

**Pilot Mountain Methodist Church  
(First United Methodist Church of Pilot Mountain)**



**Figure 131: Pilot Mountain Methodist Church, Stephens Street, circa 1900.**

Rev. Hardin Louis Atkins, with funding from Trinity College (Duke University), established Trinity Academy (Figure 108) in 1892. For several years, Methodist circuit riders, including James (Father) Needham held services at Trinity Academy. About 1897, a small Methodist congregation was established under the leadership of Rev. Thomas H. Pegram. Father Needham preached his last sermon in Pilot Mountain on Sunday, 12 March 1899, and was scheduled to preach at Trinity Academy on his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, but death claimed him first. Following is “Father” Needham’s obituary as it appeared in The Pilot News:

*ASLEEP IN JESUS  
REV. JAMES NEEDHAM, THE OLDEST METHODIST PREACHER IN THE  
SOUTH, PASSES QUIETLY AWAY*

*This Pure Man, Who Was Loved by All Who Knew Him, Preached His Last Sermon  
in Pilot Mountain Sunday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of March.*

*Father Needham is dead!  
His work is finished; his last exhortation has been heard; his last prayer on earth  
for dying sinners has been uttered; his lips are cold and still!*

*He has gone to be with God to await your coming—our coming—to meet with his loved ones on the other shore!*

*Will we forget him? Will we disappoint him?*

*The announcement on our streets Saturday that Father Needham had passed away that morning; at 1 o'clock, brought sadness to many hearts.*

*He would have been one hundred years old on the 26<sup>th</sup> of next month.*

*He was ill only a few days and said to those about him soon after he took sick that he thought he would get up again.*

*“Father Needham,” as he was familiarly known, was actively engaged in ministerial work for more than seventy, perhaps seventy-five years. While he was never a member of the Methodist Conference he served as supply pastor many years. His last sermon was preached in Pilot Mountain, Sunday, March 12, 1899, from the text, if we mistake not: “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Mr. Rodgers informs us that he had accepted an invitation to preach the annual sermon at Trinity Academy in Pilot Mountain the day he reached the century mark. Last year he assisted Rev. J. P. Rodgers and Rev. H. K. Boyer in revival meetings and preached many powerful sermons.*

*No man in Western North Carolina was more universally esteemed—none more faithful to God.*

*Father Needham leaves several children, a number of grand and great grandchildren. Two sons and one grand-son are preachers.*

*The funeral services were held Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, at New Hope, near Ararat station. A large number of sorrowing relatives and neighbors and friends attended the services which were conducted by Dr. Creasy, of Winston.*

*The News extends its sympathy to the family of the deceased.<sup>66</sup>*

The congregation continued to meet at Trinity Academy until their first church building was completed in 1900. A portion of the funds from the sale of Trinity Academy to the Town of Pilot Mountain were used to finance the construction of the church building (Figure 120). The building, a small white frame church situated on Stephens Street, served the congregation for 48 years. Rev. J. P. Rogers was serving as pastor at the time construction began. Rev. Rogers was succeeded by Rev. A. L. Coburn, who was serving as pastor at the time the first church building was completed. Charter members included Mrs. Robert E. Lee (Lelia Joyce) Flippin, Mr. and Mrs. John Green, Wiley S. and Mary Whitaker Wrike, Nancy Green Gordon, Martha Green, and Buck Cox.

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<sup>66</sup> The Pilot News, March 1899.



**Figure 132: Methodist men 1949: 1st row from left: J. B. Jarrell, W.Y. Davenport, ?, June Byrley. 2nd row: W. J. Swanson, Mr. Kiger, Mr. Krigger, P. E. Simmons.**

The need for a new church facility had been evident for some time. On 30 December 1947, plans were approved for a new church building. Fowler and Jones Construction Company of Winston-Salem was hired and construction began on the new facility, located on the site of the old Harrell Boarding House on Marion Street. The new building was completed in the spring of 1949 and the dedication service was held on 22 May 1949. It was at this time that the name of the Pilot Mountain Methodist Church was changed to First Methodist Church of Pilot Mountain. A new family life center, consisting of a large fellowship hall, industrial kitchen, conference room, parlor, and other renovations were completed in the 1990's.

Hardin Louis Atkins was born on 12 August 1864, son of John Lytle and Holly Hawkins Hudson Atkins. He was married to Nancy Elizabeth Whitaker, on 6 December 1895 in Atlanta, Fulton County, GA. She was the daughter of William and Mary Susannah Harbor Whitaker. Nancy Whitaker Atkins was born on 10 October 1863. Both Hardin and Nancy were born in the Surry County community of Siloam. This Atkins family from Surry County was found in Salisbury, Rowan County, in the 1900 census. They were in Bandera County, Texas by 1907, where their youngest son, Paul, was born. Rev. Atkins died on 29 September 1929. Nancy died on 23 March 1944. Both are buried at Siloam Friends Church (formerly Siloam Methodist Church), Siloam, Surry County, NC.

Thomas Howard Pegram was born on 11 Jan 1825 in Guilford County, NC. He was the son of Jacob and Ursula Dwiggins Pegram. He was married to Elizabeth Tyson Jones on 11 Jan 1847. She was born on 22 June 1826 and died 17 April 1889. Rev. Pegram died on 24 Mar 1906. Both are buried at Salem Cemetery in Winston-Salem, NC.<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 133: Groundbreaking ceremony for the new Methodist Church building in 1948. From left to right: June Byerly, Philip Pell, Jack Barnett, Melba Simmons, Arlene Patterson, Charles Patterson, Sammy Fulk (baby in Charles Patterson's arms), Mary Swanson Simmons, Lillie Davis Patterson, Lelia Joyce Flippin, Ada Badgett, Bennie Harrell Fry, Lonie Lee Needham, R. B. Davis, P. E. Simmons, Tom and Steve Simmons (children in front of Mr. Simmons), Bertie Byerly, Myrtle Fulk Nichols, J. B. Jarrell, Pearl Council Hiatt, ?, W. J. Swanson, Ida Flippin Kirkpatrick, Mollie Hiatt Pell, Andy Pell (child in front of Mrs. Pell), Letha Hiatt Badgett, Norma Forest Boaz holding son Jeff, ?, Mary O'Brien, Betty Boaz Smith kneeling with O. W. Smith, Jr., Roscoe C. Boaz with Suzanne Swanson on one knee and Sue Ray Smith on the other knee, Grace Cox (standing behind R. C. Boaz), Cora Badgett, Ethel Fulk Boaz, Sue Boaz Swanson kneeling with Kenny Swanson, ?, P. G. Wall holding Larry Wall, Marie Tillotson Wall, Jennie Lee Barnett Payne kneeling with Charles Lee Payne, and Mrs. L. P. Barnett, wife of the pastor who is not pictured.**

<sup>67</sup> History of First United Methodist Church of Pilot Mountain, NC, by Melba Y. Simmons.



**Figure 134: First United Methodist Church upon completion in 1949.**



**Figure 135: Methodist ladies 1949: 1<sup>st</sup> row: Pearl Wall, ?, Mrs. Krigger, Minnie Key, Bennie Fry; 2<sup>nd</sup> row: Fannie Fulk Fowler, Lillie Patterson, Letha Badgett, Mrs. P. E. Simmons**



**Figure 136: First United Methodist Church, 2012.**