As the beginning of this church is unknown to us today we will delve into Methodist history a little because of the influence of the Methodist missionaries all the early churches of the denomination were born.

The earliest work done in this country by the Methodists was begun by Rev. Richard Meade, of the Tennessee Conference, who came into the Cherokee nation in 1822. I do not know the length of his service and a casual reading of the record of his work would indicate he was in the Valley Towns of the Cherokees and not in the upper cherokee towns to which this area belongs, but one of his stations was at Cooawattie, which is in present Murray County, Ga.

In 1835 Rev. D. F. Fulton and Rev. Ring were sent by the Methodists to this immediate part of the country to work. Apparently their headquarters was Cross Plains, later Dalton. We do not know the length of their service. Maybe they began this church.

In 1835 Rev. David Cumming was appointed the first Presiding Elder for this territory. His territory was the whole Cherokee Nation, from the Wissasee on the north to the Chattoococha on the south, and from South Carolina on the east to the Tennessee on the west. His home was at the old spring which is now Linwood Cotton Mill about a mile northwest of the Lafayette, Ga., square and there is an historical marker at the location commemorating the fact. He served until 1836.

During his three year tenure there occurred the first recognition of a Methodist church at Mt. Olivet. Not the establishment of a church, but the licensing of a minister by a church already established. Rev. Levi Brotherton, born at Greenville, Tenn., on October 8, 1810, had settled in Dalton and I quote from his account of the beginning of Methodist work in this county "Beginning in 1835" by which we suppose he emigrated from Greenville in that year. I quote: "The license of the writer of these lines was written and signed by this good man (David Cummings) at Mt. Olivet church, in what is now Whitfield County. Capt. Wm Hammond, Robert McCamey, Jeff. Wade, Chas. F. Lewis composed the quarterly conference at which the license was granted." This states definitely there was a church here at least eight years before any record now exist. Levi Brotherton was probably the most influential Methodist in the territory for many years. He died in Atlanta, Nov. 22, 1893, aged 83 years and 15 days.

In 1845 the present property was acquired from John E. Earston for a consideration of $250.00. The trustees signing the deed were John Pittner, James H. Huff, Mitchell P. Varnell and Seaborn Spann. Soon after the church deed was made the plantation it was cut from was sold to Peyton Wade and it was known as the Wade Plantation until modern times. Thirteen years after this deed was made the trustees were listed as T. H. Pittner, T. Lawrence, Wm McCoughy and James H. Huff. The deeds are recorded in Murray County, Ga.

The 1850 census of Murray County, of which we were a part at the time, listed Levi Brotherton, Allison McClen, Isaac Rutherford and Elisha Tramble as Methodist ministers. With the few ministers living in this country in early days it is safe to assume all of them preached here at one time or another.

The History of Whitfield County says, "Mt. Olivet was the strongest rural Methodist church in Whitfield County. "The trustees of this church assisted in establishing three other Methodist churches in nearby sections. " Two of these can be identified by the signers of the deeds as Red Clay and Varnell.

This church is Without doubt the oldest church in the north end of the county. It may be the oldest church in the county. Poplar Spring and Macedonia Baptist were
organized in 1836 and are thought to be the oldest churches in the county. The Dalton churches were organized in 1847. There is reason to believe Mt. Olivet was in existence before 1830. The other churches in neighboring communities were organized as follows: The Cohutta Presbyterian church that now exists was first organized as a Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1842 by Rev. Hiram Douglas, one of the earliest Presbyterian missionaries. Hopewell Baptist was organized 1858, and both Varnell Baptist and Methodist somewhere between 1836 and 1847 on land given by Mitchell P. Varnell, a Methodist.

Everything in most of five counties was originally on the Spring Place Circuit. Early preachers listed by Levi Brotherton as serving this circuit from 1835 to about 1850 were: Madison C. Hawk, Daniel B. Payne, William Rush, Charles K. Lewis, William Hickey, David Crenshaw, Russell Reneau, Jackson Reynolds, Levi Brotherton, W. A. Simons. The territory was divided according to state lines about 1845 and most of the preachers went with the Georgia conference. Later Mt. Olivet was placed on a circuit composed of Varnell, Red Clay, Mt. Zion, Pleasant Grove, Mt. Pleasant and Tunnel Hill with the pastorium at Varnell.

I want to describe the old church to you. If you can't remember more than forty years you do not remember the building in which I worshipped as a child and in which my mother worshipped beginning when she was about eight years of age. So far as anyone knows that was the original building, as the slave balcony indicated it was built before the Civil War. It seems there are no legends of having first had a log building nor of a school at Mt. Olivet. (Last sentence wrong. There was a school across the road one man now about 80, John Shrop, attended.)

