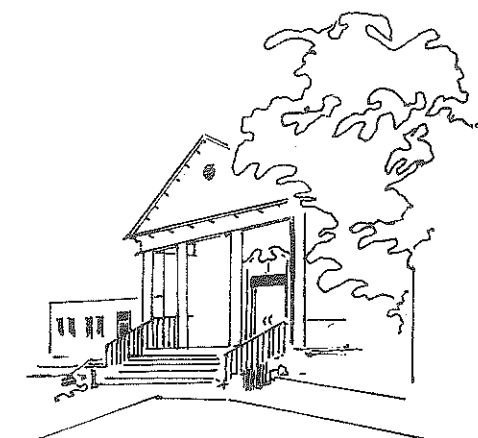
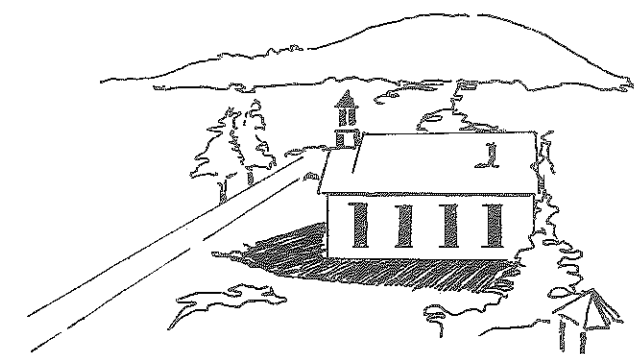


The Story of A Village Church



Sesquicentennial Celebration

First Baptist Church
Stone Mountain, Georgia
1839 - 1989

**The First Baptist Church
of
Stone Mountain, Georgia**

Pastor Dr. Lawrence Meadors
Minister of Music & Youth Rev. Ray Blanton
Minister of Education Rev. Steven Cheek

* * * * *

History Committee

Honorary Chairmen Mr. and Mrs. Tom Rawlins
Chairman Mrs. Kathryn Patton
Mrs. Grace Tuggle
Mrs. Pat Drozak
Miss Myrtice McCurdy
Mrs. Andrea Salehzadah

Drawings on Cover by Blake Griffin

THE STORY OF A VILLAGE CHURCH is a woven memory of the First Baptist Church and The Village of Stone Mountain, Georgia.

It is not a complete or literal history of the church but a compilation of stories from old church conference records and from personal memories.

It is intended to present a loving remembrance of 150 years—as it might have been.

Kathryn Patton

September 24, 1989

THE STORY OF A VILLAGE CHURCH

“**I**n the beginning . . .”

The early settlers came to live at the great stone mountain, a natural wonder, truly God's handwork in all its glory, where every sunrise and every sunset is a quiet sermon.

The Indians called it “Crystal Mountain,” and where their trails crossed, the settlers built a small pioneer village. “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is . . .”

The village was named “New Gibraltar,” and the settlers met together under a brush arbor or in a log cabin home, then built their churches, often dirt-floored and crude, to worship with their children and neighbors from the small farms, fighting off the Creek Indians to get to their meeting places. “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them . . .”

In 1839, according to tradition and a granite cornerstone, a Baptist church was founded. The members believed in God's infinite mercy, His willingness to forgive sin, firm in the conviction that good works are the fruits of faith.

Living was hard. A small plot of land, a few chickens, a milk cow, and a good mule were the American dream for the English, Scottish, and Irish who immigrated down through Virginia and the Carolinas.

They were plain people, close knit families, and they taught their children to share the work, the church life, disciplined and secure, molded to the love of virtue and good order.

The village, with its churches built on bedrock, is older than Atlanta, its people strong and sturdy and unafraid of work.

“I never saw my mother rest,” a descendant was to write. “She would churn the milk to make the butter, singing an old hymn, making work a happy thing to see.”

They worked and they prayed and they buried their babies. In a small

church cemetery on a tiny grave covered with white sand, the words were written, "Happy birthday, Sarah. Your second." And signed, "Mother." She was remembering—a mother was remembering.

Wash pots and scrub boards—and hardship. Their history grew out of fragments of stories, traditions, the headstones in old church cemeteries—saving the records of time, never complete, but telling a story.

On September 2, 1847, in divine service, Rock Mountain Church was reconstituted with 21 brothers and sisters, who came forward with the right hand of fellowship, united to become a church in the gospel. Brother David Cook was the choice for pastor.

A right-of-way was given for a railroad to the town, and the name of the small village was changed from "New Gibraltar" to "Stone Mountain Town."

In summer, people came to "Stony Mountain" to visit and drink from the seven springs at the base of the mountain. Stony Mountain was considered an "uncommonly healthy place to live," and it was said, "If a man wants to die, he must go elsewhere to find something to die of."

In February, 1848, a building committee was appointed at Rock Mountain Church to purchase a suitable lot for their reconstituted church building. The site is thought to be in the vicinity of Second Street. This building was used until 1873 when it was sold and a stucco building constructed on Mimosa Street where the church still stands.

The rules of conduct for church members were strict and strictly enforced. A brother was chastised for absence from church conference, and the membership voted "to labor with the brother until the next conference."

Much of the early church records was concerned with the dismissal of members engaged in sinful behavior, black and white members alike. They labored with Brother Ezekiel for his "sin of dancing, and he promised to try hard not to."

The women of the church, ever searching for good works to do, heard of a young girl named Mary, crippled and bound to a wheelchair, way off in Boston, Massachusetts in the early 1800's, who wanted to be a missionary, but she had never seen one.

The girl named Mary gathered a group of women around her and organized a Female Society for Missionary Purposes, and it grew to be the Woman's Missionary Union among Southern Baptists, proving that even a mustard seed can become a tree.

In 1850, the good women of the Rock Mountain Church took up the matter of Foreign Missions and collected money for the unsaved in foreign lands.

In March, 1851, the conference voted to purchase a bell for their church building and buy candles for the night services. They collected a total of 75¢ to buy the candles.

By October, a suitable bell had been found and, in 1852, the conference granted the village of Stone Mountain the liberty to ring the church bell when necessary.

A trustworthy brother was elected to sweep the church and light the candles for the night meetings. His duties included ringing the church bell to summon the faithful members to worship.

A brother came forward and asked forgiveness for unchristian behavior and the church forgave him. The conference noted that the balance must be paid on the building of the meeting house. The balance due was \$67.19 and \$14.00 was still owed on the church bell.

There were unpleasant feelings between two brothers to be investigated, and two blacks were baptized with a total membership, in 1852, of 50.

In November, 1852, a home missionary was appointed to preach within the bounds of the association to distribute the gospel.

A housekeeper was secured for the church in March, 1855. Brother Nash was the lowest bidder, and he was hired at a salary of \$5.00 per year. The church voted to put a monument on Brother Bartlett's grave and collected \$2.50 for this good work.

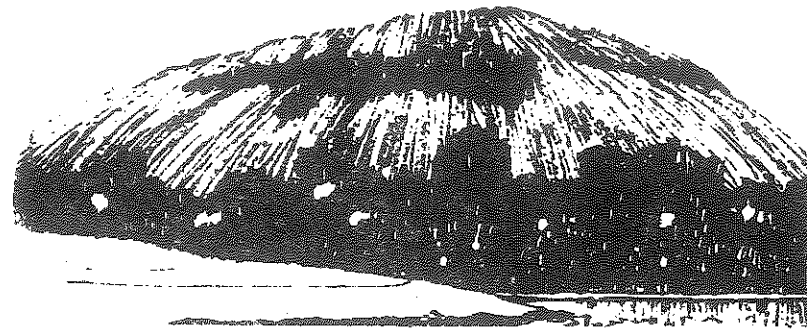
A sinful brother confessed before the church. He was sorry and would try to break his bad habits. He was later dismissed for using profane language.

In August of 1861, the conference made a report of church membership:

Baptized	.00
Rec'd by letter	.00
Restored	.1
Dismissed	.13
Dead	.1
Whites	.69
Blacks	.4

And \$2.00 in collection.

By this time, there were rumors of a war between the states. Slavery was said to be the issue, but few citizens in DeKalb County owned slaves or understood a war.



