



Cane Ridge Day 2022 a Homecoming Celebration



After two years without a Cane Ridge Day, we celebrated June 25, 2022 with a homecoming of sorts. Around 50 people gathered to remember the history of Cane Ridge. Dean Phelps led those gathered in singing several hymns while Jane Johnson accompanied on the old pump organ. Two hymns were presented which Barton Stone was known to have

requested, “The Old Family Bible that Lay on the Stand” and “Farewell Vain World.” Curator James Trader presented an expanded version of the history told everyday in the Meeting House. During lunch, the Backroom String Band once again entertained those gathered (pictured above).

Longtime Cane Ridge Trustee Dies

Kenney Shropshire Roseberry died October 15, 2022, she was 99 years old. One of the longest serving trustees of the Cane Ridge Meeting House, she was well known in Bourbon County and throughout the Bluegrass as an educator, teaching in the Bourbon County school system for more than 35 years. She was an active member of North Middletown Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and in many community and civic



organizations in Bourbon County, particularly those related to history. For much of her life she lived just down the road from the Cane Ridge Meeting House. As a teacher, she touched the lives of thousands of students and will be fondly remembered for her devotion to poetry, drama, dance and history. And for those of us who write and speak regularly, her commentary and corrections, given in love, will be sorely missed.

Join us for our opening day service at 10:00 am on April 1, 2023

SPEAKER

The Curator is available to preach or speak to a fellowship group about Cane Ridge throughout the year. Please contact Cane Ridge to schedule a speaking engagement as early as possible. Honoraria or Donations for the ministry of Cane Ridge are expected, and, depending on the amount of travel required, mileage and housing may be necessary.

GIFTS TO CANE RIDGE

Gifts to continue the mission and ministry of Cane Ridge should be sent to:

Cane Ridge, P.O. Box 26, Paris, KY 40362-0026

The address excerpted at the right was delivered during the closing day service on October 31 in the Cane Ridge Meeting House.



Notes from the Ridge

By James H. Trader, II

2022 Closing Day Service Considers Benjamin Franklin

We noted in our opening day service on April 1, that James Rogers, in his book "The Cane Ridge Meeting House," listed several ministers who had served at Cane Ridge. He lists Benjamin Franklin, the evangelist, as one. After some research, it seems that the minister he was referring to was Benjamin Franklin Hall. However, it is quite likely that Benjamin Franklin did preach at some point in the Cane Ridge Church, but no record has yet been found to prove or disprove this. So, today, we will consider the life and ministry of Benjamin Franklin.

Josiah Franklin emigrated to America to avoid persecution and became a tallow chandler and soapmaker. He had 17 children, including Benjamin Franklin, one of America's founding fathers.

John Franklin, full brother to Benjamin, was born in 1703. John had a son named James, named for John and Benjamin's brother. James married Hannah Wilson and they had a son named Wilson, who served in the Revolutionary War. He led what was known as a dissipated and worthless life. Despite this he had several children, including Joseph. In 1783, the family moved to Eastern Ohio across the river from Wheeling, VA. When Joseph was 28 he married Isabella Devold and on Feb. 1, 1812, they had a son named Benjamin Franklin, after his great uncle. Shortly they moved to what is now Noble County until 1833. Joseph ran a mill and was a woodworker, making many coffins.

Young Benjamin learned many of his father's skills, including hunting for food in the Ohio wilds and winning numerous shooting matches. When Benjamin was almost an adult he traded someone for a fine rifle and wanted to test it, but it was late on a Saturday night. He knew his father would be horrified if he thought of "gunning" on Sunday but the temptation was too great. He rose at first light and headed to the woods, far enough not to be heard, but when he fired the gun he said, "I thought I was the loudest gun I ever heard. It sounded to me like a cannon, and I thought the whole neighborhood would hear it." He returned home before anyone was awake and went back to bed, though with a guilty conscience.

Benjamin was a half inch below six feet. He was renowned for his physical strength and constitution. It is said that he could take a short run and leap over a stick held just above the height of his head. He often showed his prowess at what



Benjamin Franklin

would be called lumberjack games today. He was described as being stout, with a robust frame, weighing 200 pounds, having dark hair sprinkled with silver, a heavy beard, light blue eyes and prominent nose.

