HISTORY
of
STILESBORO CHARGE

Bethlehem Church
Harmony Grove Church
Hopewell Church
Stilesboro Church
Taylorsville Church
STILESBORO METHODIST CHURCH HISTORY

1836-1950

Written by:
(Miss) Callie Jackson
STILESBORO METHODIST CHURCH

Stilesboro Methodist Church, formerly Brandon Chapel, which was founded in 1836, was the outgrowth of a little Sunday School which Thomas Brandon, devout man of methodist faith and a pioneer settler of Cass (now Bartow) County, conducted.

Thomas Brandon and his wife, Louisa Greene Brandon, with two small daughters had migrated from Gwinnett County to the young county of Cass (now Bartow). They lived in a little log cabin which probably was built by the Indians, as they still inhabited this section at that time, and it was in this home that the Sunday School was held and the church organized.

FIRST MEETING HOUSE

The first meeting house of the newly organized church was built of hewn logs and its heating system was an open fire place. The first communion service was from Thomas and Louisa Brandon's household supply—two crystal goblets and two china plates. Incidentally, the Brandon descendants have cared for the communion service and prepared the bread and wine throughout the 115 years of the church's history. A further unbroken family service is that a Brandon has served as an official member throughout the 115 years.

FIRST PASTOR

The Georgia Conference met for the first time just five years before this church was founded and the Cherokee District was formed about two years later. This district was subdivided into circuits and missions as the need arose, Cassville Mission having been formed in 1835. Rev. Isaac Boring was presiding elder in the year 1836 and Rev. F. D. Lewis was the circuit rider of Cassville Mission, so he was the first pastor of Brandon Society.

The noted Bishop J. O. Andrew presided over the 1836 conference, assigning the pastor to the Cassville Mission, which included Brandon Society.
The large circuits covered by the pastors prohibited their appearing at anyone church more than two or three times a year; so the membership was divided into classes with an appointed leader in charge of each. The duty of the leader was to notify his class when there would be services. The "preaching day" was which every day of the week that the pastor reached his appointment.

The first written record we have of Brandon Society is the roll book of Thomas Brandon's class in 1840. In it a note is made of certain days set aside for "fasting and prayer".

Under the date 1847, and later, are enrolled the names of the slaves of a number of the members.

**NEW CHURCH BUILDING**

Some time in the late forties or early fifties the church purchased a five acre plot of ground on which was erected a substantial frame building of simple design which was named Brandon Chapel.

This church now boasted a large membership composed of pioneer families, who had come to this county from other sections of Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia. Brandon Chapel was fortunate in having as its pastors some of the ablest circuit riders of that day. Among them was Rev. Joshua Knowles, who was pastor in 1848.

**CHANGED TO ANOTHER DISTRICT**

The Cassville Mission was changed from the Cherokee to the Marietta District in 1846. In 1857 it was changed to the Rome District.

Rev. J. D. Myrick was pastor during the War Between the States, and General C. A. Evans, a minister and a soldier, was pastor for two years following the war.
In 1870 the church was changed back to the Marietta District and for some time the pastor of the Cartersville church served this church. That was four years after the division of the Georgia Conference.

The year 1874 marked the passing away of the church's founder, Thomas Brandon. Eleven years later his wife, Louisa Greene, passed on. They left ten children.

Along in the eighties the church purchased an organ, which was used only by the Sunday School— that being composed mostly of young people. About this time kerosene lamps replaced candles for lighting.

The church was in a splendid state of spiritual growth during those years. Sixty-four new members were added to the roll during Rev. J. E. England and Rev. J. M. White's pastorates in the middle 80's.

Cassville Mission had been divided into smaller circuits and Brandon Chapel was in the Kingston Circuit, with Cassville, Oak Grove making the four churches. They paid the pastor $1200.00 per year.

**ANOTHER NEW CHURCH BUILT**

After approximately 50 years the "Little Church in the Wild Wood", showed the strain of the years, so in 1891, while Rev. England was pastor for the second time, the old chapel was raised and a modern building was erected on a new site, which is in the small town of Stilesboro.

The church flourished in the new location. One hundred members were added in the next five year period.

There had been a Ladies' Aid Society for some time and in the 90's a Woman's Missionary Society was organized.

