

THE HISTORY OF ROCKFORD STREET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

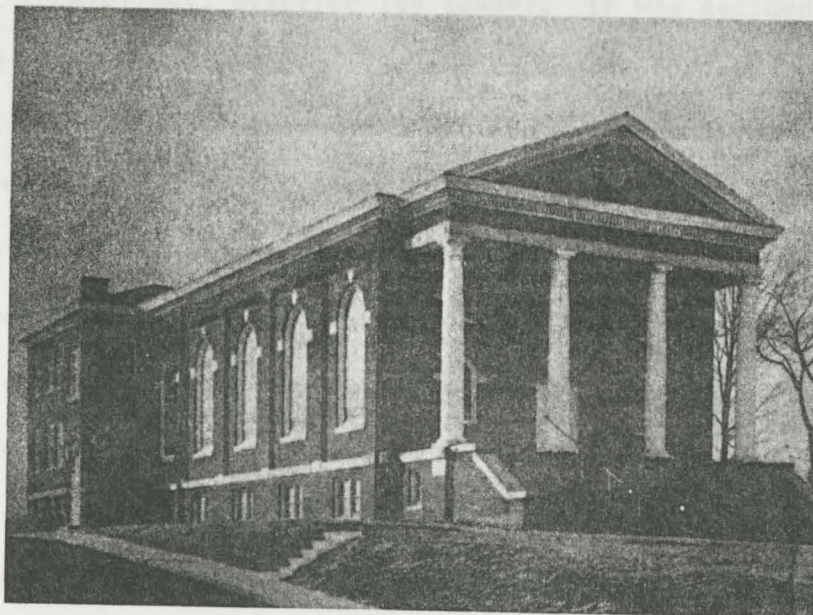
One of the most interesting landmarks in Mount Airy is the Rockford Street United Methodist Church. It is unique in that the land for the church was purchased before the congregation was organized. Because a minister, the Rev. George W. Williams, who was visiting in the area, saw the beauty of the lot and decided that the community needed. On April 1, 1921, Rev. Williams and wife, Minnie, bought the land from Edward Leska, a single man from Elkhart, Indiana, for \$1200.00. On November 15, 1922, Rev. Williams and wife, Minnie, sold the land to Mr. W. A. Riger et al. The church later paid the \$1200.00.



REV. GEORGE W. WILLIAMS
of Rockford Street United Methodist Church

Served Six Years 1921 - 1926
1928 - 1929

Rev. Williams conferred with the members of the church and with many of the Methodist leaders. Among these was Mr. E. W. Riger, who was the pastor of the Methodist Church at Mount Airy when Rev. Williams first came to the area. He was the first pastor of the church. It was dedicated in 1926. After the church was organized, the congregation helped to build the church. The Rockford Street United Methodist Church was organized on Oct. 19, 1921. In the first meeting where the water tank is now located, he bought the land and the congregation was formed through the efforts of Mrs. Roger Shaker. She held a revival. The church was organized on Oct. 19, 1921.



Rockford Street
United Methodist Church

THE HISTORY OF ROCKFORD STREET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

One of the most interesting landmarks in Mount Airy is the Rockford Street United Methodist Church. It is unique in many ways. First, the land for the church was purchased before the congregation was organized. This happened because a minister, the Rev. George W. Williams, who was visiting the community passed an auction sale. He saw the beauty of the lot and decided that it would be a good location for the church that the community needed. On April 29, 1922, Rev. Williams bought the land from Edward Leake, a single man from El Paso County, Texas, for \$1200.00. On November 16, 1922, Rev. Williams and wife, Minnie, transferred the deed to Mr. W. R. Kiger et al. The church latter paid the \$1200.00.

The trustees were: W. R. Kiger, J. W. Badgett, J. B. Jarrell, J. W. Barker and W. F. Lawrence.

Rev. Williams conferred with Rev. W. F. Womble, presiding elder, Rev. W. B. West minister of Central Methodist Church and with many of the Methodist laymen. Among these was Mr. E. H. Kochititzky, district lay leader. It was decided that the Methodist of Mount Airy would sponsor the organization and build the church.

Rev. George W. Williams organized and built the Rockford Street Church. It was Preacher Williams' "Dream Come True." The cornerstone was laid in 1925 and dedicated in 1929. He served the church for six years.

After the church began, the people of Mount Airy, regardless of their church affiliation helped in any way they could.

