



Cane Ridge, Concord and Slavery

Excerpts from Cane Ridge Day Presentation, June 19, 2010

*By Curator, James H. Trader, II
(The Concord Church was the sister church to Cane Ridge, located about 10 miles away, outside present-day Carlisle, Kentucky.)*

It is one of those paradoxical parts of our history that makes telling the story of Cane Ridge and Concord such an interesting thing. We are proud of our architecture and the outstanding ability of our forebears to construct such a marvelous structure with such basic tools. We hold this balcony as an amazing feat of engineering, a self-supporting, free-standing mezzanine inside a true marvel of pioneer craft.

Yet this symbol of the frontier ingenuity, allowing the seating capacity of this structure to nearly double, is a symbol of one of this country's deepest shames as well. For in those early years our beloved balcony was where the slaves were separated from everyone else, a place we called the slave's gallery.

When we tell the Cane Ridge story we are quick to move on to the fact that this was an abolitionist congregation, as if the shame of that peculiar institution is lessened by our skipping to the end of that story. The symbol of the integration of the Cane Ridge congregation is one of absence, the removal of the balcony in 1829 signaled that there was no longer a physical separation of the African-American and white members.

But what happened in those earlier years and how would those events influence the churches at Cane Ridge and Concord?

In 1791, the same year that the Meeting House was built, a Presbyterian minister named James Blythe came to Kentucky. He would become a professor at Transylvania from 1798 until 1831. He was considered a gradual emancipationist, one who wanted to free slaves on a schedule that included educating and training them in marketable skills. His path intersects with Barton Stone almost immediately upon Stone's arrival in Kentucky. Blythe was a fellow student of Barton Stone's in North Carolina and

Longtime Asst. Curator Resigns



Betty Allman, Assistant Curator since 1998, has resigned as of the end of 2020. Her 22 years of service have made her an invaluable part of the Cane Ridge family. While she will be greatly missed, she will continue to be part of the family and we hope to honor her in 2021 if we are able to have an

in-person gathering. We're sure that everyone who has met Betty will want to honor her.

the one who recommended Barton Stone for ordination in 1798 and mentored him through his early years in ministry.

The Transylvania Presbytery was somewhat overwhelmed by members who favored an end to slavery. In 1794 the Presbytery would adopt a resolution presented in 1787 to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia and later approved in 1793 by the new General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. This resolution called upon all slave-owning members to "teach every slave not above the age of fifteen years to read the word of God and give them such good education as may prepare them for the enjoyment of freedom." It would take six years before any of the other synods would endorse the antislavery resolution.

The action quickly divided the Presbytery. Questions arose about whether to include slave-owners in membership and communion with the Presbyterian Church. The Presbytery would back off of the strictest interpretation and allow for the conscience of the individual to reign.

When Barton Stone arrived in Kentucky he would embrace the anti-slavery position of the earlier resolution. His education at the Guilford Academy in North Carolina would be profoundly influenced by another Presbyterian minister, David Caldwell. Caldwell, the chief educator at the Academy, was one of the ones who drafted the resolution in the first place.

Stone replaced another Presbyterian anti-slavery minister, Robert Finley, at Cane Ridge and Concord. A gradual emancipationist himself, Finley would free his slaves immediately upon his removal to Ohio in October of 1796. Shortly before Stone arrived, Colonel James Smith of the Cane Ridge congregation and a state representative submitted a remonstrance against slavery and a plan for gradual emancipation to the Transylvania Presbytery. Stone would arrive in the middle of the Presbyterian discussions on the role of the church in slavery.

In the time it took for Stone to close out his affairs in Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia his resolve against slavery was assured. While in Charleston, South Carolina Stone saw how slaves were treated in that setting. He wrote in his autobiography, "My soul sickened at the sight of slavery in more horrid forms than I had ever seen it before; poor negroes! Some chained to their work—some wearing iron collars—all half naked, and followed and driven by the merciless lash of a gentleman overseer—distress appeared scowling in every face. This was the exciting cause of my abandonment of slavery."

With the realignment of presbyteries and the creation of the West Lexington Presbytery in 1800 both Stone and Blythe would be placed on a committee to study the issues of emancipation and slave-owner exclusion. The leaders of a radical emancipationist view, they would present a proposal to the Synod of Virginia that was known as the Cane Ridge-Concord Memorial. Though the original text has been lost, a cover letter stated that "You will see that the memorial submitted to your consideration states slavery as a moral evil,

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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

This 2010 essay is reprinted here in light of recent discussions regarding racism and the church's response to racism and inequality.



Notes from the Ridge

By James H. Trader, II

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very heinous, and consequently sufficient to exclude those slaveholders who continue in the practice of it from the privileges of the Church." The Synod would refuse to make slave-ownership grounds for exclusion.

Stone would emancipate his slaves in the fall of 1801 following the great revival. A wave of emancipations followed the revivals. The churches of Concord and Cane Ridge would struggle over whether to include or exclude slave-holders for some time.

