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# Early Methodism on the Pee Dee.

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BY REV. R. E. STACKHOUSE.

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An Address Delivered Before the Historical Society of the South Carolina Annual Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at Darlington, S. C., December 13, 1904.

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In presenting this sketch of Early Methodism on the Pee Dee, it is much to be regretted that the limits of such a paper preclude even a reference to the original settlement of this section of the State by various Welsh and English colonists about the year 1735, followed a few years later by many Scotchmen, who were fleeing from the issues of the battle of Culloden, and equally valuable accessions from the older colonies of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia.

The first session of the Conference held in this section of the State was at Darlington in 1832, and events mentioned in this sketch subsequent to that time, will only be a continuation of history of earlier origin.

## PIONEERS ON THE PEE DEE.

Pee Dee Circuit is mentioned for the first time in the minutes of the Conference held at Salisbury, N. C., in February, 1786.

In a letter to Mr. Wesley, Beverly Allen says that in June, 1785, he paid his "Friends and Spiritual Children" a visit at Anson in North Carolina, and formed what is now called Great Pee Dee Circuit, where many flocked to hear the word of the Lord and many were truly awakened. He also refers to another visit to Anson in the autumn of the same year. If Allen organized any society, or even preached in this section of the Pee Dee Valley in 1785, however, there is no indication of it.

The question as to who preached the first Methodist sermon in this section cannot now be solved. In his History of the Old Cheraws, Bishop Gregg relates the tradition that Charles Wesley once preached in the Britton's Neck Episcopal Church, erected by an English Colony in

lower Marion about 1735. But as Charles Wesley was never in the State but once, and that the trip from Savannah to Charleston, where he spent eleven days on the eve of sailing for England, it is certain that the said tradition was ill-founded. James Jenkins, who was reared in the Britton's Neck of Marion County, says that during a space of ten years just after the Revolutionary war, he heard only two sermons, and one of these was preached by a Methodist of Lady Huntingdon's School, who was the first of the name he remembered to have seen. This was probably the first Methodist preaching ever heard in this section, but the name of the preacher is doubtless known only to the Church in Heaven.

### PEE DEE CIRCUIT ORGANIZED.

At the Green Hill's Conference (N. C.) in April, 1785, Woolman Hickson was appointed to Georgetown, and Dr. Shipp says that while Allen was developing the Northern portion of Pee Dee Valley, Hickson was equally active in cultivating the Southern, so that when the Pee Dee Circuit was formed at the Conference of 1786, it was made to embrace the territory on both sides of the River, and to extend from Georgetown to within ten miles of Salisbury, and contained a membership of two hundred and eighty-five whites and ten blacks. To take charge of this immense territory and these two hundred and ninety-five members, there was appointed for the year 1786, Jeremiah Mastin and Hope Hull—young men of only one year's experience in the traveling connection. Under their ministry the Pee Dee Valley was swept by a mighty revival, and after giving due credit for the little accomplished before their coming, Mastin and Hull may very justly be regarded as the Apostles of Pee Dee Methodism. It is probable that the Methodism of this section owes more to these two men than any other two who have ever labored here. It was their wise planning that largely pre-empted the country for our cause, and those who came after them were charged with the responsibility of holding this goodly land to the faith rather than the taking in new ground.

### PICTURES OF THE FOUNDERS.

It is to be regretted that material is not extant for a picture of Mastin, the first of these Pee Dee Pioneers. All that is recorded is that after one year on this circuit, he went to pioneer Methodism over the Alleghenies into

Holston, where he located in 1790, but his labors were long and gratefully remembered on this circuit, Mastin becoming a family name in scores of households, awakened under his ministry. Of Mr. Hull, Dr. Coke says, "He is young, but a flame of fire. He appears always to be on the stretch for the salvation of souls. Our only fear concerning him is that the sword is too keen for its scabbard." Bishop Andrew describes Hull as "a stout, portly man of commanding appearance, with a countenance rather stern, about which there played, nevertheless, a good deal of sly humor. His voice was of unusual compass and power, and of all the preachers to whom I have ever listened, he had the most absolute control over his hearers by the modulations of his voice." "Early Methodism in the Carolinas" thus completes the picture—"Large body, medium height, large head, curling hair, heavy eye brows, keen, small eyes, and a fine face; a natural orator, a fine singer, and quick at repartee. His descriptive power was excellent, but his majestic gift was in prayer."

The labors of Hull and Mastin during this year (1786) resulted in an ingathering of six hundred members and the erection of twenty two meeting-houses.

### THE CHURCHES OF 1786.

Some of these, of course, were in North Carolina, and the precise locality of those planted in Chesterfield, Marlboro, Darlington, and Marion Counties is known of only a few.

### BEAUTY SPOT.

On the 18th of Oct. 1883, Beauty Spot, the mother Methodist Church of Marlboro, celebrated its Centennial. On that occasion a sketch of the church was read by the late Rev. L. M. Hamer in which he quotes from an old record in his possession as follows: "The first Methodist preachers who ever preached in Marlboro were Mastin and Hull. They preached in private houses until sometime in the year 1783, when a circuit was formed and a pine log church was built at Beauty Spot. This church was covered with long boards, held on by weight poles, the seats being made of split puncheons. The lot of land on which the church was built was given by Tarbet Cottingham, who was the class leader of the first society organized at Beauty Spot." As Mastin and Hull were not

