

1973

Life History of Aaron Munlin

Aaron Munlin

Willie A. Munlin

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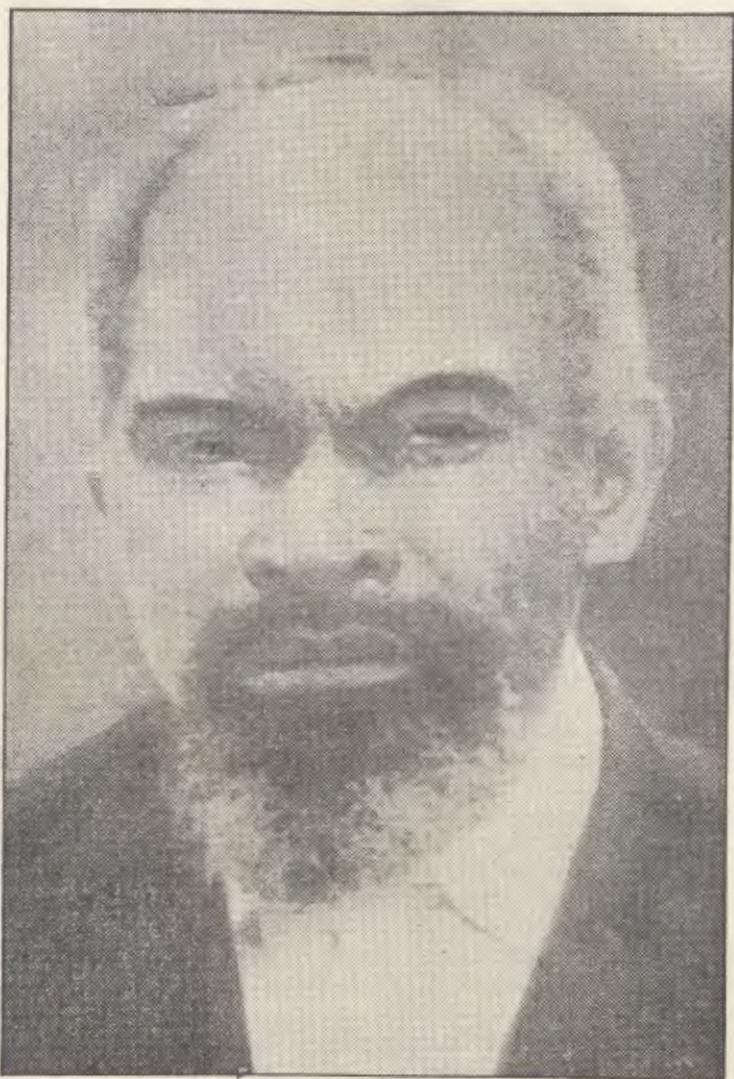
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LIFE HISTORY

OF



AARON MUNLIN

Born January 31, 1848 :: Died April 7, 1911

ROCKY FORD, GEORGIA,

Bulloch County, R. F. D. No. 1, Box 15.

This being in the year 1909. For some cause I have the desire to write a little sketch of my life both natural and spiritual.

I will first give a little information of my natural life: I was born in the state of South Carolina, Marion county, January 31, in the year of 1848, and was a slave of Mr. Neale McCray, and together with mother and one brother and two sisters was brought to Georgia in February, 1856. I became acquainted with trouble from a small child. I remember when my father and mother were separated, hearing them grieving and crying it made me very sad, and whenever I think of it it brings the same sadness of mind. I never saw father any more, nor my grandmother and many of our dear kindred that we parted from I've met no more this side of the grave; but since freedom I have been back to the old state, have seen two of mother's sisters and brothers and a few of my people that we parted from in 1856. I remember well when coming to Georgia on the train that my mother was crying and taking on, and that a white man wanted to know her trouble. After she had told him, he said to her, "Don't fret Auntie, don't fret; you will find good friends in Georgia," and I must say he told the truth. It seems like all the people, both white and colored, took a liking to us, and all the time that we were slaves we got along very well.

