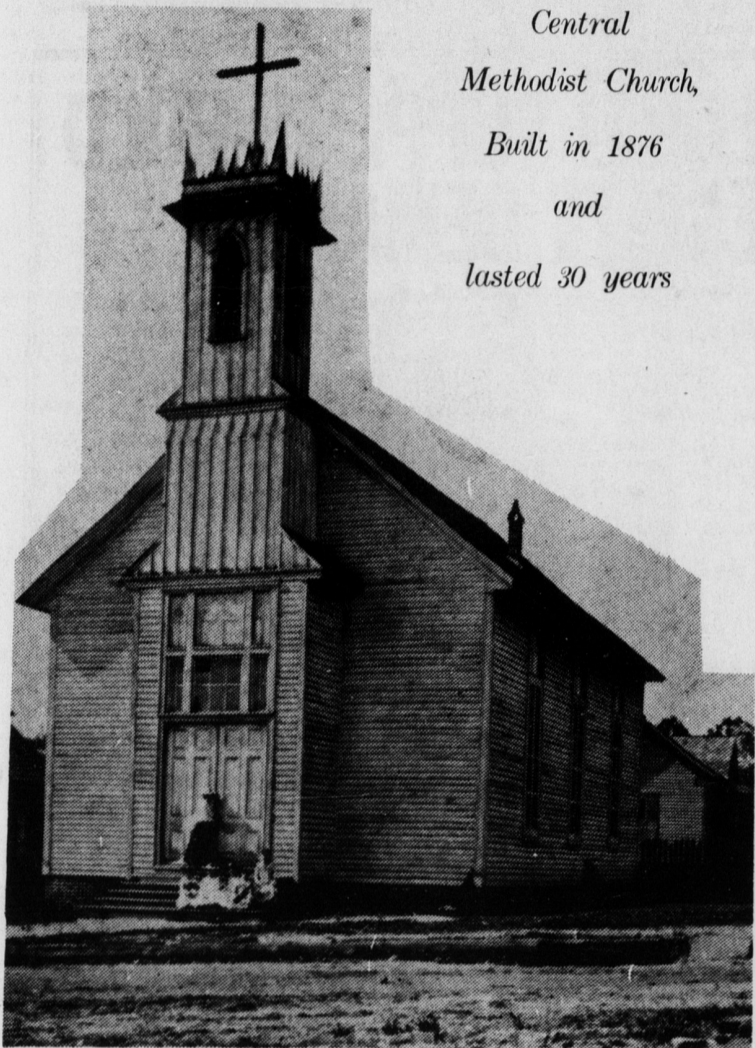


Central's First Century

By Miss Janet Falls



Central
Methodist Church,
Built in 1876
and
lasted 30 years

The North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in 1736, and, as the people called Methodists journeyed in all directions as part of the early pioneer settlers, a church home in the community of Kings Mountain was their immediate desire. Those great God-loving men wanted their souls' tent-stakes driven firmly and Christian foundations laid for their families and future generations.

In the midst of struggle and progress, in the heart of the Carolina industrial Piedmont, the year 1874 was a year of note for the organization and state chartering of the city of Kings Mountain and for the organization of Central Methodist Church by the Rev. J.W. North, a native South Carolinian, who had joined the Conference in 1849 and served as pastor of the Shelby Circuit, 1873-76.

In the early part of 1874, I. Walton Garrett and family, Richard Garrett and family, Captain and Mrs. R.S. Sugg, and Bennett R. Willeford came from Edgecomb County to make their home in this sparsely-settled village. They bought property and erected store buildings. The Garretts operated a general merchandise store and Captain Sugg a drug store. The Garretts also bought large tracts of nearby mountain land.

Being of the Methodist faith these newcomers attended services at El Bethel, the nearest church of that denomination. Since they were establishing permanent homes they saw the necessity for a church in their immediate locality. An organization was effected with the following charter members: Dr. and Mrs. James Wright Tracy, pioneer settlers and up to that time members of El Bethel Church; I. Walton Garrett and wife, Richard Garrett and wife, Mrs. R.S. Sugg, and Bennett R. Willeford.