When Stone emancipated his slaves, Ned and Lucy, he declared that slavery was "inconsistent with the principles of Christianity as well as of civil liberty." He emancipated Ned after two years and trained him in a skill so he could support himself. Lucy would be emancipated in ten years and Stone reared her in the Bible and religion and taught her a skill as well. Elder Purviance wrote about Stone and his slaves, "Father Stone could have had money (as he understands) from his Mother's estate, instead of the Negroes; but, though poor, he preferred to take the blacks, bring them to Kentucky and free them."

Barton Stone wrote a letter to Presbyterian minister Samuel Rannels of Paris concerning his opinions of slavery. The letter, possibly written in 1798, is on display in the museum and available in a booklet in the gift shop. His opposition is based on several points although the first 3 have been lost. He notes that slavery destroys families and marriages by separating husbands and wives and parents and children. He proposes that it is in opposition to the golden rule and that the Bible may not strictly prohibit slavery but it does prohibit oppression. He also invokes the idea of Jubilee, where all who were slaves should be freed on a regular basis. Samuel Rannels would hold the distinction of being both a member of Stone's ordination committee and a member of the committee that was sent to "defrock" Stone in 1804.

Stone would soon lead his congregations in the separation from the Presbyterian Church. These churches of the new Christian movement would continue to move toward emancipation and the remaining Presbyterians would also work toward this freedom as well. The Concord Church would divide, with many of its Presbyterian members carrying letters to the newly established Carlisle Presbyterian church in 1817. New pastor John Rankin would lead the Presbyterians until 1821 when he would become

pastor of the Ripley, Ohio church for the next 44 years. Rankin would establish an active station on the Underground Railroad there.

Colleagues of Stone would further the fight in the years prior to the Civil War. Many of the churches of the movement would have strong abolitionist leanings. Many became supporters of the American Colonization Society, Stone included, hoping to set up Liberia as a safe and happy state for the freed slaves. He would continue his mission through his publication, the Christian Messenger.

Stone's premillennialism showed when he exhorted his readers to free their slaves under threat of the imminent judgment of Christ saying, "Behold, he comes quickly." He also risked his readership with his views, particularly those in the deep south. He did declare that "I have in principle and practice been a conscientious opposer of slavery for nearly 40 years; but how to remedy the evil I know not...I am persuaded it will be done; but I am ignorant of the means by which it shall be accomplished."

Perhaps the story of Stone's removal to Illinois most perfectly shows his own devotion to the end of slavery. He was called a hypocrite by many when it was discovered that he owned slaves in 1830. In his home in Georgetown he had one African man, two African women, and four African children. They had been willed to his wife and children by his wife's mother. The will stipulated that they not be freed and he would not sell them. He determined in 1834 that he would move to Jacksonville, Illinois to literally emancipate himself from those slaves. He would later return to Kentucky and visit those former servants who were living in Georgetown as a family of free persons. He is said to have made a "full inquiry concerning their temporal and spiritual welfare."

Our revulsion today at the thought of ownership of another human being causes us to often want to skip over that portion of our history, both as people and as the church. We have moved on and made significant strides toward equality and integration yet this balcony stands today as a reminder of the distance we have yet to travel. Barton Stone would not recognize the societal landscape we inhabit today.

It is true that the balcony was only accessed by a ladder when the slaves reached it from the outside. Today the stairs provide a safer but still steep access for all, a symbol of the changes we've made but also of the remaining impediments we've placed in the way. I find it interesting that one of the terms we use to describe this former slave's gallery is "freestanding." I wonder if the irony of that term ever occurred to the early members of this church.

Cane Ridge Publications Available for Purchase

- [] **The Cane Ridge Reader**, 2006 edition, edited by Hoke S. Dickenson and Robert Steffer. Contains A Short History of the life of Barton W. Stone Written by Himself; The Biography of B.W. Stone by John Rogers, Notices and Tributes of Stone's Death, a History of the Christian Church in the West and other documents. **\$20.00**
- [] **Saving Cane Ridge**, 2016, by Robert Steffer, History of the Cane Ridge Preservation Project from 1921 until 2016, covering the restoration of the Meeting House itself and the building of the Stone Shrine in the 1950's and the construction of the Curator's residence and the Museum in the 1960's and 1970's. **\$20.00**
- [] **Cane Ridge Bicentennial Sampler**, originally published in 1991 and reprinted three times since. Contains stories, bits of history, records and an 1811 list of communicants with a 1838 membership list and Cane Ridge Graveyard information. **\$5.00**
- [] **Sermons by Barton W. Stone**. Published in 2016. Contains 4 manuscripts: Lamentations 1:12, Proverbs 23:12, Galatians 6:7 and in Phonetic Cherokee, Genesis 3:9. **\$8.00**
- [] **Guide to the Cane Ridge Revival**, 1988, by Lon D. Oliver as an Occasional Paper from Lexington Theological Seminary. A Bibliography of sources for the study of the Cane Ridge Revival and Excerpts from several sources in the years following the 1801 Revival. **\$5.00**
- [] **Cane Ridge Souvenir Booklet**, 2014-16 edition. Originally published in the 1950's this revision provides a brief introduction to the Cane Ridge Story, Barton W. Stone, the Revival and the construction of the Shrine. **\$5.00**

