Methodists have been in Hall County, Georgia, since 1830 when a Methodist circuit rider named Rhodes was forced to leave Gainesville without preaching. E.M. Johnson, who sponsored a Methodist service in 1831 with preacher William J. Parks at the court house, purchased for the Methodists the original Hall County Court House in 1833 for $150. Gainesville, South Bend and Antioch, a northern church with pastor and no building, and Methodist churches for blacks in Gainesville and Belton were in existence before Clemons Chapel was founded in 1880. From its organization as Polksville Methodist Episcopal Church South, Clemons Chapel was closely related to the community of Glade Properties. The congregation has been affected by the economic nature of the Glade community, the social interaction of families living in the community, and the religious influence of Methodist preachers upon the community.

In the Glade Community

Having come in 1826 from South Carolina, Major John Bell, who is buried in Clemons Chapel cemetery, purchased 500 acres on Grove River, but then began gold mining and farming along Flat Creek. His words, first describing the Flat Creek area a "glade," became the name for eventually a five square mile area. In 1833 Dr. Richard Banks, a Methodist from Gainesville, bought the Glade farm and operated diamond and gold mines. The gold vein was described as "60-70 acres; coin about 92 cts. per penny-weight." In the 1840's Major Bell and Dr. Banks bought 1,000 acres on Flat Creek, and in 1849 Bell purchased from Banks all the Glade farm and mines. Bell died in 1850 and his wife in 1861. By 1880 the Glade Properties included 6,000 acres owned by the Jennings family in Brooklyn, N.Y., and were managed by Methodist local preacher, Charles R. Clemons.
In 1869 Joseph Banks, son of Dr. Richard Banks, traded 160 acres for $500 of stock in the Atlanta and Richmond Air-Line Railroad. By 1873 Banks held stock in the Northeastern Railroad for a proposed track from Lulu to Athens. Banks was developing Lula Junction, later known as Lula, while Belton, named after John Bell, was chartered in 1874 and again in 1879.

In 1880 Belton had two churches (a Methodist, relocated later into Lula, and black Methodist), and a weekly newspaper, The North Georgian. Ara Lomax Oliver recalls attending camp meeting at the Belton black Methodist Church in 1913, the year she married.

The development of railroads accelerated the growth of agriculture of the Glade area. Matt Buice offered property for a depot in Belton, and Joseph Banks offered a larger brick depot in Lula. The forty mile Northeastern track from Lula was built to Athens omitting Belton, but included an unused mile into the hills. At the Lula depot cotton was exported from Glade Properties, which extended from Clermont to Lula. Mail was dispatched twice daily from Lula to Athens. Rivalry between Belton and Lula continued until they merged, establishing one water system, in 1956.

Known As Polksville Church

When Methodists in Polksville District organized in 1880, they elected as trustees (the spelling as listed on the church deed) Charles R. Clements, William D. Patterson, John Dunagin, Britain W. Lockhart, and Mrs. Ana Gowder. On March 4, 1880 an acre of ground was deeded to the trustees of Polksville Church and their successors (for the sum of one dollar) by Frederick M. Gowder for his concern "for the cause of Christ and from an earnest desire to promote his heritage on earth." Over a year later when the deed was recorded by the Claimant Clerk in Lula, December 29, 1881, the trustee's names were spelled as "Charles Clemons, William D. Pitman, John Dunagan, Britain W. Lockhart, and Mrs. Ana Gowder." Witnesses at the recording were Vincent Lockhart, Wilkinson Smallwood, and Y.M. Gowder.

Dr. Britain Lockhart, one of the original trustees, was grandson of Capt.
Vincent Lockhart (1794-1889), a soldier in the War of 1812, and a member of the House of Representatives. Vincent Sr. is buried on his family property. His wife Louise and son Dr. Vincent D. Jr. and wife Nancy Martin Lockhart are buried at the cemetery at Clemons Chapel. Vincent Jr. went to Augusta to practice medicine but returned to the Glade area. His son Britain (June 5, 1851 - February 11, 1919), married Annie Bell (November 14, 1862 - February 14, 1923), granddaughter of Major Bell and close friend of Ara Lomax Oliver.

