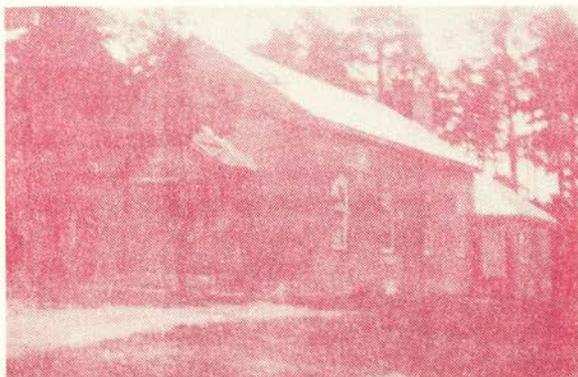


Salem Church 1883-1897



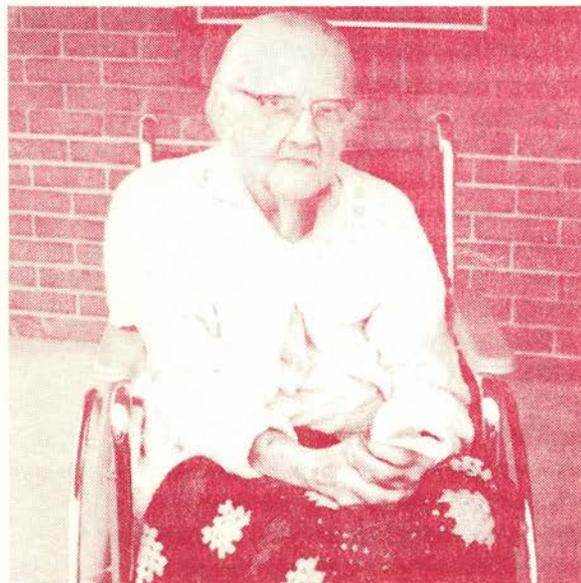
Salem Church Mid-1940's



Salem Church 1984

A Brief History of  
of  
**SALEM**  
**UNITED METHODIST**  
**CHURCH**

Located Between  
Gordonton and Hester's Store  
Person County, N.C.



**NANNIE HESTER BRADSHER**

Born July 11, 1884

This history presented in honor of Nannie Hester Bradsher and in recognition of the Bicentennial of Methodism.

November 4, 1984

# History Notes

This brief history of Salem Church covers the period January 1883 to present. There is some indication that Salem Church was established around 1850. The Person County Circuit records mentioned "New Salem" near "Bratcher's Store" and the North Carolina Conference records of the Yanceyville and Leasburg circuits mentioned Salem Church in April 1852. Time did not permit proper research of the aforementioned records thus this history begins with a introduction of Salem into the Leasburg Charge at the first quarterly conference in January 1883. This brief history was taken from the Leasburg Charge books located in the Perkins Library at Duke University, recollections by Nannie Hester Bradsher and personal and family recollections. It is noted that further research will be conducted to determine the date Salem was actually established.

This is the first known attempt to document one hundred years of Salem Church history into one brief paper. We hope this brief history, some of which would have been lost forever had it not been for the longevity and keen recollections of Miss Nannie Bradsher, will be understood, appreciated and remembered by generations to come.

**HENRY N. PLEASANT**  
Church Historian

## The Church Property 1883-1983

The first known building to serve as Salem Church was a log structure located a few hundred feet south of the existing church on lands owned by James Oliver Bradsher. According to Miss Nannie, who was born in 1884 and remembers attending church in this building as a young girl, the church faced South and stood along side the road which at that time was located south of the log church. There was a divider down the middle of the church about waist high she said, and the

men entered and sat on the left side while the women and children entered and sat on the right side.

It is not clear what became of the log church and Miss Nannie was unable to provide the answer. My mother, Minnie Tatum Pleasant, was born in 1896, and attended Salem as a young girl. She always talked about the road being behind the existing church but I do not recall ever hearing her speak of the log church.

