

The following is my recollection of THE FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SOUTH, on through until it became the THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, of Washington, N. C.. Very likely my memory may be confused, I shall not even try to use dates.

The Sanctuary has been remodeled several times in my life time. Originally, the main entrance was through the ~~east~~ front door on Second Street. There were two main isles, one crossing the other almost in the center of the building. Just in front or to the west of the two center post the floor is level where one isle used to be. The isle was closed by placing pews there.

There was no provision made for janitorial supplies nor was there a Pastors Study. The only closets were two small triangle corners closed off at both the north east and north west corners of the Sanctuary. They were used for storing supplies for the Sunday School.

There was no Alter. The Pulpit was located in the center of the rostrum, with two high back chairs flanking a center higher back chair on the rostrum. In front of the Pulpit was a large table, which was used as the Alter during church services. The choir was elevated upon a still higher level just behind the the Pulpit rostrum. The choir sat behind a brass rail, facing the congregation. The organist sat behind the choir, back to back. The only entrance to the choir loft was through a side door that led to the yard on the north west side of the building. The reason that the choir loft was so arranged was because there was a half basement beneath where a furnace was located for heating the building. The hot-air registers were placed on both sides of the choir loft several feet from the floor. There is a flue on the roof of the extreme eastern section of the Sanctuary but I do not remember knowing of a stove being used there.

Before the pipe organ came, a bellows organ was used that had to be hand pumped. I was just a little fellow but I was the organ pumper for years. My mother sang in the choir, with about six other voices. My father played a clarinet, Mr. A. J. Ayers played a French horn and also a cornet, all of these were in the choir loft. Every time there was singing, I first had to go behind the organ and start pumping. I too, sat in the choir. There was no place for the choir to hang their wraps, only just behind the organ.

I was still quite young when the Pastors Study was added to the north west corner of the Sanctuary. It was also used for choir purposes as it enclosed the entrance to the choir loft. Heat was provided from a wood ~~stove~~ burning stove.

Sunday School was held in the Sanctuary. In the beginning, three o'clock in the afternoon was the Sunday School hour. Later it was changed to nine forty five in the morning. Each class was assigned a section just a few pews apart in the Sanctuary. The mens Baracca Class grew so large that they used the entire east end section of the Sanctuary. This section was eventually closed off by placing a petition where the two center post are located. This petition was only temporary and was constructed by using some two by four timbers but mostly two by twos and heavy paste-board called Upsonboard. From the circle of designs on the two post, the petition was stationary but beneath that, the lower section was arranged so that it could be raised and lowered. This was accomplished by using pulleys and window weights. There was a small door in the center for use while the petition was down. When the petition was raised, it did not interfere with the regular church services.

Plans were drawn for an education building which would connect to the Sanctuary on the northeast corner. But before the construction began, there was much preparation to be done.

The entire yard to the rear of the church was used for a cemetery. As far as I can remember there have been no burials there since the turn of the century. About in the middle of the cemetery there was a vault, enclosed by a five feet high wrought iron fence. There was shrubbery between the fence and the vault. Once when I was a teen ager, I do not remember why, but I was alone in the cemetery and I noticed that the gate to the vault was open. I ventured inside and noticed that the vault door was also ajar. I lightly pushed on the door and it opened very easily. I walked inside the vault and found that the interior was liken to a small closet with cabinets large enough to hold a corps, on each side. I did not tarry but a few seconds. All of the graves in the area where the new educational building was to be constructed had to be removed. Before they could be removed it was necessary to contact all relatives of the deceased and get their permission to transfer the deceased to Oakdale Cemetery. This took much time and effort but it ^{was} accomplished.

So the new building was built, that is except the basement. I remember how the water used to cover the clay floor repeatedly. The building was a two story affair. An assembly room was constructed in the center of the first floor, with the stage on the south side of the room. Entrance was made through doors on each side of the stage. There were class rooms on both sides of the auditorium. The second floor was only above the class rooms. The ceiling was two stories high over the auditorium only. There was a balcony around the sides of the auditorium running north and south. The class rooms were entered through rollup petitions. And they were separated also by rollup petitions. These petitions could all be rolled up, which would turn the entire lower floor into the auditorium. The petitions between the second story class rooms were permanent petitions and could not be opened. This arrangement did not work very satisfactorily so eventually the stage was reversed to the north side of the auditorium and ofcourse the seats also.

