The Mt. Zion Methodist Church, founded in 1828, has for more than a century stood sentinental to the religious life of the Mt. Zion community. It has served as a medium of cosmic function in war and in peace; in depression and in prosperity. The history of this church is inextricably tied up with the history of the country and with the lives of its pastors and members.

The Mt. Zion Church, a member of the North Georgia Conference, Gainesville District, is located on Rogers Bridge Road near Duluth, Georgia, in the northeastern part of Fulton County. It is now a part of the Suwanee Charge. However, it has at various times been a part of five other charges: Duluth Charge, Cumming Charge, Flowery Branch Charge, Alpharetta Charge, Duluth Charge, (again), and Rock Springs Charge.

This church was originally a part of Warsaw Campground, and it has occupied one other location before being moved to the present site.

The deed to the first site was made October 24, 1885. This land was given by Robert N. Rogers and Anderson S. Bell for a very small sum of money. This deed was made to A. L. Rogers, Jasper Boles, George Lowe, Washington Little, and Robert N. Rogers. It was filed for record July 25, 1893 in the office of clerk of the Superior Court, Milton County as the location at that time was a part of Milton County.

I shall attempt to follow this church through three periods of its history:

1. Pioneer History - 1828 - 1850
2. Early History - 1850 - 1900
3. Recent History - 1900 - 1951

I shall further attempt to discuss its history from several outstanding peaks of its religious history. This is not attempting in any way to minimize the years of steady progress, perhaps just as vital to the life of an organization, but rather that high peaks of enthusiasm stand out more vividly in the memory of people, and are as stories handed down with more alacrity from one generation to another.

This church, founded in the year in which Andrew Jackson was elected President of the United States, had its incipiency in a period in American history in which there were few metropolitan areas. Literally the little rural community was often the center of the religious, educational, political, and cultural interests of our country. The community in turn often centered around the church. Indeed, these small rural communities formed an important nucleus of our nation.

It is interesting to note how closely the history of our nation and the history of our churches are related. Since the founding of the United States in the Declaration of Independence (1776) when our forefathers looked "for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence", the religious life of the country formed the very nucleus of the nation. It was only natural that the church serve as the medium of the religious
The Mt. Zion Church was the center of one of these little pioneer communities. It was instituted when the United States was just fifty-two years old. The period of its history from 1828-1850 may well be called a period of pioneer history. Not too much information is available about this period of its growth. However, from the history of our country we do know that this was a period of our history which saw the decline of Puritan influence. It was a period in which religious persecution was giving way to our ideal of freedom of religion. This new movement in religion must have been reflected in this church through its founders as throughout its history, a spirit of tolerance has been exemplified by the Mt. Zion Church.

This pioneer period of history saw throughout the country a great interest in religion. It was the beginning of the days of great revivals and camp meetings. Here again Mt. Zion Church was a church typical of that time as it was apart of Warsaw Campground until 1828.

The records must be incomplete, but the earliest date we have recorded of any member who joined this church was Anderson S. Bell in 1849. It is interesting to note here that this was the year of the California Gold Rush, this church no doubt did feel the westward expansion movement.

From this pioneer period the story has been handed down that William Rogers, a member of this church and who sometimes preached there served as a delegate to Washington as a representative from the Cherokee Nation. This further carries out the idea that the small rural community centering around the church was sometimes an important factor in our political history, although there was complete separation of church and state.

Little information is available about this pioneer period, and no stories of any great religious movement are handed down to us. But it evident that the church served an important place. The story is handed down that that often these rugged old pioneers knelt at the altar.

The period of this church's history (1850 -1900) we may call the period of early history. Again we find the history of the church linked with the history of our nation. By this time we find the problems of tariff, slavery, and states' rights were well defined. When these issues later led to the War Between the States (1860-65) we find various churches split over these issues. When the Methodist Church divided into the Northern Methodist and the Southern Methodist, Mt. Zion became a part of the Southern Methodist as all its members were typically Southern. Many members of this church fought in that war.
This period was characterized by a spirit of revival. This fact is borne out by the church records of the ministries of Rev. H. S. Bradley (1880-81) and Rev. John H. Mashburn (1883-85). During the ministry of Rev. H. S. Bradley there were seventy-six members added to the church. Most of them were on profession of faith. During the ministry of Rev. John H. Mashburn there were eighty-four members added to this church. Most of these were also on profession of faith. This was indeed a period of revival.

In the early part of the twentieth century we find the Mt. Zion Church characterized by a fervor for study, study of the Bible. Perhaps the peak of this period was felt in 1916 during the ministry of the Rev. M. B. Whitaker. A Bible study group called a "Study Class" was organized.

It was not only a period of study, but the meeting of this group led to a delightful experience of social fellowship. The outstanding teacher of this group was the late Col. W. L. Bell. In this period the church progressed.

The next outstanding peak of the church's recent history was in the years from 1922-1936. The people had just experienced the horrors of war in World War I and were perhaps beginning to feel forebodings of the coming financial crisis of 1929. In some ways it was a period of unrest, a time in which people were groping for some sort of real security. In such a crisis it is but natural that people turn to the church.

At this opportune time as by Divine Providence the proper leader was provided. In November of 1922 the Rev. D. S. Patterson was appointed as the pastor of the Duluth Charge. (Mt. Zion Church was then a member of the Duluth Charge). He furnished just such leadership as was needed.

He served as pastor of the church from 1922-1925. His ministry was characterized by a fine spirit of friendship which he promoted among his church members, among the different denominations—and in fact among all the people he contacted. Throughout his ministry new friendships were made, and old friendships were firmly cemented.

