THE STORY
of
Apalachee Methodist Church
in
The Athens-Elberton District
of
The North Georgia Conference

It has been said that the first known place of worship for Methodist in the Apalachee Community was in a small house, also used for school purposes, about two hundred yards East of the present Baptist Church.

Later the Methodists worshiped in a rough building erected about 1840 and called Comfort. It stood across the road and railroad towards the North and back of where the present Bill H. Stovall residence stands. It had crude benches, plank shutters at the windows, and a large goods box for a pulpit. John Knott used to say that he couldn’t see why it should be called Comfort as it had no material aids to comfort. Let us imagine that as the Word of Life was given out that the worshippers received spiritual food that made them forget the physical discomforts and with joy and comfort for their souls they went out, in the strength of the Lord, to live Godly lives among their fellowmen. Then through the preaching of the Word and the Godly lives of the members of the church, other souls were brought to a new birth in Him whose blood alone can atone for sins.

A preacher by the name of Lupo is the only one we have any record of who ministered the Word from this building.

In those days they had circuit riders who did not get around even as often as once a month always, but exhorters (laymen) often conducted services at the church.

Some of the leaders and worshipers of that day were the Brock, Few, Humes, Martin, Little, Nolan, Sturgis, Harris, Furlow, Stovall, and other families.

Old Philadelphia Church

John Knott II moved here just before Philadelphia church house, to replace Comfort was built. This structure was built about 1857 a mile and a half up the road towards Bostwick on an acre of land donated by Tinsley Almand.

We have no records of any finances, either of the building or other efforts of that day. Suffice it to say that, from the Christian citizens that have come from the Methodist homes of that and a later day, we can judge that God approved of and blessed the efforts of the Methodist leaders as they led holy lives and gave out the Gospel of Salvation.

The building itself, (painted white) was a typical one room structure of that day, with a pulpit and altar railing built by John Knott, previously mentioned. When the writer, as a tiny tot moved to the community, red carpet covered the pulpit and altar platform, besides the spade around these and down the two aisles leading to the two doors. Green blinds protected the large paneled glass windows and an organ of the type used in that day was a great help in the singing. A heater for burning wood kept the chill off in winter, while oil lamps hung on brackets on the walls and from the ceiling, gave light for night services.

Besides the families mentioned previously others moved in later and cast their lots with the brethren of Philadelphia Church.

W. C. Shockley, a native South Carolinian, was one of these who, with his noble wife, reared a large family of loyal Methodists who have had a large part in the work here and a number of their descendants are allied with the church at present. Shockley P. Few, who was licensed to preach from this church is at present doing interdenominational youth work in Columbia S. C.

H. A. Davis and his wife, the former Nina Knott, native of the community, returned from S. C. a few years after the Shockleys came, and their names, along with those previously mentioned, were synonymous with Evangelical Methodism and Christian righteousness through the years. The above mentioned Nina Knott kept up the tradition of her forbears and has given her life unstintedly to the cause of Methodism through the years. She is now the oldest member of the church and co-historian of this paper.
Ed Cochran and family moved into the community in 1895 and reared a large family each of which became Methodists. Edward Cochran, son of their oldest son, Roy, is a Methodist minister in North Carolina where his parents moved many years ago.

When Lou Few, daughter of Joe C. Few, married Will Michael of Walton County and reared a large family here, that gave, on a later church roll, a number of members bearing the Michael name. These members were nephews and nieces of Lina Michael, the famous Poppy Lady. J. C. and Roy are the only ones of the Michaels on our roll now.

D. E. Sanders and wife moved here in 1934 and they, with their eight fine sons and one daughter, have been active with the Methodist church for many years. The children have gone out into other places, only the parents remain to worship with us. The daughter, who married Bud Ebery, is an outstanding teacher in the Sunday School of the Young Harris Memorial Church in Athens.

