A BRIEF HISTORY OF ATHENS FIRST CHURCH

The first meeting house on this side of the Oconee River was built of small logs with the bark left on them. It was 22x24 feet, covered with pine boards, and presented externally the appearance of a crude cabin without a chimney. There was a door on one side and opposite it a box made of the same kind of boards that were used to cover the house, served as a pulpit. The floor was made of split logs somewhat smoothed on one side by a broad axe, and laid on the ground. The seats were built of the same material. This meeting House was on the lot of Jeremiah Freeman.

In 1810 a more commodious building was erected in another location a little south of the old Fair Grounds. This was Hull's meeting House, and served until 1824.

Although Athens was one of the first Georgia towns to have Methodist preaching, up to 1825 it had no church. Up to 1817 Hope Hull's House was the preaching place, and for the next eight years the professors of the college supplied the people with church services.

In 1825 the Methodists built their first church. This was the first house devoted exclusively to religious purposes. It was a frame building forty feet square, with a pulpit at the west side, the floor of which was six feet and a half above the floor of the church. (A man six feet high could stand erect under the pulpit) a gallery was on the other three sides.

About ten years after, this church proving to be insufficient to accommodate the congregation, it was enlarged by an addition of 20 feet on the West side, making a room 60x40 feet; the galleries extended to the pulpit modernized.

The lot on which the church was built was given by Mr. Thomas Hancock, a steward and trustee of the church from its very beginning. A few years ago his grand-daughter Miss Mary Ann Frierson, placed a marble tablet in the present church in memory of Thomas Hancock. This tablet hanging in the front entrance of the church has the following inscription:

"To the Glory of God and in memory of Thomas Hancock, born in Charlotte Co., Va., in 1762, died in Clarkesville Ga., April 9, 1852."

He was a devoted member of this church and the donor of the ground on which it stands.

After the completion of the church in 1825, the small congregation was put in charge of the Rev. Thomas W. Stanley, then rector of the Female Academy, and was thus the first Methodist preacher stationed there.

The early Methodist itinerant saw his members not oftener than once in several weeks, and only for a short time at that. His long coat, broad brimmed hat, and solemn visage impressed the people more or less with awe.

The young church shared the vicissitudes usual in those days, but on the whole there was a gain, for the church grew and multiplied, and enjoyed the ministry of many strong men.

In 1851 the present brick building was erected. It is a matter of interest that some of the brick were made by Mr. James R. Carlton and Mr. Henry H. Carlton the grandfather and father of Mrs. John D. Meell. The church was re-modeled and enlarged in 1884 and again in 1914.