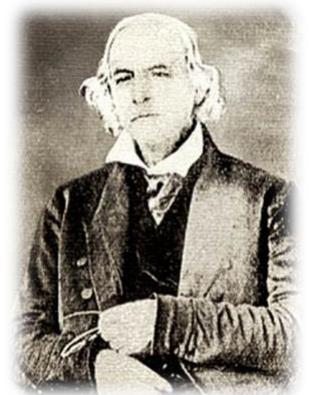


Presbyterians Come to Pennsylvania

Presbyterianism was one of the earliest denominations to emerge from Europe's 16th century Protestant Reformation. Based on the teachings of John Calvin, it quickly became the dominant religion of Scotland from where it spread into Northern Ireland and Colonial North America.

By the 1720s, tens of thousands of Scots and Scot-Irish emigres began arriving in the Pennsylvania colony, introducing both their religion and culture into North America. Never content to remain in one place for very long, these hardy frontiersmen were at the forefront of western expansion. Following Native American paths, it was the Scot-Irish who first crossed the Appalachians into Western Pennsylvania, the Ohio Valley and southward into Virginia, the Carolinas and Kentucky where they became the dominant force in frontier settlements.

The first Presbyterian minister to preach in Western Pennsylvania was Reverend Charles Beatty who served as chaplain for General Forbes' British troops during the French and Indian War. His sermon was in celebration of the French withdrawing from Fort Duquesne at the Forks of the Ohio in 1758.



The earliest ministers in Western Pennsylvania were itinerants who travelled the countryside, braving the elements to preach where ever the faithful might gather. Families living among the hills along the Big Sewickley Creek, which marks the boundary between Beaver and Allegheny counties, were first visited by Reverend Robert Patterson (right) in the 1810s.



Log cabin schools began appearing on the Western Pennsylvania frontier in the years following the Revolution. One such school opened in 1780 on Chartiers Creek under the direction of a Presbyterian minister (left). In 1791, the school was replaced by the Canonsburg Academy, which was intended to prepare young men for the ministry. The academy grew into Jefferson College that in 1865 became part of Washington & Jefferson College, a small liberal arts school located in Washington, Washington County. Now restored, the log school stands on the W&J campus as a reminder of the school's 18th century roots.

During the Academy's dedication ceremony on a hot July morning in 1791, a small group of well-wishers observed one of the school's two new students give a Latin recitation "under the shade of some sassafras bushes." The student was sixteen-year-old Robert Patterson.

Following graduation, young Patterson attended the University of Pennsylvania after which he was ordained a Presbyterian minister, the same as his father. Returning to Western Pennsylvania, Reverend Patterson married Jean Canon, the daughter of Canonsburg, Pennsylvania's proprietor. The young couple soon relocated to Erie, Pennsylvania where Patterson served as an itinerant before moving to Pittsburgh in 1807 where, for the next three years, he served as principal of the Pittsburgh Academy that later became the University of Pittsburgh. It was in 1810 that Patterson began his long association with the Hiland Presbyterian Church north of Pittsburgh on the old Franklin Road [Perry Highway] near the village of Perrysville.

In addition to pastoral duties, Patterson became an established printer, bookseller and author. It should be noted that during that time period, cash always seemed to be in short supply and salaries, though promised, often went unpaid. This resulted in clergy sometimes having to find ways of supplementing uncertain incomes.

A story often told by Reverend Patterson involved a conversation he had with a fellow traveler one Sunday morning while on his way to preach at Hiland. *"He was riding out to his church on horseback, on Sabbath morning. The roads were deep and heavy with the spring mud. A traveler, also on horseback, overtook him, and entered into conversation. As they came near the church, Mr. Patterson said to his companion, "Suppose you stop and hear the preaching, it will rest both you and your horse." "Who is the preacher?" "One Patterson." "Did he preach in Erie County once?" "Yes." "The I won't stop. He is the driest old stick I ever heard."*

From: **The semi-centennial celebration of the First Presbyterian Church of Erie, Penn. June 1, 1875**

