

increasing the compensation made to pastors; and that we, as commissioners, carry the report back home to the gymanvas and churches, and undertake the task of arranging ways and means for putting this important matter into operation, together with the recommendation that the various churches adopt the budget system which is successful in many places."

Women were not licensed to preach in the Calvinistic Church in America—nor were they encouraged to enter the pulpit to preach. There were rare exceptions to this rule when, on one or two occasions, women of prominence from Wales visited the Church in this country. Some women appealed for permission to preach. The Northern Presbytery of the Pennsylvania Gymanva in 1871 resolved that as Calvinistic Methodists they would close their pulpits to women as "preacheresses" (*pregethwresau*). An appeal by a woman was made to the Minnesota Gymanva in 1898 for permission to tour its churches. The gymanva took the following action:

"We do not, as a gymanva, feel that it is advisable for us to open the door of our pulpits to the sisters."

The minister in a Welsh community, whether preacher or pastor of a church, was required to identify himself with the local church as a member. The Ohio Gymanva ruled in 1892 that "every pastor and preacher should hold membership in some particular church, and, when he moved, should take his letter with him as other members do." The same gymanva declared that "pastors and preachers should contribute, according to ability, to support the church of which they are members." The Oneida Presbytery, New York, likewise ruled:

"It is appropriate that ministers, like all others, ask for their church letters, and present them when they move."

This requirement, which was general in the Calvinistic Methodist Church, was dropped when union with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was consummated. The pastor now holds his membership in the presbytery, and is amenable to the presbytery rather than the local church.

IV. THE CRADLE

THE cradle of the Calvinistic Methodist Church in America is a place, like other cradles, where an infant struggled to survive and where family affections were lavished; a place to which we go with affection and tenderness because of the associations and nurture connected with it—even though the cradle is now unoccupied. This is true of the old Penycerau Church in Oneida County, New York.

After the close of the Revolutionary War Welshmen migrated to America in great numbers. Large emigrations from Wales took place in 1794, 1795, and 1796. Many Welsh people had come to our shores in the days of William Penn and had obtained from him, in 1682, a tract of forty thousand acres of land, known as Y Dyffryn Mawr (the Great Valley), in the vicinity of Philadelphia. Welsh place names in the Great Valley, such as Bala, Bryn Mawr, Radnor, Merion, Pencader, and others, are present-day witnesses to the fact of early Welsh settlement. Professor Fisher, in his "Making of Pennsylvania," states that for twenty years after the founding of Pennsylvania the Welsh were the most numerous class of immigrants.

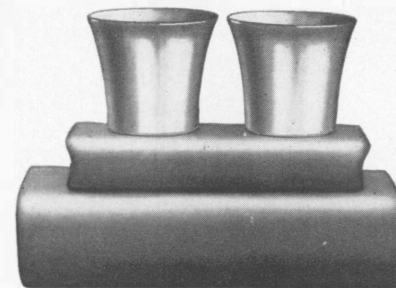
Some of those who immigrated from 1794 to 1796, who had as their leader Rev. Morgan Rhees, a Baptist divine, and who sojourned for a short period with their fellow countrymen in the vicinity of Philadelphia, were bent on securing a similar tract elsewhere for Welsh colonization. Mr. Rhees petitioned Congress for a grant of land for that purpose. He made more than one attempt, but each time without success. After a short stay in the vicinity of Philadelphia, awaiting the outcome of their coveted plan, these new arrivals left their friends in the Great Valley colony to seek their fortunes in other parts and became the Welsh pioneer settlers in several new localities in the new land. Professor Fisher, writing of trails and roads, has this to say of the Lancaster Turnpike:

“Begun by the footsteps of the first wandering Welshman, for a time a trail in the woods, then a rough road leading to a clearing, then a better road, improved here and there with logs and afterward with cobblestones, always pointed westward to the Pacific, it grew and grew until it reached the Susquehanna, crossed it, and wound through the Alleghenies to Fort Pitt [Pittsburgh], its terminus for many years. When the Pennsylvania Railroad was built, the engineers found they could make but little improvement on the Welshman’s skill, and they laid their tracks alongside the road already existing.”

The Welshmen who followed Rev. Morgan Rhees blazed that trail in 1796. Needless to say, all who emigrated from Wales during the 1794 to 1796 period did not go westward; some remained with their countrymen in the Great Valley region. But the majority of them, after splitting up into smaller groups, sought their fortunes in new and untried areas.

