

Cane Ridge: A Shrine to Unity

On June 28, 1804, a group of six Presbyterian ministers gathered in a log cabin church on the outskirts of Paris, Kentucky, to discuss the business of the Springfield Presbytery. Though the Springfield Presbytery had formed less than a year earlier as a break with the Synod of Kentucky, the six ministers who convened this meeting at the Cane Ridge Church now planned to dissolve their fledgling presbytery. With a desire to abandon human denominations, return to the practices of the New Testament, and to refrain from adding another division to Christendom, Barton W. Stone, Richard McNemar, and four additional companions issued *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*. “We will,” their document stated, “that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large.” This document set the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement in motion and established Stone’s congregation at Cane Ridge as the first church of the new movement.

The Cane Ridge congregation began when Daniel Boone led a group of Presbyterian settlers to the area in 1790 and suggested the cane-covered ridge as a site for a church. One year later, in 1791, a fifty-by-thirty foot log cabin church was constructed of blue ash timber. Though only slightly above fifteen feet tall, the Cane Ridge Church included a balcony that was regularly used as a place for slaves to participate in the worship services.

In addition to being the site where the Restoration Movement began, the church where Barton Stone ministered from 1796-1812, and the final resting place for Stone’s earthly remains, the Cane Ridge Meeting House is noteworthy for its role in the nineteenth-century religious revival known as the Second Great Awakening. At Barton Stone’s invitation, crowds estimated at 12,000-20,000 people gathered in the vicinity of the Cane Ridge Church to participate in a revival and communion service. The Great Revival, which lasted for several days in early

August, 1801, gained national attention and is frequently described as the “Pentecost” of the Second Great Awakening.

After 130 years, the final regular congregation of the Cane Ridge Church disbanded in 1921. Because of the historic significance of this site, however, it was decided to restore the building to its original form in 1932. In addition, to preserve the historic building and protect it from the elements, a beautiful stone structure was built around the meeting house between 1954 and 1957. Additional structures on the property include a curator’s home and the Barton Warren Stone Memorial Museum.

There is no admission to the Cane Ridge Meeting House, though donations for upkeep and administration are welcome. The Meeting House welcomes over 10,000 visitors annually and is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (1:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday) between April and October. For additional information about Barton W. Stone and the Cane Ridge Meeting House, see the following resources:

- www.caneridge.org – Official Cane Ridge website
- Paul Conkin – *Cane Ridge: America’s Pentecost*
- D. Newell Williams – *Barton Stone: A Spiritual Biography*
- Barton W. Stone – *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone.*