appointed to the Pee Dee Circuit, however, until 1786, and were not even preachers in 1783, it is evident that this Centennial was celebrated three years too soon. Old Beauty Spot stood about three miles east of Bennettsville, and was named no doubt after the section of Country, lying on the eastern side of Crooked Creek, about three miles in width and stretching from Bennettsville to Adamsville. Before the Revolution, the Parkers, Fletchers, Easterlings, Hamers, Adamases and others had come from Maryland in search of a more hospitable clime and pitching on this fertile, well-watered and finely timbered plain called it "The Beauty Spot." The old record quoted says that for some time previous to the building of the church, preaching had been conducted in an old barn not far from Beauty Spot Bridge on Crooked Creek. This barn was the property of a Quaker, Paul Way, and here Robert Purnell, who, as a local preacher was largely instrumental in planting Methodism in Marlboro, was converted. Mr. Hull having a week day appointment at this barn, Robert Purnell, after having declared that he would not go, left his work in the field and secreted himself near the barn where he could hear without being seen. Before the sermon was concluded, he was so overwhelmed with conviction that cries for mercy broke out from his hiding-place, and as a great revivalist, he proved to be one of the brightest trophies won in that section. Among the first names found on the Beauty Spot roll was that of James Cook, who came to Marlboro from Pennsylvania. He was a Methodist before coming to Carolina, but finding no Methodist Church in that section, he joined the Baptists. Before descending into Marlboro, Hull and Mastin had for some time preached at the Green Pond in Richmond County, North Carolina, and Father Cook sometimes went there to hear them. He it was, who induced them to come to Beauty Spot, and when a society was organized there in 1786, he returned to his old fold. Subsequently, he became a class leader, and after an honorable and useful career, passed to his reward in 1832, Robert Purnell having preceded him in 1830. It was in the church just described that Bishop Asbury preached on the 23rd of February, 1788. The text was: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our

God." That region was then, so far as gospel privileges were concerned, a veritable wilderness, a solitary place, and to those familiar with the present Methodism of this Marlboro Beauty Spot, the Bishop's text seems prophetic.

The original log house was replaced by a small frame church in 1810, and this proving too small, sheds were built on each side, making the width greater than the length. The shed covers were so flat that when it rained during service the congregation was much disturbed by the leaking. This building was replaced in 1839 by what was considered the finest church in all this section. It cost about twelve hundred dollars and was dedicated by Theophilus Huggins—the opening hymn being, "Arm of the Lord awake, awake!"

### GREAT REVIVAL.

In 1846 under the ministry of Rev. H. H. Durant, Beauty Spot, along with other churches, was visited with the most remarkable revival in the history of the County. Many of the County's most influential citizens were at that time brought into the church.

When the church of 1839 had to be replaced it was resolved to move two miles further east, and the present Beauty Spot was dedicated in 1883 by Rev. T. J. Clyde. In the meantime, various swarms had gone out from the old mother-hive; Level Green, now Bethel about 1825; Bennettsville in 1834; Hebron in 1848 and Ebenezer in 1858. Camp meetings were begun at Beauty Spot in 1810, some of the tenters being Thomas S. Covington, Eli Thomas, Rev. Charles Manship, Rev. Allen Edens, Lindsay Breeden, Joel Easterling, Philip Barentine, Daniel Hamer, Robert Bolton, Mrs. Pegues, and many others. From all parts of the County and from beyond the tenters came—men of wealth and influence, bringing their wives, children and servants, saying to the world, "Stay here until I go yonder and worship." This feast of Tabernacles was kept annually until 1842, and the record is that during these years many gracious revivals of religion were witnessed, and many hundreds of people were converted, from among whom came many useful preachers, exhorters and class leaders for the societies that were now rapidly springing up.

### MT. ANDREW.

On the 17th of Feb. 1787, Bishop Asbury preached at

Buck Swamp in Marion County and the next day in the new church at Smiths. Attended by Hope Hull he had crossed Little Pee Dee River en route from Lumberton, N. C., to Georgetown. This Buck Swamp Society is now represented by Mt. Andrew Church of the Latta Circuit, and was doubtless one of the twenty two societies organized in 1786. Twenty-five years ago, old people pointed out two pine trees by the side of the road near west of the home of Jonathan Lewis—not far from where Hopewell Church now is, and related that Asbury stood between those pines to preach the first sermon he ever preached in Marion County. About this time the society built a log house about one mile west of Mr. W. J. Page's present residence. They soon removed to a site on the south side of Buck Swamp, near the home of the late Rowland Roberts. A third building called Price's Meeting House was built on the north side of the Swamp near the present home of Mr. Bascomb Floyd. Bishop Asbury also preached in this house. A fourth building called Moody's Meeting House was then erected about one-half mile north of Buck Swamp Bridge on the road leading from Marion to Dillon. This was a large log house and was attended by immense congregations. This was succeeded by a frame building, which stood near the swamp on the spot now occupied by Dunbarton Presbyterian Church. This building was erected in 1844 and the name changed to Mt. Andrew, in honor of Bishop Andrew, whose treatment at the hands of the majority of the General Conference of 1844 had rallied around him in an extraordinary degree the love of his Southern brethren. When a new church had to be built in 1880 it was removed to the site of the present Mt. Andrew two miles further west.