Others who came and worshiped with us in this and later buildings and many of them passed away or moved out of the community were the Haughton, Daniel, Simons, Ivie, Carson, Holley, Cox, Roland, Travis, Riley, Ruark, Hanson, Smith, Harper, Beaasley, King, Parker, Jackson, McGibbony, Clark, Byes, Caldwell, Graves, Holcomb, White, Adair, Haynes, Autry, Addington, Long, Lorodock, Landrum, Leachster, and Little families besides some members of Sidwell and Beal families.


The presiding Elders we recall were Rev Poole, Pierce, Lovejoy, Bryant, and Allen.

The greatest revival anyone remembers to be held in this church was during the pastorate of the evangelist man of God, J. T. Lowe. He let God lead him in the preaching and his daughter, Rosa and another young woman, Blanche Surphey assisted much in the music and personal work. The spiritual candles lighted in many lives during this meeting burned on until the end of life, and in others to this day. This revival was in the late nineties.

About the year 1903 under the pastorate of A. J. Hughes a new frame structure was placed at the cross roads not very far west of the Baptist church on land donated by Nancy Prior and two sons, Dr. F. M. and R. H. Prior, three good Baptist friends of the church. Robert H. Prior is living in the old Prior home yet and is the oldest member of the Baptist Church. This new house of the Lord was constructed of superior material throughout and the workmanship was of the best. It had a belfrey, high ceilings, large windows with blinds, and furnished with the best oak pews of that day. A new church organ was installed and all chandeliers hung from the ceiling until electricity was available about 1920.

We have no record of financial value of the building. It was dedicated in 1905 with J. R. Dickey from old Emory College preaching the sermon.

When the church burned, being ignited by a stroke of lightning on April 13, 1923, the pew, light fixtures, organ, and almost of the other furnishing were saved.

It was in this building God used some of His choicest servants to bless our membership and rekindle spiritual fires in the hearts of many on the surrounding communities.

Evangelist C. W. Hunaway held two spirit filled meetings here. One of his sons assisted him as a soloist in the last one held in the fall of 1920. Both meetings brought spiritual fruitage in the lives of our people and the Lord was glorified and His church magnified because of these meetings.

We wish that we might mention the many other evangelists who came from time to time and left behind them evidences that the Holy Spirit had poured out His blessings on the community. But lack of space forbids.

The men whom we can recall who pastored the flock while we worshiped in this church besides A. J. Hughes, already mentioned, were J. R. Jordan, F. M. Gaines, B. H. Trammell, C. V. Fox, A. A. Sullivan, W. A. Wells, and Walter Millican.

The District Conference was held in this church in the summer of 1920 and both Baptist and Methodist opened their homes to delegates and the Lord poured out a blessing on us all. The writer vividly remembers the time of refreshing when a real love feast and testimony meeting was held.
The first wedding held in the church was that of Etta Shockley to Joe H. Few in 1912 with E. H. Trammell assisting H. E. Bakes in the ceremony.

Later Mary A. Michael was joined in holy wedlock to a local Methodist Preacher, Ernest Bigham. Gertrude Shockley was married to H. E. Clarke at this sacred altar in 1919.

**WITHOUT A CHURCH HOME**

After the church burned the Methodists worshiped in the school house and used the class rooms for some of the classes for the Sunday School work. We held our revival meetings in the sister church, thanks to their Christian generosity.

H. E. Strozier was the pastor in charge during this time or part of it, for he was here when we moved into the brick structure.

The writer wishes to record an impressive story which Bro. Strozier told at a Christmas program of the church held at the school house one evening. He told of the little rich girl, who had so many things on Christmas morning that she could not enjoy any of them. She saw other children with but few things who seemed so happy and she wondered why. So she became so dissatisfied with her lot that she began to cry bitterly and no one of the many loved ones and friends who had so foolishly spoiled her, could fathom her misery. Finally after much tears she explained that she could not enjoy so many things and she expressed it, "I want to want something." May I right here take a little space to warn and to admonish parents and Methodist ones as well as others, that "things" do not bring the true joy of living to children or adults. If there ever were a day when "things" shiner and useless, many were useful but not at all essential to true joy, are cluttering the lives of children and adults to their spiritual and moral hurt, it is now. Can you deny your child some things that he wants? If so you are a wise parent. Let us remember to "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you". Of course we realise that our Savior meant that the things to be added would be the simple necessary equipment for the righteous, unselfish, living which alone is Christian.

