HISTORY OF COLDWATER CHURCH

Somewhere in the late 1770 decade, a large caravan of aristocratic families from Albemarle County, Virginia, traveled slowly southward looking for a new place to settle. They would stop sometimes for weeks or perhaps months before proceeding on their journey. It was on one of these occasions, according to tradition, that the Episcopal minister prayed for the King of England. These American pioneers resented this and dismissed the minister from further services. Since there was no Episcopalian minister available at the time, a Methodist minister was engaged.

Among these early settlers were the Adams, Alexanders, Banks, Cunninghams, Flemings, Gaines, Johnsons, Teasleys, and Tyners. (Tamar, a daughter of the Tyners was captured by the Indians but later escaped and returned to the settlement.) After crossing the Savannah River these pioneers settled in what is now Elbert County, in the vicinity of Coldwater creeks.

Being a church-loving people, they proceeded to erect a place of worship. This structure was of logs with loopholes for defense against attacks from the Indians. It was simply called a "Meeting House," at first.

The famous Bishop Francis Asbury, on his itinerary from Maine to Florida would stop and preach at this church. It was on one such occasion that he remarked after taking a drink of water from the cold spring near by, "This is indeed Coldwater!" From that day the church was called Coldwater. Land for the church site was donated by one of the pioneers, Ralph Banks. It is said that the first annual conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church ever held in Georgia was held in Ralph Banks' home. (His homestead called the "Coldwater Plantation" is now owned by J. E. Hammond, and can be seen from the church.)

There is no definite date as to the establishing of this Methodist Church, but since Bishop Asbury's itinerary was around the decade of 1770-1780, in all probability, it was established around 1779.

There is no record as to the size of this log structure, nor when it was replaced.

The second of worship was of sawed lumber, being sawed
with a slash saw on Coldwater creek, by Ralph Gaines.
Among those who built this church were three Adams
brothers, Hiram, James, and Lawrence. This was a low,
flat-roofed, unsealed house, with three or four girders,
holding the side walls in place. A man could place
his hat on these. The windows were small, with shutters
made to slide up and down. The size of the building
was 24' x 30'.

In 1883 a move was made to reroof and ceil the house.
Dr. B. C. Smith, one of the trustees, advocated the build­
ing of a more modern church, and also a change of loca­
tion, but his proposal was met with opposition. The
house was reroofed, and plans for ceiling were under­
way. While kiln-drying the lumber for ceiling it acci­
dently was destroyed by fire. A meeting of the trustees
was called. After much deliberation, a new church was
decided upon, but it was to be at the same site.

The new church was a great improvement over the pre­
ceeding one. It was a 30' x 50' edifice with tall check­
railed windows, green-painted blinds. Some of girders
from the second building were used as plates in this
new building. Painted inside and out, this was as beau­
tiful a rural church as could be found. Wills Johnson,
a contractor, agreed to build the house for $395. The
total cost, plus some free labor and material, was $379.
A charge of fifty cents was made for the building of
each bench. Dr. B. C. Smith found time, along with his
duties as physician, to engineer the building of this
church. P. C. Gaines was one of the building committee.
B. C. Smith was secretary and I. C. Adams was treasurer.

Around the 1930 the members of Coldwater began to
see the need of a new church with class rooms. J. T.
Adams suggested that each family plant a plot of ground
in some product, the proceeds of which to be put into a
building fund. This, and other projects, were put into
effect, also the church school collection one Sunday
each month was put into this fund, of which Madora
Adams was secretary, and G. C. Adams was treasurer.

In 1947 work on this fourth church building was begun. Fifteen members donated the best of their
timber to be sawed into lumber. This timber was hauled to three different sawmills. One of these mills was placed on the church ground. Surplus lumber was sold and the money added to the
fund. The structure was to be 30' x 56', brick veneer,
with four class rooms and an assembly room in the
basement. The auditorium to have a hardwood floor.
and pews made from lumber given by the members.

In July of that year during a revival, Rev. E.W. Dunnagan, pastor in charge, received into the church 26 new members. These joined the other members in the task of building a new house for worship. This was to be as near the old one as possible. The county commissioner of roads used the county's machinery in preparing the ground for the basement. With the exception of the work done by the county machinery, and a part of the masonry, all the labor was done by the members.

Ten memorial windows add soft light to the auditorium. Two of these windows are in memory of the two young men who did not return from World War II. They are: Howell Gaines, Adam, and Nick Drewry Carpenter.

Splendid cooperation prevailed throughout the entire year's work. As result, one year from the time the foundation was laid, services were held in the auditorium. These services being the fourth quarterly conference, July 19, 1948. Rev. Horace Smith, District Superintendent, presiding.

Dedication services were August 29, 1948 with Rev. Dunnagan, pastor in charge, and Rev. Horace Smith delivering the dedication sermon, at which time he spoke of the edifice as "A Little Gem of a Church".

Most of the members who worship in this historical old church today are descendents of pioneers who founded it more than a century and a half ago.

The building committee of the fourth church building was: W.F. Anderson, supervisor; C.G. Adams, treasurer, I.A. Gaines, C.R. Gaines, S.A. Stowers, and J.W. Teasley.

Rev. E.W. Dunnagan, pastor, W.F. Anderson, church school superintendent, Mrs. L.U. Whitman, president of W.S.C.S.

J.H. Gaines, oldest living member, 93 years old.

Estimate value of this fourth church building is $30,000.
Items of interest concerning the Gaines.

Coldwater Church in Elbert county has had four different buildings, and the youngest son of four generations of the Gaines family helped build each. Billy helped raise the first, a log church. Ralph and Peter worked on two frame buildings, and Claude in 1948 helped complete the present brick structure.

Sara, daughter of Billy Gaines made two cloths to be used when sacrament was served in Coldwater church. The flax from which this cloth was made was grown on Coldwater creek. This cloth has been well preserved, and is now the property of Mrs. M. B. Daniel, a great granddaughter of Billy Gaines.