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1850 - 1950 Beaver Dam Baptist Church Historical Sketch

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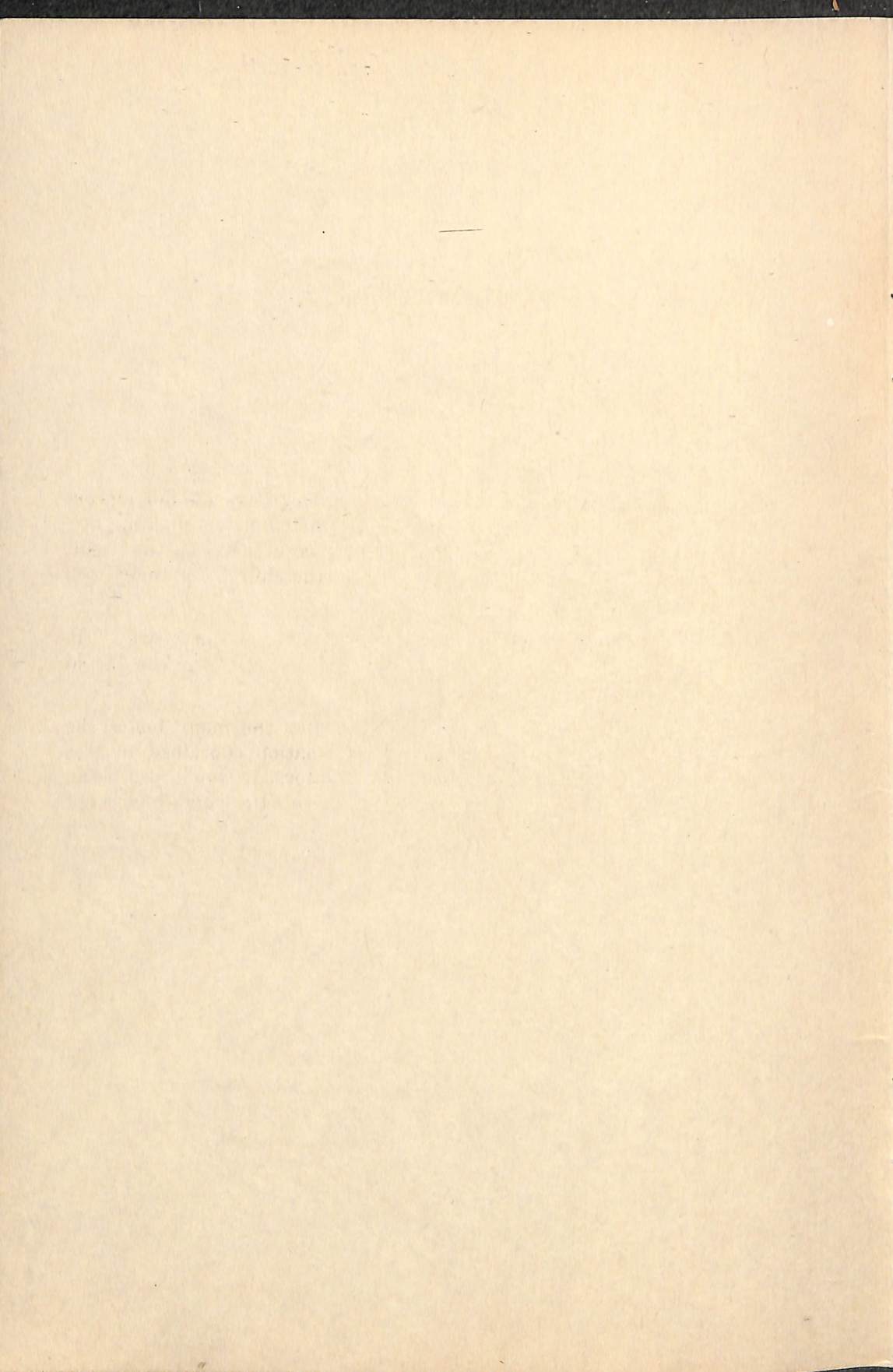
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Beaver Dam
Baptist Church

