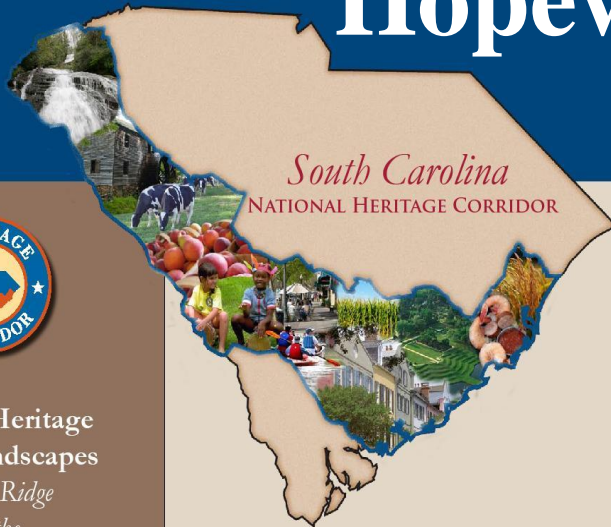


Hopewell -Keowee Church



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The first Presbyterian congregation in the Pendleton District was founded as the Hopewell – Keowee Church. A small log meeting house was constructed in 1791 on land set aside for that purpose by the “Fighting Elder,” Revolutionary War General Andrew Pickens. The name “Hopewell” was taken from the church where the General had been an elder in Abbeville District. “Keowee” comes from the Keowee River, later called Seneca River. The building burned in 1796 in a forest fire and the congregation relocated to the present Old Stone Church site.

General Andrew Pickens and his sons Ezekiel and Andrew Pickens, Jr. along with his fellow soldier Colonel Robert Anderson were instrumental in starting a Presbyterian congregation in the area. The Hopewell Keowee Church was constructed “about 80 rods east” of the Ezekiel Pickens residence called, “The Cottage,” on the north side of the road which leads from Fant’s Grove to Clemson on Seed Orchard Road.



The church was first mentioned in South Carolina Presbytery minutes on October 13, 1789: “A people on Seneca [River] apply to be taken under our care and receive supplies.” At the same meeting, the Reverend John Simpson was appointed to supply the new church on Sabbath once a month. Hopewell-Keowee, sometimes referred to as Hopewell-Seneca, was formed in union with Carmel church (formed in 1785) of the Easley area. For many years any ministers appointed served both churches. At that time most churches had full services under the guidance of a minister only once a month. Dr. Thomas Reese, a graduate of Princeton and a gifted orator, and who had moved to the Pendleton District from the Low Country, agreed to lead the two congregations. The first elders included Andrew Pickens, Robert Anderson, and Thomas Dickson.. An account by Dr. Reese stated that the church was organized “by the spirited exertions of a few men who removed from Abbeville. They were not so numerous as the people of Carmel, but better united, more catholic in their principles and dispositions, and liberal in their sentiments. A few of their number are wealthy and very forward to support the Gospel; among whom are General Pickens and Colonel Robert Anderson, both men of great influence in the state of South Carolina. Owing to these circumstances, their ability to support religion in proportion to their numbers is greater than that of any other congregation in the upper part of the State.”

In 1796, a forest fire destroyed the log meeting house and work began on a new more fire proof church, now known as the “Old Stone Church” located at the Junction of Old Stone Church Road and Highway 28/76, near Pendleton, on land donated by John Miller the printer. Dr. Reese's health failed and he died that year at the age of 54. He was the first to be buried in the cemetery of the "Old Stone Church" before construction of the new building was finished. General Andrew Pickens and his wife Rebecca Calhoun Pickens are interred in the Pickens enclosure. Later Colonel Anderson's remains were moved to the grave before Lake Hartwell flooded his home site.



In 1912, a stone obelisk marker was erected to commemorate Hopewell on the Keowee Church with a monument and stone fence.