

A History of the Churches of Washington.

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A HISTORY OF THE CHURCHES OF WASHINGTON.

Under this head we propose to write some of the particulars connected with the early history of the churches ^{of Washington} and find what influence the Christian religion has had upon its people. The first settlers of Carolina, being for a time without churches or religious teachers, fell into error, but they inherited a strong moral sense and were therefore easily reclaimed, becoming sincere followers of Christ and never bigots or persecutors for conscience's sake, as may be seen in the following pages. That branch of the church known as the Methodist Episcopal being the first to organize here, we will now proceed to get what facts we can concerning its history.

Previous to the War of the Revolution, Dempsey and Sarah Hinton, alarmed by the frequent deprivations of the Tories, came to Washington as refugees from Deep River, in what is now known as Chatham County, and upon

their arrival erected an altar of worship in their own dwelling, worshipping there with only their family and immediate connections.

This was the first introduction of Methodism in Washington, but the first real society was not formed until 1784, when Bishop Asbury came to this place and began to labor where as yet no preacher had ever been. Under him the church spread rapidly. The first marriage of a Methodist couple took place in 1787, and four years later the first death. The same year (1791) occurred the first revival of religion. Among those converted was Thomas Smaw, who has many descendents in this county who are still faithful to the religion of their ancestor.

In 1792 two Englishmen, Ralph Potts and Thomas Robinson came to Washington, the former having lived prior to this for a short time in Portsmouth, Va., while Robinson, a sailmaker by trade, arrived direct from England. He was a member of the Wesleyan connec-

tion in England, and upon his arrival here connected himself with the society, being considered in every way a Methodist by his thorough consecration.

But to Ralph Potts is the Methodist Church more indebted than to any man who has ever lived, for he was the very life of the church-both brain and muscle. Unaided he purchased a plot of ground, upon which in 1798, he erected the first meeting-house, paying for the same from his own purse, and conveyed the whole by deed of gift to the Methodist Episcopal Church. This building was situated on Market Street, between Second and Third.

It was painted red and on the whole was not remarkable for architectural beauty. It was scantily furnished and quite small, but large enough for its congregation and quite in keeping I imagine with the buildings surrounding it.

From 1798 to 1805 there were few alterations in the church. In 1806, however, Joseph B. Hinton and J. O. K. Williams were added to the membership. For a season

Hinton was sole steward of the church, ^uWhile in the position he ~~was~~ occupied towards the congregation, he was second only to Ralph Potts.

Between 1805 and 1812 many of the principal members died, among whom were Thomas Robinson and the wife of Ralph Potts, who went to their reward. A small revival occurred about this time and the church was very much refreshed. Many good and strong men were enlisted in the cause, among them John McWilliams, who was a consistent and faithful member.

In 1811 the first stationed minister was sent to Washington, the Rev. William Wright. The people received him gladly and did all in their power to make his situation a pleasant one. The meeting-house, which had proved very uncomfortable, was now refitted, the people meeting the expense without a murmur. A pulpit and altar were built, backs were put to seats, the interior of the house painted and a belfry erected.

In 1812 John Giles, a minister of considerable talent, was sent to this station, but the war leading to his removal, James Avent was appointed to fill his place. Even to this day is the church of Washington indebted to this godly man for in the person of his granddaughter, Mrs. Maggie Arthur Call, it has as consecrated a member and ardent supporter as ever her grandfather was, for her heart lies in the religion of her fathers.

In 1822 the third revival occurred. The year succeeding the revival, C. S. Cooly was stationed at Washington, who is spoken of in the records as "our excellent brother Cooly". On Friday night the thirty-first of December, 1824, the first watch night meeting was held at a Mr. Ravens.

In 1831, the second church was erected on a lot situated on Second Street between Gladden and Van Norden which was purchased from Mrs. Quinn, grandmother of our townswoman, Mrs. Sarah Satchwell. She gave a large dona-

tion to the lot, which was fully appreciated by the membership. Rev. James Avent officiated at the laying of the cornerstone, while it was Rev. William Anderson who first interested the people in the question of a new church and Rev. George N. Gregory who worked for its completion. Rev. Thales McDonald held the first services in 1833.

