1790’s to ride horseback 700 miles to and from Kentucky. He organized the first Dutch Reformed Church west of the Alleghenies in Mercer County. The congregation he formed built the famous hewn-timber-framed Mud Meetinghouse in 1800, but they were never again supplied by their mother church from the East. The Old Mud Meetinghouse still survives a couple miles outside of Harrodsburg. Its name comes from the unique wattle and daub mud insulation between its hewn timber framing. That same construction was also used in early buildings here in the Low Dutch Tract as evidenced by Tom and Regina Parks’ home just a couple miles away from here on Hudson Lane in the middle of Jacob Banta’s old Lot No. 27 in the Tract.

Here in the Low Dutch Tract, the settlers turned to the Presbyterian Church of their Scotch-Irish neighbors. Except for the language, the Presbyterians followed the same Calvinistic beliefs and same church governance as the Dutch Reformed Church. As for the language, the Low Dutch had become quite accustomed to English during their Indian struggles and search for land. They always had an affinity for the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian preaching. In fact, the first Presbyterian minister in Kentucky—Father David Rice—preached his first sermon in Kentucky in 1783 at the Dutch Meetinghouse between the Low Dutch and Harrods Stations. The sermon was taken from Matthew 4:16, “The People which sat in darkness saw great light...” The Low Dutch certainly needed the “great light” for not only were they adrift without a minister from their mother church, but also adrift among infidels. We can see this from the first Court of the District of Kentucky which met at the same Dutch meetinghouse in the same year 1783. During that court the grand jury presented nine persons for selling spirituous liquors without a license and eight for adultery and fornication.

The Low Dutch longed for direction from a Calvinist minister. Here in the Low Dutch Tract an eccentric young Scotsman named Archibald Cameron filled that void. He studied theology under Father Rice and was licensed by the Transylvania Presbytery in February 1795. In 1796 he organized the first Presbyterian congregations in Nelson and Shelby Counties. In 1799 or 1800 he was invited to serve the Low Dutch and organized the Six Mile Presbyterian

congregation here in the Low Dutch Tract. He was pastor here for 30 years while also serving Shelbyville and other area churches.

Archibald Cameron was the minister when this meetinghouse was built in 1824. Given his long and important association, let me describe the man. Archibald Cameron was what we would call today a “real character”—which perhaps suited the Low Dutch just fine. He was born in Scotland, the youngest of six children. He was a thorough mathematician and a classical scholar. He was about 30 when he began his 30-year association with the Low Dutch. In his prime he was known for his strong native eloquence. He lived his life a bachelor and was famous for his eccentricities. He was referred to as “the caustic Cameron”—a man of blunt and abrupt manners who never hesitated to call things by their right names, famous for his great shrewdness and keen powers of satire.

Cameron was an interesting character with a very strong personality. He was a patriarch of the early Kentucky Presbyterian Church, counted a shining exception among the generally mediocre ministers of early Kentucky. But his reign here over the Low Dutch congregation was not without serious problems.

Following the Great Revival that began around 1800, Six Mile experienced many defections to the New Lights and the Shakers. The New Lights arose out of the religious fever of the Great Revival—a phenomenon unlike anything before or since. Thousands gathered in great camp meetings where the religious excitement caused people—without regard to age, sex or race—to fall to the ground in mass, jerk about uncontrollably, roll around like logs, bark like dogs or exhort the “New Light” after a state of trance. Archibald Cameron loathed these excesses and the changes they brought. The New Lights embraced the New Testament Church and repudiated the creeds, confessions, forms of worship and rules of government invented by men, especially the doctrines of Calvin which were central to the reformed churches such as the Dutch Reformed and the Presbyterians. The more sensible New Lights followed Barton W. Stone into the Restoration Movement (as in restoration of the New Testament Church). These Stonites ultimately merged with the Campbellites to form the Christian and Disciples of Christ Churches.

The more radical New Lights embraced the Shaker movement. Something about this strange millennial sect appealed to many Low Dutch. They may well have been attracted to the Shakers’ common ownership of property and cloistered life in neat orderly farm villages. This was similar to the Low Dutch dream and operation of their Low Dutch Tract—only taken to an extreme perfection. But their acceptance of the Shaker vow of celibacy is less understandable. The prolific Low Dutch with their gigantic families followed God’s command to Noah’s sons to be fruitful and multiply. We can only assume there must have been some deep spiritual connection.

