

# EDITORIAL AND OPINION PAGE

## AS I SEE IT

by Bruce Barton



Bruce Barton and Elmer Hunt Photos

### HARPER'S FERRY BAPTIST CHURCH HOLDS HOMECOMING, BURNS NOTE AND PLACES CORNERSTONE

It is the season for homecomings. I recently took part in homecoming at my own home church, Deep Branch Baptist Church. It is a time for spiritual renewal. All Christians look forward to homecoming days, a pale preview of that Great Homecoming in Heaven that we all await anxiously.

All homecomings are special. But White Hill Free Will Baptist Church and Harper's Ferry Baptist Church are two churches who paid particular attention to their historical past in planning their homecoming this year. We made note of White Hill in an earlier issue.

Last Sunday Harper's Ferry Baptist Church used the occasion of homecoming to burn a note they have recently paid off and lay a cornerstone to be opened in 40 years.

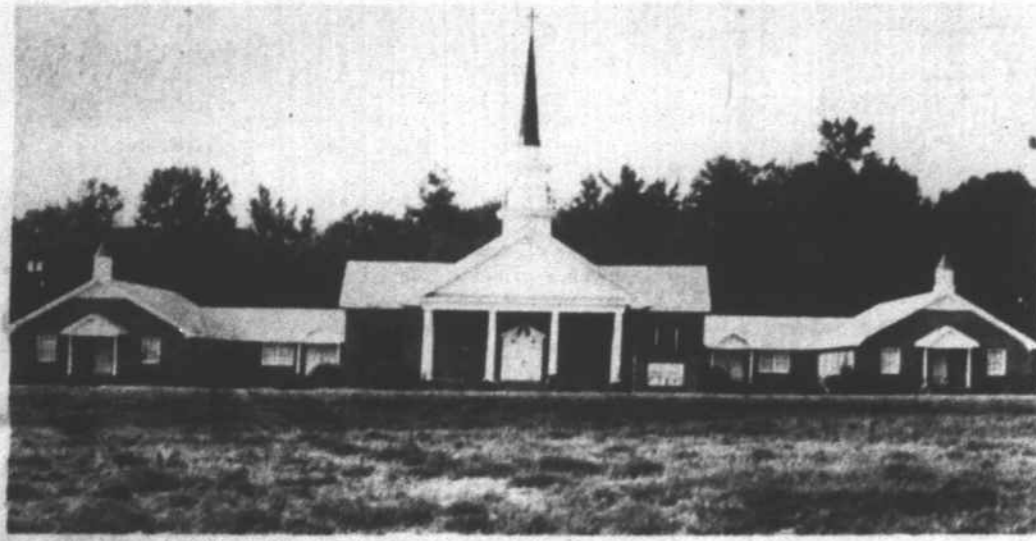
Being an historical buff, both homecomings caught my eye and I attended both momentous days.

Harper's Ferry Baptist Church was organized about 1887 (about the same time the Indian Normal School, which is now PSU, was begun). The church rests on the banks of the historic Lumber River on Highway 711 approximately 2 miles from Pembroke. James Lowry, the antecedent of most of us operated a ferry and a tavern for travelers nearby. Henry Berry Lowry roamed the area as he hammered away at injustices that hampered progress for Indian people. Harper's Ferry Baptist Church is an historic building in an historic setting. Henry Berry's wife, Rhoda, is buried in the church cemetery.

The church is located on land obtained from S. R. Townsend and wife. The land, deeded to trustees Aaron Brooks, Paisley Sanderson and Sinclair Lowry, cost the grant total of \$1.00, a mighty sum in those days.

Sinclair Lowry probably was the brother of Henry Berry Lowry, the hero of all of us.

Some of the former pastors were Rev. Zack Brooks, Rev. Angus D. Locklear, Rev. Silas Lowry, Rev. Phillip P. Locklear, Rev. Zimmie R. Chavis, Rev. Lonnie W. Jacobs, Rev. Clarence Locklear, Rev. Harvey Brewington, Rev. Sanford Locklear, and the present pastor, Rev. Steve Jones.



