1976 Athens  ElBERTON DISH

HISTORY

OF

MONROE ST. STEPHEN METHODIST CHURCH

1956
When the Monroe Cotton Mill was built in the year 1897, the Company built a church for the benefit of the employees. For a period of time Union Services were held at this church and then it was agreed that the Baptists have two Sundays a month and the Methodists have two Sundays. The Methodists were served by the minister of the Monroe Circuit. (All the information we have before the latter part of 1916 has been given to us by members who worshipped at the Mill Church before that time.)

Rev. E. A. Caldwell, a local preacher living in Monroe, pastored the Mill Chapel for some time but we do not have the date, however we are indebted to Brother Caldwell for the work he did among our people in the early history of our church. Brother Caldwell's brother, Pryor Caldwell, organized the first Sunday School in South Monroe and worked several years among our people.

From all accounts the membership of the Mill Chapel was very small, and one of the members who worshipped at this church in its earlier days has told us that a record of the membership was not kept, and when someone wanted to join the Methodist Church, his or her name was put on the roll of the First Methodist Church, Monroe, because the Conference did not recognize the Union Church. We presume this was only for a short period of time, however, we notice from the record books that our quarterly meetings were held at the First Church as late as 1921.

The written records available, date back to the year 1915 when Rev. Homer Thompson was the minister. There were four churches on the circuit; namely, Pleasant Valley, Bold Springs, Pleasant Grove and the Mill Church. At this time the Charge was in the Gainesville District. Rev. Thompson has this to say about the Mill Chapel in his report to Quarterly Conference on Oct. 7, 1915:

"The Mill Chapel alone remains fruitless. The small membership there is heroic to a fault, but local conditions over which it has no control appear to make its labor in the Lord in vain. Only the power of God can revive the work there."

Rev. Will M. Jones came to the charge in December 1916 and served through 1917-18-19. Names of three more churches are listed on his reports. These churches are: Union Chapel, New Hope and Mt. Carmel. The amount apportioned to the Mill Chapel for the support of the preacher for the year 1917 was $29.00 and the records show that only $5.41 was paid.

Rev. S. R. Belk was Presiding Elder in 1916 and Rev. J. W. Quillian served as Presiding Elder during the years 1917-18-19-20.

From January 1918 to January 1923 the Mill Chapel is not mentioned in any of the Quarterly Conference records but we learn from the members
that the minister of the Monroe Circuit did preach regularly for them. Some of our members now living who worshipped at the Mill Chapel at this time are: Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Goker, Mrs. Lizzie Ellison, Mrs. Willie Florence Miller and Mrs. D. D. Dixon.

At the 4th Quarterly Conference, Oct. 6, 1918, Rev. Jones reports:
"The charge is one the verge of falling into possession of a nice parsonage which will be a great value and compliment to the charge."

By the 1st Quarterly Conference of 1919, the parsonage located on Church Street, had been secured and valued at $2000.00. The trustees were: P. D. Briscoe, H. C. Snow, C. J. Williams, W. R. Davis and T. W. Sorrells.

In December 1919, J. A. Sprayberry came to work in this field and in his report of April 23, 1921, he makes a statement that if he were here today he might repeat:
"It saddens our hearts to know that even in sight of our churches and that during Sunday School hours, there are both children and grown people who never even go to church. If the idle brain is the devil’s workshop, the idle heart must be his home."

Rev. W. T. Hamby was Presiding Elder during the years 1921-22-23-24.
Other Presiding Elders serving this Circuit are as follows:
Rev. H. C. Emery - 1929-30-31
Rev. Nath Thompson - 1932
Rev. R. Z. Tyler - 1933
Rev. Wallace Rogers - 1934-35-36-37
Rev. E. E. Jones - 1942-43-44-45
Rev. C. L. Middlebrooks - 1946-47-48-49
Rev. E. G. Mackay - 1950-51

The Rev. G. A. Chambers was pastor for the years 1923-24. Rev. H. G. Garrett was pastor for only one year - 1925, and Rev. J. E. Russell served the Charge during 1926-27. It was during his ministry that the Mill Church is first called the "Walker Chapel" or the "Walker Memorial."

In December 1927, Rev. N. O. L. Powell came to this Charge, and Brother E. A. Caldwell was his assistant. Reports are that he found a Union Sunday School at Walker's Chapel and they were using only Baptist literature. In May 1928 he secured a tent for his first revival in South Monroe, and nearly a hundred members were added to the roll. He lists the expense of the meeting thusly:
$75.00 for Evangelist, $50.00 for tent, and $10.00 for singer - Total $130.00.

Rev. Powell was returned for the years 1929 and 1930, and Rev. G. H. C. Stone was his assistant.

