

History

First Baptist Church of Rockingham

As Written By

Charles B. Deane

It is a pleasant task but not an easy one to write the historical story of a church. In drafting this history the writer is prompted to urge church leaders to preserve records, letters and pictures, obtain the personal experiences of elderly members, and to bring together all available data in a permanent archive for the day when it is sure to be desired and needed.

Since 1932 sundry material has been assembled that will be used in this historical story. Many personal conferences took place with older members of the church. Among those, now deceased, were Deacons A.D. Dumas who built the present church, Wm. E. Harrison, R.S.L. Davis, and Claude Gore. Neither of these was a charter member of the church. However, each lived during a period in the history of the church that was most significant. Each knew something about all the ministers who served the church from the date of its constitution.

Through the years contact was made with several of the former ministers, their children, and friends, who generously provided significant and interesting history of the church.

Most of the Minutes of the Pee Dee Baptist Association have been preserved since 1816 in the Baptist collection of the Wake Forest College Library and by this writer as Clerk of the Association. From these Minutes and the available church records the statistical data included in this historical sketch has been compiled.

Early Baptist Churches in Richmond County

Fourteen years after the close of the Civil War there were only two Baptist Churches in the County. These were Cartledge Creek, constituted in the year 1820, and Saron, constituted September 23, 1826. In 1936 in view of a disagreement in the Cartledge Creek Church, Finay Grove Baptist Church was constituted in January of that year. This church failed to survive the Civil War and was abandoned in 1865.

North Carolina Baptist State Convention

Between 1820 and 1830, many missionary Baptist Churches were organized in North Carolina. This was made possible in view of the active interest of Baptist Missionaries who were going from place to place throughout the state establishing churches.

There were very few full-time churches. These traveling missionaries would go from community to community by horse and buggy. They were in every sense of the word missionary and generally self-appointed. In those days, salaries were meagre and in most instances these ministers of the road traveled without script and with a change of linen. Only through the kindness of the people of the communities they served were these missionaries able to subsist.

Baptist Churches continued to spring up over the state. Recognizing the need of a state voice, delegates came together in Greenville in 1830 and organized the North Carolina Baptist State Convention.

Wake Forest College

Many of the key leaders in the life of the North Carolina Baptist Convention were members of the early Baptist Churches in Richmond County. It was in Cartledge Creek that some of the first conference and meetings took place looking toward the establishment of Wake Forest College. A fact of historical significance was that one of the first gifts contributed to the new college established in 1834 at Wake Forest was given by members of the Cartledge Creek Church. It was an anvil for the college blacksmith shop.

At the time of the writing of this history, the College property has been sold to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has been organized and is entering its second year. A new Wake Forest College is rising at Reynolda in Winston-Salem.

The Rockingham Baptist Mission

The membership of the Cartledge Creek Baptist Church came from miles around, a score or more of whom lived in Rockingham. In view of the distance, slow travel and the growing industrial development of Rockingham, the Cartledge Creek Church established a Baptist Mission in Rockingham. The Sunday School was held in the old red brick Court House that formerly stood in the town square on the north side of Washington Street. This mission Sunday School was led by John B. Covington, who later became the first Deacon of the church.

First Minister Went West

In June 1935, the Reverend Wm. T. Jordan, the first Minister, was living at Maryhill in the State of Washington. He was proprietor of the Tokay Ranch. In April 1937, after moving to Seattle, Washington, while in poor health and having reached approximately 84 years of age, he prepared an interesting account of the events leading to the establishment of the Church.

Reverend Wm. T. Jordon

April 24, 1879 to October 31, 1880

The history and growth of any church is closely related to the minister who served. Speaking of his first trip to Rockingham, Mr. Jordon recalls that it was on a gloomy Friday afternoon late in November of 1878. He was housed by Major McCall. He came to Rockingham to fill an appointment for Dr. N.B. Cobb who lived in Lilesville and preached to a small congregation in the Presbyterian Church. On the following Sunday, Mr. Jordon preached in the Masonic Hall in Laurinburg. He points out that on that Sunday he accepted calls to preach two Sundays a month at Lumberton at a salary of \$200.00 a year, and two other calls to preach one Sunday a month at Laurinburg and one Sunday a month at Rockingham, each church paying him a salary of \$100.00 per year. He goes on to say that he would have accepted another call from

Cartledge Creek had there been another Sunday in the month. Jordon was in his early twenties when he entered the local scene.

In the spring of 1879, young Jordon accompanied by his father, Reverend Frank M. Jordon of Lumberton, began a "Meeting of Days" on the 13th of April. This meeting was held in the old red brick Court House mentioned before.

During this "Meeting of Days" the young minister relates several interesting events and we record one. He goes on to say: "It seems that there was a flock of goats in town which frequently occupied the old Court House. One morning while the elder Jordon was conducting a prayer service a storm came up and the wind was blowing a gale. An old goat walked into the room, stood in the aisle looking around until Brother Reynolds got up and put him out. My father turned the incident to a good purpose and urged the unsaved to flee to Jesus for refuge from the storm of wrath to come."

On Thursday night, the 24th of April 1879, following the evening sermon by the elder Jordon, the following individuals presented letters from the Cartledge Creek Baptist Church to join the newly constituted church. These Charter Members were Cynthia Northcutt, Lou Northcutt, W.K. Dawkins, Duncan Dawkins, L.J. Dawkins, Caroline Jones, Mary A. McKay, Louisa Maurice, Louis A. Reynolds, Elizabeth Reynolds, Flora Jones, C.P. Jones, C.J. Jones, E.J. McKay, Lou F. Nichols and Jemina Snead. Y.C. Morton joined from the Wadesboro Baptist Church and Josephine Entwistle from the Baptist Church at Graniteville. Jane Ford joined the Baptist Church at Tallassee, Alabama, and Sarah and Georgianna Atkinson from the Langley Baptist Church. These Charter Members then organized the first church. Reverend John Monroe of Spring Hill (Wagram) was present for the organization meeting. The new church received from him the "Church Covenant" and "Articles of Faith". Thereafter he delivered the "Charge" to the new church.

This Jordon team of father and son continued the meeting and near the close the following individuals were unanimously received for baptism: Henry C. Dockery, Josiah Brewer, Victoria Grissom, Alfred Northcutt, Mittie Northcutt, Mary Northcutt, Maggie Northcutt, Laura Atkinson, Emeline Atkinson, Frances Moore, Mary Jane Moore, Rebecca Moore, Margaret McKinnon, Ann McKinnon, and Sallie McKinnon.

First Baptism April 27, 1879

The Clerk's Record of the Church reveals that on Sunday morning, April 27, 1879, these individuals who joined the Church on confession of their faith were baptized in the waters of Hitchcock Creek. This baptism pool was located approximately one hundred yards below the Pee Dee No. 2 Mill Bridge and at a point if the present High Street were extended directly to the bank of the creek. This location was used by the local Baptist Church as a place for baptizing for ten or more years. It was here that one of the former members of the church, Deacon W.E. Harrison, was baptized, as well as Mrs. Y.C. Morton, widow of one of the Charter Members of the Church.