#### MULLINS STATION.

The church at Smith's in which Asbury preached on the 18th of February, is now Macedonia, or Mullins Station. Tradition in that community fixes the year 1786 as the date of its organization. The church in which Asbury preached was built by Rev. Moses Smith, a local preacher, assisted by Hardy Lewis, John Newsom and their neighbors. It stood about three miles east of where Mullins now is, near Little Pee Dee and is described as a small log house covered with boards fastened together with wooden pins and having a clay floor. About 1825 the congregation erected a new building about a mile higher

up Little Pee Dee River. Wade H. Grice, John McLean, G. W. Hart and Dr. Daniel Gilchrist are named among the builders. This is described as a double pen log house with hewn poles for a floor, split logs with peg legs for seats, and three of these seats, with backs, arranged around the pulpit to meet the needs of an altar. The first frame building was erected by the congregation about 1855, three or four hundred yards lower down the road leading from Gilchrist's Bridge to Miller's Church. This building remained at the spot where the cemetery now is until 1875, when it was removed to Mullins and converted into a school house, the congregation making an arrangement by which it worshipped in the Masonic Lodge at Mullins, and here continued until the present beautiful and commodious church was erected in 1901, under the ministry of Rev. A. B. Watson.

### MARION STATION.

Under the date of Feb. 1789, Asbury's Journal records that he was "seasonably led out at Flowers, there having been a great falling away there on account of drunkenness." The fact that there had been time for gathering a society and then a falling away confirms the local tradition that the first Methodist sermon ever preached in the vicinity of Marion was preached by Hope Hull in 1786. Flowers Church stood about a mile north of Marion, in the edge of the yard of the late Gen. Wm. Evans. Here James Jenkins was converted in the year 1790. But sometime before the year 1800 the church was removed to a spot on the right side of the road leading out of Marion by the residence of Major J. B. White and between Major White's and Smith's Swamp. The church was then called Bethel and some of the members were Jesse LeGette, Jesse Wood, Henry Gasque, Nathan Evans, Bennett Flowers, Moses Wise and Frank Wayne. When and for what reason worship was discontinued at that place, we do not know, but when Joseph Travis was in charge of the Marion Academy in 1814, he says that there was no Methodist Church in the Village and that he preached every Wednesday evening in the Court House. Two or three years later a brick academy was built on Godbold Street on the spot where now stands the Methodist Church, and the upper story of this building was used for preaching by all denominations. The Quarterly Conference Journal of Pee Dee Circuit shows that in 1833 Thos. Evans, F. A. Wayne and Benjamin Holt were appointed a committee to esti-



mate the amount necessary to build a meeting house in Marion Village, and Thomas Evans and Dr. John A. Cherry, James C. Bethune, F. A. Wayne, Gen. Evans, Benjamin Holt and Moses Coleman were appointed to be Trustees of the Church. The church built by them stood on Godbold Street, where now stands the residence of C. L. Pace, and was completed and dedicated in 1835. Here the Marion congregation continued to worship until the present church was built and dedicated by Bishop Paine in 1853. It was also in this year that the church was taken from the Marion Circuit and made a station, with James Stacey as preacher in charge.

#### TABERNACLE AND SOULE'S CHAPELS.

From Flowers, Asbury rode to Rowell's Meeting House which was in a few years succeeded by Tabernacle, a church nine miles south of Marion and now on Centenary Circuit. The deed to the lot on which the church now stands was executed in 1805 to Phillip Kirton, John Baker, John Davis, William Boatwright and Abraham Avant as Trustees.

In 1790 Asbury rode from Flowers to Sweet's Meeting House, fifteen miles below Marion. This was, doubtless, another of the societies organized in 1786 and seems to have been the predecessor of Bear Pond Church, which in turn was succeeded by the present Soule's Chapel.

#### OLD NECK.

James Jenkins joined the Old Neck Society in 1789, and says that he regularly attended circuit preaching there in 1788. This makes it reasonably certain that Old Neck Church was also organized by Hull and Mastin in 1786. Bishop Gregg says that the original Episcopal Church, erected by the English Colonists in 1735, was still standing about 1855 on the road leading from Port's Ferry on the Great Pee Dee to Potato Bed Ferry on Little Pee Dee. He adds: "About the year 1780 the congregation having been long without a minister, and doubtless very much broken up by the troublous times of the Revolution, united with the Methodists and the building passed into their hands, by whom it has since been retained." There was no organized Methodism in that country, however, earlier than 1786, and old residents in the community say that the original Old Neck Methodist Church stood on the east side of the Potato Bed Ferry road almost opposite the

present church, which was erected about 1858, whereas, it is certain that the old Episcopal Church was considerably further south. For many years this was one of the strongest societies in this section and out of it James Jenkins, John L. Greaves, Wm. H. Ellison and James J. Richardson entered the traveling connection.

### LITTLE ROCK CHURCH.

The church at Little Rock on Little Rock Circuit also dates back to 1786. In his History of Marion County the late W. W. Sellers states that in 1846 he wrote an obituary sketch of Herod Stackhouse, and was then informed that the class leadership of Liberty Chapel had been in the Stackhouse family for sixty years, which carries its history back to 1786. It is a well authenticated tradition that the first Methodist preaching in that section was under a brush arbor near a spring in front of the old Stackhouse home between Little Pee Dee River and where T. F. Stackhouse now lives. Very soon, however, a meeting house was built on the hill where now stands T. F. Stackhouse's home, and here too was located the Old Gaddy Camp Ground. As early as 1803, however, the church had been removed to a point further up the river near Harlee's Bridge and just south of the Evander Bethe place. There the Harleesville Camp Meetings were held, at one of which in 1803 James Jenkins says there were most remarkable displays of Divine power. The site, however, was not well chosen, and in 1823 David S. Harlee deeded to Herod Stackhouse, Jesse Proctor, John Roper, Isaac and Tristram Stackhouse the land on which the church now stands at Little Rock—one mile west of Old Harleesville. The name of the church was now changed to Liberty Chapel, but the camp ground, which was also transferred to the new location continued to be known as Harleesville, the camp meetings being kept up there until 1848. The present church was built in 1871 under the ministry of Rev. W. C. Power, and the name changed to St. Paul.

