HISTORY
OF THE
WHITESVILLE METHODIST CHURCH
Compiled in
1940
By
Mr. D. C. Gooding
With
Supplement In 1951
It is the desire of the compiler of this narrative to present in a succinct form an outline of the history of Whitesville Methodist Church from its establishment to the present time. However, owing to lost or imperfectly preserved records, its early history is obscure, so that entries may have crept into this record upon no firmer basis than mere conjecture.

The writer visited Columbus to search in the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Muscogee County for a copy of the original conveyance of land for the erection of a house of worship for this congregation, but met with disappointment, as the courthouse of that county was burned with all its records in 1837. As Harris County was formed, largely from Muscogee, in 1838, its records antedate those of the latter named county by several years. No deed earlier than the one mentioned elsewhere in these pages has been found.

Regardless of the when or where of its establishment, the founders of Whitesville Methodist Church builded wisely and well upon the foundation of "the faith once delivered to the saints" as accepted by our denomination.

Through the visissitudes of over a century it has operated without cessation; even during the troublous period of evil strife and the injustices of reconstruction and carpetbag rule its light illumined the red hills of Harris County. We are proud of its past and laboring to
hand on its sacred traditions as a precious heritage to posterity.

We hope this little pamphlet will serve its purpose in placing the key events in the history of this church where they will be available for ready reference. It has been a real pleasure to delve into the various sources of information, and to learn of the splendid families that constituted its membership in former days, many of whose descendents still form the backbone of this organization.

We wish to acknowledge our great indebtedness to Miss Lula Mobley, granddaughter of Reuben Rabb Mobley mentioned in the following pages for the assistance she has rendered so efficiently and enthusiastically with her records and reminiscences, also to Mr. John A. Wyche, another "link with the past".

The seed of Methodism in this section was planted in the closing years of the eighteenth century by the "circuit riders", earnest devoted men who travelled about on horseback over a wide scope of country, visiting communities where no regular services were held, and on arriving at some hospitable home would announce that preaching would be held there the next day or as soon as possible. Soon there was a great scurrying around as the master put his boys and negroes on horses and mules and sent them for miles about to give ample notice. At the appointed time some scores from the surrounding territory would be gathered to hear the message which would
be delivered if not with grammatical sequence with a vigor and earnestness which carried conviction. The preacher would then depart and the people return to their homes to wait patiently for another rider to come through when the same program would be repeated.

About 1828, the year of the organization of Harris County

Reuben Rabb Mobley, a staunch Methodist, just in the prime of life, moved into Union community, settling on what later became known as the W. C. Wisdom place, now owned by Hon. Tom Wisdom. Mr. Mobley's home soon became known to these wandering preachers far and wide becoming headquarters for their periodical visits. At length Mr. Mobley decided that the time for definite action had arrived so he called a meeting of the members who had been won by thes visitations at his home, and there, after much discussion, the first Methodist church in Harris County was founded. This occurred sometime between 1828 and 1837. We regret that we know but few of the names of those pioneers that laid this foundation, but we can readily picture the scene as, presided over by one of these preachers, they knelt in prayer asking a benign Providence to bless them in this undertaking.

Brother Mobley has been sleeping in the church yard here for ninety-nine years, while on his tomb may be easily read this legend:

______________________________

REUBEN R. MOBLEY

Born Jan'y 20, 1794  Died Aug. 19, 1841
He was for 25 years Class leader in
the M.E. Church and now his works
do follow him for he yet liveth.

______________________________
In the summer of 1837 it was decided to purchase property and erect a church building for this rapidly growing congregation. To forward this movement Wiley White, George B. White, Thomas Kimbrough, Bradley Kimbrough, William Slaughter Sylvester Sope, Samson L. Lamkin, and Thomas Saddler were elected trustees and the lot opposite the Women's Academy in Whitesville owned by Thomas Saddler was bought.

The record of this transaction occurs in Book C, page 440, in the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Harris County. It bears date of Nov. 2, 1857. Should anyone chance to examine this deed, it will be found that title passed to the trustees who were made a self-perpetuating body and that this property is unique in that, contrary to the prevailing usage, it has never belonged to the General Conference.

The building erected at this time continued to be used by the Whitesville Class until 1855. During this period it was under one supervision of the presiding elder whose responsibility it was to keep the pulpit supplied.

