HISTORY

OF

CARROLLTON FIRST METHODIST CHURCH
Carroll County, named for a Catholic, Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, his plantation estate, became a county in 1827. Settlers from eastern Georgia counties came in immediately. With them came the Methodist Circuit Riders. In 1828 the Methodist had a congregation and meeting house at Concord, the mother of Methodist churches in Carroll County. This church was a member of the Coweta and Carroll mission circuit, which was in the Athens District. It is most probable that Bishops Soule and Capers assigned Dabney P. Jones, a local minister, as the preacher. The record shows that he was first to preach at Newnan that year. Newnan was on the Carroll and Coweta Mission of the Athens District of the South Carolina Conference.

In 1830 the Carroll and Coweta Mission had three hundred and eighty one (381) white members and sixty four (64) colored members. This circuit had been changed from the Athens District to the Columbus District. George Pournell, a deacon, under the Methodist set-up, was the preacher. The year 1832 finds the Coweta and Carroll Mission Circuit divided. Carroll mission showed a membership of two hundred forty-two (242) whites and nineteen (19) colored. George Bishop was the preacher in charge.

In the meantime, Georgia had been made a conference the preceding year -- 1831, when Appleton Haygood was the preacher.

In those days the preacher seemed to be changed every year. The circuit riders lived on horses, carried their books and clothes in saddle bags, and fired the countryside with evangelical zeal for righteous living.

The Methodists of Carrollton erected the first house of worship. Tradition and contemporary historians of that time, as the late Lee Mandeville, stated that the box-like, plain church was built in 1847. It was located on the cemetery on Alabama and Park Avenue. The church lot ran up the west side of Park Avenue 156 feet to the north. The southern boundary was a line running 219 feet from the intersection of Park and Alabama Street to the west. The church faced the cemetery south across the road. Like churches of its time it had two front doors -- one for the women to enter and one for the men. The sexes sat separated. According to Dr. McGehee, the Negroes sat in the rear of the church. At the three o'clock service for Negroes, the whites sat in the rear.

The lot described above was purchased from Anderson
Boggs for fifty dollars by G. P. Garrison, Thomas B. Espey and Washington Parker, trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church South of Carrollton of the Carroll Circuit. For some unknown reason the deed was not written until February 26th, 1850. It was not recorded until November 26th, 1850. This building was shared with other denominations until these denominations erected their own houses of worship. The year 1850, in which the deed of purchase was recorded, Thomas Whitby was the minister and James E. Payne was Presiding Elder.

The Carroll Circuit was in the LaGrange District. There had been Methodists in Carrollton for twenty years prior to 1850. Like other denominations they worshiped in houses, the courthouse and other places where shelter was offered.

CHAPTER III

The building of a Methodist meeting house in Carrollton in 1847 found Methodists in a respectable position and an acceptance on the part of the people of the state and elsewhere. The people now had confidence in the circuit rider's patriotism and the quality and sincerity of his ministry. Methodists disciplined themselves for high standards of personal conduct, the Methodists increased their hold upon the state. In the main, slavery was opposed, liquor was fought, and questionable behavior resulted in expulsion from the church. Jewelry was forbidden -- ribbons and laces worn by women was frowned upon. Extravagant dress of a Methodist was a sign of impurity. While it was fashionable for men to have beards, the circuit rider was clean-shaven as an outward sign of humility and buried pride.

The organization of the church was now very well developed and understood. Formative years had passed. John Wesley's pattern for an educated ministry was having a telling effect -- the preacher had to read books. The Methodist was evangelistic, missionary and aggressive. The system of the itinerary kept men on the go. In that day of little travel, he brought news. He had ideas. People courted his companionship. The circuit rider preached once or twice per day every day in the week except Monday. In the forties, one man had most of the territory of North Georgia west of Atlanta. The circuit riders worked in the local church. As late as 1866, Dr. John B. McGehee, the Presiding Elder of the LaGrange district, of which Carrollton Circuit was a member, reports in his autobiography that there were twenty local preachers on the Carrollton Circuit. The local preachers, as for example Judge Felton of Cartersville, and many men of like caliber. You see there were only ten circuit riders in Georgia in 1807. A circuit often covered dozens of large counties.
Examine the day, week, and month's schedule of the preacher in charge. "He arose at four o'clock every season of the year. From four to six he read, prayed and studied. After prayer with the family and breakfast, he mounted his faithful horse and was off to his appointments. He preached at about twelve, held class meeting with his flock, whom he had not seen. In twenty-eight days and would not see again in twenty-eight days. He went home with some brother and preached at night and so on. He fasted on Friday and, as stated above, rested on Monday -- "the rides were long, the exposure great, and the labour exhausting." Only men of iron and a burning passion for Christian service survived. Many went to untimely graves -- all retired broken down in body. It is a wonder that Methodism spread.

CHAPTER IV

The Carrollton circuit gave through its church at Villa Rica two of the most renowned men to Southern Methodism. One was a preacher, educator, bishop, and saint -- the other was a layman, financier, educational benefactor and Christian gentleman. The preacher was Warren C. Candler; the latter was Mr. Samuel C. Candler, who settled in Carroll County in 1833.

