HISTORY

of

BOWDEN METHODIST CHURCH
HISTORY OF BOWDON METHODIST CHURCH

By Mrs. H.M. Bird.

All through the ages God has spoken to men, calling them to leave their country, their homeland, to go into a strange land on some mission for Him. Blessed is that man who, when he hears the call, has the faith and the courage to answer it.

There is every indication God called Nathaniel Shelnutt from his home in Clayton County, Georgia, in the year 1849, and directed him to come over in Carroll County, on the border-line between Georgia and Alabama, and pitch his tent in the deep, dense forest (as it was then) where the Bowdon Methodist Church, under his leadership, was built, and has stood for 100 years.

After getting settled in a home, such as could be assembled in those days, having come here determined to make a better place in which to live, the first step he took toward the purpose in mind, was to set about at once erecting an altar unto the Lord. In fact, even though we have accepted 1850 as the year the Methodist Church was organized, one reads on good authority, coming from more than one source, "The Bowdon Methodist Church was organized, either in 1849 or 1850", which indicates the haste with which he went about building a place of worship. Not only the Bowdon Methodist Church was founded by him, but the town itself, three years after the Church was organized, was founded under his leadership.

Having accomplished the building of the Church and the founding of the town, the remarkable leader and builder yielded his influence and support toward organizing and maintaining an efficient educational system, which proved to be outstanding and most worthy. In 1856, when old Bowdon College was organized under the leadership of the revered Chas. McDaniel, the valiant leader gave his support and served as trustee of the institution famed throughout the country for its service to worthy young men...especially the returning maimed and helpless soldiers from the Civil War.
Such was the character of the man who founded the Bowdon Methodist Church—in what was at the time of his coming—largely a forest and wild country, west of the Chattahoochee river—lately a frontier between the white settlement on the other side of the river and the Indians—very few whites—few homes and stores—or Church buildings.

Four buildings have been erected since the Church was organized. The first was built from logs hewn from the forest in which the church was located... on land donated by Judge Shelnutt, who also donated the land for the burying ground nearby, and which for many years was used for the burying ground of the entire settlement.

The first church stood about 100 yards west of the present building. The second, which was built of undressed lumber—little better, little larger—than the old log meeting house, was erected on almost the same spot as the first. The third building was erected near where the present one now stands... it was constructed of dressed lumber, and was considered a fair church building for its day, and in keeping with other buildings of the slow growing community. This building was used until 1909—when the present splendid brick church was erected under the leadership of the Hon Herman J. Reaves, a brother of Rev. Charles M. Lipham, North Georgia Conference architect, who designed it. The late Mrs. Charlotte Lipham was the mother of Mr. Reaves and Dr. Lipham, and supported her sons whole-heartedly, financially and inspirationally—in undertaking the spacious building—far in advance of its day and surrounding environs. Dr. Lipham later drew the plans for the modern educational building—annex to the main auditorium, which was also built under the leadership of Mr. Reaves.

It should be stated here, that Mr. Reaves largely financed both the church and the annex... His love for the Methodist Church being predominant in his life, he not only was a benefactor to the home churches, but assisted financially in making other churches possible.
From the time the Bowdon Church was organized, 1850-1867—when, according to records of North Georgia Conference, as furnished by Rev. Geo. W. Barrett, for many years secretary of the Conference, the church was served by Circuit Riders and Colporteurs. In this capacity, as far as can be established, the Rev. David Stripling and the Rev. Claiborn Trussell were among, but probably not the only ones, who served. It is conceded that in the early days there came into the community many distributors of Bibles and religious literature, who were also preachers of the Gospel. One can feel rather certain the church, even though not a member of the conference at the time, had many services held within her modest walls.

Rev. James L. Lupo was pastor of the Carroll Circuit in 1861-1862. As to 1863-64-65, it is not certain, but by the best authority from more than one source, it is believed that Rev. David Stripling or Rev. Claiborn Trussell served the church during these years. It was most likely Rev. David Stripling, since according to records, he was appointed by the North Georgia Conference to serve as pastor for 1868.

