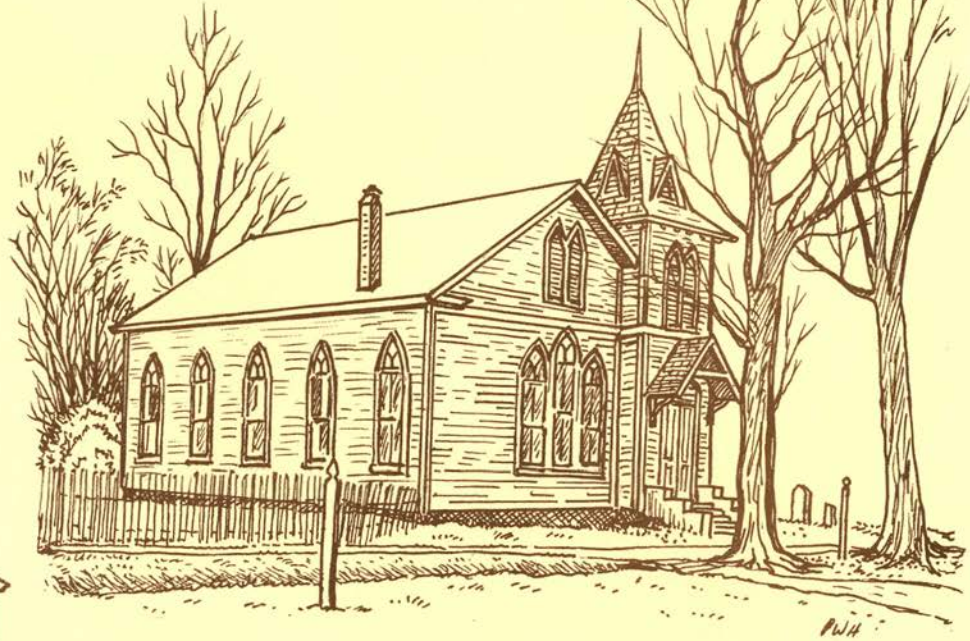
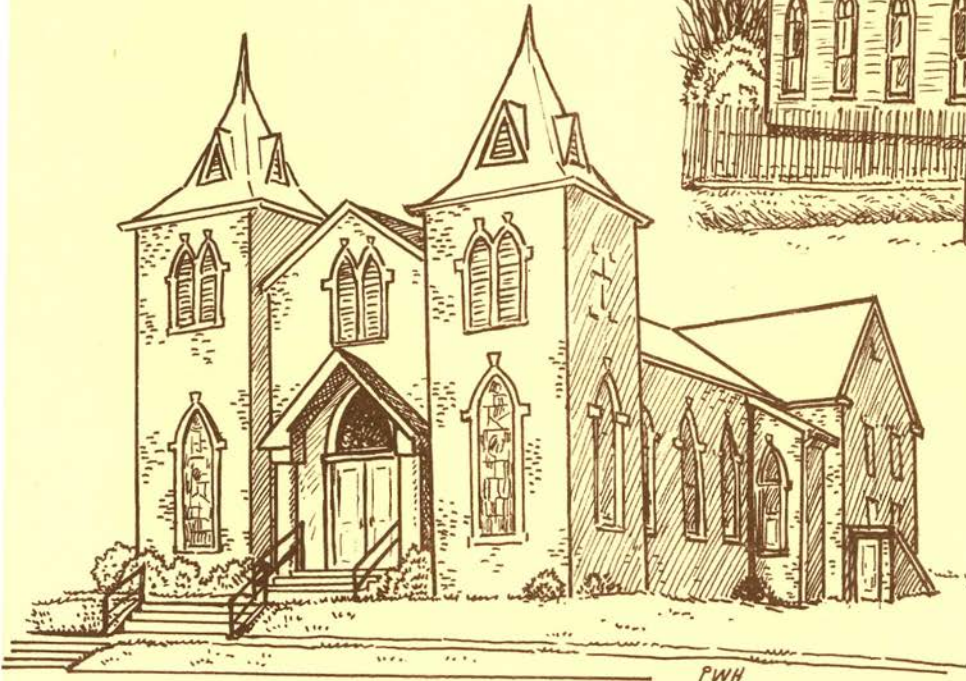


