The village of Thomaston was incorporated as a town in 1825 (142) Years ago. The history of our church dates back to the early history of Thomaston.

As early as 1823 an appointment is mentioned to the Monroe Mission, of which we were a part, and one of the ministers appointments was Thomaston. It is not recorded where meetings were held at that time, before the church was built.

On September 3, 1827 Justices of the Inferior Court of Upson County, made the deed to Alexander F. Edwards, James R. Harwell, William P. Yonge, Thomas Beall, Simeon Rogers, William A. Cobb and John Bustin who were the first trustees of the church. This was for Lot No. 24 in the southwest square of Thomaston, which the Methodist apparently never built a church upon. Instead lot No. 21 and a part of Lot No. 22, in the southeast back square of the plan of survey of the town was used; this lot as well as the cemetery and the lot for the first parsonage were given by Simeon Rogers. The Rogers family owned large tract of land and were among the prominent citizens. Farley Hardy and his children, members of our church, are direct descendent of this early settler.

This first church stood just inside of the marble gate entrance to Glenwood Cemetery, and was described as a neat wood frame building 38ft×50ft. in size, painted white with Gothic windows and green blinds. Next to the wall of the front end of the building inside, a rather tall, box-like pulpit was erected; approached by steps from the right, leading to the door of the pulpit; the floor of the pulpit being not less than three feet from the floor of the building and the enclosure about four feet higher. If the preacher was of low stature, the congregation he was addressing saw but little of the man. Immediately in front of the pulpit was the communion table, with intervening space was a circular bench surrounded by an alter rail. The most unique feature of the church was that from the rear of the building, in the center near the alter rail was a sealed or solid wooden partition about four feet high, for dividing the sexes. As the families approached the church all females would enter the left door and the males would go to the right door. In the rear for two-thirds the length of the house, was a balcony or gallery with wooden benches, which was reached by side steps from each rear door. This was for the slaves who attended church with their masters and belonged to the church. Special services were held for them at 3 O'clock Sunday afternoon, conducted by the white pastor and in his absence by Edmund Lowe, a negro who was a devout Christian. Once when he was preaching he said, "All you niggers talk about crossing the mighty river Jordan-ah, but you ain't got 'ligion enough to cross Town Branch". They would sing the old spirituals while they joined hands, their bodies swaying and keeping time with their feet. Some among them were sincere Christians and a mutual love existed between them and their white families.
The cupola on the front end of the roof gave the building the appearance and design of a church. The bell in this cupola was noted for its sweetness and purity of tone and is still in use in our present church. You can hear it on Sunday morning, calling us to worship as it did those many years ago. This bell was cast in 1837, one hundred and thirty years ago.

The church bell in those days was an important means of communication. It is hard for us to picture life without telephones or electricity and all the modern conveniences that we are so accustomed to now. When there was anything of importance which the people should know, the church bell gave the message. In case of a death or a funeral the bell was tolled by long slow claps of the gong. If there was a fire someone ran to the church to ring the bell with a fast distressing sound which called the volunteer fireman to come and help. Fires in those days were a real disaster, as it was almost certain to be a total loss, with only a bucket brigade from a well from which water was drawn by hand, or a hand pump.

Records which have been available to me do not coincide as to some of our first ministers, but a sketch written by Rev. R. W. Rogers to a committee of DAR ladies for Methodist History name Rev. George Hill as the minister sent to the Monroe mission in 1823, by the South Carolina Conference. There was no Georgia Conference up to that time, but Georgia was included in the South Carolina Conference. The next two preachers the Rev. Mr. Rogers names in this sketch written Oct. 12, 1912, are Rev. Mark Westmoreland and Rev. McCarrol Furrifoy. As our town grew, we came to be known as Upson Mission about 1828 and after 1833 we were called the Thomaston Circuit. Each circuit had twenty-six appointments and the pastor preached every day in the week except Monday. We changed ministers almost every year for a long period in our early history, no explanation is made for this. It is stated that they received less than one hundred dollars a year for their labors, and they rode horseback to their scattered and widely separated churches.

In 1857 we were spoken of as Thomaston Station, and we had a neat cottage for the parsonage, which was on the corner of, what is now known as South Church and Thomas Street. During the War Between the States we ceased to be a station for a while and were put in the circuit. Rev. Wesley P. Arnold was the pastor for the whole county and walked the circuit.

