

# HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE M. E. CHURCH SOUTH, IN WASHINGTON, N. C.

North Carolina first appears in the minutes of the M. E. Church in 1773; Joseph Pilmoor passing through the State preached a few times in the early part of this year, and Robert Williams visited it in the latter part of the same year, and in the spring of 1774 began to form societies in it. Some of the first societies formed in the province of N. C. were in the east, and in that region Methodism had its greatest strength in its infancy.

Among the principle Methodist families in the State in the beginning we find the name of Col. Taylor, on Tar River, and Dempsey Hinton. It is to the last name, and his wife, Sarah, that we are indebted for the introduction of Methodism into Washington. They originally resided on Deep River, and although strict members of the Established Church were converted under the powerful preaching of the first Methodist preachers who came to who came to N. C. in 1773, and joined the church. Just previous to the war of the Revolution 1774-5 the quiet of the country was broken up by repeated depredations of the Tories, and Deep River came in for its share of suffering. It was at that time that Dempsey Hinton and his wife determined to seek asylum in the retired and quiet little village of Washington, and here they came and settled. They found a community in which there was no organized religious denomination, only a few adherents of the English Church; but notwithstanding that they did not hesitate to proclaim themselves Methodists, and at once set up the alter of Methodism in their family. Bro. Hinton commenced and continued to hold religious services in his house in spite of every conceivable species of persecution by the ignorant and depraved portions of the population, with varying success until that able apostolic pioneer Bishop of Methodism, Frances Asbury, hearing of the infant church struggling into being, made his first visit to Washington. Thus we see that two on the first converts, of the first Methodist preachers in N. C. were the founders of the Church in Washington.

We say founders because Sarah, the wife of Dempsey Hinton, did almost, if not quite as much, as her husband to establish and introduce Methodism here, not only by her exemplary piety but by active and efficient public labors. For while she was modest and humble, and did not unnecessarily assume the more masculine duties of the Church, she nevertheless did perform a most important part; she not only sang, but prayed in public, and sometimes exhorted the congregation with thrilling effect. She frequently visited the Churches at New Hope, Little Chapel, and Durham's Creek which Asbury had formed. New Hope within four miles of Washington has disappeared and its membership has been absorbed by other Methodist Churches, while the churches at Durham's and Little's still flourish. We also learn from Dr. Bang's history that the Rev. James Hinton, a son of Dempsey Hinton, entered the ministry in 1783, and thus we see that Washington was among the first to contribute to the itinerant ranks. He was a zealous, faithful and successful laborer, and nearly wore himself out in the service of Christ and Methodism. Bishop Asbury visited Washington again in 1784, and organized the first Methodist Church, just one hundred and ten year ago. The names and number composing this Church at that time and prior to the visit of Asbury we have no way of knowing; it was doubtless small and poor. 1791 makes a cheering and important era in the history of the church here, that being the period of the first revival. We learn it was a truly glorious one. As the fruits of that work some of the most influential persons of the place united with us, among the number stands the name Thomas Smaw, who became a firm and beautiful pillar in the temple of our Methodism; but the close of 1791 makes a mournful period in our history, viz., the declension of some of the leading members, a class leader, and exhorter among the number which caused it to stagger and tremble to its very foundation and its enemies to hope its end was near; but

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fortunately that delusion was not general, and the Church soon came from its ashes to be a strength again. The Church was still poor as may be seen from the fact, we still had to worship in private houses, and occasionally in the Court House, until the year 1800, when Ralph Potts who had joined the Church in 1792 built the first Church in Washington thirty feet square on the lot next to Chauncey and Carrow's stables on Market Street. This Church was the first house of worship ever built in our town and was painted red, seats without backs and had a gallery. This Church was dedicated by Bishop Asbury in 1802, February 2, it being Tuesday; the Bishop says about this visit February the 1st we arrived at the home of Ralph Potts, had things we could enjoy. Tuesday the 2nd., considering the weather, we had a very nice congregation out to hear us. Who can tell what God will do for these people? At our evening meeting many people attended; the subject was Luke 14-26. I judged it highly expedient that Roanoke and Pamlico circuit should be divided, and that Washington should have the Sabbath preaching every week: it is a growing town of one hundred houses, and this is a good house for public worship. Too much cannot be said in praise of Ralph Potts. To no one except Dempsey and Sarah Hinton is the Church of Washington so deeply indebted. As soon as he joined the Church it began to revive, so great was his Christian influence, and his Godly walk, his liberality without ostentation, and his self denial to the extent of his power. Notwithstanding the determination of Bishop Asbury to make Washington a station in 1802 it appears he did not, or if so the change was short owing to doubtless to the financial weakness of the charge. It continued in Pamlico circuit until 1811 when the Rev. William Wright was sent as its first preacher and it became then generally a station.

