A HISTORY

of

DRI POND
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1827 - 1977

YEARS
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Compiled by

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Cover by Marcia Head Hudson

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Our Beginning

Thomas Samford wrote in the Methodist Magazine about the great revival that swept the State in the year 1827: "The Lord is doing great things in Georgia. Religion pure and undefiled may now be seen not only in the church but on the farms and at the bar and bench. Some of our courts are now opened with prayer by the judge himself. Baptists and Methodists participate in the blessings. "Perhaps no year in the history of the church in Georgia has seen a richer interest than in 1827...."

Thus we are told about the great revival that swept the State in the year above named.

The records, whatever were kept locally, are very incomplete. The clerk very often moved to distant parts and his records went with him.

However, 1827 was a great year for the churches as the religious fires were ablaze all over the state and many were added to the church.

....and that was the year that Dry Pond Methodist Church was founded...officially.

Page 1
The oldest record was given June 26, 1827. 

"June 27, 1827, witnesseth that Joseph McCutchin for in consideration of various good causes here into moving him doth voluntarily of his free will and good pleasure give, grant, bequest, confirm and convey unto James Hampton, Abram N. Clardy, Gideon Shockley, Joseph Hampton and Robert B. Hampton, trustees and their successors, all the estate, right title, interest property, claim and demand whatsoever in law or equity which he, the Joseph McCutchin hath into or upon all and singular a certain lot or piece of land situated lying and being in the county of aforesaid. (Metes and Bounds given) so as to include the meeting house called Hopewell, and as it is sometimes called Dry Pond, and to include an encampment now laid out for the purpose of a campmeeting at the above-mentioned meeting house or all that part of said encampment that may lie on said McCutchin's land. Which land was granted to Wagnon on the waters of the Oconee, containing three acres more or less together with all and singular the houses, woods, waterways and privileges and appurtenances to have and to hold to the James Hampton, Abram Clardy, Gideon Shockley, Joseph Hampton and Robert Hampton and their successors forever in trust for the benefit of the Methodist Episcopal Church and purposes mentioned in the discipline of said church.

Signed--Joseph R. McCutchin

Witness
Smith Crandall
Charles McKinney
Thos. Niblack, J.P."

Another deed from "Benjamin Scoggins, Jr., to Gideon Shockley, A.N. Clardy, James Hampton, Robert Hampton and Joseph Hampton, trustees of the Dry Pond M.W. Church and in consideration of one dollar and a certain tract of land near a meeting house called Dry Pond to the encampment that may be laid out with the privilege and free use of all the springs and waters near said encampment. Metes and bounds given in deed.

Signed, Benjamin Scoggins

Witness
Smith Crandall
J.R. McCutchin, J.P.

Under date of February 28, 1837, from George F. Adams, sheriff of Jackson County to James Hampton, James Hargrove, James R. McClesky and Aaron Sorrel, trustees of Dry Pond encampment and the Methodist Episcopal Church for the sum of one hundred dollars doth sell and convey 94 acres of land.

Signed: G.F. Adams (LS) Witness

D.M. Burns
John G. Pittman, J.P."

(A notation on the back of the deed: "Gideon Shockley, James Hodges and Berriman S. Camp to make the number seven in additional trustees.

Signed: Caleb Raiford

Nov. 12, 1838

The first notice we have of Jackson County in Methodist records is at the time that Lociv Pierce, Presiding Elder, had three districts, Appalachee, Broad River and Oconee, whose bounds stretched from the Savannah River to the Ocmulgee and from the upper part of Jackson county to the lower part of Putnam. The earliest Methodist Church in Jackson County of which we have knowledge and certainly in the upper part is Dry Pond, and as the records have not been preserved locally we are indebted to the conference for whatever historical data we have. Now inasmuch as the above deeds apply to the encampment site, we think we are safe in saying the church was established in 1812. (See History of Georgia Methodism by George G. Smith, Page 113.)