The Franklins were pious members of the church but the evil influences around them caused their sons to become rude and profane. In 1833, the family moved to Henry Co., Indiana. They established another mill and most of the boys became operators of flour or saw mills.

Benjamin became employed working on the Indiana portion of the National Road but

when winter came he was released. He became engaged to Mary Personett and married on Dec. 15, 1833. They would have 11 children. Of the children, one was named Alexander Campbell Franklin and another Walter Scott Franklin. They lived in a house built by Benjamin. In 1837, he became a partner in a saw and grist mill but the depression of the 1830's caused them to sell in 1840. He had no interest in religion and, by all accounts, was coarse, profane and immature. Despite this he provided for his family.

In 1834, Samuel Rogers, who had been ordained by Barton Warren Stone here at Cane Ridge, moved to Henry Co., Indiana. He began preaching in a schoolhouse because an existing Disciple congregation did not "harmonize" with Rogers. The existing congregation caused him to be excluded from the schoolhouse so he began preaching in groves, barns and private dwellings. The Franklins, in sympathy with Rogers, attended his increasing congregation.

The Franklins had been Protestant Methodists in Ohio, and had been immersed. In Indiana, they affiliated with the Episcopal Methodists, there being no Protestant Methodists in the area. Benjamin was not too affected by Rogers, his father and his father's friends were greatly excited against him because he stated that "Baptism is essential to salvation." Benjamin had barely been paying attention but later overheard the argument. He innocently asked, "Isn't baptism commanded by Christ?" They admitted it was and Benjamin said, "Well, is it not essential to obey the commands of Christ?" The comment stopped the debate in its tracks and eventually Joseph Franklin came to Samuel Rogers' side.

Benjamin and many of the Family were eventually convinced to join and were baptized along with John I. Rogers, son of

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Benjamin Franklin (Continued from page 2)

Samuel Rogers. Samuel was known to claim that his greatest contribution to the church was that he gave them Benjamin Franklin. Samuel also pointed out, though, that Benjamin had a quick and impulsive nature and was easily exasperated and that many sought to not set off his irascible temper.

Shortly Benjamin attended a Methodist camp-meeting and annoyed the preachers by taking notes on their discourses, looking at his New Testament to see if they misquoted scripture.

He was not well-educated and was always sensitive about that, but in his library, was a well-used Grammar, Geography and Arithmetic Book. He participated in the first of some 30 debates in 1840. He began traveling as an evangelist, sometimes preaching every night. He rarely received money for his preaching. According to Joseph Franklin's biography of Benjamin, "Sometimes the pay was tendered in a shape that tried the patience of the preacher's wife to the last degree." It was arranged that Franklin would be provided a house and that members would bring provisions as they were needed. The house was a dilapidated cabin and quite out-of-the-way. At "hog-killing" time back-bones were brought in neatly trimmed and spare-ribs (very spare indeed), and uncleaned heads and feet, came in such abundance that the wife and mother, already weary and half sick, was thoroughly disgusted. They had no smoke house nor even a meat-barrel so the overplus bones were used to make soap. So would be Benjamin's lot throughout his ministry. He was often accused of hiding away his money and being a greedy man, while his family made do with darning, patching and making do.

The family moved to Centreville, Indiana and he began what was the practice of the day, to preach at 4 locations regularly on a monthly rotation. He couldn't hold to that plan long, preferring to travel and occasionally hold protracted meetings. He preached in school-houses, courthouses, barns, groves, shops, town-halls, and private homes and took whatever was offered rarely assured that he would receive even .50 cents a day while preaching. In 1855, Benjamin divided his time between preaching at Clinton Street in Cincinnati and in Covington, KY. In that year, Benjamin and much of his family took ill, variously with cholera and small-pox. Benjamin was away from the pulpit for six weeks and in that time their youngest died of small-pox.