Building the First Church

The new Church, having organized and called its first pastor, Wm. T. Jordon, the son of the Evangelist Frank M. Jordon, who assisted in the church organization, was now ready to proceed with the tedious job of completing the church organization. The church had not at this time elected its officers. On Sunday evening, May 31, 1879, after the "Message" from the "Bar" of the old red brick courthouse, where in the weeks following would be the scene of many legal battles and political skirmishes, and amid the strong odor of left over tobacco juice matted on the floors and corners of the building, the young pastor before the conference received three additional members for admission to church membership. One of these was destined to become a stalwart figure and strong pillar in the early church.

First Church Officers

At this church conference on Sunday evening, May 31, 1879, John B. Covington and Henry C. Dockery were elected First and Second Deacon respectively and were elected for "such period of time as they may faithfully and satisfactorily perform their respective duties."

In a later paragraph it will be noted that some sixty-five years after the election of the first deacons they were placed on a rotation system. This modern move, however, provoked considerable discussion as will be noted in the historical story around 1944.

R.A. Johnson was elected Church Clerk. He served in this capacity for an unbroken period, except for two years, for thirty-one years, and to the year 1911. His attention to details and correct accounting of all transactions through the early and later years did much to solidify the early Church.

Only 49 Members in 1879

With a membership of 49 the Church approached the end of its first year with \$105.72 total gifts, including the pastor's salary. That compared with the present Church membership of 688 in 1951 with total gifts of \$39,253.64.

Capt. Wm. I. Everett Gave Lot in 1879

From the West Coast the aged minister who served the church in 1879 and 1880 wrote that it was difficult days to secure funds to erect a church building. He went on to say, however, that the citizens of the town, irrespective of denomination, were enthusiastic in their desire to help. It was pointed out that of the 49 members comprising the new church, perhaps less than a half dozen commanded much income. This early church soon became indebted to one of the county's early patriots, Capt. William I. Everett. Capt. Everett was a leading Methodist, who together with Mrs. Everett, created an Indenture dated December 24, 1879, which conveyed to the first Trustees, H.C. Dockery, R.A. Johnson, John B. Covington, George Atkinson, Josiah Brewer, J.P. Reynolds and Alfred Northcutt, a lot of land 75x75 feet at the intersection of Greene and

North Randolph Streets. This lot is the approximate site where on the present sanctuary is located.

It appears that young Jordon was a church builder because at the time the Rockingham Church was being initiated church buildings were being erected at his other pastorates in Lumberton and Laurinburg. Around this period the Lumberton Church called him for three Sundays in a month and he was forced to give up Laurinburg but continued to serve the Rockingham Church. He goes on to say that for two years, once a month at midnight, he climbed the red clay hill from the Seaboard Depot and went to the hotel kept by Brother and Sister Reynolds where he ever received a warm welcome.

The young congregation continued to meet in the Court House while the new Church was being erected.

First Church Building Cost \$2,485 in 1881

It will be noted that the land conveyed to the Trustees of the new church was for the sole purpose of a Baptist Church building. If at any time it was not so used it would revert to the original donors. Within recent years, the heirs of the late William I. Everett conveyed this lot of land in fee simple to the Church.

In the year 1880, it appears that a building committee composed of H.C. Dockery, Chairman, W.I. Everett, Y.C. Morton, J.B. Covington, and R.A. Johnson, set to work to build a church. During the year 1880 and the early part of 1881, this committee worked assiduously upon the new project, and at a church quarterly conference on June 18, 1881, the building committee made its report. It was pointed out that a new wooden structure, yet a substantial building, had been erected at a cost of \$2,485.84, and paid for with the exception of the sum of \$379.38 advanced by the Church Treasurer, H.C. Dockery, who had served as chairman of the building committee. The records reveal that this deficit was fully paid by December 16, 1883, and the young Church was beginning to show real growth.

T. or Trezevant Harrison October 31, 1880 to December 30, 1884

The second pastor of the church was Trezevant Harrison. It was during his pastorate, which covered approximately four years, that the first church was dedicated.

Dedicated in September 1884

This dedication took place in September 1884. The dedication sermon was preached by Dr. T.H. Pritchard. His text was "Their Rock Is Not as Our Rock, Our Enemies Themselves Being the Judges". It appears that young Jordon, who was then serving practically full time at Lumberton, was present and assisted in the dedication.

The first pastor made a brief talk and described his first coming to Rockingham on a gloomy Friday afternoon "having in my hand a little grip in which I had a change of linen and the

notes of two sermons.” In recalling the incidents of the day, Jordon goes on to say that he and Dr. Pritchard were being entertained in the home of Col. Thomas Leak. In the afternoon Col. W.L. Steele, who was present at the service, visited the home of Col. Leak. During the conversation Col. Steele reminded Dr. Pritchard that he had heard him preach that same sermon fifteen years before in Chapel Hill. Col. Leak pointed out that he had heard him preach it six years before in Wilmington, so the group concluded, says Reverend Jordon, “That Dr. Pritchard still had only one sermon while I had two.”

Tresevant Harrison is remembered as one of the very able preachers of the church. He was called from the First Baptist Church of Greensboro. He was the father of the late W.E. Harrison who for many years was a Deacon in the Church. The minister and his family lived in a residence which was located on the site of the old Farmers Bank Building. Mr. Harrison was a graduate of Columbia University, and upon graduation left immediately for his home in Sussex County, Virginia, where as a youth he enlisted and served with honor in the Army of the Confederacy.

It was during his pastorate in Rockingham that the church became more missionary in activity. In those days it took a very strong person to advance the cause of Foreign Missions. The new church, having gone through a building period, was resting on its oars. He rallied the membership together and his ministry was active and lasting.

This ministry continued through December 1884. Thereafter, Mr. Harrison continued to do missionary work in the Pee Dee Section and was active up until his death on July 5, 1895. His remains were interred in Old Eastside Cemetery.

The Next 21 Years

The history of the church through the next 21 years is related to the characteristics and work of the following eight ministers who served during this period.

J.W. Wildman

January 5, 1885 to November 22, 1885

Mr. Wildman was a native of Virginia. He came here from a pastorate in Roanoke. His pastorate was the shortest, save one, in the life of the church. While his ministry was short, the records reveal that his preaching was scholarly, and he was an able advocate in the pulpit. At the close of his ministry in Rockingham, the church membership had grown to 74.

B.H. Phillips

December 6, 1885 to May 9, 1886

Mr. Phillips, the fourth minister of the church, came from Ronceverte, West Virginia. His pastorate, the shortest, lasted approximately six months. There is very little record concerning this minister, but it appears he was married and had reached a mature age. The membership became attached to him and reluctantly accepted his resignation in May of 1886.

N.B. Cobb

September 26, 1886 to February 3, 1889

Mr. Cobb, the fifth pastor, came from Hickory, NC. He was also pastor at Cartledge Creek and at Lilesville. He is remembered as a thoroughly educated and full equipped minister. Mr. Cobb's son, Collier Cobb, in 1932 was head of the Department of Geology at the University of North Carolina. Mr. Cobb endeared himself to the entire community. His outreach touched the mill sections of Rockingham. In view of the interest and assistance he gave and that of the members of the Rockingham Baptist Church, the present Cobb Memorial Baptist Church in East Rockingham was named after Pastor Cobb.

