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History of the First Methodist Church of
Calhoun, Georgia - Traced Through 100 Years

by Jean Herrin Bond

Miss Lullie Pitts, over a period of years, compiled historic data, factual and informative, which she incorporated into a history of Gordon County. The work shows much labor, for she linked our present and the future with the living Eighteenth Century, whose decades are of historic significance to the people of this community. From Miss Pitts' chronicle much of the following information concerning the beginning of our church history was taken. Her romance of the town's early struggles and the story of the stalwart men and women who founded its churches is inspiring and should challenge the present generation to noble achievements.

The City of Calhoun has been from its first establishment a city in which churches have played a dominant role. For 100 years, the history of the town and the history of the church have paralleled each other.

In the year 1852, the small village was created a corporate town. In 1852, the Calhoun Methodist Episcopal Church drew its first breath of life.

The initial property of the little band of worshipers was a large lot at the corner of Court and River Streets, which was donated by United States Senator John P. King, of Augusta.

A crudely constructed building was erected on that site and used until 1874, when the congregation purchased a parcel of land on the corner of North Wall and Trammell Streets. A new and more adequate house of worship was built and used until 1888, when the building was razed by a disastrous cyclone. This was a heavy loss to the small, but devoted membership. By the following - 1889 year, however, the congregation was housed comfortably in a new and better building, completed at a cost of \$2,500. Dr. H. C. Morrison preached the dedicatory sermon in May, 1889.

The site chosen was a few yards south of the former church. The lot was conveyed from Mrs. A. E. Ellis to the trustees in 1888.

Like its predecessors, this building was of wood construction, was of one story, contained an entrance alcove, and an auditorium that served also as a Sunday school room.

The church had not until this time owned a home for the residence of its minister, but in 1896, a parsonage was built on the church lot. The Rev. Clayton Quillian, a pastor, took an active part in its construction.

In 1905, the Calhoun church was made a station. Prior to that time, the members were ministered to by circuit riders who held services, conducted funerals and weddings, consoled the bereft, visited homes and held meetings in the community.

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By 1916, the growth of membership demanded larger quarters and a movement was launched for a new, more modern building. Under the leadership of the Rev. C. M. Lipham, pastor and architect, a structure of brick and marble was erected with an auditorium seating 600 people, Sunday school rooms, a kindergarten, a kitchen, a furnace, electricity, and other conveniences available at that time.

Probably the outstanding feature of the new edifice was the exquisite memorial windows placed in honor of Thos. M. and Susan A. Ellis, James M. and Milda Harbin, Zack T. and Elizabeth Gray, John M. and Mary I. Jarvis, Roberta Harris Wilson, Major A. Roff, Sarah Elizabeth Crutchfield, and T. E. Reeve, first missionary, 1916. One window worthy of special note was dedicated to Harriet Gold Boudinot, wife of the Cherokee Indian, Elias Boudinot, editor of the world renowned newspaper, "Cherokee Phoenix", and another window of beautiful design, the gift of G. A. Hall, was dedicated to "The Poor of This Church". A tablet at the entrance to the Sunday School auditorium was inscribed:

"1919

Leila Mooney Hall
Promoter and First Supt.
Elementary Department
Calhoun Methodist S. S.
'Her good works do follow her!.'

The building committee appointed was O. N. Starr, L. Moss, and J. G. B. Erwin. A committee to solicit subscriptions for the building fund was composed of O. N. Starr, A. B. David, T. A. Hopper, J. G. B. Erwin, E. L. Jackson, P. C. Dunagan, F. L. Hicks, C. F. McClain, R. R. Owen, L. N. Legg, and Mrs. G. A. Hall.

The church was completed in 1917 at a cost of \$26,000 and dedicated on August 5 of the same year by Bishop Warren Candler.

Adjacent lots, both north and south of the church property, were secured by purchase. Parts of these were sold and the parsonage remodeled at a cost of \$4,000.

Much could be written of the part that the church played in the lives of its members and its influence in the community, but in the limits of this brief history it is enough to note that through all of its years of usefulness the "old church" served as a sure support in times of grief and disappointment and a tower of encouragement and inspiration to those who sought the grace of the gospel and the sacrament at its altar.

It was with a sense of deep regret mixed with a realization of necessity that the congregation voted in 1948 to again embark on an expansion program. Church facilities had become wholly inadequate for the tempo of present day church activities. Gradual encroachment of the commercial area was also a deciding factor.