# Pittsboro United Methodist Church

1815 - 1984

## HOMECOMING



HISTORY  
OF  
PITTSBORO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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## HISTORY OF PITTSBORO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Although there undoubtedly were individuals who professed Methodist beliefs in North Carolina and even in Chatham County, the earliest record of organized Methodism in this area was in 1776. According to W. L. Grissom in his "History of Methodism in North Carolina" at a conference held in Baltimore on May 21, 1776, four new circuits were added: Fairfax, Hanover, Pittsylvania and Carolina. The latter included all the country south of the Virginia line and had for its preachers, Edward Dromgoole, Francis Poythress, and Isham Tatum.

Later four circuits: Roanoke, Tar River, New Hope and Yadkin were formed within the boundaries of North Carolina.

At the conference of 1793, New Hope Circuit was divided and Haw River Circuit was formed.

The Methodists were the first denomination to build a church in Pittsboro although the date of the first meeting house is still in question.

The late Mrs. M. C. Reeves in an extended search for early records came across a deed to the Pittsborough Methodist Church, dated May 18, 1815 and recorded in the Chatham County Registry in Book U, Page 121.

John Henderson to Thomas Snipes, Mial Scarborough, John Hurley, William Avent and Thomas Clegg, Trustees of the Pittsborough Methodist Church.

This indenture made the twenty-eighth day of May, one thousand eight hundred and fifteen between John Henderson of the County of Chatham and State of North Carolina of the one part, and Thomas Snipes, Mial Scarborough, John Hurley, William Avent and Thomas Clegg, trustees in trust for the uses and purposes hereinafter mentioned, all of the county and state aforesaid.

Witnesseth, that the said John Henderson, Sr. for divers good causes have given and granted confirmed

and conveyed and by these presents doth grant and confirm and convey unto them the said Thomas Snipes, Mial Scarborough, John Hurley, William Avent and Thomas Clegg for purposes aforesaid hereafter mentioned and disclosed.

All the estate right claim and demand whatsoever unto and upon a certain lot and piece of ground lying and being in the County and State aforesaid,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile northwest of Pittsborough one quarter of an acre where the meeting house is now erected the said house in the center of the said lot of ground and as much more on the back of the said meeting house as may be required for the convenience of those that may attend at meetings; also the use and benefit of the spring. The timber is excepted by the said John Henderson for the use of his plantation.

To have and to hold the said lot or piece of ground and privileges unto them the said Thomas Snipes, Mial Scarborough, John Hurley, William Avent, and Thomas Clegg and their successors in office forever in trust for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America in general and for the use of Ierry (Ihrrie?) and his society in particular according to the rules of discipline which from time to time may be adopted by the ministers and preachers of said church and the said John Henderson doth warrant and forever defend all and singular the beforementioned and described lot or piece of ground and privileges unto them the said Thomas Clegg and their successors in office from the claim or claims of him the said John Henderson his heirs and assigns or claims of all persons whatsoever.

Sealed and delivered in the presence of us: Jesse West and William Poe. Chatham County. August Sessions, 1815.

Since the present Pittsboro Church has no early records the existence of this early building comes as a surprise to many who believe that the earliest church was built in 1830 and according to the records of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Eliza Lutterloh

was confirmed by Bishop Ives in November, 1831 with eight other persons. This confirmation, according to the late A. H. London, was probably held in the Methodist Church as the Episcopal Church was not completed until June, 1833.

The late A. H. Merritt, who served as Sunday School Superintendent for many years beginning in 1873, wrote a history of the church in 1900. Copies of this history cannot now be located although excerpts from it from time to time have appeared in The Chatham Record.

"In the course of time," writes Mr. Merritt, "the date we cannot determine - - through the influence of itinerant Methodist preachers, this lot (the present church site) was secured and a Methodist Church was erected. We have not been able to find the names of those aiding in its erection, nor the date, nor the cost. It was an old barn of a church, unpainted, with no steeple, no bell, with the door in the East end. It was forty or fifty feet south of the present building."

In Book AD, page 12 a deed to Pittsboro Methodist Church for town lot No. 87 is recorded, dated October 4, 1830. The deed is from John Owen and wife, Lucy Ann, to Richard Drake, Thomas Snipes, Charles Williams, Ambrose Ramsey, trustees of the Pittsboro Methodist Church, "who shall cause to be erected thereon a house for public worship."

