HISTORY OF
ANTIOCH METHODIST CHURCH
near
FAIRBURN, GEORGIA
LIST OF PASTORS SINCE 1881

J. A. Rosser
L. P. Weese
J. R. Smith
J. B. Sanders
Brannan
Hankighter
W. P. Smith
J. C. Davidson
F. P. Brown
W. C. Fox
E. C. Marks
John F. Balis
Fletcher R. Smith
Lyman H. Green
R. A. Seal
J. S. Embry
Henry P. Branham
J. R. Speck
W. T. Hodnett
W. A. Dodge
Belanger
C. W. Lipham
W. S. Gaines
E. P. Wood
H. C. Emory
J. W. Spier
L. S. Flournoy
W. W. Cash

D. P. Melson
George L. Summers
Henry M. Bullock
J. D. Bass
E. F. Statham
N. C. McPherson, Jr.
L. H. Spradley
Wm. H. Gardner
Bright
J. D. Swagerty
B. P. Read
W. H. Royal
Y. A. Bailey
W. V. Rogers
Grover C. Knowles
Hubert Dodd
L. G. Cowart
T. L. Rutland
J. S. Hill
V. V. Hill
A. J. Gilliam
C. F. Hughes
Comer Brownlow
W. W. Jackson
Walter Cross
Wm. Lyons
Walter G. Bangle
George L. Hickman
HISTORY OF ANTIOCH, METHODIST CHURCH

Foreword: - The Methodist church has made history. With its humble birthplace in Georgia, it now reaches around the world, and is continually pushing forward on new frontiers, carrying education, medical facilities and the love of Christ into the dark areas of undeveloped countries. Efforts are being made to record that history. Each Methodist church in North Georgia has been asked to contribute its chapter to the archives, established at headquarters in Atlanta. The writer of this chapter had few records upon which to draw; but is indebted to many members and friends of Antioch for information handed down to them from their forefathers. Mrs. J. M. Hodnett gave valuable assistance in assembling the material, and Mrs. Aline Steed Haskins made the final review for accuracy of facts.
"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." - Matthew 18:20

Early in the 19th century, the John L. Kidd family moved over from South Carolina, settling in a woodland section of originally Coweta, later changed to Campbell County, now incorporated in Fulton County, Georgia. Among other pioneer families of this community was the Harrison B. McLarin's, whose plantation spread far and wide to the south of what was to become the Antioch center. Feeling the need of religious ties and a place of worship, they soon organized a church. Some years later, the same John L. Kidd, owning the ideal location for a church site, donated five acres of land on a hill overlooking the beautiful rolling countryside. Deeds were duly made to Antioch Trustees - Harri-
son B. McLarin, Lewis Miles and Oliver Kidd, the titles specifying that the land must be used for church, public school and burying ground. When it is no longer used for church or school, it reverts to the heirs of John L. Kidd (Parenthetically, it might be said, like Abraham's family, God blessed and multiplied the family of John Kidd. His seed are many.)

Not much of the early history of this rural organization is known except that a log building was erected and served as church for a while. And even prior to deeding the land, a cemetery was started, the first grave being that of Mary L. Kidd, infant daughter of O. C. Kidd, in 1836. As time passed, the little church grew, more graves were added in the cemetery, and later a school house was erected near by. The outlook was for a permanent community center of religious, educational and social life.
Looking toward future expansion needs of the center, L. L. Kidd, son of John L. Kidd, in 1879 sold to the church trustees 1/2 acre of land adjoining the original five acre tract, the price, the neat sum of $5.00. Deeds were made to Trustees—Milton Miles, Nathaniel Henderson, John Stipe, Hilliard McLarin, and John E. Steed.

Again in 1888, L. L. Kidd and brother, O. C. Kidd, prompted by "natural love and affection for the church and school," donated an additional 1/3 acre of land, deeds being made to L. Miles, John E. Steed, Hilliard McLarin, John Stipe and Nathaniel Henderson. Seven years later, in 1895, L. L. Kidd sold one acre of land to the church trustees for $15.00, this being the last parcel of land obtained for the center.

Thus the entire church acreage, approximately seven acres, was obtained through the generosity of the Kidd family and the small outlay of $20.00. The officials to whom
the last deeds were made were H. A. McLarin, John E. Steed, George E. Henderson, E. L. Bishop and John F. Smith.

PART II -- 20th CENTURY

(The writer as a child became an active member of Antioch Church at the turn of the century, hence the story here becomes a first-hand picture, living and vital.)