The Rockford Street Methodist Church was formally created by the Thirty-Second Session of the Western North Carolina Conference which met in High Point, N. C. Oct. 19, 1921. In 1921 while serving the Mount Airy Circuit, Rev. Williams held a tent meeting where the water tank is now located. He bought the tent and the congregation was formed through two tent meetings. The father of Mrs. Oscar Shelton held a revival. The "Tabernacle" was built across the street from the water tank.

It was a frame building about 30'x30', heated by two sheet metal stoves. The attendance averaged about two-hundred on Sunday mornings.

FINANCES

All four furniture factories gave substantial contributions to the building fund of the church. Dr. Charles Lawrence, an uncle of Mrs. Ruth Lawrence Sawyers, gave a large amount. Also Mr. Will Reynolds gave generously. Rev. Williams asked the church members to make pledges. Small brown envelopes stamped B and L (for Building and Loan) were given to the members. They placed their pledge of money in the offering plate on Sundays.

LABOR and MATERIALS

With a small amount of money, Rev. Williams bought an old Ford truck. With a few workers they started digging and blasting. Rev. W. J. S. Walker was assigned to the Ararat Circuit in 1923 and was closely associated with Rev. Williams in the ministry. Rev. Walker and two of his sons, Clyde and Calvin scooped the first dirt to begin construction on the church. They used a hand scoop, drawn by a team of mules owned by Rev. Walker. Many of the men of the church came and worked until late every night. They had already worked ten hours at public works.

Rev. Williams went to Mr. J. D. Sargent, who was then president of the North Carolina Granite Corporation and asked for enough granite for the steps and window sills. Some of the granite had been used in other areas of the church. When truck load after truck load of granite went out, Mr. Sargent came over to see what they were doing with it. He remarked to Rev. Williams, "I thought you were building a church, instead of building a stairway to heaven."

Several people gave 100 or more brick. It was said when some people had given their brick, that Rev. Williams would ask them this question. "The brick that you have given are not showing, I am sure you will want your brick to show, will you give some more?" Rev. Williams did some of all the work.

Mr. Earl Tate (who now lives on South Main Street) did the tapestry. In 1923, Mr.

Tate was asked by Rev. Williams to lay the brick for the church. Mr. Tate did not do the brick work himself but he hired about six brick layers to do the job. Under Mr. Tate's management the brick work was done. He was paid \$1.00 an hour for it. Mr. J. W. Barker, who was the treasurer paid Mr. Tate. Mr. Tate built the four columns on the front porch of the church himself. He built them of brick and plastered (stucco-work) around each column. James Matthews made the mortar and other men carried it. Mr. Tate also set the stone that is under the windows and the trimming stone around the church. The steps were also erected by him. Mr. Tate said, "Rev. Williams worked more than any preacher that he had ever seen in his life."

Mr. Edd Caudle did the carpentry work and a Mr. Easter did all the plastering.

PLUMBING

Dixon Plumbing of Greensboro did the plumbing. Mr. Spencer Dixon was a half-brother of Rev. Williams. There was a problem because of rock. This man gave the labor and the "know-how." A shower was put downstairs back of the front part of the church for the boys. Boys who played baseball enjoyed this, also latter the Boy Scouts.

ARCHITECTURE

Mr. Henry Sprindle (District Superintendent) gave the plan. This inscription is on the cornerstone, ROCKFORD STREET M. E. CHURCH SOUTH A. D. 1925.

ORGANISTS

Mrs. Otis Wimbish was the church organist for many years (probably 35) until her untimely death, December 24, 1971. Miss Karen Jane Roberson and Miss Tamara Carter were the organists from January, 1972-June, 1974, when Mrs. Faye Horton became the organist.

SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

For about twenty-five years the late Mr. W. R. Kiger was superintendent of the Sunday School. When he retired in 1946 the church presented a Bible to him in appreciation of his many years of faithful service.

CHARTER MEMBERS

Many of the hard-working charter member of the church have passed away. They are:

Messrs. Will McCoy, Will Kiger, John Badgett, Harvey Badgett, Jim Barker, Joe Linback, Muncie Nichols, J. B. Jarrell, Joe Booker, W. F. Lawrence, W. A. Lawrence and Kermit Lawrence. Otis Moore, Boss Gardner, Roy Shelton and Reynold McCoy transferred to Franklin Heights United Methodist Church. They have also passed away.

FORMER MEMBERS

Two of our former members are chaplains with the Armed Forces, Wayne Shelton and Floyd Heckward. Cecil and Bill Heckard are ministers. Larry Walker is a doctor. The late David Vance Price Williams was associated with the Oak Ridge Atomic Plant in Tennessee. He was killed in an automobile accident a few years ago. Other members are associated with all sorts of business enterprises including textiles, furniture, oil, restaurants, retailing, florists, medical research, government work and many others.