With his devout faith in God, his faith in people, his love for people, and his fine personality he could preach to the people, and he could lead them. There are still many who remember some of his favorite texts: "Let not your heart be troubled", and "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.... for His yoke is easy and His burden is light."

Having thus been pointed to God people received new inspiration and added enthusiasm: old members were revived, and new members were added to the church. These were indeed years of progress, and Rev. D. S. Patterson is remembered as a beloved friend.

In the years from 1932-1936 we find a continuation of this period of friendship. It was also a time in which great stress was placed on youth. Again a very fine leader was provided: Rev. N. O. L. Powell. This youth movement was very timely as there were a lot of young people in the country. This was just prior to the movement.
of young people to the cities, a trend which later greatly affected
the rural churches.

So in the years from 1932-1935 the church made great progress
under the leadership of Rev. N. O. L. Powell who is still remembered
as a beloved former pastor.

Before going on to the next peak of interest may we stop
and point out a few special points of interest.

First, I should like to tell about at least one great sermon
that has been preached in Mt. Zion Church. There have been many
wonderful sermons preached there, but since I cannot tell about them
all I have chosen one that is still remembered by many of the
present members of the church. In August, 1928, Rev. W. M. Twiggs
assisted Rev. A. E. Silvey in conducting a revival meeting. This was
in the flourishing years of the church when large congregations
attended even the morning service. At the close of this wonderful
revival on a Friday morning of August 1928, Bro. Twiggs simply
told the story of the Phillipian jailer, a dynamic story of the
power of Jesus. The entire congregation was deeply moved, and this
sermon still lives in the memory of people who were present.

I should like to discuss the affiliation of the Mt. Zion
Church with the North Georgia Conference, but detailed information
is not available. However, this relationship is and has always been
very pleasant.

I should like to pause for a moment to pay tribute to deceased
members of this church and to mention briefly a few who contributed
greatly to the support of the Mt. Zion Church within recent years;

The late Col. W. L. Bell joined the Mt. Zion Church on
profession of faith in 1880 and served as a loyal member until his
death May 30, 1937.

He was the local spokesman for the church and was the beloved
Bible teacher. His magnetic personality charmed all who knew him.
Often visitors came to Mt. Zion to hear him teach the Sunday School
lesson. The following quotation is one of the poems he often quoted.
It expresses his philosophy of his service to the church and expresses his
philosophy of life;

"There are loyal hearts, there are spirits
brave,
There are souls that are pure and
true;
Then give to the world the best you
have,
And the best will come back to you."
The following are all names that will bring to mind to people who knew them some service or services which were done for the church: Mr. and Mrs. R. N. Medlock, Mrs. R. N. Rogers, Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Bell, Mrs. Joe Taylor, Mrs. C. M. Jones, Miss Mary Jane Bell, Mr. C. L. Chatham, Mrs. Paul Stonecypher, Mrs. J. A. Boles, and Mr. Nathanael Gilstrap, and Mr. W. F. Bell.

In the passing of these members, of course, the vitality of their service is gone, but in remembering them we still get wonderful inspiration. Their work will not die for truly—

"To live in the hearts of those left behind
Is not to die!"

Perhaps the greatest crisis in the history of the church came in 1943. The membership of this church, having been decreased by deaths of many substantial members, and by others having moved away, was very small. Country churches had grown smaller, and town churches had grown larger. So Mt. Zion church along with some other small churches was taken off the Duluth Charge. This was inevitable in the trend of the times. The small churches were faced with the problems of decreased membership and no parsonage.

Again a wonderful solution was provided: Student pastors were sent out from Emory University to care for the situation. Rev. James Conner served as pastor in 1943; Rev. Jack Cardwell in 1944; Rev. Hugh Duling Jr. 1947-48; and Rev. Harvey C. Boyd since 1949.

The appointment of student pastors has been and is a bright era in the history of this church. Under the capable leadership of the Rev. Harvey C. Boyd, and with the support of the few loyal members, great progress is being made throughout the Suwanee Charge—both spiritually and materially. A new parsonage has been built, and each church has made improvements. The Mt. Zion Church has been painted inside and outside, all the pews repainted, and new pulpit chairs have been bought. Throughout the entire charge Rev. and Mrs. Harvey C. Boyd are doing a fine work.

Before closing I should like to recognize some who are actively supporting the church at present:

First, I should like to mention Mr. J. A. Boles who has moved away but within recent years was superintendent of the Sunday School for a number of years.

Mrs. W. P. Bell has been superintendent of the Sunday School for nineteen years.

Mr. H. E. Bell who has been the teacher of the adult Bible Class for several years.
I shall further mention by families those actively supporting the church:

The J. L. Médlock family, The Mrs. Margaret Gilstrap family, Mr. and Mrs. S. R. Médlock, the John G. Taylor family, Mr. and Mrs. John Bell, the H. E. Bell family, the Thomas M. Bell family, the W. P. Bell family, Mrs. Blanche Bell, Mr. and Mrs. Basil Bell, and Mr. Joe Taylor.

In closing we may say that the Mt. Zion Church is of historic value. It saw the rise of a free nation, a nation based on one of the greatest religious ideals of all time: freedom to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience. When we sing the lines of the American Hymn we hearken to a rich religious heritage: "God of our fathers whose Almighty Hand leads forth in beauty all the starry band... Thy love Divine hath led us in the past... in this free land our lot by Thee was cast". The part played by Mt. Zion Church in the total national picture has been small, but it has been great in the lives of those directly associated with it. Although at times falling short, it has shared in periods of study, periods of revival, and periods of rich fellowship. It has been indispensable in the life of the Mt. Zion community for a period of one hundred and twenty-three years. It is still doing a good work and we believe with God's help it will continue to do so indefinitely.