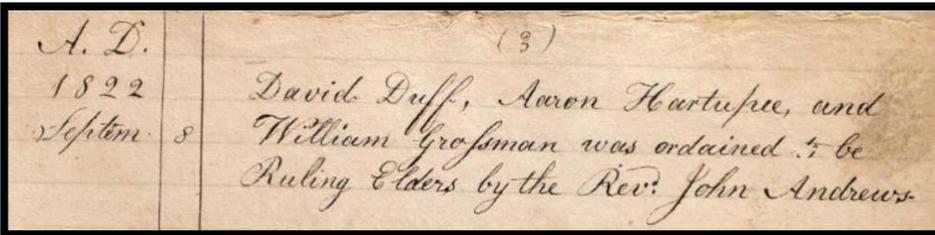
It was Reverend Robert Patterson who ministered to Presbyterian farm families who gathered for worship at David Duff's newly built grist mill on the Big Sewickley Creek.

The Arrival of Reverend John Andrews

Born in Maryland (1768), Reverend Andrews spent his childhood in North Carolina before being ordained in 1794 and serving in Kentucky. He has been described as a short statured country pastor and revivalist with pure white hair in old age.

He began preaching at a time when books and other printed materials were both scarce and costly. Reverend Andrews hoped to fill the void with a monthly religious magazine, but his efforts were short lived [1802-04]. He

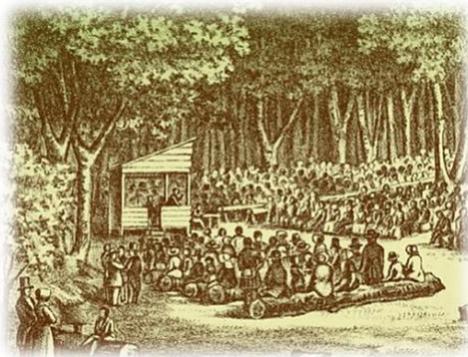
was more successful in 1814 when he began publishing the nation's first religious newspaper while in Chillicothe, Ohio. Offering a combination of religious and secular articles, it was the only paper distributed West of the Appalachians. In 1821, the Pittsburgh Synod invited Reverend Andrews to bring his paper to Pittsburgh where it would have a wider circulation. Following his arrival, he was appointed as Stated Supply to the Duff Mill and Sewickley congregations effective 1 June 1822. Duff Mill organized a few months later on 8 September with the appointment of ruling elders.



With Sewickley being the smaller of the two congregations, it was given 1/3 of the Reverend's time, meaning he preached there every third week. Early records show that he received a \$35.50 salary from the nineteen-member

Sewickley congregation. His salary from Duff Mill is unknown. Between 1828 and 1832, Sewickley and Duff Mill were united by a joint Session. Together, thirty-three members from the congregations pledged \$17.87 with which to purchase their pastor a horse "to enable him to perform his labors" [1830].

While serving the Sewickley and Duff Mill congregations, Reverend Andrews continued publishing until 1828 when he gave up ownership of the paper. Published under different names, including the **Presbyterian Banner**, the paper was discontinued in 1898.



Shortly before retiring, Reverend Andrews oversaw three communion services in the summer and fall of 1831 that are described in the **50th Anniversary Exercises of the Presbyterian Church, Sewickley, Pennsylvania 1888**. *"These sacramental occasions were notable events, and, in the language of my informant, "were attended by great crowds of people from the [Neville] Island, the hills and bottoms, and across the river, for miles around." The service, of necessity, was held out of doors, the house being too small to hold the assembly. The minister stood under a tent or canopy of boards. The services began usually on Thursday, with two sermons; a solemn fast on Friday; another sermon and the baptisms*

on Saturday; two, sometimes three services on Sunday, and again a sermon on Monday. These five days were held sacred; all unnecessary work was suspended, and the whole time given to the church services. Tokens were used, and no one was allowed to commune who had not attended the stated preparatory meetings and received the necessary token."

Reverend Andrews' retired in early 1832, after which he devoted his time to establishing Sunday Schools throughout the area. He died in 1849, aged 81 years.