Whatever the cause, Low Dutch families were the first converts to the Shaker missionaries who came here in 1805 in the wake of Kentucky's Great Revival. Low Dutch in fact formed the nucleus of the Shaker Society in Kentucky—with many converts among the Bantas, Vorises and Monforts. My grandfather wrote that some of the first Shaker preaching in Kentucky took place here in the Low Dutch Tract. We know certainly that John Banta was one of the first to unite with the Shakers in Kentucky. He owned Lot No. 6 in the Low Dutch Tract that included the east half of what is now South Pleasureville. The Banta Family History says the Shakers held their first meeting in Kentucky at his house. Also included among the Shaker converts was one of Six Mile's original ruling elders, John Voris, along with his very large extended family. When the Low Dutch Tract was broken up, one of the deeds, for 100 acres south of Defoe was to the Society of Shakers.

Defections to the Shakers and the New Lights depleted the Six Mile congregation. But the Low Dutch Tract was most reduced by the mass removals to Indiana and Ohio. Indeed, the losses from migrations to Johnson County, Indiana, in the 1820's were so great that it was referred to as "*the Exodus.*"

By that time, the 8,600-acre Low Dutch Tract had already been held in common by the Low Dutch Company for more than a generation. It had been surveyed off into 200-acre lots or plantations which changed hands without deeds, but rather only upon approval of the Low Dutch Company which kept records of ownership in its leather-bound parchment record book dating from 1786. Regular company meetings were held to govern the "Dutch Manor" as they sometimes referred to their tract. The 145-page Minute Book records 79 meetings between 1790 and 1831. I have here copies of the Record and Minute Books of the Low Dutch Company. These were made in 1973 from the originals I located in the hands of Mrs. Fred Beers of West Palm Beach, Florida, a great-great-granddaughter of Col. George Bergen, one of the last trustees of the Low Dutch Company.

Once it was built, most of the Low Dutch Company's periodic meetings were held in this meetinghouse. The first company meeting held at the "Six Mile Meeting house" was in September 1825. By the late 1820s, the exodus to Indiana necessitated that the Low Dutch Company finally deed out the farms in the Low Dutch Tract to individual owners. It was in this meetinghouse on May 9, 1831 at the last recorded meeting of the Low Dutch Company, that its Trustees who held legal title to the company's lands were instructed to make deeds to the several members, essentially closing the Low Dutch Company business and dissolving the Low Dutch Tract. George Bergen and Tunis Van Nuys were appointed agents to accomplish this. They began to deed off individual farms in 1831. The process took ten years and 53 deeds (42 in Henry and 15 in Shelby County). The back of my booklet contains detailed maps of the Low Dutch Tract drawn using these division deeds. And here is a plat of the original lots of the Low Dutch Tract laid over the modern US topographical map. The Indiana exodus that ended the dream of a Kentucky colony is epitomized by Tunis Van

Nuys, one of the final two agents. He removed his own family to Hopewell in Johnson County, Indiana in 1836—half way through closing the Low Dutch Company business!

Of course the Kentucky Low Dutch losses were Indiana's gains. Six Mile and Old Mud were the mother churches for several Indiana Presbyterian congregations in Jefferson, Switzerland, Johnson, Marion and Brown Counties. Franklin, Greenwood and Hopewell in Johnson County are large active congregations today. In fact, the farming community of Hopewell where Tunis Van Nuys moved probably came closest to realizing the dream of a Low Dutch colony in the West. The Hopewell Church celebrated its 175th anniversary this spring and has published a 600-page pictorial in commemoration. The book was compiled by Kathleen Van Nuys and includes photos of this meetinghouse—even room we are meeting in tonight.

Those Indiana churches in turn fed the next wave of migration west of the Mississippi. The first waves were again in large groups to Kansas and Iowa. Eventually, some got all the way to the West Coast leaving Low Dutch names in places like the Los Angeles suburb of Van Nuys, California.

I believe the upheaval at the beginning of the Exodus to Indiana led the Low Dutch to finally build this meetinghouse in 1824. The first priority for every Low Dutch community always was building not a church, but rather a schoolhouse for education of their numerous children. That was no exception here and, in fact, the very first meeting of the Low Dutch Company recorded in the Minute Book was "a Meeting of the Proprietors of the Dutch Company held at their School House" September 11, 1790. That was undoubtedly the first school and schoolhouse in Henry County. It would have been on the edge of Daniel Banta's Lot No. 14 along the farm lane that's still in use just a quarter-mile east of here. The school was sometimes referred to as the Red Schoolhouse and often as Lindley's Academy. Of course, the schoolhouse doubled as meetinghouse for church services as well. According to church records, Archibald Cameron preached "at a commodious school house" until 1824 when "they have now a good meeting house called the Six Mile Meeting House..."