**THE PRESENT BRICK BUILDING**

At the cost of ten thousand dollars and more the present brick building was erected and moved into in 1925. The building committee was composed of E. H. Knott, W. C. Shockley, H. A. Davis, and W. T. Shockley. Besides the upper floor, it has six class rooms and smaller auditorium in the basement. Vestibules are on either side of the cemented porch on the main floor.

The furnishings saved from the fire were sufficient for the auditorium. A piano was purchased so that an instrument was available for both floors.

The new building was not dedicated until 1933. At that time Y. A. Bailey was pastor in charge under J. W. Veatch, P. A. That Goodbye sermon, Franklin Parker of Emory University at the time, preached the dedicatory sermon.

In 1929 that powerful and courageous man of God, Warren A. Candler, preached for us in this church to an overflowing audience. "Could that God would give to Methodism a few young men like the Bishop. How sadly we need them!"

Ministers serving us since going into the present building have been H. E. Strozier, C. T. Shell, Y. A. Bailey, J. W. Coffman, R. P. Segars, F. E. Jenkins, Jr., H. D. Brigan, F. E. Jenkins, Jr. (who filled short term of Brigan's after he went into the chaplaincy during World War II), T. E. Fowler, T. D. Johnson, Randall Adams and the present pastor, Ralph Nabry.

Some of the Presiding Elders (now superintendents) for these years have been Miles Pierce, O. P. Wiggins, W. Robinson, Lee Algood, J. W. Veatch, Charles Jarroll, Charlie Middlebrooks, Gus Venable, Horace Smith and J. C. Calloway.

Edna Shockley was united in marriage to W. S. Leaster at the altar of this church in the presence of a few relatives and friends in 1928.

At a lovely public ceremony Annette Shockley became Mrs. Victor Riden in this building in 1942.

The last young lady of our church to marry here was Ora Nelle Shockley, who became the bride of George Fields, a young Baptist minister in 1946. Two members of our church, Frank E. Jenkins, Jr., and Shockley F. Few were licensed to preach while we worshipped in the present building.
MISSIONARY SOCIETY ORGANIZED

The first Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodists here was organized at Philadelphia Church under J. T. Lowe, by Mrs. Morgan Valloway about the year 1897. The first president was Elizabeth Sturgis. The group has been evergreen since that day. It sponsored the children's work and the Golden Links or Young People's auxiliaries for many years. Of the Ladies whom we might call the key women in this work of more recent years we will mention, Alice Nolan, Nina K. Davis, Nolle Shockley, Susie D. Few, Fanny Knott, Lilly Knott, and others.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

The Sunday School has been evergreen since its organization about 1860 or before. Superintendents have held their places for long durations and so there have not been very many of them. Robert Harris was probably the first one. Then came Joe C. Few, John Sturgis, W. F. Daniel, Ed Knott, Nell Shockley, and L. D. Few, grandson of Joe C. Few mentioned above.

Beginning during the days when the Methodists worshiped at old Philadelphia, it was a long time that the Baptist did not have a Sunday School of their own, so their consecrated members became officers, teachers and pupils in our organization. Mary Harris, a Staunch Baptist, wife of Robert Harris, taught a Sunday School Class for years.

R. H. Prior and Felix Prior before him were indispensable in leading the singing in those days.

For several years after the Methodist church was moved nearer the Depot and the Baptist Church in 1903, the Baptist worked and worshiped with us in our Sunday School. They organized about 1911.