Livingston Johnson

March 17, 1889 to July 6, 1895

This was the first pastorate of Mr. Johnson. He came here as a young man direct from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky. He was around 27 years of age and served for six years. His boyhood days were spent in Richmond County. He was a graduate of Wake Forest College and was one of the two pastors of the local church born in Richmond County. There was no pronounced growth during this pastorate, however, Mr. Johnson was generally loved by all denominations. He was very popular with the young people. He took an active interest in civic affairs, especially in the fight for the grade school which was uppermost in the minds of the people at that time. His stature continued to grow, and before he left Rockingham he had received numerous calls to larger fields, and likely not until his resignation, which was accepted July 6, 1895, did the church begin to realize his worth and ability. He later became an outstanding literary figure. At the time of his demise, and for several years prior thereto, he served as Editor of the Biblical Recorder.

Joseph G. Blalock

July 1, 1895 to April 16, 1899

Joseph G. Blalock was born in Granville County, October 30, 1867. After graduating from Wake Forest College with an A.B. degree in 1892, he studied at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from which he finished with a Th. M. degree in 1895.

This was the first pastorate for the young minister. He lived with the late G.A. Patrick and "Big Jess" Caudle in the "Ark", famous in those days as one of the most interesting houses in town. He was the only pastor to marry while serving as the local minister. He married Miss Minnie Rogers of Apex. One son was born while the family lived in Rockingham.

Mr. Blalock advised the writer that during his pastorate the country was going through a financial depression, but prices were low, and the dollar went much further than now. He went on to say that there was no remarkable development in the church life during his stay. He pointed out that Deacon Henry C. Dockery was the largest contributor and the leading spirit in the church.

The agitation against the saloon began to take form during this pastorate. It is remembered that Mr. Blalock spoke out vigorously against the saloon from the pulpit. Outside the pulpit he was remembered as a very modest and conservative person.

His demise took place at Wake Forest where his remains were interred in June of 1935.

Charles L. Greaves
July 2, 1899 to December 1, 1901

Mr. Greaves was born in Pasquotank County, June 12, 1872. He graduated from Wake Forest College with an A.B. degree in 1897. In 1906 he received his degree from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. In 1911 Wake Forest College awarded him the honorary D.D. degree.

At the age of 19 he was ordained, and his first pastorate was Sanford, then Pittsboro. He came to the local pastorate from Pittsboro.

It is remembered that he as the fourth young minister of the local church. He had a very attractive personality, was a fine speaker and well liked. It is recalled that he as one of the fastest speakers, though very distinct, in the history of the church. He as a good mixer and was always prepared. In later years he developed into one of the State's outstanding ministers. At the time of his death he was serving the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Raleigh.

D.C. Britt
November 24, 1901 to October 1, 1905

Mr. Britt was likewise a native of Pittsboro. He is remembered as one of the most colorful and courageous fighters in his day against the saloon. He was bold and fearless in advocating his views on all moral questions. There was no compromise in his nature.

He as married and around 30 years of age when he entered the local pastorate.

A review of the four years tenure at the local church reveals that several individuals were expelled from the church for drunkenness and other unchristian acts. It affords quite a contrast with the churches of today.

On September 6, 1903, he was given a leave of absence to study at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He resumed his work locally in 1904 and remained until October 1905. His death occurred in Rutherfordton where his remains were interred.

Evan D. Cameron
October 1, 1905 to June 3, 1906

Mr. Cameron was called from South McAlister in the Indian Territory. He was born in Richmond County at the old Cameron Place in Wolf Pit Township. He was the uncle of former Governor and Senator Cameron Morrison and the late John Morrison. He preached his first sermon at the local church on October 15, 1905. His pastorate lasted only eight months.

Following his resignation on June 3, 1906, he became President of the Baptist University of Oklahoma.

Josiah Crudup

October 1, 1906 to April 28, 1912

Josiah Crudup was born in Franklin County, N.C., March 5, 1870, the son of Rev. E.A. Crudup and Mrs. Columbia Jones Crudup, and the grandson of Rev. Josiah Crudup, also a Baptist minister. He graduated from Wake Forest College in 1890. He studied law at the University of North Carolina and was admitted to the bar in 1892. In 1893 he married Miss Corelli Remfry of High Point. In 1900 he left the law to enter the Baptist ministry. He completed his theological training at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, in the fall of 1909. Before he came to Rockingham on October 1, 1906, from Elizabeth City, he had held pastorates at Hot Springs and Marshall.

His pastorate of six years in Rockingham was characterized by a devotion and faithfulness that endeared him to everyone. In the beginning he faced many obstacles. His vision and perseverance were mainly responsible for the erection of the present sanctuary that replaced the old one room then dilapidated frame building erected in 1881.

Upon his resignation from Rockingham on June 3, 1906, Mr. Crudup went to Timmonsville, South Carolina, and at the time of his death was serving as minister of the First Baptist Church of Belzoni, Mississippi.

Mr. Crudup and the interesting members of his family left a deep impression upon the vision of the community. Even today the far-reaching results of his ministry are quite evident.

Rallying the Discouraged

The eleventh pastor of the church, Josiah Crudup, in referring to his coming to Rockingham pointed out that he found a congregation of "very fine people, but they were disorganized and very disheartened." He goes on to say that he found a dilapidated church building. He recalls that once after a rain he counted thirteen leaks. One gets the impression that had this minister known the local conditions before coming he might have declined the call. It appears that he came without any investigation and upon the recommendation of Livingston Johnson, a former pastor.

Mr. Crudup went on to say that soon after his coming to Rockingham the membership rallied around him. He recalls the Henry C. and John C. Dockery families, Robert A. Johnson, the Moore's, Sheriff Hinson, the Arthur Porters, Mrs. Commie Leak, the R.L. Davises and the mother of this writer, Mrs. Florence B. Deane. Soon he found that there were many friends in other denominations who were interested in helping the church. Among these were the Steeles, the Everette's, the Leaks, and the Covington's.

Almost from the beginning Mr. Crudup recommended the erection of a new church. This proposition, he goes on to say, was received rather coldly. The minister persevered and drew a

large picture of a church and hung it in the vestibule of the old church and put under it this legend, "Let us build a house for the Lord."

Mr. Crudup gives this interesting story concerning the first gift to the new church. He writes:

"I was riding home from a funeral with Sheriff Bud Hinson. On the way he said to me, 'Why don't you start your new church?' He was a good friend of mine, and of our church, but he was not a member of the church at that time. I told him that I was afraid to start. Afraid that I would not be able to complete it unless I could get the members behind me in the matter. 'Oh!', said he, 'You can build it alright. I'll help you out.' That encouraged me very much because he was well known to be a very forceful man and a man of means. "A few days later, after our conversation, I met him on the street and he said to me, 'Why haven't you been around to get the money for the new church?' I told him that nobody had made any contribution yet but that I would be glad to get a start. 'Well,' he said, 'You can get mine right now.' So, he went into his office and gave me a check for \$500. I do not know whether he saw my confusion or not, but the size of the check and the suddenness of its presentation just about took away my breath. You know \$500 was a great deal of money in those days. When I went out from his office, I felt like I was walking on air. I knew that check would give a tremendous boost. I carried it at once and showed it to some of our leading members. One of the pillars of the church said, 'Well, I really do not see how we can build the church, but we can't afford to lose that \$500.'"

