

# Church Of The Brethren Formed In Early 1900s

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In Surry County and surrounding regions the Church of the Brethren had its beginnings around the turn of the century.

Sheltontown Church of the Brethren originally was built around 1900 on what is now Ayersville Road, according to Russell Hiatt, a deacon at the church since the 1950s.

The church underwent major changes in 1948, when the structure was turned to face N.C. 89. The exterior of the building was redone in brick, new rooms were added and a basement was completed. Much of the interior remodeling was done by church members who assisted contractors in the church transformation.

The old church building continued to serve the needs of its congregation until 1975. That year a new structure was erected, and remains today as the place of worship for members of Sheltontown Church of the Brethren. An interesting note about the building is that church members proceeded with the construction even though they had no pastor at the time.

Hiatt said Pastor Jay Tilley had left for Sparta shortly before the work began and the church was without a pastor until the new church had been built and dedication ceremonies performed.

Sheltontown Church of the Brethren has had many pastors in its history, the most recent being John Wagner. Before Wagner, Ed West was the pastor (until 1991). West was preceded by Owen Horton, who is thought to have been at the church for about eight years. Earl Stovall presided at the church for a brief period, replacing Tilley, who left the church before the construction of the present facility in 1975.

John Barton was the church pastor for about two years, before the arrival of Tilley, Hiatt said. Before Barton the church was headed by a series of temporary ministers, of whom Galen Wine is probably the most remembered, according to Hiatt.

The earliest minister remembered by the church deacon was a man who traveled from Clemmons named Willie Robertson. Robertson pastored the church for three or four years in the early 1920s.

Robertson was replaced by another

minister from the Winston-Salem area, Jack Woody. Woody remained at the church until around 1930, when he was replaced by Norman Reed. Reed remained at Sheltontown Church of the Brethren for more than 20 years, into the early 1950s.

Robertson, Woody and Reed often were met at the train by Howard Hiatt, who owned a set of mules and a buggy. Howard and Maggie Hiatt, Russell Hiatt's parents, often had the ministers as overnight guests after Sunday services.

## St. Paul Brethren Church

Another long-established Brethren church is St. Paul Church of the Brethren near Cana, Va. The church, which originated along with St. Paul Intermediate School, was established before 1900.

According to early records the church was named in honor of St. Paul Church of the Brethren in Pennsylvania, where its founder, the Rev. Jake Weisler, had worshipped before moving to the Cana area. The first church structure, not suprisingly, was made of logs.

## Origins Were In Germany

Sheltontown Church of the Brethren's new pastor, John Wagner, said the Brethren faith began in Germany around 1708 when a group of people led by Alexander Mack founded the church because of their disbelief in infant baptism.

The original eight members of the church placed their faith in "Believer's Baptism," and originally required new members to complete tri-immersion — or being baptized through three forward immersions in water.

Wagner said tri-immersion is still practiced by the church, but is no longer required of those who believe their original baptism to be adequate.

The Church of the Brethren is a historic peace church, which forbids the killing of another person under any circumstances. Wagner said church members are allowed to serve in the military if they are comfortable doing so, but are encouraged to seek non-combat positions.

The only creed of the Church of the Brethren is the New Testament, Wagner said.