

HISTORY
of
VILLA RICA METHODIST CHURCH

HISTORY OF THE VILLA RICA METHODIST CHURCH

It is a matter of profound thanksgiving to Christians to know that religion was not over looked in the pioneer days of Villa Rica. Also it is a source of pride to all Methodists that the Methodist church had such an important part in the religious development of the oldest town in north-west Georgia. It was laid out in 1830, four years after gold was discovered and named Villa Rica (the city of gold) by the mother of Bishop Warren Candler. The Methodist church was truly the symbol of the "Faith of our Fathers" in the wilderness and a guide to point the way to right living in the struggling young settlement.

Early church records can not be found, and information must be secured from fragments gathered from oldest inhabitants, scrap books, and church records of the late eighties.

According to handed-down information the first Methodist church which was a log building, erected a few years after the mining community was settled, was located on the now-called Willoughby farm. Being the only church in the community, it served the needs of all denominations. Later about 1845, as some think, an attractive wooden church was built in Villa Rica, which is now called Old Town. The Methodist shared their pulpit with the Baptist and Presbyterians, and a strong Union Sunday School was loyally attended by all denominations for years.

Mr. W.P. Stone served as the Superintendent for many years. Records show that the church was established and supported by such godly, noble men as: S.C. Candler, the father of Bishop Warren Candler; Tom Perkerson; Dr. John Slaughter, grandfather of Dr. N.G. Slaughter of Athens, Georgia; Alfred Baggett, and others. Rev. Claiborn Trussell was one of the first ministers.

In 1883 a new town, called Villa Rica, was laid out a mile south of the old town, to connect with the marvel of the age the Georgia Pacific, now the Southern Railroad. When the townspeople moved their families, interests, and some store buildings to the new town, the Methodist did not move the church but in 1886 built a new one on the site of the present church at a cost of approximately \$1200. The charge then was composed of Old Villa Rica, New Villa Rica, Temple, and Concord. Mr. F.A. Trussell was Sunday School Superintendent in 1891 during the ministry of Rev. M.S. Williams, and filled the place for many years. However, it was customary for members to return to the Old Town church for Sunday School.

In 1890 the old church was abandoned, and in 1896 the trustees sold the building and used the money to repair the new church. The trustees were: W.A. Floyd, A.B. Davis, B.F. Floyd, W.H. Malone, W.A. Maxwell.

The preachers lived in rented houses until 1901 when a parsonage was purchased during the pastorate of Rev. D.M. Edwards. In 1911 it was enlarged for the family of Rev. W.G.

Crawley at a cost of \$570.

The white frame church was used until 1905 when a committee composed of: G.B. Malone, J.M. Moore, G.P. Braswell, B.C. Powell, A.J. Simmons, was appointed to build a new church. The present brick church, designed along Gothic lines, was completed in time for services in July 1906, costing \$3500. Rev. T.M. Elliott was pastor at this time. This building was used without change until 1940 when the main auditorium was remodeled and redecorated, while Rev. C.W. Fruit was pastor. (\$2500)

The Rev. R.C. Owen was pastor from 1941-1944. Under his leadership a ten-room annex was added for the church school, and the old parsonage was completely remade and refurnished, at a total cost of approximately \$6500.

In 1946 Rev. Wallace Wiggins was sent to the Villa Rica church. Under his guidance the church continued to make progress. The old parsonage was sold and a new site chosen on which a beautiful modern brick house was erected at a cost of \$15,000. In addition a Hammond organ with a Tower Music System, and hearing aids were installed in the church. Also a memorial Sunday School class room was built in memory of J.B. Bowen a former teacher and superintendent of the Sunday School.

Superintendents who have served the present church were: B.F. Floyd, W.H. Malone, Felix Williams, F.J. Daniell, F.T. Wilson, J.B. Bowen, C.M. Verdell Jr.

The Villa Rica church has been served in a blessed way by a long line of noble pastors. Beginning with the pioneer circuit riders and continuing to the present time of 1951, the roll call includes the following names:

Early periods: --

?	Rev. Claiborn Trussell
?	Rev. Henry Haynes
?	Rev. James Reeves
?	Rev. S. Freeman
?	Rev. Thorton Burke
?	Rev. Bailey Freeman
1867 - 68	Rev. M.D. Norton
1869 -	Rev. R.R. Johnson
1871 - 72	Rev. J.N. Myers
1873 -	Rev. Sandford Leake
1875 -	Rev. James Chambers
1876 - 77	Rev. F.F. Reynolds
1878 - 79	Rev. D.J. Weems
1880 - 81	Rev. B. Sanders
1882 -	Rev. O.C. Simmons
1883 -	Rev. G.W. Hardaway
1884 -	Rev. G.W. Thomas
1885 -	Rev. C.S. Owens

New Villa Rica ---

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1886 - 87 | Rev. E.H. Wood | 1937 - 39 | Rev. J.K. Kelley |
| 1888 - 89 | Rev. Sanford Leake | 1940 - | Rev. C.W. Fruit |
| 1890 - 93 | Rev. M.S. Williams | 1941 - 44 | Rev. R.C. Owen |
| 1894 - | Rev. W. Dunbar | 1945 - 46 | Rev. Arthur Maness |
| 1896 - 98 | Rev. F. Walton | 1946 - 51 | Rev. Wallace Z. Wiggins |
| 1899 - | Rev. C.M. Verdell Sr. | | |
| 1900 - 01 | Rev. D.M. Edwards | | |
| 1902 - 04 | Rev. M.S. Williams | | |
| 1905 - 06 | Rev. Loy Warwick | | |
| 1907 - 08 | Rev. T.M. Elliott | | |
| 1909 - 10 | Rev. C.T. Marchman | | |
| 1911 - | Rev. W.G. Crawley | | |
| 1912 - | Rev. J.D. Milton | | |
| 1913 - 14 | Rev. C.A. Jameson | | |
| 1915 - 18 | Rev. T.J. Branson | | |
| 1919 - 21 | Rev. J.W. Veatch | | |
| 1922 - 23 | Rev. A.E. Silvy | | |
| 1924 - | Rev. T.P. Dean | | |
| 1925 - 26 | Rev. G.W. Hamilton | | |
| 1927 - | Rev. T. H Maxwell | | |
| 1928 - 30 | Rev. G.B. Henderson | | |
| 1931 - | Rev. G.W. Davis | | |
| 1932 - 34 | Rev. R.W. Green | | |
| 1935 - 36 | Rev. A.E. Barton | | |

*Prepared by Mrs S.C. Connally,
Church Historian*