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HISTORY OF WESLEY CHAPEL METHODIST CHURCH

Wesley Chapel Methodist Church, probably one of the oldest Methodist churches in this section of the county, and possibly even in the State, has as the founding date 1823. According to the oldest members in the community at the present time this date may not be just accurate but it is the best that can be established. Since there is not any authorative history of the Church ~~what~~ has been gathered is the recollection of those living members as to the events in the past.

Located in the lower central section of the DeKalb county, Wesley Chapel stands at the apex of five conjoining roads. The Church is situated 3.7 miles from the Covington Highway (Highway 12) on Wesley Chapel Road. One might assume that the roads just followed the cow trails or wagon trails which all headed toward the church.

For the most part the land in that section of the county has been divided into farming plots. In recent years there has been expanding pressure from the Decatur area. Many of the farms have given way to now growing subdivisions. Thus far Wesley Chapel still would not be considered as being in the center of any residential section, but it is fast falling into that "convenient" location.

At the present time the church property consists of that triangular section of land on which the church building is located. Across the street to the left of the entrance of the church building is another section of property which belongs to the church also. Both plots of land together make up some ~~two~~ and a half acres.

In 1952 during the time that Warren Sanders was pastor, ~~of~~ the church underwent quite a building program. The rather large triangle of property was excavated so that a basement addition could be made. This large concrete block addition was almost again the size of the church building, and allowed for four Sunday School rooms, a large assembly room the width of the basement which is connected with a room on one end by sliding doors, a large fully equipped kitchen, toilet facilities for both men and women, and a pastors study. This whole downstairs area is heated in the winter by a central gas system that blows air into each of the rooms.

The church building which was erected in 1905 was moved from its location facing Decatur Flat Shoals Road to a more advantageous position on the lot directly over the basement. Wesley Chapel received a loan of 4,000 Dollars from the Methodist Church for this project. The work was done by a contractor in conjunction with church labor. At the same time a very attractive entrance to the front of the church was made. A sidewalk has been added for convenience within the past few years.

Prior to 1952 Wesley Chapel was dealt a blow. On the property across the street a Recreation Hall was in process of being built. Before it was completed, it burned down accidentally.

The present sanctuary, built in 1905 consisted of one large room with stained glass windows, hand-made pews, an altar rail, and pulpit. All of these are still in tact. Last year the pews were finished and made very attractive. Changes were made on the interior as need arose. Originally Sunday School classes were held in the sanctuary. This proved inconvenient and two rooms were petitioned

off on the sides of the entrance. Later ~~two~~ more rooms were added above the others. These rooms were entranced by a stair case that led from the hall. Still later it was decided that the hallway from the entrance of the church into the sanctuary would look more symmetrical if closed, therefore the staircase was directed into one of the downstairs class rooms.

There is no original Deed to the church property since the facts were lost sometime in the earlier part of the century when the Decatur Courthouse burned. But there is an elderly gentleman in the community who said that his grandfather donated the property on which the present sanctuary stands, and that on of the slaves which Mr. Byron Fowler's grandfather owned was the first to be buried in the cemetery adjacent to the rear of the church. Also in the community there is a Mrs. Bert Cook living on Wesley Chapel Road (her home is indicated on the inclosed map) who claims that near their place is the original cemetery and that the original church is part of her living room. If this is the case then the present site of the church is actually the second site. It appears to be clear that the grandfather of Mr. Byron Fowler and his sister, Mrs. Carpenter, actually donated the property on which the church stands, but it is not clear where the property claimed to be the original church site by Mrs. Bert Cook, came from.

Whether all the evidenee is present to make a clear picture of the history of Wesley Chapel, or not, there is much evidence that the church has been a source of influence in the community for many years. There were days gone by that saw many wagons headed from all directions toward Wesley Chapel. I can imagine this little church has been the center of more religious, social, and political life inthe past than most of us have stopped to realize.