### LIBERTY CHAPEL AND BURNETT FUND.

How many and what churches were established on the west side of Great Pee Dee River in or about 1786 has not been ascertained. That there were several is evident from the statement of James Jenkins, that while riding the circuit with Thomas Humphries in 1789 he met "that Holy man of God, Tobias Gibson, who was then quite

careless about his soul." Tobias Gibson was born and reared on the west side of Pee Dee near Mars Bluff in the neighborhood of Liberty Chapel, on the Liberty Circuit. An established appointment there, in 1789, makes it probable that Liberty Chapel is also to be credited in 1786. At the end of 1788 the original circuit was divided into Great Pee Dee and Little Pee Dee Circuits, the former lying on the west side, the latter on the east side of the Great Pee Dee River. That at the close of 1788 there were churches enough on the west side of the river to form this circuit, is also positive proof that a goodly number of societies on this side must date their organization to 1786, or thereabout. James Jenkins mentions preaching under an arbor at The Gulley in 1802. John Burnett, a native of Chesterfield County, removing to the Liberty Chapel neighborhood about the year 1815, became a zealous member of that church, and upon his death in 1830 left his property to his wife during her life and at her death to the church of which she might be a member at that time. Upon the death of Mrs. Burnett in 1837, a long suit ensued between the church and her relatives for the possession of the property. The church was represented by Wm. M. Kennedy and to him was finally turned over about Ten Thousand Dollars. Ebenezer LeGette, of Marion, was then appointed Trustee of the Burnett Fund, and a demand being made upon him soon afterward for a rendition of it, *he set up as a defense that he was not satisfied to whom the funds should be paid—whether to Liberty Church in which Mrs. Burnett held her membership at the time of her death, or to the Methodist Episcopal Church as a whole.* The courts gave the property to Liberty Chapel, which at that time had only four members, and a part of it was used to erect the present substantial brick church and a comfortable parsonage, and the income from the remainder, which is invested in real estate, is applied to the maintenance of the circuit of which Liberty Chapel is a part.

#### CIRCUIT DIVISIONS.

William Capers says that in 1810 the Great Pee Dee Circuit stretched from the neighborhood of Georgetown upwards through Williamsburg and a part of Sumter District, to a point on Lynch's Creek about opposite to Darlington Court House. thence across that creek to a distance above a smaller one called the Gulley and downward by Darlington Court House and Jeffer's Creek, so as to in-

clude all that region of country lying on the west side of Pee Dee River and the line just described.

At the close of 1813 Great Pee Dee Circuit was divided into Lynch's Creek and Black River circuits, and the name Great Pee Dee disappears from the Minutes. The circuit on the west side of the river continued to be called Little Pee Dee until 1825 when the word "Little" disappeared and it was called Pee Dee until the close of 1841, when the name was changed to Marion Circuit and the name Pee Dee disappears from the Minutes altogether.

Previous to the year 1813 the circuits in this section were in Camden District, which was formed in 1802, but in 1813 the Pee Dee District was formed and continued until the name was changed to Fayetteville District in 1825. In 1835 the Pee Dee Circuit was transferred from the Fayetteville District to Wilmington District.

#### PLAN OF THE PEE DEE CIRCUIT.

We here introduce an exact copy of the Pee Dee (formerly Little Pee Dee) circuit in 1827:

Tues. 24—Hopewell.

Wed. 25—Providence.

Thu. 26—do as you please.

Fry. 27—Bar Branch.

Sat. 28—Rockingham.

Sun. 29—Zion.

Mon. 30—Ride.

Tues. 31—Boykins.

Wed. 1 of August—Cool Spring.

Thur. 2—Old Field M. House.

Fry. 3—Piney Grove.

Sat. 4—Ivey's.

Sun. 5—Sardis 10 o'clock. Liberty Chapel 3.

Mon. 4—do as you please.

Tues. 7—Moody's.

Wed. 8—Platt's M. H.

Thur. 9. Turbeville's M. H.

Fry. 10—Miller's.

Sat. 11—Coleman's.

Sun. 12—Jiles Borough.

Mon. 13—You can do as you please.

Tues. 14—Shiloh.

Wed. 15—Tabernacle.

Thur. 16—Wahee.

Fry. 17—Go to Stephen Shackelfords or to Bro. R.

Woodberry's.

Sat. 18—Mother Woodberry's.

Sun'd 19—Old Neck.

Mon'd 20—rest or ride to Mr. Leggett's.

Tues'd 21—Arial.

Wed. 22—Adkinson M. H.

Thur'd 23—Tarts.

Fry'd 24—Union.

Sat'd 25—Buck Swamp.

Sun'd 26—Bethlehem.

Mon'd 27—Rest, or read and pray.

Tues'd 28—Spears's.

Wed. 29—McLeod.

Thurs'd 30—Beauty Spot.

Fry'd 31—Bethel.

Sat'd 1 of Sept—Quick's.

Sun'd 2—Cheraw, which brings you round.

The preachers in charge that year were Joseph Moore and Wm. Smith. It required forty-one days to make the round of forty-five appointments, five of which were in North Carolina. The length of the Circuit from Hope-well, above Rockingham, to Mother Woodberry's in Brit-ton's Neck was about one hundred and ten miles.

#### SEVERAL CHURCHES IN ABOVE PLAN SKETCHED.

**BOYKIN.**—Though Boykin, the first church men-tioned in Marlboro. cannot be traced back to 1786, it is at least one hundred years old. The present church erected in 1859 is the third in succession and has long sheltered one of the largest memberships in our Conference. It was also for many years a celebrated camp ground.