While 19th century history is scant and difficult to establish, it is interesting to trace down the 20th century records of families of these early officials and find their descendants active church people. Today only a few are represented in the local church, but many are scattered and untied with other churches, especially in nearby Atlanta. Many are leaders and officials of city churches, some even charter members of later organizations. Mrs. Bertie Smith Phillips is a charter member of Capitol View Baptist Church in
Atlanta; Mrs. Selma Henderson Tarrence is a great worker in a northwest Atlanta church; DeWitte Henderson served God in a great way at Hableton, Ga.; Dan Stone goes out from Antioch as a Methodist minister, his Emory training to be completed in the near future. These bespeak the fact that seeds of Christianity were sown in fertile soil at Antioch.

Just how long the original log church served the congregation is not known, but a large building of sawed timbers took its place and was used until 1904, when the present house was built under the guidance and supervision of Rev. C. V. Lipham, pastor, and building committee of E. L. Bishop, Chmn., J. H. Burkhead, W. L. Camp, M. W. Gardner, Geo. L. Henderson, E. P. McLarin, W. H. McLarin, John F. Smith, and Mrs. A. F. Swann. The youthful pastor and building committee took much pride in their work.
Beautiful stained glass was salvaged from the trash pile of the Old Atlanta Trinity Methodist Church which was being wrecked at the time. The glass was reloaded and put in new frames, - the finished product beautiful, artistic windows. The entire church structure and equipment were well planned and well constructed of best material. As coming events cast their shadows before them this building reflected the architectural ability of a school-boy minister who was destined to plan and build many beautiful churches now standing over the North Georgia area, monuments to his devotion to God.

But over the years, the ravages of summer sun and winter rain on roof and outside walls; the shattered glass of the lovely stained windows, broken by foul balls of the school children's nearby games; the unsightly dirt-deubers' nests plastered over the church pews,-
those gave our peaceful little temple a neglected, abandoned appearance. The financial depression of the 1920's and 1930's had our farming people discouraged. Our homes, like our church, were approaching a run-down condition. It would seem easiest to drift into the maelstrom of depression and let things go. But the sacredness of our house of worship, the memory of its former beauty, and knowledge of the down-to-earth sacrifices of our forefathers to leave us such a heritage— these were the impelling forces to challenge us forward. Our church must be preserved for future worshipers. Slowly we started, one step at a time. While there was little money in the community, there was an abundance of man-power backed by loyal hearts. As material could be bought, the men and boys would meet and make repairs, or do a paint job, often so many workers they would get in each other's
way, or some have to stand idly by for lack of tools or paint brush. As sponsor of some of these projects in the days of bread lines and financial panic, I rejoiced to see such unity of purpose, such self-denial and loyalty. The angels must have looked down and thought that naught of dissension but much of love dwells in the hearts of these people. Here we must pay tribute to Frank McLaren as leader of major repairs of that era. He not only supervised and maintained high standards of workmanship, but his good nature and kindly manner boosted the morale of all who came. His faithful teammate in these projects was Paul Bishop, who would somehow always manage to be on the job early, and often the last to leave. Such dependability lends courage to sponsors of any church or community project, and such cooperation of all the good people in these
labors tends to bind them closer in their church organization, and stimulates their interest in every phase of the church work. Here it is fitting also to recall the loving gifts of friends and former members of Antioch who have moved away, but still gladly help Antioch financially if real need arises. This beautiful relationship has been an inspiration, has often given us courage to go forward in the face of difficulties. Withal it required years of patient effort to restore our property to good condition and gain some improvements, but today ours is a most attractive rural church. The crying need of the hour now is for Sunday School rooms—a challenge to the present younger generation.

Grove prayer meetings, Saturday morning preaching services, seating of the men on one side of the church, and the women and children on the other side were customs that disappeared soon after the present
church was built. Cuspidors, little kero-sene wall lamps with their tin reflectors, water bucket and dipper vanished. The long sermon, formerly punctuated by the braying of restless mules at the hitching posts, was cut shorter to meet the demands of changing times. The nearby school house was deserted, the children now being transported to a consolidated school in Fairburn. The dilapidated school building still stands, useful as a civic center. A hard surfaced road has been built nearer to the church front. These and many other changes have taken place over the century of Antioch history. Three wars have taken their toll (Old breastworks of the War Between the States still remain almost within sight of the church, a grim reminder of those hard years). Then World War I bled our church of all young men, only to be followed by World War II, a war to end all wars. A
gold star was placed on the church service flag in memory of Sgt. Thomas Pee McGee who fell on the battlefields of Italy in 1944. Today our community is represented by Guy Whitley, fighting Communism in Korea. But despite the interruption of wars, the streamlining of life's activities and the advance in living conditions, our worship and faith remain essentially unshaken and unchanged in an ever changing world. The "Faith of our Fathers" is living still.

