

1954-04-22

1954, April 22

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Recommended Citation

Jones, M. (1954, April 22). Cleveland County Early Days, The Daily Star. Fay Webb Gardner Collection, Gardner-Webb University Archives, John R. Dover Memorial Library, Boiling Springs, NC.

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SHELBY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH which was built between 1871 and 1875.



TWENTY YEARS LATER IN 1895 the roof was changed and towers added.

HISTORY OF SHELBY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

In the evening when twilight melts into dark, I look across the roof tops and see the lovely electrically - lighted spire of the new Presbyterian Church reaching toward the moon, there comes to my mind the question: What kind of light did those Presbyterians have in the evenings nearly 100 years ago when they got together to talk about organizing a church?

In the 1850's they undoubtedly had the mellow glow of candle light; but along in 1871 to 1875, when the quaint little church pictured above on the left was under construction, it is quite probable they were using some kind of crude, oil-burning lamps with tin reflectors; even though the majority of the villagers were pathetically afraid of the explosive qualities of kerosene oil, which was just coming into use.

CHURCH ORGANIZED

On a memorable day in September, 1858, a group of nine Presbyterians, — two men and seven women—met with the Rev. Jesse Rankin, evangelist, and formally organized Shelby Presbyterian Church.

During the years before organization, and afterward until completion of the church building, the few Presbyterians got together for occasional preaching services.

These services were sometimes held in the homes of the members; sometimes in the court house sometimes in the Methodist Church which had been built about 1844-45, and was located on the corner of East Warren and S. DeKalb Street; and sometimes the meetings were held in the Baptist Church, built about 1848 on the same lot the present church building now occupies.

Among the visiting ministers who preached to the group were: The Rev. W. T. Savage, the Rev. A. A. Porter, D.D., the Rev. Nathan Shotwell (father of Randolph Shotwell), the Rev. J. W. Query, the Rev. R. N. Davis, the Rev. R. Z. Johnson, and the Rev. McNeal Turner, D. D., who operated a well-known boarding school for boys in the old Ross building.

These ministers not only held preaching service, but they baptized children, received members into the church, and administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Parenthetically, one wonders if tokens were required of those early communicants. It used to be the custom in the Presbyterian Churches to require of the would-be communicant a token (which had been sent in advance by the Session) indicating that the conduct of that person had been such as to merit participation with his fellows in the celebration of the

Lord's Supper. I am told that in earlier years the Presbyterians used these tokens, but I do not know when the practice was discontinued.

ONLY NINE MEMBERS

The official Church record lists the names of the persons who met on the 18th of September, 1858, to organize Shelby Presbyterian Church as follows: Isaac Erwin and wife, Mrs. Margaret Erwin, Mrs. Margaret Forbis, Mrs. Jane Wilson, Mrs. Margaret Dellinger, W. E. Ryburn, and Martin Mullino. These are the eight names written in the record, but it is generally accepted that there were nine members, and the older local Presbyterians say the name of Mrs. Ellen Quinn should be added. Isaac Erwin was elected Elder. The official record is very sketchy and doubtless much that should have been written was omitted.

Quoting further from the undated record, "The following persons have been connected since the organization: Mrs. Cora Gaither, Mrs. Ann Ryburn, Mrs. Nancy Ford, Mrs. Amanda Jones, H. F. Jones, Miss Susan Maxwell, and J. H. Gouger and wife."

The Mecklenburg Presbytery

met here in 1870. The leaders felt that God had predestined and ordained that Shelby should have a Presbyterian Church. The Rev. John Douglas, the Rev. Nathan Shotwell, and William Tiddy (of Lincolnton) were appointed "a committee to devise means of building a house of worship." In September, 1875, the committee reported to Presbytery that the building was completed and paid for at a cost of \$1800. And the building pictured above on the left, was dedicated on the 30th of October, 1875.

We, of today, have no conception of what it took to get that church built. In 1858, when the group was organized, the community was prosperous. Fifty white families—maybe more—lived within the village. Including Negro slaves there was probably a total of more than 500 persons in the town.

DARK DAYS

There were a number of stores carrying a general line of merchandise; and in the weekly newspapers the merchants advertised, among other things, handsome silks for ladies' dresses, and mate-

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IN CLEVELAND'S EARLY

Starts On Second Front

rials for clothes for the family.

But in 1861 the cruel, unnecessary war came, and robbed homes of fathers and sons. Where once there had been joy and prosperity, only sorrow and poverty remained. Everybody was acutely poor.

During the years between 1869 and 1875 it became necessary for the protection of the lives and property of the people of the county that a secret society—the Ku Klux Klan—which in the beginning was made up of a high type of men, operate to protect the citizens and their families from the forces of evil which descended upon them from the outside, and threatened to destroy them thru the black men who had been (and who in many cases still were) their friends.

Furthermore, they were plagued with an Army of Occupation of Yankee soldiers which caused additional trouble between the white man and the black. The record does not show where they got the money to pay for the Church. It was doubtless paid for largely by the Presbytery.

CHURCH LOT GIVEN

When, in 1843, James Love made deed to the town of Shelby for the 150-acre tract of land granted to him by the State of North Carolina as a nucleus for a town, he stipulated emphatically that four lots should be set aside for churches (and the meaning was clear that he included the Presbyterian Church). It appears that this part of his gift was carelessly handled; and I am told that when the Presbyterians wanted a lot to build their church they were told that no free lot was available.