*See page about
Rev. G. M. Webb*

Historical Sketch

1850 - 1950



PREFACE

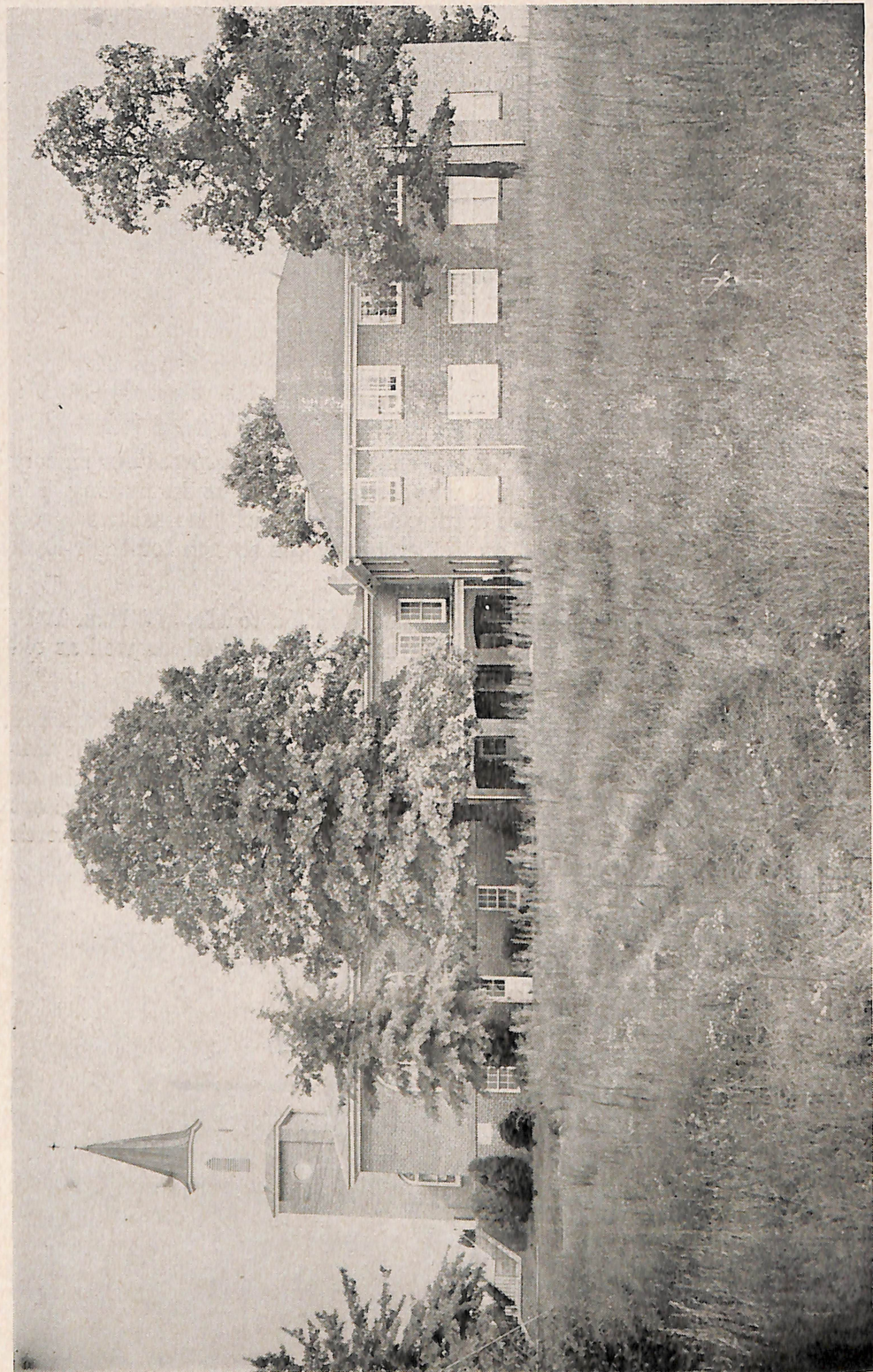
We the Authors of this historical sketch, wish to express our sincere appreciation to the many people who have assisted us in making this book possible. If this book meets with any degree of success, the credit in a large measure is due to the membership of the church for their loyal support of the project.