The first organ for the old church was bought soon after the War Between the States when the South was very poor. My Father's aunt, Mrs. Victoria Thurston, who later married Dr. Hannah, was a talented musician. She gave piano concerts and solicited gifts to buy the organ. The first time the organ was used, the congregation was so unaccustomed to it that Mrs. Thurston had to play and sing alone. It is said of her in the Upson County History, she was the only person so far as they knew who could play, sing, clap her hands, and shout at the same time and never miss a note. Methodist in those days were called shouting Methodist.
The Glenwood Cemetery which surrounded this church was a Methodist cemetery. This was the custom then, every church had its own cemetery. Even now you can usually see a church cemetery adjacent to the country churches.

I have been told that in the 1880's and 1890's that all the children went to both Methodist and Baptist Sunday-schools. One church would have it Sunday morning and the other Sunday afternoon. The Presbyterians likewise participated in the plan. We can be proud that now as well as in the long ago, there has been a spirit of cooperation and unity in our town, which has contributed much toward making Thomaston a good and pleasant place in which to live.

This first church served the needs of Thomaston Methodist for sixty years, but we had outgrown the facilities. Rev. T.A. Seals was the preacher when in March 1888 the following building committee was appointed: G.A. Weaver, R.A. Matthews, J.W.F. Hightower, I. C. McCrary, T.M. Matthews, Abner Lewis, J.F. Waterman, R.E. Hightower, B.D. Hardaway, J.F. Lewis, J.E.F. Matthews, Dr. E.A. Flewellen, W.X. Beall, Capt. J.W. Atwater, Capt. J.A. Cotton. It is mentioned in several accounts that R.A. Matthews devoted several months of his time in superintending the construction of this new building. Much thought was put into the planning of this red brick church, with Gothic stained glass windows. One minister, Dr. Walter G. Cowart, who was here in 1948-52 was thoughtful enough to devote a whole sermon to explain the significance of the numerous religious symbols incorporated in this church, which most of us enjoyed but had not fully appreciated.

In a letter written by Mr. G.A. Weaver, Nov. 25, 1898, who was probably the Chairman of the Board of Stewards at the time, some interesting facts were told about the physical property of the church, cemetery, and the parsonage. The parsonage was insured for $900, while the church was not insured as there were no funds for this. At that time the new brick church was built in 1888-89 had not been dedicated as there was still an indebtedness of $1280. By vigorous effort this had been reduced that year to $273 and he had proposed a plan for each and every member to sacrifice to pay this off by Christmas and start the new year under new auspices. The letter also tells that in 1896 the pastor was paid $800 and the presiding elder $132, in 1897 this was reduced to $750 for the pastor and $120 for the elder. This church was last dedicated on the first Sunday in January 1900 by Bishop Warren A. Candler. At this time a small organ was added to the sanctuary, and the organ was used for many years. When the organ was replaced by a larger one, a pipe organ was used instead. The church was dedicated on the first Sunday in January 1900 by Bishop Warren A. Candler. At this time a small organ was added to the sanctuary, and the organ was used for many years. When the organ was replaced by a larger one, a pipe organ was used instead.
started the fund raising campaign with a large gift. Two years later on the day for the dedication by Bishop Warren A. Candler, the entire town was saddened by the death of Mrs. Hightower, who was a most beloved person.

We had begun to need more space in the Educational Building so in 1940 plans were drawn to connect the church and the Annex. At Quarterly Conference Jan. 26, 1941 a building committee of Harrison Hightower, Sr., R. A. Freeman and H. Kilpatrick were appointed. They worked hard to secure the funds but contributions came in rather slowly, so bonds were purchased and held in safe keeping. About this time we had become involved in World War II, so all thoughts for expansion were tabled for the time.

In this church we had what was referred to as the amen corner. There were a few pews just to the left of the pulpit where a few of the most pious pillars of the church would sit, and from time to time all during the sermon, if the minister made a strong point on which they approved, they would give a loud "Amen".

For many years this was principally a farming county, therefore most of the people did not have much money until fall when their crops were harvested. The finances of the church always seemed to be in arrears, so in the fall just before Conference, (until recent years it was in November) the Stewards would have what they called "Hide & Tallow" meetings to raise the conference claims and pay the balance of the preachers salary.