In 1840 a great revival took place. The pastor at that time was the Rev. Ira T. Wyche and his labors during this revival were abundantly rewarded, for he reaped a great harvest. After this the church prospered until the beginning of the war in 1861, at which time it was considered one of the first appointments of the North Carolina Conference.

But when the war came the members were scattered and only a few remained to worship at the altars of Methodism. Today with affection we mention the names of Elizabeth Gregory, Louisa Gaskill, Mary Long, Warren S. Mayo, Lockwood Hyatt and others who were faithful and true through the long four years of trials, during which the pulpit was

occupied only by chaplains of the Federal Forces. Towards the close of the war on April 30th, 1864, the church was burned by these forces upon evacuating the town.

We now come to the close of the war after which a few of the members returned, and, with those who had remained, then began to reorganize the church. The reorganization took place in the Mason' Lodge, that building having escaped the fire, and there they continued to worship, until their church was erected. Rev. John S. Long was the first pastor, and John A. Arthur, W. S. Mayo, Daniel Wharton, W. B. Cowell, Lockwood Hyatt, and Joseph Farrow were the first stewards. The last mentioned is the only one that survives, and also the only one living that we know of who was a convert in the great revival of 1840, under Ira T. Wyche.

And now we find only a handful of struggling men, broken down in health, their fortunes wrested from them by the cruel hand of war, homeless, with no business and only the blackness of night before their faces, to carry on the

great work before them. But I forget. The faith of their fathers was still strong in them, leading them on, and through it all they heard a sweet voice, "Lo, I am with you always;" and, as the church of 1822 went forward, so did the church of 1867 gain strength from the same source and begin the struggle for the third church. This was to be situated on the same site on which the second stood, and in spite of difficulties, the work for it went on gallantly. The cornerstone was laid in 1868 by the Rev. R. S. Moran, D. D. and Rev. W. H. Moore and W. H. Call, pastors from 1868 to 1872, labored faithfully for its completion. The basement was dedicated in 1872 by Rev. Joseph Wheeler and oncemore the congregation worshiped under their own vine and fig tree. But it was not until 1876 that their hopes were fully realized and the main auditorium was completed and dedicated by Rev. J. E. Mann.

The congregation grew rapidly and in 1897 it was deemed advisable either to add to or to tear down the building.

The latter was decided upon and the church was torn down

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and a new one begun immediately, the congregation worshipping in the Town Hall, and accepting the use of the Presbyterian Church wherever necessity demanded it. The cornerstone of this building was laid in ¹⁸⁹⁷1897, with Masonic as well as religious services, grandmaster Moye and Rev. J. E. Underwood officiating.

The architect and builder was C. E. Hartge. He completed the building in the Spring of 1899, and it was furnished and the first sermon preached May 7, 1899, by the Rev. Dr. Nash, who, in the meantime had succeeded Mr. Underwood. It was dedicated in the fall of the same year, Bishop Hendrix, who presided at the Annual Conference that was in session at that time in the church, preaching the dedicatory sermon.

Dr. Nash was succeeded by Dr. R. C. Beaman, who served one year and he was followed by Rev. L. E. Thompson, the present pastor, who is serving the church in a most worthy and acceptable manner, and is fully appreciated by it.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

A majority of the proprietors of North Carolina were Episcopalians. The Episcopal Church being the established church in England, many were temporally interested in the extension of its influence and others desired and promoted it from motives of sincere piety. Hence as soon as it appeared that permanent and flourishing settlements were formed in North Carolina, mild attempts were made to establish by law the faith and practice of the church of England. It was by theory and by law the established church until ¹⁷⁷⁶ 1876, but there were no persecutions, not many parish ministers, and a constant increase of dissentors of all denominations. Protestants increased and flourished in the state, and though an occasional politician for selfish purposes and a few bigoted people made various attempts to restrain the growth of dissenting societies, causing riots and legislative intrigues, the Episcopal Church, con-

sidering its peculiar privileges and the temper and character of the times, conducted itself with liberality and prudence.

