

# Kenansville Baptist Church



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The Kenansville Baptist church, which celebrated its 100th anniversary with a reunion of old members at a home coming last Sunday, June 20, is one of the few church buildings of Colonial type still preserved in North Carolina.

Its simple lines, both exterior and interior, are architecturally correct for the period in which it was constructed. Mr. Beasley, church historian, in his history of the church on this page, points out that the interior of the church resembles very much Christ Church in Alexandria, Virginia, where George Washington, was accustomed to worship.

The Woman's Missionary society of the church, in keeping it in repair has striven to preserve its simple architectural lines, and have done well in their efforts.

Their hope is to pass it on down to future generations of Baptists in Duplin county, as a priceless antique, a building, of which future generations, still to worship in the church will be as proud, as were their ancestors, who constructed it back in the days, when not only Kenansville and Duplin county, but our nation was young.

nier, Margaret Stokes McGowen, Blount Cooper, the kind of woman on which a good church is built; Francis E. Miller, Julia A. Stokes, Hiram J. Brinson, constant and faithful attendant, and supporter from the time he joined until his death more than thirty years; R. B. Murray, whose father was once church clerk, and always faithful to every duty; D. M. Jolly, stricken down in his prime; William B. Cooper, a supporter of the church for more than forty years; Joe Penny, who died January 25, 1935, at the age of 17, the first boy to become an Eagle Scout in Duplin County; and finally, Ella Cooper Loftin, who died June 19, 1937, whose long service in the choir, and her devotion to the church will ever be remembered.

Church organization, June 20, 1837:

Deacons: Joel Whaley, J. A. Gavin, Jr., F. J. Dobson, F. W. McGowen, H. M. West and W. M. Brinson.

Treasurer, W. B. Murray; Church Clerk, Mrs. F. W. McGowen.

President Woman's Missionary Society, Mrs. C. B. Sitterson. Officers Sunday School. Superintendent, J. A. Gavin, Jr., Assistant, C. D. Dobson.

Teachers.

Men's Bible Class, L. A. Beasley; Women's Bible Class, Mrs. C. D. Dobson.

Young Men's Class, F. W. McGowen; Young Women's Class, Mrs. F. W. McGowen.

Boy's Class, E. E. Penny; Intermediate Girls, Marie Dobson; Junior Girls, Mrs. W. B. Murray; Primary, Mrs. H. M. West.

Beginners, Mrs. W. E. Belange.

The history of the church for the last half century has been touched only in spots, and that is left for the future historian to gather as he sees fit.

It is fitting to say a word about the church building itself. It is a style of architecture used for better church buildings in Colonial days. Few have been preserved in North Carolina, but many are still in existence in Virginia, and this one in the interior resembles very much Christ Church in Alexandria, Virginia, where George Washington, who was truly great, was accustomed to worship. The good ladies of the church inspired by its architectural beauty and lines, and with a desire to preserve it as a priceless antique, have done well in their efforts, and let us hope that they will last in the younger members of the church a knowledge of what we have, and a desire to protect it from change and innovation, so we have the tenets of our sacred institution.

This June 20th, 1937.

L. A. BEASLEY

Before closing, we wish to mention some of our members, who have passed to the beyond, Mary Williams Wallace, a sainted mother in Israel, the grandmother of Mrs. Marie Bennett; Margaret Wallace Gavin, daughter of Mrs. Wallace; Bland Wallace, who at the age of over ninety was present at the most of the services of the church, an example of sobriety, worthy of all imitation; Thad Jones, Jr., Sunday School teacher, superintendent and lay preacher James W. Stokes and wife Cora McGowen Stokes, whose ancestors belonged to this church, and who devoted their best to its cause; Henry Hall, a constant, solid, attendant for more than forty years; Solie A. Sotherland and Adelia

Heaham, and the grandfather of Sarah Kenan, mentioned in membership of Kenansville Baptist church.

Limestone, now Hallsville, was organized in 1804, by Rev. Silas Carter. Nahunga, now Johnson was organized in 1807.

