HISTORY

Of

ALMON CHARGE

Ebenezer
Ebenezer never figured conspicuously in the history of Georgia Methodism. It has always been one of those quiet meeting houses where the people of the community gathered, worshipped, mingled in pleasant, friendly intercourse and went about their ways.

A brief survey of conditions through this section around the beginning of the 19th century will enable us to get an idea of the beginning of this church. Only about fourteen years previous to its inception land comprising the territory of several of the surrounding counties was bought from the Indians, who retreated toward the western part of the state, where they had vast hunting grounds. During the year that marked the beginning of the year that terminated in the organization of this church, a treaty was made with the Indians and new parts of the state opened to white settlers. The surrounding territory, just prior to the beginning of the century, must have been very undeveloped and life have been very simple. The land was not so fertile as in other sections farther west in the state, and it could be bought very cheaply. In Gwinnett County a lot of land which consisted of 202½ acres was bought for a pony. The people were not wealthy. Plain provision-raising Methodists sought these cheap lands and this section was rapidly but not thickly settled. "Often one would travel miles without seeing a settler's house." The churches were usually built of logs and were very rude.

Early in the previous century a revival swept over Methodism and camp meetings were held in nearly every county. The location of camp meeting was usually determined by a grove and a spring both of which were found on this location, about thirty yards from the church. Here in 1818 a camp meeting was held. It was not such a camp ground as we now often see, but a crude brush arbor, possibly a platform, with logs for seats; and the people, coming often 75 miles, lived in their covered wagons for
for tents. These camp meetings ran three or four days, and there were marvelous demonstrations of power. A camp meeting was held on this spot for one season, possibly longer, and then it was moved for a year or so to a spot near Tucker's Mill, where the movement later led we do not know.

However, at that time Rockdale and Newton Counties were a part of Henry County where in 1828 a camp meeting was held at Salem and this may have been an extension of the same movement. Soon after the camp meeting was held at the old spring here, a church, which usually followed such a meeting, was organized and a house was built. It was most likely of logs and it stood nearer the forks of the road, the old chimney of which left a mound easily remembered by many who are here today.

An old deed, dated 1831, discloses that this church was sold by John Hodge to Trustees, named in another place, the lot containing "The Methodist Meeting House known by the name of Ebenezer, in the Yellow River Circuit in Henry County, for and in consideration of $2.00 in hand paid." The transaction was on the 5th of April, 1831. It was recorded the 12th day of May, 1831, and witnessed by William Johnson, (His mark), John Stewart and Jesse Wade, with H. Burge as Clerk.

The Trustees of this church were Ferdinand Duke, Bennett K. Stansell, John W. Stansell, Nicholas Goode (Grandfather of J. M. B. Goode), Jeremiah R. Scott, Robert Gaston and Daniel Hardwick. The deed speaks of the tract No. 209-2 9/10 acres as lying and being around the meeting house, showing that the building was in existence prior to 1831, possibly built on land owned by John Hodge. Sam Hodge evidently lived at the spring, as it is referred to as Sam Hodge's spring.

Yellow River Circuit, in which it was located, took its name, according to primitive custom of locating boundaries from streams, from Yellow River, and it was composed of the then counties of Walton, Henry, Fayette and Clayton. Newton and Rockdale have since come out of Henry, and the other counties were possibly correspondingly larger than now. The
Yellow River circuit or mission appears first in the Minutes of the Methodist Church in United States and Canada in 1823. It was in the Athens District and South Carolina Conference. No individual church was mentioned. Only the mention of the location of this church in the Yellow River Mission, which was found in the original deed, gave the key which opened the pages of its history. This circuit was broken up in 1833.

Perhaps a glance at the presence and progress of other churches and denominations in the community will be of interest. Smyrna Church—Presbyterian—was organized in 1827. Salem camp meeting, as stated before, began in 1828. Bald Rock—Primitive Baptist—now located in Conyers, was organized at Moses Daniel's school house, near where Mr. Joe McDonald later lived, on September 1, 1843. The Conyers Methodist Church was organized in 1852, and the Conyers Presbyterian in 1860. Data concerning Rockdale church was not available, much to our regret. Rockdale county took its name from this church in 1871.

Membership in Ebenezer associates one with the "first families" of Georgia Methodism and with the pioneers of all church movements in Georgia.

As early as 1836, possibly earlier, we find at Ebenezer a union Sunday school, with Joseph Hollingsworth as superintendent and John L. Stewart as teacher. This item was found in the biography of Mrs. Julia Ann Hollingsworth Stewart, whose romance with John L. Stewart began at this Sunday school. The existence of a Sunday school at this early date showed a state of marked advance for this community, as, according to George G. Smith's History of Georgia Methodism, Sunday schools were very rare in rural sections at this time. It is interesting to remember that in these early schools the spelling book, catechism, an abridged hymn-book and the Bible constituted the curriculum.
In 1834 the Covington Circuit, of which it is believed Ebenezer was a part at that time paid for the superannuates, widows and orphans and to make up deficits in the preachers' salaries, the whole amount of $2.00.

