HISTORY

of

CLAYTON CHARGE

Clayton Church
Condensed History Of Clayton Methodist Church

Long before Rabun County was made a charge over which pastors were appointed by the Methodist Conference itinerant preachers from other territories came into the county on horseback journeys and conducted services at a number of places on invitation of the people of that community. The records of deeds show that parcels of land were set aside in several communities for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church and for school purposes. There were cases in which some kind of meeting house was built without there being any deed to the ground on which it stood.

The oldest property of the Methodist Church of which there is continuous record is for the church at Clayton. The deed was made February 7, 1842, more than a hundred years ago. It was from John S. Henley to David Green, Andrew W. Morris and Jesse R. Siler. The location was on a hill just off Church Street near the residence of John E. Clark. The consideration was $75. Upon this property was built a small brick Church. (Some of the original brick were unearthed when the Clark's built there summer home near the location). This building was used until 1879, when according to the best obtainable information the walls cracked and the building had to be abandoned.

The Trustees of this church in 1879 were S.W. Dover (father of Dr. J.C. Dover) James E. Derrick and Henry Dotson, Sr. In that year they sold the lot to Jesse W. Green for $100. They were authorized by the Church to use this money on a building of a new church on a lot conveyed to them by the late B.W. and E.A. Bell. These were the late Dr. B.W. Bell and wife. This is the lot, situated on Main Street Clayton, upon which the present building stands. The deed is dated July 25, 1878.

The building then erected was of frame structure and remained unaltered until 1923. In the year under the pastorate of Rev. R.P. Ethridge and Rev. C.W. Smith it was enlarged to cover the lot, which was 60x70 feet. The walls were veneered with solid granite taken from abandoned culverts of the old Blue Ridge Railroad. Several memorial windows were installed. In 1924 the pews and altar cushion were given by the late Mrs. W.F. Gard of Clayton and Americus. In 1929 the church secured the services of a local architect, the late Marion H. Dawson (who for many years was architect for the Coca-Cola Company) who exhibited great skill in remodeling the interior of the auditorium. Rev. J.H. Couch was pastor at that time. In 1940 the pastor, Dr. Waights G. Henry, Jr., with the assistance of the late Lex Darnell of Dillard, made other improvements among them the erection of a choir loft directly back of the pulpit. Centering the choir loft is a memorial window given by the late Mrs. S.C. Dobbs of Lakemont and Atlanta, in memory of her father, Rev. Jesse F. Mixon. During the pastorate of Dr. Henry the basement was excavated and class rooms, recreation room, kitchen and furnace room were built. Auditorium lights were given the church by the late Mrs. Frank Earl of the famed "Earl House in East Clayton and by the late Cecil Cannon of the Henry Grady Hotel, Atlanta, a former citizen of Rabun County. During the pastorate of Rev. Thos. H. Wheelis (1944-'49) chimes were installed in the church and through the generosity of the late Samuel S. Dobbs, whose membership was in Clayton Church at the time of his passing, an organ was installed in memory of his wife.

The members of the Wesleyan Service Club have recently painted and repaired the entire basement area and have, with the assistance of the W.S.C.S. installed a new sink in the kitchen.