How familiar are the tones of those words today?

This courageous minister continued to work and soon called some of the leading men of the church together in a conference and it appears that they did not know what to do. They had a large check, and in the language of Mr. Crudup were "up a tree". It appears that they sat together in silence for some time and one staunch brother, Mr. Crudup points out, persisted in the opinion that we were just not able to build a church at that time. Then the youngest man in the group said, "We can build it and we will build it." That person was Claude Gore. The conference ended and it was agreed that the membership of the church would be requested to undertake the task of building a new church.

R.A. Johnson Resolution to Build

At the church conference on October 6, 1907, a resolution was introduced by R.A. Johnson in which he strongly advocated the immediate erection of a new house of worship and it was adopted.

The building committee was composed of the following: Mr. Crudup as Chairman, R.A. Johnson, Claude Gore and A.D. Dumas. Within a week, nearly \$5,000 was subscribed and the greater part paid. Mr. Crudup goes on to say that he canvassed the congregation personally and received a splendid response not only from the local Baptist people but from members of the

other churches in the town. Those who could not give cash furnished material and others gave their personal services.

Deacon A.D. Dumas was given the contract to build. He took charge of the work with the understanding that the church was to pay him a percentage of the cost for his supervision. When the church was completed it seems there was a balance due of \$2,000 and Mr. Dumas gave his entire commission.

Mr. Crudup was especially grateful for the leadership on the part of Mrs. Connie Leak. This lady, Mr. Crudup points out, gave a donation of \$500. In accepting, the minister reminded her of an old proverb, "He gives twice who gives quickly". Mrs. Leak replied, "That means you're going to call on me the second time, Brother Crudup?" "I told her that I hoped I would not have to do so, but she guessed right and paid again when the work was completed."

Other courageous persons who were active in the building program were a group of young ladies of the church. They were members of the Young Women's Auxiliary of the Woman's Missionary Union. These young ladies gave several hundred dollars and likewise presented to the pastor a silver cup inscribed with the YWA monogram.

Parapet or No Parapet

The architect of the present church was Mr. Bonitz of Wilmington. The architect's plans called for a parapet wall around the roof. The pastor felt this type of construction would develop leaks. An argument ensued and the committee decided with the architect.

Later Mr. Crudup reasoned with the contractor, Mr. Dumas, and it was agreed that there would be no parapet. There was considerable controversy, but the aggressive minister seemed to win his point as usual. Mr. Crudup goes on to say that whether he convinced the building committee or not they yielded, in loyalty, he surmised.

The Winds Blew and The Rains Descended

On the day, the church walls were completed, an unusual storm of wind and rain hit the town and lasted for a day and a half. The walls became water-soaked and the heavy winds swayed the tower of the church and cracked the walls of the belfry. The townspeople came in droves to see what was taking place. Two great cracks running down from the top of the tower developed. It was felt that the whole tower would have to be torn down and rebuilt.

Mr. Crudup goes on to say that he began to think of the debt and those who in the first place were not in favor of building who now became very critical.

It appears that the minister, after dark, went to the church and made his way over the timbers to the platform where the pulpit was to be, and there he prayed and laid the whole matter out before the Lord. He remained there for a long time; he goes on to say. He went to bed at a late hour, praying and thinking, and finally dropped off into an uneasy sleep. Presently he awoke with a start from a dream. In this dream the pastor stood by the church and saw the

cracks in the wall all healed up and the tower now standing firm and erect. Early the next morning the minister went to an expert brick man to see what could be done. This brick mason pointed out that it could be repaired. He pointed out, "Why that can be easily fixed. Mix some soft cement, pour it in the cracks, and get some heavy bolts and put them through the walls and screw them up tightly and draw the walls together, and it will be good as new."

To this day there can be seen the ends of the bolts that drew the tower together and lifted a great burden from the heart of the minister.

In October 1908, the new church was still incomplete. Services were again being held in the old courthouse on the Town Square. Needing funds it was decided that the old wooden parsonage adjoining the Weil lot and residence, where later was built the home of the late Claude Gore, be sold and the proceeds go toward the construction and debt of the new church. The selling of another parsonage to underwrite a church debt took place again in a later year. This was on November 12, 1929, when the church sold the brick parsonage to the late W.H. McCall. The brick parsonage had been erected in 1922 on half of the lot that was re-purchased from D.L. Gore, father of the late Claude Gore.

Disposition of Old Church

The old wooden church building, erected in 1881, was sold for a small sum to the late John W. Covington, father of Leak S. and John W. Covington. The material was used to build a residence. In 1917, John W. Covington sold it to the late W. M. Hale. This house is now located on West Washington Street and adjoins the late Fred Dickerson lot.

Memorial Gifts to New Church

The new church was the recipient of many splendid gifts from not only members of the church at that time in memory of loved ones, but from people who were not members.

It will be recalled that the largest benefactor outside the church membership was the late Captain William I. Everett. It was he who donated the original tract of land and was one of those composing the building committee for the first church. This interest in the church by Capt. Everett continued through the years, and in the new church he donated one of the beautiful memorial windows in memory of his father, Calvin A. Everett, who was a Deacon in the old Cartledge Creek Baptist Church. He was also responsible for the large window facing North Randolph Street. This window was placed there by T.G. Bostick in memory of his father and mother, Solomon and Rachal Bostick. Mr. Bostick, who had previously lived in Richmond County with membership it is understood at Cartledge Creek, was then living at Meridian, Miss. Capt. Everett wrote Mr. Bostick and solicited a gift. Mr. Bostick replied by telling Mr. Everett to buy and have installed this beautiful window and send him the bill.

The two large windows on either side within the church were erected, the one on the South side by Henry C. Dockery in memory of his father and mother, General Alfred and Sallie

Turner Dockery, and the one on the North side was placed by M.L. "Bud" Hinson in memory of W.C. and Queen Victoria Hinson, his father and mother.

Another window was donated by Minor T. Hinson in memory of his wife, Georgianna, and himself, and the other memorial window was erected by L.C. Sharpe in memory of Minnie Sharpe, his first wife.

In later years, the beautiful pulpit furniture was given by Mrs. Ellen West Dockery in memory of her husband, John C. Dockery.

Pipe Organ Secured

The acquisition of the \$2,200.00 pipe organ involved the special interest of several people. Mrs. Claude Gore was the first to see the need of such an instrument and even prior to the coming of Mr. Crudup wrote the Carnegie Foundation to see if they would help. She wrote several letters, but it was not until after Mr. Crudup came and the building was more or less in a state of completion that her efforts bore fruit. In the meantime, however, D.L. Gore, who was a member of the First Baptist Church of Wilmington and the father of the Chairman of the Board of Deacons, Claude Gore, made a gift to the organ fund of \$500.00. There had been received in pledges \$250.00. Suddenly there came to town a representative of the Foundation who said they would pay an amount equal to what money the church had, including the pledges, which was \$710.00. The balance of \$700.00 was then raised by the church. The organ was installed and continues in use today.