The late Dr. J. A. Sharp, of Young Harris College, was principal of the Stilesboro High School in 1893 and 1894 and delivered his first sermon in this church.
NEW CHURCH DESTROYED

Seven years after the new church was erected a cyclone completely demolished it—and no insurance on it. The Bible, the pulpit stand, and the church bell were all that was left of it that could be used.

CONGREGATION REBUILD

Rev. W. A. Harris was the pastor at that time and it was largely due to the wonderful leadership of this brilliant and deeply spiritual man that the church could go forward, as it did. For in 1899 one year after the destruction of the church, the present building was completed.

An Epworth League was organized in 1900 following a revival conducted by Rev. W. A. Harris and Rev. C. M. Dunaway. Twenty-three joined the church and a number of others united with other churches.

The Rev. S. A. Harris was the next pastor and he returned later as presiding elder of the Dalton District, to which this church had been transferred.

Twenty-four members were added to the church in 1907, during Rev. J. D. Milton's one year pastorate. Rev. L. P. Hucaby lived in Stilesboro then, while he was pastor of New Salem and Aragon churches.

In 1910 Stilesboro church was made head of a new circuit or charge. Rev. W. A. Harris was pastor again—Taylorsville, New Salem and Bethlehem. Later Harmony Grove and Hopewell were added to it.

In 1918 a home in Stilesboro was bought for a parsonage.

DISTRICT MEETING

The Stilesboro Methodist church entertained the Dalton District meeting in July 1920—Rev. C. E. Lundy was pastor and Bishop W. A. Candler presided.
A large Epworth League came into being in 1930, while Rev. H. M. Strozier was pastor.

**ONE HUNDRED SECOND ANNIVERSARY**

On the 29th of May, 1938 Stilesboro Methodist Church, formerly Brandon Chapel, celebrated its one hundred second anniversary. One of the largest crowds ever to assemble at this church was present. Some came from as far away as Valdosta, Georgia and Birmingham, Alabama. These were among the former members and their families, who returned for the celebration.

Descendants of the church's founder, Thomas Brandon, occupied reserved seats in the congregation.

The above history of the church was read by the writer in the early part of the program of the day, at which Rev. T. H. Wheelis, pastor, was master of ceremonies. A local choir augmented by a quartet from Berry School, Rome, Georgia, rendered appropriate hymns. The quartet also sang several numbers during the day's program.

The Rev. Charles Jarrell, then of Atlanta delivered an able discourse at the eleven o'clock hour. Following this, a bountiful basket dinner was spread on a long table on the church grounds.

The high light of the afternoon program was an address by the then Governor of Georgia, Honorable E. D. Rivers. This concluded the one hundred second celebration of Stilesboro Methodist church. A day to be remembered by everyone present.

Coming close upon the heels of the 102nd celebration of this church was the momentous Unification Movement in 1939.

Following this change the Stilesboro Charge was served by several pastors of the former Northern Division of the Methodist. The first of these was Rev. J. F. Rollins. Others were Rev. J. S. Strickland and the late Rev. B. A. Chastain.
In 1940 during Rev. J. T. Hollins' pastorate the Woman's Society of Christian Service was organized with twelve charter members. This replaced the Woman's Missionary Society.

New Salem, one of the churches on the Stilesboro Charge, was discontinued in 1943 and several of the members brought their church letters to the Stilesboro church.

Death has removed the names of some valued and beloved members with in the past few years: R. L. Jackson, Mrs. Clio Colbert, J. G. Brandon, Sr; Mrs. J. H. McCormick, Hessie Baker (Mrs. E. G.) Beazley, all official members. Octavia Sproull (Mrs. J. Y.) Baker a life long member. All these have passed away since the celebration in 1938.

The names of Joseph Brandon, Jr; and Mrs. Joseph Brandon, Jr; are added to the list of Sunday School Superintendents.

Eight pastors have served the church since 1938, including the present pastor, Rev. T. L. Rutland, a superanuate who lives in a superanuate's home in Cartersville,

The parsonage is maintained and has been rented part of the time, but it is unoccupied at the present.

Also since 1938 five District Superintendents have presided over this charge. The present one is Rev. Delma L. Hagood.

The Stilesboro Charge was Rev. Frank Pim's first assignment by the North Georgia Conference. This was in 1915-16. It was in the years 1944-1947 that he served here as District Superintendent. It was after Rev. Pim came to the Rome District that the Stilesboro Charge was changed from the Dalton District to the Rome District, in which it now is.