The original Polksville Church property in Lot 123 in the twelfth district of Hall County was described as follows: "Beginning at a Spanish Oak Corner on the Cleveland Road about sixty yards northwest of a tree known as the Shooting Tree, running thence ninety (90) yards about northeast to a Black Oak Corner thence Northwest fifty-four (54) yards to a Black oak corner, thence ninety (90) yards about Southeast to a stake on said Cleveland Road thence fifty four (54) yards about Southeast along said Cleveland Road to the beginning corner."8

The Gainesville Directory (1882-83) describes the activity in the Glade Properties. "The mining property belongs to A.G. Jennings of New York City. He owns a store, saw mill, and flour mill above high shoals on the Chattahoochee, three miles above the Glade Mines. The Post Office is known as 'The Glade.' Farming to a considerable extent is carried out under the same management, necessary shops, etc. A Sabbath School and good day school are taught here."9 The public school met in Polksville Church until a separate school building was erected at the corner of the Glade Store Road and the Cleveland and Athens Road.

Relocation as Clemons Chapel

The Polksville Church building burned in 1903 and was rebuilt across from the original location, a quarter mile west, near the cemetery at the intersection with Glade Road (now closed), opposite the school building. The schoolhouse was later turned into a private dwelling of John A. and Della Wiley, the parents of Guy Wiley. Charles Clemons solicited donations from the community and directed volunteers to
construct the new building, dedicated debt-free. The congregation renamed the church "Clemons Chapel."\(^{10}\)

On December 17, 1903 Albert Goud Jennings, Cecilia D. Jennings, and Marie W. Jennings deeded three acres to Clemons Chapel for its new location. The trustees of Clemons Chapel in 1903 listed were (spelling on deed) "B.W. Lockhart, D.A. Gowder, W.W. Wiley, A.D. Oliver, and James A. Pitman." The deed for the three acre site provided for the church location and an expansion of the cemetery, as follows:

"Beginning at a White Oak on the west side of the Athens and Cleveland Road or north corner of present cemetery lot of Polksville Church and running southwesterly with the north boundary of said cemetery lot and beyond, in same direction to a rock 80 yards from said White Oak, and thence from said rock westerly 158 yards to Red Oak on original line between lots 123 and 117, thence north along said line to Post Oak, thence north easterly 135 yards to a Pine on a road leading from Glade Store to the said Athens and Cleveland road, and then along said Athens and Cleveland road in a southerly direction to beginning White Oak. One acre of said land adjoining present cemetery to be used and appropriated for burial purposes by said trustees in such shape, and located as they may determine."

The three acre lot was recorded December 23, 1903. The "trust" clause is included, which read, "To have and to hold the afsaid land by the said parties of the second part in trust that said premises shall be and kept, maintained, and disposed of as a place of Divine Worship for the use of the Ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, subject to the Discipline, usage and ministerial appointments of said church as from time to time authorized and declared by and by the General Conference of said Church as from time to time authorized and declared and by annual Conference within whose bounds the said premises are situate, in Fee simple forever."

The witnesses to the three acre deed were L.A. Mackey, Helen Jennings Sibole, A.G. Jennings, and Charles H. Buckley, a notary public in Brooklyn, N.Y.\(^{11}\)
A second parcel of one acre along the road on the far side of the cemetery was deeded to Clemons Chapel by Albert, Cecilia, and Marie Jennings on May 13, 1904, the same dimensions as the Polksville site, surrounding the cemetery on the east. The former Gouder site was traded for this identically sized property across the road, in cooperation with the Jennings family. The trustee representing Clemons Chapel was B.W. Lockhart. The new site (also Lot 123, twelfth district) was described: "Beginning at a Spanish Oak corner on the Cleveland and Athens road, near the old site of Polksville M.E. Church, and running thence about northeast about ninety yards to a Black Oak Corner, thence about northwest about fifty-four yards to a Black Oak Corner, thence ninety yards about southwest to a stake on the Cleveland and Athens road, thence about southeast fifty-four yards to the point or place of beginning." The second deed for the one acre plot was recorded June 7, 1904 before witness for A.G.J., "William A.T. Jackson, L.A. Mackey, A.C. Jacobs;" and before witnesses for C.D.J., "Helen Jennings Silboen, Jennie Beggesen, Marie Latz." 

**Influential Personalities**

Preaching services were held once a month at Clemons Chapel. One of the early spiritual leaders of Clemons Chapel was W.W. Wiley, who was an inspiration to many young people. Once coming in a snowstorm as the only person present, he sang and prayed and held his own service himself. Sometimes he would walk with Ara Lomax Oliver as a child. No fire would be made until Dr. Lockart, who came by buggy, and perhaps others arrived.

