

# History Of Missouri Baptists

**WILLIAM CATHCART**  
(1826-1903)

The first Christians of any denomination, save Catholic, that ever set foot upon the soil of Upper Louisiana, now the State of Missouri, were Baptists. So far as we have been able to learn, Thos.



**WILLIAM CATHCART**

Bull, his wife, and her mother, Mrs. Lee, were the first to come. They settled in Cape Girardeau County in 1796. The following year they were joined by Enos Randall and wife, and Mrs. Abernathy.

At that time Missouri was under the dominion of Spain, and the Roman Catholic was the established church. In 1799, Eld. Thomas Johnson, of Georgia, visited these pioneers, preached the gospel to them and their neighbors, and baptized one woman. This was the first administration of baptism west of the great river, and Elder Johnson was the first Baptist minister of the regular order who ever visited the Territory.

Elder David Green removed from Kentucky and settled in Cape Girardeau County in 1805, and commenced at once to gather together the Baptists. He organized, in 1805, the Tywappity Baptist church, in Scott County, of eight or ten members. For want of success it soon became defunct, but reorganized in 1809.

The Bethel church was the permanent church organization of the State. It was formed in 1810. (Continued on page 8, col. chu



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teen members, July 19, 1806, near the town of Jackson, Cape Girardeau Co. Elder Green was the first pastor of these churches. For some years the Bethel church was an aggressive missionary body, and greatly prospered. It afterwards opposed missions, and as a consequence withered, and finally died. From it sprang, directly or indirectly, all the churches that formed the first Association.

Five other churches originated prior to the date next to be mentioned, and together with the two first named, met at the Bethel meetinghouse, near Jackson, on the last Saturday in September, 1816, and organized the Bethel Association, the first in the Territory. The constituent churches were Bethel, Tywappity, Providence, Barren, St. Francois, Bellview, Dry Creek. The ministers present were Henry Cockerham, John Farrar, Wm. Street, and James P. Edwards. Bethel Association adopted the appellation of "United Baptists."

In 1796 and 1797 a number of Baptist families removed from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Kentucky, most of whom settled in the present limits of St. Louis County. Among them we notice the names of Abraham and Sarah Musick, Jane Sullens, Sarah Williams, and R. Richardson and wife. They came in the face of Catholic restriction. The law said, "Liberty of conscience is not to be allowed beyond the first generation; the children of emigrants must be Catholics." And further, "No preacher of any religion but the Catholic must come into the province."

John Clark, a Baptist in sentiment, though not a member, and Thomas R. Musick visited and preached in Missouri in these times of proscription. Clark's first trip was made in 1798; Musick's not

long after. Clark was, we presume, the first Protestant minister that ever preached the gospel west of the Mississippi River. Musick settled in the St. Louis district in 1803 or 1804 — the first minister other than Catholic to locate in the Territory. He organized the Fee Fee church, the first in St. Louis County, in 1807, of eighteen members, and became its pastor. This is now the oldest church in the State. Cold Water, the next church in the county, was organized by Musick in 1809.

In November, 1817, at the house of Thomas R. Musick, the Missouri (now St. Louis) Association was formed with the following as constituent churches, viz.: Fee Fee, Cold Water, Boeuf, and Negro Fork, in St. Louis County; and Femme Osage, St. Charles County, and Upper Cuiver in Lincoln County; the aggregate membership of which was 142.

In the autumn of 1817, Elds. John M. Peck and James E. Welch, missionaries of the Baptist General Convention; arrived in St. Louis, then a little French village on the west bank of the Mississippi River. St. Louis is now the fourth city in the Union, extending some fifteen miles up and down the river, with a breadth of three to four miles. Messrs. Peck and Welch organized the First Baptist church of St. Louis, Feb. 8, 1818, with a membership of eleven persons.

Mingled with the tide of emigration westward we find Baptists. Nineteen persons formed a Baptist church near Loutre Island, in Montgomery County, in 1810. Joseph Baker was their pastor. The war of 1812-15 soon afterwards broke out, and most of the membership took refuge in the forts of Howard County.

Mount Pleasant church was the first in the upper county. It was organized by Elders Wm. Thorp and David McLain, near old Franklin, Howard Co. Few meet-

ings for business were held during the war. Thorp and McLain preached to the people in the forts. When the war was over the people began again to hold meetings.

The Mount Pleasant Association was formed July 25, 1818, at the old Mount Pleasant meeting-house. The constituent churches were Mt. Pleasant, Concord, Cooper Co., organized May, 1817; Bethel, Boone Co., formed June, 1817; and Mt. Zion and Salem; their aggregate membership was 161. Ministers present, David McLain, Wm. Thorp, Luke Williams, Ed. Turner, and Colden Williams. In less than five years this associational community had extended its limits as far west as Clay and Lafayette Counties, and an average of 25 miles on either side of the Missouri River.

At its meeting in 1823 it divided its territory, and formed the Fishing River Association, in Clay County, and Concord Association, in Cooper County, in the autumn of that year. Seven churches and six ministers were set off to organize the former, and seven churches to the latter. This left Mount Pleasant with seventeen churches. In 1827, the Mount Pleasant Association again divided for convenience and the formation of the Salem Association the same year was the result. The new Association took thirteen churches, with 513 members, leaving the old Association with 16 churches and 734 members.

The Cuivre Association was formed in 1822, of churches in St. Charles, Lincoln, and Warren Counties, eight in number, most or all of which had been dismissed from the Missouri Association for the purpose.

The gospel was early preached in Pike County by Leroy Jackson, J. M. Peck, and Davis Biggs. Churches were organized as follows: Ramsey's Creek, prior to 1818; Peno, Dec. 25, 1819; Stout's Settlement (now New Hope) Lincoln Co., in 1821.

On the 23rd of August, 1823, the three churches last named, together with Bethlehem, New London, and Beer Creek, met on Big Peno and organized the Salt River Baptist Association. In 1834 this body sent out a colony of fourteen churches, and formed the Bethel Association, at Bethel meetinghouse, Marion Co., the aggregate membership of which was 589. By churches gathered mainly by Elders Lewis and James Williams, situated mostly in Franklin, Washington, and Jefferson Counties, the Franklin Association was organized in 1832, at the house of J. C. Duckworth.

The Cape Girardeau Association, a daughter of the Bethel, was organized in 1824, at Hebron Church.

We now pass to Western Missouri. In 1834 the Fishing River Association embraced all the churches west of a line indicated by Grand River. This year it was divided, the Missouri River being

made the line, and the ten churches south of the river met in the following October at Little Snibar and organized the Blue River Association. Their total membership was 384.

The twelve Associations now named embraced, in 1834, nearly 200 churches, with a membership of some 7000, scattered over a vast extent of country from St. Genevieve County on the south to Lewis County on the north, from two to three counties deep west of the Mississippi River; and on either side of the Missouri River one to three counties deep, from the eastern to the western boundary of the State.

The General Association for missionary purposes was organized in 1835. This was made the occasion of a fierce and strong war upon boards and benevolent institutions by the anti-missionary party.

In the contest on missions in Missouri the anti-missionaries refused absolutely to fellowship under any circumstances those who favored the missionary enterprise. At the time of the division the regulars numbered over 5,000, and the anti-missionaries upwards of 3,000. The present strength of the former in the State is 90,000, and of the latter about 6,000.

The Missouri Baptists are warm friends of education.

(BAPTIST ENCYCLOPEDIA, pp. 804-806, 1881 Edition).