The Civil War, a war of senseless destruction, broke the back of a nation. As with most wars, those who suffered most had nothing to do with the making.

The church records were suspended during this time of terrible suffering—a time of desperation, of fear, of “make-do” and “wait and pray.”

The women, the children, and the old people were left at home to scratch an existence from the small farms, hostages to a cruel fate.

When the war came, most of the young men of Stone Mountain put on their homemade uniforms of gray and went off to battle, untrained but willing.

Some of them served with Wheeler’s Cavalry Corps, taking part in the skirmishes in 1864 to turn back the Union forces marching to cut the Georgia Railroad between Stone Mountain and Lithonia.

The homes of some church members and the old inns were used as relief stations for the sick and wounded as the war rolled over the village.

“The muffled drums beat a mournful sound,
As the brave men died on bloody ground.”

Confederate soldiers, 150 of them, are buried at the Stone Mountain Cemetery, many lying in a common grave.

Stories of this terrible war have come down in old letters and diaries—
“I was 16 years old when the war began, and the first call took my father. He went north to Virginia and was soon dead of smallpox. He died among strangers.

“The next call for recruits took my eldest brother, and he was shot dead by Sherman’s marauders close to Macon. It was more than my mother could bear and, when it was over, she was broken down by her sorrows.

“We almost starved. My little brothers and I planted some corn and sweet potatoes. We were at work in the sweet potatoes the day Atlanta fell to the Yankees, and we could hear the sound of the cannons.

“When Sherman burned Atlanta, we could see the smoke, and my mother prayed all day he wouldn’t come and burn us out. Where would we go? What would we do?”

The church conference records for that time read—“War years, deepest poverty, church suffered.”

In 1866, a committee was appointed to find a location for a new church building. In 1867, the colored people were allowed to hold meetings on the 4th Sabbath evenings. The church agreed for every member to “lay upon the table at least 10¢ per month to sustain the pastor and other expenses.”

Reverend Jacob M. Stillwell, who became pastor in 1868, bought one of the old village inns for his family residence. It was the only place available in town big enough to house his nine children.

A treasurer’s report in 1868 showed a balance of 5¢. A brother was released from his job as housekeeper, and he asked the church to pardon him for being guilty of dancing. With God’s help he would never do it again. Another brother confessed to fighting.

The Methodist denomination granted all the privileges of their house for public worship, and the church thought about beginning a Sunday School in June, 1868.

The “condition of the church around us” was: Weekly prayer meeting; every member attending every Sunday; faithful in giving; assign a brother as a missionary to duty; divine services to be held more than once a month.

“We will attend a foot washing at next meeting and once each following year.” In 1870, “a brother tried to raise \$10.00 to pay an old brother for housekeeping services—only raised \$7.60.”

In 1871, the pastor was charged with a falsehood by a brother and the case rescinded. The church moved to help establish a Baptist Orphans Home in Georgia and voted to let the public school use the church house for \$10.00 a month.

The church conference met in 1873 to organize a Sunday School. The building committee reported they had sold the old meetinghouse and lot for \$400.00, and a trial was held for offending members and ministers. In 1875, a total of \$9.00 was collected for hymn books.

The Finance Committee, in 1876, recommended a treasurer and an associate be appointed. Their duty would be to approve each member and ex-

tend to them the opportunity to contribute something, regardless of how poor they were. Remember the widow's mite and the blessings that follow.

There was an outbreak of measles in 1878 with small attendance in Sunday School, and Zion Church was invited to visit, as they loved the brethren.

During Reconstruction after the Civil War, the granite quarries began to flourish around Stone Mountain. The first work began in 1879. And to toil on the monstrous chunks of granite, workmen came to Stone Mountain from England, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Wales, and Italy.

They were hardy pioneers of their time and trade. A large number remained, married local girls, and brought their relatives from foreign lands and, today, their descendants are leading citizens.

But there were some rough edges back then, and the churches struggled with the demons of drunkenness, street brawling, and public hangings. A retired stonecutter was to write—"Local people like to think all the real bad characters were hanged publicly and thus excluded from their ancestry."

The churches fought hard. In 1879, some members were called before the church for card playing, fighting, dancing, drunkenness, joining another group, profanity, chicken shooting, disorderly walking, and violating the Sabbath. Being a good Christian wasn't easy, but they tried hard not to be sinners with the Lord's help.

According to the records, the first WMU was organized on October 27, 1879, and Mrs. L. A. Smith was elected president.

In conference in 1879, a motion was made to take up a collection to buy 20 Bibles for the Sunday School. Enough money was raised to buy 12 Bibles.

In 1884, the Conference adopted the Baptist Hymnal and, in 1885, the WMU presented the church with a handsome, helpful Bible as the first fruits of their labors in the society.

In 1887, the WMU proposed to take charge of the housekeeping for the church and asked for a contribution of 10¢ a month from the male members.

By the year 1888, there were 229 members of the church, and they collected \$2.95 to buy coal. In 1891, a committee was appointed to look after the absentees and disorderly members.

The church appointed a missions committee in 1894 with a Constitution and By-Laws to serve the Orphans Home, the Sick and Needy, Frontier work, Foreign, Home, and State missions. And it was voted to organize the Sunbeam Society for Children and the Baptist Young People's Union.

The WMU gave its annual report in 1896, and they had not been idle in the Lord's vineyard. In June, scarlet fever broke out and the Sunday School

was suspended for two Sabbaths. Arrangements were made to meet in the Presbyterian Church while repairs were made on the house of worship.

In 1899, the pastor attended the Southern Baptist Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, and the ladies of the WMU were given the privilege of repairing the inside of the church.

A member proposed, in 1902, to deed a house and lot in town to the church, income from which was to be devoted to the advancement of Christ.

In 1903, a resolution was offered: "Whereas: Unchristian conduct has become so common that it brings reproach upon the church and the cause of our Blessed Savior, and we believe our church discipline should be changed.

"Those guilty of such conduct may come before the church, and the church forgives. If they commit the same offense again, the church should withdraw fellowship, and promise to remember them in prayer to Almighty God, ever holding the church ready and anxious to receive them when they prove they are able to resist temptation and live a Christian life in this present world, not bringing reproach on the church and themselves."

Oh, the trials and temptations! It wasn't easy to be a Christian. Consider the young minister, mighty in the pulpit, who drank up all the communion wine.

These early church conference records present a harsh picture of judgment and condemnation, but it was not all stern rebuke and severe punishment. There were simple pleasures and joys of a simple time.

No history of Stone Mountain, its churches and its life, would be complete without a recounting of the Second Saturday in May. It isn't known when it originated, but it was a day set aside for fun, fellowship, thanksgiving, and good food.

People came from miles around in surreys, buggies, and even two-horse wagons. There was a large, octagon shaped pavilion where the "fiddlers" played and the people enjoyed the lively music.

A gentle passing of the days and the years. "When I was 10 years old, we lived in my grandfather's house in Stone Mountain. My sisters and I would walk to Main Street, going past the homes of our neighbors. There would be soft light in the windows from the oil lamps.

"I remember Miss Lizzie Hardeman who lived in a small house close to the sidewalk. We would pass by and Miss Lizzie and her old, crippled aunt would be sitting by the window in the dim light, and we could see that Miss Lizzie was reading her Bible.

"Then, we would walk over the hill, past the other homes. We were never afraid on these walks, because ours was a peaceful little town, we knew every-

body, and we knew no harm would come to us.”

Each August, in laying-by time, church members went to campgrounds for some “old-time religion.” Year round, the women cooked chicken suppers to raise money for the church.

Stone Mountain was always proud of its schools and, as early as 1838, the Stone Mountain Academy was incorporated.

Discipline was strict in those early days. One young man wrote—“Our teacher was thoroughly orthodox. He taught by the Good Book, putting heaven at one end of the line and hell at the other. In our boyhood, we had it warm at both ends of the line. If we caught it at school, we had another dose waiting when we reached home.”

A girl told her story—“I remember going to school in an old stone building across Ridge Avenue, and there was no water. We would cross the street and drink from the well in the churchyard.