Cane Ridge Papers:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [] #1 - <i>Worship in the Words of Barton W. Stone</i>, \$1.00 [] #2 - <i>Cane Ridge Meeting House, Basic Information</i>, \$1.00 [] #3 - <i>Cane Ridge and the Shakers</i>, \$1.00 [] #4 - <i>A Guide to the Trees at Cane Ridge</i>, \$1.00 [] #5 - <i>Cane Ridge Activity Booklet: Puzzles, Games, Questions and Fun for children</i>, \$3.00 [] #6 - <i>Cane Ridge Personalities: Robert Finley, John Allen Gano, Joel Tanner Hart, Nathaniel, Warren and William Rogers</i>, \$1.00 [] #7 - <i>Journey into Union: Drama and Destiny</i>, \$.50 [] #8 - <i>Original Script of Taped Lecture once played in the Meeting House</i>, \$.50 [] #9 - <i>Our History Through Music</i>, \$1.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [] #10 - <i>Activities for Children: Rebus Puzzles, Secret Codes, Matching, Scrambled Letters, Mazes, Fill-in-the-Blanks and Dot-to-Dots, with Pencil and sharpener</i>, \$3.00 [] #11 - <i>Cane Ridge, Barton Stone and the Christian Church</i> by Franklin McGuire, \$1.00 [] #12 - <i>Cane Ridge Coloring Book with Crayons</i>, \$3.00 [] #13 - <i>Barton Warren Stone and Slavery</i>, \$1.00 [] #14 - <i>The Israel Mitchell Papers</i>, \$3.00 [] #15 - <i>Cane Ridge in the News</i>, \$1.00 [] #16 - <i>1934 Historic American Buildings Survey-Photos and Drawings of Cane Ridge</i>, \$2.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [] #17 - <i>Stone Campbell sites in the Bluegrass</i>, \$2.00 [] #18 - <i>Reprint of an Address to the Christian Churches in Ky, TN, and OH, On Several Important Doctrines of Religion by Barton Stone, 1821</i>, \$3.00 [] #19 - <i>Barton W. Stone and the Spirit of Unity/Stone's Character</i> by A.W. Fortune and C.L. Pyatt, reprint of 1941 essays, \$2.00 [] #20 - <i>Cane Ridge and Barton W. Stone</i> by Walter Gibbs, 1947 reprint, \$2.00 [] #21 - <i>Cane Ridge Poetry and Artwork</i>, \$2.00 [] #22 - <i>Cane Ridge Membership Lists</i>, \$3.00 [] #23 - <i>Cane Ridge Meeting House Cemetery</i>, \$3.00 |
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Tax deductible contributions support the ministry of Cane Ridge, including maintaining the buildings and grounds, producing informative publications, planning special events, and maintaining items in our museum and archives.

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Cane Ridge Meeting House
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Paris, KY 40362-0026
Phone: 859/987-5350
E-MAIL: Curator@caneridge.org
Website: www.caneridge.org

CURATORIAL STAFF

Curator: James H. Trader, II
Assistant Curator: Betty Allman

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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Cane Ridge Receives Donated Items



Cane Ridge has received several items in the last couple of months. The first, a portrait of Barton W. Stone by Barbara Lancaster, currently of Winchester, TN. The portrait was commissioned by Fred Price of

Vine Grove, KY for the Kentucky Museum of History and Art in 1992 which was housed in the James T. Alton Middle School and celebrated the lives of prominent historical Kentucky figures. With the recent closure of the museum, the portraits are being transferred to places where they will continue to celebrate Kentucky's history.

The second set of items were donated by the Rev. Sharon Fields of Paris, KY. Two "Cat's Meow" replicas of the Cane Ridge Meeting House were purchased by her some time ago from a local business which commissioned replicas of significant Bourbon County structures. Sharon is the daughter of former chair of the Cane Ridge Board of Trustees, Melvia Fields (now deceased) and currently serves as the pastor of the First Christian Church, Carlisle.



In addition, we have received a pew from the Old Concord Church, the sister church of Cane Ridge and the predecessor of First Christian Church. First Christian Church is in the process of closing and wanted to make sure this part of our shared history is preserved and remembered.

The pew was donated to the Carlisle Church by Mr. & Mrs. R.P. Alexander, who had been members of the Concord Church and donated part of the land on which it sat. The family's history is intimately connected with the Concord Church history and generations of ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have come from the Alexander family.



2020 a Strange Year for Cane Ridge

Cane Ridge has continued to be a reminder of the history of this historic and holy site throughout the pandemic. Although we could not open for visitors until June and we were not able to host groups larger than 10, we have seen about a fifth of our regular visitors.

With a few notable exceptions, most of our visitors followed the guidelines for mask wearing and social distancing.

Donations have held steady but they have been lower than most years. Fewer events and visitors have decreased some expenses but some, like utilities and insurance remain at normal rates.

We've also been disappointed that the restroom renovations were interrupted and have not yet been completed. We still hope to have them finished by the time we open in 2021.

