

(written 1984)

Andrews Chapel United Methodist Church (History)

Historic Andrews Chapel United Methodist Church, originally known as Parker's Meeting House, is one of the oldest churches in American Methodism. It was founded at least one hundred and ninety nine years ago, and is recognized as the oldest continuing congregation in the Fayetteville District. An indication of its age is an inscription over its door, "Founded by John Parker, 1785". Area historians believe, however, that services were held in homes there much earlier than this, and if research into this aspect is successful, a state marker will be issued to show that meetings were held prior to 1785.

The early history of Methodism in Sampson County was compiled in the year 1867 by the Rev. Miles P. Owen, a local preacher, sent out from Andrews Chapel. According to the Rev. Owen, the first Methodist to live in Sampson County was John Parker, who moved prior to 1757 from Tar River in Edgecombe County to a place near the present day Andrews Chapel. John Parker had married Rachel Sessoms, and their house was the preaching place for the circuit riders for a long time. Rev. Owen wrote that Bishop Asbury preached at John Parker's house about 1790. After John Parker's death, the preaching was moved to his son Thomas Parker's house, who lived nearby, and was continued there until 1816. Other sons of John Parker who were active in Methodism in that area were Francis (who became a traveling preacher in 1795), William, Sessoms, and Nicholas Parker.

The Rev. Owen relates that a contemporary family in the community, with the Parkers, was Owen Owens and his wife Martha who joined the church in the early 1800's and raised a family that "gave much strength and influence to the church". Dr. John Owen was the son of Thomas Owen, and John's mother, who was a sister of Nicholas Parker, died at his birth. He was

taken by his uncle who raised and educated him.

Rev. Daniel Culbreth, a local man who entered the ministry in 1844 recorded^{ded} that "On the second day of October, 1809, a plot of land containing two acres was given by Luke Parker for the purpose of erecting a house of worship for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the U.S. of America." Trustees were Nicholas Parker, William Parker, Thomas Parker, Owen Owens, and Will Miller. The church was known as Parker's Meeting House and it was in the Black River circuit. The church was not built until 1816, but early preachers listed were Rev. Gamewell, Rev. Bernice Barnes and Rev. John Mallery.

Historian Miles Owen wrote that rounds of Black River Circuit, including Parker's Meeting Place, began April 29, 1815. The territory included Duplin, most of Hanover, Sampson, and that part of Bladen County east of the Cape Fear River. It took a preacher six weeks to make a round.

In 1836 the Black River Circuit became the Sampson Circuit. Early Sampson churches mentioned the history were Pleasant Union, (later Bethel), Clinton, McGee's, Union, Goshen, King's, Cokesbury, Bethany, Wesley Chapel, Salem, Averysboro, and Cedar Creek.

Moving into the 1900's, Andrews Chapel progressed until approximately 200 members were listed in Sunday School, with John Underwood as superintendent; and in 1919 his son, Willie J. Underwood entered the ministry from Andrews Chapel.

During the period 1952-1954 the church starting losing membership, and an arrangement was worked out with Roseboro Methodist Church so they could share their minister. Two years later, 1956, Andrews Chapel joined the Salemburg Charge, and under the leadership of Rev. Clyde White, made many improvements on the interior of the church.

When the North Carolina Conference met in June of 1966, the Historical Society honored Andrews Chapel Church. Mrs. Earl Wells accepted the plaque

declaring Andrews Chapel to be the oldest continuing congregation in the district.

Rev. White was followed^w in 1959 by Rev. W. D. Connor. Other preachers who followed were Jesse Bone, John Roberts, Will Creech, Mr. Jones, Leon Brock, Jack Morrill, Steve Hall, Alan Swartz, and the present pastor, Edwin Rose.

Local men who entered the ministry from Andrews Chapel:

1795 Francis Parker
1841 Miles Owen
Love Culbreth
1843 Daniel Parker
1844 Daniel Culbreth
1845 John Owen
1860 B. B. Culbreth
1865 Owen Spell
1919 W. J. Underwood