“We had sawdust on the basement floor of the church, and the children would lose their offering pennies in the sawdust.”

In 1905, the pastor delivered 43 song books contributed by individual members of the church and marked, “Property of Stone Mountain Baptist Church.”

In 1908, the pastor preached a most interesting, encouraging, and helpful sermon to a goodly number of Confederate veterans and many others. Miss Annie Britt, who was to spend her life in education, was received for membership on October 24, 1908.

A member wrote of her early years in the church. “I have many memories of the faithful who loved young people and made a difference in my life. I remember B.Y.P.U. and how our leader never missed a meeting and would have a party for all of us at her home once a month. I can still taste the delicious hot chocolate she served. Bless her!”

In 1911, one of the brothers donated oil for the church lamps, and the pastor was asked to resign— problems about violin music. On October 26th, the church declared it was not opposed to violin music in church services.

The pastor, in 1912, continued to be dissatisfied with the use of the violin and, to keep peace and harmony in the brotherhood, the violin was discontinued.

By 1917, the country was involved in a war across the seas, fighting the “Kaiser” and the terrible “Hun” who starved babies in Armenia. Stone Mountain’s young men went as they were called and fought in France in the dreadful trenches. “My uncle left as an enlisted man and came back a deco-

rated Captain. He walked like a military man the rest of his life.”

Church members suffered through the terrible influenza epidemic of 1918. “My mother and father both died, leaving eight children, and the neighbors cared for us.”

After the war, the church services continued, and the young boys of the membership would go on Sunday morning and build fires in two potbellied stoves in the sanctuary during the cold winter months, and mothers would bring quilts for their small children to sleep on the floors.

A man told a story from his childhood. “My grandmama raised me mostly, and she’d take me to her quilting bees at the church and put me on the floor under the quilt. The old ladies would keep me hemmed in. I must be the only kid in the world that learned to walk under a quilt.”

He went on to become a preacher. “The best way to get Christians,” he’d say, “is to grow them.”

The church stood strong even through the tragic years of the Great Depression of the 1930’s. More hardship and suffering, but surviving, persevering. The Baptists, the Methodists, and the Presbyterians met together every 5th Sabbath for fellowship and community worship.

On an Easter Sunday in 1934, the church building burned. “We were putting flowers at the cemetery, and we saw the smoke. Our church was burning.”

The pastorium was destroyed by fire on November 25, 1936. Again, on a cold night around Christmastime of 1937, the burning church lit up the winter sky. More sacrifice, more heartache—but the church was rebuilt on the same site.

By 1942, America was, once again, involved in another war, fighting the Germans and Japanese in far-off places. The defense program required a rationing of supplies and the church saw its men mustered for military service. DeKalb County had its share of Gold Star Mothers—mothers whose boys didn’t come home.

In 1948, the conference records stated, “No pastorium, and no preacher.” The next year, Mrs. Catherine Haynie was elected librarian.

The elementary school burned in 1953, and the conference voted to permit the school to use the church building. In 1957, the conference allowed the Woman’s Club of Stone Mountain to use the church for its meeting place.

The church building burned for the third time on January 11, 1964, and the church members assembled on the streets and watched the flames and shed tears. Services were held in the school gymnasium across the street for the

months required to repair the building.

Over the years, additional properties were bought and added to church use, as detailed in the church conference records. In 1979, the property known as the Stone Mountain Manor was purchased as a possible site for a new and larger church in the future.

It has endured, stood firm, the First Baptist Church, with good men and women, their names all known to God. "When a man dies, neither silver nor gold accompany him—only righteousness and good deeds."

Men who worked in a prison ministry, teaching the prisoners to read and write. Women with their quilting bees in the basement, collecting clothes for the orphans, visiting the Old Folks' Home, serving, serving, ever faithful.

The church sent workers to help build small churches and missions, sending missionaries to where the fields were white unto the harvest.

When a weary, hungry traveler passed through town, he was told, "Go see Mr. W. L. at his barbershop on Main Street." And Mr. W. L. would buy him a decent meal and find him a clean bed for the night. "They need help," he'd say—and he would find it. Today, Mr. W. L. is at home with the angels he served so well.

Young and old in the church went to the Easter Sunrise Services at the mountain, watching the sun come up and knowing they were part of the family of God.

The kindest faces in the world are inside a small church on a Sabbath morning. There was a deacon, a man with graying hair and gnarled hands, twisted by years of hard work, taking up collection, smiling, at peace with himself and his honest life, blessed by serving.

Change will come; it always does . . .

But don't weep for me.

I am forever.

I live because I was given life.

I've known sorrow; I've known joy.

Changes will come,

But don't weep for me.

Look up, look forward—I am there.

Your church.

* * * * *

PASTORS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
STONE MOUNTAIN, GEORGIA
(Known Earlier as Rock Mountain Baptist Church)
Years of Service Shown

-1847 G. R. ALMOND	1902-1905 J. G. WALKER
1848-1850 DAVID COOK	1906-1907 W. J. GRANDLE
1851-1852 LEWIS TOWERS	1908-1910 J. M. BRITTAIN
1853-1855 FEILDING MADDOX	1910-1911 W. J. D. UPSHAW
1855-1857 SAMUEL B. CHURCHILL	1911-1911 TOOLE (2 Mo.)
1857-1865 FEILDING MADDOX	1911-1915 R. L. ROBINSON
1866-1867 H. F. BUCHANNON	1916-1918 B. J. W. GRAHAM
1867-1872 W. H. STRICKLAND	1919-1923 J. H. COWART
1873-1877 JAMES M. STILLWELL	1923-1925 H. D. GOBER
1877-1880 VERGIL NORCROSS	1925-1927 MARVIN PHARR
1880-1883 EDGAR JEWELL	1927-1933 A. T. PERSONS
1883-1888 J. M. BRITTAIN	1933-1935 WILLIAM C. OAKES
1888-1888 H. C. HOONADY	1935-1936 PAUL M. SAYER
1888-1889 H. C. CARLTON	1936-1939 B. J. W. GRAHAM
1889-1894 ELIJAH WOOD	1939-1948 D. T. BUICE
1894-1895 G. W. GARNER	1948-1962 W. B. HOLLINGSWORTH
1895-1896 J. M. BRITTAIN	1962-1970 LEONARD PEDIGO
1896-1898 M. L. CARSWELL	1970-1976 GEORGE WHITE
1898-1901 A. J. BECK	1978- LARRY MEADORS

INTERIM PASTORS ARE NOT LISTED

SOME OF THOSE WHO SERVED ARE:

Dr. T. W. Tippett

Dr. R. T. Russell

Dr. Clifton Fite

Dr. James Westberry

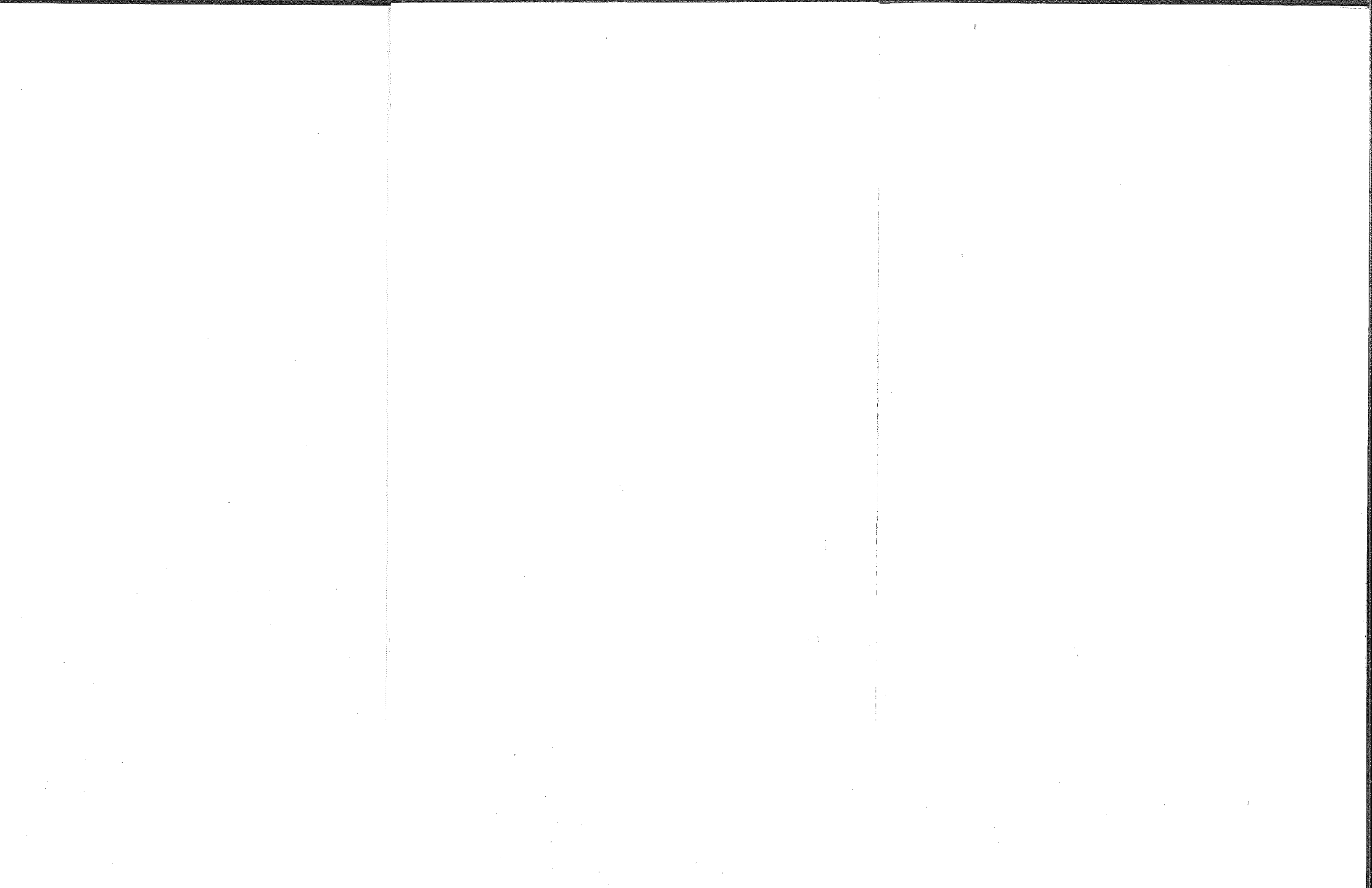
Kathryn Patton was born in Barrow County, Georgia-- a small town with a Main Street and maple trees, and she has never been far from God's chosen land, as she calls it.

"I wanted to write from my first dim memories," she says. She studied journalism and, in 1973, began a regular column for a small syndication of weekly newspapers, writing with both a humorous and a serious look at what she sees.

In 1986, she was awarded First Place in the Georgia Press Association Better Newspaper Contest for a serious column.

She is married with one son and lives in Stone Mountain, Georgia-- and continues to write a weekly column.

October, 1989



Worship 2/7/93 p. 18
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

STONE MOUNTAIN

Ridge Avenue at Mimosa

Welcomes You To
It's Sunday Services

Christian Educational Programs 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship 11 a.m.
Evening Worship 7 p.m.

- Inspirational Singing
- Helpful Messages

Rev. George J. White, Pastor
469-6121

The Christian Index
May 19, 1953

People and Places

Chamblee First church will host a commissioning service for Home Mission Board chaplains during its morning worship, May 22.

index

Fred Cox was elected pastor-emeritus at Northwoods church in Chamblee.

index

The Christian Index
May 19, 1953

The Christian Index

Mountain Park First church at Stone Mountain will dedicate its new buildings May 22 in services led by pastor Robert Woodall.

May 19, 1953

index

File! STONE MOUNTAIN
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

The Christian Index

May 19, 1953

Smoke Rise church in Stone Mountain will present Felix Mendelssohn's *Ellijah* May 22 at



7 p.m. and May 23 at 7:30 p.m. David Ford will sing the title role in the oratorio conducted by minister of music Steve Dean with direction by

The Christian Index

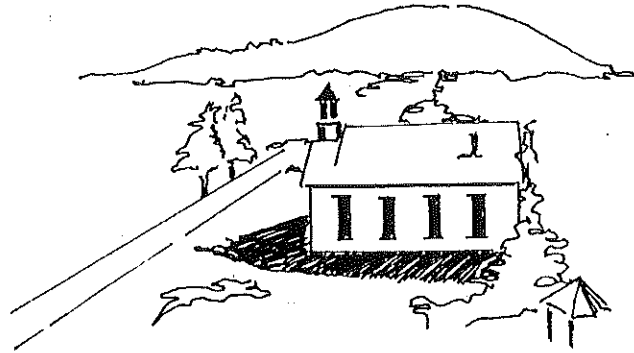
Mike Barbee will be summer youth worker at Stone Mountain First church. He is student at Southern seminary.

May 19, 1953

index

11 1989-38

The Story of A Village Church



Barrow
h a Main
never
she

it

Sesquicentennial Celebration

First Baptist Church
Stone Mountain, Georgia
1839 — 1989

The Christian Index

January 1, 1987

Mary Brookshire gave a television and video cassette recorder to Stone Mountain First church, in memory of her husband, Lawrence Brookshire.

1/1/87

subject files: Churches,

Baptist, Stone

Mountain

First Baptist Of Stone Mountain Celebrates Its Sesquicentennial

First Baptist Church of Stone Mountain will celebrate its 150th anniversary on Sept. 24.

Dr. James N. Griffith, executive secretary-treasurer of the Georgia Baptist Convention, will be the keynote speaker for the morning service at 10 a.m. Following the morning service, "dinner on the ground" will be held on the church property one block from the church. At 2 p.m., the Sanctuary Choir will present a concert.

The History Committee is interested in obtaining information and pictures. Anyone with information may contact the church office at 469-6121.

8/30/89

Dale News/Sun

People and Places

File:
STONE
MOUNTAIN
FIRST
BAPTIST
CHURCH

Thomas J. Holmes is interim pastor of Scott Boulevard church in Decatur. He recently completed an interim ministry at McCaysville First church.

Dunwoody church is featured in March-April issue of *Missions USA* for its missions' ministries.

James P. Wesberry is interim pastor at Northwoods church in Chamblee.

Rehoboth church in Tucker has purchased a computer system valued at \$45,000.

Stone Mountain First church is sponsoring a mission trip to First Southern Baptist Church of South Williamsport, Penn., in June.

Celestine Sibley will be Honors Day speaker at Tift College April 20. She is a well-known author/reporter/columnist for *The Atlanta Constitution*.

indexed

BREWTON-PARKER NAMES PRESIDENT

Y. Lynn Holmes was elected president of Brewton-Parker College last Saturday during a called meeting of the school's board of trustees. Board chairman Jack LeRoy announced election of the West Georgia College professor who is from Vidalia and Dublin. Dr. Holmes succeeds W. Starr Miller who is returning to teaching at the school (*Index*, Jan. 20). More information and pictures in next week's *Index*.

April 14, 1983

THE CHRISTIAN INDEX

The Georgia Baptist Convention News Magazine

THE STORY OF A VILLAGE CHURCH

“**I**n the beginning . . .”

The early settlers came to live at the great stone mountain, a natural wonder, truly God's handwork in all its glory, where every sunrise and every sunset is a quiet sermon.

The Indians called it “Crystal Mountain,” and where their trails crossed, the settlers built a small pioneer village. “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is . . .”

The village was named “New Gibraltar,” and the settlers met together under a brush arbor or in a log cabin home, then built their churches, often dirt-floored and crude, to worship with their children and neighbors from the small farms, fighting off the Creek Indians to get to their meeting places. “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them . . .”

In 1839, according to tradition and a granite cornerstone, a Baptist church was founded. The members believed in God's infinite mercy, His willingness to forgive sin, firm in the conviction that good works are the fruits of faith.

Living was hard. A small plot of land, a few chickens, a milk cow, and a good mule were the American dream for the English, Scottish, and Irish who immigrated down through Virginia and the Carolinas.

They were plain people, close knit families, and they taught their children to share the work, the church life, disciplined and secure, molded to the love of virtue and good order.

