AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF

THE FORSYTH METHODIST CHURCH

1951
An Historical Sketch of the Forsyth Methodist Church

As early as 1818, white settlers from other sections of Georgia and surrounding states moved into the country west of the Ocmulgee River which was part of the lands acquired by treaty from the Creek Indians. Monroe County was created in 1822, and at the same time Forsyth began its existence as the new county seat. On December 10, 1823 it was incorporated as a town. (4)

Along with the early settlers, came missionaries and traveling preachers. Probably the first of these was Andrew Hammill who came around 1820. George Hill, in 1823, was in charge of Monroe Mission, with twenty-four appointments. During this period other Methodist Churches were organized by John Wimbish. These groups, begun in 1823, mark the origin of the present Forsyth Methodist Church which was first a mission, then a circuit until 1860 when it became a station.

"At one time Forsyth belonged to the Macon District and later to the Milledgeville District. Once it apparently belonged to the South Carolina Conference." (3)

A church was built in 1828, located on N. Harris Street in the northwest corner of the original cemetery. "According to Dr. George G. Smith, the first brick church ever erected by Methodists in Georgia was built in the town of Forsyth. It is also a fact for which the same authority vouches that the Congregational Methodist Church, a body which is congregational in form of government and Methodist in doctrine, was first organized in the county of Monroe." (4) This early church was the meeting place of the first
District Conference of the Griffin District, presided over by Bishop Pierce. (3)

An interesting comparison might be drawn between the typical quarterly conference of 1835-60, and one taking place today. In the early period, the church was not only concerned about the moral character of its members, but it also passed judgment upon them at each meeting. Each official was presented individually to be passed or censured. When the names of new members were presented, frequently charges were made against others who had broken the rules of the church, resulting in expulsion from membership. In the minutes September 21, 1835, there is a resolution which expresses regret over "the violation of the rules relating to the wearing of gold, taking and receiving usury and the neglect of family prayer." (1)

There is not available a list of the charter members of the church, but the roll of those attending the 1835 Quarterly Conference no doubt included a number of the charter members of 1823. The list is as follows:

Forsyth Circuit 1835
1st Quarterly Conference, March 14, 1835
Barnesville

William Parks, Presiding Elder; James E. Evans, Preacher in charge; James Dunwoody, Assistant Preacher; Osborne Rogers, Elder; Sam'l Ansley, Elder; John D. Chappell; Abel Tatom, Exhorter; Enoch Henson, Leader; James Hillays, Deacon; Mishack Turner, Deacon; James McKenzie, Deacon; Evans Myrick, Deacon. Stewards: Oliver Morse (spelled Moss), Osborne Rogers, Isaiah Holmes, and Evans Myrick.
Additional names recorded as being present at
Second Quarterly Conference
Ebenezer, 23rd of May, 1835

Thomas Battle
Wyatt R. Singleton
William W. Hardy
Wm. Thompson
Wm. C. Redding
Wm. Bowdin

James H. Mays
Nail McMullin
James Stewart
Thos. Redding
Elijah Stephens
Urban C. Tigner

Members present at Third Quarterly Conference
not previously listed
Camp Ground, Sept. 21, 1835

Anthony G. Smith
Daniel Duffey
John S. Ford
Absalem Ogletree
Arthur Redding (Licensed)
Wm. Breedlove (Licensed)
Spencer Moore
Wm. Freeman
L. Avant
Isaac Winship
Ezekiel Redding
James Beckom
Gideon Johnson
John E. Mosley
Tapley Holt
Theaplius Williams
Daniel B. Searcy
Williamson Mims
Leroy McManis
Joshua Johnson

Benjamin Dickson
John Long
John Hannon
Thos. Commander
Nathan Johnson
Edmond Jackson
John Brown
James H. Mays
John Miller
Carey Cox
Thos. W. Davis
Richman Gordon
Wm. Richardson
Josiah Holmes
Wm. McKinzie
John Nicklison
Micklebury Merritt
Joseph Grey
Bryant F. Lane
A "Sabbath School" report was first made at the Fourth Quarterly Conference, December 5, 1835, as follows: Number of schools 4, Superintendents 4, Teachers 20, Scholars 131, Money collected $4. (1) The Sunday School report for Forsyth in 1842 shows that there were 38 students, 6 teachers and 150 volumes. (1)

From the beginning, Forsyth had the reputation of being a cultured community. This was evidenced in the interest shown in educational institutions. Monroe Female College had been in operation since 1847 (chartered 1849) with local trustees representing the Methodist, Baptists and Presbyterian Churches. In 1855, it was agreed that the college should be administered by one denomination instead of three. For the Methodist interests, the Baptist paid a sum of $3,500 which was to be used for a school for boys. (7) The minutes of the Quarterly Conference, 1856, has a resolution pledging cooperation and support for the new and greatly needed "male classical school of high standing."(1) The school in question, sponsored by the Forsyth Methodists was begun in 1857 and was known as Hilliard Institute, later as the Banks Stephens Institute which is now part of the public school system.