We wish especially to express our appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. T. P. Hamrick for the information they so graciously furnished, as well as old Church records they furnished us access to.

We are also indebted to Mrs. J. G. Greene for the many hours she spent as our Secretary in preparing the information contained in this book, so that it might be turned over to the printers. It would also be an act of ingratitude not to mention those who through the years have kept the records of the Church, for without these records, this historical sketch would not have been possible.

Co-Authors;

Jean McSwain
Robert Morgan



BEAVER DAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. John W. Suttie



Minister of the Gospel for 60 years; Moderator of the Kings Mountain Baptist Ass'n. for the past 38 years; President of North Carolina State Baptist Convention in 1949; Pastor of this Church since 1935.

The history of Beaver Dam Church is a long and very interesting history. Throughout this history is found one main theme and that is progress.

Beaver Dam Baptist Church was constituted on December 23, 1850. Some question has arisen as to exactly how the name Beaver Dam was given this church. From the most realible information available, it is learned that beavers had built a dam across a small creek near where this church was organized and it was from this that the name Beaver Dam was taken.

For sometime before the church was constituted, several ministers had been conducting services at a stand near the present site of this church. It was necessary for these ministers to ride horseback to attend these meetings. It was after several such meetings and a great deal of interest being manifest, it was decided there was what seemed to be an opportunity to establish a regular Baptist Church and so it was on the 23rd of December, 1850 that a presbetry composed of and constituted from the deaconship and ministers of the following Baptist Churches: Sandy Run, Boiling Springs, Mount Sinai and Zion was assembled. Members for the new church gathered at this meeting were from other churches and some desiring to be baptized. The churches from which members brought their letters were Double Springs, Zion and Sandy Run.

The new church was duly constituted with 43 members, 24 male and 19 female. The charter members of Beaver Dam Baptist Church are as listed below:

MALE

Elijah Eskridge
John Padgett
John J. Jones
William McSwain
Daivd Hamrick
Jesse Hardin
George McSwain
Drury D. McSwain
Howsen Harrill
Whitson Dye
Thomas Harrill
Nathaniel Harrill
Elijah Hamrick
D. C. Webb
Isaac N. Earls
David Bostic
Irvin J. Hardin
Andy Hamrick
Charles Webb
Weldon Durham
James McSwain
Reubin Bridges
L. D. Webb

FEMALE

Susannah McSwain
Susannah Bostic
Polly McSwain
Nancy Hamrick
Cynthia Panel
Rachel Padgett
Lucia McSwain
Margaret Pinson
Eliza Eskridge
Sarah Price
Frances Bridges
Priscilla Harrill
Mary Randall
Jane Hamrick
Nancy Pinson
Esther Padgett
S. E. Elliott
Elizabeth McKinney
Nancy McSwain



Board of Deacons, Beaver Dam Baptist Church

At this meeting Rev. R. P. Logan was called as the first pastor and served the church until 1853. It is reported that he received as a salary for his first years work \$10.20. It is known further that some of the following pastors did not receive this much, some of them receiving as low as \$8.75 for their years work as pastor. In connection with this, however, it should be pointed out that in the year 1850, being pastor was not a full time work as it is today.

Evidently, Reverend Logan was an outstanding leader for it was he who for the first three years of the church life kept it together and saw that not a single scheduled service was missed. If he could not attend, it was arranged for someone else to fill his place. Also the same tribute must be paid to the first members of this church for it was their loyalty and true faith in Christ that caused them not only to maintain a church but also to grow. It is significant to note that the first mention of a service being missed by this group was nine years after the church was founded in August 1859.

