

Lenoir Methodists Build and Pay for \$32,000 Church Building Within Two Years; Makes Unrivalled Record

DEDICATORY SERVICES HELD AND SERMON BY BISHOP DARLINGTON

Historical Sketch of the Activities of the Church Membership During the Period of Reconstruction—Breaking the First Ground and Laying the First Brick—Laying the Cornerstone—Dr. T. N. Ivey Delivered the Cornerstone Service Sermon—The Opening Sermon by Presiding Elder W. A. Newell—Other Interesting Facts Concerning Methodism in Lenoir—The Church Building Dedicated in the Presence of a Crowded House.

Caldwell county, as well as the larger portion of the territory embraced in the Western North Carolina Conference, belonged originally to the South Carolina Conference.

At the annual session of the conference held at Camden, S. C., on Jan. 6, 1841, the Lenoir circuit was formed from territory taken from the Morganton circuit. It was in this same year that the town of Lenoir was laid out and the first Superior Court was held in the county.

The first pastor assigned to the Lenoir circuit was Rev. Cornelius McLeod, and the first presiding elder of the district was Rev. William Crook. A few weeks after his assignment to this circuit Rev. Mr. McLeod was transferred to the Rutherford circuit and Rev. W. T. Harrison was appointed as his successor.

The first quarterly conference for the Lenoir circuit was held at Conley's chapel on April 23, 1842.

The Fairfield church, which was located at the Fairfield cemetery in the western end of the town, was the mother of the First Methodist church of Lenoir. The first quarterly conference held at Fairfield was held on June 28, 1844.

At the quarterly conference held at Littlejohns on July 5, 1845, it was decided to build a Methodist church in the town of Lenoir, and for this purpose the conference elected a building committee composed of the following brethren: James Harper, Peter Bullew, Noah Spanhour, Geo. Conley, N. A. Powell, T. H. Moore and Azor Shell. How well these faithful men performed their work is evidenced by the fact that a quarterly conference was held in the new church on Dec. 12, 1846, just one year five months and seven days from the date of their election as a building committee. At this conference

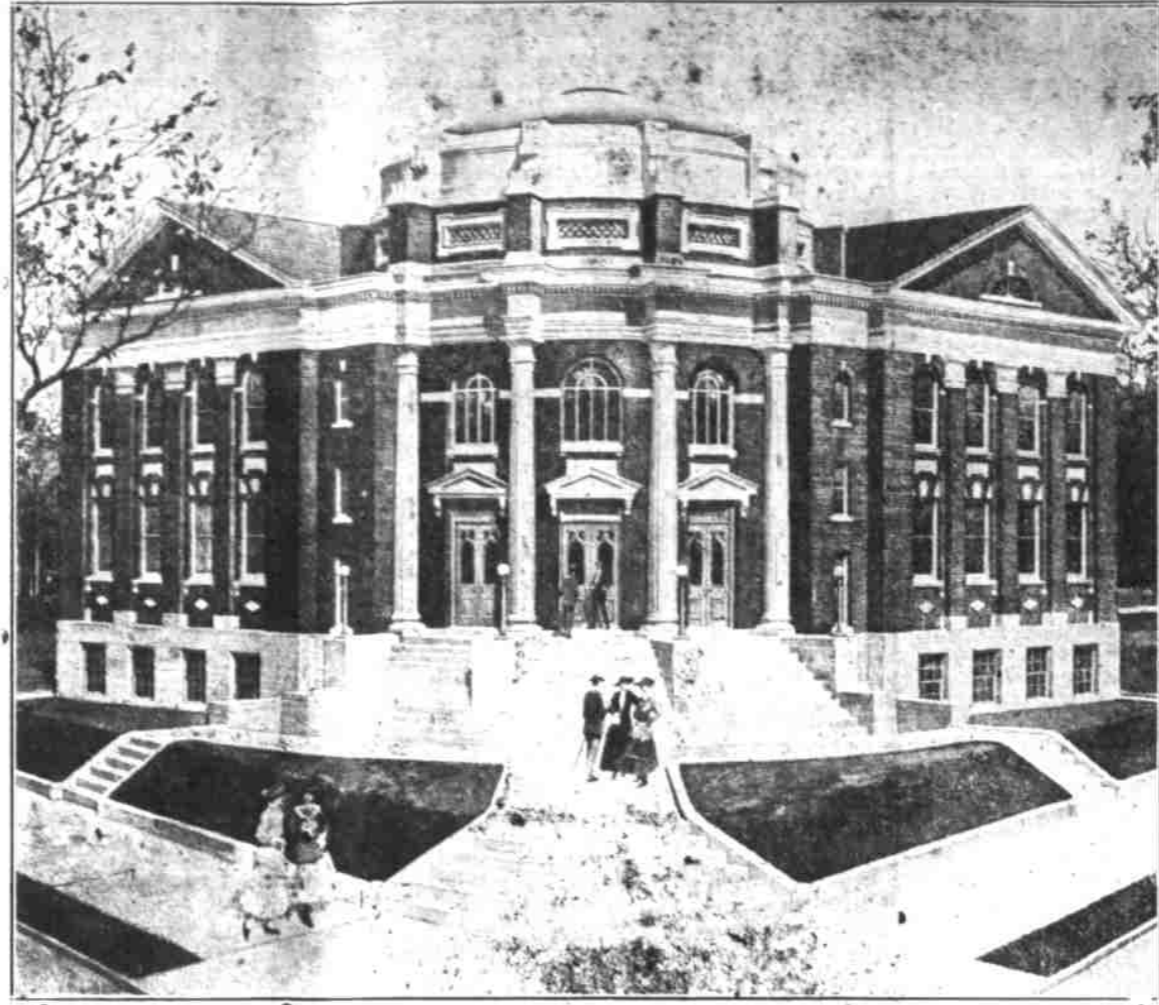
the following resolutions of appreciation were passed: "Resolved, that the thanks of this conference are due and are hereby tendered to James Harper, Esq., for the interest manifested and the efforts made by him in behalf of the new church for Lenoir." Also resolved, "That the thanks of this congregation be and they are hereby respectfully tendered to Col. William Davenport in consideration of the noble and Christian spirit which prompted him to give the lot without charge on which the new church has been erected in Lenoir."

