Washington First Baptist Church Has Interesting History

Founded By Ex-Methodist Minister
Who Was Immersed In Pamlico River

Church First Located
At Main And Bonner;
Shared "Free Church"

By MARY M. TOLEZ
Daily News Staff Writer

The First Baptist Church of Washington was founded by a Methodist minister, the Rev. Jeremiah Maslin, born in Frederick county, Virginia. After a ministry of 24 years in New Bern he resided in Washington. Maslin moved to Washington in 1844 and attended occasional services at the Tranters Creek Baptist church. He was particularly concerned in the Pamlico River in front of Washington and a short time later was ordained to the Baptist faith.

Soon afterwards Mr. Maslin and about 20 other residents petitioned the Tranters Creek Baptist church for permission to form a Baptist church in the town of Washington. Elder Maslin was called to its pastoral care and the church grew so that at his death in 1825 it consisted of 68 members.

It is interesting to note that the name of Elder Jeremiah Maslin appears several times in a very old church record of the local Baptist church, dated 1821, and his death is recorded in this book as August 13, 1825.

First Location

The Baptist House of Worship was first located at the corner of Main and Bonner streets, where the Episcopal church now stands. The "Free Church" as it was called was occupied by 50 as provided by James Bonner when he laid out the town in 1776. The Baptist members shared in the use of the "Free Church" along with the Presbyterians, Episcopalian, Episcopalians, and Methodists. The Methodists built their own church building in the year 1840 and the other denominations continued to use the "Free Church" until 1832. During this year the other churches also built elsewhere and the members of the Baptist church secured sole occupancy of the Free church building.

The small church building was removed about 1854 and placed on a new site owned by the Baptist on Market street, which was sold to the present Sam Marsh Filling station. Market street and opposite the present post office building between Germond and Third streets. The church building was of hand-hewn timbers and was substantial. Much of the heavy timber was used in the remodeling of 1890. The main auditorium and galleries were lighted by a number of small windows and the entrance to the galleries was from the outside. The pews were perfectly straight-backed and made very narrow and uncomfortable.

After many years of activity, the approach of the Civil War brought a gradual decline until the total disruption had left it the only church building left standing in Washington. The church did not begin to function properly until about 1865 due to the destructions of the Civil War and the Reconstruction Period. Just prior to the War the church was served irregularly in monthly meetings, whereas during the previous period it was led by a full-time pastor and was one of the few churches in East Carolina having a regular minister at this early date.

Elder Leader

After the Civil War, and until 1880, James Morgan, layman, and father of the late Mrs. Lucy Williams, had held the church together until such time as a regular pastor could be called, the first of which was Rev. Duncan McLeod. Conditions were such, that when he came, in the early part of 1883, there were only about 15 members. From that date until the present however, the growth of the church has been steady, due to its missionary emphasis, and the church has had services every Sunday since.

The Baptist church was one of the few buildings in the entire town not destroyed by the burning of the town during the War Between the States. For a while afterwards, until the rebuilding of the Presbyterian church, Presbyterians shared in the use of the building holding their services in the Baptist church.

Old Structure Rebuilt

By the cultivation of generosity among the Baptist members, and aided by generous assistance of local friends, those in Eastern North Carolina, and throughout the state, the old structure was rebuilt and the new building was dedicated Sunday, November 29, 1893.


The records seem to indicate that under all these pastors the church made steady progress. During the pastorate of the Rev. J. A. Sullivan, van class rooms were added and other improvements made. It was at the close of his ministry that the church felt able to recognize the aid being given by the North Carolina State Board of Missions by which it had been aided for many years. Since that time has been self-supporting and has regularly participated in giving and in turn, to missionary work near and far.

At this time a movement was started to erect a new church building in a more suitable location. For this purpose the property at the corner of Harvey and Main streets was purchased. The Rev. R. L. Gay, pastor, who came after Mr. Sullivan, began the work of raising funds for a new church building. He resigned, however, before actual construction was begun. The Rev. Edward Jenkins was called and remained until after the completion of the building, the ground being broken in 1916 and the building completed in 1917.

The 13 members of the church in 1893 were matched with the 130 of 1917 when the Baptist church was moved from Market street to East Main street. Two lots were sold from the ground before erecting the church and the Morton house which faced Market street was moved to a lot facing Harvey street, now used as the church annex.

Following the pastorate of Mr. Jenkins, the following ministers served as pastors of the church: The Rev. Drs. Frank Watson, C. P. Hudson, Charles B. Pugh, W. L. Vaden, Victor Harrell, W. C. Everette, and A. Lincoln Fulk. Mr. Fulk was pastor as pastor for 12 years. During his pastorate the church's budget plan was initiated and the carpets and acoustical alterations of the church dome were done possible by the efforts of the members.

