THE HISTORY OF

ST. MATTHEW METHODIST CHURCH

By

Jannelle Jones McRee

East Point, Georgia

January, 1962
On November 14, 1954, the first meeting of the congregation which was to become St. Matthew Methodist Church was held at Parklane School on South Blount Street in East Point, Georgia. Approximately sixty-five people attended this meeting.

St. Matthew was officially organized on January 9, 1955, by Dr. Nat G. Long, District Superintendent of Atlanta East District. After the organization a church conference was held at which time the church was named St. Matthew. Previously it had been called Parklane Methodist Church.

Dr. Long chose four Emory University students who received scholarships from Glenn Memorial Methodist Church to be the organizers of St. Matthew. The student organizers were: Gerry Hearin, Jr., Anniston, Alabama; Jack Henton, Benton, Kentucky; Ray Finklea, Jacksonville, Florida; and Ernest Hogge, Mattaponi, Virginia. Gerry Hearin, Jr. was appointed chairman and pastor in charge. The fifth Emory University ministerial student who took an active part in the church program from its beginning was Kenneth Burnett, Benton, Kentucky. He organized the Youth Class.

There were ninety-one charter members of St. Matthew. The last day for becoming a charter member of St. Matthew was April 10, 1955, Easter Sunday. Ronnie Stephens, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Stephens, was the first member to join on profession of faith.

Those who joined on January 9, 1955, were:

Ronnie Stephens  
Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Stephens  
Mrs. Henry G. Whitlock  
Mrs. Gerry Hearin  
Mr. and Mrs. O. Belton West  
Mr. and Mrs. Edgar L. Trussell  
Mr. and Mrs. Fred Harper  
Karen Mullinix  
Mr. H. H. Massingale  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Foley  
Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Daniell  
Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Roberts  
Mrs. Edith Shaifer  
Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Taylor  
Kendall Taylor  
Mr. and Mrs. J. I. Thomas  
Mr. and Mrs. E. F. Tingle, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. John Shepard, Jr.  
Mrs. R. C. Sappenfield  
Mr. Olin S. Rakestraw  
Mr. and Mrs. H. C. McMillan, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Harvey McNeely
Mr. and Mrs. Roy L. McRee
Mrs. Robert L. McRee
Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Milner
Miss Rebecca Moore
Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Moore
Arthur Mozley
Mrs. Evelyn Mozley
Mr. and Mrs. Lester Jenkins
Mrs. H. O. Jones
Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Littlefield
Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Hollums, Sr.
Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Hollums, Jr.
Miss Frances Harper
Mrs. W. R. Finklea
Miss Martha Dean
Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Brent
Billy Brown
Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Brown
Mr. and Mrs. William Byrd
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Callaway
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Chapman

Other charter members included:

Miss Annie Mae McBride, January 16, 1955
Gail Callaway, January 23, 1955
Larry Callaway, January 23, 1955
Mrs. Frank Bauknight, January 30, 1955
Mrs. H. H. Massingale, February 20, 1955
Miss Sara Bolton, March 13, 1955

On April 10, 1955, the last day a person could become a charter member, seventeen members joined. They were:

Reba Irene Byrd
Edwin Guy Brent
John P. Roberts
Jerry Shaifer
Dorothy Yvonne Reddick
Jerry McRee Moore
Pamela Sue LaMonte
John Robert Foley
Nelson Wayne Massingale
Marvin Lee Massingale
Mr. and Mrs. W. Gordon Vining
Mrs. John P. Roberts
Mr. and Mrs. T. W. Ferguson
Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Christian
The first official board members were nominated at a business meeting at Brookdale Community Center, January 4, 1955, and elected at the official organizational meeting January 9, 1955.

Stewards:
W. M. Callaway
B. F. Tingle, Jr.
Harvey McNeeley
Lester Jenkins
H. C. McMillan, Jr.
L. M. Moore
L. M. Taylor

Trustees:
J. I. Thomas
J. L. Daniell
Fred B. Harper

Church Treasurer:
Edgar L. Trussell

Charge Lay Leader:
H. H. Massingale

Chairman of Board:
Harvey McNeely

Secretary:
O. S. Rakestraw

Church School Superintendent:
Mrs. W. M. Callaway

Communion Steward:
O. S. Rakestraw

Chairman of Commissions:
W. C. Littlefield - Finance
Mrs. Evelyn Mozley - Education
Mrs. L. M. Moore - Missions
Mrs. Ruth Hollums - Membership and Evangelism

When the Church School of St. Matthew was organized, it was composed of nursery, kindergarten, primary, and junior departments. There was one youth class and one adult class which was called the Callaway Class. The name of the Callaway Class was later changed to the Fidelis Class.