At the time of holding this conference Rev. Thos. W. Postell was the preacher in charge of Lenoir circuit, and Rev. W. A. Gamewell was the presiding elder of the district.

It may be truly said that whatever has been accomplished by this church for the Master in the past, and whatever it may accomplish for Him in the future, was made possible by the faithful and efficient work done and the sacrifices made by these consecrated men and their co-laborers, all of whom have long since "passed over the river and are resting under the shade of the trees."

Under the ministry of various pastors, the names of whom are not at hand, the successors of these zealous men continued to worship in this modest structure until the year 1896. During this year, under the pastorate of the beloved Rev. T. A. Boone, this church was enlarged by building an annex, tower and vestibule, and re-furnished by installing new pews, lights and a heating plant.

During the sixteen years that followed these improvements the needs of the congregation outgrew the capacity of this building, and in the year 1912, under the pastorate of Rev. C. M. Pickens, the congregation decided to build a new and more



The new First Methodist Church of Lenoir, which was formally dedicated Sunday morning, Oct. 5, 1919, by Bishop U. V. W. Darlington of Huntington, W. Va.

commodious house of worship, and the site for same purchased from Mr. M. M. Courtney and other parties interested in the splendid lot on which the new church now stands, paying \$4,500 for same.

For a period of four years nothing further was done toward the erection of the new building, and the hearts of many were made sick by hope deferred. However, a brighter day dawned, and three years ago the pastor, Rev. D. M. Litaker, by his zealous and effective labors, revived new hope and put new interest into the enterprise. After much study and careful investigation Brother Litaker secured plans from C. W. Carlton, architect, for the new church. These plans were submitted to the church and were approved and adopted by the congregation. On Sunday, Nov. 19, 1916, he, without resorting to any high-pressure methods, raised nearly \$20,000 in subscriptions for the new church. These subscriptions assured the erection of the new building, and at a special quarterly conference held in the old church Dec. 11, 1916, the following brethren were elected as a building committee to carry forward the work: J. L. Nelson, M. M. Courtney, H. T. Newland, E. F. Allen, W. L. Greer, A. G. Foard, E. C. Ivey, W. L. Minish and J. C. Seagle.

On April 13, 1917, the building committee let the contract for the erection of the new church. On May 19, 1917, in the presence of a large number of friends and members of the congregation, the first fifty-four bricks of the new church were laid by different members of the congregation. A most inspiring and touching scene connected with this exercise was the placing of the first brick by Mrs. Rose M. Cloyd, the oldest living member of this church, and, so far as we know, the only living person who witnessed the laying of the foundation of the old church. Mrs. Cloyd is 89 years of age and has been partially blind for some years. She is truly one of "the mothers in Israel." The material used in the construction of the new building is of the best, and the pews and other furniture will be of like quality. In the size, construction and arrangement of the auditorium, basement and class rooms ample provision has been made for both Sunday school work and preaching services, and when completed it will be one of the most convenient and imposing, as well as attractive, church buildings to be seen anywhere in western North Carolina. As another has said: "The building of this church, one of the handsomest in the entire country, shows remarkable enterprise on the part of the local members and unmeasured energy on the part of the pastor, Rev. D. M. Litaker, who has coupled skill with common sense in

bringing about a realization of such an enterprise."

Dr. T. N. Ivey, editor of the Nashville Christian Advocate, who is so highly esteemed and so much loved by us all, and who was pastor of this church during the years 1887 and 1888, formally laid the cornerstone of the new church Sunday, Sept. 23, 1917. At 11 o'clock Dr. Ivey delivered an appropriate sermon in the old church. At the close of the service the congregation repaired to the new building, where the ceremonies of laying the cornerstone took place.

