

Guerilla activities caused the A. N. Falls family to move to Texas during the Civil War. Mr. Falls, who lived about three-fourths of a mile east of Potts Station, boarded up his doors and windows after storing surplus grain in the house. When the family returned at the end of the war, Mr. Falls found the doors and windows broken and the grain gone. Rain and sun had warped the floor in the living room. The floor still showed the evidence of the weather when the old house was torn down in March, 1961.<sup>26</sup>

Indian relics, which have been found near the Pottsville area, prove that the "Red Man" was there. Many youngsters of the later generations, this writer among them, have spent time picking up arrows and tomahawks. These relics were probably left by the Osages and Cherokees, both of which are known to have lived all over the area.

Some of the first white people in the vicinity were thoughtful enough to record their findings. Two such people were Cephas Washburn and Thomas Nuttall. Their records show the existence of the Cherokees in this area in the early 1800's.

In 1819, while trying to make his way from the mouth of

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This information was acquired in an interview with Mr. T. B. Falls on June 10, 1961. Mr. Falls is a lifelong resident of Pottsville. He is the son of A. N. Falls who came to Pottsville in 1851. This interview cited hereafter as: Interview with T. B. Falls.

Point Remove Creek to the mouth of Illinois Bayou, Cephas Washburn became lost on the south side of Crow Mountain. He had been deliberately misinformed by a Cherokee who had sent him on the wrong trail. He came off the mountain near the place where Pottsville was to be.

Probably no person was more familiar with the Arkansas Cherokee than Cephas Washburn. In 1820 Mr. Washburn founded what is now referred to as "Old Dwight Mission." This school for the Cherokees was opened on January 1, 1822, and was located on the west bank of the Illinois Bayou in Pope County. This location is about five miles west of Russellville, Arkansas, near Highway 64. It has a marker located near the highway.

Mr. Washburn, a Presbyterian Missionary, stayed at Dwight until the Cherokees were removed to Indian Territory in 1830. He made the move with them to the west side of Sallisaw Creek and established a new mission there.

The duties of a missionary brought Mr. Washburn in constant contact with the Cherokees. He was well acquainted with them and their problems. He personally knew such famous chiefs and leaders as Ta-kah-to-kuh, John Jolly, Dick Justice, George Guess (or Gist), and Walter Webber. Ta-kah-to-kuh worked tirelessly for an Indian Confederation which never materialized. These are only a few of the Indians who lived, fished,

and hunted in the vicinity.<sup>27</sup>

On April 2, 1819, Thomas Nuttall said:

. . . Mr. D. proceeded about eight miles above Frasers and remained the rest of the afternoon nearly opposite to the bayou or rivulet of Point Remu (Point Remove Creek, entering Arkansas River at Morrilton, in Conway County), from whence on that side, commences the Cherokee line. Both banks of the river in this distance are one continued line of farms. Some of the cabins are well situated on agreeable rising grounds.<sup>28</sup>

On April 5, 1819, a few miles farther up the river Nuttall's records give the following account:

. . . at the distance of about five miles from the first Cherokee village, called the Galley, Mr. D. and myself proceeded to it by land. Here the Cherokees had a settlement of about a dozen families, who, in the construction and furniture of their houses, and in the management of their farms, imitate the whites, and appeared to be progressing towards civilization, were it not for their baneful attachment to whiskey.<sup>29</sup>

The above settlement of "Galley" is none other than Galla Rock, a well known Indian village established by the Cherokees after their movement into Arkansas. It was located near the mouth of Galla Creek in Pope County and had been established by some of the 300 followers of Chief Tahlonteskee after the Osage had vacated this section in 1808. Galla Rock flourished as a trading center and steamboat

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<sup>27</sup> Hugh Park, Cephas Washburn's Reminiscences of the Indians, (Van Buren: Press-Argue, 1955), pp. 60-192.

<sup>28</sup> Reuben G. Thwaites, Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory, (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clarke Company, 1905), pp. 169-170.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 172-173.

landing until the railroad was built through Potts Station, some five miles north of the river, in the early 1870's.<sup>30</sup> It was to Galla Rock that many early residents came to pick up their goods which had been shipped up the Arkansas River from New Orleans.<sup>31</sup>

The town of Pottsville in Pope County is not a large town in population, but it has always shown a great interest in the finer things of life. There has been no lack of churches and religious activity in the community. At one time the spiritual needs of the people were provided by two Methodist, one Baptist, and one Presbyterian church, all standing within one-hundred and fifty yards of each other. At the present time there are three active churches located there.