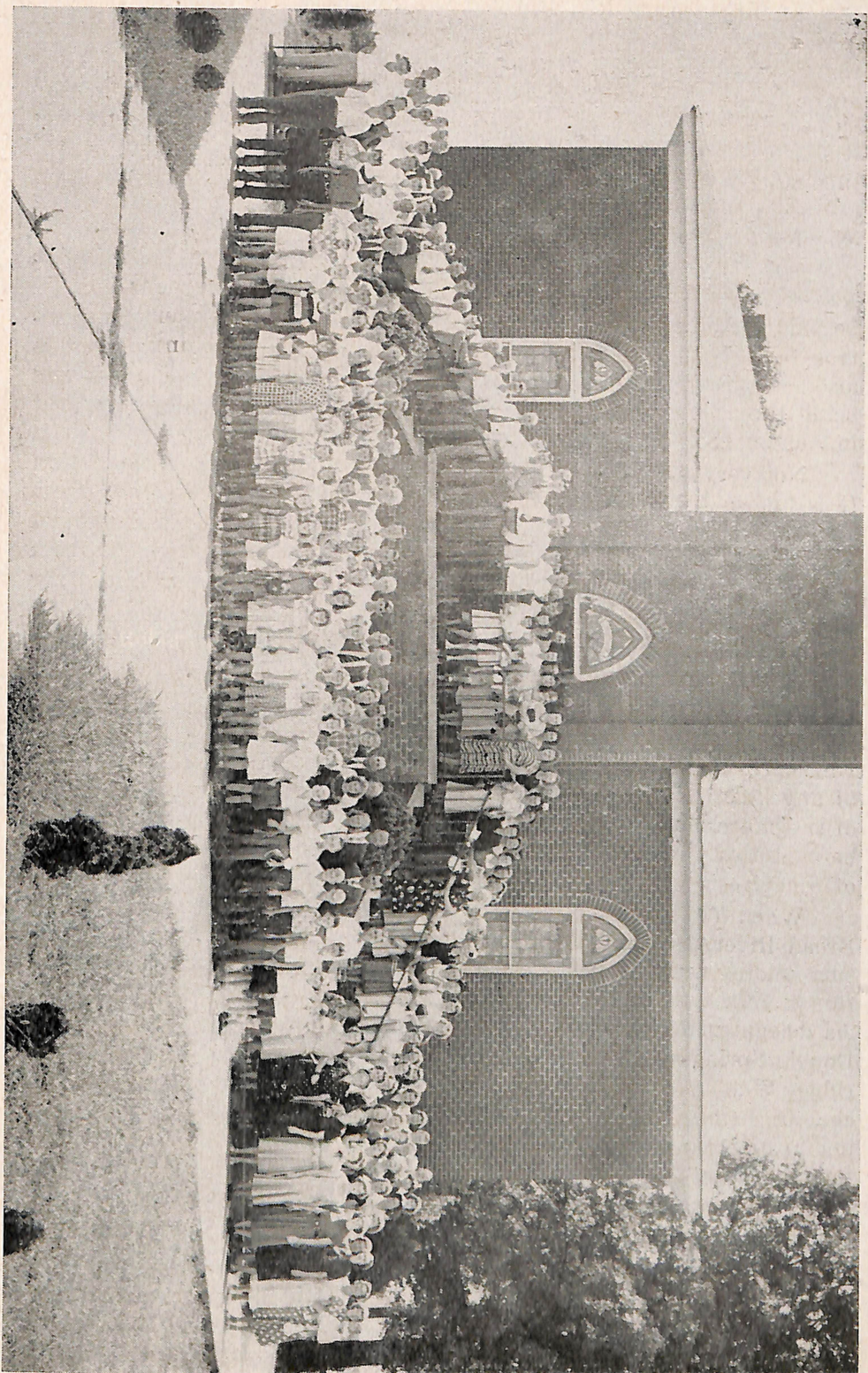
Not very much is known further of the organization of this church. It is known however that J. J. Jones was elected the first church clerk and served until 1853 when D. C. Webb was elected.

The only two known deacons in this body was John Padgett and Elijah Eskridge. The first deacon mentioned in the records of the church as being elected was Nathaniel Harrill, this was in 1852.

As to the building this group met in, the first Beaver Dam Church building was constructed of logs and situated about 500 yards west of the present church building near a spring. It was found essential for obvious reasons during this period that all homes and churches be constructed near spring. It is further known that this building had no heat nor lights of any kind. It was the custom for someone to build a large fire in front of the church before each meeting for those attending to warm themselves before entering and after the service was dismissed. As to the furnishings of this church, nothing is known other than that logs were used for seats.

