

Preface:

This is the text of an article which appeared in the Greensboro News and Record as indicated below. It was contributed by Melody and Brian Smith; Brian is related to Dr. George Welker, first preacher of Mount United Church of Christ.
- WJC August 12, 2001

D8 Greensboro Daily News, Saturday May 29, 1971

When the Preacher pointed, Silence Fell

BY BILL RHODES WEAVER
Daily News Staff Writer

Several boys and girls in their Sunday best homespun were seated on the front row of Mouth Hope Reformed (Calvinist) Church and making a slight disturbance. The preacher, Dr. George William Welker, stopped his sermon. He looked down at the innocent faces of the children, all of them his grandchildren and all seated there so that he might keep a watchful eye on them. Without one word, he pointed a long finger at them. The chatter stopped.

That incident happened about 100 years ago in the old frame church which gave the road its name. It is situated about two miles southeast of Western Electric Co.'s Bell Laboratories and Research Center on Interstate Highway 85 about eight miles southeast of Greensboro. It is now known as the Mount Hope United Church of Christ.

TOURGEE'S FRIEND

The bearded preacher was probably better known in those days than his contemporary and friend, the writer, jurist and statesman, A. W. Tourgee, who was honored in January by the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce by being named to its Hall of Fame. Dr. Welker ministered unto many church congregations particularly those of Guilford and Alamance Counties. He was an inveterate reader and accumulated a large library despite the smallness of his annual salary, which never exceeded \$400. He wrote extensively and did the information introduction to "Historic Sketch of the Reformed Church in North Carolina," a valuable study of the origins of many Piedmont families.

Dr. Walker and Tourgee served in the General Assembly from Guilford County and were fathers of the N.C. Constitution of 1868. He was responsible for the adoption of the part of the State Constitution establishing a Board of Public Charities to supervise orphan homes, homes of for the deaf and blind, and institutions for the care of "idiots and inebriates."



Photos Courtesy Mrs. W. M. Cole

Mount Hope Reformed Church of Dr. Welker

Not only was he a strong spiritual force in Piedmont North Carolina -- his appearances at churches attracting people of different congregations -- but he was an abolitionist, a Republican, a Union sympathizer and advocate, and a prohibitionist as well.

His Union sympathies resulted in much persecution even though he was generally highly regarded. One night during the Civil War his life was threatened in Greensboro. As he journeyed toward his Mount Hope house, he came to a fork in the road. Maybe it was divine providence. Maybe not, but the good preacher pondered at the fork and took the road he rarely followed to get home. In so doing, he learned later, he avoided an almost certain end from a lynching party.

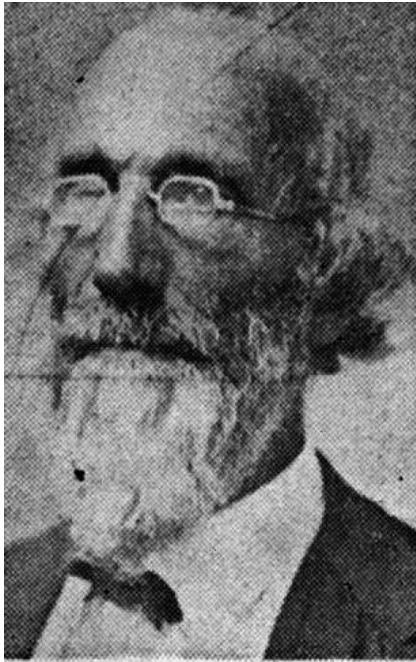
The members of Dr. Welker's church were in a large part descendants of pre-Revolutionary settlers -- the Albrechts (Albright), the Schwenks (Swing and Schenck), the Faustus (Foust), the Ephlands (Efland), Basons, Loys, Steiners (Stoners), Sharps (Scherbs), Neases (Neeses), Sherpherds (Schaeffers), the Klappers (Clapps), the Starrs, Mays and Ingolds. Many of the family names appear on tombstones in the church cemetery.

In one of the many contributions of Dr. Welker to Colonial Records of North Carolina, he tells about the recollections of one of the Mount Hope Church members, Miss Judith Clapp. She remembered the Battle of Alamance Regulators, the Colonial troops composed of men of the community. She said she and her mother and some other women were on the battleground before the fighting and were ordered to return to their homes, that there'd be "bloody work there soon."

HEARD SHOTS

They didn't reach home, which was just across Beaver Creek and not a mile away, when they heard the volleys of shot. Soon, wounded men were brought to the house. Tobias Clapp (relationship unknown) was taken prison by Lord Troy and was taken to Hillsborough, but by some means he escaped or was released.

The only Tory among the Clapps was Tobias' brother, Karl, who was taken prisoner by the Americans. When Tobias saw his brother he was indignant and declared "Dieser Kerl will ich bedhuten" -- determined he should not escape.



Dr. G. W. Welker

Dr. Welker was born near Greencastle, Pa., Nov. 3, 1837, the eldest son of Daniel and Anna M. Welker. His mother gave him an early education and he was prepared for college by a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Robert Kennedy. He was graduated with honors from Mercersburg College in 1841. The fall, he and a friend, the Rev. Jeremiah Ingold, came to Guilford County to start their ministry.

SPOKE GERMAN

Dr. Welker has only one (his left) eye, his right having been blinded in a childhood accident. He spoke German fluently and his American English bore a marked German accent. His sermons made a profound impression, and many believed him to be the foremost theologian and preacher of his time. He inspired a number of young men to enter the ministry.

He preached in several Piedmont counties and for many years was a delegate to the Synod and General Synod from North Carolina. His first charge was Brick Church, which also was known as Stoner's (Steiner's), which was build on the point of land formed by the confluence of Alamance and Stinking Quarter Creeks. That was 1841, just 13 years since Reformed ministers had changed from German to English for their services. Six years later Dr. Welker moved to the Mount Hope Church, which build its first, and still standing, structure in 1851.

AGAINST LIQUOR

When he came to Guilford County, almost every farmer had his whisky still. Dr. Welker deplored that, and as soon as he deemed himself well established in the affection of his churchmen, he began preaching against John Barleycorn. He was so diligent; he lived to see the last still among his members destroyed.

He was one of the founders of Catawba College and regularly attended the meeting of the trustees, often traveling the 130 miles from Mount Hope by horseback. After serving Guilford churches 51 years, he retired and was succeeded by the Rev. J. D. Andrew, whom he inspired to become a minister. He was in ill health a year and he died July 9, 1894. A vast assembly attended his funeral, and his body was buried in the Mount Hope cemetery.

His grave is marked by a gray marble shaft rising near a tall magnolia. The stone bears his name and that of the first two of his three wives. They were sisters, Abigail Mason, the first, and her sister, Louisa, both from Princeton, Mass.

Many descendants still live in the Greensboro area. Among them is Caroline Starr (Mrs. William) Cole, who has many mementoes of her great-grandfather Welker.