**PINE GROVE.**—Before the Revolutionary war the Quakers built a house of worship where now stands Pine Grove. Soon after the Revolution these "Friends," ob-jected to slavery in Carolina, moved to the North-West and about a hundred years ago the Methodists in common with other denominations began to use the church they had left. It soon became the exclusive property of the Methodists, and here also beginning in 1871 Camp Meet-ings were held for several years.

**CLIO.**—Ivey's, now Clio, also has a history reaching back to the early years of the past century. It stood one mile south of the village of Clio, until its membership was divided in 1886 and a church built in Clio and another at

Beulah. Here lived in the olden days Dougal McPherson, a noted local preacher, who is thus photographed: "A diminutive person, slightly stooped, dressed in homespun clothes; a blue cotton handkerchief tied closely around his bald head with a few stray white hairs peeping out behind his ears, minus eye brows, with pale, but benevolent face, cracked voice and scarcely ever making the slightest gesture." His appearance in some of our modern pulpits would be akin to the effect produced by introducing into some of our fashionable pews some of those old sisters we read of in Hebrews, arrayed in "sheep skins and goat skins." Yet his neighbors and other intelligent people would sit on rough, backless benches and listen to this old man preach for an hour on a cold winter day in an open house; and if you ask the secret of this singular history it is found in the character of the man—one of the saintliest of the earth. This it was that won his countrymen and gave him a hearing wherever he went.

EBENEZER.—Platt's meeting house seems to have stood on the south side of the Buck Swamp a mile or two below the present town of Latta. Turberville was in the immediate vicinity of Ebenezer on Latta circuit and Tart's stood about five miles north of Marion near Moody's Mill. About 1835 all three of these names disappear from the Quarterly Conference Journal and the name Ebenezer appears for the first time, the presumption being that Platts, Turbeville and Tarts were united to form Ebenezer. Brother Daniel Platt was once arraigned before this society for not having family prayer. His defense was that when he tried to conduct family worship his servants laughed at him and the children cried, and on this defense the society acquitted him. Under the question, are there any references, the preacher brought the matter before the Quarterly Conference, which reversed the society. About the same time, under the question, are there any complaints, Brother Edens was complained of for having suffered a company of young people to employ an evening at his house in Pond Playing, and a brother Andrews for suffering himself to be crowned "King of May," but on proper acknowledgment the complaints were dismissed.

MILLER'S.—Miller's church on the Mullins Circuit was organized in 1808. An acre of land on the south side of Buck Swamp was purchased for one dollar, and the church was built largely by a family of Millers, Nathaniel

Miller long revered as one of the best men, being the first class leader. One of the traditions in the Miller community is of a stirring prayer meeting at this church on the day following the meteoric shower in 1833. When it became necessary to build a new church in 1848, the location was moved a half mile further down the Swamp to the present site. This church was dedicated by Allen McCorquodale. The present church was erected in 1878, under the ministry of Rev. S. J. Hill. Beginning in the year 1872, nine camp meetings were held at Millers, some of the tent holders being A. E. Gilchrist, N. V. McMillan, H. R. Johnson, Thos. Jones, G. W. Huggins, John C. Huggins, James Norton, Rev. John L. Smith, L. W. Edwards, E. Coleman, C. D. Jones and Rowland Roberts.

**TRANQUIL.**—Coleman's Meeting House stood about a half mile from where the Wilmington, Columbia and Augusta Railroad now crosses Smith's Swamp, on the south side of the railroad—though railroads were not then dreamed of. Upon the destruction of this house by fire a new one was erected on Maiden-down Bay about two miles north of the old site and the name changed to Tranquil. This was about 1845, but about 1858 this house was also destroyed and the present Tranquil on Mullins circuit was built about a mile from the site on Maiden-down.

It may not be generally known that the Jilesborough of 1827 is now Marion. The first Shiloh church stood about four miles west of Marion on the plantation now owned by Mr. Stephen Miles.

**CENTENARY.**—Atkinson's Meeting House was about four miles from Marion on the road leading to Gallivon's Ferry, and Ariel was four or five miles further on the same road. The memberships of these societies are now represented by Olivet and Centenary. The Old Marion, or Baker, Camp Ground was four miles south of Marion, on the Britton's Neck road; but in 1839 the Camp Ground was removed to where Centenary Church now stands, and that being the Centennial year of Methodism, the name was changed to Centenary. Centenary church, however, was not built until 1853 or 1854.

**UNION.**—The Union Church of 1827 stood not far from the site of the present Union on Latta circuit. Mrs. Fama Tart, who was born in 1790 went when twelve years of age—or in 1802—to Bass's Meeting House, a small log church that stood where the road to Sellers's Depot leaves

the Old Marion and Bennettsville Railroad, about three-fourths of a mile from Berry's Cross Roads. Its membership included in addition to the Bass family, the Godbolds, Wickhams, McClellans, and some of the Betheas. A second building was erected about six hundred yards north of the first, and not more than three hundred yards from the present residence of Mr. James Berry. This house was called Union and served the congregation until it along with Ebenezer and Bethesda were destroyed by a forest fire in 1855. Ebenezer was rebuilt, but the Union membership transferred to Ebenezer and Dothan. In 1864 the Presbyterians built a church near the site of Old Union and called it Hermon, but in a few years they closed the church and abandoned the field, and in 1875 the Methodists purchased this building from the Presbyterians, changed its name to Union again and re-organized with members drawn from Ebenezer and Dothan. As early as 1807 (how much earlier cannot now be ascertained) there was a camp ground almost in front of the residence of the late John C. Bethea, about two miles north of Latta. This camp meeting was largely supported by John Bethea and his sons, William, James, Parker and Philip, and by Robert McKenzie, who in 1830 was largely instrumental in building Dothan Church. It is believed that the appointment next after Union on this old plan, called Buck Swamp, was at or near the new Bethea Camp Ground.