In 1866 the Methodist Church in that vicinity was on the Carroll Circuit. The circuit was in the LaGrange District. Dr. John B. McGehee was the Presiding Elder. At the Quarterly Conference held at Villa Rica in 1866, S. C. Candler was converted and joined the Methodist Church. His wife, Baptist-inclined, followed. Hence, Methodism gained. Dr. McGehee tells this story of his Autobiography on page 138. He said Warren was there at the meeting. Warren was nine years old. It is Dr. McGehee who states the Villa Rica Church was on the Carroll Circuit and that he was the Presiding Elder. The LaGrange District was composed of Carroll, Paulding, Haralson, a part of Coweta, and Campbell, Troup, Meriwether, Harris and Heard counties. Dr. McGehee stated that the next year he himself was changed to the Newnan District which he describes.

I go into detail about the above to prove the tie-up of the Carrollton circuit with Villa Rica and this famous family. At this time Dr. McGehee said there were over a dozen churches on the circuit with more than 1,500 members.

Dr. McGehee remembered in his old age three things about the Carrollton circuit -- the number of fine and able local preachers, the Candler incident, and the Bonners of the Bonner Gold Mine -- an affluent family, the wife of which was a Methodist and deeply religious.
I want to make a correction in the preceding chapter, with reference to Dr. J. B. McGehee changing from the LaGrange to the Newnan District. It should have been that Dr. McGehee was returned to the LaGrange District, but that he changed his residence to Newnan.

Ministers are important. Hence, for historical reasons, I will list in detail the ministers from 1829 -- the year Carrollton was founded -- to modern times, at least, Coweta and Carroll Mission -- supposedly Dabney J. Jones. The circuit was a member of the Athens District of the South Carolina Conference. George Fournell served in 1850. In 1851, the Georgia Conference was set up and Appling Raygood was the preacher. The circuit was changed to the Columbus District.

1832 - George Bishop
1833 - William W. Steagall
1834 - W. Graham
1835 - J. Jones
(The circuit was in the Cherokee District)
1835-36 - J. W. Yarbrough
1836 - Thomas L. Thomas
1837 - Alfred Dorman
1838 - Philip Groover
1839 - Sidney M. Smith
1840 - Sidney Smith
1841 - Sidney Smith
1842 - Jesse W. Carrel
1843 - Thomas Fowler
1844 - Basil E. Lucas
1845 - Robert A. Johnson
1846 - Robert A. Johnson
1847 - J. Bakely Smith
(Built Carrollton Church)
1849 - Uncertain
1850 - William E. Lucy
1851 - Thomas H. Whitby
(Had church deed recorded)
1852 - A. Dorman
1853 - James G. Worley
1853 - E. W. Arnold
1854 - Peter Groover
(Villa Rica established as a mission)
1855 - Robert Stripling
1856 - Robert Stripling
1857 - J. T. Answorth
1858 - C. W. Howard
1859 - J. W. Reynolds
1860 - James L. Lupo
1861 - No change
An historical meeting was held at the Methodist Church Sunday, November 19, 1950. Participating in the services was the Chairman of the Board of Stewards, Dr. Steve Worthy; Bishop Arthur J. Moore; the Rev. Delma Hagood, District Superintendent; and the minister of the Carrollton church, the Rev. J. W. Segars. This was the occasion of the dedication of a new $12,000 organ and the Methodist parsonage of some $30,000 value. The service commemorated 100 years of property ownership for the Methodist congregation at Carrollton. The congregation has come from a simple, box-like church, dedicated in 1850, to total property amounting to more than $300,000.

The congregation made note of this occasion with services of dedication led by the Bishop, and followed the services with a church family lunch. Bishop Moore commented that nowhere in the world except in our country could such an occasion be held. The food was excellent and the fellowship superb. A member of the Board of Stewards, P. L. Shaefer, was in charge of the arrangements for the occasion.

You will find below the remainder of the list of ministers who have served the Carrollton church:

1888 - Rev. A. M. Thigpen
1889 - Rev. P. A. Heard
1890-91 - Rev. W. R. Foot
1892 - Rev. J. R. Parker
1893 - Rev. A. G. Worley
The First Methodist Church

1894 - Rev. C. C. Cary
1895-96 - Rev. G. W. Duval
1897-98 - Rev. W. L. Pearce
1899-1900 - Rev. J. R. McClesky
1901 - Rev. H. J. Ellis
1902 - Rev. J. H. Lewis
1903-04-05-06 - Rev. Walter B. Dillard
1907-08 - Rev. Wm. Dunbar
1909-10 - Rev. A. W. Quillian
1915-16 - Rev. A. M. Pierce
1917-18 - Rev. W. T. Hamby
1919-20 - Rev. W. H. Cooper
1921-22-23 - Rev. J. P. Erwin
1924 - Rev. J. G. Logan
1925-26 - Rev. Frank Quillian
1927-29-29 - Rev. Irby Henderson
1930-31 Rev. E. F. Frazer
1932-33-34-35 - Rev. H. W. Clark
1936-37-38 - Rev. H. C. Emory
1939 - Rev. Claude Haynes
1940-41-42-43 - Rev. Zach C. Hayes
1944-45 - Rev. Horace Smith
1946-47-48 - Rev. E. Nash Broyles
1949-50 - Rev. J. W. Segars
1951 - Rev. B. W. Hancock