First Service

The first service to be held in the new church building was held on Easter Sunday, March 31, 1918. The service was conducted by Rev. D. M. Litaker, pastor. Presiding Elder W. A. Newell of Statesville was present and delivered the sermon.

Dedication

The first preaching service held in the new church building was held on at 11 o'clock in the morning, Bishop U. V. W. Darlington of Huntington, W. Va., preaching the dedication sermon. His text was taken from the 87th Psalm, the second verse: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." This was a great day for Methodism in Lenoir and Bishop Darlington was at his best. He delivered a great sermon and it was thoroughly appreciated by the crowd present. The Presbyterian, Baptist and Lutheran ministers called in their appointments for this hour so that their congregations might attend the services and worship with the Methodist congregation on this occasion. This act was thoroughly and sincerely appreciated. The day was ideal and the church building was crowded, many coming from the surrounding county sections.

The Methodist ministers present, in addition to the pastor, Rev. R. D. Sherrill, were the following: Presiding Elder W. A. Newell, D. M. Litaker, R. G. Tuttle, R. M. Courtney, D. A. Lewis, J. M. Downum, J. B. Craven and R. C. Goforth.

The official members of the church at the request of the bishop stood around the chancel during the dedication service. The chairman of the board of trustees, Mr. J. L. Nelson, presented the house to the bishop in the following words, taken from the Discipline:

"We present you this house to be set apart from all unhallowed or common uses for the worship of Almighty God."

The bishop then pronounced the "sentence of dedication," after which the congregation knelt while the dedication prayer was offered. Benediction was pronounced by the pastor.

Thus ended a service that marks an epoch in the history of this church.

OFFERS DONATION FOR PIPE ORGAN FOR CHURCH

Carnegie Corporation Offers Methodist Church \$1,150 Towards Payment for a Pipe Organ for the New Church

The Carnegie Corporation of New York city has offered the members of the First Methodist church \$1,150 as a donation towards paying for a pipe organ for the church. The letter making this offer has recently been received by Rev. R. D. Sherrill, the pastor, and is as follows:

"Responding to your appeal, Carnegie Corporation of New York will be glad to provide the last half of the cost of an organ for your church, at the price of \$2,300 when the first half has been collected by the congregation and payment of the organ becomes due.

"This promise expires on Sept. 30, 1920, if the conditions attached to it are not fulfilled and the contribution of the Carnegie Corporation paid before that date.

"Should the congregation decide to purchase a more expensive instrument at a price not exceeding \$3,300 Carnegie Corporation will be glad to give the same amount—\$1,150—toward it, but the balance required must be in hand so that when the contribution of the Carnegie Corporation is paid there will be no debt left on the instrument or further moneys collected."

BUILDING REFLECTS MUCH CREDIT TO COMMUNITY

Built With Great Care and Planned for Convenience—Main Auditorium Has Seating Capacity for Twelve Hundred

In building and paying for this new church building the Methodists of Lenoir have in all probability established a record not to be equalled by any other congregation in the country. The building cost approximately \$32,000 and was built and paid for within a period of a few weeks over two years. The same building today would cost more than \$50,000.

The building is a large one. It is thoroughly modern and was planned with the greatest care. It was planned for convenience. The main auditorium has a seating capacity of 1,200 persons, while the Sunday school room auditorium has a seating capacity for nearly as many. There are twenty-one rooms in all, which include a Sunday school class room for each class, a ladies' parlor and a girls' parlor, a pastor's study, work rooms, including a kitchen, etc.

There are few handsomer church buildings to be found. It reflects great credit upon the membership and all who took part in its construction, and it does greater credit to the community in which it is built.

The building is situated on property that seems to have been arranged for just such a purpose. It occupies a corner lot and faces south and east. It is easily accessible to all parts of the city. The entire people of the town and community take much pride in the building.

One of the outstanding features of the great undertaking by the membership was their undivided support of the then pastor, Rev. D. M. Litaker. Mr. Litaker was equal to every duty placed upon him. He displayed his skill as an organizer for such a task. All preliminary plans were worked out and the proposition was placed before the church membership to receive their unanimous approval. In a single Sunday the funds were pledged, nearly a sufficient amount for the completion of the building.

Mr. Litaker was succeeded by another man, Rev. R. D. Sherrill, who has also proved his ability. He has completed the finals. To Mr. Sherrill goes the distinction of getting together the money to make the final payment on the building.

According to airplane passengers last week the Methodist church building is the most prominent building in the city. It shows up to the best advantage, they say.



REV. R. D. SHERRILL

First Methodist Church, and under the final indebtedness of the church was raised



REV. D. M. LITAKER

Pastor of the First Methodist Church from 1915 to 1918, and under whose pastorate the church building was begun and completed