

According to papers filed at Hillsborough, the county seat of Orange county, there came to this country a man by the name of Nathaniel Harris about the year 1740 and purchased a large tract of land containing about 6,000 acres at the price of six cents per acre. Mr. Harris being a religious man felt the need for a place of worship; a place where the spiritual need of himself and those associated with him might receive spiritual strength that was necessary for the huge task he and they were undertaking. Building a log Meeting House on the lands owned by him he set a pace that was to be the pattern of the community for time to come. This Meeting House was used by any who desired to worship there, both white and colored.

It is said that the first funeral and the first grave made at the Meeting House was that of a slave belonging to Mr. Harris. Many graves of colored people are to be found near where the first building stood.

Old grave stones bearing names and date verify the statment that this church building was here sometime in the middle 1700's. We find the name of Wm. Harris who died 1824. The name of Robert Harris who died 1843 and the name of Nathaniel Harris, supposed to be the son of the first named Nathaniel Harris, died 1849. Many of the earlier graves have no marker to give us an insight further into this history.

The foundation of the chimney of the first church building can be seen at the present time, marking for us the place where the first church building was erected that was destined to become Mount Bethel Methodist Church in later years.

Sometime during the year 1808 a number of the male members, namesly, the Tilley's; Towitt Harris; Mark Harris; William Harris; Nathaniel Harris, supposed to be the son of the Original Nathaniel Harris; the Clemment's; the Garrard's and Samuel Bumpass met and decided that the Meeting House needed to be connected with some denomination and receive a permanent ministry. As up to this time the spiritual guidance was left entirely to passerbys and the layety of the community. At this meefing the building and property was turned over to the Methodist Episcopal Church and placed on the Granville Circuit of the Virginia Conference. This circuit embraced an area around Clarksville, Virginia, Person, Granville and a part of Orange County, North Carolina. The Reverend James Skidmore was assigned as the first pastor. Following this there came a long list of Methodist Circuit Riders serving the church. Namely, Reverend Mr. Dye; Reverend Mr. Speck; Reverend Mr. Jeter; Reverend Mr. Lumsden; and Reverend Mr. Campbell.

It was in the year 1838 that a new church building was erected. This brought to three the number of buildings erected on this property in a little less than one hundred years. Reverend Hezekiah Leigh was the pastor, and it was through his hard labors and evangelistic zeal that this building was brought to completion. Following Mr. Leigh we find the names of Reverends Nicholson; James; Jameson; Halstead; Walsh; Johnson; Paul Carraway; Culbreth; McMannen; Helsbeck; R. O. Burton; J. E. Martin; John Tillett; J. J. Renn; H. H. Gibbons; Jordan; Hunt; Maynard; Archer; Holmes; Galles; Farror; Herndon; J. M. Martin; J. T. Lyon; W. M. Barrenger; T. J. Gattis; J. T. gibbons; W. H. Bobbitt; P. L. Groome; Oliver Ryder. W. J. Finley; C. W. Robenson; Thomas Lowe; J. J. Renn; W. H. Moore; W. S. Davis; P. Greening and J. H. McCracken.

Mount Bethel received that name in 1808 when it became a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This church was placed on the Hillsborough circuit in the North Carolina Conference in the year 1828.

At the conference of 1878 Mount Bethel was placed on the Durham circuit, and remained there until 1917 and was placed on the Rougemont circuit at that time. In 1926 the Rougemont circuit was divided and Mount Bethel became the center around which the Bahama circuit was formed.

It was sometime during the year 1851 that the fourth church building was erected. It was here that Washington Duke attended his first Sunday School at the age of eleven. Later Washington Durke was converted under a brush harbor are the rear of the church and joined the Methodist Church. Later he would

leave us this message, "What ever I am, I accredit it to the Methodist circuit riders." It was here that the spiritual birth of the father of those making possible the great Duke foundation and Duke University was made.

In May 1901 the members decided to build a new building. This building was to be erected across the road and the building committee was composed of the following: A. W. Tilley, Chairman; J. D. C. Turner, secretary; W. J. Ball; D. J. Tilley and J. L. Garrard. J. H. McCracken was the pastor.

According to a news story in the Durham Herald-Sun papers this notation was made. The church was the most beautiful country church in Durham county and cost \$1,200. This building was completed and dedicated on November 16, 1901.

Records of the church conference give us the following data: The entire budget of the church was \$100.00. At this church conference a committee was appointed to wait on two members that had not attended services in more than a year.

The church conference records of 1902 show that J. B. Thompson was pastor and at the first and second quarters nothing had been paid by the members for the support of the church, however this notation was made, "three copies of the Advocate were taken and the church school used the Methodist literature."

