Someone has said that those who do not honor their ancestors need not hope to be honored by their descendants. We would pay tribute to those courageous Methodist pioneers who first established a church here and also to each succeeding generation who built upon this foundation. In honoring them we honor their devotion to the church and its mission.

HISTORY OF THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
LA FAYETTE, GEORGIA

By Frances Park Stiles (6/30/1878 - 12/20/1953)

Copy by J. P. Stiles, Sr. with a few up-dated items. November 1st., 1976

The First Methodist Church of LaFayette, Ga. was a one room log house that stood where the large brick Fortune home on South Main Street now stands. (Presently owned by Mr. & Mrs. Z. S. Hood) This Church was under the Holston Conference. It was also used for Missionary Work among the Cherokee Indians. Rev. David B. Cummings had charge of the work among the Cherokee Indians as well as the LaFayette District. Fort Cummings, built by the United States forces in 1836 where the Indians were gathered up from all this North Georgia Cherokee County and placed in this old Fort on the hill just West of the large spring where our town now gets its water supply. Indians called the spring "Cold Water Spring". The Fort was named Ft. Cummings for this noted Methodist Missionary, Rev. Cummings. Indians were kept in this fort until carried West to their new home.

The Annual Conference was held in LaFayette in 1836. Bishop Morris presided. Rev. David B. Cummings, Presiding Elder, Rev. W. H. Rogers, preacher in charge. Also at this Conference, the name of Circuit was changed from "New Town" to LaFayette Circuit and the Mission was called "Cherokee". Rev. Christopher Stump was the first preacher in charge of "New Town" or LaFayette Methodist Church. Rev. W. H. Rogers in 1836 and Rev. C. D. Smith 1837-1838.

The date of the building of the next Methodist Church which stood on the lot where the Walker County Court House now stands has not been found so far. All records, Bibles and song books were destroyed by the Union Soldiers when they used the Church for stables for their horses during the War between the States. However, George White's History of Georgia, published in 1849, gives the census of Walker County of 1845 as follows: "7023 Whites, 1044 Blacks, also states LaFayette the County Seat of Walker County is beautifully situated, having a Court House built at the expense of $7,000, a jail, two Churches, Baptist and Methodist, each with a Bell." This description of the town was evidently written before the Presbyterian Church was built. It was built in 1848 and also had a bell tower and bell. The Presbyterian Church was organized in 1836 and used the Brick Male Academy built in 1836 or the Methodist or Baptist Church for their services. This proves that the Methodist Church was built about 1836.
My Father remembered until his death in 1918 of coming to a Quarterly meeting held in Lafayette Methodist Church where the Court House now stands. This was in 1848. He came with his uncle Richard Lane, his mother's brother. Father was 14 years old. During the meeting the question of a Parsonage for the Preacher was brought up.

Richard Lane, dressed in a long black frock coat, black silk stock tie, placed his tall beaver hat on the bench by Father and stood up and said - "We must have a good Parsonage. I have a parcel of land here not far from the Church. I will give this to the Church for a Parsonage. There is room for a house and garden. Down in front across the road is room for a pasture for the preacher's horse and cow. Back of the house a garden and land to grow corn to feed them. Also, I will give $500. to help build the house," The house was built. It was a white one story colonial style. I can remember visiting there as a little girl with my father and mother. In 1883-84-85 when Rev. E. W. Ballenger was pastor, one of my older sisters stayed with the Preacher's family and attended school in old brick academy. The extra parsonage land was sold at different times. The railroad came in 1888. The parsonage was swapped to Mr. B. F. Thurman for a house on lot where the Ford brick building now stands next to the Presbyterian Church. (Ford building is now Abney's Dept. Store) Mr. Thurman remodeled the parsonage and added an upper story and the columns were replaced by tall ones. Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Spencer bought the house. Mrs. Spencer told me she had the old wax seal with the name of Richard Lane on it. The Richard Lane home in the Cove is still standing. A beautiful home of English design. (This Richard Lane is my great-great-uncle) The Spencers sold the house to Mr. Jim Louphridge. He moved it over to Henderson St. facing South. You can still see the antique windows and facings. (You can see this house today at 502 Henderson St.)

The Parsonage by the Presbyterian Church was exchanged for a house at 305 S. Main St. (It was destroyed by fire after the Church sold it.) The two story house at 705 N. Main St. was purchased. It was sold and the present Parsonage at 303 Dogwood Circle was built by the Church.