At its annual session in Atlanta in 1854 the Georgia Conference established Whitesville as a station. This church had attained its majority. New Hope, Bignam Chapel, Smyrna, Hopewell (which then stood near the present home of Mr. Graham Sappington,) and Friendship churches formed this circuit. Rev.
Jeremiah Rush was the first pastor.

The following paragraph is copied from the church record:

In the year of A. D. 1853 we the members of Whitesville M. E. Church under the supervision of Rev. J. P. Duncan, P. E., becoming awakened to our duty to our God, ourselves, and our cause, resolved within ourselves, petitioned our brethren and friends to assist us, and by great exertion and perseverance erected the Chapel now known as the Whitesville M. E. Church, South, for God and his worship alone.

The house was begun in the fall and was finished October 1854, the society then being in the charge of Bro. the Rev. Thos. M. Whitby.

The church, now completed, was dedicated to God on the third Sabbath in October A. D. 1854 by Bro. the Rev.lovic Pierce, M. D.

From its organization to 1867, Whitesville Circuit was on the Columbus District of the Georgia Conference but upon the establishment of the North Georgia Conference it passed to the jurisdiction of the latter, being placed in the LaGrange District.

In 1900 after forty-five years of service, it was decided that a church conference on motion of W. L. Cotton, seconded by W. N. Maddox, to repair the building: a building committee consisting of Dr. J. L. Sappington, chairman, W. N. Maddox, J. A. Maddox, W. L. Cotton, T. L. Moss, and E. M. Phillips was elected.

The repairs amounted to a remodeling: the roof and ceiling were raised, the porch in front was removed, the central tower was replaced
by corner steepes of unequal height, the windows were enlarged, and many other radical changes occurred. The committee appointed E. M. Phillips to supervise the work. A member who hauled the rafters reports that something besides prayers entered into his part of it.

While this construction was in progress the congregation was granted the use of the local Baptist church in which to hold religious service. The building was completed in due time but no report was made by the committee until the entire cost was paid in 1904, when it was excused.

Upon Whitesville being raised to a circuit, it became necessary to provide a home for the pastor. With this end in view the society in 1857 purchased a house, paying for it with money realized from the sale of the former church building. This first parsonage was situated on a now disused road which ran N. E. from the La-Grange road which it joined at the foot of the hill just below the J. L. Sappington home, standing on the south side of the road about 300 yards from the point of intersection. This was the parsonage until 1880 when the present residence of Edwin Hargett was bought which continued to be used for that purpose until 1891. Upon its abandonment the old parsonage was torn down and moved to the farm now owned by Mrs. O. A. Hopkins where her father, J. A. Maddox, passed his last years.

At different times New Hope, Bigham Chapel, Smyrna, Hopewell, CHURCHES Friendship, Salem, Humphrey's Chapel, Mountain Hill, Wardlaw's
Chapel, King's Gap, Lowe's Chapel, and Chipley were component parts of this circuit.

Chipley having far outstripped Whitesville in size and importance in 1891 its church, of right, became the titular head of the charge.

During its entire existence, our society has stressed the religious education of the young and an active Sunday School has been maintained. Among its superintendents appear the names of J. A. Maddox, R. S. Pattillo, O. S. Williams, B. B. Pearson, W. L. Cotton, S. R. Pattillo, and J. T. Cox.

In 1950 minor changes included the closing of the two entry doors in the bases of the towers and opening one in the center of the facade. The vestibules thus abandoned were made into rooms for the Men's and Young People's classes respectively.

For several years the question of additional class rooms for the Children's Department of the Church School has been agitated. At length at an informal meeting after the session of the Church School on Sunday, Oct. 1st, 1899, the question, "Do we want to build new Sunday School rooms?" , was put. An affirmative answer was unanimous whereupon B. B. Pearson, R. O. Moss, Sr., and Edwin Hargett were appointed a committee to investigate as to the most practicable location and report their findings at a later meeting. Accordingly this report was made Oct. 15th recommending that an excavation be made under the northern half of the church and that in the basement thus formed, to be
constructed of lumber and concrete, three class-rooms be suilt. This report was adopted and the same persons were retained as the building committee.

B. E. Pearson, R. O. Moss, Sr., Edwin Hargett, and Gene Hargett donated the lumber and the other members contributed liberally.

The work was completed in the early part of 1940. The grading of the grounds was done by the County Commissioners.

Their children and grandchildren equipped the largest of the three new rooms with suitable furniture as a tribute to the memory of L. Olin Williams and his wife, Ella Pattillo Williams. Mr. Williams had served this Sunday School as superintendent for seventeen years.