Choir leaders have been, beside the two Prior men mentioned, A. C. Shockley, Govan Shockley, and Shockley P. Few.

For the most part our teachers have been in recent years college people and best of all, spirit filled. Since 1925, after we moved into the brick building we have had the use of six class rooms which have added to the convenience of the work and we hope to the spiritual fervor of the church. Of course we have had the usual socials for the members of the Sunday School, picnics, egg hunts, etc. The picnics at Grants Park, in Atlanta and at Stone Mountain were the most memorable we believe.

PARSONAGES

The first parsonage, we have any knowledge of was an old house near the Rehobeth church. Later a new little cottage was built for that purpose, not too long after the new home for our beloved men of God was built there, it was decided that, since Methodist preachers had to move so often, that the parsonage should be near a rail-road. The charge about that time contained beside Philadelphia and Rehobeth, Mallory's Chapel and High Shoals. It was the Morgan Circuit then.

While L. H. Lokes was on the charge the agitation for removal of the parsonage culminated in the building of a new house in Apalachee and the sale of the old parsonage. It was not too long after the parsonage was moved from Rehobeth that the membership at that church dwindled until services were discontinued there.

The parsonage was a building of six rooms, a hall, and two porches. It was painted white and had green blinds at the windows and was well finished inside. Joe C. Few donated an acre of land for the house and Bros. Lokes was the first to occupy it.

The acre of land was in very nice shape in the days when the circuit preachers had to own horses and buggies in order to get from one church to the other. The horse could be used to cultivate garden truck and a small patch of corn for his own food.

This same parsonage, in fair condition, with a good roof recently put on at the cost of nearly four hundred dollars to the four churches, has had electricity and running water for some years and just recently a bath room was installed at around $315.00 dollars in cost.

The Apalachee Church was for some years a half station, and during those years, the Bestwick and Farrington churches completed the Apalachee Charge. Prospect Church was added to the charge when Apalachee dropped back to one Sunday during the depression.

PREACHER'S FAMILIES

We must to give a little more space to the families of our preachers.
We have no records earlier than 1894. Some were destroyed when John Knott's house burned about 1937. What we have been forced to use is what we can on account of insufficient records. The thing that really matters is that they came our way and that God used them to build His Church and the community.

Rev. J. T. Lowe, who lived at Rehoboth, had four children: Jim, Louie, Estelle, and Ross. Ross was used of God to bless the membership and now converts in the revival previously mentioned.

Rev. H. Eakes had several sons. His only daughter lived with her parents while they were on this work and married Alph Stovall before they left here.

Rev. and Mrs. R. P. Hartyn had seven children: Orra, a Harvard University graduate, was away teaching and the ones at home were Beulah, Mittie, Hildred, Annie, Robert, and Margaret. Mittie later married W. Shockley and reared her five children here and in the Methodist Church. Her youngest daughter, Orra Hally, married a Baptist preacher as previously mentioned.

Rev. and Mrs. A. J. Hughes had no children other than Mrs. Hughes' daughter by a former husband and her son. The widow Dean and son, Charlie made their home with them.

Rev. and Mrs. Strozier had two sons and daughters, William is a professor at Evansville University. Joe was the only one at home while they were here. Hallie is Mrs. John Jacobs and Mary Hettie is now Mrs. Arthur Zachry.

Rev. and Mrs. Fox (Mrs. Fox was a Lion before she became a Fox) had three fine children when they came here. They were Mary, about grown, Charlie, who went to college while here and the younger daughter, Pauline, William was born the last year they lived here.

Rev. and Mrs. Jordan had a son, Urban and daughter, Ennice, who married Carl Shockley while they were on this work.

Rev. and Mrs. Gaines Children, when they came here Nancy and Marvin, and Sara, was born at the parsonage before they left.

Olin, Lucile, Ruth and Blount were Rev. and Mrs. Trammell's children.

Rev. and Mrs. Sullivan's children were Mary Kerlo and James.