New Church Dedicated April 11, 1909

The new sanctuary which continues to be used as the place of worship was dedicated on Easter Sunday, April 11, 1909. The sermon was preached by Dr. Livingston Johnson, the sixth pastor of the church.

This was a day of great rejoicing. A large congregation of all denominations was present for the services. It truly had been a community project. Among the present members of the church who were present at this dedicatory service were Mrs. A.D. Allen, Mrs. Claude Gore, Mrs. Blanche Hinson Palmer, Mrs. Mae Hinson Porter, Mr. and Mrs. John T. Henry, Mrs. Jeanette Cole Threadgill, Mrs. Bessie Hooks Warner, Mrs. Dan Stogner, Mrs. Carl Shores, Mrs. Maude Terry Manship, and Mrs. Ruby Morton Sedberry whose father was one of the charter members of the church. The writer, as well as John W. Gore, was toddling around in the primary and cradle roll departments.

Dr. Johnson's Words of Praise

The following week an account of the dedication of the church appeared in The Biblical Recorder of which Dr. Johnson was Editor. Editor Johnson had this to say:

"The church cost \$9,400.00 and it is the best church building to the cost of it that I have seen in the State, and at the dedicatory service Mr. Crudup announced that the church would

raise \$460.00 which was the balance due. Brother Henry C. Dockery was asked to engineer the collection. Those who have seen him perform such a duty know that he is the "Past Master" at that business. In a few minutes he had raised \$679.00. The building of this church will do more toward establishing our cause in Rockingham than anything that has ever been done. Our people will now come unto their own; this they never could have done with the old wooden structure which has been replaced by the beautiful brick building. I do not know any people in the State who have done a greater work in so short a time."

Sheriff Hinson Baptized

Mr. Crudup indicates that soon after the church was completed, Sheriff Hinson and his wife, now Mrs. Blanche Hinson Palmer, joined the church and was baptized by Mr. Hinson. Mr. Crudup goes on to say that he had used the story of his relation with Sheriff Bud Hinson on many occasions, and that he looked upon him as "one of his ministerial trophies".

Church Loses Three Leaders

The growth and progress of the church up to this time was closely associated with three key members. They were Mr. John B. Covington, the first deacon who died on February 13, 1909, some two months prior to the dedication of the present church building. On November 6, 1911, at 11:30 am, Henry C. Dockery who was the second deacon elected by the church and for many years the moving spirit of the congregation, passed away. Two days following on November 8, 1911, at 2:30 pm, after a protracted illness, Robert A. Johnson who had served for thirty-one years as church clerk died. Memorial services were held for Mr. Dockery and Mr. Johnson on November 19, 1911.

Bruce Benton

January 1, 1913 to January 1, 1943

Bruce Benton, a native of Union County, became the twelfth minister of the church. His active pastorate began January 1, 1913. He served until the coming of Edwin F. Parry on April 2, 1944. His actual retirement was as of January 1, 1943. He came to Rockingham from Alexandria, Louisiana.

Following his graduation at Wake Forest on June 1, 1896, with an M.A. degree, Dr. Benton assumed the chair of Latin and Greek at Keatchie College, La., in the fall of 1896 and taught there for one year. In the fall of 1897, he assumed the pastorate of the First Baptist Church, Mansfield, La. He served one year at the Mansfield Church. It was there that he married Miss Virginia Rives. Going to the First Baptist Church of Baton Rouge, La., on December 1, 1898, he served as pastor for four- and one-half years. In 1903 he became Editor of The Baptist Chronicle, the religion journal of the Louisiana Baptist State convention at Alexandria. He served in this post for some three years. Thereafter, he took the Chair of Latin in Louisiana College and held this position for about eight years. While there Dr. Benton received the call that brought him to the Rockingham pastorate, which began on January 1, 1913.

Dr. Benton's service to the church was temporarily broken when in June 1918, during World War I, he left Rockingham for New York and entered the YMCA. On August 6, 1918, he sailed with a great troopship for France. He remained in London three weeks and was then sent to Orly, France, where he served with the Aviation Forces of the A.E.F. until November 1918. At Orly he was Secretary at what was known as the American Aviation Acceptance Park and was there when the Armistice was signed. He left Paris for home in November and spend Christmas in Southampton, England. On January 1, 1919 he arrived in New York and in February returned to Rockingham after an absence of seven months.

Wake Forest College conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1940. His long pastorate for a quarter of a century, plus five years, left an indelible impression upon the church. Dr. Benton's faithful and continuous service will never be forgotten. His unselfish work, sacrifices, and deep spiritual messages will ever challenge the membership to noble thinking and living.

Of the present membership totaling some 688, less than a dozen or two are now members of the church when "Mr." Benton came on January 1, 1913.

A Period of Transition

Heretofore, attention was called to the fact that three of the key leaders of the church passed away in 1909 and 1911. These leaders who for many years had held key places in the church family appeared not to have left behind immediately someone to pick up the responsibilities.

When the twelfth pastor, Bruce Benton, assumed the pastorate the church had not fully recovered from a heavy building program. While the church was not in debt it dropped considerably behind financially. The pastor's salary decreased from \$1,400.00 in 1911 to \$662.08 in 1912, the last year of the pastorate of Josiah Crudup. It was not until the second year of the pastorate of Mr. Benton that the general condition of the church began to show improvement.

The period covering 1915, 1916, and 1917 were crucial years. It was the period leading up to World War I. Yet the ministry of Dr. Benton in this period welded the membership together. He had well prepared the church for the break in his pastorate when in 1918 he took a leave of absence to serve with the YMCA in France during the war period.

During Dr. Benton's absence overseas, Reverend John H. Hall, who had retired in Rockingham after a distinguished service as a Methodist minister and District Superintendent, supplied as visiting minister.

Mr. Benton Returns Ambitious Programs

Not long after the return of Dr. Benton from France in January 1919, the church entered another broad expansion program. Some members felt that while the church needed more ground space it was unwise to launch some of the moves that began to take form.

During this period, the North Carolina Baptist State Convention along with the Southern Baptist Convention launched what was designated as the \$75 million campaign for various causes of both Conventions.

Churches and Baptist institutions throughout the State and Southland launched ambitious building programs. Locally the church erected in the latter part of 1922 a new brick parsonage on North Randolph Street. In 1924 the church purchased the residence of the late John L. Everett at the corner of North Randolph and Everett Streets as a cost of \$30,000.00. On November 25, 1925, another parcel of land was purchased from Mr. Everett situated between the present church and the Rockingham Episcopal Church.

At the time the Everett property was acquired, fee simple title to the lot upon which the present church is located was secured, without cost, from the heirs of the late Captain William I. Everett. It will be remembered that this lot was originally given to the church for just so long a time as it was used for church purposes. This fee simple title was necessary in view of the need to give a warranted title to the Virginia Trust Company, Virginia, for a loan being made to the church. This load of \$23,000.00 as secured by the church site as well as all the Everett property. Many problems faced the church concerning this indebtedness as the events that follow will reveal.

