

*This Church had roots in Bluefield, Abbottsburg,
and Bladenboro United Methodist Churches.*
J. N. H.

Clarkton Methodist Church

P. O. Box 666

CLARKTON, NORTH CAROLINA 28433

Rev. Wm. Fred Chasteen, Pastor

Phone 647-3831

HISTORY OF THE CLARKTON METHODIST CHURCH

The history of the Clarkton Methodist Church before 1913 is uncertain, but records indicate there was a small organization holding regular services in the old Pythian Hall during that year, and continuously since that time. Rev. N.L. Seabolt, of the Lumberton circuit, was pastor during those early years. Among the early members we find the name of Mr. & Mrs. A.M. Wallace, Mr. & Mrs. R.L. Huckabee, Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Helms and Miss Dora Dicks.

The following information about the early days of the church was furnished by Mrs. Annie Wooten McAulay Carson: The first person to hold Methodist services in Clarkton (at the old Pythian Hall - second floor of the Currie Building now occupied by Prince Bros. Furniture Co., formerly the old Post Office) - was Rev. D.A. Watkins, a widower recently married to a young wife, from Elizabethtown about the year 1908. He was followed by Rev. F.B. Noblit of Elizabethtown for the four years from 1908 to 1912. (Mrs. A.F. Burney helped Mrs. Carson connect these facts.) My former husband, M.B. McAulay, who was originally from Mt. Gilead, N.C. and (after our marriage) lived a short time in Abbottsburg, N.C., was a helpful attendant at the Methodist services during those years. I am not sure that he joined the Clarkton Methodist Church, but I remember that we entertained the preacher often in our home. I remember dimly as members of the Methodist church Mr. & Mrs. R.L. Huckabee, Miss Dora Hicks (later to become Mrs. David George McKee) and probably Mr. & Mrs. A.M. Wallace. Mrs. Fannie Huckabee Applewhite Gooden (who died in 1973) told me she recalls that her father, Robert L. Huckabee, and Mr. Thadeus Fletcher were stewards of the church, and she also recalls going to Sunday School at the Pythian Hall. (Mrs. Carson stated that she and Mr. McAulay and their son, Marshall Lee, moved from Clarkton to Acme in 1911.)

The earliest recorded facts about Clarkton Methodist Church, found in the Quarterly Conference records of the "Elizabeth" (later Elizabethtown) charge, Rockingham District, for the year 1909-10 are: At Elizabethtown

Rev. W.H. Moore, D.D. - Presiding Elder

Rev. D.B. Parker - Preacher

M.B. McAulay listed as steward of Clarkton Church.

Clarkton church credited with \$5.00 paid to charge budget.

Second Quarterly Conference held at Singletarys May 28, 1910, states "Plans being made to build church at Clarkton"

Fourth Quarterly Conference held at Elizabethtown Nov. 26, 1910 states: "Clarkton credited with \$45.00 paid on charge budget."

Quarterly Conference records for 1910-11 list A. McCullers as Presiding Elder and T.J. Fletcher as Sunday School Supt. at Clarkton.

First Quarterly Conference held in Elizabethtown Mar. 4, 1911 states: "Clarkton credited with \$7.00 paid to charge budget" and "Next Quarterly Conference will be held at Clarkton".

Pastor's report states: "We have held two protracted meetings,

*Bishop
Please pass
on to Rev. Gill*

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Clarkton and Elizabethtown, and we trust that the membership of the church was much revived. The following members have been received into the church on profession and baptism: O.L.Owen, Carl Owen, Alex Owen, Louise Owen, and Lizzie Owen; on profession of faith: Janie Fletcher, Carrie Fletcher, Ruth (probably Robert) Huckabee; by certificate: T.J.Fletcher, Mac Fletcher, Harris Fletcher, Carrie E. Fletcher, Johnnie Fletcher, and Lola S. Fletcher."

