

Needham

JAMES NEEDHAM

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James Needham was born in Randolph County May 26, 1799 of devout Methodist parents. When he was four or five his parents started out for Ohio but, because of illness, were detained at a home near the Laurel Bluff Cotton Mills and there stayed for several years before they moved back to Randolph County. There James Needham was converted--and he always emphasized that he was "converted"--in September 1820. In 1842 he moved near Pilot Mountain in Surry County.

Father Needham, as he was affectionally known, served the Methodist churches of this section as supply preacher until his death on April 1, 1899. His sermons were characterized by their earnestness. "His language was pure and he made no strange

performances in the pulpit.* His prayers became miracles; he prayed for sick people and they got well; he prayed for the grief stricken and they became joyful; he prayed for rain and it rained. At the age of 98 he attracted statewide attention when he assisted Rev. H.K. Boyer and his own pastor and co-worker, Rev. J.P. Rodgers, in a revival at Central Church. At the age of 99 he preached to a congregation of 1500 to 2000 at the annual Conference in Winston.

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* Almost all the facts herein are taken from a pamphlet written by Rev. J.P. Rodgers, "Life of Rev. James Needham." Surry Printing House. Pilot Mountain, 1899.

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Licensed to exhort some time in the year 1821.

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"Could recite Bible when in old age his eyes gave out...Was not eloquent in the sense that the word is usually understood. At times some of his words were not even heard distinctly. But he 'had the power to move people.'

JAMES NEEDHAM (continued)

"He was not acquainted with many of the plans and schemes operated by some of the latter day revivalists, but powerful religious awakenings occurred in the charges he served...He never fell in with the modern method of relating anecdotes and persisted in saying that this is not preaching the gospel. His language was pure and he made no strange performances in the pulpit. In his revival he resorted to no questionable methods to gain attention and draw large crowds.

"Often did two services a day. Nearly a hundred years old and attending and laboring in the night services of meetings week after week!

....Some leading camp grounds of years ago were established by him. On different occasions in these meetings where he labored, the interest became so great that half the night would pass away before the multitudes would retire to their tents.

Father Needham organized the Blue Ridge Mission and served it three years. He labored two years on Fisher's River Mission which was joined to the Blue Ridge Mission. Later he spent two years on this work. He served Patrick and Sauratown Mission when it extended to the Chowan District. He traveled one year on each of the following charges: Stokes, Forsyth, Surry, Yadkin, Surry Circuit which had twenty-eight appointments. He traveled the Sauratown and Pilot Mountain Mission during the war.

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EXCERPTS FROM "LIFE OF JAMES NEEDHAM"--RODGERS

"In his early life, Father Needham went to his church early one Sabbath. He took a seat on a root under a large tree. No one else had come, and it was entirely still about him. Suddenly a voice said to him, 'Get up from there'. Startled, he quickly arose. He looked all around for the speaker, but saw no one. Then he cast his eyes up the tree. At that moment a large limb broke off and fell upon the very spot where he¹ had sat.*

"Surely God never bowed his ear lower to hear the prayer of any of earth's saints than he did to hear Father Needham's. He prayed for mourners and they ceased to mourn, were comforted and praised God. He prayed for the sick and suffering and their diseases were stayed and their health was speedily restored. He prayed for rain, with a sky as clear and rainless as that above Elijah on Carmel, and in an hour the thirsty earth was drinking the descending rain. He prayed with and for his family evening and morning and they all became Christians in answer to his prayers.

"His son Jesse was very sick with fever. The doctor had given up the case. He became very disturbed about his call to preach. He thought he was going to die and was alarmed about the condition of his soul. He asked his father to pray for him. After a most earnest and powerful prayer, hope revived and he began at once to recover and rapidly improved from that hour.

"A granddaughter's husband, Rev. Jesse Ashburn of the Primitive Baptist Church, was very sick and his skilled physician said that patients in his condition always died. He sent for Father Needham and three ministers. Prayer was offered that night. Before day the suffering man called up the preachers to pray for him. While they were on their knees the pains left him. He got up that morning, ate his breakfast and walked about to the surprise of his physician and others.

"In 1881 a meeting to pray for rain was appointed at New Hope Church. After the opening services, Father Needham made some remarks. At this time in the service some of the doubters looked about for signs of rain, but saw none. He called the congregation to prayer and asked all to kneel. No prayer in a long life of prayer was offered in greater earnestness. Before the congregation arose from its knees, it thundered. He arose and told the people to hurry to their homes, or they would be caught in the rain. A good rain came and some were not yet at their homes when it² began to fall.*

1

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2

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(At the end of the pamphlet are short tributes from Solomon Helsabeck, J.T. Lowry (Mt. Airy editor), W.S. Creasy, H.M. Blair, and others.)

James (Father) Needham
Born: May 26, 1799
Died: April 1, 1899

(Per gravestone at New Hope United
Methodist Church, Ararat, N. C.)

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 12th 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 his home, at 1 o'clock, brought sadness to many hearts.

