LIBERTY CHURCH AND THE ORIGIN OF METHODISM IN GEORGIA

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Historians are frequently frustrated when trying to study Methodist origins on the local level because of the lack of written records. This is true of Methodist origins in Georgia.

It has been assumed that Methodism came to Georgia in 1785 when the first Conference preacher was assigned to the State. However, George G. Smith, our greatest writer on Georgia Methodist history, refers to "some unknown local preacher" who had been at work in Georgia before 1785. Recently, Dr. Robert L. Rhodes, an Augusta physician, has identified one of these unknown local preachers as Samuel Collins who came to America from Ireland in 1773. Collins was a friend of Francis Asbury with whom he spent some time believed settled in Baltimore. It is believed that Collins/south of Augusta in 1775 and began to preach the gospel as it was understood by the Methodists. By 1776 he had formed a "society" and erected a "meeting house" which for a time was called "Sam Collins Church". Bishop Asbury in his Journal for March 1, 1790 records that he "crossed at Augusta, in Georgia, and rode to S.C. Church..." It seems reasonably certain that the "S.C. Church" visited by Asbury in 1790 was the one which Samuel Collins had started about 1776.

Later (date unknown) this church was given the name "Liberty". If there are records of this development, they have not been discovered. Probably, when the people decided that the Church needed a name other than the name of its founder, they remembered that the Church had been started about the time when liberty came to America, 1776. What better name for this old Church could there be than "LIBERTY METHODIST CHURCH".