Several years ago Miss Nannie described the log church in detail to Maurice Hester who made a sketch of the building. This sketch was retained by Maurice and provided us with the necessary description to recreate the early church building through the artistic talents of Sarah Hawkins Norris.

A new church building (the existing sanctuary) was completed in 1897 according to the Leasburg Charge records. The fourth quarterly conference — November 6, 1897 — was held at Salem and the following report was entered into the record of that conference. "This new church building, free of debt, refreshes the spirit of improvements existing in this quarter of the charge, at least."

Also on January 27, 1897 James O. Bradsher, who had held the title to the church property at least since 1883 conveyed that property containing 4 1/8 acres to James O. Bradsher, Ralph S. Baynes, Benjamin F. Hester and Henry J. Hester as Trustees. The property, he noted, was for the use and benefit of the worship of God solely to be applied by the said Trustees to the object herein stated under the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

This new church building, like the log church, faced the south and the main road which at that time was located behind the existing church. Sometime later (date unknown) the main road was relocated to the north end of the church. The church was then remodeled and the entrance and pulpit areas were reversed and the church faced the north as it does today. When the road was relocated it was discovered that the church property did not extend to the new road. In March 1950 an agreement was made with James Louis

Bradsher, the adjacent property owner, and grandson of James O. Bradsher, to exchange 1.3 acres on the South end of the lot for 1.3 acres on the North end to allow yard frontage to the new road.

The first Sunday School rooms were constructed on the South end of the church around 1937-38 and they remained in use until 1957 at which time they were removed and the current educational addition was added. Major renovations were made to the sanctuary at that time. Inside walls and ceiling were refinished, choir loft and pulpit area was recessed and elevated, new lighting was installed, stained windows were installed (1947-48), new pews and furniture were purchased and the sanctuary was bricked along with the new addition.

Church members contributed many hours of labor assisting the contractor with this renovation. Large pine trees were cut from the back of the church lot and were sold to help finance the renovation. The cost of this renovation was paid off in record time and it was a joyous feeling when the notes were retired.

On January 30, 1968 a twenty-five foot spire was erected on the church as a memorial to R. Arthur Hester, who was a long-time faithful member and official of the church, by his family.

Major improvements were made in the church grounds and the cemetery and shrubbery was planted to enhance the beauty of the church building.

The church parsonage has always been located at Leasburg and the ownership and upkeep were shared by as many as nine churches on the charge in 1883 to five churches in 1895, to three churches in the mid-fifties to only Leasburg and Salem in 1960. In 1980 Salem requested to go "station," and was allowed to do so. Salem's share of the parsonage was purchased by the Leasburg church and the Salem membership started a drive to construct a parsonage near the church.

This effort was enhanced by a gift from Mr. and Mrs. W. Linwood Bradsher who donated the lot for the new parsonage. Mr. Bradsher is a grand-

son of James O. Bradsher and the site for the parsonage was a part of the James O. Bradsher tract from which the church lot was donated.

Approximately \$80,000 inclusive of the funds received from the former parsonage were raised. Not only was the parsonage completed in record time but the note was once again retired in record time.

Another important asset of the church includes a one-fourth ownership in a large farm in eastern North Carolina which was willed to the church by Mr. and Mrs. Robah Baynes. Annual rent from the farm has been used to help supplement the administrative budget and capital expense fund. In 1984 the owners agreed to sell the farm and divide the proceeds in accordance with ownership. Salem's share of this sale was \$48,000. These funds will be invested and only the interest will be expended annually as directed by the Trustees and Administrative Board.

## Circuit/Charge Assignment 1883-1983

At the first quarterly conference of the Leasburg Charge held in January 1883 the following resolution was unanimously adopted. "Resolved that it is the sense of this conference that Leasburg Circuit be divided so that Leasburg Church, Union, Leas Chapel, Concord and Connally's shall be Leasburg Circuit and Hebron, Prospect, Bethel and Salem be served by Bro. Guthrie of the Piedmont Mission for the present year." At the second quarterly conference held April 11, 1885 reference was made to the **Leasburg Circuit, Durham Charge**.

