

From the book Recollections and Observations by L.L. Nash, D.D.

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Chapter XI Washington Station 1898 to 1901

"The North Carolina Conference met in Elizabeth City the latter part of November, 1898. Bishop O.P. Fitzgerald presided. I had spent three years at Fayetteville, and I desired to get an appointment higher up the country, as my wife was still a great sufferer, and I had found that a malarial climate did not agree with her. But our congregation in Washington, N.C., had commenced to build a new church, and they were heavily in debt, with the church incomplete and the congregation somewhat divided, and the Presiding Elder of that District determined to have me sent there...

It is painful to me to record these facts, but I cannot be true to history and not state them.The scheme worked, and I was sent to Washington, where the climate aggravated my wife's trouble and came near causing her death. All parties to this transaction have passed to their reward, and I hope they are in heaven; for while I state these facts, I feel no unkindness to the men who schemed for what seemed to be very much against the interest of my family, as well as myself.

I went to Washington, N.C., in December, 1898. I found the congregation worshipping in the town hall. They had commenced to build a nice brick church. The building was under cover and no money in hand to complete it, with a six thousand dollar debt to provide for. It took five thousand dollars to complete the church, and the conference had been invited to hold the session of 1899 there. I was informed that the church would be completed without difficulty as the congregation was amply able to build it. He said, "It is no Fifth Street affair." I said nothing, for I saw I was in for it, let the trouble be what it would. I went there and went to work with all my might to relieve the situation, for I knew if there was any failure it would be charged to me, as the Conference was kept in entire ignorance of the situation. With hard and constant work, we succeeded in finishing the church building at an additional cost of \$5,000.00, which we raised that year. We bonded the debt of \$6,000.00 for ten years, and when the Conference met, we were ready for it and had the church dedicated.

Our Conference met in Washington, North Carolina, in December, 1899. No conference had been held in that town for about fifty-five years. There was no one living there that remembered the session that was held there, I think, in 1844. The church at Washington was founded in 1784, the same year that the M.E. Church was organized at the Christmas General Conference that met in Baltimore.....

During the war between the states the greater part of the town was burned down, including the churches. When the war was over, the people there went to work and under great difficulties built a brick church. It was a rather unsightly building, with a very sharp roof. They were unable to complete it and worshipped in the basement for several years. When I first entered the ministry they were worshipping in that basement, and I assisted Rev. A.R. Raven in a meeting held there. They finally finished the auditorium,

largely through donations made by old brother Lockwood Hyatt, and a Captain Perry, who was there in command of a revenue cutter.

When the congregation determined to build a new church there was considerable opposition from some of the older member, and when I was sent there the feeling between those who had opposed building the new church and the majority who had determined to build, was not as cordial as it should have been. This condition was not all helpful to us in the work.

There was a graveyard connected with the church, and the larger space needed for the new church required the removal of some of the dead to the city cemetery. This caused some rather unpleasant feelings on the part of some of the members.....Some of the members at Washington never became reconciled to what was done about their dead.

There was an old colored man who owned a lot adjoining the church in Washington. His cabin was the next house to the church, and the railroad desired to purchase his lot that they might run their tracks close by the church, to get down to their terminal point. I bought this lot for the church, as it would have been a great annoyance to have the railroad track running within forty feet of the church. Some of the members were very much opposed to investing any money in a lot, while we owed so much on the church building; but I got one of our members, Brother E.W. Ayers, to pay for the lot and have it deeded to himself until I could raise the money to pay for it. We paid the old colored man \$500.00 for his lot and had him a house built at the back of it, to be his while he lived.

While our Conference was in session I secured Dr. J. J. Lafferty to give us a lecture to raise the money to pay for the lot. He came and delivered his lecture on "The Days of Our Daddies." We secured the old opera house in Washington for this lecture, and had a fine audience. Dr. Lafferty was a natural humorist, and on that occasion he surpassed himself. He spoke for two hours and ten minutes, and held his crowd to the last moment. Lafferty was simply inimitable. I do not suppose any one who heard him on that occasion will ever forget that lecture. It was humorous, but at the same time one of the best answers to pessimism I ever heard. He donated that lecture to help me pay for that lot, and would not accept but ten dollars for his time and trouble.

We paid for the lot, and I advised the church never to sell it, for if they sold it, the railroad might buy it ...;but they have since sold it to a member of the church. Our Methodist people have an aversion to owning any property except for actual use for the church.

Bishop Hendrix dedicated the church in Washington, notwithstanding we owed a bonded debt of six thousand dollars; but before I left Washington we paid five hundred dollars of the debt, and it was all paid in less than five years.

I have said our church in Washington was burned by the Federal army during the war. After fifty years the government paid the church four thousand five hundred dollars for the property burned. They had built and paid for two houses of worship before the government re-imbursed (sic) them.