1972 Athens - Elberton Dist

HISTORY

OF

CENTER CHARGE

Antioch Church

Center Church

Nicholson Church
THE HISTORY OF ANTIOCH METHODIST CHURCH
Jackson County- Nicholson, Georgia

We do not know the exact year in which the Church was built. All we have concerning those early years is an unwritten history handed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. In this however, there is a story. I shall repeat it now.

Soon after the first white settlers came to Jackson County and settled at Tallassee Shoals two men were scouting about seeking places to build homes. After choosing certain plots of ground, they grew tired and sat down to rest. They discussed their plans for the future, envisioning the time when other people would settle in the immediate vicinity. Directly, one of them said, "Then, here would be a good place for the Church." According to the legend, those two men were sitting somewhere near the spot where this Church now stands.

William Glenn built a house for himself one mile south of the Church. The house still stands. It is owned now by G.W. Barnett. Mr. Glenn measured off a four acre plot of ground and built a Church on it. He drew up a deed to it with a provision that if it ever ceased to be used for a church it would automatically go back to the Glenn estate. But this deed has been lost. It was last seen about 1922. The one on record now in the County Courthouse at Jefferson was drawn up by Thomas Farmer.

In the year 1799, William Glenn sold 2,00 acres of land to Billie Smith. There is a record of this transaction on file in the Courthouse in Jefferson and it is stated that the line goes by Antioch Church.

Billie Smith was active in the work of the Church and it was during his lifetime that the Church was enlarged to its present size. It is an interesting story. I shall repeat it here.
At this time Antioch was being served by a Circuit Rider who rode out from Athens. Fortunately, he lived to a ripe old age and he, himself, told the story to W.H. Pace. The preacher and a group of the members decided that the community had grown to the extent that the church was not large enough. They went to Billie Smith to see what he thought about building some more to the Church.

"Not now", Smith shook his head when told of their plan, "Times are too hard."

After they left, the preacher told the group to let him go back to Smith alone. So he did, just as it it were merely a routine visit but, in the course of their conversation, he told Smith that he was sorry he wasn't able to help them any, but just the same they were going ahead with their plan to enlarge the Church.

"You won't do any such thing," Smith said emphatically.

"Why?" asked the preacher.

"Because I'm going to do it myself," He replied.

And he did. That is how the church was enlarged to its present size. It stills stands. The one William Glenn first built together with the addition made by Billie Smith.

The community continued to grow. The church membership continued to increase until it was one of the largest Methodist Churches of the section. People came from miles around to worship here. They came by wagon, buggy, horseback and foot. They were people who loved God. It is said that many would go away shouting and singing praises to God. Old men have told me about the great throngs of people who came here in the old days. With tears in their eyes they would say, "These were the good old days."

Later, a school house was built on the church lot. It burned some years later, however, and the Church was used for a school house for a number of years.
A pile of rock, the remains of the chimney of the school house, can be seen today some fifty feet West of the Church on the Church grounds.

Some of Methodism's best loved and greatest figures have preached here including Bishop Warren Candler.

Some later officials of the Church included Sam Shankle and Bill Miller.

After the Parsonage was built at Center, Glenn Davis came here to preach. It is said that he walked in rain and in snow to serve his churches.

After 1900, there was a time when no services were held here. Broom sedge and blackberry briars grew in the yard. The roof grew bad and rain seeped in rotting and warping the covering.

About 1915, W.H. Pace, who now owns the old William Glenn house, took hands from his farm, sawed blocks, made shingles and re-covered the Church. Then he and J.W. Massey organized a Sunday School.

Billie Smith had long since died and his descendants became scattered.

In time the Sunday School failed and it was a deserted place.

In 1922, the pastor, Rev. Garrett, read the original deeds made out by William Glenn to the congregation. They have not been seen since. I have tried repeatedly to find out just which Rev. Garrett this was and how I might get in touch with him but have not been able to locate him.

The first time I remember going to the Church was in 1923. I went with my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Osborn Barnett, to a Quarterly Conference meeting. A Rev. Varner was pastor.

Again, there was a time when the Church was inactive and the building went on deteriorating until 1928. It became apparent that something must be done. At certain intervals, during a period of thirty years, there was talk of building a new Church but nothing had been done.

In the meantime, Antioch had been put on the Comer-Colbert Charge and Rev. R.W. Griffith was pastor. He had organized a Sunday School with Bill Wills as
Superintendent. He, together with his wife, the former Miss Darline Pace, had aroused the interest of the people and had a good Sunday underway.

