

HISTORY  
OF  
POPE'S CHAPEL CHURCH

as prepared

by

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1935



H I S T O R Y  
of  
P O P E ' S C H A P E L

FORWARD

WILKES COUNTY PRIOR TO ORGANIZATION OF CHURCH

Around the year 1762 hunters and traders began to come into what is now Wilkes County and make settlements here and there. These people were known as squatters. There was at that time a squatter village located at the mouth of Cold Water Creek known as Edinburg. This village grew into quite a little town but was washed away in 1796.

About 1762 soldiers were sent into this section and a fort was erected at the mouth of Broad River which was called Fort James. After the removal of the soldiers this place became known as Dartmouth, so named from the river itself, which until about 1780 was known as the river Dart. After the Wright purchase in 1772 this little settlement began to grow and later became known as Petersburg. Petersburg grew and prospered and was at one time an important commercial center, but nothing remains now of that once flourishing little city. It was also about this time (1772) that settlers began to come into this section, taking grants of land from the Government, usually from 50 to 250 acres. These settlers were mostly hunters, fishers and distillers and lived in log cabins. Very little of the land was cleared and cultivated at this time, but by the time of the Revolutionary War this section had become thickly settled.

After the close of the Revolutionary War returning soldiers from the Carolinas and Virginia gave glowing accounts of this section and their advertisement of the country served to bring immigrants from those states into this part of Georgia, which was then looked upon as almost being the Garden of Eden and the finest timbered section east of the Mississippi. About 1782 Virginians began to come in colonies. Very few of those were church people and seemed not to care for religious matters at all. Back in Virginia these people were unfriendly to the church because only church members had been allowed to vote and had been required to pay whatever amount the parson assessed.

This was about the situation in this section in 1785 when Beverly Allen was sent here. He failed to accomplish anything and in 1786 Thomas Humphries and John Major were sent out. They established churches throughout this section.

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POPE'S CHAPEL

The Society which was later organized into Pope's Chapel



Church, which is now located near Broad River in the northern part of Wilkes County, was first organized in what is now Elbert County about a mile and a half northeast of old Bakers Ferry on Broad River at the home of James Marks in August 1786 by Thomas Humphries. Foster was the Presiding Elder of the Georgia District at that time. He had been appointed to succeed Beverly Allen, who as stated, had been sent out in 1785, but failed to accomplish anything.

Richard Ivey was made Presiding Elder in 1787 and Humphries and Major remained preachers.

The Methodists met with great success here in 1786 and 1787. Four hundred joined in 1786 and 800 was added in 1787, making a total membership of 1200 at that time. Up until this time Georgia and South Carolina was combined into one district. Now Georgia had become of enough importance to be made into a separate district at the Conference which was held in 1788 at Tate's house in what is now Elbert County.

When the Methodist first came to this section of Georgia there were only twelve places of worship of all denominations.

At the Conference of 1788 all of Georgia north and northeast of Augusta was laid out into the Washington Circuit. Richard Ivey remained Presiding Elder and Hope Hull became preacher of Washington Circuit, with James Connow to assist him. At this time Washington was but a small village in a prosperous country.

In 1789 Moses Parks was made preacher, with Wyatt Andrews as assistant. John Andrew was preacher in 1790 and Jonathan Jackson in 1791. Hardy Herbert was the preacher in 1792. Richard Ivey remained Presiding Elder during all of this time.

At the Conference in 1793 the district was re-united with South Carolina. The Methodists seemed to be losing instead of gaining ground at this time. It was for this reason that Georgia was put back into the South Carolina Conference, where it remained until 1830. The cause of the church's decline about this time seems to have been because the people were more interested in politics and in making money than religion. This was about the time of the Yazoo Fraud. Wealthy people of Virginia were selling out there and buying up lands and slaves here as the recent invention of the cotton gin was making cotton the staple crop and the money crop.

About this time Henry Pope came to the rescue of the church that was afterwards to bear his name. Elbert County had been cut off from Wilkes County leaving most of the members in Wilkes County, so the church was moved over into Wilkes County and located about a mile from Baker's Ferry on the Baker's Road near what was later to be known at the Henry Hill place



and named Pope's Chapel. It was so named for Henry Pope, who furnished most of the lumber to build the house. However, the house of worship was not dedicated until 1796. Bishop Asbury preached the Dedication Sermon.