In the records of 1903 we see that nothing had been paid for missions or other causes late in the year with this notation made, "The church will do its full duty we trust."

Other names appearing in the long list of appointments include: Reverends J. B. Thompson, S. T. Moyle, L. M. Hall, B. F. Boone, B. O. Merritt, D. A. Petty, J. F. Starnes, R. E. Pittman, M. R. Chambers, J. Bascome Hurley, W. F. Craven, C. W. Barbee, M. C. Dunn, O. I. Hinson, E. D. C. Brewer, T. M. Vick, Jr., and H. A. Chester.

Sometime during the year 1927, Mr. Cameron donated to Mount Bethel the bell. This bell was cast in England and brought to this country for use in the old Episcopal Church that stood on the Cameron estate. The Camerons came to North Carolina from Virginia about the same time that the Harris's came. The records show that the Cameron estate adjoined the Harris lands.

During the year 1936, Rev. M. C. Dunn led in the erection of the cabin and Sunday School rooms which are incorporated in the present building. These were at that time an addition to the structure of 1901. The building committee for the new stone church was composed of the following: D. M. Thompson, chairman; C. M. Allen, secretary and treasurer; W. M. Johnson, Clifton Ball, C. E. Thompson, R. B. Murphy, and the pastor who was T. Marvin Vick Jr., for the first period. H. A. Chester was pastor of the second period. The finance committee for this building was composed of the following: Fletcher Woodall, Chairman; R. H. Harris, Mrs. R. B. Murphy, James Farlow, Mrs. Florence Lloyd, Mrs. Cooper Mangum, Mrs. E. T. Jones, Mrs. M. P. Sanford, Mrs. D. M. Thompson, H. L. Umstead and A. C. Eddins.

The last wedding to be held in the old church was Helen Lashley and Elisha Eugene Watts. The last funeral in the old church was held on February 5th, 1948, being the funeral of Mrs. Ollie Thompson. The first funeral in the new church was that of Mrs. Pattie U. Grey on June 27, 1949.

Mount Bethel Methodist Church, a little church in the very small village of Bahama, twelve miles north of Durham, needed a new church building. Could the two hundred members, widely scattered as they were, ever hope to build?

Since 1901 the congregation had worshipped in an old frame church building. With the exception of adding Sunday School rooms, nothing had be done to the building since its erection. The pews were really home made benches. Perhaps they were made so uncomfortable on purpose!

In July 1944, Mr. H. L. Umstead, a member of Mount Bethel, then living in Roxboro, sent the treasurer of the church a check for \$100.00 with a note that the check was to help build a new church. This started the ball to rolling (slowly). People went to work--men, women, children, church members and non-church members. Under the leadership of Mr. Brewer, our pastor, a building committee and finance committee were appointed in October of 1944. Both made recommendations to the congregation time after time. However, nothing much was accomplished in 1944 and 1945. The total in the building fund at the end of 1945 was only \$580.00. The blame may be on the war.

The pastor following Mr. Brewer, Mr. T. M. Vick, Jr., had an architect draw plans for the new church building. The cost of the church was to be \$18,00. Before it was completed the cost was to exceed \$42,000.

Meeting after meeting was held. Plan after plan was presented to the congregation and vote after vote was taken. Finally, the congregation voted to build a \$30,000 stone church. All this time the people were busy raising money for the church. By the end of 1946, there was about \$3,500 in the building fund. The stone was bought and delivered.

On the second Sunday in April, 1948, the first board was torn off the old church building by the man who had sent the first \$100 to the building fund. The following week, the "tearing down" was begun in earnest and the congregation moved to the school building. This was done in about a week.

To pay for the new construction gallons of Brunswick stew was made and sold, suppers were given, bazaars were held, Negro minstrels, plays, a womanless wedding and almost anything to attract an honest dollar. What made the situation seem hopeless at times was the fact that building materials rose in price as money was being raised. A change of pastors found Mr. H. A. Chester appointed to the church, a man who threw his whole soul into the work of finishing the building. After Christmas the new pastor announced that with \$10,000. the Church could be finished for Easter Sunday services. A Five Percent Club was formed. People gave five percent of their earnings to the building fund. A special committee set up by the Board of Stewards sent letters to members on an assessment basis, the results were amazing. On the first Sunday in April the church gathered for service in the new sanctuary with \$346. need for the complete payment of indebtedness. A member wrote a check for that amount and the first service was held with all the money in. The total raised was \$42,241. Of this amount the Duke Endowment paid \$5,900. and the Board of Missions and Church Extension gave \$750.

The sanctuary was refinished in June and July, 1974, and what you see today is paid for and refreshingly beautiful from floor to ceilings.