Others were soon added and the group, with the Rev. North as pastor, held services in the small frame school house, located at the corner of Piedmont Ave., and King St. where the Jacob S. Mauney Memorial Library now stands. Known as the Shelby Circuit, Central Methodist Church was grouped with El Bethel, Beulah-Concord, and at times other small churches and preaching services were held once a month. At that time the "Circuit Rider," as the preacher was then known, visited in the homes of the few members and ministered to their spiritual needs. In 1881, with the

minister, the Rev. J.T. Abernathy, Central Methodist Church became a part of the Kings Mountain Circuit.

Though small in number the members overcame many obstacles and in 1876 completed their first spiritual home, a one-room frame building which stood on the corner of Piedmont Ave. and Mountain St. This served as a place of worship for nearly thirty years. In the spirit of brotherhood the doors of the old frame church were thrown open to other congregations who had organized but as yet had not a church of their own.

The women of Central Church, sensing the need for greater emphasis on mission work, met in 1888 and organized the Woman's Missionary Society. Mrs. James W. Tracy became the first president and Mrs. R.S. Sugg was elected treasurer. There were six charter members. During the society's early years the song, "Take My Life and Let It Be," was used so often to open the meetings that it could well be called their theme song. Monthly dues during this time were ten cents.

In 1923 the society, having greatly increased in number, was divided into circles.

The Woman's Missionary Society became the Woman's Society of Christian Service in a charter meeting Sept. 1, 1940. More circles were added as the organization grew in size. In December 1972 it was succeeded by the United Methodist Women which changed the circles to interest groups.

During the early years of the church the women organized the Ladies Aid Society which functioned as a parsonage group. Their duties were absorbed later by a parsonage committee.

In 1903 the young people of the church organized under the capable leadership of Miss Katie Garrett. This group which was called the Light Bearers, was succeeded in 1919 by the Epworth League and in 1944 by the Methodist Youth Fellowship and in 1968 by the name of United Methodist Youth. A separate group called the Children's Missionary Society was sponsored by the woman's organization from 1919 until the winter of 1924 when it was disbanded.

In the early years of Central Church, the members enjoyed their religion. If the preacher became overly zealous in the pulpit, some of his flock let him hear their "amens".

During the pastorate of the Rev. George D. Herman 1900 - 1903, definite

steps were taken toward securing a larger lot and building a church that would more adequately meet the needs of a growing congregation and Sunday school. A beautiful lot opposite the old church, belonging to Mrs. Lee Allison Falls, was purchased in December of 1904, affording ample space for a church, an educational building and a parsonage. The old church property was sold to the Presbyterian Church, and the parsonage property then located on W. Mountain St. was retained.

The death of three of the "Light Bearers" gave the inspiration and devotion to purchase a stained-glass window for the new sanctuary built in 1905. Mite boxes became the means by which they saved and labored to provide the window, "To Our Angel Band!". This window has been renovated and used in the new sanctuary of 1967, to be preserved and remembered.

The Rev. Plato Tracy Durham, D.D., a former member of Central Methodist Church and later Dean of Chandler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga., delivered the sermon when the edifice was dedicated in 1914.

Nourished by their love and devotion the members of Central Church continued to dream and sacrifice. In 1904 during the pastorate of the Rev. M.H. Vestal, Central became a station appointment, but in 1910 it again became a part of the Kings Mountain Circuit until 1919 when it gained station status, which it now has.

The first parsonage was at 400 W. Mountain St. After 1904 a dwelling that stood on the church property served as a pastor's home until the present parsonage, an eight-room brick veneer building, was erected during the pastorate of the Rev. J.E. Thompson in 1924. The parsonage has been maintained adequately for the minister through the years.

The church bell was installed in 1924, "so it could be rung hereafter." In the fall of 1936, while the Rev. E.W. Fox was minister, a pipe organ was presented to the church by Mrs. and Mrs. Charles Williams. This gift brought joy to the congregation and added much to the beauty and worshipfulness of the church service. Vestments were bought soon after and the choir deserves more than passing mention for the service it renders so faithfully.

During the ministry of the Rev. J. Garland Winkler, the people of Central

Methodist Church began discussing and planning a long-range building program. This interest developed into starting a building fund.