In Ebenezer's history this unexplained situation occurs. In an old deed, dated March 26th, 1853, then in Newton County, there is the recital of another sale of part of the same lot, No. 209, containing one acre, with Joseph McCollum on the one part, and the Trustees of Ebenezer Church on the other, this acre being bought for the sum of twelve dollars.

This transaction was attested by D.T. White and Leander F. Taylor, with Douglas Puckett, as Justice. The Trustees were David Murdock, Nicholas Goode, Elijah Plunkett, Robert Plunkett and Ferdinand Duke.

About 1835 Milton Waldrop moved with his family from South Carolina-Newberry, to this community. They soon united with this church. He later gave the original lot for the cemetery and the schoolhouse lot. The schoolhouse was already in existence, as the schoolhouse spring across the road was referred to in the deed of 1831. The cemetery was given for Milton Waldrop's family and any other who might wish to be buried there. His son, Larkin Waldrop, who came home injured from the war, to die soon after was the first to be buried there, in April 1862, and in the summer of the same year the father went to Virginia to bring the body of his son Harrison to lay it by the side of his other boy.

There are likely others who fought in the War Between the States who sleep there.

It is a point of interest to know that a detachment of Sherman's Army passed by the old church. Many interesting traditions are recalled in this connection.

The present building was in 1872 or 1873 with Robert Plunkett and Levi Waldrop as builders. The timber in the previous structure was bought by Milton Waldrop and was converted into the barn that still stands...
at the old Almand homestead at the cross-road.

The preachers who have served the Yellow River Mission, Athens District, South Carolina Conference are listed below. The list is incomplete, but appointments and locations are as nearly accurate as records permit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Preachers</th>
<th>White Members</th>
<th>Colored Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Andrew Hammill</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>Daniel G. McDaniel and Morgan Turrentine</td>
<td>305 white</td>
<td>42 colored</td>
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<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Joshua N. Glenn</td>
<td>611 white</td>
<td>80 colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>James Bellah</td>
<td>507 white</td>
<td>72 colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>James Bellah</td>
<td>744 white</td>
<td>237 colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>James Hunter and Robert Rogers</td>
<td>942 white</td>
<td>123 colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>James Hunter and Robert Rogers</td>
<td>942 white</td>
<td>123 colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>James Bellah and R.L. Edwards</td>
<td>974 white</td>
<td>114 colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>(Georgia Conference Formed) James Bellah and George Bishop</td>
<td>921 white</td>
<td>161 colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>James Bellah (his health failed and his brother Morgan Bellah, succeed him and C.A. Brown)</td>
<td>1048 white</td>
<td>157 colored</td>
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<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>John S. Ford</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Changed to Madison and Covington Circuit, presumably. A. Hammill</td>
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<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>W. Choice and A. Pennington</td>
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<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Peyton W. Smith and Wingfield W. Robinson. (All Georgia Conference paid $90.00 for Sunday School Work)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Samuel Anthony</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>(Changed to Covington and Oxford Circuit, presumably. Isaac Boring.)</td>
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</table>
1840—J.W.Talley
1841—Matthew Raiford
1842—John W.Glenn, W.H.Evans, Jr. preacher.
1843—Oxford Circuit—Robert A.Steele
1844—Oxford Circuit—Walter Knox
1845—Oxford Circuit—J.B.Jackson
1846—Covington and Oxford—James B.Payne, P.A.Wright
1847—Covington and Oxford—John C.Simmons, Luke J.Davies
1848—49—Oxford to be supplied
1849—50—No mention of Oxford Circuit; Covington Circuit, M.L.Hebbord
1850—51—Oxford and Covington—Caleb W.Key, Jesse R.Littlefield
1851—52—Oxford and Covington—W.A.Florence, W.T.Norman
1852—53—W.A.Florence, John S.Ford
1853—54—George C.Clarke, Albert Gray
1854—55—W.R.Branham
1855—56—Atlanta District, Newton County Circuit, probably John W.Yarbrough
1856—57—John W.Yarbrough

"Uncle Allen" Turner, one of the prominent preachers of the Conference, great uncle of Dr.C.H.Turner, was a superannuate, living in the community, and did effective preaching here at intervals for many years during this period.
1859—"Uncle" Jimmie Evans
1860—W.A.Florence