The Charge was served by R. L. Nicks, David A. Clarke, William K. Quick, Ralph Lewis, Belton Joyner, J. Donald Phillips, and presently Morris L. Barber. During the years William Quick was pastor, the circuit built a new parsonage, finished in 1957. While Ralph Lewis administered the work, Mount Bethel became a station church. Belton Joyner helped the church see the vision to purchase two properties next to the church grounds for future development; the purpose caught fire and the \$17,000 was raised in less than ninety days. Donald Phillips pastored during the period when the church air-conditioned the sanctuary and first and second stories of the educational part of the building. And now, the church is studying the use of previously obtained properties, and is attempting to secure a lot north of the church properties for long range development. The church wants to be ready for the growth which seems to be heading this way, and in the future enlarge its vision of service to Christ and the community. An educational wing is a part of the Church's dream. This is a costly project, but we believe it is attainable in the good will and providences of God.

## WILLIAM HENRY GRAY

William Henry Gray was born March 23, 1800 at Williamston Martin County, North Carolina. He died at his home near Orange Factory on Saturday, March 18, 1885, and his remains now rest in the cemetery of Mount Bethel Methodist Church which is on the Durham Circuit.

Brother Gray was converted at his home August 5, 1832. Soon afterwards he connected himself with the church and was licensed to preach by Rev. Joseph Carson. He was a successful local preacher for six years. In 1838 he joined the North Carolina Conference and was sent to Neuse Circuit where he had more than two hundred conversions. This was the beginning of Methodism in that section of Craven County. In 1841-42 he traveled Sampson Circuit and reported one thousand conversions. During 1845-46 he served on Trent Circuit and reported more than one thousand conversions. The next five or six years he did only occasional work because of poor health. In 1850 he was sent to Columbus Circuit and reported two hundred conversions. In 1851-51 while serving on Mattamuskeet Circuit, he reported eight hundred conversions. In 1853-54 he served Roanoke Circuit. During 1855 he served Mission Church (now Person Street) of Raleigh and reported one hundred conversions. During 1856 he served Granville Circuit and 1857-58 he served Hillsboro-Uwharrie Circuit. In 1859 his health failed so completely that he superannuated. During his years of active work he reported nearly five thousand conversions. A great man once said, "He is the greatest preacher who brings most souls to Christ." Judging from this statement, Rev. Gray was a much greater man than he was given credit for being.

William Henry Gray married Virginia Frances Speed and they were the parents of Frances Virginia Gray who was the wife of William Towne Speed and their daughter, Lily Speed Parrish was the wife of Dr. Robert L. Flowers. Other children were, Henry Gray who married Emma Williford of Person County, Joseph Speed Gray who married Lenore G. Graves, Ella Gray (Moore) who married Samuel Moore, and Edward Grimes Gray who married Pattie Umstead.

Edward Grimes Gray resided at the old home place until his death. The home place is a part of the Taylor Duke Farm. The Gray house was located very close to the house in which Washington Duke was born.

The above information published in North Conference proceedings of the Methodist Church.

ADOLPHUS WILLIAMSON MANGUM

Adolphus Williamson Mangum was born 1834 on Flat River in Orange County. He was blood relation to Judge Willie P. Mangum who was of state and national fame. He died May 12, 1890 at Chapel Hill, N. C.

He was converted to God through the spirit of His son, at Mount Bethel Methodist Church, Orange County (Now Durham County). He received his preparatory education at the well known school of Rev. J. A. Dean of South Lowell Academy in Orange County.

At the Age of twenty-one he graduated with high distinction from Randolph-Macon College, Virginia. He then joined the North Carolina Conference at the annual meeting in Greensboro. November 12, 1856 he received his first appointment. He was junior preacher on the Hillsboro Circuit with that flaming evangelist, Henry Gray. During 1858-59 he served Chapel Hill, 1860 Roanoke Circuit and the first part of 1861 he served Salisbury. The later part of 1861 he was chaplain of the Confederate--6th North Carolina Regiment. In 1863-63 he served Goldsboro, 1865-66 he served Salisbury, 1867 he was agent of Greensboro Female College and 1868-69 he served Orange Circuit. (He was pastor of Mount Bethel during this period.) He served Greensboro in 1870, Charlotte Station in 1871, and Edenton Street, Raleigh, 1872-75. He was elected Professor of Mental and Moral Science at University of North Carolina in 1875. He served in this job until he had a stroke and became disable.

He married Miss Laura Overman who was sister of Senator Overman. (Dr. Charles Staples Mangum was his son. Dr. Mangum was Dean of the Medical School at the University of North Carolina for many years.)

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ORANGE COUNTY in 1752