The first Methodist Conference meeting held in the Clarkton Methodist Church was the Second Quarterly Conference on May 20, 1911. T.J.Fletcher was elected Secretary of the Q.C. and Clarkton was credited with \$9.00 paid to charge budget. T.J.Fletcher and the pastor were appointed to examine the Church Register.

Third Quarterly Confernece was held at Union (Bluefield) on August 14, 1911. T.J.Fletcher was present from Clarkton and Clarkton was credited with \$12.00 paid. The pastor's report showed Mrs. Lizzie Owen died during the Quarter."

Fourth Q.C. held at Elizabethtown Oct. 7, 1911, credited Clarkton with \$15.00 paid, and T.J.Fletcher and M.B. McAulay were elected Stewards for the coming year.

No further mention of the Clarkton Church or the Clarkton people is found in the Q.C. records of the Elizabeth Charge during the next few succeeding years. It appears that the Clarkton Church was transferred at the 1911 Annual Conference to the East Lumberton Charge (in Rockingham District) on which charge it likely remained until the 1921 Annual Conference transferred the Clarkton Church back to the Elizabeth Charge.

The following interesting comments were made and recorded regarding early memories of our church: Mr. Jonathan Helms stated: "I moved to Clarkton in 1913. Rev. W.L.Seabolt was holding monthly services at the Pythian Hall. Mrs. Helms and I joined the Methodist Church in Clarkton in 1914. Other members I recall at that time were Mr. & Mrs. R.L.Hhckabee, Mr. A.M.Wallace, and probably Mr. & Mrs. N.J.Thompson and Miss Dora Hicks." Mr. Wes Baldwin, son-in-law of Mr. T.J.Fletcher (whose name is noted in early records) said: "Thad J. Fletcher was Sunday School Supt. of Methodist group who met every Sunday at Pythian Hall from about 1911 to 1913. The Fletchers moved from Clarkton in 1914. I recall as members of the group Mr. Martin L. Cromastie, who was teacher of the Bible Class, Mr. Bob Huckabee, Mr. M.B.McAulay and the members of the Fletcher family." Mrs. Mary Bridges Schrecongost said: "I moved to Clarkton in 1913. There were Methodist services at the Pythian Hall until probably 1917, at which time the Methodists started a Sunday School in the old Clarkton School Bldg. (at present location of home of Mrs. D.T. Townsend) This Sunday School was started May 6, 1917." Mr. Hector H. Clark, a former member of the Clarkton Methodist Church said: " Rev. W.L.Seabolt conducted a preaching mission in Clarkton about 1916, Mr. R.K.Craven being the leading Layman among the Methodists. Mr. Craven, Mr. H.H.Clark and Mr. A.M.Wallace were stewards of the church at that time. Mr. Charlie C. Harrington

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and his family were probably members at that time. I dimly recall that Mrs. Ada Clark (Mrs. J.A.Clark) and C.C.Harrington were stewards of the church sometime during those years.

The earliest records of the Clarkton Methodist Church is a Sunday School record covering the period between May, 1917, and Dec., 1919, and indicates that the Clarkton group ceased meeting at the Pythian Hall and began to meet in the auditorium of the Clarkton School building. The record begins with Robert K. Craven as Superintendent, Hector H. Clark as teacher of adults, D.M.Bridges as teacher of the intermediate group, and Mrs. C.C.Harrington as teacher of the children's group. The total enrollment was 39, with 14 children, 7 intermediates, and 18 adults. Average attendance was 32 and average S.S. offering was \$1.50. The total enrollment increased to 50 by the end of 1917. The original enrollment of adults were: R.K.Craven, D.M.Bridges, H.H.Clark, Mrs. C.C.Harrington, A. Mann, R.L.Huckabee, Mrs. Addie Huckabee, D.G.McKee, Mrs. Dora Hicks McKee, A.M.Wallace, Mrs. Berta Wallace, E.L.Curtis, H. Coley Bridges, Mary Bridges, C.C.Harrington, Mrs. R.K.Craven, Mrs. Ada Clark, Mrs. D.M.Bridges, Elva Harrington, G.E.Parsons, Mrs. A. Mann. Mr. H.C.Bridges was listed as S.S.Secretary during a portion of this period.

