

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CONCORD CHURCH

By Deacon George Montgomery Sweet

There is evidence of services held at Concord as early as Nov. 1785. Rev Robert McClintock, from Ireland, preached at Concord in Fairfield, Indian Creek in Newberry, and Rocky Springs in Laurens, from about 1785 till 1796, if not later; part of the time of the time regularly and part occasionally. He seems to have been independent of the South Carolina Presbytery, which was formed in 1785; and with Rev. Hugh Morrison, also of Ireland, was thought to favor the "New Lights".

He was a man of great energy, and devoted to Christ's cause. His record shows 2,808 persons baptized by him; 159 between January 1st, 1800, and June 5th, 1803. It may be in relation to Concord that Rev. Hugh Morrison wrote: "There is the prospect of a promising congregation on the Wateree; it is the intention of most of the people to have two houses. I think we shall soon triumph over all our enemies; and the prejudices of the people seem daily to diminish."

From 1793 supplies were occasionally sent by South Carolina Presbytery to Concord. Some of these were Revs. Roseboro, McCullough, Dunlap, Walker, Couser, Gilland and J. B. Davies.

Services were held at this time at a stand or house of worship five or six miles southeast of the present site on Wateree Creek, on land owned by Edward P. Mobley. The house was known as "Mobleys Meeting House". But this being inconvenient to most of the congregation a more central and suitable place was sought. The present site being selected, about six acres of land were given by Daniel Huffman. An arbor was soon erected across the railroad (the tracks were put down in 1850) from the present house near the forks of the road. At the time of the centennial celebration, elder W. W. Brice wrote: "Here they gathered for worship, no vehicles, and but few horses; the country wilderness, the roads but paths blazed out; the men came in their shirt sleeves, copperas breeches and moccasin shoes; the women clad in dresses of homespun, and sun bonnets, bearing a scone of bread for lunch. The women thought nothing hard of riding on horseback twelve or fifteen miles to church.

The writer remembers to have seen Mrs. Roseboro, now eighty-three years old, yet hale and hardy, ride at least seven miles on horseback to church. Also crowds of men and women walking, carrying their Sunday shoes and hats, and stopping” along the way to rest.

Concord Church was organized by Rev. Robert B. Walker, of South Carolina Presbytery, and enrolled April, 1796. There was a tradition that it was organized in 1790, but there is no proof of this. The first elders were James Arter, James Caldwell, James Hindman and Abraham Miller. During 1796, there were added to the eldership John Stirling, James Robinson and James Mckeown.

Rev. Walker, pastor of Bethesda Church, supplied the church for one year. From 1797, the church was supplied occasionally until 1800. Rev Wm. G. Roseboro was the first pastor, serving Horeb and Concord churches from September 1800, until his death May 5th, 1810. His remains were laid in old Lebanon graveyard. From 1810 to 1813, Rev. Francis H. Porter of Purity congregation supplied the church occasionally. In 1813, Rev. Robert McCullough supplied the church for one fourth of the time and for one half of the time after 1814. This arrangement continued until Rev. McCullough's death on August 7th, 1824. Between the years of 1807 and 1828, Rev. Samuel W. Young, who preached at Jackson Creek (Lebanon) and Mt. Olivet, would serve as supply. During this period the church appears to have prospered having constructed the present building, and installed five elders: Samuel Penny, Samuel Banks, Samuel McCullough, James Douglas and Hugh Thompson.

It is not known how long the congregation worshipped under the arbor, but we know that a log house was eventually erected. Each man in the congregation was to supply a log, with John Cork laying down the first log. This work continued until the pews were put in, each man supplying his own. Some were very rustic, “one made by James McKeown was considered to be the handsomest and most comfortable. It was made from a large poplar. Hewn trough-like, with one side higher than the other for a back.” This house was blown down by a hurricane, and another built near the site of the present building. The present brick building was erected in 1818.

James B. Stafford, a licentiate of Hanover Presbytery in Va., but a native of North Carolina, was called to the joint pastorate of Purity and Concord

churches, and was ordained and installed on June 27th, 1825. This pastorate continued until 1834. The congregation suffered considerable agitation during these years, as a result of his introducing and substituting Watts Psalms and Hymns, in place of Rouse's version of David's Psalms. This division weakened the church and diminished her numbers for some time. On March 31st, 1825, Concord asked and was allowed to move from Harmony Presbytery to Bethel Presbytery, which was formed on October 9th, 1824. Owing to some political difficulties with Purity Church, Rev. Stafford left the pastorate and moved to Mississippi. About the same time, one of Concord's elders, John Stirling, due to his disapproval of Watts's Psalms and Hymns (some say due to his anti-slavery views), pulled out of the church and helped form the short lived Stirling or Covenantor church two miles to the south. During the pastorate, the session was increased by the selection of Robert Caldwell, John Banks and William Wilson.