This lot is the southwest corner of the present total church lot. The first church was on Town Lot No. 87 and was 40 or 50 feet south or southwest of the present place of worship. The first parsonage was also located on this lot and existed until 1967.

"A society was organized which grew in size and importance and devotion of its membership till 1832, when the church had arisen to a station," Mr. Merritt reports.

On January 25, 1836 the county registry shows in Book AD, page 372 that town lots No. 74 and 75 were bought from Ambrose Ramsey for \$25 by John I. Alston, Woodson Lea, Elisha B. Stedman, Elisha Goodman, Robert E. Rives, Hillary Yeargan and W. P. Taylor, trustees of Pittsboro Methodist Church. This is the site of the present church.

Thomas S. Campbell was appointed in 1836 and served a year as pastor. He was born in 1810, joined the conference in 1831, and

died at Lexington in 1888.

"When he reached the charge," according to Merritt, "He saw at once the need of a larger or more commodious house of worship. He called to his aid such men as Thomas B. Garriss, Luther Clegg, William P. Taylor, Isaac Long, Dr. John A. Hanks, and Dr. R. K. Smith. Then there was a devoted band of noble and devout women who took an active and efficient part in the building of the new church -- such as Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. London (nee Kate Moore), Mrs. Griffith (nee Louisa Moore), Mrs. Waddell, Mrs. Small, Mrs. Joe Ramsey, Mrs. Riddle and Mrs. Hanks. They were active, zealous and liberal and the success was largely due to them.

"The building was completed in the Fall of 1837. Before it was finished, Mrs. Taylor died on August 10. The church had been covered and weatherboarded, but the floor had not been laid. The grave was dug between the sleepers under the place for the pulpit, and there they laid to rest this noble woman. Her maiden name was Sarah Lewis. She was from Virginia as also was her husband, Capt. Phillip Taylor, a gallant officer in the Revolutionary War. At the close of the war the government was largely indebted to Capt. Taylor for services. He was paid off in a grant for lands of Deep River in Chatham County and died there about ten years later. His widow came to Pittsboro about the beginning of the century. Col. James Tauntelroy Taylor, one of the most talented and brilliant and popular lawyers the state has produced, was her son.

In 1860 just prior to the war, membership of the Pittsboro Church was whites, 55; colored, 109.

In 1867 Haw River Circuit was divided into two circuits, Haw River and Pittsboro. After 1865 Pittsboro was not a station but a part of the Pittsboro Circuit.

In 1880 in Book AZ, page 511 a deed is recorded in which lot No. 87 was sold to W. L. London by H. C. Clegg, Luther Clegg, Williams J. Womble, Rufus B. Clegg, A. H. Merritt, A. G. Headen and A. J. Bynum, the parsonage committee.

In 1879 the vestry of St. Bartholomew's voted to establish the Mission of St. James (colored). Capt. W. L. London received a vote of thanks from the vestry because he had advanced the money to buy lot No. 87 for their church.

In 1886 in Book BR at page 214 the lot known as the Methodist

parsonage lot was transferred from W. L. London to the Episcopal Church.

In 1967 the entire original lot including the part sold to the Episcopal church was bought back by Mr. and Mrs. M. C. Reeves and presented to the Pittsboro Methodist Church.

Two sessions of the North Carolina Conference have been held at the Pittsboro Church. The first was in 1844 and was presided over by Bishop Joshua Soule. Although a native of Maine, Bishop Soule sided with the South when the church was divided. Rev. S. S. Bryant was the secretary of the 1844 Conference held in Pittsboro. Peter Doub was presiding elder of the district, and William M. Jordan was preacher in charge of the Haw River Circuit, and John Todd Brame was pastor of the Pittsboro Station. Capt. N. A. Ramsey says: "John Todd Brame was quite a young man in 1844, not exceeding 23 or 24. He boarded at my father's house". In the fall of that year the Conference was held in Pittsboro, with Bishop Joshua Soule presiding. It was a grand body of men, and there were but few, if any, superior in intellectual strength to John Todd Brame. He had about this time, a newspaper controversy with Bishop Ives on apostolic succession, and it was the opinion of everybody but the Bishop's friends that Brame got the best of it." The number of members of the churches in the Conference in 1844 was: White, 19,639; colored, 6,390.