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Following Reverend Andrews's retirement, the Sewickley congregation disbanded, with some members choosing to join the Duff Mill congregation. Duff's had a large Sunday School and was served by Reverend William Woods and Reverend John Moore during the next few years. Both were experienced pastors, having served many years in the Pittsburgh Synod, but Reverend Moore was only able to preach at Duff's every third Sunday as both the Plains and Crossroads churches were already in his charge.



Having first gathered for services at Duff's grist mill, the congregation built a hilltop meeting house on land given by James Duff. Both the mill and meetinghouse are shown on this 1833 map that was drawn of the new state road that connected McClean's Mill near Freedom, Beaver County and Perrysville, Allegheny County. The map shows the original course of the Pittsburgh-Rochester Road.

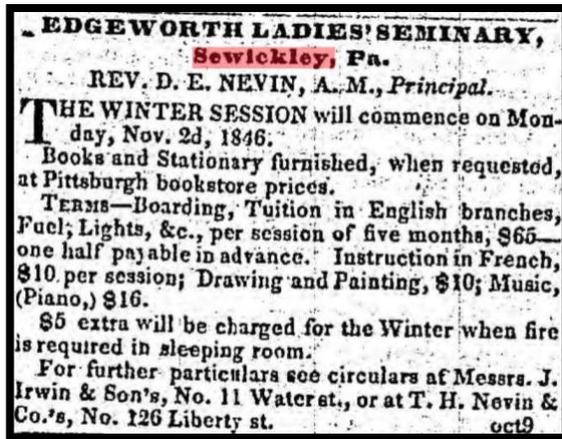
### Reverend Daniel E. Nevin

As Reverend Moore's time at Duff's came to an end, a call was extended to Shippensburg, Pennsylvania native Daniel E. Nevin (right), newly graduated from the Western Theological Seminary in Allegheny City.

Reverend Nevin's arrival in 1838 was a time of change for both the Duff and Sewickley congregations. A newly built and named Fairmount Church replaced the old Duff meetinghouse. Sewickley had a renewed interest in formally organizing. For the first time, the two congregations were officially separate even though they shared the services of Reverend Nevin. It has been written that he was once advised to take up with the larger Fairmount church as Sewickley "would never amount to much."



Facing poor health, Reverend Nevin, who was greatly admired by all, resigned from Fairmount in 1846 and from the Sewickley pulpit a year later. He re-opened the Edgeworth Ladies' Seminary in 1846 and for nearly seven years, served as its principal before accepting a position as an Internal Revenue collector. The father of eight, Reverend Daniel Nevin died in his Edgeworth home in 1886.



The Edgeworth Ladies' Seminary was a boarding school for the daughters of wealthy Presbyterians and Episcopalians. It opened in Pittsburgh in 1825 before moving to Braddock and making its final move to the Sewickley area in 1836. The school closed in 1842 following the death of its founder Mary Olver, but was reopened by Reverend Nevin and his wife. Before the school permanently closed in 1865, two more Fairmount pastors would also serve as principals.

An 1846 advertisement (left) and the seminary as it appeared in the 1838 catalogue (below) are shown.

The first pastor to serve Fairmount and the seminary concurrently was Reverend Henry R. Wilson, Jr. D.D. Born in 1808, Reverend Wilson entered Jefferson College at age sixteen. Following graduation, he studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania before attending the Princeton Theological Seminary and becoming an ordained minister in 1832. Wilson joined a mission in Oklahoma's Indian Territory and during that time, was credited with preaching the first Presbyterian sermon in Texas [1833].

Wilson returned home and married in 1834 before he and his young wife returned to Oklahoma to minister to Cherokee and Choctaw tribes. Not long after their arrival, Sarah Wilson died of a fever. Returning to Pennsylvania, Wilson remarried in 1837 before he and his new wife boarded a ship in Philadelphia for a voyage to Calcutta where they joined a mission in northern India. While there, Wilson opened schools and an orphanage.

