THE HISTORY OF PIERCE MEMORIAL METHODIST CHURCH.

The history of the Pierce Memorial Methodist Church begins back beyond the memory of man runneth, and it is supposed to be the third oldest Methodist church in Richmond County, Georgia.

According to tradition and information handed down from generation to generation, the church property was conveyed to the trustees of the Rocks Methodist Episcopal Church South by the families of Skinner and Purifoy, and the church building constructed, according to best information, near the beginning of the nineteenth century by slave labor. The old building standing now has timbers in it, in all probability, hewn by slaves.

The old building formerly stood across the highway from its present location, but owing to the crowding conditions of the cemetery, was moved to where it now stands and was remodeled. The cemetery is itself, mute evidence of the age of the church. There are grave markers showing death dates of 1852, and birth dates before the close of the eighteenth century.

Such families as the Bartons, Skinners, Purifoy's, Wards, Ferrells, Murphys, Winters, Halls, Reids, Newmans, Daleys, and many others too numerous to mention here, are notable as the old families of the church. Many of the same name are now prominently connected with the church and its progress. Of course, there are now and have been many other families prominently connected with the church and doubtless will be many more in the future.

Unfortunately, the early records of the church are not to be found, but handed down from one generation to another is the fact that its formation was in the early years of the nineteenth century; that there was a time when the plantation owners from far and wide came in their carriages, carts, or on horseback to
worship in the old Rocks church, and with them their slaves and servants, for they too must hear the word of God; and since there was no gallery in the old church as is found in many pioneer churches for the seating of the slaves, they occupied the left side of the aisle, their masters and mistresses the right.

The deed to the property was lost or destroyed by fire it is believed, as record of it has not been located, but title to the property has long since ripened by prescription, according to the laws of Georgia. There appears of record several transactions by the trustees of the church, some as far back as 1885, and a plat is of record showing over five acres, its shapes and boundaries.

There has been found recently by Miss Ann Pearre, a present member of the church, in their old family Bible, an old paper showing a committee selected to solicit funds for badly needed repairs for Pierce Chapel Methodist Church; committee names were Dr. J. J. Butler, L. V. Winter, W. B. Ferrell and Edmund Murphy. Edmund Murphy was the great, great grandfather of Miss Pearre, and he now has one grandchild, nine great grandchildren, thirteen great, great grandchildren who are now members of this church and eight great, great, great grandchildren who are members of the church school. Mr. Murphy died in 1878, which confirms the fact that the church was old long before 1878.

The name of the church was changed from Rocks (which was so called, it is believed, on account of its proximity to a large deposit of rocks) to Pierce Chapel in memory of the late Bishop George Pierce of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, of Georgia, and later changed to the new Pierce Memorial Methodist Church.

Rev. A. W. Williams was pastor of the church at the time the
building fund was begun for the new church and is reputed to be the first contributor in the sum of $25.00. Since then Rev. A. E. Silvey, Rev. W. H. Norris and Rev. C. H. Wheelis have served the church and were much interested in its completion, its present pastor being Rev. Hugh McKee who is diligently striving for its material and spiritual advancement.

Some of the earlier pastors were Rev. J. V. W. Morris, who died about 1927 at the age of 99 years, Rev. W. I. Delph, a confederate veteran, Rev. George L. King, Rev. D. B. Cantrell, Rev. Postell Reid, Rev. Lyle, Rev. Knowles, Rev. Sneed and others not known to this writer.

Special mention of tireless and earnest efforts to complete the new building of the late Mrs. Daisy Thomson (who affectionately referred to it in its early stages as her baby) is made here in deep gratitude.

All of the present members are grateful to God, and the men and women who have gone on before, for the advancement of the Methodist church in this community, and are happy that the new building is some evidence of advancement in a material way, and we believe, hope and trust, as evidence of spiritual advancement, and expect with the help of God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to continue to strive for the advancement of His Kingdom here and everywhere, and at all times.

December 2, 1953.

[Signature]

HISTORIAN.