

The spark of Methodism set off by A. D. "Uncle" Betts, caught by a slight band of believers 75 years ago, shines even today. For we are here because of his efforts, and those of the half-dozen men and women comprising Spring Hope's first Methodist Church.

This first congregation worshipped in a one-room frame building which today would be called a community house. It served for school on week-days and for church on Sundays--to the denomination lucky enough to secure a preacher.

When this building became the property of the Baptists, the Methodist congregation purchased two lots on which to construct a church--this being the site Bissette's Sinclair now occupies. First pastor was a Mr. Parker (1892-94) who remained here while the church was being built.

Serving next was J. W. Gibson, for whom our present church is named. A young man whose death came at 31 because of tuberculosis, Mr. Gibson was not an ordained minister and therefore, could not perform marriages. So it was a Mr. Puckett from a nearby church who officiated at the first Methodist wedding in Spring Hope--in 1895 when Lottie Privette and J. J. Sanders joined hands. (This couple, by the way, attended our church's 50th anniversary service in 1940.)

The first quarterly conference involving this church was on June 3, 1889. Besides Spring Hope, the circuit then was composed of Hornes, Stanhope, White Oak, Mount Pleasant, Sandy Cross and Bethlehem churches.

While there's little known of our early pastors, we might point out Mr. Joyner's concern that some of his flock preferred pool tables and "other sin" to the church, and that he would spend his time in Spring Hope "improving the quality instead of the quantity."

Also, we see Mr. Stanfield's (1907-09) interest in education. He mentions in his journal that Beulah Matthews and Dollie Edwards are at Littleton College; Giles Vick is at Trinity; Alga Richardson at Randolph Macon and her brother, Clement, is at Front Royal, Va.

It's recorded that Mr. Betts, a real "horse and buggy preacher," was known not only for his lengthy table graces but that "he sang songs as well."

A written history of our church suffers, since about 1908 the parsonage and the church (including its library) were destroyed by fire--the same one consuming more than a block of buildings. In the library were many church records which had been compiled, mainly, by Mr. Joyner (1899-02).

Of special significance today is that stalwart group, armed with a few pews, a thousand dollar insurance policy and strong hearts who arose from a burned-out church to construct a new one--this very building in which we now are gathered.

On the building committee were B. E. Stanfield, W. H. Taylor, J. J. Sanders and R. E. Ranson. Others aiding in the project included John L. Barbee, M. J. Richardson, N. B. Finch and S. A. Marshborn.

Strong support was given by the ladies of the church whose glove sales, bazaars and suppers brought in over \$200 in contributions. (It's appropriate to mention here that it was the ladies Aid Society which carried the fire insurance policy on the first church building.)

"Their labors proved fruitful," writes an earlier historian, who calls attention to a revival when "many were gloriously blessed." This occurred the year following the laying of the cornerstone of this new church which you notice on entering. It is inccribed: Gibson Memorial M E Church, 1910.

(Also secured at this time was a parsonage, the former N.B. Finch dwelling.)

What has happened to Gibson Memorial Methodists since that time? From word-of-mouth, pastors' records and bulletins come such items as these:

Eva Barbee and C. W. Lassiter were the first couple wed in this church, in 1912, W. F. Craven in charge.

Two years later a new preacher, W. P. Phipps, created some attention when he and his family drove into town in their own car-- a Metz. (His predecessor, Mr. Constable, covered his flock by horseback.)

One of our bishops, U.V.W. Darlington, came here in 1918 to dedicate one of the three conferences held in the local church.

The church's first electric organ came in 1939, while Mr. Blount was here, following a week's drive for funds.

Three ministers were produced during its first half-century-- E. D. Dodd, Herman Finch and Carl Barbee. J. O. Jernigan has since joined this group, beginning the active ministry in 1950.

The first parsonage baby was born a year later, on November 1st. This was Susan Hill Blount, weighing 9 pounds 2 ounces.

In the January 12, 1940, bulletin, we see that Mr. Matthews, longtime Sunday School teacher, celebrated his birthday by entertaining his young men's class at dinner.

The World War II bulletins frequently carried mentions of our servicemen, calling attention to their honors, visits home, and always with a prayer for their safe-keeping.

(About this time, it's recorded that the News & Observer cited our church's Path Finders Class for its Prayer League for Peace. The only requirement for membership was that each person pray for peace.)

Mention is made of such everyday occurrences as Mrs. H. B. Bergeron's making collars for the choir robes; and Roy Winstead's and Richard Strickland's repairing the bulletin board on the lawn.

Later on, we read of the invitation extended the congregation (June 18, 1959) to the marriage of Mary Louise Conrad and Orion Neely Hutchinson, Jr., in Charlotte.