When first organized, Beaver Dam Church was a member of the Broad River Association which at that time covered all of Cleveland and surrounding counties. When the Kings Mountain Association was formed, this church voted in May 1851, to become a member of this Association. As delegates to the first Kings Mountain Associational meeting, held at Double Springs the 7th of December, 1851, this church sent Elijah Eskridge, Wm. McSwain and John Padgett. Thereby this church became a charter member of the Kings Mountain Baptist Association. It is interesting to note that as their part of the Associational expenses and minutes for that year, this church sent \$1.00 as its part.

Some interesting facts about the first years of the church which should be mentioned is that the meetings were held once each month, these meetings being held quite often on Saturday. At these meetings, it was a part of the church function to hold the monthly conference. Church communion was held on the 4th Lord's day in August, November, February and May, and on each Saturday preceding church communion, the rules of the church were read.



Group attending Church service Sept. 10, 1950.

The regular church conference was considered to be one of the most important functions of the church life. In these meetings all matters pertaining to the operation of the church were taken care of. At these conferences the enforcement of regulations regarding the attendance and conduct of the church members were taken up. The rules by which a church member was governed in the early days of the church were much more rigid than today. As an example, one of the rules closely followed was: "Any male member not attending the regular meetings is to send the cause thereof by some member if possible to the church, or attend the next meeting if possible to render the cause thereof themselves". Some members were excluded from fellowship for not obeying the rule.

In addition there were several other rules for which delinquent members were brought to trial and prosecuted. The church was very prompt to act on these members and in most cases disposition of such charges was made at the following conference meeting. Most of the offenders brought before the church confessed and requested the church to bear with them which in most cases was done. However, some who refused to make such acknowledgment or were chronic offenders were excluded. Most of these excluded were later restored to church fellowship when they repented and asked to become church members again. The first member excluded from Beaver Dam Baptist Church was excluded, as noted in the minutes, for fishing and playing on the Sabbath.

The church although limited in it's first years in such things as transportation and communications was able to carry on the normal functions of a church as we recognize them today and each year the membership showed steady growth.

As early as September 1851, the church granted Wm. McSwain regular license to preach. The wording of this license being rather unusual in that it granted him the right to preach in all the world. It was about the same time that J. J. Jones was also granted license to preach.

The church was able in August 1852 to hold the first revival meeting at which time 14 members joined the church by letter and experience. It was in this meeting that the third colored person became a member, the second colored member being a slave girl whose name was Jane and belonged to Elijah Eskridge. She had joined the church in 1851 and in years to follow other colored people became members of the church. One colored woman, Lucy McSwain, was a charter member of the church and there are members in our church today who remember when she attended the services and sat in the rear of the church. She was buried in the northeast end of the church cemetery in April 1881.

Several other activities were entered into by the church, one being the improvement in the first church building when a public subscription was made to raise money to make seats and line the cracks in the building.

An attempt was made in March 1856 to organize some sort of Sabbath school. This attempt, however, met with very little if any success for no mention of the existence of such a school is made again until 1877. It was in this year that a more concentrated effort was put forth to establish a Sabbath School. J. T. Harrill was elected superintendent and G. C. McSwain



Sunday School Teachers and Officers

was named a teacher. In addition, S. H. Namrick and C. C. Hamrick was elected as male teachers and Amanda Bostic and E. Webb as female teachers. This attempt did not achieve lasting success for it is known that some members of the church at that time objected to such an organization as they feared such a school might bring false and objectionable teachings into the church. In addition there were other factors which made the operation of Sabbath School more difficult, one being that no heat was available in the winter and it was necessary for the Sabbath School when first organized to operate only in the summer.

Another attempt to reorganize the Sabbath School was made in 1879. J. T. Harrill was again elected superintendent and J. L. Wray the assistant superintendent. S. Hamrick was elected secretary and N S. Harrill was elected treasurer.

To assist the churches in organizing Sabbath Schools, the Rev. G. M. Webb had been appointed some years prior by the Kings Mountain Ass'n to work among the churches as a Sunday School Missionary.

