

July 31, 1942

# Home-Coming At Historic Church —

## Old Salem Methodist Church 85 Years Old

Historic old Salem Methodist church, oldest continuous seat of Methodism in Surry county, will hold its annual "Home Coming Day" on Sunday, August 2nd, marking the completion of 85 years of continuous existence and service to the people of Mount Airy and the surrounding section.

The Salem Methodist church was founded in 1857, outgrowth of an old-fashioned "Methodist Camp Meeting", which was held on the site of the present church and was attended by people from all the upper part of Surry county and the lower portion of Patrick and Carroll counties, of Virginia.

W. L. Gwynn, known throughout this section as "Bud" Gwynn, who celebrated his 91st birthday Tuesday of this week, remembers attending the old camp meeting at Salem with his parents when he was six years of age, and he remembers, too, the formation of the church and construction of the old wooden structure that housed the congregation. This occurred soon after the camp meeting was held.

There was one Methodist church in Mount Airy which ante-dated the Salem Methodist church, that being a structure that stood for many years on old Lebanon Hill in the northern portion of the city. The old Lebanon Methodist church, which was probably built about 1820, was abandoned in the 1850's, and Methodists of the town of Mount Airy probably joined the congregation of the Salem church until the present Central Methodist church in Mount Airy was formed and the

old church built on South Main street about 1860.

Many of the earliest members of the Salem Methodist church were prominent in the life of Mount Airy and were outstanding figures in the business growth of the town. Mr. Gwynn, who at 91 is the oldest living member of the Salem church, recalls a number of those earliest members.

Mr. Gwynn himself joined the church when he was 16 years of age, joining in 1875 under the pastorate of Rev. R. T. N. Stephenson. Other members of that time were Mr. Gwynn's father, Franklin Gwynn, Merlin Sparger, Henry Sparger, Jackson Satterfield, John Patterson, Wash Smith, Tom Evans and others. Several of these members moved their membership into Mount Airy when the Central Methodist church was formed here.

In addition to Rev. R. T. N. Stephenson, other early ministers who preached at the old Salem Methodist church were Rev. Jim Wilson, Rev. Marquis L. Wood, who served as a missionary to China, Rev. Johnnie Hicks and Rev. Miles Foy, the latter being the ancestor of a number of Mount Airy citizens of today. Rev. M. W. Heckard is now pastor of the church, serving it and other churches of the Mount Airy Methodist circuit.

The original house of worship of the Salem Methodist church stood for more than half a century, being remodelled at least once during its existence. It was torn down in 1923 and was replaced by the present brick structure, a beautiful building with tall white columns across its