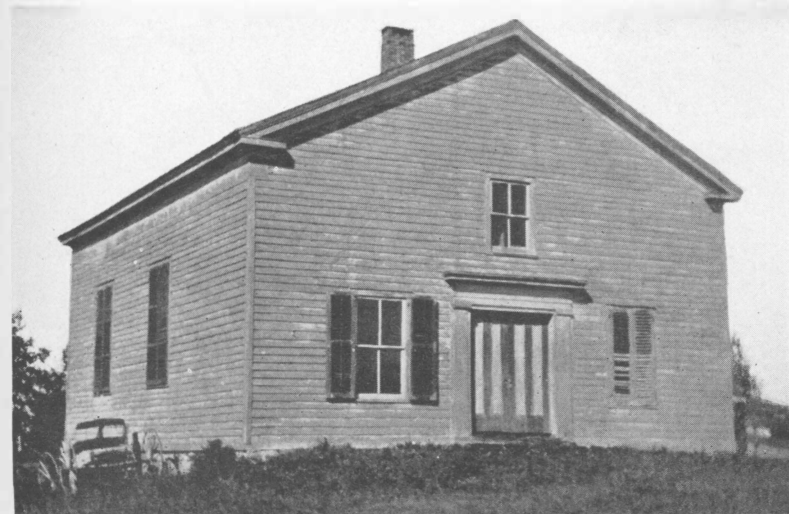
“Westward-ho!” Rhees and his pioneer group blazed this trail, pushing their way through the wilderness, fording rivers, and seeking out mountain passes, until at length they reached the very summit of the Alleghenies and settled there. Others pushed still farther west and crossed the Ohio River, while still another group went north or northwest near the foothills of the Adirondacks in New York. Besides Rev. Morgan Rhees, there was also a Congregational minister, Rev. Rees Lloyd, who accompanied a pilgrim band which settled on the topmost ridge of the Alleghenies. Rees Lloyd established what later became known as the flourishing Welsh settlement of Ebensburg, Cambria County, Pennsylvania, and Rev. Morgan Rhees established the colony at Beulah, some three miles from Ebensburg. In 1797 Ezekiel Hughes and Edward Bebb left the Ebensburg colony and became the pioneers of the Welsh settlement of Paddy’s Run, Butler County, Ohio; and in 1802 Theopholis Rees, with his family, left the Beulah colony and became the pioneers of what was later known as the Welsh Hills settlement in Licking County, Ohio.

To follow the developments of these settlements and their fortunes in subsequent years would be interesting and profitable and a source of worthy pride to Americans of Welsh descent. These pioneer Welsh settlers, by their habits of industry, frugality, honesty, moral conduct, and religious devotion, made a



COMMUNION CUPS

The original used in old Penycerau Church.



PENYCAERAU, THE FIRST CALVINISTIC METHODIST CHURCH IN AMERICA, 1824

valuable contribution to American life. But to study them further would carry us far beyond the pale of this monograph.

Our present concern is with those who left the vicinity of Philadelphia during the closing years of the eighteenth century, pursued a northwesterly course into Oneida County, New York, and settled in and about Utica and in Steuben and Remsen Townships. Different settlements, in which the Calvinistic Methodist religious persuasion prevails, have laid claim to being the most populous and best-known in America. The claim has been made by the Jackson and Gallia settlement in southern Ohio. Prominent Welshmen in Wisconsin have boasted that the large settlement of which the village of Cambria is the center was better known in Wales than any other community in America. It is good that men think well of their own community—its virtues and its fame. But of all early Welsh settlements in this country, it can scarcely be denied that the best and most widely known was the one in Oneida County, New York. The Penycerau Church, not far from the village of Remsen, in Oneida County, was the cradle of Calvinistic Methodism in America.

Churches in these pioneer communities at first followed racial rather than ecclesiastical cleavage. Nationality prevailed over creeds. The fundamentals of worship prevailed over different denominational allegiances. Theological tenets were waived in the interest of praise. A common spirit of devotion permeated their religious festivals and a common language, their mother tongue, served to praise God in the strange land. These Welsh pioneers were of one race, one blood, one language. They had one God, one Saviour, a deep sense of sin, and a controlling desire for worship. Pioneers resort to expediencies tabooed in lands of long-established customs and deeply rooted religious forms and traditions. The captive Jew, though he hung his harp upon the willows, remembered Zion. Conditions may force men to employ new ways; circumstances may compel toleration of another's ritual; so the absence of encouragement by others of their own communion persuades men to embrace the opportunity of social worship without regard to ecclesiastical affiliations once considered binding.

While these pioneer Welsh immigrants came from Wales at a

time when sectarianism was strong—even bordering on the bitter—it was expedient and altogether natural that they assemble together as a community of believers to worship God, notwithstanding their former denominational ties so precious to them in native Wales. To them the essential thing was worship; the avenues of expression and the forms to be employed came later. Thus we find that Rev. Morgan Rhees, while in the Great Valley, in the vicinity of Philadelphia, assembled the newly arrived groups and constituted a church. Mr. Rhees was a Baptist minister, but it is stated that this church consisted of an equal number of Baptists, Calvinistic Methodists, and Congregationalists—in all, about forty or fifty families. In July, 1796, Mr. Rhees presided at the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But in August of the same year, when the sacrament was celebrated for the second time, Rev. Rees Lloyd, a Congregational minister, presided.

When many of these same immigrants reached the highest point of the Allegheny Mountains, Mr. Rhees and his Baptist constituency organized a Baptist church at Beulah, and Mr. Lloyd organized a Congregational church at Ebensburg. This latter church consisted of twenty-four charter members, twelve of whom, according to Rev. George Roberts, the first deacon, were Calvinistic Methodists in Wales, and eleven of whom were Congregationalists in Wales; one other joined on profession of faith. In the program of the "Home-Coming Celebration" of the First Congregational Church of Ebensburg, September, 1934, the names of these charter members were printed. They may be of interest to the reader.