On the fly-leaf in the front of the Bible on the pulpit desk is this inscription:

"This Holy Bible is presented to this Church in loving memory of my husband Walter Lee Cotton. He loved his fellowmen, his family and his Church.

May 23, 1937          Mrs. W. L. Cotton"

Mr. Cotton also was for several years Sunday School superintendent. He served as steward at Smyrna and Whitesville for forty years.

This brief record cannot close without mentioning Rev. J. H. Callahan, long a local preacher and class-leader, who sent a son to the mission field: Mrs. Mary Talley, whose life left an indelible impression upon the church and community; Notley Maddox, a most liberal
supporter of the church: Miss Amy Moss, whose motto was "service": Baker Maddox, whose unique personality and original sayings will be remembered while this generation endures; and Mrs. Ellen Virginia Hopkins and Aunt Sallie Marshall, who are still with us.
ROSTER OF PASTORS

Below is a list of our pastors as complete as can be made from our records.

J. Rush   (After pastor moved to Chipley, 1891)
A. T. Boykin
M. S. Malsby
R. A. Connor
J. W. Knight
D. D. Cox
H. Jones
R. F. Jones
Robert W. Dixon
W. J. Cotter
T. S. L. Harwell
Jas L. Lowe
M. H. White
F. M. T. Brannon
W. L. Wotten
C. L. Owens
W. E. Shackleford
W. T. Bell
J. K. Eakes

J. A. Timmerman  C. L. Middlebrooks
T. J. Christian  H. T. Smith
J. T. Lowe  J. R. Allen
T. J. Warlick  R. P. Ethridge
J. M. Bowden  J. H. Allison
H. J. Ellis  S. A. F. Wagner
John R. Lewis  L. L. Burch
W. H. Cooper  Comer L. Brownlow
J. M. Lumkin
L. W. Rivers
J. H. S. Bugg
J. A. Sewell
A. S. Hutchinson
M. M. Walraven
E. A. Ware
A. A. Sullivan
C. A. Hall
W. W. Benson
(Expressions of appreciations given by the pastor, Rev. Comer L. Brownlow, in a dedication service for the improvements to the building and installation of new furnishings at Whitesville Methodist Church, July 9, 1950, at which time Bishop Arthur J. Moore preached and presided over the dedicatory service.)

"In behalf of the members of the Whitesville Church, I express appreciation to the Board of Trustees and Building Committee for their diligence in planning and their efforts to execute their plans. The members of the Building Committee are: Chairman, Eugene Hargett; J. T. Cox, John Terrell Pearson, E. E. Pearson, Holland Daniel, Frank Moss, Wm. H. Cotton, J. W. McDonald; Mr. R. O. Moss was a member until his death.

"In behalf of the Board of Trustees and Building Committee, I express appreciation to the members of Whitesville Methodist Church for their prayerful and material support in all phases of the improvement project. Without the voluntary support through prayers and gifts, both small and large, we never could have accomplished our goal.

"In behalf of the Trustees, the Building Committee, and all the members of the church, I express appreciation to the following for their special considerations and gifts to our program:

"To Mr. Wm. J. Creighton for his architectural advice and plans, who became interested in our church through his friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Carpenter, loved friends of us all.

"To Mr. Phillip Pearson and his firm "Home Builders" of West Point, Ga., for their work on our building and heating system.

"To Mr. and Mrs. Cason J. Callaway, of Blue Springs Farm, for their gift of $400 through the Ida Cason Callaway Foundation, which gift enabled us to renovate, repair and refinish our pews.

"To Mr. Jesse Champion, Mr. Pete King, and Mr. Tom Mann, of Builders Supply Co., Chipley, Ga., for their considerations and work on our pews. And to Mr. Johnnie Thomason and his men for their painting our sanctuary and our pews.

"To Mr. Wm. H. Cotton and his young people's Sunday School class for their raising the necessary money to buy paint for the sanctuary.
"To Mr. Eugene Hargett for his paying the labor cost of painting
the Sanctuary.

"To Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Smith for their gift of the communion
table in memory of Emma Maddox Robertson.

"To Mrs. W. H. Brittain, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Wilbanks, and Mr. R.
N. Maddox for their gift of the pulpit in memory of Mr. and
Mrs. J. A. Maddox.

