

Rev. William Moorman (1772-1834)

Pioneer Minister of Hancock County, Ky.

By Jerry Long, Owensboro, Ky., 1988

Rev. William Moorman was born on 10 Feb. 1772 in Bedford County, Va. to the union of Charles Moorman and Rebecca Leftwich. The Moormans came from the Isle of Wight, off the English coast. William's third great-grandfather, Zachariah Moorman, was born there in 1620. Zachariah Moorman served in the British Army under Cromwell. He later denounced Cromwell; leaving England in 1669 he immigrated to the American colonies & settled in Virginia. Charles, son of Thomas & grandson of Zachariah, resided in Louisa County, Va., his will was recorded there on 24 May 1757; his wife, Elizabeth Reynolds, died in Louisa County, Va. in 1765. Their son, Thomas Moorman, was born in 1705 in Louisa County, Va. and died 10 Nov. 1766; his will was recorded in Bedford County, Va. on 25 Nov. 1766. Thomas married Rachel Clark, who was born in 1710 and died 10 June 1792 in Bedford County, Va., she was a daughter of Christopher Clark (will 1754 Louisa County, Va.) & Penelope Bolling. Thomas & Rachel Clark Moorman's son, Charles, was born 23 May 1747 in Louisa County, Va. and married Rebecca Leftwich on 30 Nov. 1769.

William Moorman's mother, Rebecca Leftwich Moorman, died when he was two years old on 7 June 1774. His father, Charles Moorman, died in Bedford County, Va. on 23 Oct. 1803. While residing in Bedford County, Va. William Moorman was affiliated with the Little Otter Baptist Church. Following a great revival in this church in 1801-1803 William Moorman and his brother, James H. L. Moorman, were ordained into the ministry. J. H. Spencer in the History of Kentucky Baptists (1885) states that William Moorman upon his death in 1834 had been in the ministry for 32 years, which indicates he had been ordained about 1802. Rev. James H. L. Moorman by 1810 had removed to Hardin County, Ky., where he served as pastor of the Bethel Baptist Church for a number of years. By 1820 he moved to Breckinridge County, Ky., where he pastored the Goshen Baptist Church, and where he served as a sheriff and justice of the peace. By Rev. James H. L. Moorman's death on 17 June 1834 he had become the most prominent minister in the area of Breckinridge and its surrounding counties.

According to the History of Kentucky Baptists, by J. H. Spencer (1885), Rev. William Moorman immigrated to Kentucky in 1818. He settled in Breckinridge County, in the western part of the county which in 1829 became Hancock County, Ky. His home in the central area of Hancock County was near where the community of Weberstown is now. In Breckinridge County, Ky. Minute book 3, p.286 it is recorded that William Moorman, a minister of the Baptist Episcopal Church, was granted a license to perform marriages in the county on 18 Feb. 1822. Prior to this date he had been associated with the Bethel Baptist Church in Hardin County, Ky.,

where his brother, James H. L. Moorman, served as pastor. At the 5th annual conference of the Goshen Baptist Association (its membership included several churches located in the present counties of Breckinridge, Hardin, Hancock, Ohio, Daviess & Grayson) held at the Union Meeting House in Breckinridge County on the second Friday of October 1821, William Moorman, James H. L. Moorman & Amasa Tabor served as messengers from the Bethel Church. At the conferences of the same body, held in October of 1822, 1824 & 1825 William Moorman served as one of the messengers sent by the Pisgah Baptist Church in Breckinridge County. At this time the closest Baptist congregation to William Moorman's residence was that of Pisgah.

In 1825 Revs. William Moorman, Thomas Downs, Ancil Hall & David J. Kelley organized the Blackford Baptist Church, the oldest Baptist Church in Hancock County, Ky. The Church was named for the Blackford Creek, on which waters it is located. Article 5 of the minutes of the 9th session of the Goshen Baptist Association was: "Blackford Church petitioned for admission into this association, which was granted, and their messenger, John Snyder, took his seat." This session was held on the 2nd Friday of October 1825. On October 5th of the same year Revs. William Moorman, James H. L. Moorman, Ancil Hall & David J. Kelley organized the Bethabara Baptist Church in Daviess County, Ky. In 1829 Revs. William Moorman, James H. L. Moorman & Charles Polk organized the Cloverport Baptist Church, at Cloverport in Breckinridge County, Ky.

In a biography of William Moorman recorded in History of Kentucky Baptists, Vol. II (J. H. Spencer, Cincinnati, 1885, p.313) it is stated that the Blackford Church was constituted in 1825 and "of this congregation he was immediately chosen as pastor and continued to serve it in that capacity, until the Lord took him to himself, in 1834". Some sources state that Rev. Thomas Newton (1796-1880) was the first pastor of the Blackford Church, this is however in error, as proven by Spencer's history and by the minutes of the Goshen Baptist Association, which shows that Rev. Newton was affiliated with and represented the Pisgah Church in Breckinridge County in several of the years immediately following the formation of the Blackford Church. Rev. Newton by 1836 was serving as pastor of the Blackford Church and no doubt was called to the pastorate upon William Moorman's death in 1834. In each of the years from 1829 to 1833 William Moorman served as a messenger from the Blackford Church to the Goshen Baptist Association.