On Nov. 30, 1930 the Jersey Methodist Church was added to the Monroe Circuit. This made eight churches on the Circuit.
At the 3rd quarterly Conference, July 4, 1931, Brother Powell reports: "During the quarter the deeds to a track of land 80 x 90 feet in South Monroe, on which stands a building valued at $1500.00 was made to the Methodist Episcopal Church South. It will take $400.00 to repair the building."

The 'Building' mentioned, was the old frame school house that was moved to the back of the lot when the new brick school building, now known as Johnston Institute was built. Rev. Powell immediately began trying to get this old school building for a church so the Methodists could move out of the Walker Chapel and have a church to themselves. The Board of Education seemed to favor using the old school building as a Community House. On one particular Saturday night, the regular Saturday night dance ended up in a free-for-all fight. The next Monday the Board called Brother Powell and told him he could have the building for a church.

At the 4th Quarterly Conference, Oct. 4th, 1931, Bro. Powell reports: "We are worshipping in the new church in South Monroe. The church was named St. Stephen. It is ours and out of debt. This work was done at a cost of about $400.00 and is now valued at $2000.00."

Immediately after moving in the new church a Sunday School was organized and Mr. C. Y. Day was elected the Superintendent at Quarterly Conference Oct. 4, 1931.

Other Superintendents that have served to the present time are:

- Ralph Day Elected in 1932
- Aubrey Coker " " 1933
- R. L. Thompson " " 1937
- Fred T. Jones " " 1939
- Mrs. E. A. Carnes " " 1943
- Tryon Harrison " " 1944 and has continued as Supt. to the present time.

Rev. J. E. Holbrook was sent to this Charge in December 1931. The circuit was changed to the Decatur-Oxford District and there were only four churches on this circuit: Pleasant Valley, Mt. Carmel, St. Stephen and Union Chapel. The other four churches on this circuit became the Walton Circuit.

At Quarterly Conference February 16, 1933, it was voted to grant Ralph Day license to exhort and preach until District Conference when license to preach would be applied for.

At second Quarterly Conference, May 13, 1933, George Palmer, another member of St. Stephen, was recommended for license to exhort and preach.

Following Rev. Holbrook, was Rev. J. E. Cline. He was pastor for only one year - 1937.

Rev. B. N. McHan began his ministry among us in 1938. At the 4th Quarterly Conference, Oct 15, 1938, Bro. McHan reports: "At present we plan to build a new church at St. Stephen. We have had our lot increased in size to 120 feet front, and 150 feet deep which doubles the value of the property."
The Mill at High Shoals burned down and the Georgia Power Company offered our people some of the houses over there if they would go over and tear down and haul them away. Brother McHan and some of members worked faithfully and hard at this job until they got enough lumber to build our auditorium which we now worship in. It took two years to do this, and he reported the outside completed on Aug. 9, 1940, and the value of the church - $5000.00.

It was during Bro. McHan's ministry that our church became a half station. Preaching days were the first and fourth Sundays.

Rev. William E. Purcell was the pastor for the year 1941.

In 1942, Rev. J. J. W. Mize was sent here. Brother E. A. Caldwell was his Assistant and he gave three Sundays a month to the St. Stephen congregation. The inside of the Church Auditorium was completed during Rev. Mize's ministry.

Rev. A. J. Ledford came in 1944 to be our pastor, but because of ill health was forced to resign during the first quarter, but while he was here he worked eight hours a day, just like the people working in the mills, visiting and praying with the people.

Rev. Lamar Cherry a student at Emory University was sent to fill the vacancy made by Rev. Ledford.

The six Sunday School rooms were built and paid for while Rev. Cherry was here, also a piano purchased and the yards graded.

Rev. Jesse Warwick was our pastor for the years 1946-47-48-49, and during his work here a kitchen and two rest rooms were added to the church building, and also, new benches and new pulpil furniture was secured for the auditorium. A gas heating system was installed throughout the church.

At the 2nd Quarterly Conference, December 12, 1947, Jesse Hill Warwick, son of our pastor was recommended to preach locally.

For the year 1949-50, Rev. E. L. Ruark, was sent to the Charge as a Supply pastor. Conference had assigned W. W. Yates to this charge but for some reason, he did not take the work and this created a vacancy which Rev. Ruark came to fill. During his first here the people of St. Stephen caught a vision of the need of a full time station. In February 1950 a tithers' band was formed and plans for building a parsonage got underway. The Monroe Cotton Mills had already deeded us a lot opposite the church for the purpose of building a parsonage. By August 4, 1950 our new parsonage was completed and our first full time pastor and his family had moved in. It was during this year that the walkways in front of, and around the church were paved. A new electric bulletin board was also installed in front of the Church.

We have had a great year and we feel like the Power of God, as Bro. Thompson stated in his report 35 years ago was our only hope, has revived the work here.

Mrs. T. J. Moody, Mrs. Willie Florence Miller
Mrs. D. D. Dixon, Mrs. E. L. Ruark, committee.