Harper's Ferry Baptist Church is stately and modern.



Bill Drewington, chairman of the board of deacons, poses with the cornerstone before it is placed in the church edifice. The inscription reads "Founded 1887, Renovated 1970, Open 2018, October 8, 1978." Enclosed in a vault (hopefully air tight) within the corner stone are numerous historical documents, pictures, and records, including an album cover of the Harpertonones, a popular gospel singing group that was organized at Harper's Ferry Baptist Church; a message from the pastor, Bro. Wiley Jones (who gave a history of the church); a church directory, history, and financial records, including a copy of the deed and other church documents, letters from members to their survivors, etc. It will be an eye opener in 2018 when the vault within the cornerstone is opened.

Rev. Coolidge Cummings, pastor of Island Grove Baptist Church, delivered the message at morning worship services.



Afterwards, dinner on the grounds. Plenty of food. Purnell Swett, for one, was observed swatting the collards and other nicenes. Like most of those who passed through, his plate was full. He reportedly returned for "seconds." There was plenty of food for members, visitors and friends. The food was prepared by the ladies of the church. Here's a crowd scene of the eating and socializing.

Although not pictured here, it is worth mentioning that the Harpertonones, a group organized at Harper's Ferry Baptist Church, sang during the evening services. It was a special treat for all those who have enjoyed them over the past few years. The Harpertonones are: Bruce Swett, Judy Jones and Linda Oxendine. Pianist is Gernude Carlin.



A very special moment during the afternoon services was a musical selection by Bro. Wiley Jones. Providing the music was Bro. Willoughby Jones and sister Stella Locklear. M.C. Delton R. Locklear said it best when he said "They talk about keeping up with the Jones'. I say we ought not to try because we couldn't do it if we wanted to at Harper's Ferry."

And Brother Wiley Jones ("maybe there is one here who has been a member longer than me") gave a brief history of the church. When he got to the present pastor, Rev. Steve Jones, he said, "I don't know anybody who doesn't like our pastor. If you know of anyone... well, let me know so I can pray for him..."



Bro. Princell Bullard, left, treasurer of the church, is shown accepting the note from Jimmy Hedgepeth, president of First Union National Bank in Pembroke where the loan to remodel the church was made. Although the note was secured for up to ten years, the church paid the note off in six years. The amount of monies borrowed was for some \$80,000. With the extensive remodeling done, the church is now valued at more than \$300,000.



A few years ago when it was mentioned that the church might borrow up to \$80,000 some thought that the building committee, consisting of Dr. English E. Jones, Purnell Swett and Earl Cummings weren't being realistic. Some members wondered if they would ever live to see the church out of debt. It was a subject of intense debate within the church before the extensive remodeling was undertaken. Dr. Jones, soon to retire as chancellor of Pembroke State University, laughingly said, "It is easier to be chancellor of PSU than to be chairman of a building committee."

Some of the stalwart members of Harper's Ferry Baptist Church, who were instrumental in doing the rebuilding (and paying for the note) were Bro. Vardell Ransom, chairman of the finance committee. Bro. Ransom said, "I always added a little bit more to what the church sent me to deposit..."

Bro. Princell Bullard, treasurer, who intoned, "My job is sort of easy... and it was made that way by your giving. All I had to do was sign the checks for what we bought, etc."

Bro. Willoughby Jones, one of the beloved elders of the church; Bill James Brewington, chairman of the board of deacons; Delton Ray Locklear, who replaced Purnell Swett on the building committee when Swett's work as an educator took him to Washington, D.C. to work for a few years; Mrs. Coree Oxendine, known affectionately as 'the mother of the church'; Anderson Jones, former chairman of the board of deacons, Purnell Swett; Mrs. Stella Sanderson, another beloved member of the church; Earl Cummings and many others.

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Special comments were also given during the special ceremonies by Pastor Steve Jones and Rev. Tony Brewington, director of missions for the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association of which Harper's Ferry is a member. Both warned the church to "let it be a building that God builds... unless God be the foundation, the church building will crumble..." Rev. Jones noted, "Jesus Christ is the corner stone of our lives, and our foundation. Without Him it would be like standing in sinking sand."