The church was vacant for two years, when Mr. John Douglass, a licentiate of Bethel Presbytery and a native of South Carolina, was called. He became pastor of Purity and Concord on April 30th, 1836. During this year John McCullough, Alexander N. Hindman and Henry Moore were made elders. At this time there were 64 members, 60 white and 4 colored. In 1841 the roll increased to ninety-four and in 1849 to one hundred and thirty-five, 32 of whom were colored. Mr. Douglass continued as pastor until 1846, at which time he moved to James Island.

After 20 years of use Watt's Psalms were replaced by Rouse's Psalms, due to the protests of an unyielding minority

From 1846 to 1847, the church had no regular supply. Rev. James Saye from the Bethel Presbytery held a meeting on the 4th Sabbath in April, 1847, at which time 5 were received on examination. Rev. James A Wallace preached one-half of his time to this church in 1847 and 1848. The other half was given to a mission point near Halselville, where Mizpah church now stands.

Rev. James R. Gilland preached at Concord and Mt. Olivet of Harmony Presbytery, from 1848 to 1853, when he became a professor at Davidson College. From 1841 to 1851, the church lost several efficient elders. Robert Caldwell died in 1841, John Banks removed in 1847, Henry Moore went west in 1849 and Samuel Banks died in 1851. From 1844 to 1848, two

members of the church became ministers. These were William Banks and Douglass Harrison. In 1849, James Caldwell and George H. Miller were installed as elders. George Miller who became clerk of the session wrote the following tribute to the late elder Samuel Banks; "Coming from Scotland when twenty-five years old, he married, settled near Concord, and raised ten children. He was made elder in Concord and for thirty-six years was eminently useful. Before his death he was permitted to see his five sons and five daughters unite with the church, and to hear two sons, Revs. Alex R. and William, preach the gospel on the same day at Catholic Church. Two more were made elders in the Presbyterian church and one a deacon in the Baptist church. He gave a large copy of the Bible to each child and provided in his will that each grandchild, forty-seven in number, should receive a copy."

Rev. W. J. McCormick was installed pastor of Concord and Mt. Olivet in October, 1853, and continued until 1858, when he moved to Florida. At this time many were moving west and the church's increases were small. In April, 1857, John Neil and Thomas Carlisle were added to the session. John Neil, a bright and promising school teacher sadly died the next year. The Church was vacant in 1859 when Rev G. W. Boggs was secured for several months.

Rev. T. W.. Ervin became pastor in 1859. His was the longest pastorate Concord had in the first hundred years, continuing for seventeen years. It was during his ministry that the ravages of the war between the states spread gloom and poverty over the country. In the midst of other distresses, death claimed four of her elders; James Carlisle, William Wilson, John McCullough and Alexander Hindman. During these hard times the pastor remained and preached, receiving what little the congregation could spare. "It is said that in some cases he returned to the contributors money given saying they could not spare it without entailing suffering on their families. Having a small farm he worked as others had to do and continued to preach."

In 1865 there were 65 colored members, nearly all of whom left the church when emancipated and erected houses of their own with some of their own numbers preaching. There were two of this number that remained in the congregation. The many markers in the cemetery of veterans of the war give silent testimony to the great extent to which the congregation was effected. Tradition has it that the cemetery has the unmarked graves of five unknown soldiers who died in the area while in transit. Elder W. W. Brice writes at the

time of the centennial; "During the late war our church was invaded, the Bible taken from the pulpit, the communion service, baptismal font, and tokens taken from the closet underneath the old pulpit. All seemed discouraged except for one man, whose devotion and sacrifice as the only elder gave hope. But for him our doors would have been closed. Many of us remember his earnest prayers for this church. We are often reminded of him when we look at the Bible on the pulpit, his last gift to the church. His remains lie beside his wife in the corner of the cemetery, and the inscription is written there, Sacred to the memory of George H. and Mary Miller.

The congregation installed A. B. and John C. Douglass as elders sometime around 1865. In 1870, J. M. Blain, W. W. Brice and A. H. Dunbar were installed as elders.