I'll refer to some of the places that I was hired to work while I was a slave. The first place was to Mr. Richard Gay, for about three months in 1856, in Emanuel county. I worked with Mr. Owen Gibson in 1860, in Bulloch county; with Mr. William Aycock in 1861 also in Bulloch county. I worked with Mr. William Stringer in 1862, at that time in Bulloch county, now in Jenkins county; with Mr. David Bell in Bulloch county in 1863; with Mr. William B. Hendrix in 1864 in Bulloch county, also with Mr. Allen Hooks in 1865 in Emanuel county. It was here at this last mentioned place that I was at work when the news came to me that I was free. About this time I began to get wild, and forgetting the good training that my dear mother had given me. I began to grow strong in the belief that if I would try to do good the Lord would help me and that I could get religion any time that I would try to get it. I thought that this was the way, and that any one could be one of God's children if he would try to be one. This was the way that I had been hearing it preached, and all

who I had ever heard preach, preached it that way except the Primitive Baptist, and I did think that the Primitive Baptist had the poorest foundation of any people that I had ever heard, and I did say many things about them that I have been sorry about since. It was in the year 1866 that it was brought to me my lost and ruined state. I was now about 18 years old and I had never seen my sins before me like they appeared. I saw one night in a dream a white man. It appeared that he was above me and that he showed me all my sins at once. While I was looking at my sins and my ruined condition I thought that I felt so guilty and condemned that I could not look at the man, and many little habits that I had taken up appeared as great sins, and it seemed were growing larger and larger, some things that I had done and had forgotten appeared before me.

I thought the man spoke to me and said, "Quit plaguing and tormenting little children as you have been doing, and pray and others shall pray for thee." And as the man that appeared to me spoke these words disappeared, and I woke up and found myself in the same condition that I saw and felt to be in the dream. This was in the spring of the year 1866. I then began trying to get rid of my guilty feeling, but I could not. I would try to pray for relief, but could not get to feel as I wanted to feel, and after awhile I began to think of it all as just being imagination, and that I would quit studying so much about the sight that I had seen in my dream. I bought me a fiddle, and I tried to pray the very morning that I got it that if there was any harm in playing the fiddle that I could not learn to play it, and so I soon learned to play, also to dance, and did not think that I ever would quit this; but my burden of mind soon grew so heavy I did not enjoy the fiddle and ballroom floors very long. I would often ask old people: Is there any harm in playing the fiddle?

Some of them would tell me no, and some would tell me yes. I went on with it a while longer, but felt it was a sin. I became more and more troubled about my sins during this time. I thought if I could marry maybe I could live a better life, so I soon found one that I was satisfied with and she was with me. She was Miss Lucinda Groover; she was born a slave June 6, 1850, and was raised in Bulloch county, Georgia, and we agreed and were married October 25th, 1868. I was blessed to get a wife and we got along good together, but my burden seemed to get heavy. I tried and had just about lost confidence in my good works, but I thought maybe I have not tried

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the right way, so I kept on trying and praying and I got to where it seemed like it was a sin to be trying; but it would not be long before I would be saying, "Lord, have mercy on me a poor sinner." While I was in this condition I gave it up and tried to be content to go to everlasting torment. I felt like if I was sent to hell the Lord was just. I could not see any way to escape that awful place. I quit having sport out of the children as I had been having; I gave up the ballroom floor and the fiddle; I quit the company that I had been running with.

I was brought to feel that I was the worst sinner that had ever lived; that I was not fit to live or die, and after all hope for mercy was gone, to my surprise that great load of guilt was gone. I was rejoicing within and filled with gladness, and I felt altogether different; my mind was full of praise to the Lord. I just wanted to tell someone how glad I felt. This was the last of May or the first of June in 1870, but soon after this I began to doubt and think maybe I was deceived in what I had felt, thinking maybe it is nothing but imagination, but still new thoughts and new desires would come and I began to feel like I wanted to be baptised, but did not feel that I was fit and I had so many doubts and fears I just tried to throw it all aside as nothing; but soon I began to think about the church and wanted to hear them talk and tell how they felt when they first felt their sins forgiven. I remember hearing one sister telling her experience, and it seemed as if I wanted to see her and hear her tell it again, to see if what I felt agreed with hers.