The congregation felt kindly toward the Jennings family, owners of the Glade Properties, who were manufacturers of silk laces. The Jennings were devout members of Clinton Avenue Congregational Church in Brooklyn, N.Y. They provided the Christmas decorations for Clemons Chapel and Christmas candy and gifts for all the children. Mrs. A.G. Jennings was a director of the Society for the Aid of Friendless Women and Children in Brooklyn, and founder and director of the Brooklyn Home for Aged
Men. At her funeral in January 1890 her pastor, Rev. Thomas B. McLeod, declared, her Lord was "a living, loving Father, to whom she could go with her heart's plaudit or plaint, as trustfully as the little child casts itself on the bosom of its mother. She believed, without even a doubt, in the providence of God. In each event of life, she trusted His ruling hand. To her, as to most of us, God's way was in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and his judgments were not known, but she ever found help in the sanctuary, and she was content to wait His time for the unfolding of his purposes. This was the secret of her hopefulness, when those about her were distressed often by the darkness, which to them was impenetrable." 

Families of the Chapel

Families first represented in Clemons Chapel after the burning of Polksville Church early in the century include Armour--Thomas, India, Allie, Mrs. James, Rayda; Maggie Farmer; Samantha J. Faulkner; Julia Grier; Mellie C. Hulsey; Jones-Mary A. and R.A.; Lomax--John, Winnie, Vicy V., Catherine; Miller--E.S., Nelia, Andrew, Robert, Woodrow, Dorsey, Fletcher; Maggie Myers; Oliver--A.D., Anna, America, Dean, Ara, Fletcher R.; Pittman--Jane, Roscoe, Lula, Salina, Bruce, J.C., James, Margaret, Ruth, Jewell, Alenzo, Paul, Claud, Marvin, Fay Do; Emma Rogers; Paralee Roberts; Shockley--W.R., Zora; Shubert--G.W., Mrs. G.W., Robert R., Girlstle; India Smallwood; Sarah Smith; Stevens--Lillie, Adrie; Wiley--Cornelia, W.W., B.J., George D., Sarah Jane, Minnie, John A., Della, Mary, Hester, David, Guy, Lola, Madie, Minnie Lou, Vida, Elsie, Margie Oliver, Sallie.

Becoming members of Clemons Chapel in the mid-century were Armour--Esther, Elora; Nora H. Black; Farmer--Mrs. Hattie, Esther, Hillie; George Gowder; Ruby L. Irwin; Jones--Julia, Mary Lou, Thelma Ophelia; Miller--Joe, Bernice Haynes; Oliver--Annie, Bernice (Shubert), Neila Virginia, Avie Ardelle, Telford R.; Pittman-- Albert, Hattie Sosbee, W.J., Mrs. W.J., Mrs. Hannah, Edna Jane; Ronnie C. Sammons; Inez Scott (Hulsey); Hattie Mae Shubert; Mrs. A.G. Wilbanks; Wiley--Mrs Guy (Thelma), Mrs. Blanch, Hugh, Willie Mae, James Marion, Viemar (Masters), Hassie (Stanley),
Clemons Chapel History - 7

Dessie (Pittman), Ruby (Armour), Cardelia, Peggy Jane (Bryant), Margaret (Alexander, Turner), Julian, Edith (Pittman), Zora, Bessie; Loy Wilson.

Those who joined during the ministry of Walton McNeal were Banks-- Jeanette, Gail (Watson); Crowe-- Gary and Linda; Hulsey-- Janice (Parker), Michael, Beverly; Sammy Medlock; Oliver-- Garnett, Bessie, Dwight, Patricia, Douglas, Judy; and Eugene Wiley.

During the 1970's new members were Lola Clark (rejoining); Hulsey-- Kenneth, Reginald, William (Billy), Woodrow W.; Eddie Medlock; John A. Oliver; Billie Pittman; Ronnie Sammons; Rickie Turner.

Received in the 1980's were Griffith, Alan Duke and Quieta; Porter-- Cindy P. and Ricky; Watson, Shannon and Jane; Wiley-- Billie Sue, Mellie, A.W. Sr. and Versie.