ORGANIZATION OF EBENSBERG CHAPEL

APRIL, 1797

Rev. Rees Lloyd (Shepherd)
George Roberts (Deacon)

List of Members
Rees Lloyd *a Rachel ei wraig*
George Roberts *a Jane ei wraig*
Hugh Roberts *ac Elizabeth ei wraig*
Robert Roderick
Thomas Philips, Junr.
Margaret Rees
John Jenkins

Translation of the List
Rees Lloyd and Rachel his wife
George Roberts and Jane his wife
Hugh Roberts and Elizabeth his wife
Robert Roderick
Thomas Philips, Jr.
Margaret Rees
John Jenkins

James Evans
John Thomas
Oll yn aelodau gyda'r Iependiaid yn Nghymru, oddieithr John Thomas

William Gryffyth *a Jane ei wraig*
William Williams *a Hannah ei wraig*

John Roberts *a Jane ei wraig*
Robert Williams *a Gaynor ei wraig*
Jane Roberts
Thomas Gryffyth
John Roberts (*y Crydd*) *a Catherine ei wraig*
Oll yn aelodau gyda'r Methodistiaid yn Nghymru

James Evans
John Thomas
All members of the Independent Church in Wales, except John Thomas
William Griffiths and Jane his wife
William Williams and Hannah his wife
John Roberts and Jane his wife
Robert Williams and Gaynor his wife
Jane Roberts
Thomas Griffiths
John Roberts (the Shoemaker) and Catherine his wife
All members of the Methodist Church in Wales

Rev. Rees Lloyd became the pastor of the newly organized Congregational church of Ebensburg, Pennsylvania, in April, 1797. One of the eleven Congregationalists was George Roberts, a brother of the immortal John Roberts, of Llanbryn-mair, North Wales, who accordingly was a staunch and well-versed Congregationalist and became the first deacon of the new church at Ebensburg. His presence in the colony together with Rev. Rees Lloyd, the Congregationalist minister, would naturally be a controlling influence in making this church Congregational when it was organized. The Calvinists had no minister.

Churches which were established first as union churches became, as a rule, Congregational churches. This was natural from the very nature of the situation. Hence when we discuss early Welsh denominations in America, Welsh Congregationalism holds the first place. For when the Welsh, who were identified with the various denominations in Wales, came together to worship in small groups here and there in the new land, they assembled as a community of believers. But as the communities grew numerically and men of each religious persuasion came to feel their strength, they naturally and instinctively reverted to kind or type. Each felt the old tides of former denominational affiliation surging up in his bosom. Ecclesiastical consciousness began to grow stronger and theological differences began again to assert themselves. The union churches generally were made up of Congregationalists and Calvinistic Methodists. When the Calvinistic

Methodist contingency in the union church became strong enough to assert itself, all that was necessary was for it to withdraw. The union church still remained and continued for, in polity, it was by nature a Congregational organization. If the union church owned property, a meetinghouse or church, that also remained and, from the nature of the situation, belonged to those still in the church, namely, the Congregationalists. A good illustration of this fact may be found in the early Welsh settlement in Steuben, Oneida County, New York.

The first Welsh settlers arrived in Steuben on September 3, 1795. On that date came Owen Griffiths, Captain William Williams, Griffith Rowlands, and a few other families, who were from Carnarvonshire, North Wales; there were about eighteen persons in the company. In 1798 several additional families came into the settlement to live, and among these were Robert Griffiths, from Llanfoel; Rhys and Walter Griffiths, from Aberdaron, Carnarvonshire; David Jones, from Merionethshire; and W. C. Jones, from Montgomeryshire. Not until the arrival of this latter group did worship begin in the Steuben settlement. Other Welsh families arrived in 1801, and from that time on, for forty years or more, Welsh immigrants poured into Oneida and the adjoining counties, but principally into Oneida County. A man who made a detailed and accurate count of the Welsh population in 1812 found that within a district fifteen miles long and ten miles wide, including Steuben as its center, there were seven hundred Welsh people. The same man, in 1838, estimated that in the district from Turin in Lewis County, just north of the Oneida County line, to a little south of Utica—an area of about thirty-five miles in length and thirty miles wide—there were no less than seven thousand Welsh inhabitants.

Shortly after the arrival of the group which came to the Steuben settlement in 1798, the Welsh established a prayer meeting and fellowship meeting. Two prayer services were held each Sunday and a fellowship meeting once during each week. The presence of the fellowship meeting (*seiat*) implies that a church was organized, though we find no specific reference to the time of its organization, and it is stated that by 1800 the church consisted of twelve members who met from house to house, having no church edifice.

Later, the church, already formed, was incorporated as "The First Welsh Methodist Society of Steuben," and was recorded in the office of the county clerk, Oneida County, New York, March 19, 1804.