It is to be observed that there are now in Duplin County seven Baptist churches, each over one hundred years old, and that five of the seven mentioned by Mr. Dickson are still functioning.

The church at Beaver Dam, now Magnolia, was organized by Elder Benajah Carroll, in 1835, from members of the Concord Baptist Church, and the Kenansville Baptist Church was organized on Saturday, June 3, 1837, by Elder Benajah Carroll and six others dismissed from the Beaver Dam Baptist Church for that purpose, the following: being the names of the organizers, and the minutes of the first meeting:

On Saturday before the first Sabbath in June, A. D., 1837, the following named members of the Baptist Church of Christ met at the Lodge in Kenansville, Duplin County, and agreed to form and unite themselves into a Church of Christ at Kenansville, having regularly dismissed from the churches for that purpose, B. Carroll, Mary E. Carroll, D. C. Moore, James Carroll, Elizabeth Carroll, Stephen Herring, Nancy Herring. The above named members were regularly organized and constituted into a church and chose for their pastors, Elders G. W. Hufham and B. Carroll, then adjourned. The next meeting was held on Saturday before the first Sunday in September, 1837. Elder B. Carroll was appointed Moderator, and R. J. Carroll, a visiting brother acted as Clerk Pro Tem. Prayer was offered by the Moderator, Stephen Herring and D. C. Moore were appointed deacons, and James Carroll Clerk, and D. C. Moore and James Carroll were appointed delegates to the Goshen Association. The first church building was located on the present site, a short while after the church was organized. The lot was donated by D. C. Moore, who in a deed to Halstead Bourden for the land just east of the church lot, dated in 1839, calls for the Church Lot, though the deed from him to John Dobson and Hiram Newell, Deacons, for the church lot was dated August 7, 1853.

The pastors of the Kenansville Baptist Church, and the approximate dates of their respective service, are as follows:

Benajah Carroll and G. W. Hufham, 1837-42; Robt. McHabe, 1842-49; G. W. Hufham, 1849-50; G. W. Wallace, 1850-59; B. F. Marable, 1859-60; J. D. Hufham, 1860-61; J. N. Stallings, 1861-76; G. B. Best, 1876-77; J. M. Stallings, 1878-79; W. M. Kennedy, 1880-81; J. T. Albertson, 1882-83; J. H. Gillespie, 1884; T. J. Baker, 1885; R. C. Sandlin, 1886-88; W. K. Crocker, 1890-91; C. F. Hopper, 1891-92; W. L. Bilbro, 1893-98; J. D. Larkins, 1898-00; W. L. Bilbro, 1901-02; W. N. Johnson, 1902-05; C. M. Beck, 1905-07; W. E. Campbell, 1908; B. G. Early, 1909; J. H. Booth, 1910-12; F. K. Pool, 1912; W. A. Elam, 1916-17; P. A. Hicks, 1917; D. E. Hill, 1919-20; A. L. Brown, 1921-27; L. Israel, 1928; G. W. Rollins, 1930; R. C. Foster, 1930-37.

The church Clerks, and the approximate service of each is as follows:

James Carroll, 1837-47; John W. Murray, 1848; D. J. Middleton, 1851-58; George A. Newell, 1859; D. J. Middleton, 1889-91; A. D. Ward, 1891-94; W. T. Price, 1894; J. A. Gavin, 1895-08; J. A. Gavin, Jr., 1909-09; Paul Kornegay, 1909; L. D. Dail, 1909-24; G. E. Dail, 1924; Mrs. W. B. Murray, 1930-32; J. B. Wallace, 1932-36; and the present Church clerk is Mrs. F. W. McGowen.

The first Sunday School and Bible Class was organized in June 1837, and G. A. Newell was the first Superintendent. His daughter, Mary Newell Grimes, was a former Sunday School teacher and superintendent for many years.

Among the members, who have been Superintendents of the Sunday School in later years may be mentioned: Thad Jones, P. E. McGowen, L. E. Beasley, J. W.