I do not know its size as things sometimes look out of proportion to a child, but I would judge it was about 40 X 50 feet. It faced the south and had two home-made paneled doors in the south end and another between the pulpit and the northwest corner in the north end. There was a window in the north end on the east side of the pulpit. I suppose there were three windows on the side, maybe four. As I remember them they were the largest window of any church I attended as a child, and had many small panes. The ledges on the inside of the window were very narrow, hardly room for a little boy to lay his knife. The outside was weatherboarded and looked much like any other white church. It had a small belfry on the comb of the south end. Inside, the floor, walls and ceiling were of different width boards, as lumber men say, one by wide, meaning one inch thick and any width the log will cut. It seems to me a part of the walls were white and a part blue. I suppose they were stained in a pastel blue something like a robin's egg blue and the rest of the walls white with the ceiling blue. The inside might never have been painted but once. There was a Scripture verse made of wood letters eight or ten inches high behind the pulpit nailed to the wall in a semi-circle. The benches were home made and sat pretty hard, but had a solid plank seat. The house was not under panned and that led to its destruction by fire somewhere between 1916-1918. It had big rock piers under it. Leaves gathered under it each fall and the wood for the wood stove with which it was heated was stacked under the east side of the building. The woods burned and the fire set the leaves under it and it burned. The building some of you know was built on the same location.

Allow me to think as far back as the record goes. One of the first deeds made in this territory was by Samuel McCaughy, the Revolutionary hero, who deeded the land where the church stood to John Marston in 1836. From this revolutionary hero men of every war of our land, except the last have worshipped here, and both black and white warriors sleep out here on this hillside. Up there are the people from all walks of life, because death is the great leveler. Scattered over the old cemetery are the graves of people well past middle age before the Indians left this country. Among them are George and Abagail Bagel (1795), Peter Nessimer, Sharwood Corley (1796), Wixon and Nancy Taylor (1797), R. R. McCaughy (1805), John Pitner (1800), J. M. Stanton (1778), John Kennedy (1779), A. M. And Jacob Stockburger, the Tatomas and others whose graves are not marked.
In the Maskins cemetery north of Mr. Maples house are the Cooksey's, Groves, Shugharts, weatherly's and others. At Hopewell are the early Wilson's, Coopers, Caldwells, and many others. At Varnell are most of the rest of our forefathers including Mitchell P. Varnell an early member of this church, who moved to Varnell when the railroad was built.

In Mt. Olivet Church the early Pitner's and McGaughy's probably attained an influence above that of any other early family. I found the grave of my playmate Carl Ayers killed by a train. I suppose some of the unmarked Negro graves were slaves who followed their masters through the Civil war, and it is probable some of them were the first generation from Africa. Over in the new section are the graves of people I knew and you knew as it was not opened until some time around the close of World War One.

These, our people, were for the most part a simple, kindly people banded together through necessity, many of them unlearned in books but wise in the ways of the land in which they lived. It was a hard stern land and a hard stern life they lived and they were a stern people, deeply religious and planting the faith of their fathers through a church in the midst of each little group of settlers. In a day when regimentation seems the order of the day and where conformity to the social pattern is the norm by which men are judged these forefathers of ours would be strangely out of place. They thought for themselves. They worked for themselves and their community. They would have scorned the government aid of today. They knew how to care for their needs and they did it with help from no one until tragedy came and then it was the business of the whole community. They were rugged individualists, men who had opinions worth fighting and dying for. They were for their country, right or wrong, and lived and died by the motto on the Confederate Monument at Cleveland "Man does not live to himself alone, but to his country."

Just one story of the life of the church: Mr. William McGaughy, Sr., was Sunday School superintendent for many years following the Civil War according to both my mother and my grandmother Burns and I have heard them tell the story many times. He is said to have been a son of the Revolutionary hero, Samuel McGaughy. He fought through the Civil War with Major T. H. Pitner and lived on Major Pitner's plantation after the war and ran the tannery on the Pitner Branch. He had been shot in the nick in the war and held his head a little to one side because of the old injury. I have been told that every time they sang the old Camp Meeting song, "Palms of Victory" even if it was the first song of the service Mr. McGaughy shouted all over the house. He said the memories of four war years returned to him and he could see again the long walk home after the surrender at Charlotte in April, 1865, and as he and the Major topped the hill east of his home the first sight and sound that greeted him was his little girls playing house and singing.

The first verse of the old song goes:

I saw a weary wanderer; in tattered garments clad,
He was struggling up the mountain, and it seemed that he was sad;
His back was laden heavy, his strength was almost gone,
Yet he shouted as he journeyed, "Deliverance will come."

Then Palms of Victory, crowns of glory, Palms of Victory, I shall wear.

Presiding Elders of the territory as given by Levi Brotherton from 1835 to 1870 were: David Cummings, Joseph B. Dawter, Thomas Stringfield, Timothy Sullins, Russell Beasem, 1845-1848, Alfred T. Mann, J. B. Payne, J. C. Simmons, J. W. Yarbrough, J. W. Glenn, B. Arbogast, and W. P. Harrison.


Either the local district Superintendent or the Methodist Historical society in Atlanta can supply the District Superintendents from 1935 until the present.