About this time the circuit was not being supplied with regular preachers, but John Andrew and Hope Hull were both teaching school in Wilkes County and both preached on this circuit frequently during this time.

The General Conference met at Baltimore in 1796 and organized a plan for keeping church records, which had not been done theretofore. Arrangements were also made for printing church literature.

James Jenkins was made preacher here in 1797, while Enoch George was presiding elder. Samuel Cowles preached in 1798 and 1799, with Benjamin Blanton as presiding elder. Stith Mead was presiding elder in 1800, with Britton Cable and Buddy Wheeler preachers.

Lorenza Dowe preached at Pope's Chapel for the first time in 1802. While his headquarters were at Petersburg, he preached here often, as he did throughout the country.

In 1802 Broad River and Little River Circuit were organized in place of the Washington Circuit.

Bishop Asbury preached at Pope's Chapel in the Spring of 1803 to a Sunday congregation of a thousand people.

Stith Mead remained presiding elder during this time and until 1805. Russell and Milligan preached on Broad River Circuit from 1803 to 1805.

There is no complete record of presiding elders after this for a while but W.M. Kennedy preached here in 1806 and 1807, Abda Christian in 1808, Osborn Rogers in 1809 and 1810, and James Russell in 1811 and 1812. There was no Conference in 1813, but in 1814 Joseph Tarpley was sent here. In 1815, Tarpley was made presiding elder and Abney P. Jones was sent as preacher. Tarpley and Jones remained until 1818. Jonathan L. Jerry became preacher in 1819, Isaac Smith in 1820 and in 1821, Samuel K. Hodges followed for three years, 1822, 1823, and 1824. William Parks preached in 1825, and 1826, Benjamin Pope in 1827, and 1828. (Benjamin Pope was a grandson of Henry Pope for whom the church was named.) Lovick Pierce, assisted by William Parks, preached in 1829 and 1830.

At this time Georgia became a separate Conference again.

For a time thereafter information is not clear, but we will state the preachers as best we can from this time until 1839. Stephen Olin preached in 1831, W.J. Parks in 1832 and 1833,



Issac Boring in 1834 and 1835, G. W. Pierce in 1836 and A. H. Mitchell in 1837 and 1838.

The record from 1839 to 1884 was furnished us by Mr. Emory F. Boyd a former member of Pope's Chapel, from a record kept by his grandfather, Benjamin W. Fortson. Benjamin W. Fortson was born in Elbert County in 1808 of a Baptist family. He was converted at a Methodist meeting when 14 years old and afterwards joined the Methodist Church. In early manhood he moved to Wilkes County and became a member of Pope's Chapel Church and was a pillar of that church from then until his death in 1884.

James E. Evans was presiding elder from 1839 to 1842. Alfred T. Mann preached in 1839, Thomas C. Benning in 1840 and 1841, and Josiah Lewis in 1842.

There is no record of presiding elders from 1842 to 1845, but John Knight preached in 1843, A. J. Leet in 1844, and James Jones in 1845. George F. Pierce was presiding elder from 1845 through 1847. John P. Duncan was preacher in 1846 and T.F. Pierce in 1847. Josiah Lewis was presiding elder from 1848 through 1851. Joseph H. Echols preached in 1848, Adolphus Orr in 1849 and W.H. Evans in 1850 and 1851. John W. Glenn was presiding elder from 1852 through 1855.

John L. Dunn was preacher in 1852. In 1852 Pope's Chapel was moved from the Baker's Ferry Road to its present location. Wesley P. Arnold preached in 1853 and 1854, and Richard Lane in 1855, William Norman in 1856, and John Talley in 1857 and 1858, while John L. Dunn was presiding elder in 1856 and 1857. There is no record of presiding elder from 1858, but in 1859 J. A. Clark became presiding elder and remained so until 1862. Alfred T. Mann preached in 1858, T.T. Christian in 1859, and J.M. Dickey in 1860 and 1861. R.W. Bigham was presiding elder from 1862 to 1864. F.F. Reynolds preached in 1863 and 1864. No record of presiding elders from 1864 to 1869. Lewis L. Ledbetter preached in 1865 and 1866, Walter R. Branham in 1867 and John W. Heidt from 1868 to 1870.