At the first quarterly conference held January 9, 1886, a committee appointed to consider building a parsonage in the western part of the circuit reported and recommended that the circuit be continued as is.

It is not certain when the circuit was split again; however, at the fourth quarterly conference, held at Bethel Church November 9, 1895, five churches and one parsonage were listed as follows: Hebron, Bethel, Union, Leasburg and Salem. The

record showed the value of the churches at that time at \$4,300.00 and the parsonage at \$2,000.00.

The next change occurred around 1957 when Hebron and Union were split away leaving Salem, Bethel and Leasburg churches in the Leasburg Charge. Around 1960, Bethel was reunited with Union and Hebron churches and Salem and Leasburg remained together as a two church charge.

In 1980 Salem requested to go station. This was approved by the conference and the first minister, Reverend Steve Compton was assigned to Salem in 1980.

## Salem Church Leaders 1883-1983

**James Oliver Bradsher** obviously played a key role in the development of Salem Church. His name was on role and he was in attendance at almost every quarterly conference from 1883 until his death in 1897. He held key positions in the church and church conference, held title to the church property and donated the church property prior to his death.

At the third quarterly conference — July 10, 1897 — the following report was given. "Rev. Solomon Lea and Jas O. Bradsher, Trustee of church property have died; each lay down, as it were to 'pleasant dreams.' These men lived long among us and wrought well. We have lost their efficient services, but they have gained a glorious reward." In the same report the following tribute was given. "James O. Bradsher, a zealous class leader and exhorter, successful and faithful steward and loyal Trustee, and that for many years."

Mr. Bradsher was followed by his sons **Stephen Garrett Bradsher** and **Dr. Charles W. Bradsher**. Both of these men were in attendance at almost every quarterly conference and both held key positions in the church as Trustees and head of the Sunday School program.

**Quinton E. Morton**, son-in-law of Mr. Bradsher

was listed prominently in the conference records. Then came **Dr. Ralph S. Baynes** and **Benjamin F. Hester** (father of Nannie Hester Bradsher) both who held key positions in the early church. **Henry J. Hester**, one of the Trustees in 1897, held key positions in both the church and the church conference for many years until his death. **George C. Hester** was listed as a Trustee in 1897 and **Nathanial S. Thompson** was conference secretary.

**Walter** and **Katie Hester Bradsher** (son of J.O. Bradsher) and **Nannie Bradsher Morton** (daughter of J.O. Bradsher) were listed in the early conference records. **N. Howard Hester**, Steward, and Superintendent of Sunday School for many years, **Andrew Jack Pleasant**, Adult Sunday School teacher and Assistant Superintendent of Sunday School for many years, **R. Arthur Hester** and **Lewis A. Bradsher** (husband of Miss Nannie) were long-time supporters of the church.

Any history of Salem Church would be incomplete without proper tribute to **Effie Baynes Warren** who has attended Salem all her life. She has been a faithful member, supporter, and Sunday School teacher for many years.

Many other church families in addition to those mentioned played active roles in sustaining and strengthening the church during the last one hundred years. New generations of these families continue to make Salem Church what it is today by their attendance and support. A partial listing of those families follow: Mrs. Barbara H. Baynes, Mrs. Al Warren, Mrs. Ella Thompson (George C.) Hester, John Henry Newton, Mrs. Martha F. (B.F.) Hester, Miss Cattie Paylor, T.G. and Satira Newton Tatum, Ed and Mamie Thompson, Mrs. Claudia (Henry) Hester, Carl Egbert and Gertrude Wilkerson Hester, Luther and Cornelia Long, W. Woodson Long, George and Alice Solomon, Walter Wrenn, Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Oliver, Mrs. Ada (Howard) Hester, Mrs. Belle (Arthur) Hester, Byrd Jackson Long, Mrs. Bessie Baynes Warren, Hubert C. Pleasant, Hattie Lillian Pleasant, James Earl Hester and Malcolm Solomon.