Miss Mary H. Everett, of Remsen, New York—a daughter of the late Robert Everett, D.D., pastor of the Congregational Church of Steuben from April, 1838, until his death in February, 1875—in her "Historical Sketch of the First Welsh Congregational Church of Steuben" (*Capel Ucha*), states that this early church was a union church of Congregationalists and Calvinistic Methodists. (James Owen), Iago ab Owain, writing in 1838, states that "the first church [i.e., church organization] in Steuben was Calvinistic Methodist [*oedd ar enw y Methodistiaid Calfnaid*]." Perhaps this was a union church in the same sense as was the First Welsh Congregational Church of Ebensburg, Pennsylvania, which although it consisted of twenty-four members, twelve of whom were Congregationalists and twelve Calvinistic Methodists, was organized as a Congregational church. So the early church of Steuben may have been a union church in which the Calvinistic Methodists prevailed, which consequently was organized, named, and recorded as "The First Welsh Methodist Society of Steuben."

Our information regarding this early church is gleaned chiefly from Congregational sources, from the historical record compiled by Rev. Sem Phillips, who was copastor with Robert Everett, D.D., in the Steuben Congregational Church from 1866 to 1872. Mr. Phillips made a diligent study of the origin and development of that historic church and his articles appeared in *The Messenger (Y Cenhadwr*¹), the official organ of the Welsh Congregational Church in this country, of which Dr. Everett was the editor. Mr. Phillips studied the early records of the Steuben Church and the fruit of his labors yielded valuable information concerning it. Our concern here is only with its very earliest history.

The first Welsh families who arrived in Steuben, in 1795, were not professing Christians. In June, 1798, Welshmen professing religion came to the settlement, namely, William C. Jones, Walter G. Griffiths, Rhys Griffiths, David Jones, and Robert Griffiths,

¹ See *Y Cenhadwr*, 1871, pages 144-148.

the first four of whom are known to have been Calvinistic Methodists in Wales. Immediately after their arrival these men and their families began to assemble for divine worship, holding fellowship meetings and prayer services in their respective homes. It was not long before they felt the need of a preacher to lead them and guide them in their religious work.

John Roberts, who in 1796 crossed the ocean with William C. Jones in the ship *Atlantic*, and who was also a friend of Walter G. Griffiths, had gone to the Ebensburg, Pennsylvania, colony. He and his wife, Catherine, were among the twelve Calvinistic Methodists who in 1797 became charter members of the First Congregational Church of Ebensburg.²

Mr. Roberts was inclined to enter the ministry and, shortly after reaching Ebensburg, began to preach. A correspondence was carried on between him and his friends, Walter G. Griffiths and William C. Jones, in the Steuben settlement, which resulted in his leaving Ebensburg for Steuben in 1801. He had a talent for preaching and soon became a very acceptable preacher. Before John Roberts left Ebensburg, the Calvinistic Methodist group in the Ebensburg Church wanted to withdraw and organize a church of their own persuasion, desiring him to become their pastor. But he declined to consent for he had already made up his mind to leave Ebensburg for Steuben, where there was a Calvinistic church in need of a minister.

On his departure, the Calvinistic friends in the Ebensburg Church wrote a letter commending him to the confidence and fellowship of the brethren in Steuben, which in part is as follows:

"We write you concerning our brother, John Roberts. While here, he was looked upon by us all as one who had received special gifts for the work [of the ministry]. As time went on we intended to have him ordained, so that we might be favored with the sacraments, and also the administration of discipline among us. But he was of the opinion that it was expedient for him to leave this community and come to you. He had fully made up his mind in the matter, believing that no good would result from drawing us away from the dissenters inasmuch as he intended to leave. We therefore hope that you may be able to accomplish that which we had planned."

² See pages 38 and 39.

The letter is signed by John Roberts, William Williams, William Griffiths, and Robert Williams.³

John Roberts was ordained in Steuben, Oneida County, New York, as the following certificate declares:

"Steuben, May 12, 1802.

"This is to certify whom it may concern that previous to this date, the bearer John Roberts was chosen, elected, and appointed to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances which Christ appointed in his Church by the First Methodist Society of Steuben. To testify the same we set our hands.

"William C. Jones	} Elders."
"David Jones	
"William G. Pierce	

The three men who signed as "elders" were all Calvinistic Methodists in Wales before coming to Steuben.

On March 19, 1804, "William G. Pierce, Owen Griffiths, and Walter G. Griffiths were elected trustees of The First Welsh Methodist Society of Steuben."

It appears, beyond question, that the first church in Steuben, Oneida County, New York, was organized as a Calvinistic Methodist church. Those who arrived in 1798 and established worship services were Calvinistic Methodists. The church society was named and officially recorded as "The First Welsh Methodist Society of Steuben." The first minister, John Roberts, was a Calvinistic Methodist. The first three elders were Calvinistic Methodists, as were also the first trustees.

