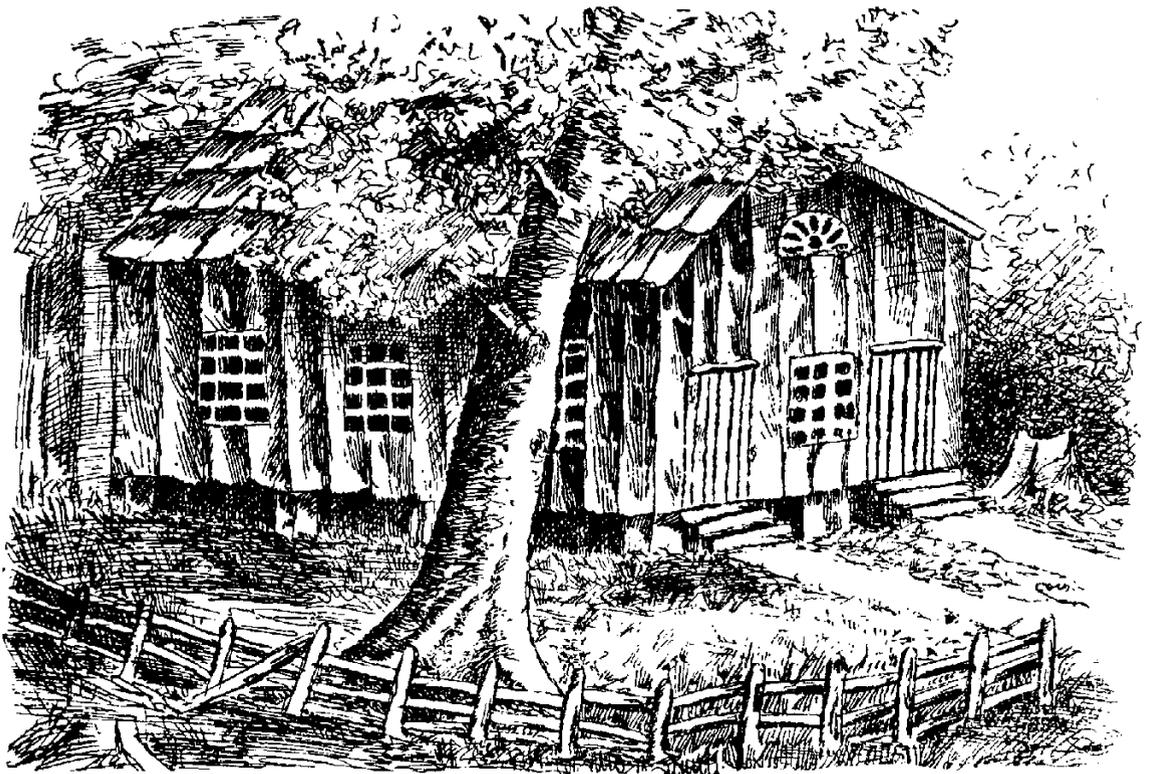


One Hundred Years
OF
PRESBYTERIANISM



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CINCINNATI, OHIO.

First House of Worship, erected 1792.

IN THE
OHIO VALLEY.

CINCINNATI, OHIO.

1890.

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EARLY SABBATH-SCHOOL WORK.

REV. B. W. CHIDLAW.

I stand before you to-day with much trepidation and much fear. I have a wide field to traverse and but a short time for the journey. The records of the early history of Bible instruction are not very abundant and not always reliable. To err is human. The first Sunday-school was established over a hundred years ago by Robert Raikes of England. When the men and women of God laid the foundation of this first Presbyterian Church in the almost unbroken wilderness of the north-west territory the Sunday-school had been at work for ten years.

In 1783, Rev. Thomas Charles, of Bila, North Wales, in the spirit and with the purpose of Robert Raikes, introduced Sunday-schools into that principality. These schools increased the number of Bible readers to such an extent, that there was a famine for the Divine Word. This need was represented in the anxiety of Mary Janes, the Welsh peasant girl, to possess a Bible. So Great was her desire to possess a copy of the Word of Life, that she walked twenty miles over the mountains to the home of Mr. Charles, that she might secure a Bible. This incident led to the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society, that has already published and distributed millions of copies of the Divine Word all over Christendom and on heathen shores.

