

## Introduction

It is natural that one should have a great love for his home church. This has motivated the author in preparing this booklet. It was at the Summit Church that he learned the truth, there that he received the inspiration to prepare himself to preach the gospel, and there that he had opportunity to lay the foundation for this by participating in the activities of the church.

We regret that the writing of this story was not undertaken a few years earlier while more of the first generation of members were still living, especially some who had so much to do with the work of the Lord in Summit. Yet we have been able to piece together most of the threads of the church's history, we hope without too many mistakes.

This work could not have been accomplished without assistance from several Christians. From the oldest living members, Henry Meisenheimer and Grace Crain, we received much information. Sister Crain, granddaughter of the founders of the congregation, has supplied us with many pertinent facts about events of the early years. Charles M. Stewart has been our source of information for the church as it is today. Sylvia (Hawley) Kelly kindly arranged for pictures and provided important church records. The author owes much to those who have passed on: to his mother, and his uncles Guy, Louis, and Harold, who provided him with a background of information as he was growing up in the Lord's work.

Finally, we express appreciation to Richard Norman, evangelist with the 35th and Cherry Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for the cover design, to our son, Monroe, for the layout and printing of this booklet, and to his wife, Julia, who gave many yours in typing the manuscript for publication.

It is our hope that this production will be an inspiration to many, especially in encouraging younger Christians to devote themselves to the Master's cause, as did those pioneers who made it possible for all of us to know the truth untainted by the doctrines of men - to see "The LIGHT of the glorious gospel of Christ."

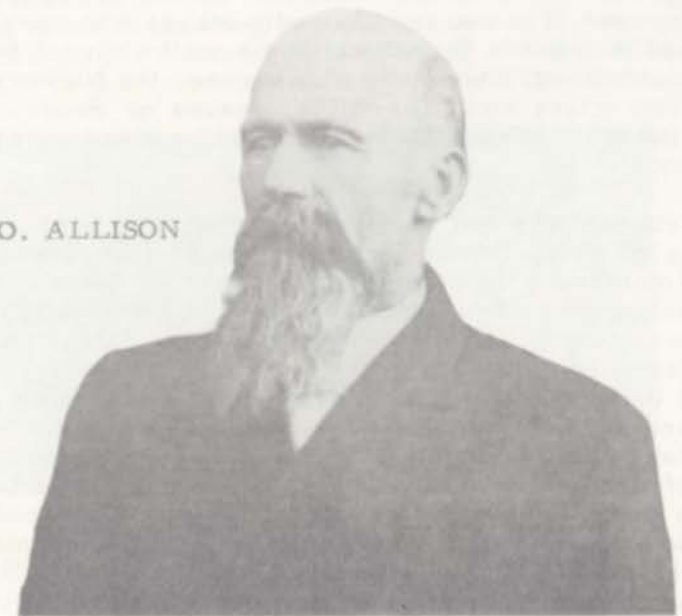
The Author  
— January, 1967

## The LIGHT Comes to Summit

"Then spake Jesus unto them, saying, I am the LIGHT of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.) "Ye are the LIGHT of the world... Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:14,16.) These words of our Savior reveal that He brought the LIGHT of truth from heaven to this world, and then passed it on to men that they might reflect it to souls lost in the darkness of sin. The purpose of this story is to relate how the LIGHT came to one dark corner in Western Michigan, and was then passed on to others, even to remote parts of our country.

The great restoration movement inaugurated by Barton W. Stone in Kentucky, and the Campbells in Pennsylvania and Virginia in the early years of the 19th century rekindled the desire of souls for the truth, unaltered by the innovations of men. Among those converted to Christ by Alexander Campbell was Thomas Hawley (not related to the Summit Hawleys) who moved his family to Detroit, a thriving midwest city, in 1841. His family, along with the Alex Linn family, formed a congregation of about a dozen members. They met in homes and in various rented buildings and were making good progress when the great digression hit Detroit. Some members wished to introduce mechanical instruments of music into the worship and to tie the church to the American Christian Missionary Society. Internal strife led to division in 1867, and early in 1868 those opposing these unscriptural practices started a congregation known as

STEPHEN O. ALLISON



Plum Street Church of Christ. This church, the oldest body following the New Testament pattern in Michigan, is still serving the Lord and will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary. For the last half century it has met in Highland Park, and is generally known as Hamilton Boulevard Church.

About 1882, Stephen O. Allison of Marietta, Ohio, came with his son to Summit Township, Mason County, Michigan, where he bought a farm eight miles south of Ludington, and one mile east of Meisenheimer's Corners, just over the line in Riverton Township. They hewed down trees to clear a place for a house. In due time he sent for his family who came to Pentwater by train where he met them. He built his house just across the orchard from the Frank Thompson home.

A few words about Stephen Allison are in order here. Born in 1838, he was in his early 20's when the great struggle between the states began. He enlisted in Ohio Volunteers in 1861, and during the war advanced to the rank of captain. He was a mild-mannered, humble and soft-spoken man, a little below normal height, and as was the custom of the day, wore a full beard. He was well liked by his neighbors, except by those who opposed the plain truth which he taught. He was baptized in 1877 and wanted others to hear the redemption story. His wife, Lucinda, was a devoted Christian who had been baptized in 1860, and undoubtedly was the influence which led her husband to Christ.

At once they began to have Lord's day morning services in their new Michigan home, and this was IN FACT, the beginning of the congregation soon to be known as Summit Church of Christ. The Allisons were not content to keep the LIGHT to themselves, and began at once to teach Frank and Lovina Thompson who were soon baptized. The two families with others who were converted continued to meet in the Allison home until a church building had been constructed. This godly man secured the Nickerson Schoolhouse two miles away for Bible classes on Sunday where he taught the truth to quite a number and baptized several of them into Christ.