And a 1951 bulletin records Harold Lamm's trip to Purdue University as a delegate to the National MYF Conference. Harold, at that time, was state MYF treasurer.

A pastor remarks on the absence of Mrs. Earle, Mrs. Richardson and Mrs. Sanders from church, his tongue-in-cheek expression that these "stray sheep who have been wintering from us" soon would be back.

Church Notes

75th Birthday

Spring Hope's Gibson Memorial Methodist Church shared its 75th birthday on Sunday with over 200 well-wishers — many of whom were friends or former members from the community and away from here.

Bringing the morning message was the Rev. Orion N. Hutchinson, Jr., of Love's Methodist Church, Walkertown. This church (1949-52) was his first pastorate.

Special music was presented by Mrs. Ted Bissette, soloist with the Baptist Church choir, and Mrs. Hobart Brantley, organist. Featured also were historical highlights concerning the church (see related story, Page Three)

The minister of the church, the Rev. Robert W. Morgan, led the special event which was concluded with a meal in the church's educational building.

This was the second anniversary observance of note conducted
continued on page 8

by the church. Its 50th birthday was celebrated in 1940 when the Rev. George W. Blount was here. Members and friends have gathered at various intervals in between, but not on as grand a scale as on Sunday.

Gibson Memorial was founded in 1890 by A. D. "Uncle" Betts. Its succeeding pastor and the years they served are these:

Mr. Parker, 1891; J. W. Gibson (first regular preacher and namesake), 1892-94; J. O. Humble, 1894-1896; R. F. Taylor, 1896-1899; L. H. Joyner, 1899-1902; D. A. Watkins, 1902-1905; A. D. Betts, 1905-1906; W. O. Davis, 1906-1907; B. E. Stanfield, 1907-1909; W. F. Craven, 1910-1912; B. F. Watson, 1912-1914; W. P. Phipps, 1914-1918; W. P. Constable, 1918-1922; W. E. Trotman, 1922-1926; W. L. Dawson, 1926-1928; C. W. Barbee (Student Supply) Oct. Dec., 1928; N. B. Strickland, 1928-1931; L. C. Brothers, 1931-32; M. F. Hodges, 1932-1936; J. W. Dimmette, 1936-1937; L. A. Tilley, 1937-1938; G. W. Blount, 1938-1942; Wayne McLain, 1942-1943; B. F. Musser, 1943-1948; A. M. Sauls 1948-1949; O. N. Hutchinson, Jr., 1949-1952; R. S. Brodie, 1952-1958; W. E. Tisdale, 1958-1960; E. H. Measamer, 1960-1963; W. R. Spears, G. W. Blount, 1963-1964; R. W. Morgan, 1964.

20-21-65

We read of visits from such persons as U.S. Sen. William B. Umstead, Dr. Robert Lee Humber, SBI Chief Walter Anderson to our church. There are Easter sunrise services, family nights, christenings. In one bulletin, the pastor has not learned the name of the infant so words a birth announcement this way: Son born to Mr. and Mrs. Buddy Edwards. If you know his name, you can tell your friends."

Among physical changes, we note memorial gifts of the altar set and pulpit drapings in 1951, dedicated by A. J. Hobbs, district superintendent. Both the parsonage and church were renovated that year, heat being put in, as recorded by Mr. Hutchinson.

Of major importance were such decisions as (1) to construct a new church building at Stanhope (May 6, 1956); (2) to put up an educational building in Spring Hope; (3) and for the latter church to become a station church, in 1960.

Within the present church building vast changes have come at intervals--some appearing, perhaps, as a challenge to the educational building which was completed in 1957 while Mr. Brodie was here. As evidence of the face-lifting are Mrs. Baker's classroom and the young men's quarters which you'll probably visit today. In addition, air conditioning serves the entire church plant, new carpeting graces the sanctuary, the vestibule and altar have recently been refurbished, and a new organ and piano acquired.

A chapel also has been added, the classroom adjoining the sanctuary remodeled for the purpose. All work and furnishings, including a new organ, were gifts of the Allen Barbees.

Gibson Memorial, though growing in many respects, has maintained a uniform roster the last few years. In the forties, for instance, our membership was approximately 200; we have 215 members today. Our budget, \$11,000 this year, was \$3,669 in 1942--while Mr. Hutchinson was here. We must remember, however, that Stanhope added to the budget until Gibson Memorial became station five years ago.

History is not to dwell on but to lean on ever so slightly, as we move forward. We have a great heritage in our church and are justly proud of it. But our main effort today is to see that the historian 75 years from now has something worthwhile to report of our efforts. Holding the faith that our forebears had, we'll justify this effort.

==ilw==

by

Joie Lane Under

Gibson Memorial Methodist Church
Rocky Mount District
Spring Hope, N. C.

October 17, 1965

Robert Morgan, Pastor