In 1790, the first organized effort to establish and sustain Sunday-schools was formed in Philadelphia, led by Bishop White, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Quakers, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans and Baptists, cordially uniting. Several schools were established. The teachers were employed at a salary of eighty dollars a year. In 1824, the American Sunday-school Union was established on the basis, and for the purpose of the organization of 1790. In 1791, Mrs. Lake, the

wife of a soldier at the stockade, a military post where Marietta now stands, gathered the children of the garrison and from the log cabins protected by it, and gave them Bible instruction on the Sabbath-day. Recently a monument was erected to her memory by the Sunday-schools of Washington County, Ohio.

Of the introduction of Sunday-schools into Cincinnati and their early history, another will speak during these Centennial services.

In 1836, when employed in Sunday-school missionary labor in Butler county, I was invited to a gathering of Sunday-schools in Wesley Chapel, Cincinnati. That Spacious edifice was crowded by teachers, scholars and friends. With a well known Methodist preacher of the time, I had the pleasure of making my first Sunday-school address in Cincinnati.

In 1842, the Sunday-schools held a union celebration and the demonstration of the Sunday-schools, teachers and officers thronged the streets, marching with banners and song. Addresses were delivered in several churches to crowded and interested audiences. The procession and the enthusiasm of the occasion showed, that nearly half a century ago this city had many Sunday-schools and hosts of friends devoted and earnest in their support. A few years later I attended a mass Sunday-school meeting held in the two-horned church fronting on Main street, the predecessor of this magnificent House of the Lord, the tabernacle of the Most High. The galleries were crowded by teachers and scholars, and the ground floor with interested friends.

Rev. Stephen H. Tyng, D. D., of Philadelphia, a prince of preachers, delivered an eloquent and instructive discourse on the power of early Bible teaching, on building character and forming habits, preparing children for the duties of life and the awards of eternity.

I found in an old paper of 1815, that a few christian people in the city of Zanesville, organized a Sunday-school in the Court house. There were churches in Zanesville, and there were pastors there at that day, but it seems the pastors were not in sympathy with Bible teaching on the Sabbath-day. They regarded it a profanation of the day, and the church door was

not opened to welcome this heaven born agency of Jesus Christ. But, any way, a few christian men started a Sunday-school. They had four teachers and forty-five scholars. That was in 1815. That was the first Sunday-school, so far as I know, in the State of Ohio.

As we look around us and see the innumerabl Sunday-schools, should we not, on this Centennial day, give thanks to God.

I have no knowledge of the first Sunday-school in Cincinnati. When I was a student at the grammar school, near Gambier, I became interested in Sunday-school. I went from my log cabin in Delaware County with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in my heart.

In 1829 I united with the Presbyterian Church in the log cabin. Soon after I became a church member a dear father in Israel said to me, "My boy I am glad you have united with the church ; It rejoices our hearts to see a young man give himself to the Lord ; And now," says he, "my young friend, if you want to become a christian and grow up in grace you must begin to work for Jesus Christ." My soul responded, "What can I do, the son of a poor widow?" "Now," says he, "let us begin. We will start a Sunday-school. You will take the English side and I will take the Welsh side."

He had the old peòple, I had the young people. We worked there together, and fifty years afterwards, in 1879, a few only remained. The old Sunday-school Missionary was invited to be present. We had three days of a semi-centennial celebration, commemorating the beginning of that little Sunday-school in the log cabin in the wilderness. What has been the result in that community? In that township they had faithful men and women working for God, and the Sunday-school has been an important factor in the religious and social condition of the community. There has never been a saloon in the township. There has never been a native pauper. There has never been a man or woman convicted of crime and sentenced to the state prison. I came back again to Cincinnati. In 1836, I became missionary of the Sunday-school Union. I am still in the blessed work. Fifty-four years a

missionary trying to gather the children, youth and adults of my country into the Bible schools, placing the word of God into their hands, giving them all the advantage possible to study and search the scriptures.

But I will not detain you longer. The Sunday-school is an institution that has the approval of the church. Let us extend the beneficent influence throughout this land in all its length and breadth.