



The old Davidson River Church.

On Sunday, September 10th, members and friends of the Brevard Davidson River Presbyterian Church celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Church.

An anniversary like this inevitably leads memories back to recollections of other days, earlier scenes and events. The sesquicentennial of this church affords an excellent opportunity to raise the curtains of history and gaze into its background.

For several years prior to 1800 the territory west of the Blue Ridge mountains was the field of Rev. George Newton, pastor of Piney Grove (Swannanoa) Church. This church was erected in 1790, and from the door could be seen a beautiful mountain rising in the distance. Mr. Newton named the mountain "Pisgah" for the Biblical Mountain Tract from which Moses looked into the Promised Land.

Mr. Newton established preaching points, or camp meeting grounds, at Reems Creek (Weaverville), Cane Creek (Fletcher), Mills River, Davidson River, Forks of Pigeon (Waynesville) and other points. Camp Meetings were usually held in the various communities after the corn was "laid by" and before "frost", and meetings usually lasted two weeks or more. Mr. Newton also established Newton Academy in what is now the city of Asheville.

While the records of the organization of Davidson River Church have been lost, we are able to place the date fairly accurate. The records of the Synod of the Carolina (1795-1813) show Samuel Davis as

Sesquicente

pastor of the Davidson River Church in 1800. At the October meeting in 1800, the Synod of the Presbytery of Greenville was established, consisting of North Carolina and much of East Tennessee, and named as preachers were George Newton, Samuel Davis, Samuel Doak, and a Mr. Bachman. This Presbytery was dissolved in 1884.

Francis Asbury, the great missionary Bishop of the Methodist Church, mentions this church in his diary. Under the date of November 18, 1800, he wrote: "We crossed the French Broad to Davidson's. The aged Mother and daughter insisted on giving notice for a meeting; in consequence thereof, Mr. Davis, the Presbyterian Minister and several others came together. Brother Whatcoat was taken with the bleeding of the nose, so that necessity was laid upon me to lecture. My subject was Luke XI:17—Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and the house divided against itself falleth."

The Church became dormant sometime prior to 1828. In May, 1828, a petition was sent to the Concord Presbytery to send someone to re-organize the Church. In June of the same year, Rev. H. M. Kerr, the Home Missionary Evangelist of the Concord Presbytery, met and organized the Church, with Rev. Christopher Bradshaw as pastor and John Murry, G. D. Davis and Ethan Davis as elders. The re-organized church had 28 members which included Rev. Samuel Davis.

In the early days of the church, the buildings were only large rough sheds, and a few shacks for those attending camp meetings. The first permanent structure was erected in 1826-7, on land conveyed by Benjamin Davidson, for whom Davidson River was named, "to the trustees of the free meeting house." The second building was constructed about 1855, with two large school rooms on the ground floor (The Davidson River Academy), and the church was on the upper floor. This building was destroyed by fire in 1891. The church then conveyed a lot on the south end of its ground to the school committee, and rebuild the church which is now standing by Davidson River.

In 1887 or 1888, during the pastorate of Rev. W. H. Davis, the Brevard church was erected as a branch chapel of Davidson River Church. After the Brevard Church was established, the trustees of the Davidson River Church conveyed the property to the trustees of the Brevard Church.

At the close of the Civil War there were two sec-