He proved to be a faithful pastor, and the Church entered at once on the highroad to prosperity, the church was refitted, a pulpit, an altar built, backs put on the seats, the interior of the house painted and a belfry erected.

In 1812 the Rev. John Giles was sent as pastor but the war led to his removal and the Rev. James Avent succeeded him. He

was my grandfather and he served the charge acceptably, faithfully and subsequently located here where he continued one of its firmest pillars until he died in holy triumph February 24, 1861.

Until about the year 1817 the Methodist Church in Washington enjoyed undisputed sway, a period of more than twenty-three years, when as records inform us the Baptist Church was built on the site where present Episcopal Church stands, by the Rev. Mastin out of his own funds and he was its minister for some years. In 1826 the Episcopalians finished their Church and occasionally had preaching. Then the Presbyterians two years after succeeded to build their brick house of worship. The Catholics commenced building about the same time but progressed very slowly.

Between the years 1815 and 1822 the Church was called upon to surrender to the Church triumph some of its best members, some who had been its support in the darkest hours, and continually through around it, that cheer we all desire. Thomas Smaw departed in glorious triumph. Ralph Potts went up in raptures, in a full blaze of glory; just before he died he exclaimed, "I have longed to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and now I am about to be gratified." If there is a name in our history we ought to know and remember, if there is a grave we ought to deck with flowers, and teach our children to revere and honor, that name is the name of Ralph Potts who built the first Church in Washington. The loss of these two men was indeed a severe blow to our struggling Church, but God buries His workman, and carries His work on, and so He did then, and other able laborers soon sprang up and filled their places.

In the year 1822 the Rev. Miles Nash was pastor, and the Church had its third revival of great power. Bro. Nash was succeeded in 1823 by the Rev. Charles Cooley. in 1824 by the Rev. Thackee Muire, in 1825 by the Rev. Joseph Carle, in 1826 by the Rev. William Waller, in 1827 by the Rev. John Keer, in 1828 by the Rev. Abraham Harrell, in 1829 the Rev. Leroy Lee, and in 1830 by the Rev. George Gregory.

In the year 1831 the Rev. Phillips Anderson was pastor and the membership of the Church had increased to one hundred

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and two, and the first house of worship being old and small, the Church concluded to build a new house which was built on the site of the present Church. In 1845 the Church was again much improved under the pastorate of the Rev. John Todd Brame.

In the year 1840 the Church enjoyed a revival of great power under the pastorate of the Rev. Ira T. Wyche. There was a great need of the out-pouring of God's spirit as the membership had been reduced to eighty. Of the members that came into the Church as the fruits of this revival, and by certificate this year who became its support and strength in years to come, we note the names of John Long, Lockwood Hyatt, John A. Arthur, J. A. Farrow, Sarah C. Redding, Roseman Hancock, Elizabeth Buckman. Nearly one hundred joined the church at this time and of that number only two remain now, J. A. Farrow and Elizabeth Buckman, the others one by one have passed over the river and now rest under the shade of the trees. Blessed ones that remain, long may you linger to cheer us on and on by your Godly walk and influence. The year of 1843 the Church was called upon to mourn the death of its pastor, Rev. Chapel Feathersen. The yellow fever and died, his remains rest under the basement pulpit. In 1845 the Rev. John Todd Brame the most popular pastor the Church ever had, died; his remains were taken to New Bern.

Why it was I know not but the membership was again reduced from 146 in six years to 98 but rose again under the ministry of the Rev. S. M. Frost in 1848 to 138; under the Rev. H. T. Hudson in 1852 to 179; in 1853 to 193 and 1857 under the Rev. T. Page Ricaud to 216; the highest figure in its history previous to the war of 1861. During Bro. Ricaud's term that indispensable adjunct the station was bought and paid for a parsonage. Also during his second year the Church by the aid of John A. Arthur built for its colored congregation a separate church, called Avent's Chapel.