In the short biography of James Owen, written by his friend John S. Williams, of Trenton, is a quotation from the diary of Mr. Owen, which says that in the early years, the church was considered to be Calvinistic Methodist, but when or how it renounced its former principles and became Congregational he did not know. The church was incorporated on March 19, 1804, and recorded in the county clerk's office under the corporate name, "The First Welsh Methodist Society of Steuben." On the twenty-fourth of the same month something happened. And this "something" seems to be the crux of the situation; for Miss Everett, in her "Historical Sketch," has this to say:

³ On these names, see pages 38 and 39.

"At this time there were radical and intelligent Congregationalists, members of long standing in Wales, who though worshipping with this church, and contributing to its finances as though they were members, yet did not unite with it. Of this number, Nicodemus Griffiths and two or three others visited the Utica Congregational Church early in the winter of 1804-1805, to confer with them as to the advisability of their uniting with that church, or of forming a Welsh Congregational church in Steuben. The latter course being decided upon, a meeting was held in April, 1805, at the house of Nicodemus Griffiths for the purpose of forming a Welsh Congregational church. . . . Nearly all the Methodist brethren and sisters were present and wished to come in with the Congregationalists into the new church."

Just what happened after the incorporation of the church in March, 1804, is a matter of conjecture. It may have been that the Congregational element in the vicinity grew stronger with the increase of newcomers into the settlement, or it may have been that the Calvinists asserted their power in church government and doctrine to a degree intolerable to the Congregational wing. At any rate, a Congregational society was organized in April, 1805. But the corporate name remained the same for many years, until April 18, 1829, when, by special act of the legislature at Albany, it was changed to "The First Welsh Congregational Society of the Town of Steuben."⁴

In the reorganized church the Calvinistic Methodists continued to worship with their Congregational brethren; Rev. John G. Roberts and Rev. William G. Pierce, both of whom were Calvinistic Methodists, continued as copastors in the new church. For a period everything appeared to be moving along harmoniously, but with the coming of Rev. Evan Roberts as pastor, in September, 1820, relations became strained. Some dissatisfaction was expressed and we read that things did not go on so well as could have been desired. Friction developed with regard to the ministry (*y weinidogaeth*), which may refer to the pastor or to his preaching, and also concerning matters of church discipline. Mr. Roberts is described by Miss Everett, in her "Historical Sketch," as one who was "methodical and kept the most accurate records of any before or after him." He may have been too exacting and scrupulous

⁴ See Session Laws, State of New York, for 1829, Chapter 161.

as a Congregationalist to suit the Calvinistic Methodist element in his church. Whatever may have been the cause, it was early in the pastorate of Rev. Evan Roberts that the Calvinistic Methodist branch withdrew from The First Welsh Congregational Society of the Town of Steuben. Mr. James Owen, who had arrived in the settlement in 1818, immediately upon his arrival united with the church, and was soon thereafter made a deacon and appointed secretary of the church, at the close of a fellowship meeting handed over the secretary's book, announced that he was leaving peaceably, and declined to be a member of that church any longer. Just what the point at issue between the Calvinistic Methodists and Congregationalists was has nowhere been clearly stated so far as we have been able to discover, but John S. Williams, in his brief biographical sketch of James Owen, makes a reference to the Sunday School which may, in part at least, account for the break.

The Sunday School was at that time a new and, to many, a novel institution. In Wales it was started under Calvinistic Methodist auspices about three years after Robert Raikes started the Sunday School movement in England. Rev. Thomas Charles, of Bala, was the originator of the Sunday School in Wales. Thomas Charles was an Anglican who left the Established Church in 1785 and joined the Calvinistic Methodist movement. He started day schools and, later, night schools to teach the people in order that they might be able to read their Bibles. The night schools were followed by schools on Sunday, and the Sunday School as a permanent institution was established in the year 1789. This was only about five or six years before the first arrivals reached the Steuben settlement in Oneida County. Starting as an institution within the Calvinistic Methodist movement, its influence could not have reached extensively into other denominations very early in the nineteenth century. But by the time James Owen left Wales in 1818 it had become well established throughout the principality in Calvinistic Methodist circles. James Owen, moreover, had been prominent in the affairs of the Church before leaving Wales. His home was a Mecca for preachers. He entertained many of the prominent ministers of Wales. It is recorded that Rev. Thomas

Charles, of Bala, as well as John Elias, of Anglesey, and others, frequented his home. Mr. Charles would remain for several days for rest and recuperation, and, as a result of such associations, Mr. Owen was inspired with zeal for the Sunday School and fully persuaded of its essential worth. To others in the Steuben settlement, who had migrated earlier and were in charge of affairs in the church, the Sunday School was more or less foreign at the time, and, because of its novelty, considered a dangerous institution.

In 1819 James Owen introduced the Sunday School into the church in Steuben, but his effort in this direction met with definite and stubborn resistance. His fellow officers would not tolerate it. Things went from bad to worse until finally a written notice was posted on the door of the church as a warning, strictly forbidding holding such a school in that church. When Mr. Owen read the posted notice he realized that the Sunday School could be of no value there, so he withdrew and held it in his own home, which was large enough to accommodate the attendance during the cold winter months, and in the summer, when attendance was larger, the Sunday School was held in the barn; and so it went from the house to the barn and from the barn to the house until the church was built. Looking back over the century, it is interesting and gratifying to realize how the Sunday School came into its own and held such a controlling place in Welsh churches of all denominations.