He would have been one hundred years old on the 26th 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 grand-children. Two sons and one grand-son are preachers.

The funeral services were held Sunday, April 2nd, 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.

(Copy obtained from Pansy Broughton by Wilma Hiatt)

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WILLIAM GOLDING JUNR from CHARLES TALIFARO a deed (Book R, p. 36)

This indenture made this 10th day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixteen between Charles Talifaro Administrator of the estate of Frost & Snow Decd of the County of Surry & State of North Carolina of the one part and William Golding Junr of the County and State aforesaid Witnesseth that for and in consideration of the sum of one Hundred and Eighty Two pounds Ten Shillings Virginia Currency to Frost and Snow in hand paid before the ensembling & delivery of these presents the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged hath Bargained Sold released and confirmed unto the said William Golding one certain tract or parcel of land situate lying & being in the County aforesaid on Stewarts Creek containing three hundred acres be the same more or less & bounded with lines as followeth to wit beginning at Ellets branch on the west line of a Survey made by John Bledsoe of Four Hundred and forty six acres on a Spanish Oak tree thence south to a white oak on said Creek thence down said creek to a cliff on white pine thence South to a fore and aft pine thence to a poplar thence to the including line thence down the dividing line between Michael A Harts line & the said Frost & Snow with all woods ways water & water Courses trees orchards houses fences & all other the immoluments thereunto belonging or in any wise appertaining to have and to hold the same unto the said William Golding with its appertinences to hold and fully enjoy the same & I do for myself my heirs & a for ever warrant & defend the right & title of the land and premises to him the said William Golding and his heirs forever against the Claim or demand of any person or persons whatever either in law or Equity in witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year above written signed sealed and delivered in presents of

C Talifaro Adm (seal)

C Talifaro Junr
R. H. Talifaro

Surry County May Term AD 1822 The execution of the within deed was duly acknowledged in open court and ordered to be Registered.



Dean Palmer/Mid-South News Service

Pearl Needham celebrated her 99th birthday last weekend with family and friends at her home in Pilot Mountain.

Needham celebrates 99 years of life

By DEAN PALMER

Mid-South News Service PILOT MOUNTAIN —

Four generations of family gathered at the Butler Street home of Pearl Needham last weekend to help the long-time Pilot Mountain resident celebrate her 99th birthday.

Slowed by age but still in remarkably good health, Needham enjoyed the visits and an abundance of well-wishes from friends in her church and community. Although no longer able to attend regularly, she is the oldest living member of First Baptist Church.

Needham was born in 1907 to Mary Tickle Wright and Albert Wright. One of six children, she had three brothers, now deceased, and two sisters. Effie Smith is now 100 while Katie Gilbert is 92.

Needham grew up in Mount Airy but, by the time she met the man she would eventually marry, had moved to Winston-Salem to be near her work at the S.H. Kress "Five and Dime Store." It was at another similar store, Clellan's in Mount Airy, that she first met Carl Needham. The couple was married in 1928 and went on to have two sons, C.L. and Bill, five grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and one stepgreat-grandchild.

Carl Needham brought his wife to Pilot Mountain, where

he was a well-known carpenter and where both resided until his passing in 1970. Both sons now fondly recall the way their father often described first meeting his wife, using a reference to a popular song of the era.

"Dad always would always say, 'I met my million dollar baby at the 5 & 10 cent store,'" Bill Needham recalled with a smile.

Pearl and Carl Needham came to her current home on Butler Street in the early 1940s. She had left the workplace and spent most of her days doing what she loved best, caring for her family.

"She always kept us clean and well-fed," C.L. Needham remembered. "She loved to cook, to bake and to make candy for us. Her family has always been number one to her."

"That's her nature," Bill Needham agreed. "She's a loving, kind and generous person."

Today, Pearl Needham attributes much of her vitality to that active and hard-working lifestyle, centered around her family. As she looks at current society, she sees the time parents are spending away from their children, with both busy outside the home, as the biggest negative change through the years.

But Needham does appreciate the many conveniences that she has seen introduced

throughout the years, although not all have come easily to her. After an early attempt at learning to drive ended with a slight "bump-up," Needham decided to instead rely on her husband for transportation. After his passing, however, she refused to let age be an obstacle and for the first time became a licensed driver.

Needham still exhibits that spirit of independence. While receiving some help with cleaning and yard work, she enjoys living alone. A quiet lifestyle includes sleeping late whenever possible, reading and enjoyable necessity of occasional trips to Pilot Mountain and Mount Airy.

She easily recalls a time when her Butler Street neighborhood was a much closer community, when everyone was acquainted and neighbors would frequently drop by for visits. Though times have changed, Pilot Mountain will always be home.

"My husband always loved it here," she remembered. "It is a friendly town with good people. It's been home for a long time."

According to C.L. Needham, his mother's independence is simply a reflection of her personality. "She'd just rather be doing for others than have them do for her," he explained. "She's that kind of loving and caring person."

10-31-2006