On 24 March 1829 Hancock County, Ky. was formed from parts of Breckinridge, Ohio and Daviess Counties, Ky. The first marriage recorded in Hancock County was Matthew Whogan to Mary Lyons on 10 Sept. 1829, the celebrant of the marriage was Rev. William Moorman. George W. Bruner contributed 1 ½ acres from his farm for the Blackford Baptist Church and Cemetery, on 15 Dec. 1832 a deed was recorded by which he transferred the property to William Moorman, John Snyder & John T. Bruner, the Trustees of the Blackford Baptist Church (Hancock County deed book 2, page 263). In the marriage books of Hancock and Daviess Counties, Ky. William Moorman is shown as having performed marriages during 1829-

1834, the last recorded in Hancock County in which he was the celebrant was William Chambers to Belinda Miller on 10 April 1834.

Rev. William Moorman died in 1834 while on a trip to Daviess County, Ky. He wrote in his will that the writing of his will was "done at the house of George Kelly in the County of Daviess on the 28th day of July 1834 in the presence of George Kelly, Terry Tharp & John G. Howard, whom I desire to subscribe their names as witnesses to prove this will in the County Court of Hancock and state of Kentucky the place of my residence when I am at home." By the fact that he wrote his will while away from home he was no doubt on his deathbed at the time and probably died on July 28th, the day he wrote his will, or very close to that date. His death probably occurred at the home of George T. Kelly, where he wrote his will. His will was recorded in Hancock County, Ky. on 22 Sept. 1834 (Will book 1, pp.99-100), by his will he appointed Horace M. Newton and his son-in-law, Thomas Hale, administrators of his estate.

In the family records of the late Dr. Edwin Stewart Bruner (1898-1982) of Owensboro, Ky. the following note was recorded: William Moorman "died while holding a meeting south of Owensboro, near Greenbrier Church, and was buried there". This was originally written by Dr. Bruner's older sister, Ida Grey Bruner Berry (1882-1961), who in the early 1900's recorded information related to her by older members of the family. Dr. Bruner and his sister were great-great-grandchildren of William Moorman. The Greenbrier Baptist Church is located about 9 miles south of Owensboro, in the Murray Precinct of Daviess County, and about 22 miles from William Moorman's home in Hancock County.

The land deeds of Daviess County, Ky. were researched to determine the location of the farm of George T. Kelly, at which William Moorman wrote his will and probably where his death occurred. The farm owned by George T. Kelly in 1834 was located about two miles northwest of the Greenbrier Baptist Church, and extended along both sides of the Gore Road, south of the second right angle turn in this road and along the north side of where the Locust Grove Road runs now. George T. Kelly, Terry Thorp & John G. Howard, the three subscribing witnesses to William Moorman's will, in 1834, all resided in the Greenbrier Church neighborhood. Terry Thorp is buried in the cemetery of the Greenbrier Church, his monument records that he was born 27 June 1796 & died 29 April 1863. According to the History of Daviess County, Kentucky (1883, p713) John G. Howard on 29 Oct. 1820 was one of 25 founding members of the Greenbrier Baptist Church; in the early years of this church services were held in private residences and Rev. Thomas Downs served as the pastor of the church from 1820 until 1847.

The Daviess County, Ky. tax records show that George T. Kelly in 1834 was assessed on 150 acres on Two Mile Creek, a branch of the Panther Creek. On 27 April 1832 William R. Griffith, Benjamin Field & Remus Griffith sold the farm of 150 acres to George Kelly, which included the plantation where Kelly was then living (Daviess County deed book C, p.418). This land was part of a tract of 206 acres which Kelly sold on 10 Feb. 1846 to Jacob W. Trunnell

(book H, p.87); on 10 Jan. 1848 Jane Kelly was appointed as the administratrix of her husband, George T. Kelly's estate. Jacob Trunnell died on 28 Aug. 1856 and he willed the farm to his two sons, James H. & John; the former was born 14 Feb. 1836 in Bullitt County, Ky., died 12 Dec. 1866 & was buried at the Greenbrier Baptist Church Cemetery in Daviess County, Ky., and the latter was born about 1843. The Trunnell farm of 222 acres, which included the former George Kelly farm of 150 acres, on 29 Nov. 1859 was divided between James H. & John Trunnell (book Q, pp.435 & 440). John Trunnell received the western 111 acres and his brother the other half. James Trunnell's widow, Mary Jane Ashby Trunnell, on 5 March 1868 sold her husband's 111 acres to James A. Small. John Trunnell sold his 111 acres on 18 Jan. 1865 to G. W. Murphy, Murphy sold the same 111 acres to Richard O'Flynn on 7 Oct. 1865. O'Flynn on 19 Dec. 1867 sold the northern 61 acres of the 111 acres to James T. Clark, the deed contained a reservation for 1 ½ acre for a graveyard located on the tract of 61 acres; Clark sold the 61 acres on 22 Jan. 1868 to James S. Davis. O'Flynn on 20 March 1873 sold the southern 50 acres of the 111 acres to Susan A. Small, the wife of James A. Small, who had previously purchased the eastern half (111 acres) of the Trunnell farm. On a plat map of the Murray Precinct recorded in the 1876 Historical Atlas Map of Daviess County, Ky. James A. Small is shown as owning 161 acres & James S. Davis 61 acres which composed the former Trunnell farm of 222 acres and the 150 acre farm of George T. Kelly.