The village, with its churches built on bedrock, is older than Atlanta, its people strong and sturdy and unafraid of work.

“I never saw my mother rest,” a descendant was to write. “She would churn the milk to make the butter, singing an old hymn, making work a happy thing to see.”

They worked and they prayed and they buried their babies. In a small

church cemetery on a tiny grave covered with white sand, the words were written, "Happy birthday, Sarah. Your second." And signed, "Mother." She was remembering—a mother was remembering.

Wash pots and scrub boards—and hardship. Their history grew out of fragments of stories, traditions, the headstones in old church cemeteries—saving the records of time, never complete, but telling a story.

On September 2, 1847, in divine service, Rock Mountain Church was reconstituted with 21 brothers and sisters, who came forward with the right hand of fellowship, united to become a church in the gospel. Brother David Cook was the choice for pastor.

A right-of-way was given for a railroad to the town, and the name of the small village was changed from "New Gibraltar" to "Stone Mountain Town."

In summer, people came to "Stony Mountain" to visit and drink from the seven springs at the base of the mountain. Stony Mountain was considered an "uncommonly healthy place to live," and it was said, "If a man wants to die, he must go elsewhere to find something to die of."

In February, 1848, a building committee was appointed at Rock Mountain Church to purchase a suitable lot for their reconstituted church building. The site is thought to be in the vicinity of Second Street. This building was used until 1873 when it was sold and a stucco building constructed on Mimosa Street where the church still stands.

The rules of conduct for church members were strict and strictly enforced. A brother was chastised for absence from church conference, and the membership voted "to labor with the brother until the next conference."

Much of the early church records was concerned with the dismissal of members engaged in sinful behavior, black and white members alike. They labored with Brother Ezekiel for his "sin of dancing, and he promised to try hard not to."

The women of the church, ever searching for good works to do, heard of a young girl named Mary, crippled and bound to a wheelchair, way off in Boston, Massachusetts in the early 1800's, who wanted to be a missionary, but she had never seen one.

The girl named Mary gathered a group of women around her and organized a Female Society for Missionary Purposes, and it grew to be the Woman's Missionary Union among Southern Baptists, proving that even a mustard seed can become a tree.

In 1850, the good women of the Rock Mountain Church took up the matter of Foreign Missions and collected money for the unsaved in foreign lands.

In March, 1851, the conference voted to purchase a bell for their church building and buy candles for the night services. They collected a total of 75¢ to buy the candles.

By October, a suitable bell had been found and, in 1852, the conference granted the village of Stone Mountain the liberty to ring the church bell when necessary.

A trustworthy brother was elected to sweep the church and light the candles for the night meetings. His duties included ringing the church bell to summon the faithful members to worship.

A brother came forward and asked forgiveness for unchristian behavior and the church forgave him. The conference noted that the balance must be paid on the building of the meeting house. The balance due was \$67.19 and \$14.00 was still owed on the church bell.

There were unpleasant feelings between two brothers to be investigated, and two blacks were baptized with a total membership, in 1852, of 50.

In November, 1852, a home missionary was appointed to preach within the bounds of the association to distribute the gospel.

A housekeeper was secured for the church in March, 1855. Brother Nash was the lowest bidder, and he was hired at a salary of \$5.00 per year. The church voted to put a monument on Brother Bartlett's grave and collected \$2.50 for this good work.

A sinful brother confessed before the church. He was sorry and would try to break his bad habits. He was later dismissed for using profane language.

In August of 1861, the conference made a report of church membership:

Baptized	00
Rec'd by letter	00
Restored	1
Dismissed	13
Dead	1
Whites	69
Blacks	4

And \$2.00 in collection.

By this time, there were rumors of a war between the states. Slavery was said to be the issue, but few citizens in DeKalb County owned slaves or understood a war.



The Civil War, a war of senseless destruction, broke the back of a nation. As with most wars, those who suffered most had nothing to do with the making.

The church records were suspended during this time of terrible suffering—a time of desperation, of fear, of “make-do” and “wait and pray.”

The women, the children, and the old people were left at home to scratch an existence from the small farms, hostages to a cruel fate.

When the war came, most of the young men of Stone Mountain put on their homemade uniforms of gray and went off to battle, untrained but willing.

Some of them served with Wheeler’s Cavalry Corps, taking part in the skirmishes in 1864 to turn back the Union forces marching to cut the Georgia Railroad between Stone Mountain and Lithonia.

The homes of some church members and the old inns were used as relief stations for the sick and wounded as the war rolled over the village.

“The muffled drums beat a mournful sound,

As the brave men died on bloody ground.”

Confederate soldiers, 150 of them, are buried at the Stone Mountain Cemetery, many lying in a common grave.

Stories of this terrible war have come down in old letters and diaries—“I was 16 years old when the war began, and the first call took my father. He went north to Virginia and was soon dead of smallpox. He died among strangers.

“The next call for recruits took my eldest brother, and he was shot dead by Sherman’s marauders close to Macon. It was more than my mother could bear and, when it was over, she was broken down by her sorrows.

“We almost starved. My little brothers and I planted some corn and sweet potatoes. We were at work in the sweet potatoes the day Atlanta fell to the Yankees, and we could hear the sound of the cannons.

“When Sherman burned Atlanta, we could see the smoke, and my mother prayed all day he wouldn’t come and burn us out. Where would we go? What would we do?”

The church conference records for that time read—“War years, deepest poverty, church suffered.”

In 1866, a committee was appointed to find a location for a new church building. In 1867, the colored people were allowed to hold meetings on the 4th Sabbath evenings. The church agreed for every member to “lay upon the table at least 10¢ per month to sustain the pastor and other expenses.”

Reverend Jacob M. Stillwell, who became pastor in 1868, bought one of the old village inns for his family residence. It was the only place available in town big enough to house his nine children.

A treasurer’s report in 1868 showed a balance of 5¢. A brother was released from his job as housekeeper, and he asked the church to pardon him for being guilty of dancing. With God’s help he would never do it again. Another brother confessed to fighting.

The Methodist denomination granted all the privileges of their house for public worship, and the church thought about beginning a Sunday School in June, 1868.

The “condition of the church around us” was: Weekly prayer meeting; every member attending every Sunday; faithful in giving; assign a brother as a missionary to duty; divine services to be held more than once a month.

“We will attend a foot washing at next meeting and once each following year.” In 1870, “a brother tried to raise \$10.00 to pay an old brother for housekeeping services—only raised \$7.60.”

In 1871, the pastor was charged with a falsehood by a brother and the case rescinded. The church moved to help establish a Baptist Orphans Home in Georgia and voted to let the public school use the church house for \$10.00 a month.

The church conference met in 1873 to organize a Sunday School. The building committee reported they had sold the old meetinghouse and lot for \$400.00, and a trial was held for offending members and ministers. In 1875, a total of \$9.00 was collected for hymn books.

The Finance Committee, in 1876, recommended a treasurer and an associate be appointed. Their duty would be to approve each member and ex-

tend to them the opportunity to contribute something, regardless of how poor they were. Remember the widow's mite and the blessings that follow.

There was an outbreak of measles in 1878 with small attendance in Sunday School, and Zion Church was invited to visit, as they loved the brethren.

During Reconstruction after the Civil War, the granite quarries began to flourish around Stone Mountain. The first work began in 1879. And to toil on the monstrous chunks of granite, workmen came to Stone Mountain from England, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Wales, and Italy.

They were hardy pioneers of their time and trade. A large number remained, married local girls, and brought their relatives from foreign lands and, today, their descendants are leading citizens.

But there were some rough edges back then, and the churches struggled with the demons of drunkenness, street brawling, and public hangings. A retired stonecutter was to write—"Local people like to think all the real bad characters were hanged publicly and thus excluded from their ancestry."

The churches fought hard. In 1879, some members were called before the church for card playing, fighting, dancing, drunkenness, joining another group, profanity, chicken shooting, disorderly walking, and violating the Sabbath. Being a good Christian wasn't easy, but they tried hard not to be sinners with the Lord's help.

According to the records, the first WMU was organized on October 27, 1879, and Mrs. L. A. Smith was elected president.