It is believed that Beaver Dam was one of the first churches in the association to maintain a year-round Sunday School. The records show that this church has operated a Sunday School the year-round since 1879. The Sunday School was helped a lot when, in 1881, the church bought its first stove at a cost of \$21.00. This enabled the Sunday School to carry on throughout the winter with a great deal more comfort.

In 1856, the first call was made on the church by the Bible Board of Nashville, Tennessee, which we now know as the Sunday School Board. This call was for money to help distribute Bibles. The church voted not to send the funds. The following year in September 1857, the church took a public collection to obtain money to assist in sending preachers to the Catawba Valley which was called in a letter dated that year, "A destitute region of baptist preaching".

The church in its early years was also active in helping to organize other churches and in 1860 sent its deaconship and pastor to help organize a church 12 miles east of Rutherfordton. The name of this church was not identified in the records.

The church was not without its problems in the early years and finances was one of the main problems. This is shown by the fact that in 1860 some of the church members felt that a more suitable meeting house was needed but it was decided that this could not be done at this time. Additional evidence of the financial problems confronted by the church is shown by the fact that it took 17 members to raise \$1.00 which was sent to the Kings Mountain Association to help pay for minutes of the associational meetings that year. This money for some reason was not turned over to the association by the delegates and was brought back to the church and used for the purchase of wine for the church communion service.

The affiliation of Beaver Dam Church with the Kings Mountain Association has not always been harmonious, for in 1859, Beaver Dam along with 5 other churches in the association withdrew and formed what was called the Constitutional Kings Mountain Association. This action took place in 1859 and was brought about by the liquor question. This subject had been discussed in the church for several years but no definite solution

T. P. Hamrick



Oldest living member of Beaver Dam Church; Deacon for 52 years; Church Clerk 1885 - 1908, and 1913 - 1916; also church trustee.

could be arrived at. In 1859, however, the association passed a resolution which was not to the liking of these 6 churches and so it was that they withdrew from the association. The churches which did accept this resolution were faced with dissension in their churches and it was necessary for them to turn out of their church large numbers of their members. This division of the association continued with the two groups holding separate associational meetings until 1866. It can be said to the credit of this church that it was one of the leaders in bringing about the reunion of the two groups. This was done by the church adopting a resolution in 1866 asking for a consideration of this matter in sending it to their association.

As early as 1878, the church showed an interest in Christian Education for it was in that year the church made up money to help J. M. Bridges receive an education. The record of this action as stated in the minutes for that year is as follows: "The church voted to help Brother J. M. Bridges procure an English education at Boiling Springs Academy".

As noted by previous mentioned facts, the young church was growing in all respects. This is emphasized by the fact that in 1868 the church built its second building, this was built close to a spring as was the first one. The location was about 150 yards northwest of the present church building. This new building was needed very badly for several reasons, one being the old building was not large enough to accomodate the number of people which attended the services, another being that the old building was in a very bad state of repair. This fact is shown clearly by an entry in the minutes of that year which stated that the old building was rotten. So it was that on Saturday, February 22, 1868, that the first meeting was held in this new building. The cost of this building, as entered in the records of that year, was \$24.00 and 52 pounds of nails. \$30.00 was pledged but \$6.00 was not collected. This building was a plain wooden structure and it was not until 1878, 10 years later, that this building was ceiled.

Also in the year 1868, the group felt the need of a burying ground and in July 1868, a plot of ground, which is now the present cemetery, was secured. It is of interest to note that Howsen Harrill was the first person buried in this cemetery in 1870. An unusual fact is that his mother, Mrs. Susannah Harrill who was affectionately called "aunt Sukie" was to follow her son in 1871 and was the second person buried in this cemetery. To some it might seem unusual that the church had existed for 18 years without a burying ground but it is to be remembered that in this period it was customary for people to be buried in family cemeteries.

After the building of the second church house, the membership increased rather rapidly. In 1872 the total membership was 152 and by 1883 the membership had grown to 258. One of the new members during this period was James Smith who was baptized in 1882 when he was 80 years old.