I went on this way awhile, and again tried to lay it all aside, as when one day as I was plowing my little ox it seemed that I heard someone say, "Put not off the day for tomorrow may be too late." It came so forcibly to my mind I stopped and looked about to see if I could see anybody, but I saw no one, so I decided it was just an impression of mind and not a natural voice that I heard, and so I became willing to go and offer myself to the old Primitive Baptist; but there was no church of the Primitive Baptist among the colored people in that part of the country at this time, and so it was with the white people I was directed to go and tell what I hoped the Lord had done for me; and on the 23rd of July, 1870, I went to Nevils church and told them of my little hope. Myself and one white sister were received and baptised. I had a few hours of joy, and as I was

returning home that evening these words were in my mind all the time, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; bless the Lord, O, my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

I was so overcome with joy that I hardly could keep from shouting out loud, I just felt like I wanted to tell someone how happy I felt that evening. This is a reason of my little hope in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I will try to tell or write a little of my call to the ministry as I hope. I did not remain in that happy condition long; soon my mind was led to think about praying, and it became such a burden on my mind that I had to stop one morning at the edge of a footlog that lay across a branch and there try to pray, and as I got up I had a little calm feeling in my mind, so I went on doing my day's work; and all seemed to be calm within, but in a few days after this I became burdened again just like I did at the footlog, and I would yield to my impression of mind sometime, and sometime I would try to suppress it, and I got to being in so much trouble that I could not rest only as I would yield to the impression of my mind, and it was about the same way as near as I can tell about talking in public. I would talk and tell the brethren and sisters about how I thought we ought to live and conduct ourselves before the world and before each other, and sometimes I would want to tell some of my experiences, and how I believed the Lord saved his people, and then again at times I would try to keep all my expressions to myself, but I could not; it came to me that I had to preach, and I said to myself, I know that I cannot do that, and I will say just here I began to meet trouble and sore trials, such as I had never met before.

I wanted to talk and tell the church my trouble, but I was afraid to say anything to them about it, so I went on the best I could. It seems to me that the Prophet Job in the 3rd chapter, first to the fourteenth, tells my troubles that I had to meet better than I can tell them, but I believe the Lord was with me; it seems to me that there was strange customs with the old mother church while I was a member with her; she was composed of two nations of people, one was white and the other colored, and the custom was that all the business of the church was done by the white members, and the colored part of the church after being received and baptised had no more says in the church, and this custom caused me to see much

trouble. I tried to be contented and submissive to our custom, and while I was passing along here it seems to me that I was about to lose my mind. I could not keep any records about my earthly business. I would often find myself standing and studying and could not tell how long I had been standing there. My wife would say sometimes to me, "Aaron, what is the matter with you? You act so strange." I would say, "I don't know," and sometimes I would say, "nothing is the matter." I went on in this way trying to pray to the good Lord for Him to show me what to do, and what was His will. I became willing to do my duty whatever it was, and I wanted to talk to the church and tell them about my condition and impressions, but I became afraid to go, and I was alone one night; my wife had gone to see her mother, and I had a dream that night; I thought a man came and lay down beside me and was talking with me and he told me many things that I would have to meet here in the church, and it seemed to me that I understood all that he said and just as he got up to leave me he said to me, "Go on and don't shrink back," and just as he said that I waked and it was daylight. I then began to think over my dream, and thought that I could go on. I felt like I wanted to go and tell the brethren my feelings. The church where my membership was, was in a cold condition, and I felt like I wanted to talk and tell them what I felt to be our duty towards God and I told one of the white members that I thought that we all ought to meet regular and sing and pray, but at last, what did I hear from that? It was soon spread abroad that I was going to take the church in charge. This gave me trouble again. The Lord knows I had no thought of such a thing as taking the church in charge. It seems like while passing along here that my burden was so heavy that I would have been better off if I could have died. But the Lord was with me I hope, and made me able to endure it all. I was in so

so much trouble I went to see Elder J. Wilson, who lived about fourteen miles from where I lived, and I tried to tell him all my troubles and of my condition, or as near as I could. He said to me, "Well Aaron, if you feel to be weighted in mind you must fix you a place among your color where you can exercise your gift, for some of the white folks will not permit you to exercise in the church with them."