After James Owen withdrew from the First Congregational Society of Steuben, others withdrew and followed him to organize the Penyaerau Church. The names of those who left Steuben are Benjamin Davies, James Owen, David Anthony, Griffith Jones, Owen Walter, Lewis Lewis, Evan Griffiths, Hugh H. Owens, Mary Jones, William Williams, Jane Owen, Dina Jones, Mary Owen, Margaret Owen, Elizabeth Williams, Catherine Jones, Ellen Charles, Ann Charles, Elizabeth J. Jones, Bridget Jones, Margaret Walter, Ann Lewis, Jane Richards, Sudnah Jones, Hannah Howell, Gwen Griffiths, Margaret L. Jones, and Jane H. Owens. Worship services, as well as Sunday School, were held in the home of James Owen, until the church of Penyaerau was completed in

the summer of 1824. The first sermon preached in Penyaerau was delivered by Rev. William G. Pierce on August 1, 1824. This, no doubt, was its dedication service. New arrivals kept coming into the settlement, and the group which met for worship at Penyaerau kept constantly increasing, so that the leaders felt the need of an organized church.⁵ Mr. Owen corresponded with officials of the denomination in Wales, expressing the desire to have Penyaerau Church received and recognized as a member of the Calvinistic Methodist Church in Wales. In a letter to Mr. Owen, dated November 24, 1826, Rev. John Elias, on the authority of the gymanva held in Carnarvon, stated that the request had been granted. The church at Penyaerau was organized March 21, 1826, in accordance with the rules governing the denomination in Wales, with the election of three elders: James Owen, Hugh Owen, and Lewis Lewis.

ELDER JAMES OWEN

James Owen, the prime mover and recognized leader in Penyaerau and the other Oneida County churches for more than a generation, was a remarkable man. He was born at Pwll Defaid (Sheeps' Pond), Aberdaron, Carnarvonshire, North Wales. His parents were in comfortable circumstances and owned considerable property. His father was a farmer who believed in educating his children. James Owen, after such schooling as could be obtained in the vicinity of his home, was sent to Liverpool to complete his education. Before he was quite nine years of age he united with Penyaerau Church near his home. At the age of twelve he began to engage in worship at the family altar, and he continued to maintain it throughout his life. He married at the age of eighteen, in October, 1798. Fourteen years later, November, 1812, his wife died, and he married again in 1816. Early in May, 1818, he and his family sailed for America, arriving in New York on June 16. Mr. Owen went directly to Oneida County and into the Steuben Welsh settlement where, in Trenton Township, he purchased a fine farm on the road from Remsen to Prospect. He built a large stone house and over the front entrance,

⁵ The church edifice was built about a year and a half before the society was organized.

inserted in the wall, there is placed a large smooth stone which bears the following inscription*:

“Adeiladwyd Hwn
“i James Owen
“1822

“‘Os disgwyliaf, y bedd sydd dy i mi.’ Job 17:13
“Daethom o Gymru i’r wlad hon yn 1818.”

The house built by Mr. Owen in 1822 is still standing and the inscription over the door is legible even at the present.

James Owen was made an elder of Penycaerau Church, Carnarvonshire, North Wales, when very young, and was also appointed secretary of the same church. He was elected to the same offices in the Steuben Congregational Church for the short period of his membership there, and he again held the same offices in the new Penycaerau Church from its organization in 1826 until his death. Mr. Owen thus served as an elder and clerk in churches for a period of fifty-four years. He made a hobby of keeping records of all kinds. He kept a daybook and a diary, in which were recorded detailed accounts of business and personal affairs, religious and church notes, aside from his official records as church secretary. If a member was absent from a church service, Mr. Owen made a record of it, together with a notation of the reason why. He made a careful record of the texts of all sermons preached at Penycaerau, and at special meetings elsewhere, together with the names of the preachers and the dates. He kept careful records of all burials in the Penycaerau cemetery, from its establishment in 1824 until the time of his death, July 30, 1853. The number laid to rest in that period was two hundred and nineteen. The mortal dust of James Owen mingles with the soil of his beloved Penycaerau. A tombstone bearing the following inscription marks his grave:

“Here resteth the remains of
“James Owen

* Translation: “This house was erected for James Owen, 1822. ‘If I wait, the grave is mine home.’ Job 17:13. I came from Wales to this country in 1818.”

“of Trenton, Oneida Co.
“(Native of Wales)
“Born Oct. 18, 1780. Emigrated
“to America in the year 1818
“Died July 30, 1853. 72 years
“9 months and 12 days”

James Owen lived to see the fruit of his labors. From the small beginning in the organization of the Penycaerau Church in 1826—the only Welsh Calvinistic Methodist church on the American Continent—he was permitted to realize before his death, a trifle more than a quarter of a century later, that a denomination had developed in this country, consisting of four gymanvas with a membership of more than ninety churches. He was an elder of elders, and the starter of Welsh Presbyterianism in America.

