THE HISTORY OF SARDIS METHODIST CHURCH

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis: and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.” Rev. 3-4.

The history of Sardis Methodist Church dates back into the beginning of the nineteenth century. Much of the information consists of reputed data, but goes to make the history one that is most interesting.

It is the third oldest church in Georgia and is located on Powers Ferry Road, in suburban Atlanta. A very interesting reputed fact is that the land on which the Church is located, and has been for approximately 137 years, was taken from the Indians by Mr. Sy Donaldson. At that time no deeds were held because the property had never been surveyed. However, the old method of platting land by Bee's-waxed string was a substitute for the deed, when he gave the Church the property. There was enough land for the site of the church, and also a cemetery.

Our history begins in approximately 1812, with a little log cabin which was used as the Church. This was later replaced by a wooden Church, erected in the same spot. In the beginning of the Church, services were held every two weeks, the first preachers remembered by some of the oldest members (information secured from members of their family) were Pastors Lane and Owens. One came one week and the other, two weeks later. There were no Sunday services, either, they preached either Tuesdays or Wednesdays. People rode horseback those days, or walked or hitched up to a wagon to get to church. During the Civil War there were few, if any, meetings held. However, the soldiers never bothered the Church at all. The wooden structure, which replaced the log cabin, was a two-story building. The farmers of the territory actually built the Church with their own hands.

This frame Church was destroyed by a cyclone. The Church was blown down, but did not hurt a father and son, in a mule and wagon, who had sought shelter from the storm behind the building. One of the oldest members of the Church made this statement at that time: "That was the start of the good part of Sardis. Christ blew down the Church but He didn't suffer the storm to kill anyone.” The Sardis Lo'ge of F & A M Lodge played a great part in the building of this structure. They used the second story room for many years as a meeting place. Great was the faith and love of God among the countrymen of those days. They were faithful in their attendance at the semi-monthly meetings and, though some of them lived miles from the Church and
all had to work hard to keep up their farms, they did not begrudge giving of their share of hours to erect a Church of God.

The Pastors in those days were called circuit riders and came from Cobb County and from below Atlanta. A few years later, they began having services on Saturdays and Sundays. The farmers came direct from the field to their worship service at 11:00 A.M., each Saturday that the Circuit Rider came to Sardis. They were also all present at the Sunday service.

During the life of the Church, it has been on several different charges, or districts. Some of the Pastors lived in parsonages at Vining, Georgia; some at Mt. Bethel; some at Dunwoody, Georgia; some at Sandy Springs, Georgia; some in Atlanta, Georgia. It has carried the name Sardis Methodist Church, Sardis Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and Sardis Methodist Church. It has served under the Atlanta Heights Charge, and was transferred to The Atlanta East District of the North Georgia Conference, from the Marietta District, in 1940.

The site on which the Church is located was previously in the County of DeKalb, and in 1853, the County was divided and Sardis was placed in the County of Fulton, thus making it one of the oldest churches in Fulton County. The Church was also an operating body during the time of Cities of Terminus and Marthasville, which cities became City of Atlanta in 1845.

Several Pastors who served were supply preachers, along with some local preachers, and received no pay for their services.

In the late twenties of the twentieth century, the present structure was erected. Again the members of Sardis Lodge F & A M Lodge offered able assistance. The members of the Church selected O. J. Southwell as architect of this new building. The plan he submitted was colonial in style. Mr. Southwell stated that he used the colonial architecture because it was the prevalent style at the time the first Sardis Church was erected. Around 1812, about the time of the origin of the Church, was an age of Puritanical simplicity, and the architecture changed from Gothic elaborateness of the previous epoch to a severity of line. The style of this particular church is of the late eighteenth century tradition. It was the last development of the colonial architecture and was known as the Georgian Style.

A dedication service was held at the Church on July 20, 1941, at which time Bishop Arthur J. Moore conducted a mortgage-burning ceremony. This was under the pastorate of Rev. N. O. L. Powell.