No religious history of the community would be complete without mentioning the Camp Ground, better known as the Old Camp Ground, which is located on Galla Creek about three-fourths of a mile northwest of the town. This area served as a community center for early religious meetings, for people came for miles by wagon and horseback. There were no buildings here, but a cleared area

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Federal Writer's Project, Arkansas A Guide to the State, (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1941), pp. 247-248.

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Interview with Mr. George Jones, June 12, 1961. Mr. Jones, who has passed his ninetieth birthday, has been a resident of this area throughout his life. Hereafter this will be cited as: Interview with George Jones.

on a high bank on the south side of the creek provided a place for the people to park their covered wagons in which they slept. It is interesting to note that as early as 1893 the adjective, old, was applied when referring to the Camp Ground. This indicates that the Camp Ground has a history much older than this date. During the 1880's and 1890's this area was used for baptizings, especially by the Baptists, who often came here on Sunday afternoons following morning services and dinner on the ground.

Probably non-denominational meetings were held here in the earliest days of its history. However, this is not known and likely never will be. Today the Camp Ground area is covered with grass, bushes and trees. A few people still use the creek for swimming.<sup>32</sup>

The idea for the establishment of the first Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church at Potts Station was evidently conceived in the minds of some of its members who were preparing to move westward from the Carolinas. Some came to Potts Station in 1851, while another group moved near Hot Springs, Arkansas. Prearrangements called for the two groups to assemble at a later date. The basic idea behind the move probably was economic, but it seems quite certain that the

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Interview with Mr. V. A. Johnson, August 23, 1961. Mr. Johnson was born about three miles southeast of Pottsville in 1876 and has an excellent knowledge of its history. Hereafter this will be cited as: Interview with V. A. Johnson.

group had every intention of establishing an Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church west of the Mississippi.

The settlers established themselves on almost the same geographic latitude as that from which they had emigrated. A check in an atlas showed that Gaston County, North Carolina, and York County, South Carolina, border each other. The southern part of York County is approximately thirty-four degrees and fifty minutes north latitude, and the northern part of Gaston County is about thirty-five degrees and twenty-five minutes north latitude. Pottsville, Arkansas, is approximately thirty-five degrees and twenty minutes north latitude. The settlers were almost due west of their original location.

Nine families were involved in the first Presbyterian move to Pottsville. James Whitesides, Warren Ferguson, John Oates, Sr., and John Oates, Jr., were among the group that first came to the Potts Station area in 1851. The group which located temporarily near Hot Springs included John W. Ferguson, A. N. Falls, Joseph D. Oates, and William Oates, Jr.<sup>33</sup>

John Falls, Sr., also moved to this area about 1852. He was the father of the above mentioned A. N. Falls, his eldest child, as well as eight other children. Mr. Falls, who located near

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with N. H. Bell.

Russellville, was an elder in the newly formed Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church until his death in 1855.<sup>34</sup>

Mr. Falls evidently traveled to Memphis by wagon without mishap. The remainder of his trip, however, was not pleasant. His son, A. N. Falls, related:

My father and company suffered a greate deal from Memphis until they reached us. They went on the mail Boate Ironton at Mephis (Memphis) and down the Miffs (Mississippi) 240 miles to Neapolian back up the Miffs (Mississippi) 40 miles to White River and then up White R 200 miles to Rock Row Lake. The weather was wet and the fogs heavy. The pilot could not keep the chanil of the River at night on the account of the heavy fog. Theire is whare they got theire disease. Isabella commenced vomiting before they left the bote. They come on to this edge of the Grand Prairie and theire stoped about a week. Isabella died. Blackwood and Jude at the prairie. Thos Jeferson, Charles Roxan and Tom died at uncle John Oats sister. Margaret and her youngest child had they same disease. they come to my House. they booth got well. the doctor say that it was the Cholery that disease has never spread in our valey yet. they have all got well and well satisfied with our country. . . . 35

Other families may have been involved in this first move. At any rate, the Hot Springs group probably moved to the Potts Station area in 1852. Following these came groups from Tennessee and the Carolinas. Between 1853 and 1855 the families of John Pinkerton, H. M. Hughey, Gregory Sinclair, Franklin Raymond, Hugh Taylor and Alex Dickey arrived from Tennessee. About the same time

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<sup>34</sup> "History of the Falls Family," compiled by Mrs. E. B. Falls, February 2, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from A. N. Falls to Alexander Ware, Esq., and Family, February 7, 1853.

William Oates, Sr., and Alex Bell came from North Carolina, while William McElwee, John F. Oates, Alex and Andrew Henry arrived from York County, South Carolina.

The Potts Station community gained in preference over Hot Springs as a suitable location for the families and the establishment of their church. The first Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church service was held there in November, 1852. The Reverend John Patrick, a veteran missionary, organized this group into the Pisgah, Arkansas, Church on January 29, 1853.<sup>36</sup> (There is a Pisgah in North Carolina.)