Reverend Wilson arrived at Fairmount in 1855 and remained until the Fall of 1859 when he resigned from both Fairmount and the seminary to accept the principal's position at the Female Seminary in Springfield, Ohio. He had always been active in Presbyterian governance, ending his career in the New York office. Reverend Wilson died at his New Jersey home in 1886.

Following Reverend Wilson at both Fairmount and the school was Reverend Aaron Williams, D.D. who was remembered as a modest Christian gentleman. A native of Washington County, Pennsylvania, Wilson was not yet fifteen-years-old when he entered Jefferson College in 1826. Upon graduating, he joined the first class in the newly organized Western Theological Seminary in Allegheny City from which he graduated in 1831. Williams then taught school in Zelienople, Butler County for a period of time before accepting a position at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. In 1853, he returned to Jefferson College to teach Latin and remained there until resigning in 1859 when he assumed Reverend Wilson's positions at both the seminary and Fairmount Church. In addition to those duties, Reverend Williams also served as chaplain to the nearby Dixmont State Hospital. He left Fairmount in 1864. His tenure at the school ended the following year when the building was heavily damaged by fire and not rebuilt.



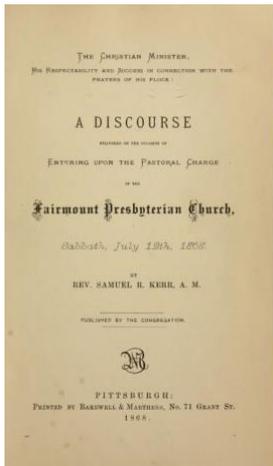
Reverend Leland McAboy, D.D. filled the Fairmount pulpit for a short time following Reverend Williams' departure. In turn, Reverend McAboy was replaced by Reverend John W. Potter who was installed in October 1864, splitting his time between Fairmount and the Plains Church in Cranberry Township, Butler County. Reverend Potter died in 1866 and is the only one of Fairmount's early pastors buried in the church cemetery. It was written that under Reverend Potter, attendance and interest increased greatly at both churches.

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Having graduated from the forerunner to the University of Pittsburgh and later from the Western Theological Seminary, which is now the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Reverend Samuel R. Kerr was installed as Fairmount's pastor in July 1868. In later years, he would be awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Richmond College.

Reverend Kerr not only ministered, but was also a respected speaker, scholar and author. His religious writings appeared in numerous publications. The discourse from his installation at Fairmount may be read at:

<https://archive.org/details/christianministe00kerr/page/n1/mode/2up?q=%22Samuel+r.+kerr%22>



At the time of his death in early 1901, he had been estranged from his three children. Widowed, he had been living with a nephew and his family in the Bayne section of Franklin Park when he fell ill while visiting at his brother-in-law's home in Allegheny City where he later died.

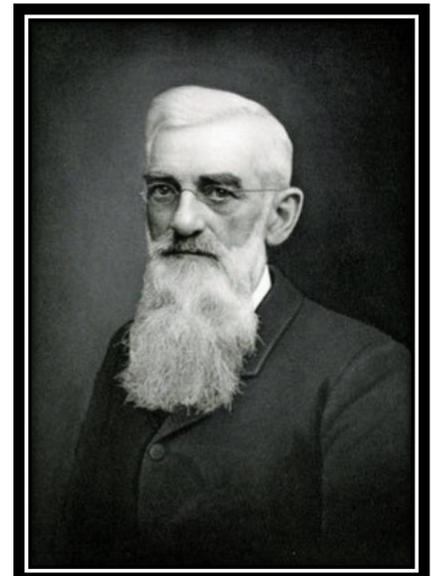
CONTESTS FATHER'S WILL.

His children contested the will that left his estate to his niece. At issue was his valuable library of over 2,500 books. Following the court's validation of Kerr's will, his niece followed through with the Reverend's wishes and donated his entire collection to the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary where it remains to this day.

Reverend Levi Risher

It is rare, almost unheard of, that a newly ordained minister would have the good fortune of receiving a newly built church as a gift from his father as did Levi Risher. Having first studied at Jefferson College before graduating from the Western Theological Seminary at age twenty-six, Reverend Risher's coal operator father presented him with the Amity Presbyterian Church in Dravosburg, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania in 1862.