Towards the last part of Rev. Ervin's ministry, the congregation had increased and the population of Blackstock grew, to the point where a need was felt for a house of worship there. Thus Blackstock Church was erected in 1877. The first board of deacons was elected in the spring of 1877, consisting of S. B. Lumpkin, John A. Stewart, E. D. Mobley and Hugh Bruce.

Mr. T. M. Lowery served as supply in 1877 and Rev. James Douglas during the following winter. In July, 1877, Rev J. Lowrie conducted a meeting in which seventeen were added to the roll on profession of faith and seven by certificate!

Rev. John McMullen, of Alabama, served a short while in the fall of 1878 and was called to the pastorate of Concord in May, 1879. He served until September 20, 1884, when he became an evangelist of the Bethel Presbytery. At this time one hundred and forty-six names appear on the roll. Rev. C. R. Hemphill of the Theological Seminary of Columbia and Mr. S. R. Hope supplied the church with preaching for the next year.

Rev. Wm. G. Neville of the South Carolina Presbytery, was the next pastor, serving from May 8th, 1886, to July 20th, 1890. The congregation made good progress during this pastorate. A number of revival meetings were held, and 94 names were added to the roll, the total reaching 189. Mr. R. G. Miller (the son of George H. Miller) was installed as an elder in 1887. Daniel H. Stevenson and W. B. Thompson were installed as elders in 1889. Thomas W. Brice was installed as a deacon in 1887, and Alexander

McDonald was installed as a deacon in 1890. During Rev. Neville's ministry, the congregation, led by him, built its comfortable and commodious manse at Blackstock. In July, 1890, Rev. Neville left a sorrowing people and removed to Frankfort, KY.

Rev. R. P. Smith began preaching at Concord in January, 1891 and continued for three and one half years. During his ministry the roll of members increased to 195. In August, 1893, Rev. Smith moved to Gastonia N.C. . Mr. J. Currie, of Columbia Seminary, followed as supply to the church.

In the latter part of January, 1894, Rev M. R. Kirkpatrick, of Wadesboro N.C., began his pastorate at Concord. Rev Kirkpatrick served as pastor until 1905. In 1895, two elders, S. D. Patrick and S. G. Miller and two deacons, J. N. Caldwell and J. H. Allen, were installed. The church's membership grew to 225. Rev. Kirkpatrick's pastorate included the centennial observation. He compiled the historical sketch of the first one hundred years of the church, at the time giving credit to, Rev. John Douglas for the history of the church between 1796 and 1839, and to George H. Miller for the history between 1839 and 1881. This current history has depended greatly on his sketch and the sketch done by elder W. W. Brice, for the first cenutry. Rev. Kirkpatrick spoke fondly of the work done by the ladies of the church saying: "Few churches have to record more heroic and efficient service rendered by the women than ours. The Ladies' Aid Society during the last three pastorates has done great work. Through their labors, chiefly, an iron fence has been placed around the cemetery at Concord, costing about \$800. There being a debt of \$700 on the manse in 1887, they, by their unceasing activity, have paid principal and interest, reaching near \$1,000. The final payments were made during the present pastorate."

In his paper, written for the centennial, entitled, Houses of Worship by Elder W. W. Brice, he states: "The present brick building was erected in 1818, and though somewhat dilapidated, still stands a monument to the builders—the noble men and women whose remains lie there in the cemetery. The roof of this building being too flat, it was raised three or four feet higher about fifteen years after it was built. In 1859, it was recovered, the brick floor replaced by a plank floor, and the pews remodeled. A few years later the pulpit recess was added and the gallery used by colored members before the war, was removed. Several years ago the walls were braced with iron rods to prevent collapse. This we hope is the last work we will do to this building,

hoping before long it will be replaced by a neat, modern building.” We hope he would be pleasantly surprised to see us still worshipping in this wonderful old building, more than one hundred years later!

Rev. G. G. Mayes served as pastor from 1905 to 1909. In 1906, John R. Craig and George L. Kennedy were installed as elders. In 1907, deacons; S. L. McDonald, G. L. Kennedy, T. W. Brice, S. B. Clowney and James E. Douglas were installed.

Rev. W. S. Hamiter preached at Concord from 1911 to 1918. In 1912, elders; W. T. McDonald and W. M. Harvey and deacon E. M. Kennedy were installed. Will Ragsdale was installed as deacon and W. S. Peden elder in 1915. Robert McIlroy was installed as elder in 1917.