On January 23, 1955, twenty-four persons attended the first prayer meeting. It was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Foley.

On January 24, 1955, the W.S.C.S. organizational meeting was held at Brookdale Community Center. The installation service was held March 5, 1955, at the evening service. Mrs. J. E. McCord, District President of the W.S.C.S., installed the officers:

President: Mrs. J. C. Hollums, Sr.
Vice-President: Mrs. Joe Brown
Secretary-Treasurer: Mrs. Fred Harper
Missionary Study Secretary: Mrs. E. G. Brent
Christian Social Relations Secretary: Mrs. H. O. Jones

On March 6, 1955, the first evening church service was held.

On May 29, 1955, at Mrs. J. C. Hollums' home a tea was given by the W.S.C.S. in honor of the St. Matthew ministers and their wives.
The first Vacation Church School was held for five days beginning on June 13, 1955. Mrs. W. M. Callaway was the superintendent.

In June, 1955, the Reverend Ray Finklea was appointed by the North Georgia Conference to remain as pastor with St. Matthew.

On July 1, 1955, Allen P. Tankersley, of First Methodist Church, East Point, gave a tract of land at Winburn Drive and Jefferson Avenue. The property was to be used for building St. Matthew. He gave one-third of the land at this time.

On October 16, 1955, the first Layman's Day speaker was Ben F. Tingle, Charge Lay Leader.

Annual Christmas parties have been held since December, 1954.

The purchase of the church parsonage at 1122 Winburn Drive adjoining the church property was made on December 20, 1955.

The first anniversary of St. Matthew was observed on January 8, 1956. The guest speakers were Gerry Hearin, Jr., morning service, and Ernest Hogge, evening service.

St. Matthew had its first revival services beginning April 22, 1956. Dr. B. F. Tingle, Sr., of Birmingham, Alabama, conducted the services.

On June 11-15, 1956, the Vacation Church School was held with Mrs. J. W. Howard, superintendent. Fifty-six attended.

On July 27, 1956, the zoning and planning commission met at East Point City Hall because of a request for re-zoning of the church property. On September 4, 1956, the council of the city of East Point met at East Point City Hall and decided that the property at Winburn Drive and Jefferson Avenue should be re-zoned for church use.

Allen P. Tankersley gave the second part of the property at Winburn Drive and Jefferson Avenue on October 15, 1956. This property was given in memory of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Tankersley, who observed their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1955.

The Crusader Class of St. Matthew Church School was organized in the conference year of 1956-57.

St. Matthew Methodist Church celebrated its second anniversary on January 13, 1957. The guest speaker for the morning service was the Reverend E. C. Wilson, associate pastor of First Methodist Church in East Point.
On April 21, 1957, Mr. Tankersley gave the last third of the land for the church building. The church received the deed at this time.

Mr. Harold Sheats, of East Point, gave to the church his legal services in connection with this property.

On Sunday evening, April 28, 1957, a Church Conference was held in conjunction with the evening worship service to consider the plans of the first unit of St. Matthew. The Conference voted unanimously to accept the plans for the first unit presented by the building committee.

Choir directors in the order in which they served were:
- B. F. Tingle, Jr.
- Gordon Vining
- Mrs. Paul G. Krotts

Those contributing their services as pianists were:
- Mrs. Evelyn Mozley
- Mrs. R. J. Brown
- Mrs. George Thomason
- Miss Charlotte Gresham
- Mrs. W. R. Finklea
- Miss Jane Jones

On May 20-24, 1957, revival services were held at St. Matthew with the Reverend Sam H. Coker, pastor of Clifton Methodist Church, in charge. The Reverend Larry O'Steen, song leader at Audubon Forest Methodist Church, was in charge of the singing.

After the return of the Reverend W. Ray Finklea to the Florida Annual Conference, St. Matthew Methodist Church was served for one month by the Reverend Charles W. Lovin, retired Army chaplain.

The Vacation Bible School was held on June 17-21, 1957.

The Reverend Wilton A. Moulder, of Atlanta, became the first full-time pastor on June 30, 1957. Before coming to St. Matthew he was minister at St. Luke Methodist Church in Atlanta.