The period, 1860-1880 was one of growth and development in spite of the effects of the War Between the States. In 1860, Forsyth became a separate station with the Rev. G. G. W. Macdowell as preacher with a salary of $850. In 1870, the present church lot was purchased for $410, and a new building costing approximately $8,600 was completed by the fall of 1871.
"The present parsonage lot was bought in 1876 at a cost of $942.50, and a six-room house built facing the Ed Ponder home. In 1892, this parsonage was remodeled to its present size and turned to face as it does now." (3)

The church was destroyed by cyclone in December, 1894, but it was rebuilt during the following year, at an estimated cost of about $4,000. (6) Older members recall that the final cost was nearer $6,000. Mr. D. F. Bennett, Sr. was the contractor, and Mr. Exekiel T. Mallory was chairman of the building committee. The new church was dedicated by Bishop Warren A. Candler. (3)

"In 1938 there took place a momentous occasion in Methodism: the Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church, bringing together approximately 8,000,000 members." (3)
Observance of the 125th Anniversary
of the Founding of the
Forsyth Methodist Church

Sunday, October 10, 1948, The Forsyth Methodist Church observed its 125th anniversary with homecoming, worship and fellowship. The following account is taken from The Monroe Advertiser, October 14, 1948:

Approximately 500 persons gathered at the Forsyth Methodist Church Sunday for a day of worship and fellowship, as it celebrated the 125th anniversary of its organization.

Both morning and evening services carried out the theme of the anniversary, and at noon a bountiful barbecue and chicken dinner was spread on the grounds. Exhibits by the Daughters of the American Revolution, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, The American Legion, Bessie Tift College and the church emphasized the history of Forsyth during the church's long and useful existence.

Dr. Lester Rumble, of Atlanta, preached the morning sermon, and the Rev. E. L. Rudisill, of Rome, delivered the evening message. Other ministers assisting the Rev. Frank Crawley, pastor, were the Rev. Leroy Smith and the Rev. J. M. Moore.

A large portion of the membership of the church took part on various committees, and worked untiringly to make the celebration an outstanding success.
The Forsyth Methodist Church Builds
a Church School Addition

For a number of years, the church had felt a great need for additional space for the Church School, and recreational activities. In 1941, new class rooms, rest rooms and kitchen were added in the basement, but even these facilities were soon felt to be inadequate for the expanding church.

Through the interest and enthusiasm of the Rev. Frank Crawley, pastor from 1945-1949, in cooperation with church leaders, a movement was begun to raise funds for a new Church School addition. At the meeting of the Fourth Quarterly Conference, 1949, it was voted to award the contract as soon as the required amount of money was in hand. This meant that it was necessary to raise approximately $5,000 more. A special committee was successful in soliciting this amount immediately following the conference meeting.

The Building Committee, composed of Robert O. Persons, Chairman, Charner W. Hill, and John T. Stephens, were thus authorized to award the contract on June 14, 1949. Dennis and Dennis were the architects with A. K. Abel as contractor.

The addition, built of brick at the rear of the original church, includes: Departmental units which have both assembly
rooms and individual class rooms, a combination recreation and larger assembly room, a kitchen, rest rooms, nursery, pastor's study, church office and choir room. The total cost of the building (without equipment) was $53,531.86. The new addition was first used in May 1950. In the year since the completion of the building, organizations within the church and individuals as well have donated equipment and furnishings.
THE MARY BARRY PERSONS CHAPEL

At the same time that the Church School addition was constructed, a small chapel was built as the east wing of the structure, with entrances from the street and the interior of the Church. This chapel, which has been completely furnished and provided with an organ, by Robert O. Persons, has been dedicated by him to the memory of his grandmother, Mrs. Mary Barry Persons, who was an outstanding leader in both the Church and the community. The chapel, early American in design, features a curved ceiling with white pilasters and cornices. Its simple beauty and worshipful atmosphere make it an ideal memorial to a Christian life.
DEDICATION OF THE BUILDING