Preachers had an appointment every twenty-eight days, and many times these days came on weekdays. The preacher traveled by horseback with saddlebags to carry his books, which consisted of a Bible, a hymnbook, and a ritual. He wore a wide-brim hat, a Prince Albert (or long-tail) coat, and a white cravat.

The attendance was quite as good as if it had fallen on the Sabbath. People always had time for things worthwhile.

If there was an appointment miles away for the next service--and there usually was--the preacher mounted his horse and away he rode, across creeks, over swollen rivers, and oftentimes his faithful horse carried him across by swimming. He arrived on time all the time.

When a young man joined the conference, his assignment could be far away. He would tell his family--and perhaps his fiancée whom he would not see for five years--goodbye. He mounted his horse and rode away. For days he traveled with one lone companion who had work in the same field--through an unbroken wilderness and sometimes a not too friendly Indian country, if the assignment was west of the Altamaha. He had to believe in his Divine protection and guidance in his work. Whatever task was assigned him, he took it up with alacrity, love and enthusiasm.

The pay was the promise of $80 a year. Later this was increased to $100. No man in the pioneer days could support a family and preach. So, when an itinerant preacher married, he settled down in the community and became a local preacher--though not all local preachers had been itinerant preachers.

How heroic was the endurance demanded of these pioneer preachers.

The first settlers in this section never got nearer than a mile of his neighbor as he wanted elbow room. The location of a spring decided the location of a dwelling.

When the preacher found a settler who was concerned, he left an appointment at his home for a preaching service two or three weeks hence. At the appointed time he came. The settlers were present in large numbers. The preacher sang--he prayed--he preached--he shouted--he gave invitation--and success often attended his efforts.

When a spot seemed especially popular and convenient to a number of people, preachers often established campgrounds.

The land granted for the Dry Pond campground lies across the road in front of the present church. The stand was built in the form of an open court under a roof.

Large hewn logs were set up as columns of support and plates and columns morticed and pegged together to hold them securely. Joists were laid on these and trusses placed on them to support the roof.

One William Patrick (known as Bill rived the boards for the covering of this
rent exacted of him was to feed the preachers’ horses during the camp meeting.

The first church building was built of pine logs at a house raising. Logs were
notched and made to fit. Both inside and outside were hewn flat after logs were
placed in position. The church faced southward, toward Hog Mountain Road.
One door was on the front, facing the road, and one was on the side. A few
benches in the rear on both sides were railed off for Negroes to occupy. No mixed
audiences were allowed. The men sat on one side of the church and the women on
the other side. The same was true of the section for the Negroes.

Dry Pond campground was known and visited for forty or more miles away.
John Mitchell said that when he started out to join the cavalry which was being
recruited in Forsyth County, he was asked where he was from. He replied, “Dry
Pond, near the Dry Pond Campground.”

Each time the person said, “I know.”

A company of Confederate cavalry stayed at the Dry Pond campground a short
time.

Four Wilson brothers were in the Civil War. Three were killed. William
Mitchell, son of Russ Mitchell, died. F. Parks Henry and George Henry were in
the war. George was killed. George Merck lost two sons. Four Patricks were
killed: Tom, Miles, Bill and Jim, brothers of Mrs. Martha Nunn, wife of Elijah
Nunn. Elijah Nunn is buried in the old cemetery. There were twenty-five
widows in a radius of five miles of Dry Pond.

Any war brings sadness to the community, but this war within our country
against fellow countrymen, left permanent scars.

The preachers for the Dry Pond Campground had their sleeping quarters in the
church building. The grounds were lighted from pine knots. These knots were
placed in an earth-filled box supported by four posts and candles were placed on a
stand. The services were announced by a bugle. The first signal was to get
ready, followed by the second signal in ten minutes. At this call everyone came in
promptly.

Samuel Garrison was the bugler. (His daughter, Caroline Wilson, was recognized
at the 1927 Centennial as being the oldest member present—age 94. Her
grandsons, Frank and Fenn, are still active members, as well as her
great-grandson, R.L. Wilson.)

