

# Congregation started in log cabin in 1812

Church moved in 1844 to current location, modifying it as recently as 2009

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**BELBROOK** — The year was 1812. A small group of Methodist settlers in the Sugarcreek/Bellbrook area had been holding class meetings serviced by traveling circuit riders.

Thomas White donated land on his farm for a log cabin at the corner of what is now Ohio 725 and Wilmington Pike to be used for worship. One of the founders of Bellbrook, Stephen Bell, was a member.

Two hundred years later, the Bellbrook United Methodist Church, now at 47 E. Franklin St., counts among its many members Sugarcreek Twp. Trustee Nadine Daugherty, and Bellbrook-Sugarcreek school board president Mary Frantz, minister for education and congregational life at the church and director of the church's Happy Child Preschool.

By 1819, the original group had moved to a log-hewn building facing east on West Franklin Street,



The Rev. Terry Heck stands in the doorway of Bellbrook United Methodist, which at one time was housed in a log cabin. The church moved to its present location (above) in 1944. Staff photo by Jim Witmer

according to the church's history. The group split into two churches in 1829, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestant Church, the latter defunct by 1934.

From 1829 to 1844, the Methodist Episcopal group met in a for-

mer brick school at 91 W. Franklin St.

They moved in 1844 to their present location on a half-acre lot at Franklin Street, built with a \$5,000 donation from a new Bellbrook resident from Virginia. The one-room sanctuary had two entrances,

one for women and one for men. Sliding drapes could create four rooms. It was heated by two pot-bellied stoves and had toilets out back, according to the church history.

In 1921, Dr. A.N. Vanderman, who lived at 55 E. Franklin St., donated a bronze bell to the church, and in 1922, a bell cupola was built.

Two rooms were added in 1937, and a narthex in 1949, when the two front doors were closed in.

In 1956, indoor plumbing and a basement were added.

In 1989, the sanctuary and other areas were reconstructed, and a residence at 62 E. Franklin St. was purchased. The house was torn down for a parking lot in 2001, when the sanctuary was rebuilt and a new narthex and accessible bathroom were added.

In 2009 a new addition, with community room, offices, nursery, kitchen and new entrance, was built.

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