This building originally sat on the three-acre Meetinghouse Lot set aside by the Low Dutch Company right in the center of their Low Dutch Tract on the other side of the road just a quarter-mile northwest of here where the Low Dutch Colony highway marker stands.

The original Session Records commencing with the year 1829—just five years after this meetinghouse was built—are preserved at the Presbyterian and Reformed Historical Society in Montreat, North Carolina. I have here a copy. The records document the end of the meetinghouse's use as a church. On the third Sabbath in June 1857 the Six Mile congregation dedicated a new brick meetinghouse in North Pleasureville and on September 10th the name of the Six

Mile Church was changed to the Pleasureville Presbyterian Church which in 1925 merged with the Eminence Presbyterian Church. The General Assembly of Kentucky by a special act empowered the trustees to sell their old meeting house and lot to pay for the new church. The sale was made George W. Wills for \$300. The sturdy timber frame was subsequently moved, probably twice, ending up as a barn frame behind the old List home about a quarter-mile the other direction along 421 from its original site. In 2003 that barn was donated by Eddie Baxter to the Kentucky Trust for Historic Preservation who had it carefully dismantled and then accepted proposals for rebuilding it which was done the next year by Sam and JoAnn Adams.

What we see now is a perfect example of the austere Presbyterian meetinghouse of the early 19th century. Such timber-frame meetinghouses were severely plain and unadorned, but highly functional. The large open space provided by the intricate timber framing was a vast improvement over the cramped crude log structures built by the first settlers. A meetinghouse such as this was the finest building in the community for a generation. Great pride of workmanship went into its construction as can be seen from the planed smooth octagon poplar columns supporting the chamfered purlin. Those pieces would have been exposed to view in the original building. The rebuilt meetinghouse allows us 21st century visitors to see the spectacular timber framing that would have been covered with plastered walls and wood sheathing on the ceiling in the original building. I liken it to walking right inside the mastodon skeleton at the Museum of Natural History—a true museum piece! The white walls behind the timber frame create the perfect contrast to show off the craftsmanship of the timber framing and the intricate rafters and collar tie roof construction. We can clearly see the cathedral in wood the pioneer Low Dutch artisans created by their own labor using only the materials at hand from the nearby forest. Sawmills and the advent of balloon framing using 2x4s and nails made construction such as this a lost art even before the Civil War.

I have been able to learn quite a lot about how this meetinghouse functioned in the 1820s and 1830s by reading the histories of its daughter churches in Indiana. One of the best Indiana historians of the 19th century—David Demaree Banta—wrote some priceless descriptions of the churches of his childhood. His people came directly from this church in the years just after this meetinghouse was built.

One interesting custom of country congregations at the time this meetinghouse was built was for men and women to occupy different seats in the church. There was a “men’s side” and a “women’s side” in every meetinghouse of the period. D.D. Banta said “the modern custom of promiscuous seating” did not come into fashion until around 1840.

Another characteristic of meetinghouses of the period was the high pulpit. This would have been at one of these gable ends where the high windows are

located. These high windows behind and on either side of the pulpit were a distinguishing feature of the simple meetinghouses of the early 19th century. According to the style of the day, the pulpit would have been a square frame boarded up with clap-boards at least four or five feet up from the floor. A stairway was necessary to get up to it. Then there would have been the usual high balustrade, breast high, all around, above the floor of the pulpit, hiding the occupant from the audience until he rose to speak. The front of the pulpit was so high that a box was often kept behind for shorter men to stand on.

I have mentioned the old Scotsman Archibald Cameron was also minister of other congregations, including that of his hometown Shelbyville. At the very most, he would have preached here only one Sunday a month. This was a very common situation for county churches and highlights the importance of the Presbyterian elders. In the absence of the minister, the elders would assemble the congregation and conduct the religious services with prayer, singing, reading the Scriptures and reading a sermon.

According to the Session Records, Albert Voris (my own great-great-great-grandfather) and John Voris were elected and ordained the first two elders of Six Mile. After a time, John Voris joined the Shakers and left the bounds of the congregation. Peter Banta was elected and ordained elder in his place. As Albert Voris and Peter Banta became aged and infirm, they insisted additional elders be appointed and George List and Samuel Demaree (my great-great-grandfather) were elected and ordained. An important role of the elders was to catechize the children and young people using the Larger and Shorter Catechism. The Presbyterians demanded a literate membership and understanding of the Catechism was a requirement. I have here a leather-bound Presbyterian book containing the Confession of Faith, Catechisms and directory for conducting worship services. This book, published in 1827, was owned by Samuel Demaree, one of the Six Mile elders.