On July 7, 1957, a picnic dinner was given in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Moulder at Brookdale Community Center.

Working drawings and specifications for the construction of the first unit of St. Matthew were presented by the architect to the building committee on August 19, 1957.

After many unsuccessful efforts to negotiate a loan for the construction of the building, it was decided at the Official Board
meeting of December 30, 1957, that the bond system of finance would be further investigated and presented to the congregation for consideration.

On January 12, 1958, the third anniversary service was held at Parklane School. Dr. Nat G. Long preached for the morning worship service. Lunch was served in the school cafeteria after which information concerning the bond system of finance was presented to the congregation.

On January 15, 1958, a meeting of the Official Board and the Quarterly Conference was held at Brookdale Community Center. At this meeting arrangements necessary for incorporating the church were made, and it was voted to proceed with the bond program.

On January 19, 1958, the corporation charter and the bond resolution were presented to the congregation in church conference. Both were approved.

On February 2, 1958, the two-week bond program began under the direction of James W. Fletcher of the Southern Bureau for Fund Development. The issue was for $55,000. $47,200 of the bonds were sold during the campaign, and the balance was sold later.

A contract for the construction of the building was signed with W. M. Abernathy on February 18, 1958.

Grading began on the church property on February 20, 1958.

The official Ground Breaking service with participation of church members was held on Sunday afternoon, March 2, 1958, at 2 o'clock.

The first unit, costing $70,000, was a two-story concrete and steel structure with brick veneer. Included in the 8500 feet of floor space were a chapel, a three-unit nursery, kitchen, and nine large classrooms.

The building committee members were: Ed Brent, Chairman; Mr. Moulder, J. I. Thomas, Fred Harper, W. M. Callaway, J. C. Cooper, Jake Wright, and Harvey McNeely. Roy L. McRee was building fund treasurer.

Revival services were held from March 23 through March 28, 1958. The Reverend Carroll Tinsley, pastor of Wesley Oak Methodist Church in Savannah, conducted the services.

In June, Mr. Moulder was reappointed as pastor for the 1958-59 conference year.
The first Official Board meeting held in the new building was on July 1, 1958. However, the building was not completed at this time.

On August 10, 1958, the last worship services were held in Parklane School, with the evening service being a special prayer service of thanksgiving.

On August 17, 1958, the first worship service was held in the new building. Open House was held from 3 to 5 P.M.

In October, 1958, the Fishermen's Club was organized. It was a group of laymen and laywomen, led by the pastor. The aim of the Fishermen's Club was to find and win new persons to Christ and membership in the church.

In October, 1958, the growth of the youth classes necessitated a division from one class to two classes for the intermediates and seniors.

In November, 1958, Mrs. C. S. Soonyers was appointed director of music.

In November, 1958, St. Matthew observed its first Thanksgiving Festival. The basic theme was to recapture the original spirit of Thanksgiving.

On January 11, 1959, the fourth anniversary service was held. Dr. Nat G. Long preached at the morning worship service. Charter members were recognized. Lunch was served after the service.

On February 15, 1959, the first school of Missions ever conducted by the church was begun.

The month of March in 1959 was set aside as the first annual Youth Month. During this time the youth participated in all of the services and young guest ministers preached at the evening services.

During April and May of 1959, an intensive stewardship program was conducted. This program was climaxed with a Loyalty Dinner at which Dr. Pierce Harris spoke. For the first time in the history of the church the proposed budget was pledged. Pledges exceeded the proposed budget by $1400.

In June, 1959, the Vacation Church School was held under the direction of Mrs. Neal Hainlin. This was the first such school held in the new church building.

Allen P. Tankersley gave a large number of books to St. Matthew. The books were processed in June of 1959. A committee
selected those books suitable for use in the church library, and the remaining books were either given away or sold.

The Reverend Wilton A. Moulder was reappointed to serve as pastor of St. Matthew Methodist Church for conference year of 1959-60.

In June, 1959, plans were made for a Volunteer Church Staff. This group had charge of preparing bulletins, handling correspondence, and other types of secretarial work.

On August 16, 1959, a special service in recognition of the first anniversary of entering the new building was held. Dr. W. Rembert Sisson, new Atlanta East District Superintendent, preached at the morning service. Lunch was served on the lawn after which the first quarterly conference was held.

Since 1956 it has become a custom in St. Matthew to receive a special Christmas offering. The suggested standard of giving is one day's pay from all employed persons.