In 1698 the County of Bath was laid off. It consisted of five precincts, and in the year 1702 the assembly passed an act by which thirty pounds, currency, per annum were raised in each precinct towards the support of a minister. The following year the first Episcopal minister arrived. In 1705 the first Episcopal church was built in Chowan precinct, and in 1706 a larger one in Perquimans. But it is not until 1822 that we hear of one being built in Washington, North Carolina. For the following information concerning this church, I am indebted to Miss Bettie Hoyt, granddaughter of Mr. Eli Hoyt, one of its most prominent members.

From her I learn that this was a plain, wooden structure, facing Main Street between Bonner and Harvey. It was built on a plot of ground donated for that purpose

by Colonel James Bonner, a member of the Colonial Militia, many of whose descendants can be found in Beaufort County. The church was consecrated in 1830, by Rev. Richard S. Mason and given the name of St. Peters by Mr. W. R. Swift, a resident of this place at that time. The chandelier and font (old relics now in the church) were presented by Mr. Stephen Cambreleng and Hon. C. C. Cambreleng, brothers of Mrs. Eli Hoyt and natives of this place.

The first parish vestry was composed of James Ellison, Thomas A. Demille, A. P. Neal, James ^S Blount, Eli Hoyt, John Jackson, and Jarvis B. Buxton. Mr. Hoyt was senior warden of the parish until his death, 1864, and was a native of Norwalk, Conn. James Ellison, grandfather of Miss Polly Ellison, of this city, was born and died here. Mr. Thomas A. Demille, for many years a resident of this place and an active member of the parish, afterwards moved to Brooklyn, N. Y. Mr. J. Buxton, also of this place, rose to prominence as a minister of the gospel.

In 1856 or 57 some additions were made to the church, the communicants at that time being from seventy-five to eighty-five in number while now there are over two hundred.

On April 30th, 1864, this building was laid in ashes, as was so much of the town at that time. No services were held in the meantime, until the reorganization, which took place in 1866 in the parlor of the rectory. Then they worshiped in the court house and while there, after much hard work, the present building was erected. It was thought best to change the position of the church, in consequence of which, it now faces Bonner instead of Main Street. It is largely indebted to Rev. Edwin Geer, W. E. Demille and J. F. Randolph, faithful servants of the church, for the prosperity of the parish. This church was consecrated November, 1875, by Rt. Rev. Thomas Atkinson, bishop of the diocese.

There have been five of these bishops, namely, Ravenscroft, Ives, Atkinson, Lyman and Watson, and twelve rectors, as follows, Joseph Pierson, George W. Freeman,

Philip Wiley, William Hawks, Robert Shaw, William Shaw, John Singletary, William E. Snowdon, F. E. White, Edwin Geer, N. C. Hughes and Nathaniel Harding.

The last named has been rector of the parish since 1875, when he was ordained to the priesthood, and now after thirty years spent in the service of his Lord in this place, Nathaniel Harding's name is a house hold word for all that is good, so firm and steady are his Christian principles, so diligent in the administration of relief and comfort, knowing no creed where duty calls. Neither honors nor wealth in distant fields have allured him from his little parish, for as true and unfading as a mother's love is his devotion to the people of Washington.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

On April 16, 1746, was fought the battle of Culloden in Scotland between Charles Edward, grandson of James II and the Scotch Highlanders, and the army of the Duke of Cumberland. The heir of the Stuarts, being totally defeated,

made his way to France, leaving many leaders of the rebellion to be put to death. But finally a general pardon was granted on condition that those implicated should emigrate to America. Once there, they sought refuge in the solitudes of North Carolina, bringing with them their Presbyterian religion, liberalized by its travels. Soon the sandy wastes on the upper Cape Fear were swarming with hardy Highlanders direct from Scotland, and being joined from time to time by others, they spread over the country now divided into the counties of Cumberland, Bladen, Sampson, Moore, Robeson, Richmond and Anson.

Their religion of course spread as widely as themselves, reaching even this secluded and distant place in 1823. At that time a church was organized with seven members, and on a plot of ground on Gladden Street, between Main and Second, donated by Thomas Trotter, the first Presbyterian church was built. It was a brick building, and therefore something to be appreciated, since buildings of this kind

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were rare in those days.