Mr. Merritt revealed that the second annual conference was held in Pittsboro in November, 1864 and was presided over by Bishop George F. Pierce, who had served at various times as president of Wesleyan College and as president of Emory University. "The session of this conference was a long one — lasting two weeks and when it adjourned, Isaac Long, who had entertained the Bishop, remarked that "Pittsboro had been eaten out to a shell."

Mr. Merritt gives an interesting account of the Sunday School from 1873 to 1900, when he succeeded A. G. Headen as superintendent. In May, 1881, he started to go from Genesis to Revelation. Sunday School teachers in 1900 were: Mr. Merritt, Mrs. Lutterloh, Julia Bynum, B. Nooe, Jr., Mrs. Tinnin, Mrs. Laura Horne, Miss Lou Horne was librarian; Miss Margaret Horne, organist.

Mr. Merritt, in his history of the church, tells some interesting anecdotes on several Methodist ministers. Of Rev. William Closs, he says: Dr. Closs was fond of coffee and having passed his cup to be filled about the fifth time, the lady of the house remarked: 'Brother

Closs, you must be fond of coffee.' Rev. Closs replied, 'It would seem so, madam, when I am willing to drink so much water to get a little coffee.'

In speaking of the Rev. Perley H. Scovell, who was in charge of the station in 1861, Mr. Merritt relates this story: "On going from his boardinghouse, Mrs. Lea's, to hold service at the church one day, he solicited a gentleman who kept a grog shop on the corner between the courthouse and the Presbyterian Church, to close up his shop and go with him. The grog shop keeper got mad and began to curse and swear. Scovell begged him to stop his profanity, with the warning that it might be very soon when he would not be able to close his doors or to go to church. Before Scovell had concluded the services, the grog shop keeper fell prostrate on his floor, and never was able to close his shop or to go to church."

The Pittsboro Methodist Episcopal Circuit included five churches until the North Carolina Annual Conference met in 1950. The churches were: Brown's Chapel, Pleasant Hill, Hickory Mountain, and Chatham, as well as our own Pittsboro: First. When the circuit split up, three charges were formed and Pittsboro First became a station. The name was changed to Pittsboro United Methodist Church when the two denominations were joined together in 1968. The Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Churches were united to create the new denomination.

During the time of the Rev. W. T. Phipps, the church building was brick veneered and the single steeple was redesigned into a two towered edifice. This took place during the late 1940's. During this period a new parsonage was also constructed at 202 West Street. The structure was completed in 1950, and Mr. Phipps had opportunity to live in the new home for just one year. The house is a brick and wood construction with 7 rooms including 3 bedrooms and 2 baths.

In 1961, the new education building was begun during the ministry of the Rev. Randall Baker, who served until 1968. Soon after his arrival, Rev. Baker went to work to expand the educational facilities. A Duke architect, James Ward, was invited to create the architectural blueprint. The Administrative Board Chairman, Harry Horton, Sr. and Rev. Baker contacted persons whose family members were buried in that part of the cemetery to be covered by the structure to get permission to move the graves. Earl Dark, Sr. was appointed to be the Building Chairman. The building was begun in



1961 and completed in 1962. It has five classrooms, a pastor's study, church office, fellowship hall, kitchen and two bathrooms. The building was paid for by 1966 and dedicated to the glory of God. The total cost of the building was \$84,000 with \$12,000 of this coming from the Duke Endowment. Bishop Paul Garber was present for the dedication of the building.

In 1967 the first picture directory was printed. Subsequent picture directories were completed in 1980 and in 1983. These are on file in the church office.

In 1982, property was donated for the parking lot and in 1983 it was graded and covered with rock and gravel. In 1984, an additional \$7,000 was raised to put pavement on the lot.

Also in 1984, the parsonage received a real improvement as all exterior wood was covered with aluminum siding at a cost of about \$2900. In the same year, a large brick sign was erected in front of the church to read "PITTSBORO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH". This was dedicated to God and in memory of Mrs. Annie Jenks Screws.

In February of 1984, our oldest living member, Mrs. Annie Bynum, died at the age of 100. She had served our church as organist and pianist for fifty years.