On one occasion his family asked him for money for the necessities but he had only a dollar and needed it for his journeys. However, on his journey he was entreated by a poor man and gave his last dollar to him. Yet, he was shortly asked to officiate at a wedding and was paid \$20 for it. Later that day, an acquaintance stopped him and noticing his threadbare

clothes, marched him to a tailor and paid for a new suit. He fully believed in the providence of God. It was often said that churches which relied on a settled pastor fell into helplessness. Ministers became lax and congregations ceased to have additional meetings, Bible classes, singing and prayer meetings by the elders. Benjamin regarded "the pastorate" as an unscriptural office, and constantly made war upon it. In churches that had pastors, he did believe that the preacher had no "executive authority." Benjamin noted that, "The Lord did not intend Evangelists to open an office, and sit down and wait for sinners to come to them to be converted. But he intended the living preacher to go to the sinners, and with the living voice preach to them the word of the living God.... A little preaching on Lord's day will not do the work. The Word should be preached every day and every night as far as possible.

A "pastor in charge" or "one man system" seemed to be developing and Benjamin strongly opposed it. Likewise, the introduction of the term "Reverend" offended him. He, and others, worried that a new "clerical caste" or "ministerial standard" might be started.

He was known to hold Union Meetings with other groups. In 1844, he participated in a Union Thanksgiving Service with a Methodist and a Presbyterian minister. He advocated these Union Meetings but was often opposed. The Union meeting went by the wayside.

He was a proponent of congregational singing but lamented its state. He said, "Have you not seen large congregations that could not sing one hymn without a book, and could scarcely sing one hymn with one?" he continued by noting that there was rarely someone who could lead a hymn and no one who could remember a tune and then even if a leader and tune is found, "the tune is murdered though, and all seem glad the task is performed. We say, have you not seen something like this? Well, why is this" It is just because no effect is made to learn to sing; for there are some that could learn in every congregation. Let them practice at home, and assemble an hour before meeting time and practice, and so develop a love for singing, and they will soon be able to sing a great variety of our excellent songs and hymns. When you go to the house of God, go with the intention of mingling your voice in the praises, and sing with the spirit.... If you expect to be happy in singing the praises of God forever, you must delight in it here; for God will change no heart in the grave, or in the resurrection, and tune it for singing his praises, that does not delight in it here." He strongly opposed the use of the organ in worship and often expressed the regret that more importance was not placed on singing as part of worship. He believed that singing

with an instrument was "destitute of true devotion." Despite his opinion that all should sing and learn to sing well, it was widely known that he couldn't carry a tune in a bucket, even though he occasionally sang lustfully.

Regarding Benjamin's speaking abilities, it was said that often a young minister of some education would hear him preach and criticize his grammar and rhetoric, sneer at his manners and dress and then go off in jealousy because he had been so eclipsed by such an unpolished person. He believed that young preachers relied too much on what they learned in school and are "too fearful of their hands, their polished boots, and immaculate clothing, to go among the masses of people and learn from them." His biographer said he was one of nature's orators, all others were just imitators and declaimers. Though he delivered his sermons in a conversational tone but was said to come down with an emphasis equal to a thunderbolt. Some even called him "the Great Commoner" of the Restoration.

One of Benjamin's strongest critics disliked some of his kind of backwoods erudition, complaining that he had the unconscious habit of saying, "My friends and brethering." At one address, he was said to have repeated the phrase at least 150 times.

Benjamin was constantly in the field, preaching at the rate of a sermon and a half each day. Except in the coldest of days his rule was to preach morning and evening. Again, his biographer said, "Our city pastors complain of hard labor, speaking only about thirty or forty minutes twice on the Lord's day. Such work was too laborious for them. They require a summer vacation in which to go to the springs to rest and recuperate.