So what kinds of sermons were read by the elders on those many Sundays when their pastor was absent? D.D. Banta says early sermons were tough going, sometimes taking an hour and a half to read. Thankfully, shorter, sharper, crisper and less dogmatic sermons were found. We know that sermons of the famous early American preacher, George Whitefield, were frequently read here in this meetinghouse. I have here another leather-bound book published in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1825 by the early religious publisher, Thomas Skillman. Its title is *Eighteen Sermons, Preached By the Late Rev. George Whitefield*. To underwrite a publication such as this, Skillman took subscriptions. In this book he published the names of the subscribers in the back. Among them we see Rev. A Cameron along with several Low Dutch names—Banta, Brewer, Carnine, Commingore, Demaree, Rynearson, Terhune, and Van Nuys—in fact, Tunis Van Nuys of this church ordered ten copies. We also know from the number of boys named after George Whitefield about this time, how popular his sermons must have been.

Books were as prized in those days as the latest personal computer might be today. D.D. Banta, who grew up to be a judge and dean of the IU Law School, was a precocious youth who sought out every book in his neighborhood. He recalled that “leaving out the Bibles and hymn books...a bushel basket would carry the lot [and] there was not a work of fiction [in the entire neighborhood]...save old John Bunyan’s...” Thankfully, David Demaree had Western Adventure by John McClung—an Indian book full of good scalping stories a boy of the 1830s could prize far above a Confession of Faith!

Scarcity of another type of book—hymnals—created another interesting practice in these meetinghouses. The “singing clerk” or “precentor” was a man of far more consequence in the old days than the modern choir director. Indeed, he filled a place only a little lower than the minister himself. Occupying a seat in front of the old-fashioned high pulpit, it was his duty to rise up facing the congregation and not only pitch the tune, but to line out—or “parcel out” as it was called—each hymn as it was sung. This was done by parceling out two lines at a time with the tune and words followed by the congregation repeating the singing of the lines. This would have been done a cappella since primitive organs were not introduced into the services until the 1850s by which time the availability of hymnals had already made the singing clerk unnecessary. Uncle Sammie Van Nuys, who was one of the most famous old-fashioned precentors in Indiana, quite likely learned his style in this meetinghouse from which he transferred his membership during the Exodus. By the way, dispensing with the precentor and introduction of music were both very traumatic changes for these conservative Presbyterian congregations.

Another early Presbyterian practice that the Low Dutch congregations were unusually slow to change was the extended way in which they observed the sacrament of communion. Celebration of the Lord’s Supper remained the cherished ritual for the strict Calvinists who repudiated all the other colorful ceremonies of Catholicism. Communion was conducted no more than quarterly and it began on Friday evening with preaching and prayer service. Saturday morning was another sermon and parents presented their children for baptism—a crucial sacrament for parents who believed the congregation’s commitment made to the infants as they became part of the church community increased the likelihood of their later acceptance of the faith. For Sunday communion, the meetinghouse was transformed. Long tables were prepared in the aisles, covered with snow-white linen tablecloths. The communicants, each of whom had been presented by the elders with a lead token, resembling in size and shape a silver dime, took their seats at the table of the Lord. After presenting their “tokens” to the elders, they partook of the sacramental feast. Quantities were no mere tokens, but approximations of bread and wine consumed in an actual meal. The tables might fill several times, especially during revivals when nearby congregations might visit. The whole process could take most of the day.

In mentioning wine, I should also mention that the early 19th century Presbyterians very generally did not believe it was morally wrong to drink a social

glass. Alcohol was an accepted aspect of the Scotch-Irish as well as the Low Dutch cultures. Few Presbyterians objected to the moderate consumption of alcohol, even by their ministers and elders. On the other hand, public intoxication was considered a sin and was not tolerated among members. As the Six Mile Session Book documents, it was the most frequent type of unseemly conduct for which a member might be tried and censured by the Session.

The allocation of tokens very conspicuously identified those outside the church. The ministers or elders would not give out communion tokens until converts understood the Shorter Catechism. It was this withholding of the sacraments during the Great Kentucky Revival in the first years of the 19th century that most upset the New Lights. They felt communion should be open to all believers in Christ as it soon was in their services, and eventually was even in Presbyterian churches.

I have probably gone on way too long for an after-dinner speech. D.D. Banta once closed one of his historical discourses saying, "I have written a long letter, but I like my people." I too like my people. And with that I will open it to any questions that may have come to your mind while listening to my story.

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