The Baptist Church in the year 1900. The church was located on the west side of Market street, between Second and Third streets. Much of the heavy timber of the Free Church was used in the remodeling of the Baptist church in the year 1886. The church purchased property and moved to its present location on East Main Street in 1917.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WASHINGTON

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN 1900

Fulk's term the church added the services of a Religious Education assistant and a secretary.

Data In Old Paper

The early history of the First Baptist Church was partly furnished by an interesting paper prepared by Mrs. S. P. Allgood, who was born October 23, 1867, in the oldest member of the church and has worked diligently towards its progress during her lifetime. For approximately 45 years Mrs. Allgood served as the leader of the young people of the church.

The present pastor of the First Baptist church, the Rev. Dr. Winton Hamilton, a native of Roanoke, Virginia came to Washington in October of 1966 after serving as pastor in Hampton, and Roanoke, Virginia, and New Orleans, and for two years as a chaplain of 1st General Hospital in World War II. He received his education at Fork Union Military Academy Va., University of Richmond, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Before entering the service Dr. Hamilton taught in the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary which institution conferred upon him the degree of Th.D. in 1949 since he has been pastor in Washington, Dr. and Mrs. Hamilton have their home at 505 North Street.
BAPTIST
(Continued From Page 5)

the new Baptist parsonage at 211 College Avenue in Washington Park which was completed last November. They have two children, William Wistar Hamilton III who is taking training with General Electric Company in Schenectady, N.Y. and Mrs. James E. Herring of Clinton, Mississippi, where Professor Herring is on the faculty of Mississippi College.

Today the First Baptist church of Washington has a total roll of 686 members, of whom 350 are resident members. During the last "church year" there were 99 new members added, 60 of whom were received by baptism. Three branches have gone out from the First Baptist church of Washington. During Mr. Everett’s ministry the Riverview church; and recently the Cherry Chapel church and the Nicholsonville church, growing out of the Tenth and Nicholson streets Branch Sunday School, which is still an arm of the Mother church, and is, under the leadership of Mr. Merrill Daniels, associate superintendent of the First Baptist Sunday school. This latest branch was begun in July 1951 and already has an enrollment of 98.

Mr. W. D. Welch is the capable superintendent of the Sunday school department of which there are 488 members, graded into study classes on the age basis.

The women of the church are actively working in the Women’s Missionary Union and various circles of the church and sponsor the missionary training of the several auxiliaries of boys and girls and older youth people.

Church Officers
The church officers are: Paul A. Waters, Moderator; A. J. Rector, clerk; F. T. Paul, Treasurer;

church is now in process of building Sunday school rooms to accommodate its 74 attendants. The church was founded March 28, 1938 by Hubert Morris, and since this date its 28 members have taken an active interest in all phases of church work.

Brother S. J. Hodges was the first pastor of the church and the Rev. D. F. Fulcher of Vanceboro is its present minister. The Belhaven Pentecostal church is a branch of the Mother Church in Goldsboro, N. C.

Sunday school is held each Sunday at 10 o’clock, while preaching services at 11 o’clock are conducted each Second and Fourth Sunday.

Older Member
Mrs. Annie Smith, who is the oldest member of the Belhaven church, is superintendent of the

W. D. Welch, Sunday school superintendent; J. D. Warren, director of Training Union; Mrs. Hannis Latham, Jr., President; W. M. U.; R. B. Bilbro, chairman of Deacons; Orion J. Peavy, president Brotherhood, and Mrs. C. S. Graves leader of the young people.


The highlights of the church year were the evangelistic services held in April; the annual Southern Baptist Convention which Dr. Hamilton and Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Allgood attended in Miami in May, and the vacation Bible school in June which broke all previous records with an average daily attendance of 148. Special religious activities soon to take place are the State Missions Week of Prayer to be held in

September, the Roanoke Association in October, the North Carolina State Baptist Convention November 2-8 in Winston Salem, and the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions which will be held in December led by the Missionary Organizations of the church. A "Roll Call" of the entire membership will be conducted during September. Worship services continue throughout the year without interruption.

Schedule of church services are Bible school each Sunday morning at 9:45 o’clock followed by 11 o’clock morning worship; 6:30 P.M. Training Union; 7:30 P.M. Evening worship and Hour of Prayer each Wednesday night at 7:30 o’clock. (Except that the night services are a half-hour later during the summer months, until school begins.)