Patrick had come to this frontier area some three or four months earlier and worked hard to establish a church. The following quote gives some indication of the situation at that time:

The Rev. John Patrick left us a few days ago after spending some 12 or 13 Saboths with us. he preached every Saboth but one and that was one of them wet ones. I think that he is well pleased with our country and if no one else comes back to preach the Gospel of glad tidings to us he will again lend us his aide. he is a noble preacher and is able to explain Gods word as deep and as easy to be understood as all most any other. we maid him up 58 dollars for the time he spent with us. I hope at some future day not fare distant that we will be able to raise up a church to the Lorde our God. the work is his if we leave it to himself.<sup>37</sup>

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Monroe Oates, "A Sketch of Thirty Years of a Pastor's Life," A.R.P. Journal, January 3, 1898, pp. 3-6.

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Letter from A. N. Falls to Alexander Ware, Esq., and Family, February 7, 1853.



As might be expected, the first meeting was held in the Potts School House, which was located approximately three-fourths mile southwest of the home of Kirkbride Potts on land owned by W. O. Ferguson. Charter members included John Oates, Sr., John Oates, Jr., William Oates, Jr., James Whitesides, A. N. Falls, John Falls, Thomas M. Oates, John M. Ferguson, Emily Ferguson, and Margaret Falls. There was a total of twenty-six members. All charter members were emigrants from the Carolinas. Only three of the original members, A. N. Falls, James Whitesides, and Mrs. S. R. Ferguson, were still living in January, 1898.

By 1855 the church had increased its membership from twenty-six to seventy. The largest membership ever recorded was one-hundred and seventy-five. The total membership over the years has been eight-hundred. Not to be overlooked is the fact that it furnished the foundation for the origin of the A. R. P. Churches at Russellville, Little Rock, and Havana, Arkansas, all of which were established about 1890.

The first building for the congregation was a frame structure located near what is now known as Pisgah Cemetery, about one and one-half miles west of Potts Station. As time passed, the

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<sup>38</sup> Monroe Oates, "A Sketch of Thirty Years of a Pastor's Life," A. R. P. Journal, January 3, 1898, pp. 3-6.

congregation grew and other facilities were needed to house some of the members who lived on the fringes of the community. Therefore, Calla Creek School House was used as a meeting place for members living south of Potts Station. By 1877 a new building, called Bethany (there was a Bethany Church in South Carolina) was established there. As the population shifted toward Potts Station, which was now a trading center located on the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad, the Pisgah Church was abandoned in 1885 for the church at Potts Station. In 1916 the original A. R. P. Church building at Pottsville was replaced by a modern brick building which burned in 1960. This, in turn, was replaced by a smaller, but still more modern, building. In 1947 the old church at Bethany was replaced by a new building.<sup>39</sup>

Listed below are some financial statistics for the church between the years of 1868 to 1898:

First Decade:

Total contributions for all purposes . . . . .	\$ 3,919.05
Average yearly contribution . . . . .	391.90
Average salary (Minister) . . . . .	285.40
Average contribution per capita . . . . .	3.80

Second Decade:

Total contributions for all purposes . . . . .	5,152.14
Average yearly contribution . . . . .	515.21
Contribution to Synods Fund . . . . .	283.95
Contribution to Foreign Missions . . . . .	119.15
Average Salary (Minister) . . . . .	355.23

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with N. H. Bell.

Average contribution per capita . . . . . \$ 5.26

Third Decade:

Total contributions for all purposes . . . . .	7,658.70
Average yearly contribution . . . . .	765.87
Contribution to Synods Fund . . . . .	589.10
Contribution to Foreign Missions . . . . .	435.64
Average contribution per capita . . . . .	5.75
Average salary (Minister) . . . . .	435.64

Other:

Repairing Pisgah Church in 1869 . . . . .	180.00
Building Bethany Church in 1877 . . . . .	700.00
Building the church at Potts Station in 1184	950.00
Cost of Parsonage in 1891 . . . . .	600.00
Total contribution for thirty years . . . . .	16,729.89
Total accessions in thirty years . . . . .	209
Average yearly accessions . . . . .	6.9
Total deaths in thirty years . . . . .	104
Average yearly deaths . . . . .	3.4
Removals in thirty years . . . . .	88
Average yearly removals . . . . .	2.9
Adult baptisms . . . . .	34
Infant baptisms . . . . .	113
Average yearly infant baptisms . . . . .	3.7 <sup>40</sup>

These statistics point out several things. The growth of the church is evident; however, there is also the indication of trials and tribulations. When the pastor's average yearly salary is but \$285.40, there is the possibility that the financial affairs of the church were suffering. Also, it is possible that ministers of that day were not expected to have more than a minimum livelihood.