A beautiful corner lot on Line and College Streets was purchased in 1948 from Miss Lulie Pitts at a cost of \$8,000.

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Again a building committee was named. The group was composed of the Rev. C. W. Fruit, J. H. Reeve, and T. J. Brown, chairman. Under the forceful leadership of J. L. Spink, the finance committee did an outstanding job. Those who served under him were A. B. David, Thos. J. Brown, Dr. M. M. Ellis, C. L. Moss, Sam Powers, Willie V. Owen, James Starr, Mrs. Annie Maude Wise, Mrs. J. M. Wright, and J. H. Reeve.

A gigantic undertaking loomed ahead, but enthusiasm was rife and as in the past, the church responded to the new challenge with imagination, courage, and determination. Credit for the inception of the undertaking must be given to the Rev. Y. A. Oliver. Under his virile leadership, the program was conceived, his dream on the verge of fruition, when the North Georgia Conference saw fit to transfer him to another pastorate.

He was replaced by the Rev. C. W. Fruit, and to him Calhoun Methodists owe eternal gratitude. In his efforts to make of the new structure a church of real beauty and distinction, he found no detail too insignificant for his careful consideration. His outstanding ability, his determination for perfection in his Lord's House and his consecration to duty, made his stay in Calhoun an epochal time in the church annals.

William Crutchfield, distinguished architect of Chattanooga, Tennessee, was employed and asked to submit plans for consideration. An impressive building of colonial design was the final selection of the committee, and under the direction and guidance of the Rev. Mr. Fruit, the walls of the new Calhoun Methodist Church were speedily lifted.

Ground-breaking ceremonies were conducted at the new building site on Sunday afternoon, June 5, 1949. Dr. J. E. Billings, chairman of the official board, presided; to T. J. Brown, chairman of the building committee, was accorded the honor of wielding the spade which broke ground for the new house of worship.

On Sunday morning, June 4, 1950, the church was host to an overflow congregation of members and friends when the new sanctuary was opened for worship. Communal thanks for the successful program just completed was the theme for the impressive service.

The old church building was sold for the sum of \$20,000; this amount augmented by many generous gifts, and pledges from members and well-wishers made it possible to announce in June, 1952, that the entire cost of \$132,000 had been paid in full.

The handsome new church is furnished in a manner befitting its imposing exterior. Some of the beautiful memorial windows were removed from the old to the new sanctuary, and four new ones added. Radiant in color, rich in spiritual significance, and vibrant with a warm, human quality, these windows tell a soul-stirring story that finds a response in the hearts of all who see them. It was not deemed advisable to move six of the windows, but those departed, loved ones in whose honor the stained glass was placed now share a composite memorial. Their names inscribed on a tablet of finely cast bronze, occupies an honored place in the vestibule, just on the left of the sanctuary doors.

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The church received a large number of magnanimous, memorial gifts in connection with the new building. Mr. and Mrs. Sam Powers donated the church spire as a memorial to Mrs. Powers' father Lawrence Moss, and a beautiful window in memory of her mother, Jennie A. Moss. Handsome, colonial style bronze lanterns at the entrance were given by Mrs. C. E. David and Mr. and Mrs. Estes David as a memorial to their husband and father, Claude E. David. Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Ramsey gave a piano to the Primary Department in memory of Mrs. Ramsey's mother, Alma Slappey Jones.

As a memorial to his parents, Ellen B. and George W. Koon and Bertie B. Hall, Dr. and Mrs. Wilbur Hall gave the flood lights on the front lawn and a window typical of the stained-glass artistry employed in the sanctuary. Two other windows of this type were given by Judge and Mrs. J. H. Paschall to honor Mrs. Paschall's mother and father, Thomas W. and Ida H. Herbin, and Dr. and Mrs. Fred Bolding with Miss Alda Bolding in memory of Thomas A. McClain and Mary Bolding McClain.

Miss Madge Moss, to honor the memory of her mother, Madge Slagle Moss, presented the intermediates of the Sunday school department with Sallman's inspired portrait, "The Head of Christ". The children of the Rev. A. C. Cantrell contributed the handsome pulpit stand as a memorial to the beloved former pastor, the Rev. J. T. Eakes. A beautiful portrait of Mrs. J. G. B. Erwin, faithful worker for many years, hangs over the mantle in the Ladies' Parlor, a tribute from her children, Mr. and Mrs. Rice Erwin, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Jolly, and Dr. and Mrs. L. E. Black.