**HOPWELL AND TABERNACLE.**—Hopewell church on the North Mullins circuit was built in 1830 by Geo. W., Theophilus and John C. Huggins, the two former of whom entered the South Carolina Conference from this church. The first building stood about a mile east of the present Hopewell.

Tabernacle on the same circuit was organized in 1833, largely through the instrumentality of John D. Jones, an eminent local preacher. Other members were Thomas Scott and wife, John Miller and wife, Lovett Goodyear and wife and Jeremiah Goodyear and wife.

Union Church on North Mullins Circuit was formed by uniting some very old societies—Sardis in the Hayes community and Mt. Zion in the Gaddy community; but these churches and Tabernacle were on the old Bladen Circuit.

There has been a society at Bethlehem on the Brownsville Circuit for just about a century, and here was also the



famous Brownsville Camp Meeting, attended by James Jenkins in 1841.

**PARNASSUS.**—Spears Meeting House, also called Mossy Bay, stood about two miles south-east of the present Parnassus Church, near the residence of Mr. John R. Townsend. McLeod's was about three miles west of Blenheim near the Berry Alford place, and in 1835 Spears and McLeod's were united to form Parnassus.

**CHERAW.**—Although Cheraw was Bishop Asbury's first stopping place after entering South Carolina in 1785, it was forty years before a Methodist Church was built there. Our cause was introduced in Cheraw, however, in 1822, through the instrumentality of a good woman, Mrs. Mary McShea. Removing to Cheraw from Charleston in the spring of 1822 and learning that Rev. Benjamin Rhodes was preaching in the country near by, she sent him an invitation to visit Cheraw. He held his first service in the house of a kind Presbyterian, Mr. A. McIntyre, but as soon as Mrs. McShea moved into her own house a regular appointment was established there, and among others who preached at Mrs. McShea's from time to time were John Boswell and John Gamewell, and two local preachers, Henry Covington and Mastin Crawford. In 1823 Rev. John Boswell, then on Little Pee Dee Circuit, with the assistance of Malachi and James Pegues, secured money enough to enclose a small house of worship. It stood on the western edge of the village, and was dedicated about the close of 1823 by Reverend Henry Covington and Isaac Hartly. In 1824 Cheraw was taken in as an appointment on Little Pee Dee Circuit. In 1825 with Society Hill it was under the pastoral care of Rev. Charles Betts, and it was this year really laid the permanent foundation of our cause in Cheraw. In 1832 the church was removed to its present more central location, and in 1838 a four day's Quarterly meeting was the beginning of a revival that continued a month and added fifty-five whites and one hundred and forty-three blacks to the society. The quarterly meeting services, we are informed, consisted of prayer meeting at 8 o'clock in the morning and preaching in the evening for four days. This would be rather a novel quarterly meeting now.

#### **CHURCHES ON THE LYNCH'S CREEK CIRCUIT.**

We have seen that the Lynch's Creek Circuit was

formed at the close of 1813 out of a part of the Great Pee Dee Circuit. In 1817 in the earliest record accessible to us, the following churches on the Lynch's Creek Circuit are mentioned as having contributed quarterage: Zion, Dowling's, Bethlehem, Liberty Chapel, Bethel, Salem, Sardis, Shiloh, Pine Grove, Wrights, Windham's, Garner's, New Chapel, Rehoboth, New Hope, Antioch, The Gulley, Providence, Mt. Olivet, Duett's, Haw's, Campbell's, Eady's and Ward's—twenty-four in all. There may have been other churches on the circuit, but if so they contributed nothing that year. At the close of 1830 the name was changed from Lynch's Creek to Darlington Circuit, presumably, owing to the fact that a church had been built in Darlington village during the year 1830, and became during the year 1831 for the first time a regular appointment on the Circuit.

#### DARLINGTON CIRCUIT.

James Jenkins had begun to preach at Darlington several years prior to this, but no organization was effected until 1830. The first church in Darlington was a plain frame building, that stood on part of the ground now occupied by the cemetery. It was not plastered or ceiled, and was dedicated in the latter part of 1830 by Rev. Joseph Moore, during a several days' meeting conducted by himself, Moses Turrentine and James Jenkins. In 1831 within the humble wall was conducted a revival that has become historic, in which the Baptist and Presbyterian Churches also largely shared. Mr. Moses Saunders, a prominent figure in that revival, afterwards became the great-hearted benefactor of Darlington Methodism.

#### DARLINGTON CIRCUIT IN 1832.

The churches on the Darlington Circuit in 1832, a year after its formation, were Darlington Court House, Mt. Carmel, Friendship, Liberty Chapel, Tabernacle, Dry Creek, Coleman's, Coward's, Bethel, Pine Grove, Salem, Wright's, New Hope, Newman Swamp, Sardis, Cypress, Dowling's, The Gulley, Skinner's, Bennett's, Stephen's, Fork Creek, Zion, Pleasant Hill, Shiloh, Bear Creek, Parker's, Society Hill, Mt. Zion, Damascus, Antioch, New Chapel, School House. The names of Windham, Bethlehem, Garner's Rehoboth, Providence, Mt. Olivet, Duett's, Haw's, Campbell's, Eady's and Ward's do not appear. Most of them, doubtless, set off to some other circuit.