These early records attest to the interest and activities of the early congregation and the practice of supporting our Methodist Orphanage. A special Christmas offering was sent each year from 1917 through 1919 of \$6.91, \$14.80, \$22.31 respectively. It is also noted that a Christmas Committee was appointed in 1919 for giving simple treats to the children of the Sunday School - fruit and candy - at Christmas time. Serving on that first committee were H.H.Clark, D.M.Bridges, Mrs. S.H.Rogers, Mrs. H.H.Clark, Mary Bridges, Fannie Huckabee and Thelma Curtis. The records says: "To go to the Christmas Treat - \$1.26."

One of the early means of raising funds for some project was to have a "measuring party" - a church social or party whereby everyone attending was measured for height and paid a penny for each inch. In 1918 funds were raised for an old-fashioned home organ, pumped by foot pedals. This organ served the Clarkton church until 1923 when the old piano (now in Carter Funeral Chapel) was purchased as a used piano. The organ was later sold to the Negro Methodist Church at Savannah Temple.

The first Clarkton Methodist Church Register was prepared by Mr. H.H. Clark, Steward, who stated on the flyleaf that he had no record of membership to go by except those who were members at that time - Jan. 1, 1919. The following 13 members were recorded:

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Mrs. Ada L. Clark | 5. Lula(Lola Helms | 9. Mrs. Olive B.Clark |
| 2. R.L.Huckabee | 6. W.J.Kemp | 10. A.M.Wallace |
| 3. Mrs. Addie Huckabee | 7. Mrs. W.J.Kemp | 11. Mrs. Bertha Wallace |
| 4. Jonathan Helms | 8. Hector H. Clark | 12. Robert K.Craven |
| | | 13. Jane Butler |

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Between the years 1919 and 1923 when the ~~new~~ first church building was started, the church membership had increased from 13 to 35 members. A.M. Wallace and Finley K. Rogers had been appointed stewards to take the place of H.H. Clark who had moved away in 1920. Our preachers had been N.L. Seabolt, G.H. Biggs, R.A. Bruton, Lindsey Frazier and H.E. Lance. The desire for a church building in Clarkton was continuing to grow in the minds and hearts of these early members of the Methodist Church. It had remained a dream for nearly ten years before positive steps were taken. The church building was estimated to cost \$3000. and Clarkton church requested the Board of Church Extension to donate \$1000.. Financial pledges were being made and the records show that the Sunday School offering for one Sunday out of each month was being put aside for the building fund. The trustees of the church purchased a lot from E.J. Cox for \$200., one half the lot on which the church was eventually built. Rev. H.E. Lance, our preacher at that time, was a man of boundless enthusiasm and great executive ability, and on July 1, 1923, a Building Committee was selected. Serving on this Committee were R.K. Craven, C.E. Voiles, S.H. Rogers, A.M. Wallace and D.M. Bridges. S.H. Rogers was elected Chairman and R.K. Craven Secretary. Rapid progress was made and the response from local friends and adjoining communities was very encouraging. Plans for the new church building were copied after that of the Beth-Car Presbyterian church near Tar Heel, N.C. An additional lot (for the sum of \$100.) was purchased in Aug. 1923 and in April 1924 the Conference reports state: "Clarkton Sunday School and congregation are now occupying their new church. Pews are yet to be built and the house yet to be painted." Also noted in these reports were: The ladies are making vigorous campaigns in collecting for the needs of the new building.