THE FIRST STEWARDS

The first stewards were a group of young men and very handsome. They were: Messrs. Harvey Badgett, John Badgett, J. W. Barker, Joe Booker, W. Y. Davenport, G. B. Gardner, J. B. Jarrell, W. R. Kiger, W. F. Lawrence, Joe Lineback, Otis Moore, W. M. McCoy, M. S. Nichols and C. W. Robertson. In 1925-26 Mount Airy District Quarterly Conference Minutes the Official Members were: J. W. Badgett, J. W. Barker, J. T. Booker, Lucille Brossell, T. E. Davenport, J. C. Harris, M. S. Jones, W. R. Kiger, W. F. Lawrence, J. M. Lineback, M. S. Nichols, Fred Pruitt and J. S. Redmon.

TRUSTEES OF THE CHURCH PROPERTY

Trustees were: Rev. G. W. Williams, J. W. Barker, J. W. Badgett, W. R. Kiger, M. S. Nichols, and W. F. Lawrence.

MISSIONARY SOCIETY AND EPWORTH LEAGUE

From the very beginning the church had a Missionary Society and Epworth League. The Epworth League was a very active organization for the youth.

MEMORIAL WINDOWS

The High Point Glass Co. installed the windows. The beautiful memorial windows are in memory of Mr. Will R. Kiger, Mrs. Matilda Jane Lawrence, Mr. William A. Lawrence, Mr. W. M. McCoy, Mrs. Mittie Y. McMillan, Mrs. Helen E. Nichols, Rev. George W. Williams,

and Mrs. Pauline M. Wimbish.

THE FIRST WEDDING

Miss Josephine Jackson and Mr. James Hadley were the first couple married in the church.

THE GREATER MOUNT AIRY PARISH

The Parish was originated in the 20's but no grass roots were taken until the 70's.

EARLY SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Young Adult--Mr. C. W. Robertson and Mr. George Snow

Intermediate--Mrs. Sanford Redmin

Juniors--Miss Winona Williams

Primary--Mrs. G. W. Williams

MEMBERSHIP AND CHURCH VALUE

In 1922-25 the total membership was 134. The officers and teachers were 14. The church was valued at \$3,000.00. In 1926 the membership had increased to 169 and value of the church had gone to \$20,000.00. By 1933 there were 251 members with the church valued at \$55,000.00. Presently, there are about 130 members and valued at about \$150,000.00.

THE PARSONAGE

The parsonage was built before the church. The Rev. G. W. Williams' family were the first to occupy it. It has been said that Mrs. Williams once remarked, "I have so many shirts to iron, that I only iron them down the front."

DONATIONS

Many material donations have been made through the years. Mr. Will McCoy built and donated the pulpit, flower pedestals, and table in the sanctuary in 1931. This was done with much skill. The following statement was said about the pulpit. "The pulpit was most exquisite."

The organ was donated by Mr. and Mrs. E. Q. Benbow and Mr. and Mrs. P. A. Boore. The pulpit Bible was presented to the church in memory of Mr. Roland Leach by James and Susie Leach. Mrs. Minnie Lou Leach Key is also a daughter of Mr. Roland Leach.

The Offering Plates were donated in memory of Mr. Tom Nichols by Mrs. Nichols and family. Mr. Nichols was Jack's father.

Through the years the Woman's Society has presented a number of things which are in use in the sanctuary. The candleholders were in honor of Mrs. Otis Wimbish and the candle snuffer in memory of Mrs. George Caraway. The cloth Runners and Bible Marker on the pulpit are in memory of Mrs. Mittie McMillian. The bookcase in the church is in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Hurley Moore. The Guest Register was given in memory of Mrs. Myrtle T. Hatcher, (Jamie's mother).

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Neal gave the ushers' pocket tabs in memory of Mr. Reynold McCoy. Mr. Perry Robertson (Cynthia's father) donated and installed the iron rail in the balcony. The M. Y. F. placed the lighted cross in the back of the choir. Mrs. Thamar Kiger had the hand rails installed up the front steps of the church. Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Kiger gave the rocking chair in the room off the vestibule, the bookcase in the Ladies' Class Room, and a folding table in the dining room.

The wicker furniture in the Ladies' Class Room came from the Mount Airy District Parsonage when Mount Airy was combined with the Winston-Salem District.