"To Mrs. John Mark Smith and Mrs. Janie Hargett for one of the
pulpit chairs in memory of Dr. and Mrs. J. L. Sappington.

"To Dr. and Mrs. A. J. Whelchel for their gift of one of the
pulpit chairs.

"To Mr. Edwin Hargett for his gift of money for the sanding and
refinishing of our floors, and his time in supervising the job;
and the work of Mr. J. H. Moore of West Point, who did the
sanding and refinishing.

"To the Woman's Society of Christian Service, under the leader­
ship of Mrs. W. H. Cotton, for their project of carpeting the
pulpit, around the chancel and down the center aisle.

"To the Midway Baptist Church for the use of their church while
our church was being renovated.

"To the various committees, especially the women for their prep­
arations of food, and the men for their cleaning of the grounds
and preparing the tables.

"To Mrs. J. M. Smith and Whitesville Community Club for the gift
of shrubbery down the sides of our church.

"To Mr. Kent, director of recreation for Shawmut Mills, Ala., for
the public address system.

"And to all our members and friends who have contributed sub­
stantial gifts to the general fund for improvements.

"From the depth of our hearts pour forth praise and thanksgiving to God
for what has been accomplished in His Glorious Name.

Respectfully,

Mrs. L. Brownlow
Comer L. Brownlow, pastor
Chipley Methodist Circuit,
Chipley, Georgia
WHITESVILLE CHURCH IS DEDICATED BY BISHOP MOORE AFTER RENOVATION

(This article appeared in the Wesleyan Christian Advocate, July 27, 1950; and in a slightly changed version on July 9, 1950 appeared in the Columbus Ledger-Inquirer.)

Bishop Arthur J. Moore preached and led a service of dedication at the Whitesville Methodist Church, on the Chipley Circuit, on Sunday evening, July 9, at 8:15 p.m. The service of dedication climaxed a project of improvements and installation of new furnishing completed during the preceding twelve months. The Whitesville Methodist Church was organized sometime between 1828 and 1837, with the first building being erected in 1837. The present building dates from 1874; it has been remodeled three or four times, and the present congregation has finished a renovation and beautification project amounting to over $6,100.

Proceeding the service of dedication there was served a good dinner on the church grounds at 6:30 p.m.

At 7:30 p.m., the first Quarterly Conference of the new conference year was held under the superintendency of Rev. J.S. Thrailkill, of the LaGrange District. At this meeting, reports were heard concerning the completed improvement project and plans for the year. Other churches attached to the Chipley Circuit are Chipley, Hopewell and Salem.

The members of Whitesville Church have combined several schemes for gathering the $6,100 spent on the improvements. The ladies have sponsored suppers, Stanley parties, plastic parties, and have sold Christmas and Occasional Cards. The members pledged definite amounts per month from the salaries and incomes to the Building Fund. The Building Committee solicited funds from friends of the church, and from relatives of members. Sunday School classes raised money with which to paint the sanctuary, while a member of the Building Committee paid the painter's labor bill. Another member of the committee paid over $300
to have the 93-year old floors refinished. A $400 gift from the Ida Cason Callaway Foundation paid for renovation and refinishing of the pews. The Woman's Society of Christian Service undertook to lay new carpeting in the pulpit and around the chancel and down the center aisle at a cost of $500. Our new communion table was given in memory of Mrs. Emma Maddox Robertson by Mr. and Mrs. W.W. Smith; the new pulpit is in memory of Mr. and Mrs. J.S. Maddox; one of the chairs is in memory of Dr. and Mrs. J.L. Sappinton while the other chair is the gift of Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Welshel. This pulpit furniture cost $266. In addition to these items of improvements, new windows weatherstripped, new doors, a new heating system and the ceiling insulated were realized at a cost of $4,400.

To cap it all, the pastor, Rev. Comer L. Brownlow, was returned to the Chipley Circuit for his fourth year by the North Georgia Conference and began a weeks series of revival services with Dr. Waights G. Henry, Jr., president of LaGrange College, preaching each evening. Fifteen new members were received into the church membership of Friday evening, June 15, as a result of the revival. This fires the congregation with enthusiasm for the new project of building a Sunday School annex for which they already have blueprints drawn.

The Building Committee guiding the achievement will be charged with the building of the annex. They are: Eugen Hargett, chairman, Edwin Hargett, Wm. H. Cotton, John Terrell Pearson, B.B. Pearson, J.T. Cox, H.C. Daniel, Frank Moes, J.M. McDonald.