Discussions were held as to the advisability of adding on to this church building, now that the war was over. All were reluctant to give up this church building we had been brought up in, and loved so much. The W. G. Hightower lot (where the George A. Harrison Memorial Library is now being constructed) was donated and the McMillan property which adjoined it, was purchased. Plans were drawn for a new church plant for this plot but it became more and more evident that parking facilities would be an increasing problem as time went on.

At a church conference in May 1956 Mr. Julian T. Hightower offered to give six acres of land on West Gordon Street, across from the Upson County Hospital, this was accepted. At the same conference an offer of $100,000 was made for the old church and educational plant, which was to be used by the R.E.Lee High School.

On October 21, 1956, a conference was called to discuss the second proposed site offered by Mr. Hightower. This site is the 17.8 acres of land, the most beautiful location any one could wish for, to build a magnificent house of worship. This was gratefully accepted.

The Building Committee was appointed: George H. Hightower, Chairman; Dr. R.E. Dallas; Hugo Starling; C.M. Jorgeson; Dr. Sam D. Rauch; Hays Arnold; A.A. Hardy; Rev. W.H. Ruff; and Julian T. Hightower. These men worked tirelessly and faithfully to
accomplish their objective, to give us a beautiful as well as a functional church complex.

Large sums of money had to be raised if we were to see our dream come true. It required unselfish giving by all of the members. The plans were drawn and a ground breaking ceremony was held on October 20, 1957. Construction was begun the next day.

Finally the day arrived for the last service in the old church. Our pastor was sick, so on that Sunday morning Feb. 8, 1959 he called for George Hightower to fill the pulpit. As we all know, George is always willing and eager to serve his church in any capacity for which he is called. At that time it was not known if the new church would be dedicated or consecrated the following Sunday. The collection was not taken until after the sermon and George had made his last plea to finish up the deficit, so that we could enter the new building debt free. We were given this last opportunity, the ushers went to the Annex to count the offering. The congregation remained to hear the results. When the announcement was made that we had gone over the amount needed, there was great rejoicing and tears of happiness flowed freely. The congregation spontaneously sang, Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow.

On February 15, 1959, our new church was finished and dedicated at the very first service. Bishop Arthur J. Moore, Mrs. Moore and other dignitaries, many former pastors and their wives, former members, visitors as well as local members were here for the unprecedented occasion. Bishop Moore conducted the Act of Dedication and preached the sermon on this memorable day.

To bring you up to date on the parsonages; in 1905 or 1906 the second parsonage was built on South Center Street, in the garden of the first one referred to previously. It was a two story white clapboard house with a large front porch on two sides. The ladies societies of the church took much interest and pride in the parsonage and it was a continuing project of theirs, to keep the furnishings and interior in good condition. This parsonage had accommodated many pastors families comfortably, but now we were eager to have our minister in a home in keeping with our handsome new church, with the latest modern conveniences. The same building committee, who had done such a wonderful job on the new church was asked to serve again, this they agreed to and as we all know, the result was most satisfactory and pleasing to all. Mrs. George Hightower and her committee are to be commended for their selection of furnishings of a lovely, livable parsonage which is located on the corner of Avalon and Cherokee Roads. Open house was held on Sunday afternoon, June 26, 1961, with the W.H. Ruff family as its first occupants, followed by the Claude Singleton's, and now by Dr. Roland L. Walker and his family.

On August 5, 1962 a magnificent pipe organ was installed. This was a gift of our generous benefactors, Mr. and Mrs. Julian T. Hightower, who continue to make noteworthy gifts and improvements from time to time.
Many families in our church have been in Thomaston for several generations and figured in its history, while a few can trace their ancestry back to the very beginning. If your family is one of these, you may be justly proud but equally important to our church and town are the newer families, who have chosen to make this their home. Many of them are the ardent, tireless workers who have contributed to the growth and prosperity of our church and community.

We Methodists can have a feeling of satisfaction that our church has kept up with the growth of Thomaston. May our love, loyalty, and faith measure up to the beauty of our church, and keep us forever mindful of our obligations as Christians.

By: Martha Matthews Thompson, (Mrs. Charles G.)

September 10, 1967.

Information from:
History Notebook of John Houstoun Chapter, DAR compiled by Mrs. R.E. Hightower, Sr. and Mrs. W.H. Dallas 1912.
Sketches written by; Mr. G. A. Weaver and Rev. R. W. Rogers
Upson County History published in 1930
Church Bulletins