Hence, we learn the status of the Bowdon Methodist Church was: Primitive from 1850 to 1860, and Methodist Episcopal, South 1861 until unification. The North Georgia Conference records give the names of the preachers having served the church since the first official appointment was made in 1867 for 1868, as follows: (For this information I am indebted to Rev. Geo. W. Barrett)
1867 - D. Stripling
1868 - J.C. Bridges, Carrolton & Bowdon
1869 - M.F. Malaby
1870 - J. Chambers
1871 - ??
1872 - W.C. Danlap
1873 - C. A. Mitchell
1874 - A.C. Reese
1875 - E.K. Aiken
1876 - J.L. Perryman
1877 - W.S. Simpson
1878 - W.E. Shackelford
1879 - G.C. Andrews
1880 - W.H. Speer
1881 - A.J. Hughes & P.D. Cantrell
1882 - M.W. Arnold
1883 - J.H. Myers
1884 - J.N. Myers
1885 - J.N. Myers
1886 - J.N. Myers & W.T. Irvine
1887 - H.W. Morris
1888 - H.L. Edmondson
1889 - H.L. Edmondson
1890 - H.L. Edmondson
1891 - W.F. Tarpney
1892 - J.S.L. Sappington
1893 - J.S.L. Sappington
1894 - G.C. D'Neal
1895 - W.G. Crawford
1896 - B.F. Searcy
1897 - B.F. Searcy
1898 - H.W. Morris
1899 - H.W. Morris
1900 - J.A. Timmerman
1901 - J.A. Timmerman
1902 - Walter Millican
1903 - J.R. Speer
1904 - J.R. Speer
1905 - J.R. Speer
1906 - J.M. Fowler
1907 - J.M. Fowler
1908 - V.E. Lanford
1909 - V.E. Lanford
1910 W.A. Maxwell
1911 W.A. Maxwell & Hosea Crawford, Supt.
1912 - W.A. Maxwell
1913 - W.A. Maxwell
1914 - J.A. Sewell & R.H. Crawford
1915 - J.A. Sewell
1916 - T.M. Elliott

1917 - M.K. Patillo
1918 - W.A. Maxwell & Nelson Hinesly
1919 - W.A. Maxwell
1920 - W.A. Maxwell
1921 - W.A. Maxwell
1922 - C.V. Weathers
1923 - C.V. Weathers
1924 - A.F. Nunn
1925 - R.F. Elrod
1926 - R.F. Elrod
1927 - C.J. Withrow
1928 - J.R. Allen
1929 - J.R. Allen
1930 - J.R. Allen
1931 - Z.C. Hayes, Jr
1932 - E.C. Hayes, Jr
1933 - Z.C. Hayes, Jr
1934 - E.G. Thomason
1935 - E.G. Thomason
1936 - E.G. Thomason & G.T. Sherrill
1937 - J.B. Gresham
1938 - J.B. Gresham
1939 - J.J. Copelan
1940 - J.J. Copelan
1941 - W.Z. Wiggins
1942 - W.Z. Wiggins
1943 - J.L. Black
1944 - J.E. Holbrook
1945 - J.E. Holbrook
1946 - J.E. Holbrook
1947 - J.E. Holbrook
1948 - L.L. Burch & W.Henry Norris
1950 - W.Henry Norris
An outstanding event in the history of the Bowdon Methodist Church was the 100th Birthday Celebration, taking place on the last day of the year, December the 31st., 1950. The program, just as it took place, is attached to this article, to be come a part of the history. It was a great day, closing with a Watch Night Service, beginning at 10 o'clock P.M. and ending at the stroke of mid-night—the beginning of the New Year, 1951. The Rev. W. Henry Norris, pastor, was the host for the occasion.

Among preachers called to the ministry from this church are: Rev. Charles M. Lipham, retired, and guest speaker at the home church, which gave him to the service; Rev. Shirley Sherrill, who is doing a great work on the California Coast; Rev. Marion Sherrill, prominent young North Georgia Conference pastor; and Dr. Chas. L. Allen, pastor of Grace Church, Atlanta, who is also one of Georgia's most popular columnist and radio speakers, and others.
Bowdon Methodist
Centennial Celebration
December 31, 1950

Bowdon Methodist Church
Bowdon, Georgia

Founded - 1850

Rev. W. Henry Norris, Pastor