The Pulpit Chairs and a Church Bell were given to the church by the late Mr. Will Hale, and a piano was given by the late Mrs. E. H. Kochtitzky, who were members of Central Church. The Woman's Society of Central gave the chandeliers in the sanctuary.

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Gunnell were proud to present a table which Mr. Gunnell's father hand-crafted over fifty years ago, to the Wesley Class. Mr. Kyle McCoy presented to Mrs. Kiger a bookcase to be placed in the church in memory of Mr. W. R. Kiger.

The late Mr. Will McCoy and Mr. Joe Lineback built and placed in the church the Literature Cabinet in the basement hallway. Also Mr. McCoy built the Literature Cabinet which is in the Beginners' Class Room. The late Mr. Muncie Nichols made a table and placed it in the church, probably the one in the basement library.

The Choir Robes were bought by individual members of the choir as a memorial to Mrs. Otis Wimbish. The cross on the table was a Memorial to Mr. Miles Dalton from Helen and Lloyd.

Mr. Paul Hull gave the Walnut Plaque, on which the names of the people who gave Pews are listed, to the church.

The church gave the Christian and American Flags in memory of Aaron Sherrill. Very likely there are many things in the church that have been donated by different people through the years. The writer cannot recall them at this time, and any omission is certainly not intentional.

EVIDENCE of A SOCIAL CHANGE

In the 20's the shower, ball park, kitchen and dining room affected the church's attitude of the community. This was evidence of a social change. This was also a community project. All people contributed something, the wealthy gave well.

The social life was to be centered around the church. These men were farsighted as they lived and worked. They built up their men. All denominations entered in and helped out. The church was built out of mutual work and the project took about six or seven years.

Rockford Street Methodist Church is an example of a social growing project which the wealthy helped. This building was a socialized project. The men at Central and Salem helped, also others. Rev. Williams wanted the congregation to build slowly, and dependable.

1901-1903 - Rev. Olet G. Benson

1904-1908 - Rev. John T. Frazier

1909-1910 - Rev. Arthur R. Pearce

1911-1917 - Rev. George Carter

1918-1919 - Rev. Harry H. Sherrill

1919-1932 - Rev. May Dolin

1932-1935 - Rev. Dwight H. Hildreth

1935-1939 - Rev. Dr. D. Martin

1939-1942 - Rev. Mark Sawyer

1942-1977 - Rev. Mary Miller

1977 - Rev. Doug H. Leonard

MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED THE CHURCH

1921--1926-----Rev. George W. Williams
 1927-----Rev. J. O. Ervin
 1928-----Rev. George W. Williams
 1929--1930-----Rev. W. M. Heckard
 1931--1933-----Rev. R. S. Howie
 1934-----Rev. R. G. Tuttle, Jr.
 1935-----Rev. D. H. Rhinehart
 1936--1937-----Rev. H. R. Cornelius
 1938--1940-----Rev. H. Grady Hardin
 1941--1942-----Rev. C. E. Williams
 1943--1944-----Rev. E. M. Graham
 1945--1947-----Rev. J. E. Rink
 1948--1950-----Rev. B. C. Winn
 1951--1952-----Rev. J. M. Barber
 1953--1956-----Rev. F. H. Shinn
 1957--1960-----Rev. Ben F. Stamey
 1961--1963-----Rev. Giles O. Bowman
 1964--1968-----Rev. John T. Frazier
 1968--1969-----Rev. Arthur B. Pearce
 1970--1972-----Rev. George Carver
 1972--1979-----Rev. Harry M. Sherrill
 1979-1982 - Rev. Max Talin
 1982-1985 - Rev. Dwight Whitlock
 1985-1989 - Rev. Dee B. Martin
 1989-1992 - Rev. Mark Guyer
 1992-1997 - Rev. Mary Miller
 1997- Rev. Jay W. Leonard

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Carpenter, Mrs. Lillian McCoy

Gunnell, Mr. Leonard

Kiger, Mrs. W. R.

Minutes of the Western North Carolina Conference, Mt. Airy District
The Methodist Building
Statesville, N. C.

Minutes of the Thirty-Second Session of the Western North Carolina
Conference

Neal, Mrs. Bernard

Register of Deeds Office, Dobson, N. C.
Book 89 Page 274
Book 100 Page 43

Sawyers, Mrs. Ruth Lawrence

Shelton, Mrs. Margaret Walker

Tate, Mr. Earl

Williams, Miss Grace

(daughters of the late Rev. G. W. Williams)

Williams, Miss Wonona

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