In 1859 Rev. W. E. Pell was pastor; in 1861 Rev. Charles P. Jones. Bro. Jones soon left his charge and entered the Army, and the charge was supplied by Rev. James E. Mann. Brother Mann did not remain long, on account of Federals taking charge of Washington; his flock was scattered and he

returned to his home in Winston. During the years of 1862, 1863, 1864, and 1865 the Church was without a pastor, but those noble brethren L. Hyatt, and W. S. Mayo held services regularly in the Church until it was burned and then in private houses until the war closed. In 1866-1867 John S. Long was pastor, and our membership had been reduced and scattered to 125. The congregation rented the Masonic Lodge and held services there. In 1869 Rev. W. H. Moore was pastor, and the membership during that year grew to 145. In 1870, 1871, 1872 1873 W. H. Call was pastor and under his ministry the church membership increased to 169.

During the war the Church edifice and parsonage was consumed by fire, which almost completely destroyed the entire town; and this, together with other losses, our membership was reduced to complete poverty. In 1866 Greenville was attached to the Washington station and the pastor provided by the Conference. 1867 an earnest effort was made to rebuild our Church on the site of the former house and the corner stone was laid by Rev. D. D. Moran, D.D. but our friends attempted too much; their plan was too costly, their hearts were larger than their purses, they relied too much on help from abroad, evidently forgetting that hundreds of churches besides theirs was in the same condition and must be rebuilt; but by earnest and persevering effort they succeeded by May 1873 in getting the basement in such a condition that the Washington District Conference held its session there. To the Reverends R. S. Moran, D.D., W. H. Moore, D.D., W. H. Call, and those noble brothers John a. Arthur, Lockwood Hyatt, J. A. Farrow, John F. Small, G. L. Buckman, Benjamin Cowell, Daniel Wharton, John Rose, W. S. Mayo, and A. W. Thomas and others. the church is greatly indebted for their present temple and to my sister Maggie Call, they also owe a debt of gratitude, which they can never repay - she having been the leader of various movements assisted by the ladies of the Church by which over one thousand dollars was raised. In 1874 Rev. A. R. Raven was pastor and the membership increased to 245 the highest figure since it became a church. During this year the church enjoyed glorious revival which ranks next in

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importance to the one in 1840.; about eighty souls were converted and sixty three added to the church. It extended to every class of society and to all the churches. In 1876 and 1877 Rev. B. B. Culbreth was pastor; no minister the church has ever made a more lasting impression personally upon our people and as we pass in and around the homes we frequently hear words of love and endearment spoken of him.

In 1878 Rev. John N. Andrews was pastor. This was one of the most notable years in all our history; one mingled with deepest sorrow and joy -- one in which the cypress and the ivy were entwined in garlands around each heart -- on February 2 my sainted father passed to his reward. He joined the church in the year 1840 in that great revival under the ministry of Rev. Ira T. Wyche. He occupied many positions of trust in the church, Class Leader, Superintendent of the Sunday School for more than thirty years, and to its cause and the children was devoted; yes he loved the children, and they loved him, and in token of their love they covered his casket with flowers entwined with their own little hands. Our town paper in speaking of him said: "He was a faithful consistent Christian, who enjoyed the confidence of the entire community. He was a man of energy, and force of character. always in the front ranks of workers of Christ. He was a man with a large benevolence, and alms were bestowed without hesitation. Our town mourns the loss of a good man. The righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance. We learn that the stores will be closed during the hour of his funeral in respect of one of our oldest merchants.."

In May of this year by the efforts of Capt. Perry, Capt. Gaskill, N. S. Fulford, Redding Brown, Wm. Chauncey, Edward Shaw Minnie Archbell, Jennie Munroe, Lou Mayo. Lou Rich, Ellen Chauncey, Eliza Whitford and Mary Miles, and many others, our church was painted, carpeted, furnished and dedicated to the service of the Almighty God by Rev. James E. Mann, D.D. Thus after years of struggle, sacrifice and self-denial we reached the goal of our highest ambition of our hopes, our church was completed. Joy was on every face and praises on every tongue to Him who led us day by day

through all our struggles to the end at last. To Him be all the glory.

On August 8, the church was again called upon the mourn the loss of one of its official members; one who had occupied the place of steward for many years Br, John S. Small. Bro. Small joined the Church in 1852 under the ministry of the Rev. H. T. Hudson. His name was peace, honored and beloved.

In 1879 S. M. Davis was pastor. Bro. Davis was the first unmarried minister the Church had had for a number of years, a fine preacher and a good man, and when he left was universally loved. In 1880 Rev. W. B. Doub was pastor. In 1881 Rev. John N. Andrews again returned to his charge.