The church was established by Abner Burbank, Joseph Potts, William Roberdeau^u Swift, Thomas Trotter, Samuel R. Fowle, Nathan J. Oliver, Richard H. Mastin, Hezekiah Farrow, Ezra Holmes and Jonathan Havens.

On April 7, 1825, the church was dedicated. At that time the Presbytery of Orange was in session, and the following ministers were present: Rev. Messrs. E. B. Curry, William McPheeters, D. D., John Witherspoon, J. H. Pickard, S. P. Kollock, S. L. Graham, L. D. Hatch, E. W. Karuthers, S. Frontis and John Douglas. The ruling elders present were Mr. Hay, of New Bern, Mr. Linch, of Hillsboro, Mr. Neal, of Caswell, and Mr. Burbank, of Washington. The dedicatory sermon was preached by Rev. S. K. Kollock.

The church is not now in Orange Presbytery, the General Assembly or Synod having divided Orange and put this in the Presbytery of Albemarle. It was a source of regret to the members that it was found necessary to make the change.

For many years the Town of Washington has been the center of Presbyterianism in this part of Eastern Carolina, many of the churches in other counties being built up in part by help derived from this church and its pastors. The church in this town has always been a strong and flourishing one and stands today upon the roll of the churches of Albemarle Presbytery as high in the performance of all duties required of it as any church in that body. In this respect, however, it was blessed in a remarkable degree. For fifty years it had two active and devoted elders, who made this church and its success their life work, Mr. Samuel R. Fowle and Mr. Joseph Potts. Their memory is still kept alive by a grateful congregation in two tablets, on each side of the pulpit of the present church. After them came many men who also devoted much of their time, talents and money to the church, but none so long and so earnestly as the two mentioned .

Also no history or sketch of this church would be just did it not mention one of its pastors, the Rev. Mr. Dalton, as

it was chiefly through his efforts ~~his efforts~~ and work that the church was rebuilt, after having been burned during the war, on April 30th, 1864. He also travelled in adjoining counties, and aided largely in the building up of other churches, especially the one in Tarboro. He was a good man and greatly loved by all the people.

The church which he aided so much, was dedicated Feb. 24, 1871, and in 1877 was most fortunate in securing the services of the Rev. Dr. Smith, who is conceded to be not only one of the ablest preachers in the Presbytery but in the State. He remained here for twelve years, after which he became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina, where he is now.

The church was again fortunate. In Dr. C. M. Payne, Dr. Smith's successor, it felt it had one of its very own, he having married some years before Miss Maggie Sparrow, the third daughter of the lamented Major Thomas Sparrow, who for years was a ruling elder in the church and one of Washington's

most esteemed citizens. Dr. Payne labored among these people until September 13th, 1900, when he was called to rest. In the death of Dr. Payne the entire community lost a friend. Broad and liberal minded, with a heart full of charity, he went among the people a blessing to all and as a memorial there has been built at Nicholsonville a building known as the Payne Memorial Chapel, a fit monument to a true follower of his Lord.

Dr. J. H. N. Summerell came in December, 1900, remaining one and a half years and leaving to accept a call to a church in Ghent, a suburb of Norfolk, Va. In 1902 came the present beloved pastor, Rev. George Lawson, a powerful preacher and in every way worthy to fill the office to which he was called.

THE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH.

Situated on Bonner Street between Main and Second in the Town of Washington there might be seen in the year

1827, a small wooden building which was used by the Missionary Baptist as a house of worship.

There are no records whatever of the early history of this building, and very little tradition. We hear of the Rev. Lemual Ross as one of its ministers and also of the Rev. Mr. Mastin. Of the deacons we hear of only one, Mr. Elijah Clark, great grandfather of our towns woman, Mrs. G. A. Hepinstall. He afterwards moved to New Bern and became a very influential member of the Middle Street Baptist Church of that city.

We are told that before moving to New Bern, at his own personal expense, he had the church moved from its position on Bonner Street to one on Market, between Second and Third, and there are many people today who remember the old Market Street church, as it was the only one which escaped the fire of April 30th, 1864.