A Period of Discouragement

Following the purchase of the John L. Everett property the church along with the country entered a period of economic distress. The church had placed a heavy mortgage of approximately \$25,000.00 on the church property. The holder of the mortgage, the Virginia Trust Company, Richmond, Virginia, was patient but firm in its demand for the payments due. Time and again the Chairman of the Board, Claude Gore, called the deacons together, and after hours of discussion, one drive after another was conducted in an effort to secure the necessary interest and principal payments with which to pay the indebtedness. It is recalled that on several occasions a special representative of the mortgage company visited with the deacons. The writer recalls that he and the late W.F. Seago made a special trip to Richmond to secure better terms on the mortgage indebtedness. The pressures continued. It became necessary to sell, as indicated previously, the new brick parsonage completed in the later part of 1922 in order to forestall a possible foreclosure of some of the church property. The membership persevered and with this sale the church experienced a breathing spell and later the mortgage was refinanced.

Slowly the church moved out of the depression days. It will be recalled that Dr. Benton made a great sacrifice in salary. At times, no salary was paid; at least the salary got far behind. And, to the embarrassment of the church, some of this salary was donated by the pastor of the church.

Retirement of Dr. Benton

It came as a complete shock to the membership when at the Sunday morning service on January 3, 1942, Dr. Benton expressed a desire to retire from the active ministry. It was indicated

that he would like for his retirement to become effective the first Sunday in January 1943; thus, would round out thirty years of service. Dr. Benton agreed to serve until a new minister was secured.

On the first Sunday in January 1943, the church observed "Bruce Benton Sunday". Thus, the written record, though incomplete, of this courageous pastorate closes. The church in view of the years of unselfish service of Dr. Benton has, since his retirement, paid him an annuity each month.

Rotation of Deacons

On Friday evening, January 28, 1944, while Dr. Benton was supplying the pulpit, the Board of Deacons at the call of the Chairman, Claude Gore, held a significant meeting at his residence. Those present were Sam R. Carter, E.R. Cox, Charles B. Deane, John T. Henry, Dr. T. Boyce Henry, C.O. Funderburk and the Chairman. Dr. Benton was present and served as Chairman of the meeting.

It was agreed that R.S.L. Davis and W.E. Harrison would be elected Deacons Emeritus. This is the only time in the history of the church that two living Deacons were so designated.

During the previous years there was no special number of Deacons designated. It was agreed that a new Board of Deacons be constituted to consist of twenty members and it was further agreed that for the first time a rotating system whereby five members of the Board would retire each year and that at the expiration of a four year term a deacon would not be eligible to succeed himself until the lapse of one year. This action provoked considerable discussion. Some felt as in the early days – "Once a Deacon always a Deacon."

At this meeting it was further agreed that thirty-nine names be submitted to the church on an official ballot for the election on Sunday morning, February 6, 1944, for the first time, of a Board of Deacons. It was agreed that the twenty names receiving the highest votes would be declared elected. The first rotating group of Deacons who soon joined hands with another youthful minister in launching still another great expansion period in the life of the church were elected as follows:

Term Expiring October 1945: D.H. Buchanan, W.W. Harris Sr., Dr. T. Boyce Henry, Dr. G.F. Meadors and W.F. Seago.

Term Expiring October 1946: J. Neal Cadieu, Dan Gore, M. Max King, Carson N. Ratliff and F.B. Stanley.

Term Expiring October 1947: Athos L. Cockman, H.P. Cannon, James F. Hicks, and Thomas Young

Term Expiring October 1948: Charles B. Deane, Claude Gore, Thomas H. Leath, and William G. Pittman

The new Board of elected Claude Gore (Chairman), Charles B. Deane (Vice Chairman), and Thomas H. Young (Secretary).

Tribute to Dr. and Mrs. Benton

At the Sunday morning service, March 22, 1944, after Edwin F. Perry, the succeeding pastor, arrived a fitting program was observed honoring the long and useful service of Dr. and Mrs. Benton. This service was presided over by Charles B. Deane. Messages of appreciation directed to Dr. and Mrs. Benton were expressed on behalf of the church by Wm. G. Pittman and on behalf of the community by L.J. Bell, then County Superintendent of Schools, a long and close friend of the retiring pastor.

Claude Gore, soon to retire as Chairman of the Board of Deacons who had served as Board Chairman throughout the ministry of Dr. Benton, presented to the retiring pastor and Mrs. Benton a cash gift of \$700.00.

Truly the membership of the church and friends throughout the State rejoiced and still do in the continued useful life of this clergyman. Dr. Benton at a Sunday morning service preached a stirring sermon on "Death" in May of 1952. Despite his advanced age, the membership recalls that the same old spirit and courageous appeal were just as evident as when he returned from the war in 1918.

Stewardship of Dr. Benton

Perhaps few men have been as meticulous and thorough in keeping the records of his members as was true with Dr. Benton. From the beginning of his ministry until its close he maintained an accurate personal record of each member received upon a profession of their faith and the date of baptism, the name and date other members were received by letter, and the name and date of death of all members that occurred during his pastorate.

The late Robert A. Johnson, as Church Clerk, recorded the names of all those received during his long term of service. The other records after this Clerkship and previous to Dr. Benton and in many cases since, are unfortunately missing.

As part of the historical record of the ministry of Dr. Benton there is attached as appendix A the complete membership record indicated above.

Seeking a Pastor

Soon after the resignation of Dr. Benton, Claude Gore, Chairman of the Board of Deacons, suggested that various leaders of the church come together and name a pulpit committee. From a large number of persons who came together representing all groups within the church the following pulpit committee was selected: Charles B. Deane (Chairman), H.P. Cannon, Athos L. Cockman, Claude Gore, C.O. Funderburk, Wm. G. Pittman, Mrs. M.B. Leath, and Mrs. John W. Porter. This committee with the possible

exception of one or two had never served on such a committee before. It was not an easy task to secure a successor. Many names were canvassed. The committee visited many churches. Several ministers were invited to visit the church for a preaching service.

It will be recalled that John Newport who at about that time was finishing at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, accepted an invitation to visit the church, appeared to be impressed as was the church with him, and accepted a call. This was in December 1943. On December 22, 1943 he wired the Chairman of the pulpit committee that after mature deliberation he felt led to decline the call.

Older members recall that a similar situation occurred prior to the call of Dr. Benton. Dr. Zeno Wall first accepted a call to Rockingham then declined, afterwards going to a church in Mississippi. Mr. Newport, the record reveals, went to the same Mississippi church after his decision not to accept the local pastorate.

In the early days of 1944, the name of Edwin F. Perry was suggested to the pulpit committee by M.A. Huggins, Raleigh, General Secretary of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention. Following an exchange of letters with the Chairman of the Committee and a visit to Rockingham by Mr. and Mrs. Perry, a call was extended and accepted.

Edwin F. Perry

April 2, 1944 to January 1, 1949

Mr. Perry, a native of Wake County, was the thirteenth pastor of this church. He was a graduate of Wake Forest College and Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

Mr. Perry came to Rockingham from Emmanuel Baptist Church of Fayetteville, North Carolina.