Risher's ancestors were among the earliest families in the Baldwin, Hays, Whitehall section of Pittsburgh. Following the elder Risher's return from the California gold fields, the family relocated to Dravosburg, which was built on land purchased by Mr. Risher and where the family conducted its coal operation.





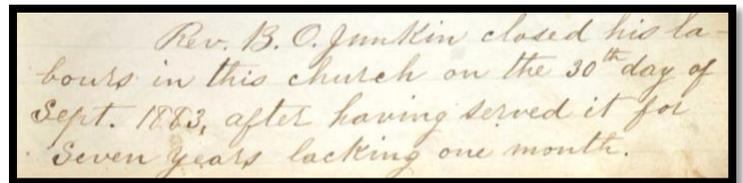
While studying at the seminary, young Risher met his future wife Elmira, a Clarion County native. They married in 1862 and eventually became the parents of four sons and a daughter. Like most ministers and their families, the Rishers moved frequently throughout his career.

After preaching for two years, Risher joined the family's coal firm for four years before accepting a call to serve the Fairmount and Plains churches (1869-76). During that time, the Rishers resided in Franklin Township. From there, they returned to Dravosburg where he served for six years, followed by postings in other regional churches.

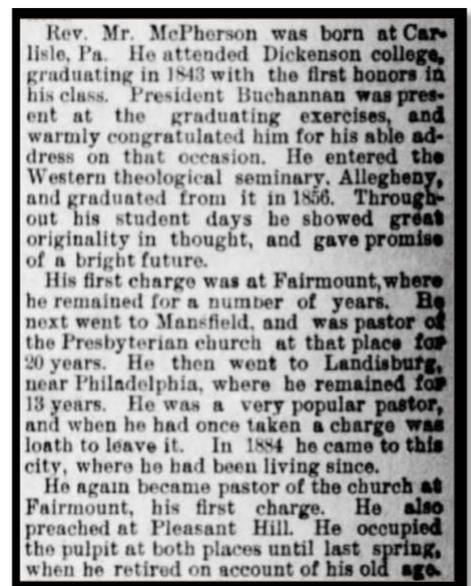
Rev. Risher passed in 1894 at age fifty-nine and is buried in Dravosburg. His widow Elmira, who passed in 1940, lived to the age of 101.



Following Reverend Risher at Fairmount was another Jefferson College and Western Theological Seminary graduate, Reverend Benjamin Oliver Junkin who was ordained in 1860 and installed at Fairmount in 1876 where he would go on to serve for nearly seven years. After departing Fairmount, Junkin preached in Iowa then California. Reverend Junkin retired in 1896 and would die at his Los Angeles home in 1899.

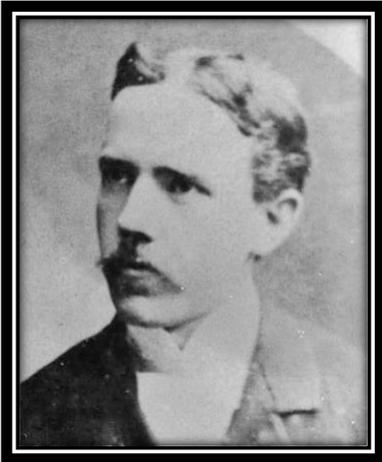


Reverend Robert McPherson has the distinction of preaching at Fairmount first as a licentiate from 1847-1850 then as an ordained minister from 1884 until 1892. Between those times, he enlisted as a chaplain in the 139th Pennsylvania Infantry in October 1862 and saw action at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville & Gettysburg before being discharged in July 1863.



Reverend McPherson retired from the Fairmount and Pleasant Hill pulpits in 1892, a year before his death. He was returning home from a funeral in Philadelphia with family members when he suddenly became ill on the train and died before help could be reached. Clippings are from the 22 October 1893 **Pittsburgh Press**.

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Reverend Walter L. Wilson had the distinction of welcoming the new century from the Fairmount pulpit. Wilson was born in 1871 to missionary parents as they served in Asia. His birthplace has been recorded as having either been Bangkok, Siam [Thailand] or China. He was a graduate of both Grove City College and the Western Theological Seminary.