The Administrative Board has established several Endowments to help promote and enhance the work of our church.

In 1969, the Myrtle Spaugh Reeves Memorial Scholarship Fund was established to assist youth attending college, business or technical schools.

In 1976, the George W. and Audrey W. Blair Memorial was established to maintain and beautify the church yard and grounds including the cemetery.

In 1978, the Janie Fields Baldwin bequest was established to beautify the church building and grounds.

The Program Ministries of the church have sought to reach out through the contributions of second mile giving, above the askings of our Conference. Through the help of our bazaar funds, several thousands of dollars are sent to the "Advance Special" to meet

the needs of the hungry and the oppressed people in the nation and around the world. Local human need is also met each year because of the extra effort of the whole church to raise these funds.

The Ecumenical Spirit of our church is alive and well as we continue the United Methodist Youth Group which cuts across denominational lines. For more than 20 years our church has been the center of activity for children from Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal and some Baptist. The Church School has also been reaching out ecumenically as the children from the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches have held a joint Vacation Church School for many years. More recently, the Episcopal and Methodist Churches have been holding a joint Sunday School since 1981.

Our policy making body, The Administrative Board, has a growing sense of it's mission in the work of Christ and His Church. In 1983, they adopted a Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of Pittsboro United Methodist Church is to know God through the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to respond to that love by upholding His Church through the fulfillment of our vows and commitment to be faithful with our prayers, our presence, our gifts and our service.

In carrying out this purpose, we shall seek to meet the needs of our people by providing opportunities for study, worship, spiritual growth, and fellowship for all ages. We shall also respond to God's love by enthusiastically helping with our community and world-wide human needs in the hope of saving souls as well as mending lives.

With an active Council on Ministries, three strong United Methodist Women's Circles, a reactivated United Methodist Men's Group, and a vital youth program as well as a growing Sunday School, we shall seek to fulfill these goals through the strength of God and the power of His Spirit, to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The following are pastors who served from the beginning of the Church:

1832 - 33 - J. W. White  
1834 - George W. Longhorn

- 1835 William Closs
- 1836-37 - Thomas S. Campbell
- 1838-39 - James M. Boatwright
- 1840-41 - Sidney D. Bumpass
- 1842-43 - Chappell Featherston
- 1844 - John Todd Brame
- 1845-46 - William Closs
- 1849-50 - W. W. Nesbitt
- 1851 - John W. Tinnin
- 1852 - William W. Albea
- 1853-59 - Pittsboro was not a station but formed  
a component part of the Haw River Circuit.
- 1859-60 - James W. Wheeler
- 1861 - Perley H. Scovall
- 1862 - Joseph B. Martin
- 1863 - Richard S. Webb
- 1864-65 - Oscar J. Brent

Pastors of Pittsboro Circuit were:

- 1868-70 - J. B. Martin
- 1971-74 - W. H. Moore
- 1875 - C. C. Dobson
- 1876 - John Tillett
- 1877 - W. H. Moore
- 1878-81 - T. J. Gattis
- 1882-85 - R. A. Willis
- 1886-88 - R. T. N. Stevenson
- 1889-92 - N. E. Coltrane
- 1893-94 - C. W. Robinson
- 1895-97 - W. W. Rose
- 1898 - L. E. Thompson
- 1899-1900 - Johnathan Sanford
- 1924-28 - C. M. Lance
- 1928-32 - J. A. Dailey (8 Churches)
- 1932-34 - Mr. Ellerby - Mr. Williams
- 1934-35 - H. L. Davis
- 1935-39 - J. D. Young
- 1939-43 - R. Z. Newton
- 1943-45 - W. G. Farrar
- 1945-50 - W. T. Phipps
- 1950 - Pittsboro became a station.
- 1951-52 - E. C. Maness
- 1952-54 - Brooks Patten
- 1954-58 - J. C. P. Brown
- 1958-61 - Horace Garris

1961-68 - M. Randall Baker  
1968-69 - Frank Lloyd  
1969-72 - Carl W. Barbee  
1972-74 - H. Worth Pearce  
1974-79 - Murry DeHart  
1979-83 - Carlton F. Hirschi  
1983- - Gerald Peterson