The pastor appealed to T.K. Glenn, great grandson of the Church's founder, for assistance. Mr. Glenn bought cedat shingles and the people of the community covered the church. He also contributed one hundred and nine dollars to be used for such other repairs as might be needed. New windows, new doors, new benches were made. The assessment for Antioch at the time was fifty dollars per year. Mr. Glenn also assumed half of the assessment.

On the fifth Sunday in August, 1928, the first Annual Homecoming was held. A great throng of people gathered for the occasion. I well remember how the church yard was filled with automobiles, wagons and buggies. Some of the cars had parked in the road. The church was filled to capacity with people. They stood in the aisles and doors. Many who could not get in the church congregated on the outside under the trees. It was a great day of rejoicing for those who had gathered back at the old Church for the Homecoming Services.

A Rev. Adams preached at the morning service and the afternoon was taken up in short talks by many who had grown up in the community.

About 1930, Rev. R.W. Allison became pastor.

In 1932, an automobile stopped one day at the Center Post Office and a man inquired of the Postmaster, J.W. Johnson, the way to Antioch Church. That man was T.K. Glenn. He wanted to see the Church his great-grandfather built. He also wanted to find his grave. For the next ten years, there were rumors circulated that Mr. Glenn wanted to build a new Church here, but he never did.

After the Homecoming Service of 1928, the old church seemed to take on a new life. Membership was increased by a few members and it seemed to be getting on its feet again. But, nevertheless, it had many ups and downs from 1928 to 1935. Several Sunday Schools were started and failed. But she kept struggling for existence—the spark of the founders had not gone out,
not completely.

In 1935, I became Sunday School Superintendent, a position I held for the next twelve years. Rev. A.Y. Bailey was pastor at the time. He was succeeded by the Rev. Alton Whittemore, H.R. Hendricks, H.R. O'Bryant, Edmund Perry, Ballard Wilson and Rev. Raymond Melear. The present pastor is Rev. Garnett Wilder.

During these twelve years the church made much progress. Church School attendance was increased greatly. During one of these years, our average attendance for the Church School was 59. And for one quarter of the same year our average was 80. Many times we had a hundred for Sunday School. One day, someone who lived in another section, came by and seeing the crowd asked, "Where do all these folks come from?"

The assessment was raised from fifty to one hundred and fifty dollars per year with Mr. Glenn paying seventy-five and the people paying seventy-five.

One Sunday in 1939, after Sunday School several members and myself lingered in the Church yard as the crowd filed out of the church and drifted away. During our conversation, an automobile drove into the yard and stopped. Several people got out. Among them was an old lady who was walking with a stick.

The old lady walked slowly toward the church. She said, "It looks just like it did when I was a little girl." "I wonder if I can find his grave." "Whose grave are you looking for?" Asked someone.

"Billie Smith's", she replied. "He was my grandfather."

Then she told us of how he had added to the church William Glenn had built here. Out in the cemetery she found his grave.

In 1945, again it became apparent that something must be done. The old church had stood about as long as was possible without repairs. Ballard Wilson was pastor. He and I talked the matter over. We decided to ask the people to help us repair the church.

The people responded. Working together, we raised money, built substantial pillars under the Church, added a new roof, a new floor, put asbestos shingles on the outside, added fluorescent lights on the inside. Mr. Glenn contributed
paint for the inside and the benches. All together, we raised and spent about seven hundred and fifty dollars on the church. And when we finished, someone remarked, "It's good for another hundred years."

At the 1950 Homecoming Service, an old man stood up to talk. "I was here in '87." That was about all he said. His eyes welled up with tears. He sat down. But I kept thinking about this man. A few days later, I met him on the street. His name was L.D. Benton and this is the story he told:

"In the year 1887, my parents moved to Nicholson and stayed one year. During the summer of that year I went with an older brother to Antioch one night to meeting. A revival was in progress there.

"I was only seven but I well remember that night. The people got happy and shouted. Something I had never seen before. When we got home, I awoke my father and told him about it, and asked why they did it."

"His explanation to me was something like this, He said, "'Well, son, you have seen a miller measuring corn in a half bushel measure and you know that sometimes the measure gets too full and runs over. That's the way it is with christian people. Sometimes they get so full of the spirit of God that it runs over and they shout because they are so happy.'"

In conclusion, permit me to say that this is but a brief sketch of the story of our church. It would take many pages to give a complete history. But I trust that this may be sufficient to show what she meant to those first few who founded her and to those who have lived since, down through the years, including those who live today in the community round about her. May she continue to march forward.

Written by
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