In conference in 1879, a motion was made to take up a collection to buy 20 Bibles for the Sunday School. Enough money was raised to buy 12 Bibles.

In 1884, the Conference adopted the Baptist Hymnal and, in 1885, the WMU presented the church with a handsome, helpful Bible as the first fruits of their labors in the society.

In 1887, the WMU proposed to take charge of the housekeeping for the church and asked for a contribution of 10¢ a month from the male members.

By the year 1888, there were 229 members of the church, and they collected \$2.95 to buy coal. In 1891, a committee was appointed to look after the absentees and disorderly members.

The church appointed a missions committee in 1894 with a Constitution and By-Laws to serve the Orphans Home, the Sick and Needy, Frontier work, Foreign, Home, and State missions. And it was voted to organize the Sunbeam Society for Children and the Baptist Young People's Union.

The WMU gave its annual report in 1896, and they had not been idle in the Lord's vineyard. In June, scarlet fever broke out and the Sunday School

was suspended for two Sabbaths. Arrangements were made to meet in the Presbyterian Church while repairs were made on the house of worship.

In 1899, the pastor attended the Southern Baptist Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, and the ladies of the WMU were given the privilege of repairing the inside of the church.

A member proposed, in 1902, to deed a house and lot in town to the church, income from which was to be devoted to the advancement of Christ.

In 1903, a resolution was offered: "Whereas: Unchristian conduct has become so common that it brings reproach upon the church and the cause of our Blessed Savior, and we believe our church discipline should be changed.

"Those guilty of such conduct may come before the church, and the church forgives. If they commit the same offense again, the church should withdraw fellowship, and promise to remember them in prayer to Almighty God, ever holding the church ready and anxious to receive them when they prove they are able to resist temptation and live a Christian life in this present world, not bringing reproach on the church and themselves."

Oh, the trials and temptations! It wasn't easy to be a Christian. Consider the young minister, mighty in the pulpit, who drank up all the communion wine.

These early church conference records present a harsh picture of judgment and condemnation, but it was not all stern rebuke and severe punishment. There were simple pleasures and joys of a simple time.

No history of Stone Mountain, its churches and its life, would be complete without a recounting of the Second Saturday in May. It isn't known when it originated, but it was a day set aside for fun, fellowship, thanksgiving, and good food.

People came from miles around in surreys, buggies, and even two-horse wagons. There was a large, octagon shaped pavilion where the "fiddlers" played and the people enjoyed the lively music.

A gentle passing of the days and the years. "When I was 10 years old, we lived in my grandfather's house in Stone Mountain. My sisters and I would walk to Main Street, going past the homes of our neighbors. There would be soft light in the windows from the oil lamps.

"I remember Miss Lizzie Hardeman who lived in a small house close to the sidewalk. We would pass by and Miss Lizzie and her old, crippled aunt would be sitting by the window in the dim light, and we could see that Miss Lizzie was reading her Bible.

"Then, we would walk over the hill, past the other homes. We were never afraid on these walks, because ours was a peaceful little town, we knew every-

body, and we knew no harm would come to us.”

Each August, in laying-by time, church members went to campgrounds for some “old-time religion.” Year round, the women cooked chicken suppers to raise money for the church.

Stone Mountain was always proud of its schools and, as early as 1838, the Stone Mountain Academy was incorporated.

Discipline was strict in those early days. One young man wrote—“Our teacher was thoroughly orthodox. He taught by the Good Book, putting heaven at one end of the line and hell at the other. In our boyhood, we had it warm at both ends of the line. If we caught it at school, we had another dose waiting when we reached home.”

A girl told her story— “I remember going to school in an old stone building across Ridge Avenue, and there was no water. We would cross the street and drink from the well in the churchyard.

“We had sawdust on the basement floor of the church, and the children would lose their offering pennies in the sawdust.”

In 1905, the pastor delivered 43 song books contributed by individual members of the church and marked, “Property of Stone Mountain Baptist Church.”

In 1908, the pastor preached a most interesting, encouraging, and helpful sermon to a goodly number of Confederate veterans and many others. Miss Annie Britt, who was to spend her life in education, was received for membership on October 24, 1908.

A member wrote of her early years in the church. “I have many memories of the faithful who loved young people and made a difference in my life. I remember B.Y.P.U. and how our leader never missed a meeting and would have a party for all of us at her home once a month. I can still taste the delicious hot chocolate she served. Bless her!”

In 1911, one of the brothers donated oil for the church lamps, and the pastor was asked to resign— problems about violin music. On October 26th, the church declared it was not opposed to violin music in church services.

The pastor, in 1912, continued to be dissatisfied with the use of the violin and, to keep peace and harmony in the brotherhood, the violin was discontinued.

By 1917, the country was involved in a war across the seas, fighting the “Kaiser” and the terrible “Hun” who starved babies in Armenia. Stone Mountain’s young men went as they were called and fought in France in the dreadful trenches. “My uncle left as an enlisted man and came back a deco-

rated Captain. He walked like a military man the rest of his life.”

Church members suffered through the terrible influenza epidemic of 1918. “My mother and father both died, leaving eight children, and the neighbors cared for us.”

After the war, the church services continued, and the young boys of the membership would go on Sunday morning and build fires in two potbellied stoves in the sanctuary during the cold winter months, and mothers would bring quilts for their small children to sleep on the floors.

A man told a story from his childhood. “My grandmama raised me mostly, and she’d take me to her quilting bees at the church and put me on the floor under the quilt. The old ladies would keep me hemmed in. I must be the only kid in the world that learned to walk under a quilt.”

He went on to become a preacher. “The best way to get Christians,” he’d say, “is to grow them.”

The church stood strong even through the tragic years of the Great Depression of the 1930’s. More hardship and suffering, but surviving, persevering. The Baptists, the Methodists, and the Presbyterians met together every 5th Sabbath for fellowship and community worship.

On an Easter Sunday in 1934, the church building burned. “We were putting flowers at the cemetery, and we saw the smoke. Our church was burning.”

The pastorium was destroyed by fire on November 25, 1936. Again, on a cold night around Christmastime of 1937, the burning church lit up the winter sky. More sacrifice, more heartache—but the church was rebuilt on the same site.

By 1942, America was, once again, involved in another war, fighting the Germans and Japanese in far-off places. The defense program required a rationing of supplies and the church saw its men mustered for military service. DeKalb County had its share of Gold Star Mothers—mothers whose boys didn’t come home.

In 1948, the conference records stated, “No pastorium, and no preacher.” The next year, Mrs. Catherine Haynie was elected librarian.

The elementary school burned in 1953, and the conference voted to permit the school to use the church building. In 1957, the conference allowed the Woman’s Club of Stone Mountain to use the church for its meeting place.

The church building burned for the third time on January 11, 1964, and the church members assembled on the streets and watched the flames and shed tears. Services were held in the school gymnasium across the street for the

months required to repair the building.

Over the years, additional properties were bought and added to church use, as detailed in the church conference records. In 1979, the property known as the Stone Mountain Manor was purchased as a possible site for a new and larger church in the future.

It has endured, stood firm, the First Baptist Church, with good men and women, their names all known to God. "When a man dies, neither silver nor gold accompany him—only righteousness and good deeds."

Men who worked in a prison ministry, teaching the prisoners to read and write. Women with their quilting bees in the basement, collecting clothes for the orphans, visiting the Old Folks' Home, serving, serving, ever faithful.

The church sent workers to help build small churches and missions, sending missionaries to where the fields were white unto the harvest.

When a weary, hungry traveler passed through town, he was told, "Go see Mr. W. L. at his barbershop on Main Street." And Mr. W. L. would buy him a decent meal and find him a clean bed for the night. "They need help," he'd say—and he would find it. Today, Mr. W. L. is at home with the angels he served so well.

Young and old in the church went to the Easter Sunrise Services at the mountain, watching the sun come up and knowing they were part of the family of God.

The kindest faces in the world are inside a small church on a Sabbath morning. There was a deacon, a man with graying hair and gnarled hands, twisted by years of hard work, taking up collection, smiling, at peace with himself and his honest life, blessed by serving.

