

A HISTORY OF THE YELVERTON METHODIST CHURCH

By Ruby and Herman Lane

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Today I have witnessed by television the funeral and interment of a great president. John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Because of his assassination and other similarities, history has seemed to repeat itself. It seems very fitting to go back and pick up the threads of Methodism and unravel them and try to find the ones that lead to Yelverton. The war between the states destroyed many early records. Too few were kept at all. However, we know that this area was a fertile field for the growth of Methodism.

The most convenient and easiest mode of travel for the Indians and early settlers was by boat or raft down the rivers, creeks, and swamps of this land. Thus we have our first settlers establishing themselves along these streams and on the highlands adjacent to the lowlands bordering the streams. Others followed the trails that led up into the piney woodland. Grisson's "History of Methodism" mentions Francis Asbury visiting the Neuse Meeting House and having a circuit from Murphy to the sea. It is quite conceivable that the Neuse River, Contentnea Creek, and Nahunta Swamp would be a likely path for the early settlers to follow. The itinerant circuit riders preached to people wherever they could be gathered, - under trees, in homes or empty barns. Later Meeting Houses were erected from logs or hewn boards. There was such a Meeting House (made of logs) that stood across the road from the present Yelverton Church at Faro.

There was a pioneer named Yelverton who settled in this area. He had nine sons who reared families in the surrounding territory. Two maiden ladies named Yelverton deeded the lot to the conference in 1847. Legend has it that one building was burned. It is not definite if it were the log building or the frame building which antedated the deed that burned. It is known that a large frame building with two doors at the front and one at the back stood at the present site. The front doors were used by

white people and the back door by the slaves. There was a section in the back with a railing around it where day school classes for community children were held. The Teachers salary was paid by parents of the children. This building was bought by the Outland family and moved down toward the Greene County line before the turn in the road that leads to Lanetown and opposite the D. A. Yelverton farm.

The frame of the present sanctuary was built in 1888. Mr. J. B. Lane says the structure was under construction the year of the earthquake 1888. The carpenters were living in the home of his father, Mr. George Lane. These men were on their way home the day the earthquake shook houses, broke windows, and stirred the neighborhood.

It was during the pastorate of Rev. J. C. Williams in 1946 that the present sanctuary was renovated, brick veneered, and the educational department added. Rev. Williams suffered a fatal heart attack in 1947. The Rev. L. C. Vareen held the first service in the new church and served as pastor for a year during which time stained glass windows were added. On the first Sunday in May 1950, Bishop W. W. Peele dedicated the church. Running water, a central heating plant, a partially furnished kitchen, cement walks and beautiful shrubs are now a part of the church plant.

In 1770 America was listed as the fiftieth circuit by a conference held in London. The conference sent men and money to America. Francis Asbury came in 1771 and with the whole new world as his circuit, set the pattern for the hundreds of Methodist Circuit Riders which came after him. John Wesley appointed Asbury (Francis) as Bishop and he was confirmed in 1784, probably at the organization of the first Methodist Conference in Baltimore. The first official Annual Conference was held in the Green Hill House in Louisburg in April 1785. Asbury surely attended this meeting. He is known to have visited the Contentnea Area that year. Bishop Asbury was the prime organizer of the scattered Methodist Societies, into a Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Methodist Church began in North Carolina with the ministry of Joseph Pilmore in 1772. In 1779 John King, John Dickens, and Edward Pride were assigned to the circuit of North Carolina and at the end of the year, reported to the Conference in the bounds of their circuit 930 members.

Prior to 1790 it is thought that Yelverton was a part of the Tar River circuit. Thomas Bowen and Thomas Weatherford were preachers on this circuit in 1787. Contentnea (Contentney) Circuit was formed ^{in 1790} of Parts of Greene, Wayne, Pitt, Craven and Lenoir counties. John Baldwin was its first preacher. This Circuit was continued until 1808 when it was dropped and included in Trent and Goshen Circuits. Neuse Circuit was then formed and Greene, Lenoir, Craven and probably a part of Wayne were embraced in it.

The Snow Hill Circuit was formed in 1830 with William Anderson and Thomas S. Ransom as the first pastors. At this time Snow Hill Circuit was in the Neuse District and Joseph Carson was the presiding Elder. The Rev. Daniel Culbreth was pastor of the Snow Hill Circuit in 1837, the year in which the N. C. Conference was separated from the Virginia Conference.

There were but few Meeting Houses and churches in which early Methodist preachers could preach. As late as 1812 Asbury noted that there has been a Society in Greenville for thirty years, but there was no house of worship at that place. The people of the Snow Hill Circuit had many churches - Ormond's Chapel (built with money left in the will of Rev. William Ormond Sr.) Rainbow, Snow Hill, Mount Herman, Tabernacle, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Bethel and Yelverton.

The records are not complete, but it seems most probable that the Fremont Circuit was formed about 1873 and embraced Yelverton, Eureka, Fremont, and Lebanon. It known that there has been an active Missionary Society for many years. Mrs. Alex Taylor was presented a 25 year pin in 1940 after serving as President for twenty five years. Dr. Cecil Robbins

was our minister in 1940 and led the service in which 33 charter members enrolled, and the officers installed. The ministers who have served the Fremont Charge are listed below:

1873-79	R. A. Willis	1947-1948	L. C. Vareen
1879-81	A. J. Finlayson	1948-1949	J. D. Cranford
1881-82	W. H. Call	1949-1953	W. E. Howard
1882-83	J. N. Andrews	1953-1954	D. M. Lewis
1883-86	R. C. Beamon		
1886-89	W. J. Crawson		
1889-93	W. H. Rose		
1893-95	W. H. Puckett		
1895-99	C. P. Jerome		
1899-1900	F. B. McCall		
1900-1902	F. J. Daily		
1902-1906	D. L. Earnhardt		
1906-1908	C. R. Taylor		
1908-1910	B. H. Black		
1910-1914	R. R. Grant		
1914-1918	J. L. Rumley		
1918-1921	W. T. Phipps		
1921-1925	J. A. Dailey		
1925-1927	N. B. Strickland		
1927-1929	R. E. Pittman		
1929-1933	K. F. Duvall		
1933-1937	E. R. Shuler		
1937-1942	C. W. Robbins		
1942-1944	B. P. Robinson		
1944-1947	J. C. Williams		

In 1954 Eureka and Yelverton formed a two-point charge and built a parsonage at Eureka. The ministers who have served this charge are:

1954-1956 C. H. Beale
1956-1958 J. G. Snypes
1958-1960 R. A. McLean
1960-1963 J. J. Juren
1963- H. F. Crawley

In 1964 the Yelverton Church building made extensive changes. A vestibule was added, the sanctuary was renovated, the choir loft enlarged, a new piano, a new pulpit, new paved walks and a yard light added. In 1965 new pews were installed.

Many family names have played prominent roles from one generation to another: Bests, Overman, Yelverton, Edmundson, Lane, Johnson, Minshew, Evans, Darden, and West.

We are indebted to: "Methodism in Greene County" by Rev. J. A. Russell: "A History of Methodism" by Grisson: "A History of Wayne County" by Judge Frank Daniels.