

The Churches—An Integral Part Of Community History

The oldest church in the area is the Roan Mountain Baptist Church, which was organized sometime in the late 1820's. This is proven by the oldest actual record, a copy of the Minutes of the French Broad Baptist Association for 1830, which lists Roan Mountain Church as having twenty-one members.

Other Baptist Churches in the communities adjacent to Bakersville were Bear Creek and Rock Creek, which were organized in 1844.

The oldest church in Bakersville is the Bakersville Baptist Church, which was organized in 1869. It was admitted to the Roan Mountain Baptist Association on September 9th, 1869, and was represented by William A. Wilson, D. W. Pannell, John Buchanan, the pastor, and James Mc Kinney. The 1869 membership was reported at twenty-seven.

In 1870 a group of Methodists in Bakersville, mostly engaged in the mica mining business, petitioned the Holston Conference to establish a church in Bakersville. The request was approved, and the Rev. G. W. Martin came to Bakersville to serve the church as its first pastor. The Bakersville Methodist Church soon became, in some respects, the stronger of the two churches in Bakersville. Although the

first services were held in a building which stood where a general store now is, the Methodists actually succeeded in constructing a building before the Baptists did.

In an old Methodist Church book, dating back to 1870, the following admonitions are given:

"Brethern: Do not neglect the assembling of yourselves to-

gether on the Sabbath Day.

"Friday before each quarterly meeting must be set apart for fasting and praying."

The struggling Baptist Congregation appears to have had difficulty completing its first building. It held meetings for several years in the county courthouse, then finally built an edifice which stood on or near the site where the Hen-

line Hughes Funeral Home now stands. This first building was washed away in the May flood of 1901. An eye witness to this disaster, which so much affected property in the valley, tells of watching the church building as it was lifted by the rising flood waters and carried down stream.

The church bell was recovered from the sand and debris

where the flood waters had deposited it, and it was installed in the belfry of a new building. This second building served the church from about 1902 to 1925, and then the present building was completed. The old bell was then installed in the belfry of the new building and may still be heard each Sunday morning.



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