

HISTORY OF REGAN'S METHODIST CHURCH

The following is a sketchy history of Regan Church, some of which is heresay, which was assembled by John B. Regan and which he has given on several occasions. Several statements consist of the information which he several years ago received from some of the older members of the church as well as some of the people in the community who were not members of the church. He is absolutely positive that the history of Regan's church, or the particular area on which it now stands, is probably one of the oldest meeting places for religious worship in Robeson County, it being near the Cape Fear River where the early settlers settled. It was one of the first areas of Robeson County inhabited by people and there is considerable evidence of meeting ground at this particular spot many years before there was an organized church. The older people claimed that even prior to 1847 that it was a camp ground or a camp meeting place and there is specific reference to the camp ground in the deed for the property on which this church was erected. So we do know that prior to 1847 it was a meeting place and a camp ground and a place where the people assembled and worshipped God. In 1847 we find the first written record of the church. It being a deed from Eli Regan and Col. Neal Regan to the original Trustees of this church which I will have more to say about later. This particular deed was the first deed recorded in Robeson County for any church ground to any Board of Trustees. Consequently you know that the history of this grand old church dates back to one of the earliest in this section of the country anywhere.

This deed was dated the 23rd day of June, 1847, made by Neal Regan and Eli Regan to James Barker, William H. Willis, Absolom Davis, Jr., Zachius Musselwhite, Ralph R. Parker, Saul Mercer and Milby Musselwhite, Trustees, in Trust for the purposes and uses hereinafter mentioned. This deed conveyed a little more than two acres of land and the beginning corner was in the edge of the Regan Road just south of the old camp ground. This original piece of land was square and was conveyed to the Trustees in Trust for the following purposes, to-wit and I quote from the Deed: "That they shall erect and build or cause to be erected and built thereon a house or place of worship for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in the United States of America according to the rules and discipline which from time to time may be adopted and agreed upon by the Ministers and Preachers of the said church at their General Conferences

in the United States of America; and in further trust and confidence that they shall at all times forever hereafter permit such ministers and preachers belonging to the said church as shall from time to time be duly authorized by the General Conference of the Ministers and preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church South or by the Annual Conference authorized by the said General Conference to preach and expound God's work therein and in further trust that they the said trustees above named shall keep up perpetually a Board of Trustees for the said property according to the intent and meaning of the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church." The grantors seem to be mindful of the fact that some member might be forced to put up a little more money than some of the other members and they included in the deed the following provisions: "Provided nevertheless that if any trustee or member of the Building Committee shall advance a sum of money or become responsible for any sum or sum of money on account of the erection of said Church, that then and in that case he shall be entitled to the remedy in such case made and provided by the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and, so forth." Neal and Eli Regan appeared at the August term of Court in 1847 and in open Court acknowledged the due execution of the deed and from that time on there was a recorded record of Regan's Church. The foregoing deed constitutes all of the land owned by the church except four-fifths of an acre deeded to the church by D.C. Regan and wife, Katie Lee Regan, by deed dated February 18, 1833. So far as I have been able to find those two conveyances constitutes the real estate owned by the Church.

You will note that the church did not have a name at the time the Deed was made and that the Trustees were not named as Trustees of any particular church and so it is assumed that the Trustees named in the Deed, none of whom were Regans, named the church because it was built by the side of the Regan road. When and how the Regan Road got its name is not known.

The first church which was erected on this lot served the charge for some 40 years, from those living now who remembers the old church. I am informed that it was very beautiful in design. It had benches which were unpainted, it had plastered walls and was a very lovely church which served the congregation for between 40 and 50 years. At that time the present church was built and has been maintained and recently added to

practically in its original form.

I have been told since I was a child that the old church records were burned when our home was burned about 1918 and it has, therefore been impossible for me to get too many details about the early history of the church. Some of the older members tell me that at one time Bishop Asbury attended this church and preached at a quarterly conference. The records are fairly complete since the early 1890's and there exist a record of the marriages, baptisms and members of the church which is fairly complete since that date.