BENJAMIN DAVIES, THE FIRST MINISTER

The name of Benjamin Davies will ever be honored and revered in the annals of Calvinistic Methodism in America. He was the first man ordained to the gospel ministry by the denomination in this country. Mr. Davies was born in Monmouthshire, which was then in South Wales, in 1802 and came to the Steuben Welsh settlement about twenty years later. He was a shoemaker by trade. On his arrival in the Welsh settlement he united with the Steuben Congregational Church and later withdrew from that church with others of the Calvinistic Methodist group. He was a young man of singular piety and of deep religious convictions. At the age of twenty-four he was induced to enter the ministry and began to preach to the Calvinistic Methodists who assembled at the newly erected church of Penycaerau, which was by that time their recognized home. He was licensed to preach in February, 1826, and Penycaerau Church was organized in March of the same year. The efforts of Mr. Davies were effective and successful, and his labors as a young minister were acceptable to Penycaerau Church, which was enlarging as newcomers kept constantly arriving in the community. There was also a growing conviction of the need of an ordained minister but there was no gymanva, no presbytery, and no ordained minister of the denomi-

nation in America empowered with authority to perform the sacred function of ordination. James Owen again corresponded with Wales, as he previously had done in the matter of organizing Penycerau Church. Because of unusual circumstances—the urgent need and condition of isolation—special permission was granted to ordain Benjamin Davies to the full work of the ministry. He was ordained in 1828 by a Rev. Mr. Powell,⁷ from New York.

Benjamin Davies was not strong physically. Also, he was of a rather nervous temperament and possessed a very sympathetic nature. The strain of hard work was telling on him. Starting a new cause in a strange land was a heavy burden of responsibility. Eight churches were built in Oneida County during his ten years of ministry. His home was Penycerau, but as a circuit preacher he was busily occupied preaching in all the churches from Sunday to Sunday and caring for them and nourishing them during the week. Three of these churches—Nant, Penygraig, and Hebron (French Road)—were organized in 1828, and Utica Church in 1830. Mr. Davies used to walk to Utica, a distance of twenty miles, on Saturdays, preach there twice on Sunday, and start home again on foot on Monday morning. His compensation for Sunday preaching in Utica at that time was one dollar.

In 1831 Mr. Davies made a voyage to Wales in search of rest and recuperation of health and strength, but it added little, if any, to his physical resistance. It was on this trip to the homeland that he met Rev. Morris Roberts, who had been for some time strongly inclined to come to America. The conversation which took place between the two men in a gymanva at Rhuthin, in 1831, helped to settle the question for Mr. Roberts and he came to America that same year. After ten strenuous years of faithful service, Mr. Davies passed on to his reward and was buried in Penycerau cemetery, June 26, 1836. His friend, Morris Roberts, officiated at his funeral.

Fifty years after the death of Rev. Benjamin Davies, the Oneida Presbytery, in session at Penygraig Church, August, 1885, re-

⁷This Mr. Powell may have been Rev. Howell R. Powell, a Congregationalist minister, who frequently visited the church at Steuben during that period.

solved to recommend to the New York Gymanva that a monument be erected in his memory. The New York Gymanva, in session at Floyd, Oneida County, in September of the same year, supported the resolution and appointed a committee, consisting of Dr. Williams, of Remsen, and M. J. Meredith and Ebenezer Jones, of Holland Patent, to carry out the plan. The gymanva which convened at Holland Patent, December, 1886, appointed an operating committee, consisting of William Roberts, D.D., chairman; Rev. George Lamb, of Remsen, secretary; and Robert Lewis, of New York City, treasurer. The following resolutions were adopted:

1. "That a worthy tombstone as a memorial to the Rev. Benjamin Davies be placed in front of the Stone Church, Remsen.
2. "That the work of preparing it be intrusted to Messrs. Hughes and Evans, of Utica, from a design selected by the committee."

Rev. George Lamb, secretary of the committee, was authorized to tour the churches of the gymanva in the interest of the worthy project and to solicit funds for it. In June, 1888, at the gymanva held in Utica, it was recommended that the unveiling of the monument take place in connection with the gymanva to be held at Remsen, and the committee was instructed to arrange an appropriate program for the occasion. However, when the gymanva met in New York City in October, 1888, the committee reported that the memorial stone had been set up, and that it was satisfactory; and that the unveiling ceremonies had been held at Penycerau.

From this report it will be observed that a change was made in the location. The idea in suggesting Remsen as the site for the monument was, no doubt, that the location of the Stone Church was more advantageous, being in the village and on a beautiful hillside; while the Penycerau cemetery is a mile and a half, or more, from Remsen. It is altogether fitting, however, that the change to Penycerau was made before the memorial stone was placed. For Penycerau was the first church; Penycerau cemetery was the first cemetery; Benjamin Davies was the preacher at Penycerau; he was ordained there, he labored there, and he was buried there. And there, at his grave, should be placed the monument to his sacred memory.