The Clarkton church building was dedicated on July 12, 1925, by Bishop H.M. DuBose, and this was the first visit of a Bishop of the Methodist Church to Bladen County since the visits of Bishop Asbury during the early days of Methodism in America. The following is a word-for-word copy of the Board of Trustees' report of this memorable occasion:

"Clarkton Methodist Church was dedicated by Bishop DuBose of California, Sunday morning, July 12th, 1925, at 11 o'clock. The church was beautifully decorated with crepe myrtle and potted ferns. A splendid musical program was followed by one of the most eloquent, impressive and learned sermons ever delivered in this section, after which the Board of Trustees presented the building for dedication to the service of God.

"Bishop DuBose read the beautiful and impressive dedication service and pronounced the benediction. The entire service was beautiful and impressive and was thoroughly enjoyed by a large and appreciative audience.

"This church was organized eight or ten years ago, and for a long time held its services in the school building in the town of Clarkton. About two years ago this little band of struggling Methodists resolved that they would build a house of worship. They entered into the work with a perfect faith in God, and in the generosity of their neighbors of all denominations. By

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heroic efforts of themselves and the generous help of the Presbyterians and Baptists of the town and community, they succeeded in building, finishing and paying for a small, but beautiful, church home.

"The congregation of this church and the citizens of the town are justly proud of this achievement.

Board of Trustees,
/s/ C.E.Voiles, Secretary "

Clarkton, N.C.
July 13th, 1925"

with 19 members

The Epworth League (MYF) had been organized in February of 1924, and the Young Adult S.S. Class in April of 1924. This is a year to be proud of in the history of our Methodist Church in Clarkton. A class for Beginners ~~was established this same year, and unusually strong interest appeared in all departments of the church.~~ ~~was established that year and unusually strong interest appeared in all departments of the church.~~ was established that year and unusually strong interest appeared in all departments of the church. A Woman's Missionary Society was organized in Feb. 1928.

In the summer of 1947, a determined effort was started to build a desperately needed educational building. A financial campaign was conducted that autumn, and again in 1948, and ground was broken and construction started in October, 1948, and a portion of the building was in use by early Spring of 1949. Two years later the educational building was completely finished and debt-free. Serving on this Building Committee were: F.K. Rogers, Roy Helms, Mrs. R.K. Craven, W.W. Wallace, Mrs. Oliver Hinman, Mrs. Helen Hester and W.S. Wallace. Mr. William A. Crow was serving as pastor of the church during this building campaign. In the interval between the building of the first church, with Rev. H.E. Lance as preacher until 1925, the following preachers served the Clarkton church prior to the beloved Rev. Crow: C.H. Caviness, W.J. Underwood, Charles M. Lance, N.M. Wright, Nelson P. Edens, Carl W. Barbee, R.Z. Newton, and O.L. Hardwick. Rev. Crow served from Dec. 1949 through Dec. 1954, and was followed by Rev. Harvey Davis.

At this time the plans were to make Elizabethtown church a station, with a pastor to serve only Trinity church in Elizabethtown. The other three churches formerly served by this pastor - namely, Clarkton, Bluefield and Wesley's Chapel - would have a separate pastor. Construction for a Methodist Parsonage in Clarkton was begun, with George W. Elkins as general contractor. The house was designed especially for a parsonage consisting of three bedrooms, kitchen, living room, dining room, pastor's study, two baths, ample storage space. The type of construction was frame with brick vaneer and was located almost directly across the street in front of the church. The parsonage was completely furnished. Carl Newton, son of Rev. R.Z. Newton - a former pastor of this church, was the first pastor to occupy the new parsonage, and the first pastor to serve the new Clarkton circuit. Carl was sent to Clarkton in June 1955. He was a bachelor - young, attractive, energetic and very popular with the young people in the church and community. He married his attractive wife, Suzanne, soon after moving into the new parsonage. He served this charge until June 1959.