The Methodist Church which stood where the Walker County Court House now stands was a large one room frame building painted white. Had a belfry and bell. Inside there were large columns up through the center. The pews were long high back benches. The Church faced West. There were two front doors, an aisle up from them to open space in front of the altar. From right of Church, the women sat. Occasionally, a man, if he was "going with" a girl, sat with her, or a young married man, but all the older men sat on the left side of the church, or on left of center pews. Right of center aisle seats were women or younger ladies. The "Amen Corners" were on both sides of pulpit up one step on platform. Church rail all around except for openings on side. The Organ was in front of the "Amen Corner" on right. The Choir sat behind on 3 or 4 benches. On left the "Amen Corner" was used exclusively by good old men of the Church. My father and Mr. B. F. Thurman sat in chairs so they could lean back. They leaned back against the front pews of the "Amen Corner".
My first rememberance of the organist was Miss Dovie Farris. (Mrs. Hunt) Her sister Miss Ludie Fariss (Mrs. Hammon) sat in the choir. My older sister, Jennie Park also sang in the choir as others too numerous to mention. My father (James Andrew Park) was superintendent of the Sunday School for over twenty-five years. Mr. P. A. Cooper for sixteen years, Later Mr. Arthur Jackson, Mr. Lee Napier & Mr. Joe Hall.

There was one large maple tree in front of the Church and hitching posts for the horses. There was no paved sidewalk down to the church. If it rained, it was very muddy and all around the hitching posts there were holes full of water. The horses and mules impatient at the long time hitched would paw holes out all around the posts. Behind the Church there were a few maples.

Sunday School during my father's time was held at 9:30 A.M. A recess of one half hour between Sunday School and Preaching time. We children had to go to nearby homes for a drink of water. We Park girls always went up the Capt. Napier home with Dee Dee and Em. Mrs. Napier was always kind and gracious as indeed all the family.

From the prior history of our Church written by Mrs. O. W. Bledsoe in 1915 and re-written by Mrs. E. P. Hall in 1970. I will try to bring up to date items on the building of the Church.

The third Church was built on the corner of West Villanow St. and South Cherokee St. This was in 1900 under the Pastorship of Rev. S. P. Wiggins. The Building Committee was Messrs. T. A. Jackson, J. D. Farris and H. P. Lumpkin.

In 1924, this building was partially razed and a new brick-veneer auditorium built around the old shell. When they let the roof down on these old exterior walls, the wall bowed outward. Large steel turn-buckle rods were installed in the attic. The rods held the walls and they were brick-veneered. To this day, the walls held. You can sight down the walls and see the curve. The building committee was Messrs. O. W. Bledsoe, E. P. Hall, Jr., I. H. Holliman, T. M. Quillian and T. A. Jackson. During the Pastorship of Rev. Floyd Walden in 1954, extensive remodeling was done in the main auditorium. J. P. Stiles looked after this work.

Ground was broken for our present Church on Sunday, July 1st., 1956 on the lot on South Main St. that was donated to the Church by Dr. & Mrs. S. B. Kitchens. Building committee was S. B. Kitchens, F. D. Leake and J. P. Stiles. Rev. Charles Williams, Pastor. First services were held in this Church on Sunday, September 8th., 1957.
Christopher Stump 1835
Godman Hughes &
John P. Bailey 1859-1860
John H. Mashburn 1860-1867
Wiley T. Hamilton 1867
James L. Lupo 1867-69
Thomas H. Timmons 1870
Alexander Odom 1871-72
H. C. Christian 1873
P. G. Reynolds 1874
W. W. Lumpkin 1875
G. W. Duvall 1876
A. J. Hughes 1877
W. G. Hanson 1878
O. C. Simmons 1879
T. J. Edwards 1880-81
E. W. Ballenger 1882-84
J. L. Moon 1885
G. W. Thomas 1886-87
J. L. Perryman 1888-89
Fletcher Walton 1890-91
R. R. Johnson 1892-94
A. B. Weaver 1895
J. F. Davis 1896-98
S. P. Wiggins 1899-1900
J. J. Ansley 1901
A. S. Harris 1902-03
C. M. Verdel 1904-05
H. S. Smith 1906-09
C. K. Henderson 1910
A. S. Hutchinson 1911-12
J. R. Jordan 1913
T. M. Elliott 1914
N. A. White 1915
J. A. Patridge 1916-17
A. E. Scott 1918-19
J. W. Brinsfield 1920-23
W. O. McMullan &
C. F. Hughes 1924
H. L. Byrd 1925-28
T. H. Williams 1929
E. W. Jones 1930
C. A. Hall 1931-34
D. P. Johnson 1935-36
W. W. Cash 1937-38
E. C. Dewey 1939
H. L. Wood &
E. A. Padget 1940-43
L. B. Linn 1944-47
F. E. Crutcher 1948-51
Floyd Walden 1951-54
Charles Williams 1955-58
W. Jack Lamb 1959-60
Hengry G. Walker 1961-64
Marion Pierson 1965-69
C. J. Reaves 1970-