The local board of deacons serving this pastorate remembers Ed Perry as a tireless worker. They also recall the deacon meetings that lasted on and on into the night. Many of these meetings did not adjourn until near midnight. Mr. Perry's vision far outdistanced most of the deacons. He envisioned a long-range plan that would utilize the entire church property. This plan would include a modern Sunday School and educational building, to be followed by a commodious sanctuary. Members of the Board of Deacons were hesitant, stubborn at times, but the new minister was persuasive. The historical account of the next five years will reveal that at least half of that vision began to mature.

Just at a time when the church membership was catching the moving spirit of its minister, and in the midst of a \$90,000.00 education building program, Mr. Perry's resignation was announced to the church on December 5, 1948. His pastorate ended as of January 1, 1949, and thereafter he assumed the ministry of the Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

Installation of Edwin F. Perry

On Sunday morning, April 2, 1944, the service of installation took place. Charles B. Deane, Chairman of the Board of Deacons, having succeeded Claude Gore who had served a Chairman of the Board throughout the thirty years pastorate of Bruce Benton, presided, and presented Mr. Perry. Bruce Benton, who had continued to serve as pastor while the church sought a successor, offered the prayer of installation. The service closed with the observance of the Lord's Supper. At the evening service the new pastor preached his first sermon using as his theme, "The Open Door".

War Years, 1941-1945

Rockingham during the years 1941-1945 was surrounded by the lads in khaki. Mr. Perry, coming from Emmanuel Church in the military area of Fort Bragg, kept in close touch with the young men and women in the service and with military families in the town. A church newsletter and church bulletin went out week by week to servicemen and absent members. Special recognition was given to the men and women from the church in the service on the day of the pastor's installation. They were:

Paul Bateman, David Brothers, Richard Brothers, B. Duane Baucom, L.C. Cole Jr., George Hurley Cockman Jr., William Cargill, Bruce Collins, John C. Dockery Jr., Billy Dawkins.

Leland Franklin, John W. Gore, Miss Margaret L. Hicks, Woodrow Hale, William H. Harris Jr., Richard Harris, Walter Hooks Jr., Marion Lee Hinson, Jack Haywood, Carlyle Haywood, I. Jay Helms, John T. Henry Jr., Edwin Ivery, Boyd Irvin, Benn Carr Liles, T. Berry Liles.

Woodrow Little, Thomas H. Leath, James McIntosh, Robert McLendon, William A. Poplin Jr., Charles H. Poplin, James Pittman, John Pittman, Frank Phillips Jr., Carson Ratliff Jr., Miss Georgia Mae Seago, William Seago.

Howard Stogner, Dan Stogner, William T. Smith, Tobe M. Shepherd, Leon Thrower, Edwin Warner, W. Lyde White, Sherrod M. White, Miss Norma Yates, John Yates Jr., Eldridge Yates, and Tom Yates.

It will be remembered that one of these servicemen, Carlyle Haywood, made the first specific gift to the new educational building. Frequently Mr. Perry announced from the pulpit gifts and letters of encouragement coming from the members who were in the service.

Following Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the declaration of war by Congress on December 8, 1941, America moved rapidly into national mobilization. The impact on Rockingham was exceedingly heavy. Many new people had come into the community. Space in the homes was at a premium. The new minister was living in a rented home. The Sunday School facilities at the church was crowded and outmoded.

Berean Shack

The Berean Shack is significant in the history of the church. Formerly this building, with a dirt floor, served as the garage for the former John L. Everett. When the Everett property was purchased, the Berean Class, the oldest class in the Sunday School having been organized during the pastorate of Josiah Crudup as the Baraca Class and later taking the name Berean, moved from the balcony in the church to the garage.

With fresh new sawdust on the floor, the building was named the Berean Shack. This class in those rustic days was taught by the late John B. Brewer, father of Mrs. Claude Gore, and thereafter by Charles B. Deane. The oldsters remember that on one occasion a boxing match with Ben Wall, the bootblack, as one of the contestants was held.

The building became more dignified in later years, having been enlarged in size, floored, and ceiled, and was the meeting place for every kind of church group.

It was principally the membership of this class and the Benton Bible Class that early caught the spirit of Mr. Perry. One recalls the deacons meeting in the Berean Class during the cold winter evenings of 1944 when Pastor Perry inspired the deacons to believe that the membership of the church was, in the language of Josua, "Well able to possess it".

Everett Residence Razed

When the church was forced to sell in 1922 the brick parsonage on North Randolph Street to meet the mortgage payments on the church property, Mr. and Mrs. Benton moved into the Everett residence which remained their home until several months after his resignation. When first acquired the residence was used altogether for Sunday School space. Later it served both as the parsonage and for some classes of the Sunday School.

It was with mixed emotions and a divided vote that the church on a Sunday in February 1945 directed the Deacons to raze the residence and use available material in the erection of a new pastor's home on the northwest corner of the church lot. The new parsonage, now the Frank and Hilda Butler Youth House, was completed at a cost of approximately \$9,000.00 and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Perry.

Sunday School Annex

A Sunday School annex was built on the lot between the church and the Episcopal Church where the horse stables belonging to the Everett home once stood. When the Federal Government decided to build a new Post Office and Federal Building, several members of the church purchased for \$100.00 the old stucco post office building that stood where the present Post Office and Federal Building is located. The usable material went into the construction of the Sunday School Annex. Jesse P. Phifer erected this building, which contained three department assembly rooms and two extended wings for classrooms.

These were rugged days, and some of the present members will recall the freezing weather of winter and the hot uncomfortable summer days as this annex served as the principle Sunday School building. It continued to be used during the construction of the new Educational Building and the portion that was not torn down was completely razed during the week of February 6, 1949. Despite the uncomfortable quarters, it served its day well. The building has a special appeal to the writer because it was in this building, which served temporarily as the church meeting place following a serious church fire, that his young son and a number of junior boys and girls joined the church.

Significant Dates

Many moving events took place in 1945, not only at the corner of Greene and North Randolph Streets, but in other parts of the world. Patton's Army had moved through Europe and hostilities ended during the first part of May 1945. The Japanese Armistice was signed aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945.

On August 14, 1945, the church enlisted for the first time a full time Educational Secretary. She was Lillian Humphrey. The first significant step looking toward the erection of the new Educational Building occurred December 9, 1945, when the Deacons, followed by the church in conference, went on record favoring the erection of such a building.

Credit is due The Post-Dispatch for noting the hour of the first serious church fire. This occurred at 6:20 am, October 7, 1946. Had it not been for the quick work of the local Fire Department under the leadership of Fire Chief Lacy Ingram, whose recent demise occurred, and his loyal fire fighters, the church would have been destroyed. This fire, of unknown origin, was in the furnace area, and seriously damaged the southeast corner of the building, destroying one of the small, beautiful memorial windows, the piano, several of the oak pews and quite a bit of old church records. The pipe organ also received minor damage. The water and smoke made it necessary to rework the entire church auditorium. The loss was \$9,468.00 and was covered by insurance.

It is important to note that few churches are properly insured. Significantly, only the week before this fire, a study by the Deacons revealed that the insurance coverage on the church was seriously deficient, and the increased coverage that was authorized brought urgently needed protection at a time of most need.

"The Open Door"

The church having gone on record to build a new Educational Building, a period of complete enlistment followed. The Pastor's theme in his first message, "The Open Door", remained a constant challenge. Soon the new parsonage was free of debt. Gifts to the building fund were more and more encouraging as were the gifts to missionary and denominational causes.

