

HISTORY OF THE WALNUT GROVE METHODIST CHURCH  
BY  
Mrs. Sally Mae Woodruff  
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The Church which is now the Walnut Grove Methodist was for many years located two miles east of Walnut Grove on the Monroe road. It was called "Old Hopewell Methodist Church". The records show that it was organized in the ✓ 131 year 1825. This was the place of worship until 1848.

Among the leading members of the first Church were Allgoods, Dials, Carters, Byrds, Harris, Thompsons, and Allens. Many descendants of these familys are members of the church at the time of this writing.

In the year 1848 the members of Old Hopewell decided to move the place of worship to the little village of Walnut Grove and change the name of the Church to ✓ "Walnut Grove Methodist". At this time the Clay family was added to the roll of working members. This family later proved to be instrumental in the growth of the Church. In time the membership grew and a Sunday School was organized with four classes being taught in a one room Church house. The building soon became crowded. One of the Sunday School teachers, the late Mrs. A.C. Clay (Miss Lizzie) had a vision of a bigger and more adequate building. She talked about it and prayed about it for some time. Finally she presented her ideas to the congregation. The Pastor at this time was the Reverend Paul Kendall. She convinced him and the people that with

much prayer and hard work that a nice brick Church building with five class rooms, a spacious sanctuary, a basement room and kitchen could be built.

Very little money was available at this time. There were no salaried people on the Church roll, all were dirt farmers. A few of the members with Mrs. Clay as leader, put their heads together and made plans for raising money for the new Church building.

In the spring of 1915, while Reverend G.W. Tumblin was Pastor, a committee was appointed and asked to contact each Church member, also friends in the community. This committee asked each Church member to pledge as much as possible toward the building fund. The pledges were to be paid in the fall at cotton selling time. When the pledges were paid there was a sum of around \$1000.00 on hand. The next spring, 1916, a few ladies, with "Miss Lizzie" as leader carried small bags of cotton seed to each member and asked them to plant these and let it be "Gods' Acre". The people co-operated nicely and in the fall the cotton was sold and proceeds put in the building fund. This project was carried on for several years, thus causing the fund to grow. In the meantime many other ways of raising money were tried. Some of these activities were barbecues, suppers, rummage sales, and a weekly sewing circle. The women met in the back room of Mr. Grady Thompson's store, sewed, crocheted, and quilt-

ed. The proceeds from the sale of these were added to the building fund. All of the money in the building fund up to this time has been placed in a savings account in the Bank and earning interest. The Walnut Grove church members, aiding Pastors, and sinners worked for 13 years to realize the church building of which they had dreamed.

In the 1920's, present church building was erected. Mr. A.S. H. of Covington was the contractor who had charge of the construction. Many items were given free by people in the community. Mr. John T. Byrd gave all the nails for the entire building. He also gave materials for one Sunday School room in memory of his family. All of the material and labor in the church basement were donated to the late Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Clay in memory of Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Clay, their children and grandchildren. A marker in the basement room signifies the memorial. It is "Miss Lizzie's" (Mrs. A.C. Clay) request that this basement room be used for recreational purposes, group meetings, and especially for the Youth of the church.

Many days of labor were given during the erection of the building. Many people had no money. The following persons were stewards and trustees during the time of raising funds for erecting the building: W.S. Carter, A.C. Clay, J. C. Clay, S.N. Forrester, R.A.



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Forrester, H.I. Allgood, and W.G.Byrd.

The Pastors serving during the 13 years of preparation for building were: G.W.Tumblin, T.W. Darnell, Walter Millican, J.S. Askew, Richard Broyles, R.A. Coleman, and C.W. Fruit.

The new church building was completed in the summer of 1928. Bishop Candler preached the dedication service in September of 1928. Reverend W.H. Venshke was pastor at that time.

Improvements on the Church have been made from time to time during the years. The first heating system was a central heating system with a coal furnace, and the first lights were supplied by the Delco System. In 1947 the heating system was changed to gas, and the lights were changed to electricity furnished by the Walton County Rural Electrification Corporation.

Organizations within the church since 1920 have been The Missionary Society, The Womans Society of Christian Service, and the Epworth League, later known as the Methodist Youth Fellowship. Out of these groups there have been a number of Christian Study Courses and from the Sunday School Department there has been the Daily Vacation Bible Schools since 1940.

The late Dr. Grady E. Clay, son of Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Clay, was a generous contributor to the church. A few weeks before his death, July 10, 1946, he made plans

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for the church building to be redecorated throughout. He left \$800.00 with the understanding that the church match it to do this work. In the summer of 1952 the matching fund was ready and the interior of the sanctuary, all Sunday School rooms, and halls were redecorated and furnishings were refinished. A beautiful new red carpet was given by Mr. and Mrs. Grover T. Mitcham.

Dr. Clay did many outstanding things for the Church during his lifetime. He redecorated and refinished the Adult Sunday School room in memory of his mother, the late Mrs. Lizzie Chupp Clay. The room was finished and ready to be dedicated at the time of his death. His plans and requests were carried out in regard to dedication program on December 1, 1946. Rev. D.L. Middlebrooks, the District Superintendent and life long friend of Dr. Clay's, preached the dedication sermon. At this service Mrs. E.C. McDowell paid a glowing tribute to Dr. Clay's mother. Among his other contributions to the church Dr. Clay established what is known as the "Lizzie Chupp Clay Educational Fund", to be used to help educate poor but worthy boys and girls of the Walnut Grove Church. The fund was made up of cash and notes to the amount of \$4,292.95. He also bequeathed the sum of \$7000.00 to be used as an Endowment fund for the church. The proceeds of interest are used twice a year for payment on preachers salary and upkeep of the church.