Mrs. Martha Beattie, a member of the ARP Church, donated a lot which was sold for \$225 and "this was the beginning of the house of worship."

FIVE VALIANT WOMEN

When the church was completed Dr. R. Z. Johnson was appointed by Presbytery "with the authority of evangelist" to hold services in it once each month. When Dr. Johnson took over he found that the organization which had

been previously built up had disintegrated, and that the church had only five resident members, all women. These five women had labored and striven valiantly for years to hold the organization together. The local church owes these five women a tremendous debt. The official record does not give the names of the five, but in a news story published in the Shelby Aurora in July, 1903, their names are mentioned as follows: Mrs. Ellen Quinn, Mrs. Ann Ryburn, Mrs. Amanda Jones, Mrs. E. B. Jennings, and Mrs. Margaret Dellinger.

Let us identify some of these early residents. Mrs. Ellen Quinn was the wife of Anonymous Quinn, and the grandmother of DeWitt Quinn; Mrs. Ann Jennings was the wife of E. B. Jennings, and the grandmother of Miss Frances Jennings; Mrs. Ann Ryburn was the wife of W. E. Ryburn and the mother of Robert L. Ryburn, a prominent attorney of earlier days; Mrs. Amanda Jones was the wife of H. F. Jones, and my grandmother. My grandparents came to Shelby in 1860 about two years after the little church was organized; Mrs. Margaret Dellinger was the wife of M. P. Dellinger and lived in the house on West Warren Street where Miss Mattie Adams lived for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Erwin were the great grandparents of Mrs. Ora Poston Davis. I think there was some kinship between Mrs. Erwin and Mrs. Quinn. The Erwins formerly lived where the Misses Alexander now live on West Warren Street. And when Mrs. Alexander bought the house from them in 1874 the lovely boxwood and cedars which have made that house a point of interest thru the years were already growing.

Mrs. Margaret Forbis and Mrs. Jane Wilson, two of the organizing members, were connected, I think with Crockett Wilson and William Forbis. It will be remembered that William Forbis and wife, Elizabeth, were the first to give land, 140-acre tract, in 1841, for the newly chartered town of Shelby. Both families lived near Chapel's Bend toward Broad River, not far from the Earl Mea-

LY DAYS

cham home. W. E. Ryburn was the father of R. L. Ryburn. I cannot place Martin Mullino.

It appears that all others who had joined the church prior to September, 1875, had either died or moved away, or something had happened to them. However, Dr. Johnson worked zealously and at the end of eight years had a live church with 65 members.

The Rev. Edward P. Davis came in 1883 to succeed Dr. Johnson. The pastor's salary in those days was less than \$500 a year. After Mr. Davis came a manse was bought and paid for at a cost of \$1800. Mr. Davis also served the churches at Kings Mountain, Duncan's Creek, Shiloh at Grover, Sandy Plains, and Forest City. After four years he was succeeded by the Rev. E. E. Erwin. Other pastors were: The Rev. J. W. Siler, the Rev. W. P. McCorkle, the Rev. T. N. Lowery, and the Rev. W. R. Minter. In 1903, under Mr. Minter, the church had 11 members.

The first elder was Isaac Erwin, elected in 1858. J. H. Gouger, a teacher, was elected elder in 1868. Other elders were: H. F. Ramseur, J. N. Forney, J. Pagenstacher, J. W. Kerr, John F. Tiddy, R. L. Ryburn, Frank H. Curtis, T. J. Kearns, J. M. Flack and A. C. Miller. The first elected deacons were J. F. Tiddy, R. E. Kerr, and B. B. Babington. Other deacons were Lee Kerr, D. F. McSwain, A. C. Miller, J. M. Black, Walter Ramseur and L. A. Gettys. This is the official list up to 1900, and those reminiscences do not, as a rule, contemplate events later than 1900. The official records from 1885 to 1900 were burned in the fire that destroyed the Miller block in 1901.

During the years 1887 to 1894 churches were organized at Waco, at Cherryville, at Forest City, at Mooresboro and at Beattyville.

I recall that a small church was built at Beattyville, but the attendance did not justify its continuance.

Twenty years after the first church was built—it was remodelled and towers added. See picture above. In 1916 the church was again remodeled, which church was torn away to make room for the new structure costing \$225,000 of which Dr. John S. Brown was pastor. This paper carried a picture of that church last week.

OTHER CHURCHES

The oldest active Presbyterian Church in this section is Shiloh at Grover. This church was established before the War of the Revolution, and it was at this church Col. Fred Hambright was an elder. He is buried in the old cemetery there. Later, a new Shiloh Church was built, and it is located in the village of Grover.

In a history of Presbyterian Churches in this section Mrs. W. F. Mitchell speaks of an old Associate Reform Presbyterian Church located at Knob Creek, which was

...
...
... were organized by the ...
... Presbyterian Church.

I am indebted to Miss Margaret Tiddy for the opportunity of a casual reading of the record in her home. These irreplaceable records are the property of the Montreat Historical Association, and Miss Tiddy is copying them. Miss Tiddy tells me that her father, Capt. John F. Tiddy, was one of the first deacons after he connected himself with the local church in 1875, and that he continued either as deacon or elder until his death in 1911.