

BAILIFF CHURCH CELEBRATES SESQUICENTENNIAL IN CLARK COUNTY
ILLINOIS 1984

"Bailiff Church" Celebrates Sesquicentennial
Clark County IL
Submitted by Cindy McCachern

West York, New Providence, Melrose Township Clark County IL
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Two miles west of West York on the north side of the Crawford/Clark county line road is the site of the "**Bailiff Church**," center of worship for Cumberland Presbyterians since 1834. The church house stands on a hill surrounded by trees of oak, walnut, beech and pine.

Adjoining the church yard is the well-kept **Bailiff cemetery**, both church and burying ground named for **Robert Bailiff**, one of its founders and donor of the land on which both are located. **It was in the year of 1830 and possessed of \$10 that Robert Bailiff and wife, Anna, came in an ox-cart from Cumberland Gap, Tennessee, to Crawford County, Illinois. The following year, they settled in Melrose Township, Clark County.** About that time camp meetings were being held with great success near Marshall by the **Cumberland Presbyterian preachers, James Ashmore** of Edgar county and **John Taylor** of Clark County. **Robert Bailiff** invited these men to come to his farm and hold such a camp meeting.

The first meeting, resulting in several conversions, **was held in 1833**, and the year following a church--**New Providence Cumberland Presbyterian**--was organized by **Rev. Henry Groves at the Bailiff home with Robert Bailiff and wife, Joseph Green and wife, Sarah Buckner and Thomas Handy as members.** The first house of worship, used until 1842, was a large shed-like building on the **Bailiff farm** made of rough lumber and located just a little west of the present structure. **Rev. J. C. Hill was pastor until 1838.**

In that year, Robert Bailiff was called, and in 1842, he donated land and led in building a log structure 20 x 26 feet which served until 1867, when it was torn down and its materials used to build a dwelling still in uses. At the time the church logs were given up to a secular use, a frame building 26 x 36 feet was erected on the site of the old structure at a cost of \$1,100. This building, dedicated the same year by **Rev. Jesse Beals**, is still doing service. **Robert Bailiff served as pastor until his death in 1877**, a total of nearly forty years.

After the death of the elder Bailiff, his son, Thomas, took up the work of his father. He ministered to the church and kept it going as long as he lived. Unlike the father, who seldom left home to preach, "**Uncle Tommy**," as he was called, was a circuit rider and travelled far and wide, preaching and holding revivals and making many conversions. He married many couples and conducted funerals in all the surrounding territory. He always freely gave his services to his home church and was highly respected by all who knew him.

With the passing of Thomas, his son, Chalkley, succeeded to the pastorate of "Bailiff

Church." Besides his work there, he also preached in many other churches and was active in revival work like his father. **He died in 1936 at the age of 84 years. The combined ministerial services to this one Cumberland Presbyterian Church by Chalkley Bailiff, his father, and his grandfather extended over an unbroken period of 98 years** and each of them donated their services for the love of the cause of Christ. They, with their wives, are buried just west of the present chapel, **the location of Robert Bailiff's grave being the door of the old log church.**

Robert Bailiff was made a life member of the Home and Foreign Missionaries at Alton, IL, in 1864. **In 1870, the young men of the congregation took him to Terre Haute, IN, and had a large photograph of him made. This photograph, along with pictures of Thomas Bailiff and Chalkley Bailiff, hangs in the chapel today.**

The church house of 1867 is now enhanced by several improvements. In 1962, a Sunday School wing was added with a basement under it. New seats and a new pulpit were also installed. Shortly thereafter, rest room facilities and a front vestibule were added. In 1975, the original part of the building was redecorated on the inside with the ceiling being lowered and paneling installed. Stained glass windows, furnished by **the family of Leo Green in his memory**, and new carpeting completed this refurbishing.

A partial list of pastors who have served, some more than once: **Noah Haddock, 1891; Charles Waggerman, 1918; F. E. Bennett; Minnie (Sanders) Hollingsworth; H. E. Pendleton, 1948; Lloyd Gower, 1949; Stanton Lawer, 1951; Roscoe Deverick, 1953; Clarence Bline, 1954; J. C. Bennett, 1970; Richard Chapman, 1975; and Gill Grounds, 1976.**

Since 1976, **Fran Howe** has served as pastor and the church is experiencing a surge of growth. General Assembly moderator, **C. Ray Dobbins**, was present and preached on July 29th, when the sesquicentennial was celebrated. New Providence Church is known locally by the name of **"Bailiff Church"** and as a friendly, loving fellowship where all are welcome to come and worship.