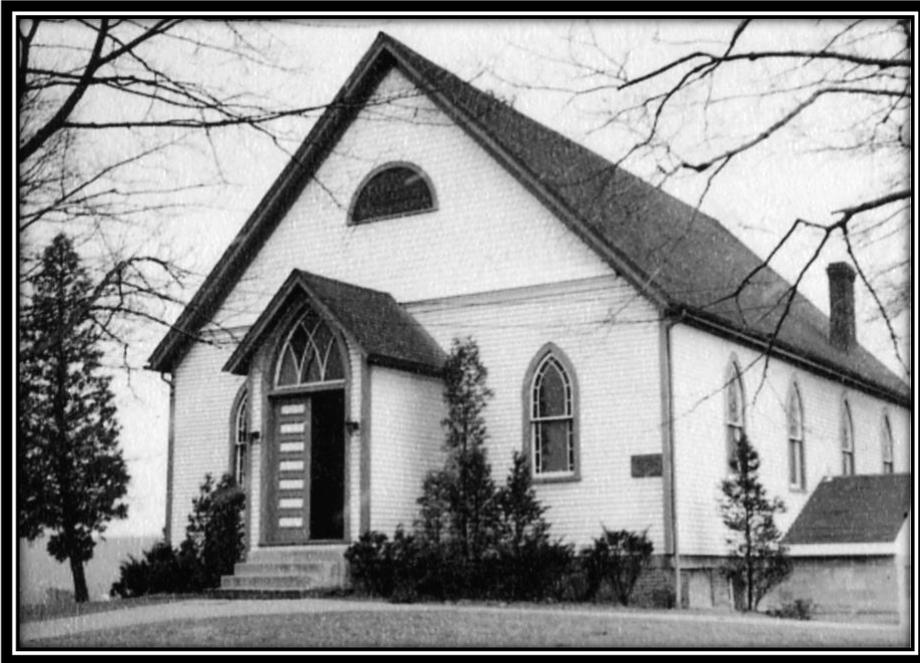
When Fairmount extended a call to the newly graduated Wilson in 1897, it was learned that the annual salary would only be \$325, which was a cause of concern, especially as he was newly married. The solution was for him to split his time between Fairmount and nearby Pleasant Hill. He served as a supply minister before being installed the following year.

In 1902, Fairmount's brick sanctuary (right) was destroyed by fire, but was soon replaced with a new frame structure built by the members themselves. The new church building was dedicated in 1903 and continues in use nearly 120 years later.



*November 1-1902 - The corner stone of the new building was laid, this day, at noon, with suitable religious services.*

*November 12<sup>th</sup> 1903 The new building of Fairmount Church was Dedicated by the Pastor, assisted by the Rev. Stephen A. Hunter Ph. D. L.L. D. <sup>of Pittsburgh</sup> and the Rev. Charles A. McGrea of Perrysville Pa. In a warm, dreamy, cloudless, breathless "Indian Summer" day a great multitude assembled, from whom was received a sufficient sum, to liquidate ALL debt, and to put a surplus in the Treasury.*



Fairmount Church, as it appeared before the addition of the education wing.

Reverend Wilson left Pittsburgh in 1904 and headed West where he preached as far distant as Montana before returning to Western Pennsylvania where he accepted the unanimous call from both of his former congregations and was installed in September 1906. He left Pennsylvania for the last time in 1912 when he moved to North Carolina, where he remained until his death in 1941.

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Throughout its nearly 200-year history, Fairmount Presbyterian has been served by numerous clergy, some of whom had many years of experience while others were newly licensed or ordained. What they had in common, however, was a desire to spread their Christian faith and minister to the families in their care.

Along with its ministers, Fairmount's elders and deacons played and continue to play an essential role in providing continuity and in helping grow the church. Throughout its history, countless numbers of the church faithful have contributed their time and talents to insure Fairmount has had a firm footing on which to enter yet another new century.



(Photo by Glenn Lewis)