On January 10, 1960, the fifth anniversary service was held with the Reverend Wilton A. Moulder presiding and preaching.

Mr. Moulder conducted an intensive research project charting the growth of East Point for the past ten years, with particular emphasis on its population, school system, and churches. From this study, a projection was made of the anticipated needs of St. Matthew for the next ten years.

On February 29, 1960, the Official Board elected a planning committee to study plans of growth and expansion of St. Matthew.

Mr. Moulder was reappointed to serve as pastor of St. Matthew Methodist Church for conference year of 1960-61.

In 1960, Mrs. Frank S. Parham became the first paid part-time secretary of the church.

The Shepherd Class of young adults of St. Matthew Church School was organized in the summer of 1960.

In June, 1960, St. Matthew's morning worship services were held at 9 o'clock during the summer. The average summer attendance made a significant increase.

The sixth anniversary service was held on January 8, 1961. The speaker was Bishop J. Owen Smith.
In January, 1961, a religious survey of our community was taken. Eighteen of the members along with workers from Jefferson Avenue Baptist Church had responsibility for the survey in our immediate area. They contacted 1072 families. As a result of this survey Mr. Moulder announced that at least 150 homes would be visited by him and members of St. Matthew.

In February, 1961, the Official Board decided that St. Matthew would establish a food bank for those in economic need. It was decided that all loose offering received for several weeks would go toward helping these people.

The Church School established a new record in April, 1961. On Easter Sunday the attendance was 208.

A revival was held in May, 1961. The Reverend Reynolds W. Greene, Jr., pastor of North Decatur Methodist Church, conducted the services. W. T. Callahan was the song leader.

In May, 1961, the Official Board voted to compile a list of those persons who could give blood to other members of the church or their immediate families under emergency circumstances.

In June, 1961, the Youth Choir was organized under the direction of Mr. Moulder, Miss Patsy Schenck, and Mrs. C. S. Sconyers.

The Vacation Church School was held in June with Mrs. E. G. Kadel in charge.

The Reverend Wilton A. Moulder was reappointed to St. Matthew for conference year of 1961-62. On July 2, the W.S.C.S. sponsored a Welcome Fellowship in honor of the pastor and his family.

In the summer of 1961 the first year book ever compiled at St. Matthew was distributed to the membership. Along with this year book went a survey form seeking opinions on future building construction. The results of this survey were turned over to the Building Committee for preparation for specific plans for construction.

In October, 1961, St. Matthew reached its highest average church school attendance. This was matched by consistently high attendance at both morning and evening services.

On November 1, 1961, John D. Wiggins was employed as Director of Music. His responsibilities included adult, children's and youth choirs. The accompanist for the adult choir was Miss Teresa Walton and the accompanist for the youth choir was Mrs. P. M. Meaders.
A new record attendance for church school was established on November 12, 1961. The total number attending was 208. This was the highest ever except for Easter.

As St. Matthew Methodist Church approached its seventh anniversary celebration on January 14, 1962, the church was experiencing its most rapid rate of membership growth for any period in its history except for the first three months after its organization. This growth was accompanied by record attendance at both morning and evening worship services.
## APPENDIX

### ANNUAL SUMMARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New Members Received</th>
<th>Total Membership</th>
<th>Total Funds Paid Out</th>
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<tr>
<td>1955 (Five month period)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>$1,081</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955-1956</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>$9,345</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956-1957</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>$6,747</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957-1958</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>$11,482</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958-1959</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>$34,539*</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959-1960</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>$20,281</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960-1961</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>$19,677</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961-1962 (Six months, July-Dec.)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>$9,071</td>
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*Year in which accumulated building fund was spent on new building.

### OFFICIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP, 1955-1956

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<tr>
<th>Ed Brent</th>
<th>Mrs. Fred B. Harper</th>
<th>Mrs. Evelyn Mozley</th>
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<tr>
<td>W. M. Callaway</td>
<td>Lester Jenkins</td>
<td>L. M. Taylor</td>
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<td>Mrs. W. M. Callaway</td>
<td>W. C. Littlefield</td>
<td>J. I. Thomas</td>
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<td>J. L. Daniell</td>
<td>H. H. Massingale</td>
<td>Mrs. J. I. Thomas</td>
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<td>Ray Finklea</td>
<td>H. C. McMillan, Jr.</td>
<td>B. F. Tingle</td>
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<td>Harvey McNeely</td>
<td>Edgar L. Trussell</td>
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### OFFICIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP, 1956-1957