Our growth in membership has been slow but steady. Today (1952) we carry about 140 names on the church roll. Within our memory, the Sunday School has functioned regularly, the church formerly had services once a month, then semi-monthly, this year being our first attempt at full-time services. Due to many circumstances, it has been necessary to give us frequent changes of minsters. Even though this was unavoidable, it sometimes proved disrupting.
The longest unbroken periods of ministry were those of Rev. C. N. Linham, 3½ years, and Rev. J. W. Spier, 4 years. During the calendar year 1944, we had four ministers, each for a short period. On the other hand, we have had the inspiration and enthusiasm of many young Emory students, who preached for us on Sundays, studying at the seminary during the week. We have enjoyed the guidance of many pastors seasoned with long years in the work of the Lord. We have appreciated all, and their influence will reach down through the years to come.

Our church finances have stayed on par with those of other small rural groups.

In its early history, farming was the chief livelihood of Antioch members, cotton being the money crop. The pastor had to wait for his pay until the cotton was harvested and marketed, often nearly Christmas. It is interesting to note that members were assessed,
rather than make pledges in those days.

Single ladies paid 25¢, married women 50¢, single men $1.00, married men $5.00, with H. A. McLerin and Dr. Camp being leaders, each paying $10.00. We all remembered with gratitude the fabulous gift of Mrs. Ann Swann, $100.00, toward building the present church.

Some fifty years ago, our regular budget ranged between $100.00 and $150.00 per year. Today rural churches are keeping pace with the times, a united (Northern and Southern) Methodist church helping to hold up the hands of the weaker organizations.

Just before the turn of the century, we find the Camps, Stipes, Norwoods, Cottons, Slatons, Hendersons, Hearn, Morgans, Abraham Millers, Steeds, Taylors, Smiths (John F., Francis - known as Dock, Joe and others) actively interested in Antioch. Then the Bishops, Langstons, Watkins, Browns, Drileys, Williams, Stones, Reeves, Baldwins, Neelys, etc.
Cawthons, Hornetts, Lidsons, and other Smiths entered the picture. Always we have had "Mc-
Levins" on our roll. Oddly enough we now have the third John F. Smith of the same family line,
as Antioch member. The first was husband of Betty Smith, who during the War Between the
States, drove in a wagon with her 10 year old son to Andersonville, Georgia to see her
husband. John F. Smith was guarding a Con-
federate prison. He died the night of Aunt
Betty's visit and she brought the body back
to Antioch for burial. Having to travel
across the Federal lines, she explained her
problem to a kind Federal officer, who fur-
nished a guard for Mrs. Smith and son on
their long lonely trip home, this in 1864.

One family, the Slatons, who attended
Antioch services regularly, met a problem of
their dry in a unique way. Their means of
transportation was a wagon, the wheels of
which would shrink badly when dry, and could
not be used. Early each week, the wheels were removed from the wagon and submerged in Bear Creek to remain there and swell up, ready for use the following Sunday.

Bear Creek also played into the affairs of the Harrison R. McLean family, but in a less favorable day. There was no bridge over the creek in their day. The family lived near near the West Point Railroad and had to "ford the creek" to reach Antioch. When Mr. McLean passed away and his body was being carried to Antioch for final rites and burial, the funeral procession reached Bear Creek only to find its waters swollen much too deep for fording. The procession of wagons and buggies turned back, returning the corpse to the home to wait for the creek to go down. After the waters receded, some days later, the procession resumed its sad journey, made a safe crossing, and the funeral and burial took place.
Antioch church has been the scene of two weddings, of which we have knowledge. One of our members, Hilda Lidson, was wed to Claud Bannister. Dorothy Steed took the matrimonial vows with James Lessiter.

These are but glimpses of a colorful picture, ever changing. Though space forbids, we would like to tell more of Miss Mat Henderson, a faithful Sunday School teacher; little Mrs. Gary who polished the lamp chimneys and made tidy the house of God; Mr. John Taylor who made a record of having helped to clean Antioch cemetery fifty years in succession; Mr. C. W. D. Stone, who will long be remembered for his faithful visits among the church members to raise the pastor's salary, even in the sunset years of his life when almost too feeble to travel about the community; and a host of others who made their contribution in humble ways.

Among other Sunday School superintendents
in later years, we recall Mr. J. H. Burkhead who also taught the nearby day school.

Mr. J. A. Henderson, Mrs. Mamie Taylor, Mr. G. W. Baldwin, his son, Mr. Carlyle Baldwin, and Mr. W. H. Reeves. Ella and Margaret Stone made their contribution in music for many years, as did Mrs. Maggie Reeves. Many of these and others deserving of mention have passed out of the scene, new ones taking their place, always trying to seek and learn more of the Truth, and make of this community a little bit of Heaven. Nothing spectacular in our history, but we know the church has been a great influence for good. Many fine people have gone out from its environment. But the fields are still white until the harvest. May we, like the first church, "continue steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer."

This 25th day of February, 1952
Fairburn, Georgia