In 1889 Oscar Gore purchased the eastern 111 acres of the James A. Small farm and members of his family still own the farm today (1988); his daughter-in-law, Mrs. James Small Gore, lives on this tract which extends east of the Gore Road. The 61 acres, north of the Gore tract & on the west side of the Gore Road, continued to be owned by the Davis family well into the 1900's and it is now the property of George Greer of Owensboro, Ky. On this later tract there is an old family cemetery; it is just south of a right angle turn in the Gore Road, in a clump of trees on an embankment a few feet off the west side of the Gore Road, directly opposite a small pond on the other side of the road. On 19 Aug. 1988 this writer visited the cemetery and found two monuments resting against an oak tree with signs of at least three bases to broken monuments in the ground nearby and several fieldstones. The two markers read as follows: "Jacob W. Trunnell born 7 Jan. 1804 died 28 Aug. 1856" & "Clarissa H. wife of O. O. Brown died 2 Mar. 1856 aged 35 yrs."(her maiden name was Trunnell, and she was the wife of Oliver O. Brown). Mrs. James Small Gore, who lives near the cemetery said it was referred to as the "Trunnell Cemetery" and in the early 1900's there were as many as ten or twelve monuments in the cemetery. The cemetery is located on what was the George T. Kelly farm in 1834. If the cemetery predated the burial of members of the Trunnell family it is possible that William Moorman may have been buried here. It is believed that William Moorman was buried at the Greenbrier Baptist Church or in the nearby neighborhood, where his death occurred in 1834. In the cemetery at the Greenbrier Church the oldest tombstone with an inscription was erected in 1852.

Rev. William Moorman was married twice. He married first Elizabeth Martin; their marriage bond, dated 22 Oct. 1792, was recorded in Campbell County, Va. She died 8 Jan. 1806 in Virginia; in Spencer's History of Kentucky Baptists (1885) it was written that an exceedingly sad circumstance occurred in the life of this good man in that he accidentally shot his wife through the head causing instant death. By this marriage there were two children: Mary Martin, born 10 Nov. 1795, believed to have married Benjamin Barnard. And Charles, born 1796-1806, several sources state that he was a Baptist minister and never married. William Moorman married second Mary Burkholder on 15 Dec. 1806 in Botetourt County, Va. The daughter of Isaac Burkholder & Mary Newton, she was born in Lancaster County, Pa. on 30 Oct. 1785. She survived her husband by 34 years and died in Hancock County, Ky. on 17 March 1869. She was buried in the Hale-Moorman Cemetery, located on a high hill on the east side of US Hwy 69, opposite the South Hancock County Elementary School, near Weberstown in Hancock County, Ky.

William Moorman & Mary Burkholder had 9 children:

1. James Leftwich, was born 16 Oct. 1807 in Botetourt County, Va., married about 1835, living in Hancock County, Ky. in 1840 but not listed there in 1850.

2. Elizabeth Jane, was born 26 July 1810 in Botetourt County, Va., married Thomas Hale on 14 Nov. 1833 in Hancock County, Ky., died 13 March 1898 in Hancock County and was buried in the Hale-Moorman Cemetery.

3. Matthew or Martin, was born 5 June 1811 in Botetourt County, Va., he does not appear in the records of Hancock County, Ky. & may have died prior to 1830.

4. Thomas Clark, was born 13 July 1813 in Botetourt County, Va., married Maria Bruner on 10 Oct. 1837 in Hancock County, Ky., he married second Catherine C. Miller on 28 May 1853 in Hancock County, Ky., and died 1883-1884 in Hancock County, Ky.

5. Emmaline Watts, was born 10 Oct. 1815 in Botetourt County, Va., married John Rice on 13 Feb. 1833 in Hancock County, Ky., in 1870 she was living in Hancock County, Ky.

6. John Calvin, was born 3 Dec. 1817 in Botetourt County, Va. and died 1817-1830.

7. Martha Ann, was born 20 March 1820 in what is now Hancock County, Ky., married Richard Remington and died after 1880, was buried at the Blackford Baptist Church in Hancock County, Ky.

8. Rebecca Leftwich, was born 14 Feb. 1822 in what is now Hancock County, Ky., married Enoch Freels on 2 May 1841 in Hancock County, Ky. and in 1870 was living in Hancock County, Ky.

9. Isaac B., was born 14 Feb. 1822 in what is now Hancock County, Ky., married Lucy Nichols about 1846, in 1880 he was living in Hancock County, Ky.

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