Rev. Larry Sproul was Charge Pastor from June 1959 to June 1960, and it was during this time that the Clarkton church decided to "go station". The membership had increased to approximately 120 members. The value of the church building and equipment was ~~valued~~ reported as \$15,750. and the value of the parsonage and furnishings as \$17,250. Some of the members were doubtful about the church's ability to carry the additional financial burden of a station church, but the majority felt that this was the wisest move for additional growth in the church. It was hoped that Conference would send Mr. Sproul back to Clarkton as full-time pastor, however, Wesley Chapel church decided to go station at the same time and Mr. Sproul was assigned to Wesley Chapel and Rev. Jack Newsome was sent to Clarkton in June of 1960 but had to leave in March of 1961 to accept a vacancy in the northern conference which he had been anxiously awaiting (since it was near his home) and Mr. John Riggins was sent in April 1961 and remained until June 1962, when he returned to his western home conference. Mr. C.E. Price came in June 1962 and remained until June 1963. He was followed by Harry J. Jeanneret who remained two years, but during this appointment the Clarkton church was changed back to a charge, or circuit, church with Bluefield. Rev. Ronald Ronson followed Mr. Jeanneret from June 1965 to June 1966.

This decade could be called "trying times" for our Clarkton Methodist Church. The traditional "welcome" receptions for the new preachers, which had always been such delightful occasions for the entire community, had ceased. Our church was changing preachers faster than we could wash the dishes! The ladies of the church had always prided themselves on the beauty and dignity of their "church receptions". A descriptive remark was once made by Mrs. Helen Hester, who always so graciously loaned her lovely silver service for this occasion. Being told the plans for refreshments at a reception, she replied in unbelief, "What! Bought mints for a Methodist party?" She immediately went home and made pulled mints for the occasion.

In the early evening hours of New Year's Eve 1965, tragedy struck our Methodist Church. A very destructive fire occurred in the Sunday School Educational building causing severe damage to the Church School extension and some smoke and water damage in the main sanctuary. Origin of the fire has never been determined and occurred under very suspicious circumstances. The church began the New Year with its meetings being held in the Lion's Club Building. Insurance settlement for fire damages amounted to \$11,688.39. Mr. J.C. Dunn, Lay-Pastor from Lake Waccamaw, served the church from June 1966 until April 1967, when Rev. Fred Chasteen was assigned to Clarkton Charge and plans for a new church building on a new location site began.

Rev. W. F. Chasteen was Pastor here for four years when the new church building was built.

Rev. Howard Elam was Pastor for four years.

Rev. Thomas House came in nineteen hundred and seventy five.

CLARKTON METHODIST CHURCH.

Annual Amounts Paid as Pastor's Salary.
 (From a record prepared for use in determining parsonage equity in 1955)

CONFERENCE YEAR.	AMOUNT.	NOTE: * indicates an estimate
1927-1928	\$ 257.75	
1928-1929	304.83	** Conference Year 1954-1955 was eight months instead of 12 months.
1929-1930	300.00*	
1930-1931	325.00	The following information from Annual Conference Journals.
1931-1932	304.00	
1932-1933	295.00	CONFERENCE YEAR.
1933-1934	275.00	1955-1956
1934-1935	200.00	1956-1957
1935-1936	225.00	1957-1958
1936-1937	225.00	1958-1959
1937-1938	235.00*	1959-1960
1938-1939	230.00	1960-1961
1939-1940	230.00*	1961-1962
1940-1941	240.00*	1962-1963
1941-1942	254.00	1963-1964
1942-1943	280.00	1964-1965
1943-1944	306.00	1965-1966
1944-1945	334.00	1966-1967
1945-1946	334.00	1967-1968
1946-1947	385.00	
1947-1948	640.00	
1948-1949	640.00	
1949-1950	675.00*	
1950-1951	725.00*	
1951-1952	788.00	NOTE: Each drastic change in the amounts paid on pastor's salary indicates a specific change in the make-up of the charge.
1952-1953	828.00	
1953-1954	828.00	
1954-1955	552.00**	