The opposition to Franklin's views would coin the term "Franklinian Stupidity" for not being able to move beyond some of the stands that Alexander Campbell had originally taken. One man who heard many criticisms of Benjamin decided to meet him and make up his own mind. He said he had heard many harsh, severe things against Franklin—"that he was cross, selfish and "had good teeth set just in the right position to chew a young preacher right up." After meeting him he related that he was a genial person, full of the love of Christ in every expression. In a sermon on prayer he said, "Prayer should be studied carefully, most profoundly considered, and our address to the Father well-ordered. We greatly need to be taught how to pray. It is astonishing that any matter of so much importance should receive so little attention as this very subject does. There is nothing among us more unaccountable than the prayers and thanksgiving, evincing that there has

Published two times a year by
Cane Ridge Meeting House
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SCHEDULE

Summer Season-April 1-October 31
Open Monday-Saturday - 9 am-5 pm
Sundays 1-5 pm

Winter-November 1-March 31
Open by appointment and when
curatorial staff is available.

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Lexington, KY
Permit No. 850

Closing Day Address on Benjamin Franklin (continued from page 3)

been no preparation of mind or heart for the solemn performance, and that so little is well-ordered.... A brother is called to give thanks for the loaf at the Lord's table. He commences praying, and continues praying, till he has made quite a long prayer, and closes without giving thanks for the loaf at all." Benjamin was not alone in his dislike of musical instruments in worship, especially the organ. It was said that once he led a series of meetings in a congregation where the music was led by a flute. After two or three evenings with the flute he finally announced that at a future meeting he would urge the presence of more singers and added, "Hereinafter we will dispense with the whistle." Benjamin also expressed his dislike of the use of musical notation in the hymnals. Some of the time were opposed to written music and hymnals as well but Benjamin did say that the use of written notes in public worship are as legitimate as written notes for preaching. He also objected to the title of "elder" as inappropriate and unscriptural. Benjamin was opposed to open communion, sharing the meal with un-immersed persons, based upon his understanding of the scriptures. But he did say that "When an un-immersed person communes without any inviting or excluding that is his own act, not ours, and we are not responsible for it. We do not see that any harm is done to him or us, and we need make no exclusive remarks to keep him away, and we certainly have no authority for inviting him to

come." One of Benjamin's strongest agitations was in opposing slavery. The journals and papers of the movement were surprisingly quiet about the issue, owing much to many of the leaders of the movement finding little scriptural justification for the opposition. Benjamin, however, after making his stand, refused to make his journal a single-issue publication and did not consistently write against it. This also upset some of his readership, who thought he should make even stronger statements. Benjamin regarded the divisions in the movement as "schisms of feeling" but not "schisms of practice" and felt that the unity of the movement was remarkable. He did say, "I do not believe that any slavery is authorized by the gospel of the Son of God." It was as much as he was going to say in his journal. In addition to these other oppositions he was strongly against drinking and thought no Christians should partake. Benjamin did admit, though, that sometimes he had used immoderate language in his oppositions. He had called churches that embraced certain sectarian issues, as harlots. He also castigated a conservative brother, Isaac Errett, who edited "The Christian Standard," and said that he was an Anti-Christ and anyone who had the journal in their home was a heretic. Benjamin would become a signal-bearer for what would become the conservative branch of the movement. Although he was not always trusted by

either side. Southern members were distrustful of his Northern sympathies. Others were concerned by his power as an "editorial Pope." Benjamin visited the church in Concord on many occasions, the sister church to Cane Ridge where Barton Stone converted Samuel Rogers, who would later convert Benjamin. He went to Carlisle and that week spoke at Concord where it was so cold he could barely speak. For several days, he spoke in the morning at Concord and the evening in Carlisle 18 sermons in all. A Presbyterian minister was shaken by his preaching and this minister, James Mathews, corresponded with Benjamin. They debated on "Predestination and foreknowledge of God." The discussion was printed in a volume of 450 pages. The discussion led to an actual debate at Carlisle which was presided over by former governor Metcalf and it lasted 6 days from May 26 until June 1 of 1852. He also spent a great deal of time in the communities near Cane Ridge. October 22, 1878, Benjamin Franklin was dead. The last words he is reported to have spoken were to his wife, "Mother, I am sorry to have to leave you." He was 66 years old and his service was held at home because his wife was too ill to go to the church. It is estimated that he baptized as many as 10,000 individuals.