Special services are being planned for Sunday, May 20, 1951, at which time both the Church School Building and the Mary Barry Persons Chapel will be dedicated. Former pastor, the Rev. Frank Crawley, will preach at the 11 o'clock service. Participating in the dedicatory service at 3:30 will be a number of ministers who are former members of the church. Among those expected are: Dr. Lester Rumble, the Rev. Edmund Rudisill, James Moore, Hamby Barton, Jr., George King, Sewell Dixon, LeRoy Smith and Mac Coleman.
In 1878 The Methodist women of Atlanta organized their first Missionary Society. In some way Forsyth caught the gleam and before the year was out a small group of the denomination here had formed themselves into a like society for the propagation of the gospel outside their own borders. Thus, Forsyth Methodist women won the right to be listed as founders of one of the Pioneer Auxiliaries. Mrs. R. P. Trippe was the first President.

The Society disbanded for a short while for lack of a President, but when the young girls were organized into a band of "Earnest Workers", the older people resumed their meetings. Of this original number of eight "Earnest Workers", only one is left in Forsyth now as a beloved member of the W.S.C.S., Dollie Baskin Alexander (Mrs. G. L.)

The Foreign and Home Mission Societies merged into one in 1910 and the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of this union was celebrated with a beautiful and impressive service in 1935. The Sixtieth Anniversary of the Woman's Missionary Society was observed in 1938 with another elaborate and meaningful service.

September 2, 1940, marked the first meeting of the W. S. C. S. or Woman's Society of Christian Service, the new name given the organization after the unification of the Northern and Southern Methodist Churches.
In the early days of the Missionary Society, the women raised their own dues by selling eggs, having "Missionary Hens", sewing, quilting, etc., and not by signing their husband's names to checks. A gift as large as five dollars was unheard of and the minutes of a meeting in 1880 tell of a visitor in Forsyth giving $5.00 to the Society, whereupon the members gathered around her and showered her with thanks and congratulations upon her generosity. The total raised in 1886 was $108.50 and the total raised in the first ten years of the Society was $1,026.60. In contrast to this, the amount paid into the treasury in 1947 was $1,784.37, plus approximately $200.00 collected by the Wesleyan Service Guild; and five members of the W.S.C.S. have pledged $25.00 each in dues for 1948, in addition to amounts to be paid into Circles and special collections. In 1946 and 1947, the W.S.C.S. and the Church shared equally in the $500 "Specialy the support of a Mexican pastor.

There were 46 members in the Society in 1899 as compared with 85 in 1948. Other women outside the membership of the Society participate in and contribute to the Missionary Circles.

The Wesleyan Service Guild, an organization of younger women in the Church, who cannot attend the daytime Society, was organized in 1945, with 22 members enrolled. Today, the membership numbers 47 and it is one of the livest branches of our missionary workers.
WHAT THE METHODIST YOUNG PEOPLE ARE DOING*

The Epworth League has always been an important department of our Church and when the name was changed to Methodist Youth Fellowship in 1940, interest and activities of the group grew by leaps and bounds, until our young people have become a very great source of pride to us.

Miss Lucy Banks has been in charge of this group for eight years and Miss Bertie Hughey is her assistant.

Week-end retreats have been held at Indian Springs in three successive years with an average of twenty young people participating in the three-fold program. Seven members attended Camp Glisson at Dahlonega this past summer.

In recent years the Forsyth M.Y.F. has furnished four District Officers: Aubrey Hayes, Jr., Karl Hill, Lou Gean Tribble, and Sam Bunn.

At least 40 per cent of the attendants at the Sunday Evening Church Service are young people, and a number of them come to the mid-week Prayer Service.

Mrs. Paul Chapman is in charge of the Junior M. Y. F., and her group sing in the choir every Sunday Evening.

Two of our most active young people, Rosanne and Jack Thweatt, children of Mr. and Mrs. John G. Thweatt, are the only fourth-generation members of the Church on both sides of their family. Their paternal grandparents, George B. and
Julia Rudisill Thweatt; their paternal great-grandparents, John G. and Julia D. Brown Thweatt; their maternal grandparents, J. L. and Rosa Redding McGee, and their maternal great-grandparents, Capt. D. S. and Clara Blanton Redding, were or are all members of the Forsyth Methodist Church, as are their parents, John G. and Gladys McGee Thweatt.