Change will come; it always does . . .

But don't weep for me.

I am forever.

I live because I was given life.

I've known sorrow; I've known joy.

Changes will come,

But don't weep for me.

Look up, look forward—I am there.

Your church.

* * * * *

PASTORS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
STONE MOUNTAIN, GEORGIA
(Known Earlier as Rock Mountain Baptist Church)
Years of Service Shown

-1847 G. R. ALMOND	1902-1905 J. G. WALKER
1848-1850 DAVID COOK	1906-1907 W. J. GRANDLE
1851-1852 LEWIS TOWERS	1908-1910 J. M. BRITTAIN
1853-1855 FEILDING MADDOX	1910-1911 W. J. D. UPSHAW
1855-1857 SAMUEL B. CHURCHILL	1911-1911 TOOLE (2 Mo.)
1857-1865 FEILDING MADDOX	1911-1915 R. L. ROBINSON
1866-1867 H. F. BUCHANNON	1916-1918 B. J. W. GRAHAM
1867-1872 W. H. STRICKLAND	1919-1923 J. H. COWART
1873-1877 JAMES M. STILLWELL	1923-1925 H. D. GOBER
1877-1880 VERGIL NORCROSS	1925-1927 MARVIN PHARR
1880-1883 EDGAR JEWELL	1927-1933 A. T. PERSONS
1883-1888 J. M. BRITTAIN	1933-1935 WILLIAM C. OAKES
1888-1888 H. C. HOONADY	1935-1936 PAUL M. SAYER
1888-1889 H. C. CARLTON	1936-1939 B. J. W. GRAHAM
1889-1894 ELIJAH WOOD	1939-1948 D. T. BUICE
1894-1895 G. W. GARNER	1948-1962 W. B. HOLLINGSWORTH
1895-1896 J. M. BRITTAIN	1962-1970 LEONARD PEDIGO
1896-1898 M. L. CARSWELL	1970-1976 GEORGE WHITE
1898-1901 A. J. BECK	1978- LARRY MEADORS

INTERIM PASTORS ARE NOT LISTED

SOME OF THOSE WHO SERVED ARE:

Dr. T. W. Tippett

Dr. Clifton Fite

Dr. R. T. Russell

Dr. James Westberry

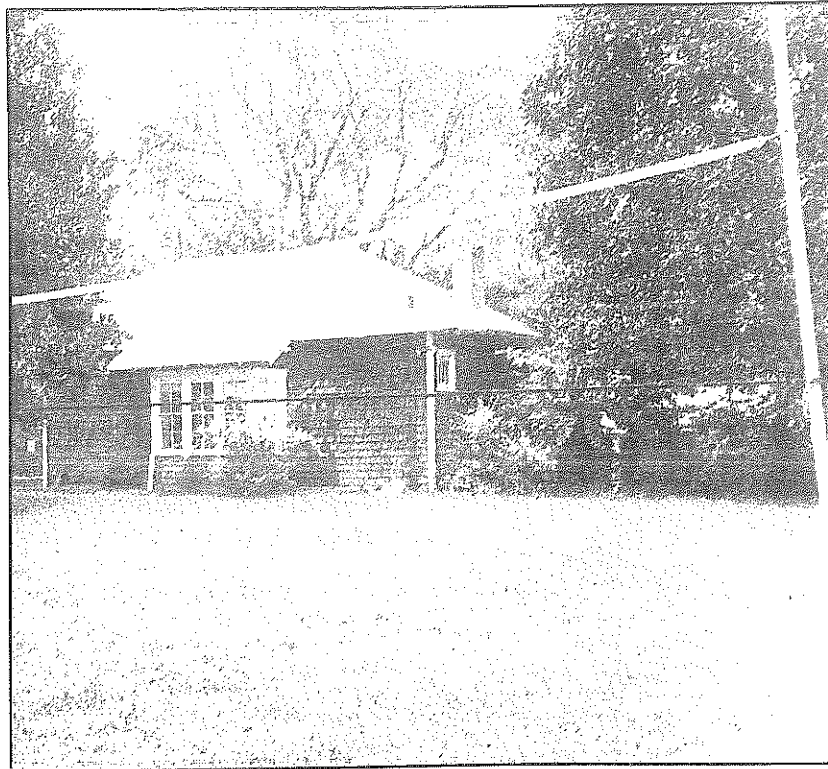
Owned By Baptist Church

No Takers For Historic Site In Stone Mountain Village

By REBECCA W. THOMAS

The hill overlooks the village of Stone Mountain through which a CSX freight train is pulling coal. Beyond the haze of summer heat,

Stone Mountain itself looms grayly in the background. A slight breeze blows through the old pecan trees, one of which measures 75 feet in diameter.



A small, brown-shingled building on the Ridge Avenue edge of the lot is used by the First Baptist Church of Stone Mountain for Sunday School activities. It is to be sold along with the acreage.

This would be the panoramic view from the front porch of the big white building which used to stand there on top of the hill, and which served as a nursing home, hotel and boys' school at various times. The property now is for sale by the First Baptist Church of Stone Mountain.

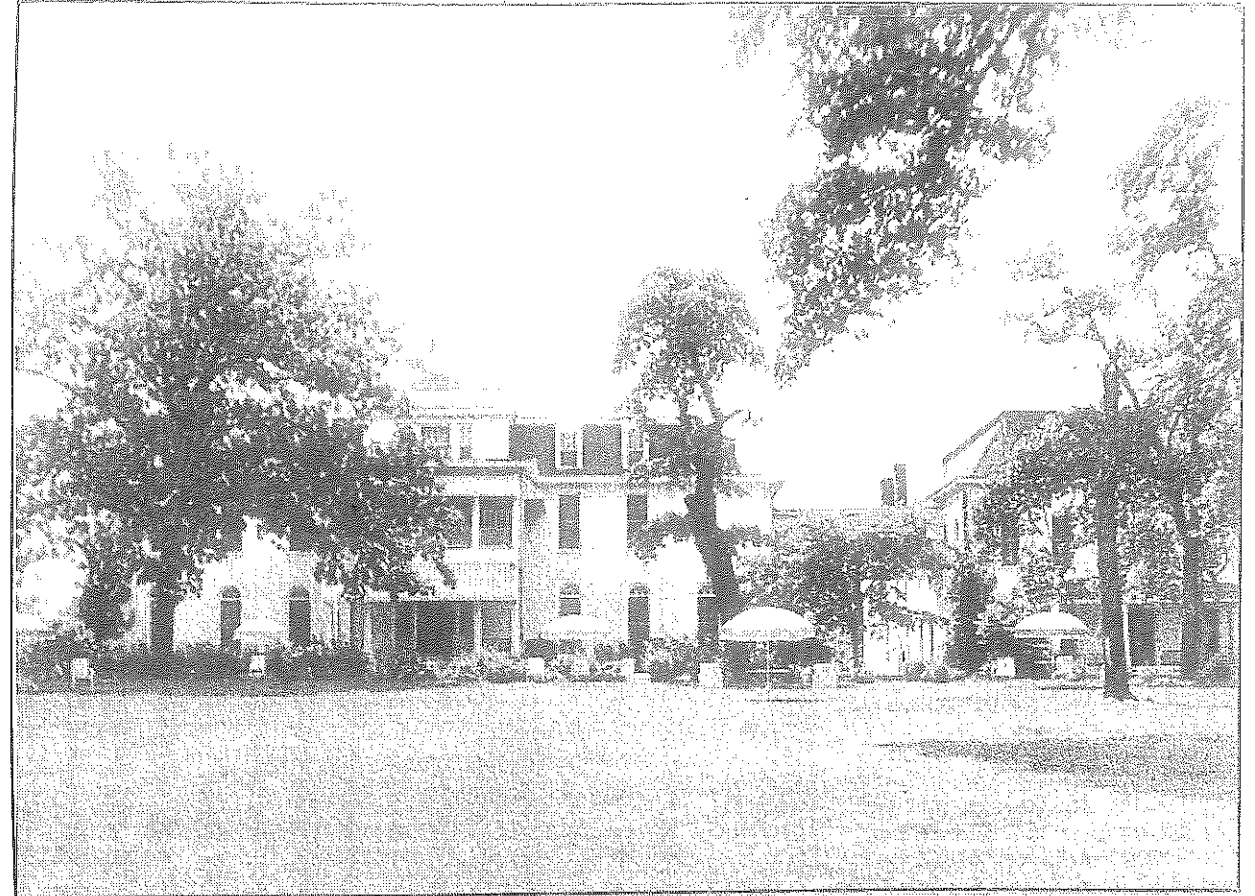
The 3.47-acre lot has been vacant since the nursing home burned to the ground in the 1970s. The nursing home was owned by Mrs. Ruby Bicknell and it was empty at the time it burned. Since she sold the property to the church in 1979 for \$195,000, it has stood in all its pastoral glory looming gently over the town.

