

Along The Way

By Emily Killete

Duplin County is very fortunate to have so much of its history recorded. Not only did local government officials understand the need for good records, but most area churches are able to trace their history through the documents kept by the members.

The September 17, 1936 issue of the DUPLIN TIMES carried an article announcing the celebration centennial of Johnson's Baptist Church of Warsaw. Along with the celebration agenda was the publication of the church's history. The history of Johnson's Church, as printed in the 1936 DUPLIN TIMES, is reprinted below.

Historical Sketch
 Johnson's Baptist Church was originally Nahunga Baptist Church. Sometime between 1792 and 1803 Rev. Francis Oliver, assisted by the Rev. Williams Wells, and perhaps others, organized a Missionary Baptist Church which was called Nahunga Baptist Church. The location of the church house was five or six hundred yards southeast of W.B. Cooper's Mill site which is 4 miles east of Warsaw.

The organization of Nahunga took place while Rev. Francis Oliver was pastor of Bear Marsh Church where he had been ordained in 1792. Burkett and Read in their history of the Kehukee Association, published in 1803, making mention of Nahunga Church in Duplin County. The history adds, 'The labours of Rev. Oliver have been greatly blessed and several branches gathered.' Benedict's history of the Baptists shows that the Cape Fear Association met with Nahunga Church in 1811. At that time the church reported 31 members. All church records of the Nahunga Church in 'Associational Minutes have been lost.

About 1835, or 1836, the church was moved from Cooper's Mill community to a place two miles southeast of Warsaw, at the intersection of the old road leading to Kenansville and Hallsville. The house built there was oblong and had one door in one end and one door in one side. The pews were made of pine boards and had one narrow board for the back to rest against. They were, at that time, the only Baptist Church within the Warsaw community.

Following the location change, the name was changed from Nahunga to Johnson's Baptist Church, the land for the new site having been given by the family of Sloan Johnson. The Associational Minutes speak of Nahunga Church, while those of 1839 refer to Johnson's Church. As the minutes of 1835 have been lost, we infer that the church was moved in the late 1835 or early 1836. From old minutes we find that the membership increased from 17 members in 1822 to 76 members in 1840. We read, also, that the pastor at that time (1836) was the Rev. B.A. Carroll, and that John Phillips was church clerk. Among the earlier pastors were: Rev. Francis Oliver, Rev. William Wells, Rev. Jonathan Thomas, Rev. Nathan Askey, Rev. Robert MacNabb, Rev. A.J. Battle, Rev. Hiram Stallings, Rev. D.J. Roberts acted as Moderator in 1838, and later served the church as pastor. These were followed by Rev. G.W. Huffam in 1840. Rev. Isaac West, 1842-45; Jessie Howard, 1848; Rev. L.F. Williams, 1845-48. Old records say that "in 1851 the church mourned the death of their pastor, Rev. Stephen Guy." Rev. Alfred Guy is the only pastor named that served the church between 1851 and 1866.

Beginning with 1866, we were able to locate the following names and dates: Rev. J.L. Stewart, 1866, and several years following; Rev. G.S. Best; Rev. J.N. Stallings, 1872-1874; G.W. Huffam, 1874-1875; Rev. H.W.M. Kennedy, 1875-1879; Rev. H.S. Spivey, 1879-1883; Rev. R.C. Sandlin, 1883-1884; Rev. T.J. Baker, 1884-1885; in 1885 Joseph H. Gillespie was licensed to preach the gospel, but was never ordained on account of failing health and death; Rev. L.M. Curtis, 1886; Rev. E.D.

unchanged. The land for the new site was given by J.B. Windows.
 The new house was completed and dedicated August 2, 1892. The dedicatory sermon was preached by Rev. J.W. Powell.
 Rev. W.L. Bilbro served the pastorate of the church from July 1890 to March 1898. The year was completed by Dr. N.B. Cobb. Rev. J.D. Larkins followed him for two years and he was succeeded by Rev. A.L. Betts, 1901-02; Rev. T.L. Brown from 1905-1907. During this year Rev. D.S. Kennedy was ordained to the full work of the gospel ministry. Rev. J.M. Page served from 1907 to 1913; Rev. A.C. Moore from 1913 to 1918; Rev. K.W. Cawthon served from 1918 until 1925. During his ministry, nine commodious well equipped Sunday School rooms were added to the auditorium and a modern system of carbide lighting was installed.
 Rev. G.W. Rollins was called to the pastorate in 1925 and served until his death in 1930. Rev. R.C. Foster began his ministry as pastor in June 1930, and is now entering his seventh year of service as pastor. The church now has a membership of 194 and has 119 enrolled in Sunday School.

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