I said to myself, "My Lord, what shall I do?" I came on back home, and while I was walking along I continued saying "Lord, what shall I do; what must I do?" I continued to read the Bible and other good books and I soon began to find out that if one is called to follow Christ he must suffer many things for His sake. It was about the next meeting at Nevils Creek church after I went to Elder Wilson that I and my wife met at the church and there were some worldly men met us at the spring where we were getting water; one of them called me by name and said to me, "Come with us, we want to see you a little." He spoke as if he was angry, and I refused to go with them, but went on into the church house and heard a good sermon preached I thought, but did not enjoy it much because of the action of the men that I had met on the outside. We thought there was more trouble ahead of us.

I will now try to tell of a dream that I had the same night following: I saw a drove of big, fierce looking bulls all together and they had long, bloody horns, and I thought they were all watching me and that I was in a place like a garden; it was walled around and I was inside of this place, and they were on the outside. I thought I had become dissatisfied and was looking for a place to come out. It seemed that I could see one place that the wall was down, and that the cattle and hogs had little paths through the place and it was full of bushes and weeds, and I was walking along inside and thought I would come out at one of the places where the wall was down, and as I walked along the bulls would walk along outside watching me, and I thought to myself in the dream if I go out there those bulls will destroy me; and about the time I came to that conclusion I thought I heard a voice. I saw the bulls drop their heads and begin to walk off in another direction, and it seemed that all my fears of being destroyed by them vanished. I awoke and wondered what this great dream could mean. It soon came into my mind that the bulls that I saw in my dream were wicked men that would have destroyed me if the Lord would have permitted them to, and the place that I

was in when the voice said to "stay inside and they can't hurt you," was the church; so I was encouraged a little and made to feel that the good Lord was with me, and I went on doing the best that I could. I would often get up and make a fire to try to read; I just could not sleep, and I would read and read and sometimes I would go to some of the members' house and read and talk; sometimes I would forget myself and be talking out loud.

Some of the brethren, both white and colored, became satisfied that the Lord had enjoined something on me to do and they would invite me to fill appointments at their houses and about under shade trees, and soon after that I began to talk regularly. Some of the members at Nevils Creek wanted me to talk with the church, so in December they had me to come before the church and talk. The house was full of people and when I sat down some of the brethren spoke and said they were satisfied with the young brother, then they agreed to give me license to exercise my gift. This was done in conference on the seventh day of Decembr, 1878, and I continud to talk here at Nevils Creek and at other places, and as this was something new among the people I was invited nearly every Sabbath day somewhere either among the white brethren or among the colored, and sometimes the Missionary Baptists and the Methodists would invite me to preach for them. And I continued on as the Lord enabled me to go.

While at Nevils church I had another dream about a tree. It may be that those who read this will call me a dreamer like Joseph's brethren did him. I dreamed I was traveling along the road near where Nevils Creek church was at that time; I thought I was going up the road and out by the side of the road I saw a tree and its top had been cut off. As I drew near I could see that the tree was healing over where it was cut off, and just below where it was cut I saw some sprouts that had sprouted out. It looked like the tree was getting less and less while I was looking at it, and just below the sprouts I saw letters cut on the tree, and I began to walk around the tree to see what the letters were, and I saw these four words, "You shall have her." As I read what I saw, I heard a voice say, "Thou shall have her," and I thought where the tree had stood, stood a woman and she was my wife, and I remembered in my dream that my wife that I now have was at home and I began to say to myself in the dream, "Am I going to have a tree for a wife?" And I was full of love for that woman, and I thought she was the most beautiful woman that

I had ever seen, and I awoke and began to wonder what all this meant. I tried to pray to the Lord to show me what this dream was or what it meant, and something said to me it is the church, and it was but a short time when myself and some colored members of the church agreed to build a church house and get letters from them and try to keep house for the Lord, and on Saturday before the second Sunday in March, 1879, my wife and myself and two others got our letters from Nevils Creek church, and on May 16th, 1879, we four and one from Oaky Grove church were constituted into a church called Banks Creek Primitive Baptist church by Elder M. F. Stubbs and Elder Matthew Donaldson, and I was called to the care of this church and to serve it as best I could, and February 20th, 1880, I was ordained to the full work of the ministry by the same elders that were with us in the institution, Elder M. F. Stubbs and Elder Matthew Donaldson. They belonged to the Lower Canoochee Association at that time.

I have tried to give a little sketch of my life and a few of my experiences and some of my troubles and call to the ministry in the above writing, hoping that it may be a little comfort to someone when I am done with this troublesome world.

