HISTORY

of

THOMASTON FIRST METHODIST CHURCH
THOMASTON METHODIST CHURCH

The development of any community, state or nation, is found in the history of their religious progress. Those who would understand the past, work intelligently today, and plan wisely for the future, must have knowledge of these religious groups.

The First Methodist Church of Thomaston is one of this number, and her history is the life story of many devoted men and women who not only contributed to the carrying on of the Gospel, but the upbuilding of this great county and city of Thomaston. Ours is a rich inheritance.

In July, 1826, the Inferior Court of upson County ordered a deed made to the Methodist church for lot No. 24 in the southwest square of Thomaston. On September 3, 1827, John Thomas, Elijah Jewett, Bevin Brooks and Thomas K. Smith, Justices of the Inferior Court of Upson County, made the deed to Alexander F. Edwards, James R. Harwell, William F. Yonge, Thomas Beall, Simeon Rogers, William A. Cobb and John Bustin who were the first trustees of the church. Apparently the Methodist never built a church upon this lot. They built upon lot No. 21 and a part of lot No. 22, in the southeast back square of the plan of survey of the town; this lot was given by Simeon Rogers.

Of the first trustees, Alexander F. Edwards had been an itinerant Methodist preacher, was admitted on trial by the South Carolina Conference held at Savannah, Ga., in February, 1823. He was appointed second man on the Cedar Creek Circuit. At that time the South Carolina Conference included the state of Georgia.

In 1824, Mr. Edwards was second man in the appointments made for the Sparta Circuit. At the Conference of 1825 he was ordained a deacon in the Methodist ministry, and was appointed to the Monroe Circuit which included Upson County. He was married to Mrs. Mary Rebecca Lucas of Hancock County, on April 19, 1825. While Mr. Edwards was a citizen of Thomaston he resided between where the Pruitt & Murray building is located and the lot upon which Mrs. R. E. Chatfield's residence now stands. He owned a number of lots in this immediate section. About 1835 he removed from Thomaston to Mobile, Alabama.

Major William A. Cobb was a son of Thomas Cobb and his second wife Catherine Stith of Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia. He was born in Columbia County, Ga., July 12, 1798; married Jane McMurphy in Richmond County, Ga., Nov. 23, 1819. A few years after his marriage, he moved to Upson County. Mr. Cobb's mother came to Upson with her son and was one of the first female members of the Methodist church. She died in 1832, and is buried in the Thomaston cemetery. Major Cobb's second wife died in Thomaston November 9, 1881, at the age of eighty-two years and is buried in Thomaston. Mr. Cobb died in 1877.
William P. Yonge was a merchant in Thomaston for several years, he resided for a time upon the lot where Miss Anna Weaver lived, now the Dallas home. His store was located where Hannah and Chatfield's store now stands. On March 6, 1826, he was appointed treasurer of the county by the Inferior Court. Evidently, he was a leading citizen of the county at that time. He left Thomaston about 1835 and located in Columbus, Georgia.

General Thomas Beall was a cousin to the maternal grandfather of Bishop Candler. He and his brother, Josiah B. Beall, came to Thomaston soon after the town was laid out. Their uncle, General Elias Beall, who resided at Forsyth at that time, owned a store in the Thomaston Cotton Mill Building, and the two nephews were doubtless clerking for him. Later they became partners in the business. Thomas Beall was a general of the Georgia Militia in the forties, and retained his military official title until his death. He married Elizabeth Mabry, who was also an active member of the Methodist church. During middle life he practiced law for a short time. His death occurred near The Rock, February 4, 1885, and his remains lie buried in an unmarked grave in the Thomaston cemetery.

Simeon Rogers was the son of Henry Rogers, Sr., and his wife Elizabeth Mobley. He was born March 4, 1782, and died October 25, 1861. He married Miss Sarah Simmes in Warren County, Ga., June 6, 1811. He came to Thomaston about 1826, where he lived until his death. Mrs. Rogers died May 12, 1853.

James R. Harwell was for some years one of the Justices of the Inferior Court of Upson.

John Bustin lived at the Ben Walker place, later known as the Pound place. He sold his farm and home in 1834.

The early days of Methodism, not only in this section, but throughout the South, are obscure. A few heroes of the cross preached over large sections of this state and other adjoining states. In 1823 George Hill Hamil was appointed to the Monroe Mission and had an appointment at Thomaston. Under the same plan Mark Mulholand was appointed for the year 1824. The charge was still called the Monroe Mission and was supplied in 1825 by A. K. Edwards; in 1826 Adam Myrick; 1827 Jeremiah Norman. In 1828 it was known as the Upson Mission and was supplied by the following preachers under that name till 1833. James Dunwoody came in 1828; Jesse Sinclair 1829; Charles Hardy in 1830; John Wimbish 1831-2; A. B. Elliott 1831-2, Junior Preacher; Noah Norman 1833.

After this date it was called the Thomaston Circuit and was supplied by the following preachers who received for their labors less than one hundred dollars a year, and rode horseback to their scattered and widely separated churches. As the country became more thickly populated, and the people more
prosperous, these patient and unselfish servants of the church were much better cared for.