No record during war

1866—Georgia Conference divided into North and South Georgia Conferences
1868—W.A.Florence
1869—A.M.Rowland
1870—E.A.Gray
1871-Miles W. Arnold and W.R. Branham
1872-73-presumably Allen Turner and W.T. Caldwell
1878-J.A. Reynolds—Great revival
1879-W.F. Robinson
1880-J.W. Wardlaw
1881-Allen Thomas
1882-Conyers Circuit—D.L. Anderson, who went as missionary to China from this circuit.
1883-R.J. Bigham
1884-1890—uncertain but probably during these years J.L. Lupo, James L. Pierce and J.L. Moon served, at least a part of the time.
1891-H.M. Quillian
1892-C.L. Pattillo
1893—Miles H. Dillard
1894-H.S. Bradley
1895—probably H.S. Bradley; Asbury Ragsdale (local preacher)
1896-A.M. Pierce
1897-R.A. Eakes
1898-A.M. Pierce
1899-G.M. Eakes
1900-G.M. Eakes
1903—F.R. Smith
1904-W.E. Venable
1905-06—Firley Baum
1907-L.A. McLaughlin
1908-09—J.M. Crowe
1910—J.M. Sewell
1911-J.H. Farr
1912-13-14—W.R. Branham
1917—Lucien Roper—Guy White(?), B.P. Read
1920-D.A. McBrayer?
1921-B.C.Matteson
1922-G.W.Tumlin
1922-23-G.W.Tumlin
1923-24-G.W.Tumlin
1925-Frank Pippin
1926-W.A.Langley
1927-28-Thomas H.Marston
1929-30-J.D.Milton, Thomas H.Marston

The following list, which is very incomplete, contains the heads of families, as far as can be recalled, up to 1900:
The Nicholas Goodes-Joe, Jimmie and Clarke
The Plunkets-Elijah, who lived at the old Thrasher place, and Charlie, who lived on the hill top almost back of the church
The Sammie Hutchesons
The Bennetts, with sons Bill and John
The Hudsons-Mark, Pressley, Anthony and Fannie
The Joel Stansells
M.H. Waldrop, who joined in 1871
The Henry Turners
The Clark Goodes
The Milton Waldrops, who lived at the old Stanton place; later at the cross roads
The Robert Stantons
Mrs. Amelia Plunkett Edwards
The John W. Almands
The Levi Waldrops—Frank Waldrops
The B.J.Marbuts
J.J.Stansell, who joined the church under J.A.Reynolds, in 1878. Mrs. Stansell, who was the daughter of D.T.White, was also a member here.
The Bates Reagans
The J.J.Cowans
The T.T.Thrashers
The W.T.Stantons
"Uncle" Warren Tucker
The Warren Heads
J.B.Sparks
Mrs. Betty Swann and family
The Longshores(?)
Mr. and Mrs. W.B.Jackson
Mrs. A.E.Hardin
Aunt Mary, Sallie and Lucy Farmer
The S.R.Thompsons
The J.R.Treadwells
The J.R.Rossers
The J.T.Rossers
Arthur Sharp
The W.T.Fees
The J.R.Hardins
The A.J.St.Johns
The W.H.Alexanders
The J.E.Andrews
The G.S.Christians
The J.L.Dyes
Mrs. Hayden Almand, née Martha Waldrop, M.H. Waldrop of Atlanta and Mrs. Amelia Plunkett Edwards are likely the oldest living persons whose names have ever appeared on this roll.

The foregoing history was compiled and prepared by Mrs. Bessie Almand Pierce and read at the Centennial of Ebenezer, June 15, 1930. The Centennial sermon on this occasion was preached by Dr. A.M. Pierce, a former pastor of Ebenezer.

The membership of Ebenezer, unless in its early years, was never large but it was composed of substantial people who, in the language current about the turn of the century, would have been called "good livers."

In common with the great majority of country churches along through the years, Ebenezer suffered severe depletion of membership and of prosperity generally when hard times hit the farmers and so many of them left the country and sought more favorable conditions in the towns and cities. But the members of Ebenezer, though they may have drifted away, still love the old church and for some years before the centennial and many years since have responded to the call of a Home Coming occasion and have returned to renew old friendships, to worship together in the old church and to visit the cemetery where many of their loved ones had long been sleeping. On many of these occasions Dr. A.M. Pierce, since he was a former pastor and had married a former member of Ebenezer, was invited to return to his old pulpit for the occasion.

Along through the years the church building has remained very much the same; necessary repairs have been made, the grounds have become much more attractive and the cemetery has showed the results of loving care. Since the Home Coming of last year notable the building has undergone notable transformation. The front of the church has been changed; instead of two doors as formerly there is now a double door with cement steps; in-
stead of two aisles there is now a double aisle down the center of the auditorium and the pulpit has undergone similar transformation. In its new coat of paint and other important changes the old church presents a new face, 

Many real revivals have blessed Ebenezer in the past and the old time religion can do as much for the present days to come.

It is a cause of greatest pleasure to have present with us today one who has served both as a junior preacher about sixty years ago and as regular pastor several years ago, Rev. W. R. Branham, a man who was and is so greatly beloved by every one, and whose life has been an inspiration and a benediction to all who have come in contact with him. Also we have with us a former pastor, Rev. Asbury Ragsdale, a man whose life and efforts have been an inspiration for so many years. Bro. Ragsdale served this church faithfully and effectively about thirty years ago.

It is a matter of unusual interest that we have here today two of the descendents of the fifth generations from two lines of the early members of this church—Mary Frances and Martha Goode. They are the descendents of Nicholas Goode, one of the original trustees, and of Milton Waldrop, who united with the church about 1835.