On Sept. 13, 1953, under the leadership of the Rev. Phillip L. Shore, Jr., a ground-breaking service was held for the erection of an educational building. This building, completed in the early summer of 1954, was furnished throughout and opened for use January 1955. A much smaller educational building, which probably dates from the late 1920's, was utilized in the construction of the new building which contains a number of classrooms, dining room, kitchen, offices and rest rooms. It fills a long-felt need of a place for greater educational activities for the young and old. A dedicatory service for the educational building was held May 17, 1959, by Bishop Nolan B. Harmon.

The Sunday School, having been an integral part of church life throughout the history of Central, was organized in divisions and graded levels in 1959.

The new program has been carried on under the supervision of the church officials and according to the standards and directions of the Conference Board of Christian Education.

The spirit of progress did not grow cold or become musty with mediocrity for the people of Central Methodist Church as the indebtedness on the educational building was eliminated. Even in the service of dedication a spark seemed to come forth anew from the long-felt dream of a new sanctuary.

Ministers McLarty and Garmon, with the church officials and members, gave forth continued hope and inspiration with a note of emphasis on the "Building Fund," and a climatic hour came when the love and devotion of a former member, Mrs. Lizzie Jackson Thorne, daughter of Mrs. Rossie A. Goforth (Mrs. I.B.), who with a heart of steadfast devotion even during her last illness, bequeathed a special gift to Central Methodist Church.

Encouraged anew by this benevolent devotion, the Christmas season of that year proved a focal point in crystallizing the people's determination for a new sanctuary. As a result the calendar year began with approximately \$35,000.

The Rev. Howard R. Jordan, sensing the dedicated determination of the congregation, recommended a planning

(See CENTRAL p. 9B)

Of Interest to Women

Cadette GS Troop 4 Visit Founder's Home

photos by sylvia holmes

The Juliet Gordon Low home in Savannah, Ga. is a tourist attraction.

It held special interest for a group of young ladies and their adult escorts from Kings Mountain last week.

They were members and leaders of Cadette Girl Scout Troop No. 4, sponsored by First Presbyterian Church.

The reason is the Savannah home holds special interest for this group is simple; Juliet Gordon Low was the founder of the American Girl Scout movement and her birthplace is a monument to that cause.

Before Cadette Troop 4 made the April 8-10 trip, however, they had a little homework to do. It took two years of fund raising projects before the troop had enough money to charter a bus. With the money in hand they still had some work to do.

The girls had to research the number of and names of rivers they would cross before reaching the homesite in Georgia and be prepared to submit their findings in writing. They also had learned something of the 1800s architecture in Kings Mountain and to help them they had Mrs. J.E. Herndon lecture to them. The Girl Scouts also had to scrounge up some authentic 1800s recipes and some swatches of patchwork quilts.

All of these items were donated to the caretakers of the Low home for display.

The girls also made small pictures using drapery rings for frames, cardboard for backing and dried flowers for the artwork. These items were donated to the home for concession sales.

At the home following the tour the girls were treated to some drop mints made in the kitchen by four of their own. Following the tour the girls held a ceremony in the garden in which they received "daisy pins." Daisy was Juliet Low's nickname and at her Savannah home is the only place Girl Scouts may receive the pins.

Financial assistance for the trip also came from the Kings Mountain Woman's Club, The Newcomers Club and the Alpha Delta Kappa.

In Savannah the group stayed at the YWCA.

Cadette GS Troop 4 leader is Mrs. J.D. Barrett. Assisting were Mrs. Raymond Holmes and Mrs. Dwain Lynch. Barbara Dixon, Beverly Lynch and Brenda Wood, former members of the troop, were also on the trip.

The troop members on the tour included Kelley Adams, Ruth Barnett, Tricia Blalock, Janice Bolin, Kathy Crawford, Robin Crawford, Lynn Drumm, Robin Green, Patty Hayes, Lindsay Holmes, LaVonda Hunter, Lynda Lynch, Sherry Maddox, Sarah Maner, Angela Mangum, Becky and Cindy Morrow.

Also Darlene McClain, Elizabeth McGill, Arlene Parker, Barbara Rhea, Charlotte Scism, Sherri Sellers, Kathy Sincox, Kim Whisnant and Lisa Yarboro.