Princto and Ennry, Grace and Harlo were the sons and daughters of Rev. and Mrs. Walter Milligan.

Harry was the name of Rev. and Mrs. Hally's son.

Rev. G. T. Shell's daughter was named Kathleen, who died a year or so ago. They later had a son.

Rev. F. E. Jenkins had lost his wife before coming here. He had a married daughter at home and the talented children at home were Mary, who made a home for father and taught a music class, John, who was in college, and Frank, who was in high school while they were here. Rev. Jenkins stayed here longer than any man ever had on the work and had his wishes he would have stayed longer. Frank Jr. later preached for us a short while. Bro. Jenkins married Miss Francis Montgomery, the year before he left here.

Rev. and Mrs. R. P. Segars had no children when here.

Rev. Y. A. Bailey married Mary Spence of near Atlanta while on this work. Will T. Shockley often spoke of the expense Bro. Baily had at the parsonage. The Bailey's have two sons now.

Rev. Coffman and wife lived here only one year.

Rev. and Mrs. R. D. Brignman were childless. They now have a daughter.

Rev. and Mrs. T. A. Fowler had a little son, Torrey, God gave them another after they left us.

The Tasker Johnsons had no children, but have two now.

Rev. Randall Adams was very young and unmarried.

Rev. and Mrs. Ralph Hugry had a little son, Nathan when they came here and on 4th of July, 1951 God gave them twins, Deborah and Delbert.
MISCELLANEOUS AFTER THOUGHTS

We feel that some little incidents that happened at the Methodist houses of worship here or in the members lives might add interest to the paper.

1. The Hymn Book Walks.

One night when Bro. Artyn preached here the biggest beetle I ever saw kept disturbing the worship as he flew around dabbng at the lights and bald heads. The children (and I was one of them) became quite excited. Bro. Artyn's oldest daughter got a chance to do something about the big bug when he landed on the floor near her feet and near several of the children. She picked up a big hymn book and carelessly placed it squarely on the creature's back. That on earth could have kept those children from almost going into hysterics when the beetle walked off with the book?

2. Linen Dusters.

When I was a tiny girl I used to love to be where I could see the "Judge" Nolan when they arrived at old Philadelphia church on a summer Sunday morning. They lived about seven miles on the Atlanta highway and beyond Bostwick. They came in several horse drawn vehicles, sometimes a carriage and one or two buggies and sometimes in several new looking rubber tired buggies.

When the young ladies, when I thought so very attractive, began to hop to the ground with the assistance of their brother or beau, I was almost breathless with interest. Each of the young ladies, again with some assistance from the miles, would unbutton and slip off her freshly laundered linen duster, fold it partially and place it on the back of the buggy seat. Then the well protected costume of each lady looked as if she had just put it on, and as they approached the church, each one looked as if she had just "stopped out of a band box". They practiced, as I saw it, the old adage, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness". And surely their cleanliness was of the body and soul, for they were sweet Christians.

No one else except Sally Harris of Bethany, came so far to our church as did "Judge" Nolan and his daughters, Olde, Stella, Luella, and Sallie Nolan Thomas and the children of the last named lady (some of them we recall were Nellie, Pearl, Emmett, and Nolan Thomas) and that accounts for the linen dusters the ladies wore. The family was a great asset to Philadelphia Church.

3. A Unique Member.

John Houghton of near Madison, a bachelor of means, worshiped at Philadelphia too. He drove two fine horses to a buggy. He was very bald and use to let that hair he had on one side of his head grow long enough to come over the top of his head and much of the bald spot was thus covered. He was always fascinatingly groomed and I have heard the adults of that day say he had an eye for all the pretty girls. How like a child to remember such little things?

4. Favorite Scripture verse.

For many years Felix Runck, who never married, always quoted the same scripture verse when called upon to repeat one on any occasion. The one he almost invariably used was "He that suffereth as a Christian let him not be ashamed". We have often thought how that he not only did not suffer as Christians but we were too ashamed or timid to go all out for Christ to the point where we would have to suffer. To predict that many who are true to Christ's Gospel will be suffering in many ways from now on.