It was a nice day and one worth commemorating. I am proud to have been part of history in the making at Harper's Ferry Baptist Church.

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## Correction

To whom it may concern:

I am a reader of our Carolina Indian Voice and would like to say in hopes that you could fix an error in my article that was made. I'm not from "Hagerstown, Md." It should have said that I'm from Cherokee, N.C. where I am born as well. The reason I'm writing you from Hagerstown is that I'm in prison here. I'm going to Hagerstown Jr. College here within the prison, but will be leaving on parole very soon. I had only a five-year sentence and I'm going to get my lawyer degree as well. I thank you so very much.

May I add that I would like to receive The Carolina Indian Voice please, for I have no money yet, at this time, but will pay you all whenever I'm paroled soon.

Please send each week: "Subscription, Carolina Indian Voice. Great peace be unto you all, brothers and sisters, with all the Great Spirit's love and warmth forever.

Lewis A. Thompson #143683 Cherokee & Lumbee Indian

P.S.: Could someone please write to an Indian inmate who has no one. Thank you again.

MCTC Rt 3 Box 3333 Hagerstown, Md. 21740

## A Letter From the Editor

Now is the time to act. Elections for four members of the board of directors of the Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation will be held Tuesday, October 17th at the Pembroke State University Performing Arts Center. All the consumers, if possible, ought to be there. That's when we have our say so about the member-owned electric cooperative.

Up for re-election are the President, Rev. Elias Rogers, and incumbents, Frank Jacobs, Jr., Harold Dean Brewer and Bradford Oxendine.

The Carolina Indian Voice considers all four of them eminently qualified to serve, although they are being contested by a number of good and qualified challengers.

Now, unlike days of old, one can run for election to the board without being discriminated against. May the best men (or lady) win. That's as it should be. We champion open and honest elections.

Until Rev. Elias Rogers arrived on the scene, Indians and blacks did not have a fair chance to contest for a seat on the board of directors. It was a closed cooperative, for a few consumers...and not for all the members. Most of us just paid our light bills uncomplainingly.

Rogers, an Indian from Hoke County, fought a long and costly battle to gain the right to be seated on the co-op board of directors. Rogers won his law suit against the cooperative and was seated by the courts the first time in 1967. Since then he has won each resulting election. The Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation spent some \$40,000 contesting Rogers in the federal courts before allowing him to be seated.

None of that board of directors remains in office. Roger's win opened the way for good and positive change in Lumbee River. Load management and long range planning are two results of free and honest elections. The present administration disavows the action of the administration that was toppled, in part, by Rev. Elias Rogers.

Should we throw them all out and start anew? The culprits are federal regulatory agencies and a sordid past, not the present administration or the present board of directors.

Still, thanks to Rogers and others, members have a right to throw them out if they want to. They won the right to open and honest elections for all the members of the Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation. That's how it should.

So, come out on the 17th and vote your convictions. The cooperative will be better off if you participate by voting. See you there.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Exercise Your Right To Vote

Dear Bruce,

This month an event of great importance for several thousand residents of Robeson, Scotland, Hoke and Cumberland Counties takes place, the annual meeting of the Lumbee River Electric Membership Cooperative.

The Electric Membership Cooperatives not only brought electricity to many rural areas, but also brought control of the electric cooperatives to the local people. That is a very important factor. If consumers have problems or questions, they can go to a local board member, usually a friend, and get answers quickly without a gaggle of red tape and bureaucracy.

I am a consumer of Carolina Power and Light Company and they do not operate like the cooperatives. We have basically no voice in matters of the company and for practical purposes can only receive our bill, "cry" and pay them.

Lumbee River Electric Membership Cooperative is different. Rev. Elias Rogers, Harold Brewer, Frank Jacobs and Bradford Oxendine are members of the Board of Directors that are up for re-election at LREMC Oct. 17th. And I feel I could go to either one of them if I had a consumer complaint and get action.