An Airplane Ride

The architectural services of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tennessee, were enlisted to suggest plans for the new Educational Building. Pastor Perry and Athos L. Cockman, Chairman of the Building Committee, took to the air and made a bumpy flight, at times precarious and exciting, to Nashville, Tenn., to try and perfect plans and specifications for the new Educational Building.

Church Chimes and Choir Loft

Upon the passing of two devoted members of the church, relatives made dedicatory gifts. On February 2, 1947, Mrs. Ed Kennedy gave in memory of her mother, Mrs. Sue Fowlkes, the distinctive church chimes. These chimes are the only reminder of the old church in the new church. The kindred of Miss Netta Poplin made possible the choir loft.

From October 1, 1947 to February 22, 1948, the church employed the first full time Minister of Music. She was Miss Mary Van Enman.

Significant Growth

On April 4, 1948, which marked the close of four years of Mr. Perry's pastorate, the records revealed that 140 new members were received by baptism and 209 new members by letter. The total membership for the first time went over 500. The budgets in those years, which were reached, of over \$30,000.00 were pleasing yet surprising to some of the Deacons and members. Only during four previous years during the entire church history did total gifts go above \$10,000.00 and not over \$15,500.00.

The New Educational Building

At a Deacon's meeting on January 2, 1948, after many such meetings and many delays in an effort to try and unify the thinking of the Board, a resolution was adopted by the Board, recommending to the church that construction begin. At a church conference on the following Sunday morning, January 4, 1948, the church committed itself to the erection of a new Education Building at a cost not to exceed \$90,000.00.

In the months following and by late summer, a total of \$60,000.00 in cash and pledges had been received. The contract was let to Jesse F. Phifer, his bid being \$93,000.00. Actual work began August 2, 1948.

Mr. Perry Resigns

Some three months before the completion of the new Educational Building, the driving power behind the project, Pastor Ed Perry, submitted his resignation, effective January 1, 1949. The decision by the Pastor came as a shock to the congregation. Mr. Perry's resignation was reluctantly accepted that he might assume the pastorate of the Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

G. Carl Lewis

April 3, 1949 to September 1, 1976

Between January 1, 1949, and the coming of Mr. Lewis for his first service on April 3, 1949, Dr. Benton and visiting ministers supplied the pulpit. Mr. Lewis was born in High Point, North Carolina. He graduated from Wake Forest College in 1934, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, in 1937. The Rockingham Church was his second pastorate. He came to the local church from Sunset Baptist Church in Wilmington, NC.

As this sketch is prepared, Mr. Lewis is directing and experiencing a marvelous ministry. He came upon the scene when the church was completing a staggering building program. The minister has solidified the membership, and the church has the largest membership, both in Sunday School and in church, at any time in its history.

New Educational Building Occupied

Despite the fact that it became necessary on November 21, 1948, for the church to borrow the sum of \$30,000.00 to complete the construction, there was great rejoicing from the old and the young alike when on Sunday morning, February 9, 1949, the new structure was occupied. Gone was the old Berean Shack, the scene of vigorous Deacon meetings in launching the building program. Removed, too, was the old Sunday School Annex.

Tremendous Growth

It is difficult to single out the many achievements of Mr. Lewis. The encouraging facts are that there is a spirit of unity and caring, seldom known in the history of the church. There is an ever-increasing strengthening of the organizational and spiritual life of the church. Many significant events have taken place during this pastorate of thirty-eight months.

Loyalty Day

The date of April 6, 1952 will be remembered for a long time. It was Loyalty Day in both the Sunday School and Church. It was a day when a goal was set to have 500 people in Sunday School and retire the debt of \$6,000.00 on the new Educational Building. This was the balance due on the original loan of \$30,000.00. The attendance goal was more than reached with 531 people present. Through the regular Sunday School and Church offerings, \$8,890.00 was contributed which liquidated the debt and started the Church on the good road, looking toward its next objective, a new sanctuary.

Chairman of the Board of Deacons

Much could be said about every officer of the church, who through the years has rendered faithful service. There were the rank and file members who Sunday after Sunday assumed tasks and responsibilities that were appreciated but perhaps not fully recognized. Names of the men of the church appear most frequently in this narrative. Yet, it remained for countless numbers

of women, who as Sunday School teachers and members of the Woman's Missionary Union and Auxiliaries, furnished the momentum that stirred the men to action. Had it not been for these unsung heroes, the truly remarkable spiritual and material progress would never have been attained.

Heavy responsibility and difficult decisions, often running counter to other Board members, had to be made by the Chairman of the Board of Deacons. The record and leadership of the following men who served as Chairman of the Board will long be remembered:

Claude Gore, who served throughout the pastorate of Bruce Benton, from 1913 into 1944.

Soon after the coming of Edwin F. Perry in April 1944, Charles B. Deane was elected Chairman and served until October 1946. In October 1946, Thomas H. Leath was elected Chairman and served into the year 1948. Beginning in 1948, Athos L. Cockman served as Chairman until October 1950. From October 1950 to October 1951, Koy L. Dawkins served as Chairman.

This historical account closed with 1951 but in October of that year John W. Gore, the son of Claude Gore, was elected as Chairman and is now serving.

The Minister's Wife

Behind and standing with every successful minister is a loyal and consecrated wife. The minister's name is on the program, he receives all press notices and special awards and in general takes the spotlight. It should not be. This writer has personally known the following minister's wives. As a small knee pants boy, he recalls Mrs. Corelli Remfry Crudup, the wife of the late Josiah Crudup. She was followed by Mrs. Virginia Rives Benton, wife of Dr. Bruce Benton. Then came Mrs. June Seawell Perry, wife of Edwin F. Perry, and now Mrs. Bobbie Medlin Lewis, the wife of Pastor Lewis. These ladies of poise, intellect, and emotional strength have so endeared themselves to this Baptist constituency that they will never be forgotten.

Looking Ahead

The membership has indicated their desire to provide an urgently needed sanctuary and to that end another building fund is rising. If the record of the past carries any historical significance, the only comment would be that before long a new sanctuary will rise on the church property to take of the ever increasing number of members and visitors that fill to overflowing the old church which through the years is still held together, materially speaking, by iron pins and bolts.

Dedicatory Exercises

Now as this historical sketch ends one anticipates another great day in the history of the church. On Sunday, July 13, 1952, the new Educational Building, launched during the pastorate of Edwin F. Perry, will be dedicated. Mr. Perry will come from his church in Louisville to preach

the sermon of dedication. Pastor Lewis will preside and at high noon the burning of the mortgage notice will take place.

Statistical Summary

There is attached to become a part of this historical sketch a statistical summary of the church from 1879 through 1951. This will be noted as appendix B. This summary indicates the number of members received, the church and Sunday School membership, and the total contributions representing each pastorate. Such a record is a pretty good barometer of the spiritual life that has prevailed through the years.

Study the Past

The record comes to an end. Good or bad it cannot be changed. What is past is prologue. This Historical Sketch Prepared in Washington, DC during the week of July 7, 1952 by Charles B. Deane.