Large Stained Glass Window Honors
Three Founders Of The Local Church

First Station Preacher
Sent Here 1811; Present
Church Was Built In 1899

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The First Methodist church has the distinction of being the oldest church in Washington, North Carolina. A large stained glass window, "The Good Shepherd," is placed on the north side of the church. Ralph Potts, Sarah Redding and the Rev. James Avent were the founders of the church.

Methodism was brought to America by John Wesley and George Whitefield. Twelve years after the formation of the First Methodist Society in North Carolina, Bishop Francis Asbury came to Washington, C. and founded the society here in 1784. This society was the nucleus of the local Episcopalian church, which was organized at the general conference in Baltimore in 1866.

Early History

The early history of the local church is found in an old deed of Methodism in North Carolina: "Previous to the year of 1790, the inhabitants of this region, proprietors of the soil, became impressed with the high benevolent character of the Methodist faith. They were generally converted and associated themselves with the Methodists, having up to this time been strict disciplinarians, and more accomodatingly creed." At this time the church was built by the Rev. James Avent, located on the present site of the church.

First Station Preacher

Ralph Potts was the first preacher to be sent to Washington by the Reverend William Wright. The history states: "The meeting house, which has been so much admired, was built in the year 1853. The interior of the church is very elegant and spacious. The windows are filled with stained glass and the pews are of solid oak. The church is a large brick structure and is located on the main street of the city. The church was dedicated on November 1, 1854."

The massive brick First Methodist church of today was built in 1899, the members feeling the need for a larger church. The cornerstone was laid December 29, 1897 at the corner of the Sunday school building. The cornerstone at the front of the church reads: "First Methodist Church, 1899."

Within its sacred sanctuary the brightness of day sends its light through the stained glass windows, the windows were created by the famous glass craftsmen of the world. The windows are dedicated to the memory of God and His love for mankind.

METHODOIST CHURCH OF EARLY YEARS

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH in Washington after the Civil War has been described as a "large and handsome building, with a very sharp roof." This church was shown as such in a photograph of the University of North Carolina, 1899. It is now preserved in the Library of the University of North Carolina, 1899.
January 3, 1897, given by his family.

The huge-stained glass window, at the south side of the edifice, inscribed, "Unto Me," was presented by the Rosebud Society of the church, which active group, under the leadership of Mrs. P. A. Cowell, by her son, John Thomas Lewis, 1874-1931, and Leila Savage Lewis, 1872-1941, and the peach entrance double doors are dedicated to the memory of Elmport Freeman Robbins, 1912-1919, "memory of God and in loving memory." On the walls of the church are two marble plaques, placed in remembrance of members who served the church and served well. One reads: "To the memory of Warren S. Mayo 1822-1897, pastor of the church and superintendent of the Sunday school for 13 years," and the other tablet is inscribed: "To Arthur who died Feb. 2, 1878, age 59. This tablet has been erected by his wife and he was loved by them, and loved his best, his wife and children." The name of Rosa Avent Arthur has been added at the top of the tablet.

The Arthur family played an important role in the church's history and on the rear grounds of the church there is a communal vault with a wrought-iron-locked fence enclosing its entrance.

Simmons Fulford, born July 15, 1825, died January 3, 1897. The communion tray, along with the other memorials within the church, is the marble baptismal font given in memory of Mrs. Annie Walters Spencer, 1870-1939.

The cherished memorials within the church are the marble baptismal font given in memory of Mrs. Louisa Gaskill by her children; the polished marble of Emily A. Freeman Robbins, 1849-1917; and the pulpit chairs, scoured in loving memory of Bessie Bumford.

The grounds surrounding the church are undergoing transformation with the church building for the past few years. The Morris Sutton Hut, purchased with church funds, was dedicated on August 10, 1951, for the outstanding work with the Youth of the church.

The church is now taking just pride in the chapel which is being built and will be a memorial to Mrs. P. A. Cowell, by her son, John Thomas Lewis, 1874-1931, D.H. Tuttle, 1873-1918; J. E. McCraken, 1822-1875; L. D. Hayman, 1822-1874; H. R. C. Hay, 1822-1874; T. A. E. Rees; D. A. Clarke, 1940-1944; C. F. Heath, 1844-1849. The church building has served as a place of worship since Dr. P. A. Cowell's pastorate began in 1873. It includes the Sunday School, the Sanctuary, and the Fellowship Hall.

The highlights of the Methodist church this year are Sunday School Program. The annual conference is held in October, the North Carolina annual conference which meets October 21, and the observance of Easter. The Methodist choir's Christmas and Easter concerts have received widespread acclaim. Mrs. James A. Hackley directs the choir, and C. E. Stevens directs the youth choir.

Mr. Earnhardt, known throughout the section for his wit and humor, when asked: "How is your pastorate?" replied: "Things have been talked about for the past 50 years and been completed." In connection with the outstanding accomplishments of the present administration, the church has been redecorated and enlarged under the direction of Lewis H. Swindell, Jr., who is pastor. A new building is under construction providing a church annex for the Boy Scouts; addition of 275 members to the church roll; increased membership; providing additional space for the Boy Scouts; and the congregation has more than doubled. The Ladies Parlor is being beautifully furnished. The church and the kitchen are newly renovated, and the church has a modern look.