5. Favorite Visitors.

For many years nieces and nephews of John Sturges came up from Union Point for long visits to their uncle and grandmother, Elizabeth Sturges. And because they were here so much, particularly the girls, they seemed as members of our group. They were greatly beloved and very popular with the young people of that day. Their names were Lary Lou and Grace, Libur and Foster Harwell, Mary Lou finally married a man of the church and community-Berry Stovall and lived here for a number of years, being a member during that time. Her nephew, who is Foster's son, is the preacher of the Bethany Baptist Church near Madison now. My Nellie Leester, one of our own is to become his bride in the brick church here May 29th, 1931, if nothing unforeseen prevents.

6. Tying a Knot.

Nina K. Davis tells this story of a lively little pun Rev. Patillo made on the Knot Name on the day he performed the ceremony which united the then Nina Knot in holy wedlock to H. A. Davis in 1891. He remarked after the ceremony, "I took a Knot and tied a knot that made a Knot not a Knot."
7. Memories of Spiritual Joy

One of the sweetest memories of the writer's childhood is that of prayer meetings with other school children in the woods near the road between the school house and Philadelphia Church. The spot was about where Stella T. Sidwell, one of the older members of today, lives now.

Four logs were used as seats and for our prayer altar, and the older boys and girls led the devotions. As long as that spot with its rotten old logs was visible from the highway it seemed a hallowed spot to me and always brought back vividly the blessings God poured out on our youthful hearts, and the sincere vows we made on our knees there. This season of prayer meeting followed a wonderful revival in our church and two of the leaders were Frank Stovall and Mamie Knott.

8. Other Individuals

Besides the individuals already mentioned we want to mention a few others who have been especially sacrificed in their loyalty to Christ's cause in our midst.


Of the men we want to mention, Ed Knott, who, besides being Sunday School superintendent the largest portion of his adult life, was a fine contractor and cabinet maker (as was his father, John Knott, before him) and both of them rendered much valuable service to their church through the years.

Ed Knott had the building of the present church house in charge also.


How we would love to record more about our preachers and the faithful members, but space does not permit. After all, it is Christ alone who made it possible for individuals or groups to accomplish anything for His glory, according as they yielded their hearts, their time, their talents, and means to Him.

The Church of Christ was founded as an instrument for the salvation of men's souls from sin, and for praise and worship of the Triune God. We must not make the mistake of using His Church for honoring men or women, be they ever so faithful to Him. His is the victory and the power and to Him be the glory!

Many of the Methodists of our day, and in our local church are confused. We wonder if our minds and hearts are not on "things" too much and on finer churches, modern educational equipment and lovely surroundings to the neglect of the spiritual.

We wonder if we are not depending too much on science, culture, so called better living conditions, and social works to do the work of the changed heart, which alone can come through a living faith and yieldedness to Christ.

We wonder why a B. A. (born again) degree for preachers is not as important as it used to be. Our experience has not taught us that the compulsory B. B. and P. H. D. degrees have given us more "strangely warm" hearts than we had in the past. We wonder why the changes for much higher educational equipment in preachers and material improvements in buildings, etc., are not bringing the spiritual upheavals of decades past.

We wonder if the requirements, not necessarily spiritual or moral have not been the cause of our heaping to ourselves many teachers with "itching ears" and false blind leaders of the blind.

We wonder and pray we have had a glorious past! But it has been in the strength of the Lord. Can we continue to grow, to go, and to glow on the momentum of our forefathers? Can we? God is calling Methodist to wake up! God grant that we may!

Etta Shockley Few (Mrs. J. U. Historian).
Mina K. Davis (Mrs. H. A.) Co-historian
Ralph Habry, Pastor in charge this May 10, 1951