There is known to have been a small log church a few hundred yards from the site of the present Newman Swamp prior to 1800. In 1840 the church in Darlington was made a station, but was put back in the circuit in 1844. It permanently became a station in 1859.

#### THE CONFERENCE OF 1832.

On the 26th of Jan. 1832, the first session of the Annual Conference held in this section of the State convened at Darlington. The feature of this conference was the decided and memorable impulse given to the missionary spirit, particularly mission work among the slaves, by a speech delivered by Bishop James O. Andrew at the Anniversary of the Missionary Society. Professor Park, of Randolph Macon College, had been sent to the Conference to represent that institution. His fame as an orator had preceded him, and the highest expectations were excited at the announcement that he would make a missionary address. Mr. Andrew, who was also a visitor to the conference was introduced first, however, and Bishop Wightman thus describes what followed: "We have heard many good and clever speeches in our time; a few withal that deserved to be called great, but foremost in our recollection stands the remarkable speech made by Bishop Andrew on that occasion. He drew a picture of the irreligious, neglected plantation negro, Claude-like in the depth of its tone and coloring. He pointed out his degradation rendered but the deeper and darker from the fitful and transient flashings up of desires which felt after God—scintillations of the immortal blood-bought spirit within him, which ever and anon gleamed amidst the darkness of his untutored mind. He pointed out the adaptation of the gospel to the extremest cases. Its recovering power and provisions were adequate to the task of saving from sin and hell all men, of all conditions in life, in all stages of civilization. He pointed to the converted negro, the noblest prize of the gospel, the most unanswerable proof of its efficiency. There he was mingling his morning song with the matinchorus of the birds, and sending up his orisons to God under the light of the evening star; contented in his lot, cheerful in his labors, submissive for conscience's sake to plantation discipline, happy in life, hopeful in death, and from his lowly cabin carried at last by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Who could resist such appeal, in which argument was fused with perfect eloquence? The speech

carried by storm the whole assembly. 'Ah!' said a gentleman high in political life, 'I have heard Henry Clay in his happiest moods, but he is nothing as an orator to Mr. Andrew.' Of course, when Professor Park was introduced to follow him he dextrously excused himself from making a speech.

### JAMES JENKINS.

The two most remarkable contributions yet made by this section to the traveling connection were James Jenkins and Tobias Gibson, both natives of Marion County. James Jenkins admitted on probation in 1792, is described as: "Tall and commanding in person, with a face even in old age expressive of great courage and energy, and a voice, until impaired by long use, clear and trumpet toned" Bishop Capers characterizes him as a "most remarkable man, whose goodness no one ever doubted, but whose zeal was always brandishing in the temple a scourge of not very small cords as if for fear some might be present who did not love the temple well enough to take a scourging for it, and who ought, therefore, to be driven out, and in full faith that the more men were beaten the better for them, as it would make them more humble and less wordly minded." His vigilant supervision of the young preachers and his prompt correction of their errors caused him to be known among them as the "Conference Curry Comb," but with all his apparent austerity, a tender heart throbbed in his bosom, and few men who have belonged to our Conference ever organized more societies, built more new churches, or were instrumental in the salvation of more souls.

When "thundering Jimmie," as he was often called, thundered from the pulpit, there was the lightning stroke of conviction among the people, and when he called aloud on sinners to forsake their ways and spare not, the accredited signs of the gospel usually followed. Dr. Lovick Pierce declared that Mr. Jenkins preached with a tone, manner, power and spirit that were perfectly new to his section and credited to him the first full gospel sermon that ever fell on his ears. Like the chief of the Apostles he seemed to scorn building upon another man's foundation and felt himself a "debtor to preach in the regions beyond, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to hand." Neither the tomahawk of the Oconee Indians, nor the swimming of swollen rivers, nor the

menace of malarial swamps, nor the threatenings of bel-  
lowing mobs, nor excruciating bodily pain, nor days of  
hunger, nor sleepless nights could daunt his purpose to  
preach Christ to the spiritually destitute. Even after his  
richly won superannuation, he it was who planted Metho-  
dism in Winnsboro, Society Hill, Darlington and Sumter,  
and the Pee Dee feels honored as the birth place of one of  
the founders of South Carolina Methodism.

### TOBIAS GIBSON.

But of no less heroic mould was Tobias Gibson, born  
near Mars Bluff in West Marion. He was received on  
probation with Jenkins in 1792, and while extraordinary  
talents are not claimed for him, he yet deserves to rank  
among the heroes of American Methodism. His preach-  
ing is characterized as "sensible, fervent and impressive,  
without evincing any great logical power, or being em-  
bellished by graceful elocution. His great aim was to  
bring God's living truth in contact with the hearts and  
consciences of those whom he addressed and if this pur-  
pose were only gained, he cared little for anything beside.  
There was no sacrifice, however great, that he was not  
willing to make—no obstacle, however appalling, he was  
not willing to encounter, in order to sustain and carry for-  
ward his Master's cause." After seven years of laborious  
service in South Carolina, he volunteered to go as a mis-  
sionary to Natchez and in 1799 was sent by Asbury to  
plant the banner of salvation on the lower Mississippi,  
"He set out," says the history, "from Pee Dee, his native  
spot, and bent his course toward the Cumberland River.  
For six hundred miles he travelled through the wilder-  
ness. Arriving at the river, he sold his horse, bought a  
canoe and embarked for twelve hundred miles with sad-  
dle, bridle and saddle bags and a supply of provisions.  
Paddling himself down the Cumberland, he dropped into  
the Ohio, and soon afterward reached the Mississippi.  
'God speed thee, brave hearted boatman! Thy frail bark  
carries the gospel to the frontier outpost of civilized life.'  
Down the Great River he continued his solitary course  
until he reached Natchez, and after visiting and preaching  
awhile, he organized his first church at the village of  
Washington, six miles east of Natchez. At the end of his  
first year he reported sixty members. After three years  
he found the work enlarging, his health failing and help  
needed; so he took the Natchez trace on horse back and