Rev. J. E. Coker was pastor from 1919 to 1920. S. M. Brice was installed as deacon and J. F. Coleman as elder, in 1919. For a short time after Rev. Coker, R. C. Clontz served as student supply. On November 5th, 1921, Rev. A. N. Littlejohn began his pastorate at Concord. On July 16th, 1922, J.M. Blaine was installed as elder, and E. E. Hedgepath was installed as elder on April 3rd, 1927. We know that Rev. Littlejohn was still preaching at Concord in 1925 and may have been, as late as 1927. The roll in 1925, contained 113 names.

On October 2, 1927, Rev. S. A. Ewart began his long pastorate at Concord. Rev. Ewart preached through the Great Depression and most of World War II. These were very trying times, when many fortunes were ruined and in the war, lives lost. We can imagine that the constancy of Rev. Ewart's pastorate through these troubled years, provided most of the comfort there was to be found. In August, 1937, Dr. McIlwain conducted special services, to allow Rev. Ewart to take vacation. In September 1939, Rev. Martin of Winnsboro (father of N.C. Gov. Jim Martin) conducted special services for Rev. Ewart. On October 6th, 1939, S. L. Montgomery, Charley McCarley and L. M. Brice were elected elders and S. M. Brice, T. W. Brice Jr., J. B. Montgomery and Lex Montgomery were elected deacons. In Oct. 1940, Rev. T. F. Grier held special week long services at Concord.

On April 20th, 1941, W. T. McDonald after serving so long as clerk of the session, passed the job along to S. L. Montgomery. While going over the session records for this period, I was impressed with the fine handwriting and

strength of language used in the minutes of each session. The cemetery shows that W. T. McDonald's wife Lizzie Dickey McDonald, passed away on Feb. 7th, 1941. Later examples of elder McDonald's hand show that someone else actually wrote up the session minutes. More than likely his wife was providing the wonderful pen for the records all those years, as so many other ladies must have done, providing their strength and talents behind the scenes. On July 8th, 1943 Rev. T. F. Grier again held special week long services at Concord .

The last entry in the session records by clerk S. L. Montgomery is the statistical report of April 20th 1944. On July 15th, 1944, 28 year old deacon Lex Montgomery, was killed in action at St. Teny France, while serving in the 329th Infantry Division. Elder S. L. Montgomery was heart broken at the death of his son and passed away on August 17th, 1944. He was buried in the north west corner of the cemetery and was joined by his son four years later, when his remains were returned from France. Once again as in all the previous wars, we find Concord deeply effected by the conflict, Turner McCarley was killed in action while serving in the U.S. Navy in 1943. Joe Woodward was also killed in action while serving his country in the Second World War. My mother, Captain Mary Montgomery Sweet, received a life shortening wound while serving on a hospital ship the North Sea. In 1951 after brain surgery, she was given two years to live, she decided to ignore the prognosis and give birth to her second son my brother (a deacon of this church) and lived to see his 14th birthday.

The next session record on Aug. 27th, 1944, was clerked by Mrs. S. M. Brice. In it she records the decision of Rev. S. A. Ewart to end his pastorate at Concord. This was officially acted on in September 1944. Rev. S. A. Ewart served Concord for seventeen years, the longest term of any pastor since Rev. Ervin's seventeen year term, which began in 1859.

It appears from the session records showing Rev. A. N. Littlejohn moderating, that he returned to Concord's alter after seventeen years and assisted the congregation in the task of finding a replacement for Rev. Ewart. On September 28th, 1947, Rev. W. J. Honeycutt of the Bethel Presbytery, was installed as pastor of Concord, with Rev. T. F. Grier and Rev. J. C. Solomon helping with the installation. On October 17th, 1947, James Boyce Brice and Thomas C. Whitworth were elected as elders. Rev. Honeycutt

remained with Concord until October 27th, 1949. Elder Lawrence Brice chaired the committee to find a new pastor.

Rev. Walter Baker was installed as Concord's pastor on April 30th, 1950, with Rev.s C. N. Morrison, John S. Steele, T. F. Grier and S. P. Bowles assisting. On August 16th, 1950, John McLurkin and Thomas Montgomery were installed as elders. On October 1st, 1950, Jack James was installed as a deacon. On May 20th, 1956, Edward S. Busbee was installed as elder. William D. Montgomery was installed as deacon on July 1st, 1956. On October 31st, 1957, elder W. T. McDonald passed away. He had been serving continually as an elder from the date of his installation on May 19th, 1912, some 45 years. Rev. Baker preached at Concord until the end of 1957.

A.B. Plexico acted as student supply, starting early in 1958. On June 4th, 1958, the session voted to expand the cemetery. On April 4th, 1960, A. B. Plexico was installed as pastor to Blackstock, Concord and Cornwell churches at Cornwell Church. The three churches would on occasion hold combined session meetings as well as share the pastor alternately.