* Copied from an account given in, Forsyth Methodist Church. 125th Anniversary Homecoming Bulletin, October 10, 1948.
Presiding Elders and Preachers 1835-1859

1835  Wm. J. Parks, Presiding Elder
      James E. Evans, Preacher in charge
1836  Wm. J. Parks, Presiding Elder
      Samuel Anthony, Preacher in charge
1837  Wm. Arnold, Presiding Elder
      Samuel Anthony, Preacher in charge
1838-39 Wm. Arnold, Presiding Elder
      John L. Dickinson, Preacher in charge
1840  Wm. Arnold, Presiding Elder
      C. W. Key, Preacher in charge
1841  J. W. Talley, Presiding Elder
      G. W. Persons, Preacher in charge
1842-43 John W. Talley, Presiding Elder
      McCarrol Purifoy, Preacher in charge
1844  J. W. Talley, Presiding Elder
      W. W. Robinson, Preacher in charge
1845  Isaac Boring, Presiding Elder
      I. F. Stegall, Preacher in charge
1846  Isaac Boring, Presiding Elder
      S. M. Smith, Preacher in charge
1847
1848  Isaac Boring, Presiding Elder
      W. W. Robinson, Preacher in charge
1849-50 John W. Glenn, Presiding Elder
      John P. Duncan, Preacher in charge
1851  J. W. Glenn, Presiding Elder
      John C. Simmons, Preacher in charge
1852  Josiah Lewis, Presiding Elder
      M. C. Purifoy, Preacher in charge
1853  Samuel Anthony, Presiding Elder
      J. W. Farmer, Preacher in charge
1854-55 A. T. Mann, Presiding Elder
      E. P. Burch, Preacher in charge
1856  J. W. Glenn, Presiding Elder
      C. A. Fulwood, Preacher in charge
1857  J. W. Glenn, Presiding Elder
      J. M. Marshall, Preacher in charge
1858  J. W. Glenn, Presiding Elder
      M. A. Clonts, Preacher in charge
1859  James E. Evans, Presiding Elder
      D. Blalock, Preacher in charge
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Preachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>David Bick and John B. Macleod</td>
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<td>1859-60</td>
<td>Geo. G. N. MacDowell</td>
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<td>1861-62</td>
<td>Wm. F. Cook</td>
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<td>1863-65</td>
<td>Peter M. Ryburn</td>
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<td>1866</td>
<td>J. F. Payne</td>
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<td>1867-68</td>
<td>Wesley P. Pledger</td>
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<td>1869-70</td>
<td>Francis A. Kimbell</td>
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<td>1871-72</td>
<td>Daniel J. Myrick</td>
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<td>1873-74</td>
<td>D. D. Cox</td>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>G. E. Gardner</td>
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<td>1876-77</td>
<td>L. J. Davis</td>
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<td>1878</td>
<td>H. J. Adams</td>
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<td>1879-80</td>
<td>J. D. Hammond</td>
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<td>1881</td>
<td>A. M. Thigpen</td>
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<td>1882</td>
<td>J. S. Bryan</td>
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<td>W. F. Smith</td>
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<td>A. W. Williams</td>
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<td>1885-86</td>
<td>J. R. Parker</td>
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<td>J. M. Tumlin</td>
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<td>1889-90</td>
<td>I. C. Davidson</td>
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<td>1891-94</td>
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<td>1895</td>
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<td>1897-98</td>
<td>W. T. Irvine</td>
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<td>1899</td>
<td>W. M. Wynn</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>J. S. Bryan</td>
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<td>1901-03</td>
<td>W. T. Bunnicutt</td>
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<td>1904-07</td>
<td>J. A. Timmerman</td>
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<td>1908-09</td>
<td>Geo. W. Griner</td>
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<td>1910-12</td>
<td>R. M. Dixon</td>
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<td>1913-15</td>
<td>W. G. Crawley</td>
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<td>1916-17</td>
<td>Olin King</td>
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<td>1918-19</td>
<td>E. D. Hale</td>
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<td>1920-21</td>
<td>W. R. Foote</td>
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<td>1922-23</td>
<td>T. M. Sullivan</td>
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<td>1924-27</td>
<td>J. H. Barton</td>
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<td>1928-29</td>
<td>E. C. Wilson</td>
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<td>1930-31</td>
<td>A. G. Shankle</td>
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<td>1932-35</td>
<td>Augustus Ernest</td>
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<td>1936-37</td>
<td>T. R. Kendall</td>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>S. A. F. Wagner</td>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>C. P. Venable</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940-44</td>
<td>Paul J. McKnight</td>
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<td>1945-49</td>
<td>Frank Crawley</td>
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<tr>
<td>1949-</td>
<td>Robert Hays</td>
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SOURCES

1. Forsyth Circuit of the Methodist Church. Minutes of the Quarterly Conferences, 1835-1859.

2. Forsyth Methodist Church. Minutes of the Quarterly Conferences, 1860-1881.