Pastoral Guidance

The first Methodist circuit serving northern Hall County was in Elberton District before Gainesville District was formed. Air Line Mission with 96 members in 1873-74, was served by John H. Washburn who died in 1876 in Gillsville. The Gainesville Circuit was served by Marion Lafayette Underwood, the Hall Circuit by J.S. Embry. The following year, 1875-76, Belton Mission was organized with a charge membership of 246. In 1884-85 Belton and Toccoa were served by F.S. Hudson, Hall Circuit by B.E. Ledbetter. In 1886-87 Belton and Air Line Missions were given three preachers, and Hall Circuit was served by Henry Lafayette Edmondson. Belton was served in 1887 by M.P. Watkins, Hall by G.K. Quillian, and Gainesville Circuit by S.H. Braswell. In 1888 Belton was served by B.P. Allen, Hall by J.N. Myer, and Gainesville Circuit by S.H. Brasell. In 1889 Belton and Mission were served by J.H. Little, Hall by C.P. Marchma, and Gainesville by A.A. Tilley.

Before 1922 churches in the annual conference records were not identified on circuits, and no record of membership and finances of specific congregations were made. Folksville (later Clemons Chapel), located on the boundary between Elberton
and Gainesville Districts, was primarily on Belton (later Lula) Circuit, but occasionally on Hall (later Brookton) Circuit. Belton was in Elberton (later Athens-Elberton) District, before it was transferred to Gainesville District, to which Hall Circuit belonged. Pastors in 1890 were W.M. Bond (Belton) and H.H. Perry (Hall); in 1891 A.C. Cantrell (Belton), S.H. Braswell (Hall); in 1892, W.R. Stillwell (Belton), T.P. Graham (Hall); in 1893 G.W. Morgan (Belton), W.A.C. Baker (Hall.) In 1894 W.P. Rivers was one of five preachers on Belton Circuit, and A.F. Nunn one of three Hall preachers. Pastors in 1895-96 were M.E. Arnold (Belton), A.M. Pierce (Hall); in 1897-98 J.C. Atkinson (Belton), J.W. Austin (Hall). Ara Oliver recalls Austin as pastor of Polksville Church.

Pastors were in 1900 A.J. Hughes (Belton) and W.E. Venable (Hall); 1901 S.S. Cowan (Belton) and J.H. Fair (Hall); 1902 John W. Austin (Belton) and G.W. Tumlin (Hall); 1903 J.W. Austin (Belton), Hall to be supplied; 1904 J.W. Austin (Belton, W.H. Clark (Hall); 1910 Arthur Manes (Belton), W.M. Barnett (Hall); 1911 J.L. Lover (Belton), W.H. Barnett (Hall); 1912 I.J. Lover and A.C. Ledford (Belton), W.M Barnett (Hall); 1913 A.W. Quillian Jr. and four preachers (Belton), William Dunbar (Hall); 1914 F.R. Smith (Belton), J.W. Brinsfield (Hall); 1915 F.R. Smith (Belton), J. W. Brinsfield (Hall); 1916 T.L. Rutland (Belton), R.T. Harrison (Hall); 1917 T. M. Lee (Belton), R.T. Harrison (Hall); 1918 Roy P. Etheridge (Belton), F.G. Spearman; 1919-20 W.B. Hughes (Belton), F.G. Spearman (Hall); 1921-22 V.B. Hamrick (Belton), W.B. Hughes (Hall.)

From 1922 to 1933 Clemons Chapel was assigned to Brookton Circuit. Pastors were W.B. Hughes 1922; Earnest Swetnam 1923; A.S. Dailey 1924; N.A. Parson 1925; Louis M. Davison 1926; T.E. Sherwood 1927; H.L. Gurley 1928-29; P.H. Stokes 1930; Mencel M. Brackman 1931-32.

Belton Circuit was discontinued in 1933, the year Clemons Chapel was assigned to the newly formed Lula Circuit. T.C. Noble was pastor 1933-36; Clyde Patrick 1937; J.H. Smith 1938-40; G.F. Venable 1941; J.H. Smith 1942-43; Robert Stewart

Clemons Chapel was placed with New Holland in 1977, when Glenn Ray became pastor. He was followed in 1978 by Hamp Buffington; 1979 Richard Huycke; and 1981 Virgil G. Megill.