Eventually the basement was completed. It was discovered that the city sewer line was not deep enough so that toilets in the basements could function properly from the floor of the basement. So the toilets had to be raised high enough from the floor of the basement so they would have a natural drain to the sewer.

A modern kitchen was installed and equipped. The sink of course had to be raised so that it was necessary to have a platform to stand upon to use the sink. Along the walls of the basement were placed rooms for storage and other uses. Later some were used for classrooms. A large dining area was provided in the center of the basement. The women of the church served many meals for the church as well as outsiders. I remember the Lions Club and the Rotary Club both met in the Methodist Church for many years. They met every week and it was quite a responsibility as well as being very profitable.

I understand that the original Sanctuary was destroyed by fire. The present Sanctuary was built upon the original foundation. This foundation is exposed in the ~~southwest~~ southwest corner of the basement. The foundation was largely constructed by using ballast rocks which were brought to Washington on ships from the West Indies. These rocks were used to ballast the ships when they were partially loaded and helped to keep them more in ballance. When this educational building was constructed and the basement excavated, it was discovered that a grave still remained beneath the foundation of the Sanctuary and it could not be removed. It is said that a portion of the casket in the grave still protrudes through the foundation into the southwest room of the basement. Of course the casket has been covered with cement and can not be seen.

When the hurricans came in the fifties, water came into the basement so very badly that it has been used very little since.

Unfortunately, my mother fell while descending the stairs into the basement during the forties. She broke her hip in such away that it could not be healed properly and she never walked again without assistance. I have never cared for the basement since.

Mr. C. G. Morris lived next door to the church. He ran a produce brokerage to the rear of his residence. When Mr. Morris retired from this business, the church bought his property and first demolished the dwelling. The produce building was used for the scouts for several years before it was demolished.

Mr. Charles Cowell Sr. financed the erection of the Chapel that carries his name. This site is where the Morris home was standing.

I understand that the church received a very encouraging offer a few years ago from a now deceased member to place a memorial of a stained glass circular window in the church which necessitated the change in the choir loft and provided an Alter for the church. This offer was accepted for several reasons. The church had never had an Alter. The choir loft was not satisfactory any more. Then too, many years prior, the old bellows organ was done away with and a waterpump organ was installed. This organ was a pipe organ. At the time of the offer the organ was giving a lot of trouble. It was decided to replace the organ with a more modern organ. So, the offer was accepted and remodeling began. It was necessary to make so many changes that ^{the} church could not be held in the Sanctuary. For several months during the summer, all church meetings were held in the basement of the educational building, water or no water, there was no alternative, but we survived.

Finally the remainder of the graves of the old cemetery had to be removed so that the new educational building could be built. About the same time we decided that an automobile parking lot was needed. There were four houses on Second Street that had to be

and removed. After this was done, the parking lot came quickly. There was another building to be acquired on ~~Mass~~ ^{Van Norden} Street. There was the rail road property to acquire and the expansion program began. Meanwhile the new education ^{building} was completed.

I failed to say that in the beginning of the twentieth century, the Sanctuary was lighted by gas. There was a large chandelier which hung in the center of the sanctuary with smaller lights around the sides of walls. And I believe this chandeleir was also equiped with electricity, I'm not sure.

There was a large eight-day clock that hung on the wall just inside the main entrance. We had some "long winded" ministers and this clock was placed there as a reminder. The only objection was that at times when every thing was very quiet, this clock could be heard ticking, all over the Sanctuary.

I also remember that there have been several heating systems used through the years. One of these was a castiron furnace that was placed in the center isle about midway down the isle. There were no radiators, only the furnace and it would get red hot and the heat was terriffic. The grill sat over the furnace which was not very far beneath. And the red glowed all over the church. The grill was the same width as the isle and it was a square grill. To walk down the isle past the grill it was necessary to walk on top of the grill. The heat was so great that the public did not want to walk over it. Especially the women, it would play havoc with their dresses and at times it caused embarrassment.

Now that the city has acquired the railroad property, I understand they are planning a parking lot next to the church on Gladden Street to serve people going to the newly planned Post Office which is to be placed on the corner of Second and Gladden Streets. This will be an asset to the church property.

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