In honor of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. I. Boston gave the handsome communion table and chairs; Mrs. Tom Brown, Mrs. Luke Spink and Jack Boston the harmoniously proportioned altar set.

Mrs. Jewel B. Reeve gave a beautiful piano in honor of her husband, Charles Phillips Reeve, who from childhood until death was a faithful member of the First Methodist Church.

Money was generously expended by other members for many beautiful and valuable gifts; unfortunately, space does not permit the enumeration of them all at this time.

During the early days of the church there was no training in sacred music. A few, old favorite hymns were sung with "hearts full of praise and throats full of noise." Today Mrs. T. B. David, a full-time musical director is employed. A beautiful electronic Baldwin organ peals its harmonies over the worshipers, and vocal selections rendered by talented members features each service.

The educational function of the church has been carried on from the earliest days of its history. The present enrollment in Sunday school is 350, with attendance increasing regularly. Dr. T. J. Lance, distinguished and beloved layman of the North Georgia Conference, serves as general superintendent; Dean D. Hayes,

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assistant superintendent; Mrs. L. C. Brownlee, secretary.

The church program of youth work had its origin in 1886 when Mrs. B. M. Harlan organized a group of children, designated by the poetic name, "Little Lights". Their leader was entitled "Lady Manager". In 1903 the Juvenile Missionary Society was formed under the direction of Mrs. P. M. Tate, now of Fairmount, in 1922 the Calhoun Young People's Auxiliary came into being, was later succeeded by the Epworth League, and in 1939 assumed the name, "Youth Fellowship." Mrs. J. B. Watts organized the first Cradle Roll. The department of youth work is currently under the sponsorship of Mrs. L. C. Brownlee, with Miss Sue Marie Franklin acting as her assistant. The effectiveness of this branch of the church has been greatly enhanced since removal to the new building; the attractive, well equipped recreation room being a prominent factor in increased response from youth to the church.

A potent force through the years has been the Ladies' Missionary Society. Following a conference meeting at Kansas City in 1939, when the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant Churches were united into one group to form the Methodist Church, this organization became known as the Woman's Society of Christian Service.

Calhoun's first Missionary Society, while conceived in 1879, was not organized until April, 1880, under the influence of the Rev. and Mrs. M. L. Underwood, assisted by the Rev. W. A. Parks, presiding elder, who led the devotional exercises. Mrs. Robert Wilson was elected first president. The present society, under the able leadership of Mrs. W. F. Dew, is subdivided into three circles and one Business Woman's Guild. During the critical building years, W. S. C. S. led by Mrs. J. E. Billings, and later by Mrs. J. L. Spink, worked enthusiastically for funds to purchase the beautiful furnishings which adorn the building today.

The legacies of the past, the opportunities of the present, and the challenge of the future, have always been met forth-rightly by the women of Calhoun Methodist Church.

Fifty ministers have served this pastorate since the year 1876. Among those leaving a deep impression on the lives of the communicants were Clayton Quillian, S. A. Harris, Frank Quillian, E. D. Hale, E. G. Machay, C. M. Lipham, T. J. Branson, J. T. Eakes, S. D. Cherry, E. C. Gieckler, G. F. Venable, Robert Armous, Wm. Gardner, Y. A. Oliver, and C. W. Fruit.

The Rev. J. T. Eakes, possibly most beloved of all ministers who have served this church, made Calhoun his home after his retirement by the conference. He was held in the highest esteem and affection by all who knew him. His was a "form and combination, indeed, where every God did seem to set his seal to give the world assurance of a man." His beloved wife resides in Calhoun today.

For many years and still, under the leadership of the Rev. J. T. Eakes,

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For the conference year 1953 - 54 the Rev. John C. Moore, Jr. was appointed pastor of the First Methodist Church of Calhoun, Georgia. During this year the contract was signed for air-conditioning both the sanctuary and the church school building.

As of this date, May 11, 1954 the enrollment of the church school is 406 and the enrollment of church membership is 498.

The First Methodist Church of Calhoun stands today as a thing of beauty and usefulness, awaiting the response of those who are now members, and those who will become members. It exists for the sole purpose of preaching the everlasting gospel of the Son of God.

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