During the war the congregation of this church, as well as those of her sister churches, was scattered abroad and it was not until 1869 that it was reorganized. But for

reasons which I cannot understand it disbanded, to be organized again in 1886 by Rev. J. F. Love. The Rev. Mr. Wildman came occasionally from Greenville and preached to them, but there was no stationed preacher, After him, the Rev. Josiah Everett for two years came once a month and preached, not on the Sabbath, but some night during the week . In January 1890, however,, the State Board of Missions of the Baptist Church sent the Rev. J. E. Stowel to this congregation, but he remained only one month. C. H. G. Thomas succeeded Mr. Stowell, and upon his departure the church was once more without a regular pastor.

Then came the Rev. Duncan McLeod, to whom the congregation is indebted for the remodeling of the old building. He found this in a delapidated condition. There were no less than seventy panes out of the windows; the roof leaked and there was much to be done. But the bravery of Scotch blood showed in the man and he was not to be daunted by the formidable undertaking of repairing this church. Not only did

he raise funds by subscription, but laid aside his coat and worked with his hands as well as his brain for the cause in which he was so interested. He was ably assisted in raising funds by the Rev. Dr. Vann, now president of the Baptist Female University at Raleigh, North Carolina.

The new church was dedicated November 29, 1896, the Rev. Dr. Carter, of Raleigh, preaching the dedicatory sermon.

The Rev. Mr. Alderman succeeded Mr. McLeod as pastor of the church. Then came the Rev. Mr. Herring, Booth, Corpening, Page and Crudup, the latter being the present incumbent, to whom his congregation is devotedly attached.

But we cannot close this paper without referring to Mr. Thomas J. Latham Sr., who came to Washington and to the aid of the church when it was in its darkest days, and who strove so manfully to remove the obstacles which were in the way of the church's prosperity. And he has been amply rewarded, in the beautiful building which he has seen e-

rected and the great increase in the membership, which is now about one hundred. And here we would mark the individuality and character of those men who have worked so for the Baptist church in Washington, for it takes men of sterling worth to be faithful to the church whose vows they have taken when they find her banners trailing in the dust.

Memoirs of the church and congregation of St.

John the Apostle and Evangelist, Washington, Beaufort County, North Carolina.

The earliest records which can be found of the settlement of Roman Catholics in the town leads us to the year 1798. The place was then in its infancy and among its first settlers were the following Roman Catholics: Dr.

Dabancourt, Leonard Desseant, Peter Cass, Joseph Picquet, Walter Kenrahan, and Louis Leroy.

The first visit of a clergyman that can be discovered was in 1807. The Rev. Michael Lacy, of Norfolk, Va., came thither upwards of a hundred and thirty miles through this pathless wilderness to respond to the call of the sick. Mr.

Henrehan being ill at that time. On this occasion he celebrated mass at Mr. Leroy's, which may be considered the opening of the mission in this town. On the corner of third and Van Norden Streets may be seen today the plot of ground which was given by Mr. Leroy for a church and burying ground to these people.

On June 4, 1821, Bishop England first visited Washington, then embraced in the diocese of South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia. He again visited this town November 16, 1821, and again May 7, 1822. During this last visit he commenced the building of the first Roman Catholic church attempted in North Carolina. It was finished, frequently used for the celebration of mass and formally dedicated March 25, 1829, under the invocation of St. John the Apostle and Evangelist.

In 1848 and '49, under Bishop Reynolds, the church was repaired and furnished with an organ, pews, small side altars and was painted inside and out. A new fence was placed

around the adjoining cemetery, which was laid out in walks bordered with shrubbery, and trees and beautiful flowers were planted. It continued to be kept in good order and repair until destroyed April 30th, 1864, by the United States land forces under General Harland ~~and~~ Col. J. M. McClesney acting protem.