Besides those who stayed in tents, many stayed and lived in and around their
covered wagons. Some lived as near as two miles, but they would tent during
camp meeting. Russ Mitchell was one of those. William Mitchell, father of Jim
Mitchell of Maysville, had a tent. There were as many as thirty to forty tents.
Most of the church farm was in woods. Visitors at camp meeting were free to use
wood for any purpose to meet their needs, such as cooking or making light from
pine knots.

Camp meeting embraced the fourth Sunday in September, beginning Tuesday
or Wednesday before the fourth Sunday and closing Monday or Tuesday after the
fourth.

The last campground meeting was held in 1862. The stands and tents were torn
down and sold after the Civil War. Some of the lumber was used in making
furniture by F. Parks Henry, David W. Garrison and William Bachelor, who were
skilled in cabinet making. Some of this furniture is in use and in perfect condition
today.

David Gilliland lived on the church farm prior to and during the Civil War. The
rent exacted of him was to feed the preachers’ horses during the camp meeting.

He constructed a stock pen furnished with long troughs on the branch below the
spring. During the meeting the preaching services were under the guidance and
direction of the Presiding Elder.

David Gilliland’s daughter was the first interment in the old cemetery. The
land for the cemetery was given by David W. Garrison and was between his home
(where the Willie Davises live now) and the church farmhouse—later the Wes W.
Hancock home and now the home of Mrs. Carl Porter.

Before this cemetery was established, a cemetery was started near the Wes W.
Hancock cotton warehouse. At present it is in the pasture back of the Lurry
Sailors’ home. Many families had private cemeteries before church cemeteries
were started.

Sometime later the church farmhouse became the parsonage, and it was
occupied by the Reverend Mosby. He incurred a debt, part of which was for
remodeling the parsonage. The trustees, Elijah Durham, Marion Dunson, and
Hansel Wilson, with the approval of the church, decided to sell the farm to pay the
Rev. Mosby’s indebtedness. H. C. Barnett bought the farm and lived on it for
several years. Mr. Barnett donated a lot for a school building. Until that time
school had been held in the church building.

Among the local preachers of this pioneer church were: Henry Merck, Sr.,
Buck Rutherford and his son, Frank Rutherford, Jackson Oliver, two
brothers—Tom and Sam Parris, John Ross, Billy Gilliland, Lois Osborne, Thomas
Prickett and Brantly Merck. At one time William J. Parks was Presiding Elder in
charge. He was one of the stewards of Georgia Methodism.

Henry Merck, Sr., was grandfather of A. Brantly Merck, who for a number of
years was a local preacher in Dry Pond before joining the conference. He died an
itinerant preacher. Henry Merck was also the grandfather of one of our local
stewards at the time of the Centennial Celebration, Harrison Merck.
SECOND CHURCH

Five years after the soldiers returned home from the war, the church members decided to erect a new church building. There were several local carpenters, and they put up the building by giving their time and labor. John R. Parker, preacher in charge, joined heartily in the work.

This second church was a frame building about 30' x 50'. It faced south with one door on the south side and one door on the east side. There were no heating accommodations.

The Reverend Parker made and painted the pulpit for the new church at his home in Jefferson. The same pulpit which serves the preacher in our present sanctuary.

John R. Parker served the Dry Pond Church for four years and after a lapse of time he served a second term. This was after the church was transferred to the Commerce Circuit.


TODAY'S CHURCH

In 1903 the church members decided to build a new church. In conference on January 22, 1903, the following building committee was appointed: David W. Garrison, Lovic B. Prickett, Wes W. Hancock, Henry Merk and R. M. Wilson. They began to solicit subscriptions and in 1904 the contract was given to the Reverend Tom Allen Jones, Gainesville, Ga.

The Rev. Allen requested that the first service be held on the day after the building was completed, and on Wednesday, September 21, 1904, the first service in the present church was held.

The Scripture reading for the day was John 3: 1-21 and the text was John 3:16. The Rev. A. D. Echols was the pastor in charge.