With this large membership the church once again outgrew its building and in 1883 it was deemed necessary to build another church house. The committee which had charge of building this house was composed of: M. N. Hamrick, G. C. McSwain, J. L. Wray, C. Greene, George McSwain D. Bostic, T. C. Eskridge, George Doggett, D. B. Greene, L. J. Holland,



Baptist Training Union

C. C. Hamrick and D. H. Smith. It was during the revival meeting in 1883 on Thursday of that week that the congregation moved into the new house. The location of the new house was moved to the present site of Beaver Dam Church. It is said that the very finest forest timber was used in the construction of this building. This information is substantiated by the fact that when in 1923 the church voted to remodel and enlarge the church building, the building which was constructed in 1883, was turned to face the highway, a basement added and the building brick veneered. So it is that the main auditorium of our present building incorporates the one constructed in 1883. The committee which directed this work in 1923 was composed of: T. P. Hamrick, J. S. Wilson, John Wilson, A. B. Humphries, J. L. Blanton, and David Greene.

It was during the revival meeting in 1883 that our present pastor, Reverend John W. Suttle, was baptized when he was 9 years old. When our pastor joined the church, he was considered by some to be too young, being only 9 years old but one member of the church believed that this young lad had truly accepted Christ as his Saviour, this member being Mr. C. C. Greene, better known as Uncle Neilly, for it was he who made the motion to accept this young boy into the church. His faith has truly been justified. A very large group joined the church at this meeting as a total of 59 new members were added.

The church has not only grown in membership and plant facilities but also in its scope of activities, having started yearly contributions to missions and to christian education. These contributions began very modestly for instance the year 1876 Beaver Dam contributed to state missions \$1.60 and also an equal amount to foreign missions. This was increased until in 1888 the church contributed to various missions as follows: Baptist Orphanage \$10.00, Christian Education \$2.00, Home and Indian Missions \$4.00, and to State Missions \$6.00.

Another example of growth may be noted in that prior to 1886 the pastor's salary had been raised each year by contributions from individuals but after that year the excellent method was adopted for collecting the pastor's salary, the excellent method being that a collection was taken every Sunday and the pastor's salary was taken from this.

The year 1886, Beaver Dam for the first time was host to the Kings Mountain Baptist Association. It was necessary to accomodate the crowds which attended to utilize the school house which at that time was very near the church. Beaver Dam was also host to the Association in 1906, 1928 and 1949. A report of the meeting at Beaver Dam in 1886 is as follows:

"The 36th session assembled at Beaver Dam September 23, 1886 and days following, and after the sermon by Rev. G. M. Webb, from Luke 19:10, Messrs H. F. Schenck, D. S. Lovelace and T. D. Lattimore were elected moderator, clerk and treasurer respectively. A committee on Woman's missions was appointed at that session. The churches pledged for State missions \$234.00, for Education \$113.10. A Committee on Baptist Orphanage was appointed and \$28.50 was raised for the Orphanage. Rev. C. Durham was present representing the Orphanage, and the body passed a resolution heartily endorsing the Orphanage and urging the churches to contribute



Woman's Missionary Society

regularly to it, as much so as to missions and education. The ladies met in the Academy to consider missions and were addressed by Dr. Nelson Dr. W. A. Nelson and C. Durham preached missionary sermons, and took up collection of \$31.40. The session raised \$350.94 for missions, total contributions for the past year being \$7,924.31, with 40 churches and 6194 members, having baptized 423 and received by letter 315 during past year, making total additions 738".

It would be a mistake to omit the christian influence that the church put forth in this community during these years. An example of this being the interest that was taken in the schools of the community for it was as early as 1861 that the church granted an arm of support to a small school located close by. This influence and interest was continued and manifest and it was in 1904 that the church paid \$20.00 for an acre of land on which to build a school. This acre of land being located approximately one mile northeast of the present church site on what is now the A. H. Padgett farm.

One could not completely give the history of this period without mentioning the music of the church. The first mention of a hymn book was made in 1868 when it is recorded that the church authorized the purchase of a Bible and Hymn book. But for a period of 20 years after this the church had no musical accompaniment for it was not until 1888 that the church voted to buy an Organ. It should be mentioned that the committee appointed to approve the selection of this organ was composed of three women with Mr. W. J. D. Greene to buy the Organ. The women on this committee were: Amanda Bostic, Mrs. J. T. Bridges and Mrs. Fannie Doggett.

