

Bio: Methuselah Baldwin

The biography below is taken from "The Centennial of the Presbyterian Church of Scotchtown (New York), 1796-1896.

METHUSELAH BALDWIN

The first pastor of the Church, was born in Newark, N. J., December 15th, 1763. He was the second son of Jeremiah and Mehetabel Baldwin by the second marriage of his father. Jeremiah had several children by his first marriage, and three sons and a daughter by the last. Methuselah survived all the other members of the family of both branches. His father died when he was but twelve years old. His mother was a most godly and judicious woman, whose instructions had great influence in forming the character of her son. About the age of sixteen his religious character became decided and bethought he had experienced a change of heart. He was then attending upon the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Chapman, of Orange, NJ, living about seven miles from church, which distance he walked regularly every Sabbath. Neither distance nor any other obstacle prevented his attendance. Soon after his conversion he felt called to enter the ministry, and although many obstacles seemed to be in the way the desire was not quenched. With no father to direct him, and no means to prosecute a course of study, he cast himself upon the promises of God. He entered the Academy at Orange, after engaging for the payment of his board on condition of payment when he should become able. He also obtained a loan of some money which was expended before completing his college course. There were then no societies or organizations in the Church to assist needy young men desiring to enter the ministry and they were thrown upon their own resources unless aided by private hands.

He pressed on in his course amidst obstacles and discouragements until he finished his college course, graduating from Queen's College, at New Brunswick, now Rutgers, in 1789. After graduating he spent some time in teaching at Elizabeth-Town, N. J., to enable him to discharge his pecuniary obligations incurred in prosecuting his studies, which he fully accomplished, at the same time prosecuting his theological studies under the direction of the Rev. Dr. McWhorter, of Newark. He was licensed to preach in the Presbytery of New York, in October, 1791, and soon after was appointed to spend a year in missionary labor in Northern and Western New York, at that time both a natural and moral wilderness. At the close of this term he received a call from the Presbyterian Church of Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County, N. Y., which he accepted and where he was ordained and installed pastor November 6th, 1792. The Rev. Mr. Kerr presided over the meeting at the time of his ordination and installation, the Rev. Mr. King preached the sermon from Dan 2: 44, the Rev. Mr. Minor gave the charge to the pastor and the Rev. Mr. Close to the people. While here Mr. Baldwin was married on May 4th, 1792, to

Jane Higgins, of Newark, N. J., who died soon after, leaving two infant children. After four years at Pleasant Valley, he removed to Mathersfield [Mathewsfield], in the Town of New Windsor. While here he was married to Julianna Evertson. He assisted while here in forming the Presbytery of Hudson, upon the dissolution of the Presbytery of Dutchess County. He was the last survivor of the original members of this Presbytery (Hudson). He supplied various vacant churches within the bounds of the newly organized Presbytery. While at Mathersfield [Mathewsfield] in New Windsor, he was invited to supply the Church of Scotchtown, which, after three years, resulted in his permanent settlement as pastor, as already stated. The congregation at that time was small and feeble, unable to support a minister properly and hence he purchased a farm, on which he lived until his death, the same having been occupied for many years by the late George Wallace, and where his family still reside. While living here the dwelling house of Mr. Baldwin was twice consumed by fire, in one of which the records of the Church, prior to 1825, were destroyed, the loss of which has been felt in the preparation of this historical sketch.

On the day of Mr. Baldwin's installation the following persons were chosen elders in the church, thus completing its ecclesiastical organization: John White, Peter McLaughlin, David P. Arnell and George Houston. Before the time for ordination Peter McLaughlin died, when Ephraim Everett, Adam Alspaugh and Enos Ayres were chosen, and all six were ordained on June 16th, 1804. The first report to Presbytery, in 1805, gave the numbers as forty-four. Mr. Baldwin's labors were greatly blessed and under his ministry the membership of the Church increased largely. Several extensive revivals were experienced during his pastorate. The first marked season of religious interest was in 1815, and which extended to other churches in the vicinity. It commenced in the summer season in what was called the upper neighborhood and continued through the harvest until fall. It has been estimated that more than one thousand persons were added to the various churches in the county that summer. Again in 1819 or 1820, in 1830 and in 1836. In 1830 ninety-six persons were received at one time upon profession of their faith.

Mr. Baldwin was a man of great kindness and benevolence of heart, greatly beloved by his people for his many excellent qualities, as well as for his labors in seeking to promote their spiritual welfare. While receiving a meagre remuneration for his services, he seems to have been contented with it, making it evident to his people that he sought not theirs but themselves.

He was a man of great prudence and discretion as appears in the judicious treatment of many perplexing difficulties that came up during his ministry for adjudication. He was faithful and zealous in the discharge of his duties as pastor, watching over the flock committed to his care with great tenderness and fidelity, and his labors were greatly blessed in its enlargement and

increase, and in the ingathering of large numbers into the church, Goldsmith's description of the village pastor in his "Deserted Village," portrays most admiringly the character of this first pastor of this Church, so far as we understand it.

"A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year.
Remote from towns he ran a goodly race
Nor e'er had changed nor wished to change his place.
To relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'er his feelings leaned to virtue's side.
But in his duty prompt at every call
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all.
At church with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway
And fools who came to scoff remained to pray."

His multiplied and arduous labors during an extensive revival in 1836, with all the anxiety and sense of responsibility attending such a state of things proved too great a tax upon his strength, which together with his advanced years disqualified him for prosecuting his work and led to securing a colleague. In the fall of 1838, he was laid aside from his labors and only preached two or three times afterwards. His last sermon was preached from II Tim 4: 6-8, "For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day,"

"His last years were those of great bodily weakness and infirmity, of humble submission and confiding trust and of patient waiting for the glory to be revealed. His confidence and trust in the blood of atonement as the only ground of acceptance with God, were firm and unwavering, accompanied with a sense of personal unworthiness and of the utter worthlessness of all his own doings, every act of his life being, as he said, tainted with sin, and no one to be regarded with complacency. He had long ceased to take a lively interest in the world and his spirit was ripening day by day for the heavenly world." *

The state of his mind in view of his departure was well indicated in the passage chosen by him for his funeral sermon. "I have waited for thy Salvation O Lord." His death occurred February 27th, 1847, in his eighty-fourth year.

*Funeral Sermon by Rev. E. D. G. Prime.

Do you want to know more?

[Link to Methuselah Baldwin in database](#)

[Link to Juliana Mathews in database](#)

Bio of Methuselah Baldwin; prepared by Pamela Hutchison Garrett for John Markham of Chesterfield website; 2018.