

A History of
Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church
Route 2 Bladenboro, N. C.

by

The Reverend Wm. Kenneth Hall

In the 1890's a farmer and grist mill operator named William Porter Guyton, a member of Singletary Methodist Episcopal, South Church (Southern Methodist) in Dublin, built a covered shelter for occasional services on his enormous farm on the south side of Crawley's Swamp. The shelter came to be known as Porter's Chapel. While several ministers of varying theological persuasions preached in the chapel from time to time, it had no regular pastor.

About the year 1903 a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Northern Methodist), the Reverend Charles Baines, who occasionally preached at Porter's Chapel, persuaded those who worshipped there to organize themselves as a Methodist Episcopal Church and affiliate with the Blue Ridge - Atlantic Conference. The Reverend Baines became their first pastor.

The congregation purchased Porter's Chapel and an acre of land from William Porter Guyton and his wife Alice for the sum of one-hundred dollars and deeded it to the Methodist Episcopal Church of Bladen County. According to the deed dated May 13, 1903, (Book 44, page 345) the trustees were Daniel Dowless, Edward S. Dowless, William Porter Guyton, George T. Guyton, and William E. Dowless.

The membership of the church was largely made up of persons who were members at Singletary Church. Those members who withdrew from Singletary Church in 1903, according to the ministerial records of the Reverend George T. Simmons, pastor of the circuit which included Singletary Church at the time of the withdrawal included, in alphabetical order by family name: D. J. Brisson, Manning Brisson, and David J. Brisson; Mrs. Sarah Burney; Richard W. Cain; Mrs. Carolina Dowless, Daniel Dowless, Miss. Edith Dowless, Edward Dowless, Mrs. Jimmie Ann Dowless, Miss. Polly Dowless, and William E. Dowless; Mrs. Elizabeth Graves; Mrs. Alice Guyton, Mrs. Amanda Guyton, Mrs. Ella V. Guyton Hester, Ephraim C. Guyton, George T. Guyton, Mrs. Malcy Guyton, Miss. Martha Guyton, Mrs. Mary J. Guyton, Miss. Minnie Jane Guyton, Miss. Nancy Caroline Guyton, Mrs. Sarah Ann Guyton, and William Porter Guyton.

On February 6, 1905 the congregation at Porter's Chapel purchased a tract of land in the Guyton Community containing two acres, more or less, from Ephraim C. Guyton and his wife Amanda for the sum of twenty-five dollars. The deed for this

parcel (Book 44, page 336), is also deeded to the Methodist Episcopal Church and has the same trustees as the first deed. The deed describes the land as being on the southeast side of the Cotton Road and bounded on one side by the parsonage lot. The house used by the congregation as a parsonage, starting with their first pastor, the Reverend Baines, is still standing but was never deeded to the Church. When the Church lot was purchased in 1905 the parsonage was owned by W. Bradley Guyton who probably rented the parsonage to them. It now belongs to Mr. Sollie Guyton's daughter, Doris (Mrs. Vance Ammons).

After the congregation purchased the property on the Cotton Road they dismantled the Porter's Chapel building and hauled it across Crawley's Swamp to its present location, reconstructed it, and named it Pleasant Grove. Later, three Sunday School rooms, a front porch, and a steeple were added. A brick, air-conditioned, multipurpose building with rest-rooms and a kitchen was completed in 1978.

The Methodist Episcopal, South (Southern Methodist), the Methodist Episcopal (Northern Methodist), and the Methodist Protestant Churches were reunited in 1939 to form The Methodist Church. Sometime after the 1939 reorganization, Pleasant Grove and Singletary were put on the Lumberton Circuit with Smith's and West Lumberton Methodist Churches. Pleasant Grove, Singletary, and Purdie Churches were put together to form the Dublin Circuit in 1953 after internal dissension at Pleasant Grove resulted in the withdrawal of several members who started another church nearby. This church later became Community Baptist Church (Independent).

This history is based on many hours of research in the records of the Reverend George T. Simmons, pastor of Singletary Church from December 11, 1899 to November 30, 1903, Methodism Alive in North Carolina, edited by Kelly O. Ingram, records in the offices of the Register of Deeds and the Clerk of Superior Court, and many personal interviews including one with Mr. Tommy Smith, born about the year 1896, who actually worshipped in Porter's Chapel and is well acquainted with the people and events in its history. The only record the local church has is a membership book started in 1953. Unfortunately, it contains no information on the years before the book was started. The roll book begins by listing current members' names but leaves the manner of their reception and date of enrollment blank. Hopefully, additional research will reveal more historical information.

Bladen County, July, 1980