This was in some way a radical departure from precedent in as much as a thorough search of the church records up to year 1888 shows that no woman before this time had ever been placed on a committee in this church. It should be mentioned that this action did not meet the approval of all church members and in addition, the placing of these women on this committee caused comment throughout the Association.

The above mentioned Organ served the church up until 1900 when it was replaced with a new Organ the case of which now serves as a book-case in the cradle roll department. The Organ purchased in 1900 served the church until 1924 when the church bought its first piano. It is significant to note that the purchase of this piano was objected to by some of the church people.

Beaver Dam Church has licensed and ordained several pastors into the ministry. The names of all these are not available, however, some of these men are as follows: Wm. McSwain, J. H. Carboro, M. Pannell, C. E. Beaver, J. J. Jones, F. B. Hamrick, W. F. McGinnis and Nolan Howington,

The present pastor, J. W. Suttle, is a son of the church and it is interesting to note that on Saturday, May 21, 1892, this church was requested to send the deaconship and minister to assist in the ordination of Brother John W. Suttle at the Shelby Baptist Church. It is significant to note that on this date, he delivered the sermon at this church.



Baptist Brotherhood

As previously mentioned in this history, Beaver Dam Church has been a mother church in sending out members to form several new churches. The names of all these churches are not recorded, however, it is known that members sent from this church helped form Pleasant Ridge, Lattimore and Poplar Springs. In connection with the founding of Poplar Springs Church, Beaver Dam Church sent \$13.30 to help build the church house.

At the turn of the century, we find the church in a very active condition with a membership of 305 and a growing Sunday School. The pastor in 1900 was Rev. B. M. Bridges, Mr. T. P. Hamrick was Sunday School Superintendent and also served as church clerk. The church had six active Sunday School classes with the following teachers: W. B. McSwain, D. H. Smith, Miss Maggie Glasco, J. D. Brooks, C. W. Callahan, J. L. Blanton, E. S. Glasco and B. D. Blanton.

The pastor's salary in 1900 was \$100.00 per year. The sexton's salary was \$5.00 per year, his duties included not only looking after the church house, but taking care of the church spring. The pastor's salary in that year was paid at the end of the year. However, in 1902, the church voted to pay the pastor's salary quarterly or semi-annually.

The first mention of trustees of the church is made in 1909, those listed in the records that year as trustees are: J. L. Blanton, D. B. Greene, J. D. McSwain, C. C. Hamrick and T. P. Hamrick. These were naturally not the first trustees of the church but the first recorded list of trustees.

After the turn of the century, the church continued to show progress in all respects. The pastor's salary in 1910 being \$200.00 and the membership had grown to 276. Also in that year the church contributed \$10.00 to the poor, \$20.00 to State Missions, \$10.00 to Home Missions, \$13.00 to Foreign Missions, \$13.00 to the Orphanage, \$2.00 for Ministerial education \$2.00 for Ministerial Relief, \$4.00 to Old Ministers Relief, \$2.00 to the Associational Minute Fund.

Rev. A. C. Irvin served as pastor of the church from 1907 until 1916. Many of our present members were baptized by Rev. Irvin.

It was in the early 1920's the church started other activities in connection with Christian work. An example of this being the organization of a B. Y. P. U., on September 18, 1921. Miss Ozell Gardner met with the church and assisted in this organization. Mr. J. B. McGinnis was elected President and Miss Mildred Hamrick, Secretary of this organization. This Organization has since that date shown steady growth and is today very active and considered one of the more important functions of the church.

The founding of the B. Y. P. U. at this church was followed shortly by the organization of a W. M. U. No record is found of the first officers of this organization other than Mrs. Chivous McSwain was the first Pres. It has grown from its inception and today it is well organized and assists the church in many ways.

One of the chief reasons for many new activities during these years was the better church building. In 1923, the church was remodeled and enlarged which gave the church 6 Sunday School rooms and in 1924 electric lights were installed. This was followed by a heating plant installed in 1928.