

# HISTORY OF AHOSKIE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Continued from Page 5)

left the church for some cause. The membership of the Ahoskie church as reported in 1850 was, white 963 and colored 34, a total of 997.

In 1841, the first Sunday School was reported with 90 scholars and 13 teachers. It is evident that they wanted a very few scholars to a teacher. That year nine Sunday schools were reported in the Chowan Association of 42 churches and five of them were in Hertford County—Ahoskie, Bethlehem, Buckhorn, Meherrin and Mt. Tabor. The first church clerk reported was James Holloman in 1842, postoffice, St. Johns.

In 1841, Dr. A. Jack Aske was clerk, postoffice, Pitchland.

In the church letter he gave the following note: "Church has not been blessed in its special effort, (only five baptized) as in former years, in consequence of a very great sickness prevalent among the members; but they are not discouraged and are resolved never to forsake the blood-stained banner of the cross which is nailed to the mast."

Notes by Dr. Aske given in Church letter in 1847 when the Association met at Mt. Tabor: "(We) have enjoyed a glorious revival during the last year." (34 were baptized.)

"During the last year (1846—Ahoskie) erected a commodious and comfortable house greatly to their credit." This was the third meeting house built here.

To show some of the customs and abuses of special church meetings in those days and for the encouragement of church people today a paragraph is given here in connection with this meeting of the Association at Mt. Tabor in 1847. This was written by Samuel Saunders, historian for the Association in 1894.

"At the session in 1847 stands were erected all about the grounds, from which confectioneries and whiskey were sold. In 1853 the Old Chowan Association met with the Meherrin church, convening as had been its custom on Friday. But there was at this meeting so much selling and drinking of whiskey and horse racing in a field near the church, carried on, not only on the other days of the meeting, but also on Sunday, that the Association, to avoid this desecration of the Lord's day in connection with their sessions, decided at their meeting to convene afterwards on Tuesday, instead of Friday, so that all delegates and visitors to the Association could leave their homes after Sunday and return to them before the following Sunday, surely, then, in some respects we have made progress."

The first gift by Ahoskie for Home Missions was in 1853. The amount was \$15.00 which was next to the largest gift made.

The postorate of Rev. John Nowell was noted for the fine laymen in the church, Jesse Barnes was first reported a delegate in 1837. It is said that he and his wife sold their home and farm and gave half the proceeds to Chowan College and half to Wake-Forest College. The farm is now the home place of W. A. Baker on the Aulander highway. Dr. A. Jack



Aske was first a delegate to the Association in 1843 and W. W. Mitchell in 1850. These two last named men were among the great laymen in the Chowan Association. Other names occurring as delegates during this period were James Holloman, Joseph Holloman, Jno. S. Godwin, John Chamblee, J. B. Slaughter, R. B. Cobb, J. C. Jenkins, W. Slaughter, Geo. Holloman, W. O. Wynns.

In 1850 Wake Forest College began an effort to raise endowment by selling scholarships for \$500.00. Mr. James S. Purefoy was appointed to this work. His first effort was in the Chowan Association. "It was the church at Sawyer's Creek in Camden County that took the first scholarship and paid the \$500.00. This action stimulated the church at Ahoskie to a similar effort." (Paschal's History of Wake Forest College.) So Ahoskie seems to have been the second church to take a scholarship.

Rev. John Nowell died February 12, 1859 at an early age, 56. His postorate alone is a worthy monument to him. He came to a church of 175 members and left a large church of 409. How he was loved and esteemed is given by Dr. A. Jack Aske who was appointed by the Chowan Association in 1859 to write the obituary for his pastor.

Obituary in part of Elder John Nowell:

"The subject of this short sketch was born in Hertford County, N. C., 6th day of September, 1803, near Colerain; near by he spent the most of his life. Elder John Nowell, soon after making a profession of religion was baptized on 18th of March, 1832, by Brother James Delk. As soon as he was received into the church, he immediately manifested a strong and earnest desire to work for the church and gain the salvation of sinners, which ever afterwards seemed to be the object of his living and laboring; and age nor time effaced from his mind 'living for Christ.' But grew with his growth and strengthened with his strength, and instead of losing that heaven-born zeal in his ripe years for the conversion of sinners, it has been burning on the altar of his breast ever since, and continued until the day of his death.

"The Colerain church granted him license to preach in June 1834. His preaching was so acceptable, his deportment so unexceptional, his character so unsullied that in May 1835 (only a year after he commenced preaching and only three years after he

## FIFTH SUNDAY SONG SERVICE AT AHOSKIE

Shown above is a small section of the crowd that attended the fifth Sunday Bertie County Sing which was held in the Ahoskie Baptist Church, Sunday afternoon, January 30, 1938. In the background, on the pulpit dais, are the Rev. Oscar Creech, pastor of the host church; L. J. Godwin, of Ahoskie, song leader, and L. S. Mizelle, of Windsor, who presided. Behind them is the mixed choir with Miss Maidie Wade at the Hammond organ. In the foreground is part of the congregation which filled the auditorium to more than capacity.

## CHAPTER II 1860-1889-PERIOD OF WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

- B. B. Williams, 1860-1863
- J. M. C. Lake, 1864-1868
- John Mitchell, 1869-1871, 1886-87
- R. R. Savage, 1872-1885
- M. T. Williams, 1888-1889

B. B. Williams, 1860-1863

WAR, panics, depressions, etc., may come and go but churches move on. Thus we can truly say of Ahoskie during the Civil War and the period of reconstruction that followed. Outside conditions do not close churches long, but inside conditions may close them indefinitely.



B. B. Williams

Rev. B. B. Williams, of Mars Hill in Bertie County, was called to the church as pastor following the death of Rev. John Nowell. When he came to this church the membership was reported as 409. He was with the church 4 years as pastor and left it with 409 members which speaks well for him. He baptized 36 people during his postorate. Three years of the War had passed and, of course, it was thinning the ranks, making it more difficult to hold the number of members up. Elder Williams served both in the army and as pastor. He was Lieutenant in Company E, in the 68th N. C. Regiment. He had a deep interest in soldiers. In May 1862, he read his report on periodicals before the Association and then asked for a collection, which amounted to \$38.00, to pay for *Biblical Recorders* to distribute among the soldiers. Again at the Association in 1863 he appealed for an offering for the same purpose. This offering amounted to \$332.30, in Confederate money. The pastor's unusual interest in the soldiers may account somewhat for the use of the church grounds and building at times during the war by the soldiers. By the year 1862 conditions were beginning to be hard. This was the only year the church ever failed to be represented at the association. No minute fund was sent with the church letter and many churches failed to send minute fund that year.

Elder Williams was an ardent dry. He probably did more during his day to push forward the cause of temperance in the Chowan section than any other preacher. He had a temperance lecture which he called, "The Dark Valley Railroad." This lecture made a deep impression upon many who heard it.

The Ahoskie church was fortunate not only in having a wise pastor as leader for those trying days but in having also some splendid laymen. Dr. A. J. Aske was one of Bertie's outstanding citizens. He was a man of great ability and used his ability for the glory of God. It is said of him that as a physician he never entered an account on a book. He was appointed by his church twenty times as a delegate to the association and was present sixteen times. In 1844 he was elected assistant clerk of the association. He was a liberal supporter of

(Continued on Page 2, Section G)

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