Wes W. Hancock, one of the pillars of the church, promised that if he made a certain number of bales of cotton he would contribute a substantial amount toward the purchase of pews for the church. He made at least the number specified and followed through on his promise. The beautiful pews in the church today were the ones purchased at that time and they were custom-built for the Dry Pond Methodist Church sanctuary.

Almost six years after the church was completed it was dedicated. That was on the fourth Sunday in June, 1910. The Reverend J. D. Turner was pastor at the time, and Fletcher Walton was the Presiding Elder.
The following names were taken from a Sunday School record book dated 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912 and 1913. Mrs. L. P. Legg and Mrs. J.C. Head and a number of children's names which those who remember feel would have been at Sunday school seem to indicate that the nursery and primary classes were not included and that those two women who were such faithful supporters of their church were probably the teachers of those classes.

These are the names that were listed: Prof. Richard Elrod, L.B. Prickett, Fred P. Garrison, Hubert Hancock, William P. Wilson, Carl Carroll, Hiram Griffeth, Will Lay (W.D.), Tommie Wallace, Claude Lay, Frellie Wallace, Estalena Durham, Nellie Lay, Comer Wilson, Frank Wilson, Thurmond Griffeth, Carl Legg, Victor Durham, Bertha Wilson, Lorena Slaton, Victoria Wilson, May Wilson, Annie Durham, Iler Garrison, Irene Legg, Mrs. A. Keith, Mrs. Bell Prickett, Mrs. Willie Eberhardt, Mrs. Erie Hancock, Blanche Ensley, Miss Emma Thompson, Mrs. Carrie Garrison, Dora Griffith, Nettie Lay, R. R. Wilson.


CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Nineteen hundred and twenty seven was a memorable year for the members of Dry Pond Methodist Church. That was the year that the church was one hundred years old. The community banded together for a big celebration. The following is taken from a newspaper clipping:

“One of the most colorful church gatherings in the history of the Elberton District was held at the Dry Pond Methodist Church, Maysville Circuit, Sunday June 22, 1927. Fifteen hundred people were in attendance, including several former pastors of the church. A feature of the meeting was a sermon at 11 o'clock by the Reverend Charles B. Drake, the pastor, was master of ceremonies.”

Additional information about the occasion that will be of interest is that the songs that were sung at the first services in the present church following its completion were sung again at this celebration. They were: “Amazing Grace” and “How Firm a Foundation.” The Reverend Christian, a former Presiding Elder, gave an invocation. The “Awakening Chorus” was sung by the choir with Adele Head as pianist. The offering was taken by Boyd Langford and Thurmond Griffeth and Lester Legg and Sam Wilson were junior stewards. A former pastor, the Reverend J. R. Speck, pronounced the benediction.

Many of the present congregation remember that gala event.

AND 50 YEARS LATER

Some of the present members can also remember when preachers were paid through a “Hide and Tallow Collection.” The “finance committee” of the church would call on the various members and accept “anything from a chicken to an elephant” as a church contribution. They collected meal, vegetables, hams, flour, canned goods, anything and turned it over to the preacher as his pay. The preacher and his family always went home with a church family after preaching and ate dinner. Oftentimes, if he were alone, he stayed a night or so and had all his meals with his host. This practice remained in effect until the end of the Depression, around the early 1940’s.

In the past fifty years Dry Pond has continued to progress. Sometimes more slowly than in the very recent years.

Points of progress include the removal of the little pot-belly stove that sat center front and which, even when red-hot, never quite dispelled the chill at the far sides or the back. That smoky little stove was replaced by the gas space heaters which are in use today.

Kerosene lamps were replaced by electric lights. At first the sanctuary was lighted by little naked bulbs that hung from the high ceiling by a standard, cloth-covered wire. When the late Claude Davis renovated his barber shop, he sold the present white glass globes to the church for the total amount of $25.