In 1834 the circuit was supplied with a preacher whose name we do not know. T. Mabry came in 1835; John Starr in 1836; Ivey F. Stegall in 1837-8; W. W. Robinson 1839; J. Scarfe 1840; Samuel Harwell 1841-2; A. Peeler 1843; James Hunter 1844; Benjamin W. Clarke 1845; R. Richard 1846; Morgan Bellah 1847-8; Sidney M. Smith 1849; McCarrol Pourifoy 1850; J. W. Knight 1851; J. F. Dickinson 1852-3; John M. Marshall 1854; Alexander M. Wynn 1855; J. O. A. Clark 1856; Thomas F. Pierce 1857; Wiley G. Parks 1858-9; Thomas H. Stewart 1860; Walter Knox 1861; John C. Simmons 1862; Wesley P. Arnold and Miller H. White 1864-5; John W. Reynolds 1866-7; Daniel Kelsey 1868-9-70; Miller H. White 1871-2; William F. Lewis 1873; J. B. Payne 1874-5-6; R. R. Johnson 1877-8; J. B. Payne 1879; Albert Gray 1880-1-2. At the close of Albert Gray's pastorate in 1882, the local church had grown strong enough to support a pastor, and thereby became a "station." W. R. Foote, Jr., one of the most popular preachers Thomaston ever had, was appointed to the new station. He served the church in 1883. J. B. Johnston 1884; E. E. Timmons 1885-6; T. A. Seals 1887-8-9-90; D. J. Myrick 1891-2-3-4; W. T. Bell 1895; F. C. Hughes 1896-7-8; H. W. Joiner 1899-1900; J. F. Mixon 1901-2-3-4; William Dunbar 1905-6; Henry F. Branhm 1907-8; R. B. O. England 1909-10-11-12; J. M. Tumlin 1913-14-15-16; R. M. Dixon 1917-18; M. S. Williams 1919-20-21; E. W. Jones 1922-23-24-25; Sherman R. England 1925-26-27; J. T. Robins 1928-29-30.

The total number of years served by these faithful servants of the Methodist Church at Thomaston is one hundred and seven. These men did not toil alone, faithful and self-sacrificing members toiled with them and share the glory and honor God bestows upon faithful servants. Space is too short to even mention the names of all those who made possible the Methodist Church. Just a few who held official positions, and were largely responsible for the building in which the Methodist's worshiped in the long ago, and the building in which they worship today.

The first church was a neat and commodious wood frame building 36x50 feet in size. So well did these early Methodists build, that for sixty years, this building met the needs of a growing community and the extension of God's Kingdom. In this sketch we shall not attempt to name the long list of men and women who loved and served the church during this period of its history. Many of these names are familiar to us in this year, 1930, descendants of these noble Christian fathers and mothers who still carry on the work of the Methodist church.

July, 1853, Simeon Rogers for the sum of $100.00 sold to the church one acre of land located where the present parsonage now stands, and a neat cottage was built in the
northwest corner of the lot, to be used as a parsonage. In 1860 Mr. Rogers gave one acre of land joining the cemetery to be used for burial purposes, a part of which was to be used for the burial ground of negroes.

It will be of interest to many to know how and when the first organ was bought and used. Immediately after the War Between the States, when the South was in such an impoverished condition, Mrs. Victoria Thurston, who afterwards became the wife of Dr. Hannah, succeeded in raising enough money to buy the organ. She did this by giving concerts and soliciting private subscriptions. She was the first organist, and older people say that she was the only person, so far as they knew, who could play, sing and shout at the same time. We do not know what became of this organ, but the bell used in the old church was brought to the new, and installed in its belfry, and in sweet mellow tones, is calling today as in the long ago, for sons and daughters to worship the God of their fathers.

The trustees who served the church in 1853 were: Thomas F. Bethel, William A Cobb, George W. Davis, Thomas Flewellen, Curran Rogers, James Shuptrine and Travis A. D. Weaver.

Rev. T. A. Seals was the last preacher to use the old Church. During his pastorate, it was determined to build a new church. A lot was procured, and in March, 1888, the following building committee was appointed: G. A. Weaver, R. A. Matthews, J. W. F. Hightower, I. C. McCrory, T. M. Matthews, Abner Lewis, J. T. Waterman, R. E. Hightower, E. D. Hardaway, J. F. Lewis, J. E. F. Matthews, Dr. E. A. Flewellen, W. X. Beall, Capt. J. W. Atwater and Capt. J. A. Cotton. The committee was requested to meet at the office of Capt. Cotton, where the following soliciting committee was appointed: G. A. Weaver, R. A. Matthews, I. C. McCrory, A. Lewis and Dr. E. A. Flewellen. R. A. Matthews devoted several months of his time to the supervision of the building of the new church. In due time the building was finished, and dedicated to God by Bishop Warren A. Candler.

Forty years have woven into this "church house" things eternal. Here men have gone with their sorrows, joys, disappointments and sins, to "The Man of Sorrows" who has been able to pardon sins, wipe the tears from their faces and bring new hope and courage.

During the pastorate of Rev. S. R. England, it was determined to build a Sunday school annex. Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Hightower led the way with a splendid gift, and in the early morning of April 3rd, 1927, the day on which this building was dedicated by Bishop Warren A. Candler, the tender and loving heart of Mrs. Hightower was stilled forever, her pure spirit took its flight to the Eternal Home.

"To that fair land upon whose strand
No wind of winter moans."