alone, and traversed the wilderness four hundred miles to the Western Conference for help. The next year he presented himself before the Conference again to plead for still more reinforcements, for he knew that his end was now approaching. On new-year's day 1804 he preached his last sermon and retired to the house of a relative to die. When in the following spring he finished his course, from Walnut Hills to West Florida the sad news spread, and profound sorrow was in the hearts of all the people. He was then in the thirty-fifth year of his age and is represented as "tall and spare, with fair complexion, light hair and piercing black eyes, and was considered handsome. His candor was softened by courtesy and such was his character for piety and charity that a personal contest with him would have been looked on as discreditable to any man."

#### THE PAST AND THE PRESENT IN CONTRAST.

Such was the humble origin and some of the first beginnings of Methodism in this section. What it is now is written large in the Conference Minutes. How hard to realize that over one of the fairest and most densely populated valleys of Carolina, where far famed fields bloom like gardens, and beautiful and happy homes are embosomed in beds of flowers, and thousands of spindles hum merrily under the fingers of our captains of industry, and school houses and churches and books and above all the Book of Books weave around our lives the garments of Christian Civilization, less than two hundred years ago there roamed the Cheraw and Pee Dee Indians. In Darlington and the adjoining counties of Chesterfield, Marlboro, Marion and Florence where now nearly one hundred and twenty churches shelter as true and loyal disciples of Jesus as can anywhere be found, far into the eighteenth century King Harry, Corn-white Johnny, Captain Billy, George and Dancing Johnny and their kindred on low sand dunes and hard by the river's bank worshipped the Great Spirit around large flat mounds made sacred to them as the resting places of generations of their forefathers.

#### SOME CONCLUSIONS.

If the secret of the share of Methodism in the transformation from that day to this is asked, the answer is that Methodism came with the doctrines and polity that were best adapted to the condition and needs of a pioneer

people.

(1) Our doctrines were simple, scriptural and preachable. The preacher's message set forth, first, salvation from sin, free and for all, on the simple condition of faith; second—a salvation you can know here and now; third—a salvation to which you can testify.

(2) Our itinerancy has been characterized as a kind of light artillery that God organized to pursue and overtake fugitives that flee into the wilderness from His presence—firm and effective in action, ready for all service, and omnipresent, as it were in the field.

(3) Such a ministry, armed with such doctrines was inspired with a supreme passion to reach men. Methodism went after men; instead of waiting for them to come to the Gospel, it carried the Gospel where men were, and set up a pulpit in fields, barns, lofts, and kitchens. It camped with the multitudes in the woods and converted the groves into temples of God.

(4) With a passion to reach the masses, Methodism yet made its appeal to the individual. This secret of preaching to the individual, early Methodist preachers learned from the Wesleys themselves. Listen to one of John Wesley's appeals: "Thou art the man; I want thee for my Lord; I challenge thee for a child of God by faith; the Lord hath need of thee; thou who feelest that thou art just fit for hell art just fit to advance his glory. Oh! come quickly; believe in the Lord God, and thou, even, thou art reconciled to God." No wonder John Nelson said, "I thought he fixed his eyes on me, and his whole discourse was aimed at me." While Charles Wesley was preaching in the open air at Bristol, a man in the vast throng cried out: "What do you mean by looking at me, and directing yourself to me, and telling me I shall be damned." It was the same sort of preaching that Hull and others did on the Pee Dee. With his hope of a real Heaven and his warning of a real hell the Methodist preacher made a direct appeal to the consciousness of immortality in every man.

(5) When the story of Methodism is finally written, much of its early success will be accredited to its local preachers and class leaders. In those days of large circuits that brought the itinerant into each congregation, only once in six weeks and that for just a day, our societies would have been disintegrated as fast as gathered, had it not been for the faithful oversight of these consecrated local lay workmen.

(6) Scarcely less effective than any of these agencies for the planting of Methodism was the power of song. Says Dr. Austin Phelps: "For the planting of great Christian truths deep in the heart of an awakened people, let us have John Wesley's tongue of fire, seconded by Charles Wesley's hymns floating heavenward on the twilight air. Under such conditions Methodism is inspired. Mobs bellowing with infuriated blood thirst, which neither John Wesley's coal black eye, nor Whitfield's imperial voice could quell, have been known to turn and slink away, when the truth was sung at them in Charles Wesley's Hymns."

(7) But neither our popular doctrines, nor our itinerant ministry, nor our system of lay helpers, nor our gift of song would have produced any such results without the spirit of utter self-sacrifice that marked Methodism's first preachers. How those early itinerants threw their very lives into their God-appointed tasks. They were men who labored as "if judgment fires were about to break out on the earth, and time end with their day." When we are told that during these hard years of conquest, one-third of all Methodist preachers died before they reached the age of thirty, and fully two-thirds before twelve years of this itinerant life had passed, we understand something of the cost at which these rude and sparsely settled regions were saved to religion and civilization. The doctrines and polity of Methodism were as exquisitely adapted to the situation as Providence could shape them, but the same doctrines and methods wielded by a less heroic measure of self-sacrifice would have been powerless to produce existing results.