The first marriage which I found recorded in any of the records was that of J.M. Butler and Annie Regan, the wedding being performed by Bright McCall in 1893.

Regan's Church has a very rich history, it has been a Mother Church to many of the other Methodist churches in this area. This was the first Methodist Church in Eastern Robeson County and from its membership was formed the Methodist churches of Smiths, Barkers, Fishers at St. Pauls, now the St. Pauls Methodist Church. It is needless to say that the influence of this Church has been far reaching in that Methodists have gone out from this congregation to almost all parts of the United States.

So far as present day records are concerned, the church was at full strength in 1907. For on March 23, 1907, while this church was a part of the Rockingham District of the N.C. Conference, a quarterly meeting was held here under the leadership of Rev. F. F. Euro and there were 188 members on roll at which time the names of P. B. Kinlaw, Sallie Kinlaw, Mollie Lewis Regan, Lillie Smith, Bessie Smith and Mrs. Nettie Graham were added to the roll, making a total membership of 190.

On September 21, 1907, still under the leadership of Rev. Euro, 4 new members were added at a quarterly conference held at this Church. The next records in the minutes were of a quarterly conference held in this Church on March 27, 1909, W. A. Jenkins, preacher. At this quarterly conference, one or two members were dropped from the roll, several were added and the secretary was ordered to confer with several other members to see why they should not be dropped from it.

The next records that I have been able to find came from the roll book beginning about 1909 during the time that W.A. Jenkins was pastor of the church. During Brother Jenkins pastorate here he baptized 30 infants; however, the record is not too clear as to how many new members he received into the church. W.A. Jenkins was the pastor of this church through 1911. These records are to be found in the library at St. Pauls Methodist Church.

On November 28, 1911 A.J. Groves was assigned to this church as it's pastor and while here married 12 couples from 1911 until his removal in 1915. He also baptized 50 infants during his pastorate here and took into the church 22 new members.

In 1915, while John C. Kilgo was bishop and John H. Hall was presiding elder, L.H. Joyner was assigned to this church and stayed here one year. During the time that Brother Joyner was pastor he baptized 9 infants and took into the church 2 new members. He also performed 3 wedding ceremonies while he was on this charge.

Following Mr. Joyner, still under the leadership of Kilgo and Hall, A.S. Parker was assigned to this church, stayed here two years and later became presiding elder or District Superintendent. During these two years he married four couples and received 12 members into the church.

Following Brother Parker, we had G.W. Starling for four years from 1918 through 1922. Brother Starling probably kept the most complete records of his activities of any of the preachers thus far; however, his records of baptism and of marriages were kept for the entire charge instead of just for Regan's Church and it is difficult to pick out those that were performed for Regan's Church. However, he took into Regan's Church 36 new members during his four years on the charge. The first marriage performed on the charge by Brother Starling was the marriage of D.C. Regan and Katie Lee Broadwell on July 16, 1916. The last one performed for Regan's Church was that of Calton Rezier and Irene M. White.

Following Brother Starling we were assigned Ivey T. Poole who is still a member of the conference and who in addition to his activities as a minister has distinguished himself in the Masonic Fraternity and is a member of the

Masonic District. While here he received 20 new members for Regan's Church, performed several marriages and infant baptisms. At the time Brother Poole was assigned to this charge, Brother Collins Denny was bishop and J.H. Shore presiding elder.

In 1925, under the leadership of Bishop Mazon and presiding elder J.D. Bundy, we were assigned James A. Dailey who served as pastor of this church from December 1925 to November 4, 1928. Brother Dailey was very active in that he performed numerous weddings and baptismal ceremonies; however, the records were kept for the charge instead of individual churches and it is difficult to tell just how many were performed for

his church. While here he received 25 new members in the Regan's Church.