On Mar 15th, 1962, the Cemetery Association was formed by the following committee: John McLurkin, James Brice, Sam Brice, J. B. Montgomery, E. S. Busbee, James Brice Jr. and Charley McCarley. The purpose of the association was to establish a fund to be kept separate from the church fund.

On January 31st, 1965, a joint session of Blackstock, Concord and Cornwell churches met to hear the resignation of A. B. Plexico. Mildred Montgomery and Charley McCarley were elected to a pulpit committee to find a replacement. Rev. Kenneth Barnes was the next pastor of Concord. He began preaching in 1965 and continued until January, 1973. On Mar 7th, 1971 elder John McLurkin and deacons J. B. Montgomery and Charlie McCarley were elected to three year terms as church trustees. This trustee committee had sole authority over the church's property. Rev. Kenneth Barnes ended his pastorate with the three churches, leaving fond memories on Feb 18th, 1973.

A meeting was held on July 29th, 1974, to arrange for the search for a new pastor. Unrelated to this business, the session discussed the idea of withdrawing from the P.C. U.S. . During this time Rev. Harry Phillips, a visiting minister, filled in the pulpit for several Sundays. On Feb. 3rd, 1974,

the congregation voted ten for and two against, with one abstention, to “withdraw from the Bethel Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church U.S. and to be an independent church”. Among reasons for the separation, was concern for the control of the churches property. On January 9th, 1975, the Presbytery acted on the resolution and the church’s properties were turned over to the Concord Presbyterian Church Memorial Association. Having to break off from Blackstock and Cornwell, meant meeting only one Sunday a month.

For the next to years the pulpit was filled by guest minister Roger Galleon, who preached until September 1977.

We now digress 125 years or so. Prior to the War Between The States, two young fellows, Isaiah Moore and Tom Brice, grew up fishing and hunting together becoming fast friends. Isaiah was a slave and Tom was destined to become Major T. W. Brice of Co. D, 6th Regt. S.C.V.. Isaiah followed Major Tom to war. While the confederate army was in retreat, T. W. Brice was severely wounded losing his eye and was in such bad shape, that he was left on the battlefield. When the soldiers returned to camp and informed Isaiah, he got a horse and rode to the spot were Major Brice was left. He put the major on the horse and brought him to a safe place, where he nursed him back to health. The major went on to fight again. After the war, the close ties between the two continued until T. W. Brice died of old age. Isaiah lived for another ten years and as death neared, he expressed a desire to be buried as close as possible to the major. He died in 1917 and was, according to his wishes buried just outside the cemetery fence, actually about as close as could be, fence or no fence. This story is picked back up at the next Association meeting 80 years later.

On November 6th, 1977, at the annual meeting of the Association, Pete Busbee moved that the cemetery fence be painted and opened so that a chain link fence could be put around Isaiah’s grave to include it in the cemetery. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously. We eventually erected the fence sometime in the 1980’s.

Rev. Richard Davis began preaching at the church in September 1977 and is still with us today. During the decade of the seventies the church was kept alive by a stalwart few. We are especially grateful for the dedication of John McLurkin, James Brice Sr. and Pete Busbee along with the ladies of the church. It was around this time that members from Concord began attending

services at New Hope A.R.P. on second Sundays and New Hope members attending Concord on the first Sunday. Two families from Florida moved back home and began attending in 1978. The numbers grew slowly and we were encouraged enough to add a third Sunday at Concord. We began having Sunday School again at both churches with Dr. Janie Sweet as our adult teacher. Sarah and Carolyn Brice teach the children. In January, 1985, the church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On October 6th, 1985, George Montgomery Sweet and Geoffrey Angus Sweet were installed as deacons. In 1990 the church had a well and septic tank added with the appropriate plumbing for a restroom added to one of the old Sunday School rooms.

Rev. Joe Beale began sharing pastoral duties with Rev. Davis in June, 1992. Rev. Beale spent a great deal of his time traveling long distances to teach one on one communicants classes to our young people. Rev Beale also shares the pulpit with Dr. Archie Reed at New Hope A.R.P., which has had the effect of further strengthening the ties between the two churches. On January 16th, 1994, James Brice Jr. was installed as an elder.

We continue to have baptisms, funerals, weddings and hold communion on a regular basis. There is hope that a loving congregation at Concord, will one hundred years hence, look back on us with affection and historical curiosity.