In 1882, 1883, and 1884 Rev. Daniel May was pastor. During his pastorate the Church gave to the heavenly kingdom another one of its stewards D. B. Wharton. Bro. Wharton joined the Church under the ministry of Rev. H. T. Hudson in 1852. he was a faithful steward and discharged the duties of the position with a fidelity that drew to him the love and esteem of his pastor and the commendation of his Brethren. he sleeps the sleep of the good beside the church, no monument marks his resting place but it is in the hearing of those who knew him best and loved him most. Rest in peace dear brother while night's pale goddess with her starry attendants keep watch over thy grave, and the tall grass bends to shed its dewy tears upon thy dust. In 1885-6 Rev. T. Page Ricaud was pastor. He was as we have said before the pastor of this church before the war, and those of the membership that knew him hailed his coming with delight. His geniality, his sympathetic nature, at once drew all to him, and it was not long until Uncle was loved and revered with unbounded devotion. In '87-8-9-90 Rev. W. R. Ware was pastor, during his pastorate the church increased to the largest membership it has reach in its history, viz. 384.

It enjoyed the most powerful revival that stirred the community on every side, scores joined the church from the white head veteran of sin to the Sunday School scholar; but it was not long before death with ruthless hand invaded our ranks and gathered to the church above one of the noblest, purest and best teachers, Warren S. Mayo.

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Bro. Mayo joined the Church in 1853 under the ministry of Rev. J. W. Tucker. His was a beautiful and Christian life as I ever knew and I knew him from early childhood. He visited the orphan and widow in their affliction, and kept himself unspotted from the world. He was steward, Class Leader and Superintendent of the Sunday School for a number of years. During the pastorate of Bro. Ware by his effort a church was built out in the country on Jamesville Road in a neighborhood, where many of the members of the church in Washington resided, dedicated and is now on an appointment on Pantego circuit.

In 1891-2-3 Rev W. S. Davis was pastor. Bro. Davis was one of the ablest ministers the church had ever had, in years, if not the ablest. I have never known one so popular in the pulpit. During his pastorate the membership again reduced to 286. This was mainly caused by the members of Ware's chapel moving there membership from the church here to that place, and revision of the roll from which many were dropped. During his pastorate the Church was again bereaved by the death of one of its oldest and most influential members, one who had contributed more to its support than any, Lockwood Hyatt. Uncle Hyatt joined the church by certificate under the ministry of Rev. Ira T. Wyche in the year 1840. He occupied many positions of trust in the church, steward, chairman of the Board of Trustees and teacher in the Sunday School. In every condition in which he was placed his fidelity was sure. He loved the church above his chief joy, and to him as much as anyone are we indebted for our present house of worship. His Christian life was beautiful; and shone forth with childlike simplicity, and when the summons came he was ready. How much is contained in this word. It is life's history written in a word of Christian devotion to duty, love and trust. Sweet is his memory. Thus have we traced the simple story of our dear old Church from its infancy to 1894 when the Rev. R. J. Moorman was assigned as pastor to this charge. Bro. Moorman has a united church behind him with prospects as bright as the most sanguine hearts could wish. May that God who has been our guide all these years direct

his footsteps so when his pastorate shall have come to a close much good may have been done in the name of the Master, toward the up building of his kingdom. My task is done, my story is told. I am glad I have been permitted to tell of the triumphs and victories of our dear Methodism, that I love so well, but not of its defeats, it has never in all of its history known the meaning of the word, but has ever kept waving in the breeze its glorious banner inscribed thereon; "The World of Jesus," and has march on and on until dotted here and there on the hill top, dale and valley, its churches with their spires pointing skyward call the wandering feet back to home and Heaven. Its chief glory has been, it carried the gospel to the poor, and that the common people heard it gladly. In the pews the humble are as welcome as the rich. It disclaims all denominational bigotry, and exclusiveness, and greets with Christian fellowship all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. To much of its success may be ascribed its itinerant system, peculiar to its own, and in all this land today you cannot find a Methodist minister in the regular work without a charge and a congregation without a pastor.

Such is our Methodism handed down to us by our fathers. Oh! how should love and prize such a heritage. Around her alters our mothers and fathers have worshipped; our children have been baptized; and converted, and our young men and maidens have plighted their troth to walk the pathway of life until death do them part. A new year with new responsibilities is now upon the church and lets rally to its support as we have never done before and cheerfully give that sacrifice that will demand success, and God will bless her as of yore, and the year will close with joy and gladness in every heart, remembering that "he that observeth the wind will no sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap, but he that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again rejoicing bringing in the sheaves with him."

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**By J. A. Arthur**

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