I feel that their communities are fortunate to have such great influence in a multi million dollar cooperative that possesses the potential for community improvement for so many years to come.

I encourage each member and your family to go out and enjoy the annual meeting festivities and to exercise that very important right of voting for the candidate of your choice. Your candidate needs your support.

Sincerely,  
Harold Deese  
414 Central Street  
Maxton, NC 28364

### Expresses Opinion on Rev. Rogers and Upcoming LREMC Election

Dear Sir:

As a member-consumer of Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation, I find I must express myself prior to the election for board of director members on Oct. 17.

I have followed with interest and much admiration the career of Rev. Elias Rogers, now president of the LREMC Board of Directors. When he was elected to that position last year, I could not help but think about how deserving he was. I termed it "poetic justice" because he is the pioneer who made it possible for minorities to be seated on that board. He did this through determination and untiring belief in what he knew was right. After six years in federal court, Rev. Rogers was finally seated by a federal court order on the board. Something that should have happened 6 years earlier considering that he won the election fairly and squarely. Although receiving enough votes to unseat his opponent, things being as they were for minorities in Robeson County, it took six years for him to be seated. These things only a minority can understand I am sure.

I followed that law suit with much interest and earnest prayer. I prayed continuously for him because I knew that he had something that most of us lacked, the courage to stand for his convictions. Stand alone when necessary and I know that many times he stood alone. I am convinced those were the loneliest days of his life. Knowing in my heart that most of us who wished him well and prayed for him, did not openly take a stand with him. While he continued the battle, even to the point, I have heard, of checking under the hood of his car before driving it, most us breathed a silent prayer for his success and quietly went our way.

And now after sitting on that board for a term or two I am sure and being ignored by his fellow board members, Rev. Elias Rogers has stuck with it until he has become, I dare say, the most qualified person to ever serve on that board. This statement is proven fact. Proven by way of certificates of accomplishment and appointments to state and national boards. Any person wishing to become informed of the facts can verify what I am saying.

Come Tuesday night, October 17, Rev. Rogers will seek re-election to his seat at large on the LREMC Board of Directors. And I am saddened to know that those opposing him are not those persons in reality who were responsible for flushing his

ballots in the first election down the toilet. No, if these persons were opposing him, at this time, it would not make me sad. The sad thing is that two Indians, Rev. Grover Oxendine and Mr. Hamer Lee Oxendine, and one Black, Mr Robert Fairley are the opponents. That really is sad, isn't it. We stand to wipe away what it has taken this man 18 years to accomplish in one fight. Perhaps I would not find the upcoming event so appalling, if Rev. Rogers had not strived to make things better for us all. But he has done more than his share, and has qualified himself to the point that there is no questioning his credentials for holding that position.

I have heard many of the same complaints, most consumers have heard, ever increasing electric bills, so-called luxury trips, etc. I wish to clarify these complaints somewhat. The electric bills are not the only things which have been sky rocketing lately. Inflation is not the fault of the present board of directors of LREMC. And as for those luxury trips, they are seminars, workshops, etc. that members of the board of directors of any coop must take in order to make himself aware of the functions of a coop. A person off the street with no experience in the field of utilities, has a lot to learn when he becomes a member of a board of directors for a coop. To replace the present board at this time, would not save money, as a matter of fact, it would be quite costly to us, the consumers because we would certainly have to pay for a new member to attend these sessions and become informed and qualified to serve us.

It is my hope that those consumers who are believing the rumors that are circulating about the spend thrifts on the present LREMC Board will do some sincere fact finding before they vote on Tuesday night. The facts are readily available to any member-consumer. Just approach your board members, or visit the LREMC offices and ask for the facts. Do not be misled by those who do not fully understand what is involved in running a cooperative size of LREMC.

I urge each member to join me on Tuesday night as I attend the annual meeting of consumers at PSU's Performing Arts Center and cast my votes for the most qualified competent members to represent me on the LREMC Board of Directors.

Sincerely,  
DOROTHY LOWERY  
Maxton, NC



In ancient Finland it was considered a proper sign of reverence to shoot an arrow into sacred trees at every opportunity.