I want to give a little information of the beginning of the church at Banks Creek. We were the first church of the colored Primitive Baptist in this country, and it seemed from an outward view that we were too little and too few to try to keep house for the Lord, but I have been made to believe the Lord was with us in this little building. It was, as I have said, in March, 1879, on Saturday before the second Sunday, that my wife and myself, Martin and Dinah Hodges got our letters from Nevils Creek church and Brother Mose Parrish got his letter from Oaky Grove church in Emanuel county, Ga., and we five brethren and sisters agreed to live together in a church, and we called two white ministers and we were constituted into a church, May 16, 1879, by Elder M. F. Stubbs and Elder D. M. Donaldson, of the Lower Canoochee Association. I felt so lonely after we were constituted! I wanted to know how we stood in the sight of God, and the same night I tried to pray to the Lord to show me how we stood in His sight, and I had a wonderful dream that same night. In my dream I was in a house and heard someone call me; I got up and went to the door to see who it was. When I looked out I saw a man

sitting on a house and he said to me, "Come here and bring your book with you. I thought I took up a hymn book to carry to him and I thought to myself, this is not the book that he wants and put the hymn book down and picked up a Bible and went to him, and as I was going he bowed his head to let me know that I had the right book, and as I left the house he disappeared, and where the house was there was a garden with greens in it. I thought that the rows of greens would check so that they could be seen both ways, and I saw on one side of the garden there were two rows that had no greens on them, but had little dots all along even against the greens that were on the other rows and that man who had called me to him took the Bible and opened it at the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament and he showed me many things that were lawful for us to use and things unlawful to use and we were in the garden at the end of it when he closed the Bible and gave it back to me, and then he disappeared and just as he did I thought that I heard someone saying, "We are a garden walled around, chosen and made peculiar ground." I then woke up and when I began to think over what I had seen and heard I could not stay in my bed, but I got up and kindled a fire to read. I could not wait until daylight, and I soon found the song that I heard in my dream, and it is in the Lloyd's Primitive Baptist hymn book, on page 209. I now became satisfied that the Lord was with us and I yet feel so. Though we have had our crosses and our trials there are yet a little few that are contending for the faith that was delivered to the Saints.

I was called to the care of Banks Creek church the same day it was constituted, and have been every year, except four years—the years 1887, 1890, 1891 and 1894. My oldest sor in the ministry served with Elder W. Hodges, and I am yet trying to serve them at this time, which is 1909, to this work. Twenty-six years that I have served to the best of my ability, and they have been good to me and have divided their temporal blessings with me.

AARON MUNLIN.

Statesboro, Ga., September 1, 1912.

Now I will write a little sketch of my father's death as he asked me to do while he was sick, and he told me to finish his life story after he was finished with this world. He was taken ill the year 1910. I was with him at the last association that he met with, which

was held with the church at Beth Haven, Tattnall county, Georgia, and he was not feeling well at the session, but he preached an able sermon. He preached John 10th chapter, 27 and 28, and he kept getting worse until he had to go to the doctor for medical treatment. He went a few times, but soon got too weak to go, and he called the doctor to come to see him. He was first taken with indigestion and from that to dropsy. From the year he was born, 1842, up to 1911 he said this was the first time he had ever been under the care of a doctor. He was a man who loved the welfare of God's people; he never did lose sight of God; when he was able to talk he was always talking about the works of the Lord and how the Lord had blessed him. He said the reason he wanted to stay here was for the ties of nature; he felt when he was done with this world that his troubles would be ended; he was always singing these words, "Oh, if my Lord would come and meet my soul, would stretch her wings in haste." He suffered much but bore his affliction with Christian patience, and on April 7, 1911, the Lord called our dear father's presence from us, but his life is yet in our presence. He left a wife and nine children to mourn his death. On Saturday, April 8th, 1911, his body was carried to the family cemetery where his mother and other children were buried. He was funeralized by Elder W. Hodges with a large crowd to pay their last respects to the body. He was the father of twelve children, six of whom are resting in a better world, I hope.

Hymn No. 656 was sung for the opening of the funeral, and hymn No. 382 for the closing of the funeral.

Now I have only tried to do as he requested of me to do, so I remain his son in blood and spirit as I trust,

Respectfully yours,

WILLIE A. MUNLIN.