THE LAND IS bordered by the railroad on the east, by West Mountain Street on the north, Ridge Avenue on the west and Manor Drive on the south.

Wrought iron gates at the northeast and southeast corners are kept locked but the real estate agent, Jim Grant, has the key.

He led us up the curving concrete drive, which used to sweep grandly from each gate to the buildings at the top. The drive is broken in places, its cracks filled with grass, but it's still recognizable as a drive, a remnant of a gracious past.

Two small buildings are on the Ridge Avenue side of the property.



These buildings once occupied the top of the hill overlooking the railroad and the village of Stone Mountain. Since they burned down

the land has remained vacant, used only for church picnics by the First Baptist Church of Stone Mountain which has the property on the market.

One is a little white storage building and the other is a small, brown-shingled house which is used by the Baptist church's Sunday school classes. The overhang on the side porch of the house is designed like the roof of the village train depot, Mr. Grant pointed out, wondering if maybe it was built at the same time. Pink morning glories try to clamber over the fence next to the house and a honeysuckle vine stills struggles in the corner.

tails of the negotiations as it is too early in the discussions, he said.

An agent with the real estate firm Coldwell Banker, Mr. Grant knows the property intimately. He showed the remains of an old steam pipe in the ground and speculates that the buildings had a steam plant for heating in the old days. There are water and sewer lines still underneath the ground,

he said.

Col. Sandy Beavers ran a boys academy there, said Miss Myrtice McCurdy, a long-time Stone Mountain resident who was a student when the property also served as an elementary and high school for the town. She remembers sitting in the rocking chairs on the porch when the building was a hotel, she said.

(COVER)

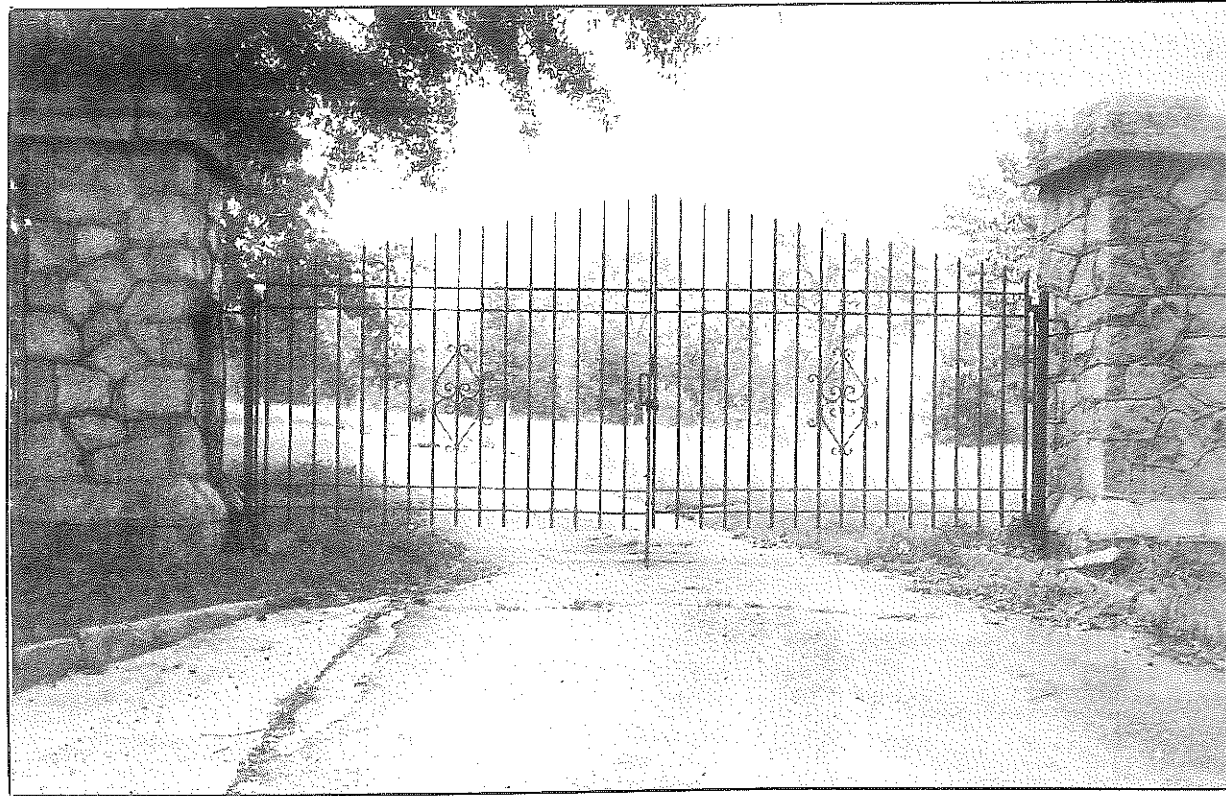
EVERYTHING IS...

Wrought iron gates at the north-east and southeast corners are kept locked but the real estate agent, Jim Grant, has the key.

He led us up the curving concrete drive, which used to sweep grandly from each gate to the buildings at the top. The drive is broken in places, its cracks filled with grass, but it's still recognizable as a drive, a remnant of a gracious past.

Two small buildings are on the Ridge Avenue side of the property.

A small, brown-shingled building on the Ridge Avenue edge of the lot is used by the First Baptist Church of Stone Mountain for Sunday School activities. It is to be sold along with the acreage.



NEWSphotos by Rebecca Thomas

Elegant wrought iron gates open to a sweeping drive which curves up the hill to the former site of a nursing home, hotel and boys

school which occupied the property at various times over the years.

One is a little white storage building and the other is a small, brown-shingled house which is used by the Baptist church's Sunday school classes. The overhang on the side porch of the house is designed like the roof of the village train depot, Mr. Grant pointed out, wondering if maybe it was built at the same time. Pink morning glories try to clamber over the fence next to the house and a honeysuckle vine stills struggles in the corner.

EVERYTHING IS immaculately kept.

The property is on the market for \$1.5 million.

Mr. Grant says he knows of no other undeveloped property of its size within the city limits of a DeKalb municipality. The fact that it is off the beaten path makes it a liability to developers, he said, adding that he has approached a big hotel chain to see if they would be interested in the site.

It is not on a major traffic artery, a location which most hotels prefer, and there are already two hotels within Stone Mountain Park, the Stone Mountain Inn and the Evergreen Conference Center, he said.

Although busy Memorial Drive and the Stone Mountain freeway are just a few blocks away, the property has not drawn any commercial interest, even though it is zoned C-1. The city's land use plan calls for the property to be used as a park, a cemetery or a light retail complex, Mr. Grant pointed out.

MAYOR JANE RHODES said at the last council meeting that she would like to see a park up on the hill. The city has made two offers to the church, Mr. Grant said, one of which was turned down. The church and the city are negotiating a second offer, he said, but he would not divulge any de-

tails of the negotiations as it is too early in the discussions, he said.

An agent with the real estate firm Coldwell Banker, Mr. Grant knows the property intimately. He showed the remains of an old steam pipe in the ground and speculates that the buildings had a steam plant for heating in the old days. There are water and sewer lines still underneath the ground,

he said.

Col. Sandy Beavers ran a academy there, said Miss My McCurdy, a long-time Stone Mountain resident who was a student when the property also served an elementary and high school the town. She remembers sitting in the rocking chairs on the porch when the building was a hotel, she said.