

Pisgah Presbyterian Church and Academy  
One mile north on Pisgah-Georgetown Pike  
Woodford County, Kentucky

HABS No. 20-10  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 20

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
G. M. Grimes, District Officer  
304 Martin Brown Building  
Louisville, Kentucky

Name of structure: Pisgah Presbyterian Church and Academy

Location: One mile north U. S. No. 60, on Pisgah-Georgetown Pike, Woodford County, Kentucky.

Owner or custodian: Rev. Hervey McDowell, pastor.

Address: Versailles, Kentucky

Date built: 1812  
(approx)

Architect or builder: Not known.

Present condition: Excellent.

Number of stories: Church: One story and balcony (organ loft)  
Academy: One story.

Material used in construction: Foundation: Native stone.  
Exterior walls: Native stone.  
Interior walls: Plastered; wood wainscot.  
Floor: Wood, covered with carpet.  
Roof: Frame construction, covered with tin (recent).  
Ceiling of Academy is wood, tongue and groove.

Description: (Under date of July 2, 1933, The Leader, Lexington, Kentucky, contained the following which is on file in the Library of The University of Kentucky, Department of Extension, Lexington, Kentucky.)

"In 1780, Samuel Stevenson and his wife, Jane Gay, left the fort at Lexington and moved to their log cabin near the spot which later was to be called Mount Pisgah. Then came Alexander Dunlap and his wife, Agnes Gay; John Gay and his wife, Sally Lockridge; and Moses McIlvanin and his wife,

Margaret Hodge. They built their homes within a mile of each other and near the springs. These families were of the Presbyterian faith, and soon others of the same faith, the Allens, Scotts, Evanses, Garrets, Fergusons, Burriers, Blacks, Bobbs, Elliotts, Watsons, Campbells, Howes, Steeles, Wardlaws, Youngs, Stewarts, and Wasons, moved into the community.

"It is believed that services at first were held regularly in one of the homes. Samuel Stevenson and his wife, however, soon set aside two acres of ground on a nearby hill for the church and graveyard. The first church was erected of logs by Stephenson, Dunlap, Gay, Wason and McIlvanin. A stone church of square design was erected a little further up the hill in 1812, and fifty-six years later it was remodeled in Gothic style as it stands today. The original stones and floors were retained in the present building. The stained glass windows were installed by Dr. Robert James in memory of his mother.

"The records, though not complete, show that when the church started the families also began a school. The first teacher, a Mr. Andrews, who moved from Pisgah to Ohio. About the year 1793, Andrew Steele was appointed by the Presbytery as teacher and the tuition was fixed at four pounds a year. The first school was a log building with two rooms and a "dog-trot", or hall, between. The teacher lived in one room and used the other for a class-room.

"In 1794, a charter was issued in the name of "The Kentucky Academy" and forty-seven men were selected to collect funds for the school following the disposal of the Rev. James Moore as head of the school known as Transylvania and the election of Henry Tomlinson, a disciple of Priestly, in his place. Some of the people had become so incensed by the change that they determined to start the Kentucky Academy. A total of \$4,000 was subscribed in Kentucky, and "\$10,000 subscribed in the East, towards its endowment, of which President George Washington and Vice-President John Adams contributed \$100 each, and Aaron Burr \$50". From Collins' History of Kentucky, Vol. I, page 24. Dr. George Gordon, of London, England, secured a small valuable library and 'philosophical apparatus', or laboratory equipment, for the new school.

"The school which was opened at Pisgah in 1797, known as Kentucky Academy, and Transylvania Seminary at Lexington were united in 1798 and called Transylvania University. A small school was retained in the stone building at Pisgah until the first part of the present century.

"Dr. Louis Marshall, son of the famous Col. Thomas Marshall, was at one time a teacher in the school at Pisgah. The log school was replaced by a structure of stone, which several years ago was remodeled and is now used for Bible school rooms. Among the most famous students of the old school were Judge Trimble, afterwards governor of Ohio; Governor Clark of Kentucky; J. Cabell, William and Robert Breckinridge; and L. W. Green, at one time president of Centre College".

*G. W. Grimes*

*Reviewed 1936, H. C. Foreman*