Indications are also evident that the years between 1860 and 1862 were especially trying ones, with some lively sessions of the

church officials. At one meeting of the session as many as six cases of intemperance were under consideration at the same time. In 1862 many of the members became disorderly, with division, alienation, and animosity springing up. The War Between the States was partly to blame for these divisions, but obviously the chief cause of disagreement was the subject of a union between the Associate Reformed and the Presbyterian Church.

After the war there was much ill feeling among members whose sympathies had been with opposing sides. Many of these men carried pistols with them when they were away from home. Inside the homes pistols were frequently seen hanging on bed posts. Ill feelings were quite obvious in 1868. The session was most often in agreement, however. Differences in opinion about the operation of the Grange brought complications at a later date, but this difference was short lived and did not bring serious or lasting results.<sup>41</sup>

The following is a list of some of the pastors with the years of their service: Monroe Oates--1867-1899, J. W. Carson--1900-1903, S. J. Patterson--1905-1906, C. T. Bryson--1908-1948, and T. G. Morris--1954-.

Supply pastors have been John Patrick, David Kerr, John Boyce, Kenneth Morris, and Charles Holland.

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Ibid.

After the organization of the church in 1853, the Reverend Patrick returned to North Carolina. The Reverend John Boyce served as supply pastor during the summer months of 1854 and 1855. In the fall of 1855 the members requested Patrick to assume leadership of the church. He returned late in the year and served on a half-time basis until ill health forced him to retire in 1860. He was followed soon after by the Reverend David Kerr who served in a similar capacity until he joined the Confederate Army in 1863.

Patrick again resumed the work and remained until the latter part of 1867. In December of that year came the Reverend Monroe Oates, son of one of the original elders, John Oates, to serve as minister. He was the one person who probably did more than any other to build the church. His services were terminated in 1899, after thirty-two years of leadership. He died the following year.

The next minister was J. W. Carson whose tenure was for three and one-half years. He was followed by S. J. Patterson who came to the church in the early summer of 1905 for one and one-half years of ministering. D. P. Pressley followed him, serving until January, 1908. At this time the Reverend C. T. Bryson was called to the pastorate of the church. He continued to serve until his death on September 14, 1948.<sup>42</sup>

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Interview with N. H. Bell.

Outstanding of the above men are John Patrick, Monroe Oates, and C. T. Bryson. It has been said that Patrick planted the church, Oates nursed it from youth to maturity, and Bryson served it during its maturity.

Methodism in Pope County originated with some families who migrated from North Carolina and settled near present day Russellville in 1839. Some of these, the Harkeys, Reeds, Maddoxes, Hollingers, Howells, Shinns, and Brookses, were charter members of the first church which was formed after a Methodist minister, the Reverend Mr. Emmett, had visited there.<sup>43</sup>

What was later to be the Pottsville Methodist Church was first organized at the Old Cove School House in Bradley Cove in 1868.<sup>44</sup> M. C. Baker, Cicero Harkey, and George Reed were the first stewards and James Potts was the Sunday School Superintendent. Another charter family was the Reeds.<sup>45</sup>

The earliest information available lists William J. Dodson as pastor in 1876. By 1888 the church had been moved to Pottsville and made a part of the Atkins Circuit which at this time was

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<sup>43</sup> James A. Anderson, Centennial History of Arkansas Methodism, (Benton: L. B. White Printing Company, 1935), pp. 493-494.

<sup>44</sup> The Weekly Tribune, Russellville, Arkansas, July 16, 1936.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson, op. cit.

pastored by E. L. Massey. Later, while J. C. Weaver was pastor, land was bought for the construction of a building. In 1916 Pottsville became a circuit of its own, including Bells Chapel, Pleasant Grove, and New Hope.<sup>46</sup>

Early ministers of the Methodist Church often had to fight fire with fire and fight men as well as the devil. The Reconstruction Period following the Civil War brought out political differences that did not die until years later. The enlists for the cause of this denomination often suffered the violence of those who disagreed with them.

One of the earliest ministers in the Pottsville area, Reverend L. C. O'Darr, related that in the earliest days all Methodist work within eighty miles of Dover was inside the Dover Circuit. During the years from 1867 to 1872 he traveled there as a circuit rider, and, in true Wesley and Asbury style, accepted all the hardships that accompanied such a life. He went through cold, hot, dry, and wet weather, swam creeks, and slept on the ground. O'Darr built the first shed at Center Valley and held a meeting there under the guard of twenty-five men who were well armed and ready to fight.<sup>47</sup>

At Coplin Church near Atkins, O'Darr and a fellow minister

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<sup>46</sup> The Weekly Tribune, Russellville, Arkansas, July 16, 1936.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.