Preserving Its Witness

After the Second World War Clemons Chapel added three Sunday School rooms to the rear of the sanctuary. The sanctuary ceiling was lowered and an exhaust fan installed. To prevent vandalism at the church a mobile home was set on the property to have someone living nearby, and all gas heaters were replaced by electric heat in the walls. Benny and Edna Nash and Alan and Quieta Griffith when they lived in the mobile home helped in maintenance of buildings and grounds. A social hall was erected under the pastorate of Hamp Buffington. In the 1980's the outdoor arbor eating area was rebuilt, and new roof placed over the Sunday School rooms and sanctuary. Walls and ceiling were painted. Storm windows, ceiling fans for the sanctuary, and carpet in the Sunday School rooms were installed. A trustee's reserve fund was established from donations and payments toward cemetery plots. The cemetery was cleaned regularly by volunteers. Trees that had grown over gravesites were cut to allow sunlight over all graves.

Vacation Bible School was resumed 1984 and 1985. A one day Bible School was held a Saturday in 1987. Revivals have been held regularly the last week in July. Clemons Chapel has known the rise and fall of attendance as children grew to adulthood and moved away. Few full time farmers remain as former cotton fields are dairy
or wooded areas. Employment is in textile, poultry, or other occupations. With each generation the worship services, revivals, fellowship occasions, Sunday School, and Vacation Bible School of Clemons Chapel have revived its outreach to the families of the Glade community.


3Gainesville City Directory and Complete Business Directory, op.cit., pp. 133-134. One of the diamonds mined a few miles from Clemons Chapel was displayed at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876.

4Lula Community Development Plan, historical section, November 1975. John Bell, born in Virginia, was age 37 when he came to the site of a Cherokee village set up by Indians fleeing from the white coastal settlers, where Belton is today. He and his wife Narcissa came with six children and nine slaves at the time. Four other children were born in Georgia. He was interested in land speculation, farming, and mining. After purchasing the Glade Farm from Dr. Richard Banks, Bell's family home was the Glade farm on Glade Farm Road. Dr. Banks' 1,000 acres were Lots 93,100, 101, and 117, each 250 acres. Polksville Church boarded Lot 117 in Lot 123, afterwards added to the Glade Properties. The Glade Property was owned later by the Hunt family, and by Mose Gordon Lumberyard Company. In 1980 the 6,000 acre tract was purchased by overseas speculators, from Austria, who placed it in the soil bank, and arranged for tree planting and supervision from persons related to the University of Georgia in Athens.

5Mrs. R.L. Seales, "History of Belton, Georgia" in The Annals of Lula, April 22, 1976. When the Methodist Church of Belton was relocated into Lula, the lumber from the Belton Methodist Church was used to rebuild Living Mission after its fire, and
the Belton Methodist church bell was given to Mossey Creek. The bell was considered the finest in Hall County.

6 Dr. Ferdinand Phinezy Calhoun Sr., whose mother was Lula Phenizy, claims the "Lula" name was given in honor of his mother, one of the young ladies present at the celebration of the opening celebration of the train service from Lula to Athens.

7 Sybil McRae, This 'N That, History of Hall County, Georgia, November 1973; and Sybil McRae, Pictorial History of Hall County to 1950.

8 Hall County Register of Deeds, Book N-P, page 466.


10 Although Clemons Chapel was situated at the heart of Glade Properties, Charles Clemons influenced all Methodist congregations affected by Glade Properties. Tribute is given to him at his burial site in Trinity Methodist cemetery in Clermont.

11 Hall County Register of Deeds, Book 10, pp. 183-84.

12 County Register of Deeds, Book 10, pp. 276-278.

13 Conversation with Ara Oliver. Ara could remember events and people since the late 1890s. She and her husband Dean observed their 75th wedding anniversary in August 1988. She died December 10, 1988 at age 93, and her husband survives at age 94.

14 In Memoriam - Mrs. Cecilia Douglass Jennings, Entered into rest, January 6th, 1890, pp. 9-10. The book includes a biographical account of her life and family, record of the death of her child Douglass and deaths of three adult children who preceded her, their religious activities, address by Rev. Thomas B. McLeod illustrative of late Victorian religion, Scripture passages used and poem, "A Voice from Heaven," hymns sung by the quartette of the Clinton Avenue Congregational Church, and resolutions by the secretaries of the Society for the Aid of Friendless Women and Children, and the Brooklyn Home for Aged Men. According to Ara Oliver, some members of the Jennings family lived in the Glade Farm owner's home once used by the Bells.