The following persons may be considered founders of this church, Louis Leroy, John P. Labarb, John Gallagher, William Grace and Jacob Wheeler. The church has never been rebuilt since destroyed by fire, but the mission has been visited many times by various priests. We know of only two baptized members of that church now residents of this place, who are also the only descendants of any of the founders- Mrs. Mary Sheffry and Dr. J. M. Gallagher.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The Diciples of Christ in the United States number about one million two hundred and fifty thousand. As individuals they are Diciples of Christ, but as a church The

Christian. With the dawn of the Nineteenth Century a great religious awakening began simultaneously in all parts of the country. Among the great leaders in this awakening were Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott and Thomas and Alexander Campbell. The followers of these men first organized a church in Washington in 1890, at W. J. Crumpler's residence. The official Board was composed of Aug. Latham, T. W. Phillips and C. M. Robinson as Elders, and W. J. Crumpler, J. A. Burgess, E. H. Whitley, O. K. Stilley as Deacons. The ground was purchased of D. T. Swindell, and present building begun ¹⁸⁹⁰ ~~1891~~ it was finished in 1891, Dr. H. D. Harper, of Kinston, North Carolina, preaching the first or dedicatory sermon. D. W. Davis was first pastor, and the present one is Rev. Merritt Owens. They have a present membership of about two hundred and the church, although comparatively speaking in its infancy, is in a very prosperous condition.

THE PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH.

The Primitive Baptist Church, one of the oldest Churches in North Carolina, was not organized in Washington until September 1891. The organization took place at the home of Mrs. W. B. White, on the corner of Fourth and Market Streets. A church was begun on land given by Mrs. White adjoining her residence, and this was finished in 1901. This has never been considered a station, a pastor visiting it only at intervals. Rev. J. N. Rodgers preached the first sermon, and continues his visitations to this congregation. Though small in number, they are hopeful for the future and we trust that their hopes may be fully realized.

THE COLORED CHURCHES IN WASHINGTON.

The colored churches in Washington are worthy of some consideration. We will first take notice of the A. M. E. Church.

In 185-9, T, Page Ricaud of the white M. E. Church leased from the Town Commissioners for the sum of one dollar for ninety-nine years a plot of ground on the corner of Res-
pess and Fifth Street for the purpose of building a chapel for the use of the colored members of his church. Sufficient funds were raised by the white people for the building, which was soon completed and known as the Avent Chapel.

It may be known to few that before the war the colored people did not have pastors of their own race, the laws not allowing them this privilege. The Rev. Edmund Hoover, (white) was their first pastor, and Warren S. Mayo, John A. Arthur, and George L. Buckman were appointed guardians for them. This church was burned in 1897 and re-
built in 1899. Bishop Vanderhoof was the first bishop. *to 1899*
It had been recently remodeled and speaks well for the industry and thrift of its people.

THE ZION METHODIST CHURCH.

This church was organized in the spring of 1869.

The ground was purchased for the erection of a building from Mr. George Turner on Fourth Street between Market and Respass. The cornerstone was laid in 1872 and it was completed the same year, the first pastor being Rev. G. B. Farmer and the first bishop to visit it J. W. Hood. The church building and ground as it stands now is valued at three thousand dollars. It has a large and influential congregation, who are earnest and sincere workers for its prosperity.

There are other colored denominations in Washington, but they are yet in their infancy.

And now, after relating the history of the churches let us think something of their influence. Even the most skeptical must admit that it is far good, and if, divided, their influence has been so marked, how much more

wonderful would have been their record had there been no division. We speak of the division of creeds, for in all temporal affairs there has been a oneness of purpose. Who was really the Father of Washington's Public Schools? W. Z. Morton, an earnest, christian vestryman of his church for years. Moreover in her early history we find two of the most prominent Presbyterian elders with several of the Episcopal vestry pushing her trade and commerce to the utmost, and the deacons and elders we find the bone and sinew of her mercantile life. Yet we mean no reflection upon those old deacons and stewards, who worked with so much zeal and fervor for their churches, overcoming obstacles that would seem insurmountable, but who, with an unerring faith and trust in ^{God} good, have given to us, their children, such a precious heritage. What we mean to say is that it was as individuals that they worked for the churches, and therefore the great result of their labors seems so much the more wonderful. And really if the

lives of these men of God and their faithful pastors
could be written it would make a chapter in history equal
to the Acts of the Apostles, who first went out into the
world to preach the gospel.

(The End)

Marie Louise Archbell.

June, 1904