Broad River circuit was revived in 1868.

T.F. Pierce was presiding elder from 1869 through 1871. J.H. Grogan was preacher in 1871. V.W. Speer was presiding elder in 1872 and 1873. Thomas F. Pierce was again presiding elder from 1874 to 1877. William F. Quillian was preacher in 1874 and 1875 and J. F. Mixon in 1876 and 1877. R. W. Bigham was presiding elder again from 1878 through 1881, J.W.G. Watkins 1883 to 1885, John D. Hammond in 1885 and M.J. Cofer from 1888. Jesse Boring was presiding elder in 1884 and Simon P. Richardson from 1886 through 1889. A. J. Hughes preached from 1889 to 1892 and Crawford Jackson in 1893 and 1894. H.H. Parks was presiding elder from 1890 through 1893 and Luke Johnson in 1894. R.B.O. England was preacher from 1895 to



1898 and W.P. Lovejoy was presiding elder from 1895 to 1897. We have no record of presiding elders again until 1901, but I think George W. Yarborough was presiding elder during this interval. J.S.E. Emory was the preacher in 1899, Simeon Shaw in 1900, W. H. Cooper from 1901 to 1903 and W.G. Crawley in 1904. W.P. Lovejoy was again presiding elder from 1901 to 1904.

A new church, the present building, was erected in 1897. The Dedication Sermon was preached by Lindy Harris in 1898.

Sidney J. Bryan was presiding elder from 1905 through 1908. W.W. Brinsfield was preacher in 1905, J.T. Lowe in 1906 and C.M. Verdell 1907 to 1909. W.L. Pierce was presiding elder from 1909 to 1911 and B.P. Allen from 1912 to 1915. L. O. Winter was preacher in 1910, W.W. Benson 1911 to 1913, W.A. Simmons 1914 and 1915. S. P. Wiggins was presiding elder 1916 to 1919 and F. S. Hudson was preacher from 1916 through 1919. Dating from 1919 we haven't an accurate record of the presiding elders but from that time until the present time the following have been the presiding elders in the order named. G.F. Venable, W. S. Robinson, J. L. Allgood, J. W. Veatch, C.C. Jarrell, H. L. Byrd 1937 and 1938, J. Foster Young acted as District Superintendent after the death of H.L. Byrd. In 1938 M. M. Maxwell was D.S., 1939-1941 C. L. Middlebrooks; 1942, 1943, 1944 & 1945 J. H. Barton; 1946-1950 H. S. Smith and J. C. Callaway came in 1951.

This is a list of the preachers as our records show them: George W. Barrett 1920 to 1922; J. S. Hill 1923 and 1924; W. A. Woodruff 1928; J. T. Rutland 1929; J. F. Farr 1930 to 1933; J. A. Griffies 1934-1935; J. G. Lupon 1936-1938; H. A. McNeil 1939-1940; H. B. Landrum 1941-1943; B. C. Mattison 1944 to 1949; J. H. Cameron 1950-51 and the present pastor H.B. Duling, Jr. came in 1951.

This completes the history of this church from its beginning in 1786 with James Humphries as its pastor to 1952 with H. B. Duling, Jr. as pastor, covering over a century and a half, a period of time that also embraces the history of the United States from its beginning to the present time.

During that period of time many members have worshipped at the altars of this church, some of them sleep in the burial grounds of the church yard, many preachers have filled its pulpits, some of eminence and others by far the greater number, of a more humble position in the affairs of the church, all laboring though to further the Kingdom of God among men, and who can say but that of all who have come and gone during the past century and a half some who are accounted least among men may not have been greatest in the Kingdom and that their names shall hereafter be found written in the book, to wake to everlasting life and shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever?



For the early history of the church I have consulted White's Statistics of Georgia, History of Lorenza Dowe, Lorenza Dowe's Journal, Bishop Asbury's Journal, George G. Smith's History of Georgia Methodism and a few other minor sources.

Compiled by J. F. Rucker in 1935 then an addition made by him in 1952. He was an active member of Popes Chapel until the time of his death in September 1955.