Upon the stone the following words are inscribed:

“Erected by the
 “Calvinistic Methodist Churches
 “of the State of New York
 “to the Memory of
 “Rev. Benjamin Davies
 “The First Ordained Minister
 “of the Denomination in America
 “Born at Risca, Monmouthshire
 “South Wales, G.B., 1802
 “Ordained at the Church
 “of Penycerau, 1828
 “Died at Remsen
 “June 25, 1836.
 “‘For who hath despised the
 day of little things.’ Zech. 4:10.”

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church was never wedded to the idea of a large, strong, central church. The early Welshmen wanted a neighborhood church, one within walking distance of home. This may be accounted for by more than one reason. In the first place that was the program in Wales. The bad roads and poor transportation facilities in the early days of settlement made it quite necessary to establish neighborhood churches within a small radius. James Owen, in reporting on the new church at Penycerau, built in 1848, compares the Penycerau Church to a beehive where the new swarms leave the old hive and form new ones elsewhere. No sooner had the church been organized in 1826 than some left it and started Penygraig, Nant, and French Road Churches in 1828. Others left soon after to form other church centers. In 1850, Penycerau reported forty-five members.

As time went on roads were improved and highways built, followed by modern means of transportation. These, and the tendency on the part of many Welsh farmers to retire from their farms and to congregate in towns and villages, worked a hardship on the small church in the country. The churches in the cities and villages, as a rule, grew stronger at the expense of the rural communities. This appears to have been the fate of Penycerau. In a meeting of the Oneida Presbytery in 1887 Penycerau Church was reported as being very weak, and in 1907 the report

was made that no service had been held in Penycerau for a long time. The few members remaining petitioned the presbytery to allow them to transfer such money as they had on hand to the church in Prospect, and their request was granted.

In 1913 an appeal came from the friends in Penycerau for a *cyfarfod pregethu* (preaching festival) in the old church to celebrate the establishing of the first Welsh Calvinistic Methodist church in America. A committee was appointed to arrange for such a celebration and the meeting was set for September 3, 1913. In 1917 the attention of Oneida Presbytery was called to the dilapidated condition of the old church and cemetery, and a resolution prevailed to instruct the trustees of the gymanva to make the necessary repairs as soon as possible. The trustees reported to the fall meeting of presbytery in session at Nelson, September 13, 1924, that the old church had been sold and removed. At the same time, they recommended that some sort of monument be placed on the site where the old church had stood as a witness to generations to come, showing the place where the first Welsh Calvinistic Methodist church in America has been built one hundred years before. The plan suggested was to place a large boulder on the site, with a bronze tablet containing a relief of the old church and an appropriate inscription. The recommendation appealed to the presbytery, and the trustees were authorized to provide such a monument. In 1925 George W. Jones reported for the trustees that a boulder had been placed on the site of old Penycerau Church, and it bravely bears its silent witness to-day.

In 1930 a resolution was passed in the Oneida Presbytery which reads:

“That the churches of the presbytery make an annual pilgrimage to Penycerau on the second Sunday in July, and that an English sermon be preached in the afternoon and a Welsh one in the evening. It is expected that the annual pilgrimage to the site which is so consecrated to Welsh Presbyterianism may prove an inspiration to all the churches of the presbytery.”

The pilgrimage has been made annually since 1930. The meetings have been a source of inspiration and vision and uplift to all who there assembled. Long live the spirit of Penycerau in the lives

of all who are associated, both far and near, with this sacred shrine of Calvinistic Methodism in America!

The first gymanva of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church in America was held at Penycerau, May 10, 1828. With the mere mention of this we turn to the chapters which follow to study the gymanvas and presbyteries of the Church.

V. THE GYMANVAS AND PRESBYTERIES

THE organizing of the Calvinistic Methodist church at Penycerau, Remsen Township, Oneida County, New York, in 1826, was both significant and prophetic. It meant that Calvinistic Methodism was definitely established on the American continent. Moreover, it had received recognition and indorsement of the denomination in Wales, and was accepted as a church belonging to that body. This fact, when it became known, no doubt influenced and encouraged emigration on the part of Calvinistic Methodists in the homeland, and they came and settled in Oneida and adjoining counties. Such was the tide of immigration, following close upon the organization of the Penycerau Church, that other churches soon began to spring up in other neighborhoods in the settlement.

At the beginning all were members of the mother church, but as settlers increased some lived at a distance from the immediate vicinity of the church. In these new neighborhoods, cottage meetings, such as Sunday School and prayer meetings and even fellowship meetings, were held. But all went to Penycerau for the preaching services and the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In the course of a few years these neighborhood services developed into churches; so that in 1828 there were four churches of the denomination in Oneida County, and it was in that year, on May 10, that the first gymanva ever held in America convened at Penycerau Church. No record shows who presided as moderator or who preached at the public services. Rev. Benjamin Davies was the only ordained minister of the denomination in America at that time, so far as is known. This brings up the query, What is meant by a gymanva? It is rather difficult to define. The first gymanva, as it was called, at Penycerau was in all probability not an organized body but simply a day of preaching. The first gymanva held in Wisconsin in 1844 is reported to have had a large audience present, considering