

# Elder John Alderson

John Alderson was born in New Jersey, March 5, 1738, and was the first Baptist minister that visited the southern part of West Virginia. As early as 1777 he settled on Greenbrier River, in Greenbrier County, near the present site of the town of Alderson.

Owing to the hostility of the Indians, he and his neighbors were compelled, at times, to take shelter in a fort on Wolf Creek, and much of the time he followed the plow with his rifle swinging by his side. He commenced preaching in the forts, and in the houses of the settlers.

In 1781 the Greenbrier Baptist Church was organized with 12 members, and as this was the fourth church in what is now the State of West Virginia, its field included a large portion of the State. Elder Alderson labored as a minister for seven years without seeing another Baptist preacher.

Though he lived at this early day, and comparatively isolated in his home, he was an enthusiastic missionary; doing much personal work, and urging his brethren to spread the gospel over the State.

He was mighty in the Scriptures, a good preacher, a wise counselor, and an untiring worker. He died March 3, 1821, at the advanced age of eighty-three years, in great peace, and his body now sleeps in the cemetery adjoining the

Greenbrier church. His influence lives among his descendants and others today (Slightly adapted from THE BAPTIST ENCYCLOPEDIA by William Cathcart, Vol. I, p. 21, 1881 edition).

Twice I have gone to visit the grave of this pioneer Baptist preacher. Below is a picture of his grave and tombstone. The writing on the tombstone is hard to read, but after some time I found that it said this: "Sacred the memory of Elder Jn. Alderson who was born March 5, 1738 and died March 3, 1821, aged 83



years. He was the first minister that preached in the country where he afterward settled with his family in 1777. To a vigorous mind was united eminent piety."

In the city of Alderson, West Virginia, there stands today a historical sign which reads: "ALDERSON Settled in 1777 by 'Elder' John Alderson, the frontier missionary. He organized the First Baptist Church in the Greenbrier Valley. In 1763, the Muddy Creek settlements were destroyed by the Shawnee Indians

under Cornstalk." I ask the reader to please observe that in 1777 Baptist preachers were called "Elder" and not "Rev." or "Dr." I call upon my Primitive Baptist friends to consider the words "frontier missionary." Here was a "missionary" Baptist in 1777. Also they should consider Cathcart statement: "He was an enthusiastic missionary; doing much personal work, and urging his brethren to spread the gospel over the State." In view of such historical fact how can some teach that the "missionary" Baptists began in 1830? **BBB**