The installation of gas and electricity gave a smoke-free atmosphere and a crew of workmen were hired to clean and varnish the beaded ceiling walls and ceiling. The floors, too, were sanded and varnished. About the same time the wooden steps at both front doors were removed and cement steps were built with a galvanized pipe handrail placed on one side for safety.

Then for a time this little church seemed to regress and for some years it was kept alive by eight or ten faithful members.

In nineteen fifty seven the Sunday School annex was built. Pittman Carter gave the lumber; Fenn Wilson supervised the rough framing; and Fenn’s son, M. D. Wilson, supervised the finishing work.

In nineteen seventy-three the attending members of the church formed a choral group which they called the “Herald Angel Choir.” They created a program of music and narration and presented it to a number of churches in the area. The money received from gifts of the host churches was used to buy a carpet for the sanctuary. The ladies of the church refinshed the pews, covered the altar cushions and made drapes to hang behind the pulpit. The floors in the Sunday School rooms were covered or refinished and new curtains were bought.

Improvements have continued. The grounds are being landscaped; the church has been underpinned and painted; wrought iron rails have been put on all the steps; a night light was installed outside by H. O. Parks; restrooms and a kitchen have been completed through the efforts of our carpentry gifted men, some of
whom are Haynie Porter, Aubrey Highfill, Bill and Lester Legg; concrete tables have been placed in the yard; the old cemetery has been resurrected from years of undergrowth and abuse; and most recently, a well has been drilled and Bill Legg, Larry Sailors, R.L. Wilson, Aubrey Highfill, and others have laid two flagstone walks. These are some of the evidences of material progress that the church has made.

Interest in the old cemetery has resulted in a special fund of contributions from interested relatives and friends of those interred in the cemetery. This fund is growing and will be used to enclose the historic old burial ground with a chain link fence.

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WITH GRATEFUL HEARTS

There are many people to whom Dry Pond United Methodist Church is indebted. The paintings in the narthex were created by two different artists. The log cabin and the second church were painted by Istalena Durham Graham, who used to call Dry Pond her home. The one of the present church was painted by a relative of the Webb Carter family, the late Mrs. Theo (Cecil) Chandler, of Owosso, Michigan. To these two women we are grateful for their interpretations of these three buildings.

A special word of gratitude and praise is due Adele Head, who has been the pianist at Dry Pond for more than fiftytwo years.

At the sacrament of Holy Communion, the communion plates rest on a table which was given to our church in memory of the late Bonnie Carter Yancey, and the communion cloths which are still in use were handembroidered and the edges crocheted by Mrs. Webb Carter. The parament set was given the church in memory of Minnie Carter.

The piano in the sanctuary was given by the families of Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Vandiver, Sr., and Gerdine and Carl Legg, in their memory; and the piano in the Sunday School rooms was given by Mr. and Mrs. Lester Legg. The Methodist Hymnals were presented in memory of Virginia Legg Carter by Mr. and Mrs. Bill Legg.

The children of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Head gave the cross and candles, the vases and the flower stands in memory of their parents, and the collection plates were given by Barbara Head because we needed them.

Our good Baptist friends, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Vandiver, gave the church the beautiful antique pump organ that graces our sanctuary.

It would be an impossible task to list the names of all those who have contributed so much in time and money to the growth of the church. So to all of you who are so deserving of credit but whose names have been omitted, this book is dedicated with a special word of thanks to each and every one of you.

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Dedication

On this day, June 26, 1977, as Dry Pond United Methodist Church celebrates one hundred fifty years of service to the Lord, the church accepts with deep gratitude two generous gifts.

Mrs. Irene Legg Kesler, who was a member of Dry Pond for many years, is contributing an original work of art which she painted in 1911. Her nephew, Bill Legg, is presenting this gift to the trustees of the church on this memorable occasion.

Mrs. Ruth Head Gregory is presenting to the church through the trustees a Hammond electric organ. This presentation is to honor Mrs. Gregory's sister, Adele Head, who has served faithfully as pianist for 55 years.

The church accepts these gifts of love with grateful heart.