

Minister's Diary Valuable Source Of Information

Now to resume the set-up of Mount Airy as listed in Branson's Directories of 1867-68 and 1869. We had just finished the schools, and will now go on to the churches.

The Rev. Mr. Marquis Lafayette Wood was the only minister noted in the Mount Airy vicinity. He was the pastor of both Salem and Oak Grove and at Mount Airy which at that time was the only organized church in the village.

The then single Rev. Mr. Wood had been minister of the Mount Airy church in 1858. It was he who engineered the move from Lebanon on North Main to South Main since the town was "growing that way." He visited around a lot and kept an invaluable diary of his daily activities, both religious and secular. He undoubtedly loved to socialize.

He then left Mount Airy the next year to serve as a missionary to China. Married twice, widowed twice, he remarried a third time which wife came with him to Mount Airy. He also brought home with him from China a little Chinese boy whose name was Haze, who remained in Mount Airy where he married and established a family.

In late 1867 the Rev. Mr. Wood was again assigned to Mount Airy but, alas, his diary is not as full and detailed as his previous one.

William Rawley was listed as a supply preacher. (A supply preacher is not an officially ordained minister.) "Brother Rawley," as he was called by his friends, and "Parson Bill" by the general public, was a resident of Mount Airy and a prominent businessman.

It is interesting to note that Stuart's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, "Old Hollow," the nearest Baptist church in the area and the oldest church, had no mention at all. Why? Was it the wish of the congregation? Elder Johnny Jones preached there since he was moderator for the Fisher River Primitive Baptist Association to which the Baptist churches belonged, and was listed as minister for several. The Missionary Baptist Church had not yet gotten a foothold in this immediate area.

In 1869 another church in Mount Airy was being organized, the "colored" Methodist church. Blacks in those days were referred to as "colored." This church grew into the present Mallalieu-Jones Methodist Church.



RUTH MINICK

Its first place of meeting was down on Virginia Street, then called Needmore, where the just-freed blacks settled. A notation in the Rev. Mr. Wood's diary confirms this when he notes: "Preached at night for the colored people in Mount Airy, Needmore Street." The year of notation was 1870. In an 1895 issue of the *Yadkin Valley News* there was an item stating that a new church was being built by the colored people down on Needmore. This evidently replaced the earlier church.

Up to 1871 when the last black member was noted in the South Main Methodist Church blacks were regular members of the church. Their marriages were performed by the Methodist pastor, their funerals preached by them. They were buried in their own cemetery which still exists in a grove of trees just north of the intersection of Highways #52 and #89. Most markers are gone, but a researcher did find a tombstone dating to the late 1700s.

The same cannot be said of the old white cemetery behind the then Blue Ridge Hotel. There is no trace even though older residents as late as a few years ago noted periwinkle still growing in spots. The new cemetery down at the South Main Methodist Church became the city cemetery at the same time the church was built. Little Victoria Allred, daughter of Murphy, was the first grave noted, in 1857.

The Rev. Mr. Wood had these items in his diary which pertained to the black members:

"Went to the colored people's graveyard, near Mount Airy, to bury a little boy who died yesterday." (1868)

"At four o'clock I baptized two colored persons and took them into the church." (1868)

"Married General Neill (Neal?) and Margaret Fulton, colored, at parsonage." (1869)

The Rev. Mr. Wood in his diary mentioned his many visits to some of the folks in whose homes he spent the night. He eventually went to board at Mrs. Rachel Moore's who had taken over the hotel business of her father, Elisha Banner.

Here are some random entries in his diary:

"July 1869. This afternoon from 130 to 150 persons, men, women, and children passed through Mount Airy on their way to Utah. They were leaving this county. Most of them had joined the Mormons."

"Spent the day with wife and with the Siamese Twins. We went to the home of Chang which is the smaller and left-side one. They landed in this country the 16th of August 1829 and were 59 years old. They were born, I think, May 21, 1811. They told me how old they were when they came to this country and when they landed. They are kind and entertaining."

"In the afternoon went to Salem and held a church trial. Expelled Mrs. _____ for slander, and Mr. _____ for gambling." (Sorry, folks, the preacher mentioned names but this writer will not.)