Only a partial list of past pastors of Sardis could be secured, and they are: Pastors Lane, Owen, Osburn, Morgan, Wardlaw, Whitefield, Matthews, Dempsey, Dodge, Bellah, Smith, Rolader, Brown, Mayson, Anderson, Austin, Brown, Bailey, Dave Brown, Wright, Saunders, Weir, Rorie, Speer, Eakes, E. Jones, Nunn, Allgood, Miller, J. Jones, B. Greene, Knowles, Betts, Cash, Bailes, Anderson, Edwards, Burtz, Gillilan, Garry, Reeves, Hall, Penn, Mize, Scott, Waggoner, Crutcher, Powell, King, Hunt, Prince, and Henderson.

In 1947 a plot of ground was purchased just across the road from the Church, on which a parsonage was erected. This was under the pastorate of Reverend Frank Prince.

There are several traditional facts connected with the Church: all four buildings have been in the same spot, beautifully arched between oaks and pines, on a small knoll, with the original cemetery, and now a new one added, by its side.

The Jim Chaffin Memorial Singing is held yearly at the Church, being started in 1909.

On the Church Roll today are names of families which were charter members of the Church.

The Church is the same growing body that it has always been. Sunday School rooms are being remodeled in the basement, as well as a modern kitchen being installed. The Young Adults of the Church have built a Sunday School Room, to the rear of the Church Auditorium, to show the expansion program of the Church. A building fund is in operation now, for other buildings to the side and rear of the building.

(If any pertinent information has been omitted from this History, it is entirely through the lack of being able to secure such data, and any correction or addition will be gladly received by the Church. We have intentionally omitted mentioning specific names, but each of you who has rendered a service know of such, and also know that the Church is deeply indebted for it.)
FAMILIES OF SARDIS FOR THREE GENERATIONS:

Mr. R. C. Arrington, Mr. Paul E. Arrington, Denon and Diane Arrington
Mr. Ellis Bryant, Sr., Mr. Ellis Bryant, Jr., Master Ellis Bryant, III
Mr. B. F. Morris, Mrs. J. L. Gastley, Gerald, Lewis, and Wayne Gastley
Mr. B. F. Morris, Mrs. Jamie A. Norris, Master Billy Norris
Mrs. W. L. Tumlin, Mr. J. E. Bell, Master Gene Bell
Mr. W. L. Tumlin, Sr., Mr. W. L. Tumlin, Jr., Mrs. Harold Herndon
Mr. Ivan C. Rolader, Mr. Donald W. Rolader, Master Donald Ashley Rolader.

FAMILIES OF SARDIS FOR FOUR GENERATIONS:

Mr. James H. Rary, Great-grandfather
Mr. James H. Rary, Father
Mrs. H. D. Cook, Mother
Brenda Cook, Daughter

Compliments of

Mrs. B. H. Hardman
Mr. & Mrs. B. F. Morris
Mr. L. W. Camp
Mr. Hoke Barron
Mr. V. R. Fitch
Mr. J. A. Norris
Mr. O. D. Hudson
Mr. Charlie Maddox
Mr. & Mrs. W. F. Stone
Mr. & Mrs. R. L. Maddox
Mr. & Mrs. A. C. Thompson
Mr. & Mrs. W. F. Warren
Mr. & Mrs. C. A. Lowry

Haley Stewart Elec. Co., Inc.
Mr. & Mrs. C. L. Nuckolls
Mr. Leon Townsend
Mrs. J. L. Gastley
Mrs. Mae Donaldson
Mr. & Mrs. J. W. McGee
Mr. & Mrs. Marshall Spruill
Mr. & Mrs. R. C. Arrington
Mr. & Mrs. Paul E. Arrington
Mr. & Mrs. H. T. Pylant
Mr. & Mrs. O. Wagner
Mr. & Mrs. H. M. Stone