Stokes, J. A. Gavin, Jr. and Prof. J. O. Newman.

This narrative would be incomplete without a reference to the founders of the church.

Daniel Olofer Moore is one of the founders of the church, and as a staunch citizen of the county. He was the son of Levi Moore and Rachel Mallard Moore, and was born April 10, 1792. His first wife was Clarissa McGowen, nee Sloan, and his step daughter Clarissa McGowen married Halstead Bourden, another distinguished citizen of the County, who lived in Kenansville and owned the residence just east of the church. Clarissa remained a member of this church until she moved to Johnson Church, in 1891.

D. C. Moore came to Kenansville in 1835, and purchased a large tract of land, extending up to the courthouse square. His home was on Hill Street, just north of the courthouse square. He donated the lot to the church, and one to the county in front of the church, and he also gave the communion set formerly used by the church. He died December 12, 1863, and is buried two miles south west of Magnolia on the old Sloan plantation, known since as the G. S. Murray farm.

Benajah Carroll was another founder, occupying a prominent part in the Baptist history of both the state and nation. He is the Elder B. Carroll mentioned in the minutes, having organized the church at Beaverdam, and at Kenansville. He was born in Sampson County in 1803, his father being John Carroll. He married Mary Eliza Mallard of Duplin County, and lived in Kenansville. In 1840, he moved to Carroll County, Mississippi, and later to Arkansas, and then to Burleson County, Texas, where he was pastor of a church. He died there in 1863, and his wife died four years later. They had twelve children, three of the sons being Baptist Preachers, one of them being Doctor B. H. Carroll, a man of great ability, and at one time president of Baylor University, in Texas. He had two nephews, who became Baptist preachers, Rev. Luther Rice Carroll, and Doctor James Lemuel Carroll.

James Carroll another founder was a brother of B. Carroll, and was born in Sampson County in 1801. He married Elizabeth Carroll, a daughter of Thomas Carroll. He died in 1864, and his wife in 1869.

Stephen Herring was another founder along with his wife, Nancy Herring. They came from Sampson County and settled on Elder Swamp, near highway number 40, about 1834. They had one son Everett Herring whose daughters, Mrs. Mary Ann Nicholson, and Mrs. Alice Spell are members of this church. Stephen Herring was born September 12, 1790, and died December 13, 1874.

The pastor who served the church for the longest time was J. N. Stallings, who served in all 18 years. He was born at Hallsville, N. C., February 10, 1832, the son of Rev. Hiram Stallings and Mary Sandlin Stallings. He attended the University, and was licensed to practice law in 1857. He married Elizabeth Houston, March 9, 1858. She was a sister of Capt. W. J. Houston who organized the first cavalry company to go out from the county in the War between the States. He joined the church here in 1864. He was ordained to preach by this church here in 1880. He became a teacher of note, teaching at Warsaw, Clinton, and Magnolia, where in 1894, he and his daughters, Irene and Annie conducted the first graded school the county ever had; one equal in method, skill and ability to the best the state now has, when the word pedagogy and all it implies and apponels was unknown except in the dictionary. He was also a newspaper editor, and while in Warsaw conducted a paper, called the Warsaw Brief Mention. After teaching at Magnolia, he moved to the western part of the state, where he performed long and useful service as a preacher, and in 1899, Rutherford College conferred a D. D. on him. He died February 2, 1915.

Two church clerks / appear in the roll from 1830: Margaret E. Maxwell, Mary J. Newell (Grimes), Anna J. Stokes, Rebecca A. Newell, Thomas L.

have given long and continuous service, David J. Middleton, born January 20, 1827, died February 21, 1904, served nearly thirty years; John A. Gavin, born October 10, 1847, died June 24, 1920, served over ten years.

The church has had one missionary among its membership, Dr. E. T. Bryan, of Shanghai, China. He was born near Kenansville, October 14, 1855, the son of Mary Oliver Bryan and John A. Bryan, and after graduating at the University, and at Louisville, he went to China, and has been there for over fifty years.