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<th>Ed Brent</th>
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<th>L. M. Moore</th>
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<td>John P. Roberts</td>
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<td>J. L. Daniell</td>
<td>H. C. McMillan</td>
<td>L. M. Taylor</td>
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<td>Miss Martha Dean</td>
<td>Harvey McNeely</td>
<td>J. I. Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ray Finklea</td>
<td>Mrs. Havery McNeely</td>
<td>B. F. Tingle, Jr.</td>
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<td>Fred B. Harper</td>
<td>R. L. McRae</td>
<td>J. H. Ward</td>
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### OFFICIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP, 1957-1958

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<th>E. P. Atchison</th>
<th>Harvey McNeely</th>
<th>John Roberts</th>
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<td>W. M. Callaway</td>
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<td>Mrs. Paul G. Krofts</td>
<td>Roy L. McRee</td>
<td>J. I. Thomas</td>
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<td>Marvin Massingale</td>
<td>Wilton A. Moulder</td>
<td>M. D. Williams</td>
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<td>Miss Darlene Folk</td>
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### OFFICIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP, 1958-1959

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<th>E. M. Bellah</th>
<th>Merrill Harris</th>
<th>John P. Roberts</th>
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<td>M. L. Bouler</td>
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<td>Jrs. John P. Roberts</td>
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<td>W. M. Callaway</td>
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<td>Mrs. W. M. Callaway</td>
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<td>Walter Corley</td>
<td>Roy L. McRee</td>
<td>Miss Karen Walton</td>
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<td>J. L. Daniell</td>
<td>H. H. Massingale</td>
<td>Wendall B. Walton</td>
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<td>L. M. Moore</td>
<td>J. H. Ward</td>
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<td>N. E. Hainlin</td>
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<td>Fred Harper</td>
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### OFFICIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP, 1959-1960

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<th>J. O. Beckham, Jr.</th>
<th>Mrs. Charles Foley</th>
<th>Wilton A. Moulder</th>
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<td>E. M. Bellah</td>
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<td>N. L. Bouler</td>
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<td>Miss Gail Spain</td>
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<td>Harry Cook</td>
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<td>Walter Corley</td>
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<td>Robert Dillard</td>
<td>Roy L. McRee</td>
<td>J. H. Ward</td>
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<tr>
<td>W. N. Eidson</td>
<td>H. H. Massingale</td>
<td>M. D. Williams</td>
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### OFFICIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP, 1960-1961

| J. O. Beckham, Jr.   | Fred Harper              | Mrs. C. S. Sconyers    |
|----------------------|--------------------------| L. M. Taylor           |
| E. M. Bellah         | Merrill Harris           | J. I. Thomas           |
| Mrs. E. M. Bellah    | Mrs. E. G. Kadel         | Wendall B. Walton      |
| Harold Bellah        | H. C. McMillan, Jr.      | J. H. Ward             |
| M. L. Bouler         | Harvey McNeely           | L. M. White            |
| E. G. Brent           | H. H. Massingale         | Mrs. L. M. White       |
| W. M. Callaway        | W. Harold Miller         | M. D. Williams         |
| Walter Corley         | Wilton A. Moulder        | Richard Yarbrough      |
| R. L. Dillard         | Gene C. Reeves           | Nelson Massingale      |
| W. N. Eidson          | John P. Roberts          |                        |
OFFICIAL HOBD MEMBERSHIP, 1961-1962

E. M. Bellah
Harold C. Bellah
M. L. Bouler
E. G. Brent
W. M. Callaway
Frank Camp
Walter Corley
R. L. Dillard
Joel T. Handley
Merrill Harris
E. J. Howell

Henry R. Irmen
Mrs. E. G. Kadel
Mrs. Frank Kunkel
H. C. McMillan, Jr.
Harvey McNeely
H. H. Massingale
Mrs. H. H. Massingale
Nelson Massingale
Wilton A. Moulder
Gene C. Reeves
John P. Roberts
Miss Patay Schenck

C. S. Sconyers
Mrs. C. S. Sconyers
L. M. Taylor
J. I. Thomas
Wendall B. Walton
J. H. Ward
Robert L. Watson
L. M. White
Mrs. L. M. White
M. D. Williams
Richard Yarbrough