The church was not satisfied to labor in this small way, and knowing of Plum Street Church, Bro. Allison asked that congregation to send its evangelist, William D. Campbell, for gospel meetings. In late summer, 1892, he came. The story is told that as they drove the nine miles in a horse-drawn carriage from the depot to the Allison home, the preacher was informed that the Methodist Church building had been secured as the place of meeting. He suggested that they tell the preacher just what would be taught. After a conference had been held the offer of the use of the building was withdrawn and the nearby French Schoolhouse was secured instead. This building was filled to capacity night after night with some people standing. Enthusiasm ran high and several obeyed the gospel. Bro. Campbell was to return for at least five more meetings during the next few years.

While the church had in fact been meeting regularly for about ten years it was not until June 16, 1893, that it was organized. In the official record (see appendix) it was designated "Christian Church of Summit," though it has always been known as Summit Church of Christ. In this first business meeting Stephen O. Allison and Frank Thompson were appointed elders, and Eugene Stewart and Thomas Walker, both just recently baptized, were made deacons. David Conrad was appointed clerk, with Bro. Walker as treasurer. There were 24 members. The church had a treasury of \$39.80.

Since it began assembling for worship in 1882 or 1883, Summit Church is the second oldest church of Christ in Michigan, though it was not officially organized until 1893. Between these two dates two present day congregations in Michigan came into existence.

In 1884 a group of Canadian brethren from near Toronto, Ontario, moved to farms out of Deckerville in the Thumb, and began meeting. After some years the group ceased to meet regularly because of lack of leadership. The work was revived in 1912 by H. H. Hawley, sent out by Summit Church.

Then there was another beginning in Detroit. Plum Street Church was mission minded and had Bible classes in several places. One of these efforts led to the birth of Vinewood Church in Detroit in 1887. It should be noted that many other congregations had sprung up in several parts of the state. A report in GOSPEL ADVOCATE in 1949 gave a list of about seventy congregations which existed in Michigan in 1870. Most of these were swept away with the tide of digression, or ceased to exist. But only these four which started before 1900 have continued as faithful churches of Christ. Plum Street is unquestionably oldest. On the basis of meeting regularly Summit is second. Then comes Deckerville, followed by Vinewood. If OFFICIAL ORGANIZATION is the criterion, Summit comes fourth.



MR. AND MRS. W. D. CAMPBELL

Of course, the congregation needed a place of meeting, so a committee was appointed early in 1894 to try to secure a certain desirable site. When this property was not available Eugene Stewart offered an excellent site on the corner of his farm, located on two roads, one of which is now U. S. 31. Bro. Stewart made the offer on the condition that a building must be started within two years. Plans were made to build at once and the structure was erected and occupied in 1894. Here it has stood for almost three-quarters of a century.

And how did the members get their building? It was a very simple matter! They went into the woods and cut down the trees and sawed them into logs. They took the logs to the Piper saw-mill nearby and had them made into lumber. Then they got together and put up the building! Bro. Allison told the men to come into his woods and cut trees, and another man, George F. Piper, did the same. Stephen Allison was a carpenter and was able to direct the men in putting up the building. And how much did the building cost? If we have read the treasurer's report correctly it was \$258.27! Probably this was spent for nails, windows, and doors - things which could not be made by the members. Imagine erecting a building for that amount today, and the ease with which it was financed. No bond issue, no borrowing, nor other kinds of church financing! Truly, a do-it-yourself project! In recent years the building has been moved back from the highway a short distance, and somewhat remodeled, but it still stands as a landmark, being especially visible as one approaches from the south on U. S. 31.



BUILDING BEFORE REMODELING



HENRY MEISENHEIMER

## They Saw the LIGHT

A study of this nature is interesting because it is a story about people, and the Lord's church is made up of people - people who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Personalities of the past come to life as we consider the spiritual activities of those who have gone before us in the Summit Church. The membership roll of the congregation in the 1890's was not just a list of names, but a representation of interesting individuals who lived here and served the Lord when the church was young. In fact, the list was made up as one by one they were baptized into Christ, and their names were recorded by the clerk, in most cases with the date of baptism.

An examination of membership records of Summit Church reveals many surprises even to those who have known the congregation for years. You will share these surprises with us as you scan the list of names in the appendix.

Membership in the congregation swelled rapidly during the first few years. Perhaps the newness of the true gospel message to people who had known only denominationalism, the impact of W. D. Campbell, a dynamic evangelist, and the enthusiastic appeal of other preachers to follow, led many souls to Christ. Perhaps, too, opposition from the two nearby religious bodies had not yet crystalized. But the records show that 117 names had been placed on the roll in less than five years from the day of the organization of the church.

Many families of the community were represented in the membership in these first years. Among these family names were Allison, Thompson, Walker, Peterson, Conrad, Kibbey, Meisenheimer, Rinehart, Hawley, Wright, Stewart, Broder, Piper, Abbott, Pierce, and others, many of which were to appear again and again, though some of these names were soon to disappear from the list of members.

During the entire history of the church the names appearing most often in the list of those baptized are: Meisenheimer (25 times), Hawley (21), French (14), Sanford (12, all in recent years), Stewart (11), and Brickley (10).

We are sad to state that one word appears all too often after the names of members - the word "backslid"! Moreover, it was inevitable that many members should move away. Some went into sectarianism. Here is an excerpt from the record of a business meeting held January 10, 1898:

"At a meeting of the church officers called by David J. Conrad (The Clerk) for the purpose of examining and correcting the church book financially and otherwise, there were present Ste-