Another missionary, Miss Katie Murray, now at Cheng Chow, China, we cannot claim, as she is a member of the Baptist Church at Rose Hill, but her grandfather, W. H. Murray was for a long time a member of this church, as is her father, W. B. Murray and wife Effie Murray, and her brothers, W. B. Murray, Jr., and Durwood Murray.

The oldest living member of this church is L. M. Cooper, who has been a member for more than fifty years. His wife was Adelia A. Cooper, nee Blount, also a member, who died November 22, 1902. He had a brother, William B. Cooper, who became a member at the same time, and who died February 23, 1921.

The church has had in its membership the following public officials:

Two Sheriffs of Duplin County, John D. Abernethy and Bland Wallace, the latter a Confederate Soldier, wounded at Gettysburg, in 1863. His son J. B. Wallace is now a member of this church. Two Register of Deeds, Henry Clay Moore and Thad Jones, Jr., and Mrs. Mittie B. Jones, the widow of the latter is now a member of this church.

One Clerk of the Superior Court John A. Gavin, mentioned above. Four members of the General Assembly, D. J. Middleton, A. D. Ward, J. A. Gavin, Jr., and D. M. Jolly.

Two judges of the county court, D. M. Jolly and A. J. Blanton. The following list of members for the first fifty years is taken from the roll of the church.

First Roll, Elder B. Carroll, Elder G. W. Hufham, James Carroll, John Barden, Stephen Herring, John Bowzer, John T. Carroll, Levi Moore, John Abernethy, James Dickson, James H. Carroll, Thomas J. Holland, Gibson Sloan, Edward A. Houston, David J. Middleton, John B. Quinn, Daniel B. Carroll, Charles Oglesby, Benjamin Best, Stephen Herring, Jr., James D. Dobson, John W. Murray, John Moore, James Kimmey, Daniel Parker, Howell Dobson, Henry Moore, John Dobson, Bryant Sotherland, William Huggins, Henry R. Kornegay, Mary Barden Herring, Nancy Barden Herring, Zilpha Barden, Elizabeth Carroll, Margaret Jane Herring, Fannie Hufham, Clarissa Bowden, Priscilla Bishop, Elizabeth H. Stallings, Ellen Sloan Hawkins, Mary E. Greer, Mary A. Guy, Abigail Kelly, Jane Bass, Caroline Brown, Barbara Rogers, Barbara Sotherland, Zilpha Sotherland, Silvia C. Sotherland, Elizabeth A. Carroll, Mary J. Farrior, Mary Cox, Margaret E. Maxwell, Susan Oglesby, Rachel Moore, Sarah Kilpatrick, Nancy Kimmey, Elizabeth Rivenbark, Ann Eliza Sloan, Mary Moore, Mary Sotherland, Amanda M. Roehwell, Catharine J. Stokes, Catharine Best, Mary Stanley Abernethy, Julia Wilkinson, Eliza Turner, Dolly A. Moore, Dicoey Barden Murray, Catharine Garrison Dobson, Catharine M. Carroll, Jennette Kornegay.

The following new names were added from roll beginning with 1859:

James Maxwell, E. A. Houston, Giles Clute, J. N. Stallings, Geo. A. Newell, J. W. Hill, Hiram Newell, David Hall, Heseckiah Dobson, Mary Middleton, Eliza Sotherland, Martha Wood, Elizabeth Clute, Nancy Clute, Oedia Charles, Ann Oglesby, Mary W. Houston (Carroll), Harriet M. Newell (Farrior), Francis Houston, Sarah Kenan, Fereby C. Oliver, Susan Dickson, Eliza (Lawhorn) Abigail, Montford, Christiana Scott, Susan A. Hasey.

The following names were added to the roll from 1890:

Margaret E. Maxwell, Mary J. Newell (Grimes), Anna J. Stokes, Rebecca A. Newell, Thomas L.