Following Mr. Dailey, in 1928, Mr. J.B. Thompson came to this charge. He received into the church 22 new members, first of which was Charles Mercer, now a member of the North Carolina Conference and the last one Sadie Ray Douglass on the 24th Day of July, 1932. I have found no other records pertaining to his work; however, he is known to most of you, and you know that his activities were considerable. At this time the old system of records was changed into the present day system and it is entirely possible that the other records of his work while here are included in some later books.

I have made no effort to bring the history of the church from 1932 to the present date for the majority of the grown people present are as familiar, or more so, with the recent history than I am. However, hurriedly, the pastors were; R.R. Grant, E.M. Harrison, J.W. Harrell, Allen C. Lee, C.A. Jones, O.L. Hathaway, B.F. Boone, Present membership in 1958 was 79.

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Of the early members of the church and of the great grandparents of many of the present members were the following: Of the two grantors: Neill Regan left eleven children, namely: William J., Jim, Dr. John, Part, Neill, Rebecca, Hilda, Margaret, Betsy Span Olie Velens and Mary Bias Regan. The other grantor, Eli Regan left the following children: D.C., Millie Regan McIntyre, J.B. and Mary Regan McIntyre. The original trustees, namely, James Barker, the father of Henry Barker who was the father of the Jim Barker who later moved to Lumberton. William H. Willis was the father of John Willis, one time Sheriff of Robeson County, and Richard Willis who were both brothers of the old Dr. Willis who lived at Mayesville Crossing on the Big Swamp. Absalom David probably died early for the records show that Colonel Regan raised three David boys who were orphans and who later went to Texas. Zachus Musselwhite was the father of Zack who was the father of Oscar and Clarence Musselwhite. Saul Mercer was the father of Miles Mercer who was the father of S.E. Mercer, Sr., Nash Mercer, Mrs. John Herring, Mrs. Haynes Andrews, Lonnie Mercer and Miss Ellen Mercer, who were all active in this church during the lifetime of some of the present members. Wilby Musselwhite, probably father of the Musselwhite clan which later formed Barker's Church. We have been unable to find any trace of Ralph R. Parker and we do not know what became of that family.

Some of the interesting side lights and some of the first in the history of this church I am told that Katie Lee Broadwell, later Mrs. D.C. Regan, gave the first silver communion service for the church. I am informed that Mrs. Jasper Edge joined with her in the task and helped furnish the first silver communion service for the church. Irene King, McNeill, raised the money for the first organ, and Miss Bertha Broadwell the sister of Kelton Broadwell, was the first organist. I am told that the first

Epworth League (now MYF) was organized in 1917 and H.M.King was the first president of that group. That the present Missionary Society was first organized about 1930 and Dora Herring King was the first president of the Ladies' Missionary Society.

This church has made its contribution in professional men of our time, having furnished several preachers, doctors and lawyers. Some of whom could be mentioned briefly. S.E.Mercer who was presiding elder, who was the father of S.E.Mercer, Jr., who was a member of our conference until his untimely death. Charles Mercer, one of the young and up and coming members of the conference. Dennis Kinlaw who was the son of Wade Hampton Kinlaw whose grandfather was a faithful member of this church. J.R.Burns was also a member and at one time his family was members of this church. There were several doctors some of whom are Dr. Durham King, dentist, Dr.Richard Smith, dentist, Dewit Regan, dentist, Charlie Whites Regan, Pharmacist, Dr.John Regan, Dillon,S.C.,M.D. There has been at least two lawyers who are former members of this church, one of whom is the late Wade Hampton Kinlaw of Lumberton and the other John B.Regan of St.Pauls,N.C.

This church has a very interesting history, has made a wonderful contribution to the spiritual life of this community and of Robeson County and this section of North Carolina. In addition to being Mother Of Methodism in this immediate community it's influence has gone out into all of the communities of the South and has been felt throughout the South. I do feel that this constitutes a serious challenge to the present members when we stop to realize that someday the people will be studying our History and I wonder how well our records will compare with those of our predecessors. At any rate we owe those who have worked so hard and diligently through the years to make this shrine of religious worship possible, the duty of doing our best to carry on the good work which they began.