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Andover

Churches - Presbyterian
Rock Spring Presbyterian
Church

History of Rock
Spring Church
by Mrs. W. A.
Clymer

Mr. Joel Mable realized the great need for a Church in the community. He was a devout Scottish Presbyterian, whose father came directly from Scotland to America & who taught school in Rock Spring school house. At that time the school house was located near the intersection of what is now Morningside Drive & Rock Spring Road. On Nov. 12, 1870 Rock Spring Presbyterian Church was organized by Rev. Mr. Myron D. Wood & elders from the Decatur Presbyterian Church. The first

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Services were held in the little schoolhouse. Work began on a house of worship in 1871 at the present site on Piedmont Road. The first building was a small white frame structure without a steeple. During Mr. T. M. Hollingsworth's pastorate a manse was used for the first time; it was the little Rock Spring School house remnant enlarged with three rooms & a hall & painted white. In 1921, the construction of a new church building was begun & completed in 1923.

Lithonia, Ga., May 13. 1897.

Editor New Era:- I see in your paper where Rev. A.J. Beck and J. C. Johnson went out and organized a Sunday School at old Rock Springs church. Now what did these gentlemen mean by doing this? Are they both yet aware that Rock Springs church has been standing there for fifty odd years, and do they not both well know that Rock Springs church is opposed to Sunday Schools and has always been? Is it to get up a fuss and disturbance in that church and neighborhood? It looks like this to a man up a tree.

There has stood old Rock Springs church 50 odd years and every one who knows its members know it is opposed to Sunday Schools, and yet there is Macedonia church with a Sunday School only about 2 mile west. Salem Presbyterian west about two miles, Rockland Methodist south about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, Lithonia three miles with three schools, and now for these two Rev. gentlemen to go out there and form a Sunday School over the heads of those old members and those

who sleep in those old graves by the old Church, it looks little like Christianity to me. There is no excuse for such a fare of things there and both the Rev. gentlemen know it.

Rock Springs is built away off in the woods and they do not dictate for other churches or try to ~~foude~~ things on them they do not want. Well, What else have they done? They have built a school house and Sunday School just as close to the church as they can get it and also put the school house across the path from this old landmark to the spring. Is not there something wrong in all this big move in these Rev. gentlemen, now after fifty odd years of peaceful and undisturbed worship, to be imposed on by this kind of christianity when they both knew that it was against the faith of old Rock Springs Church?

And now I will say in conclusion that if Revs. Beck and Johnson are determined to roust those old people out of their 50 years home, for them to sell out the church house to these two Rev. gentlemen and move off in some other place and start a new and give up their old

home and the home of their fathers
and mothers to these two evangelists
of recent date. So mote it be.

- J.T.Brand.

EDITIR NEW ERA: DEAR SIR:-

I do not like newspaper noterity,
but in this case I think it but Justice
to the community of Johnson Academy,
also Bros Beck and Johnson to make a
short reply to Mr J.T.Brand's communi-
cation of the 20thult, in which he makes
an attack upon Bros Beck and Johnson
for organizing a Sabbath School at
Johnsons academy by earnest request
of the leading citizens of this
community.

I desire to give a few facts that
your many readers at a distance may
understand as well as "aman up a
tree".

Now Johnson's academy is located
near Rock Springs Church and is
built on its own ground, on its own
paths, endways to road, right side
up and built by Sunday School people
with the understanding that its doors
stand open for every good and moral
purpose they may see fit to use it for.

Not a single hardshell has paid in
a nickel, drove a nail or laid a shingle

in this building.

While fifty to sixty odd scholars
attend the literary school only two
patrons are hardshells and there is
only four hardshell members in this
entire community and they are all
females and are attending to their
own business.

Now who is trying to get up a
distnrbance but "aman up a tree."
Come down, friend, and practice
what you preach and allow others
the same privilege.

This is a free country and a free
government and Sabbath Schools arde
the highest standard of good morals,
so say our best and wisest men..

-Benj. F. Raines.

A Brief History
of the
Rock Spring Presbyterian Church



1870 — 1960

HISTORY OF ROCK SPRING CHURCH

By Mrs. W. A. Ozmer

Fortunate, indeed, is the boy or girl whose teacher does not confine his teaching entirely to the contents of a text book, but who tries to instill into his pupils the virtues which are enumerated in Paul's Epistle to the Philipians—truthfulness, honesty, courtesy, purity and justice. Such a teacher was Mr. Joel Mable, a devout Scottish Presbyterian, whose father came directly from Scotland to America and who taught school in Rock Spring school house. At that time the school house was located near the intersection of what is now Morningside Drive and Rock Spring Road.

Mr. Mable realized the great need of a Sunday School and Church in the community. The school house had formerly been used as a Methodist Church but for some reason had been dropped from the circuit. In the winter of 1868 Mr. Mable organized a Union Sunday School which was composed almost entirely of Presbyterians with Mr. Mable himself as the superintendent. The Sunday School met every Sunday and became the nucleus of the Church.

On November 12, 1870 Rock Spring Presbyterian Church was organized by the Rev. Mr. Myron D. Wood and elders from the Decatur Presbyterian Church. Mr. Wood served the church as a "portion" of the Decatur Church beginning January 1, 1871. The first services were held in the little schoolhouse.

In the Spring of 1871, the Rev. Mike Ketchum was called as first pastor and began serving the church. Soon, work began on a house of worship at the present site on Piedmont Road. Mr. James Washington Smith, an elder, deeded an acre of ground to Rock Spring Church so long as it continued to be a Presbyterian Church. The first building was a small white frame structure without a steeple.

The members "exhibited a commendable zeal" in completing their new building and paying off the entire sum required for its construction.

The new building was dedicated December 2, 1871 with the Rev. Donald Fraser of Decatur preaching the dedication sermon. His text was Psalms 122:1, "I was glad when they said, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'."

It was the custom in those days to hold preparatory services on Saturday morning at 11:00 o'clock before the quarterly Sunday observance of the Lord's Supper. This custom continued for many years and the faithful members laid aside all secular duties to attend this service.

During the Rev. Mr. Ketchum's ministry, Mr. Johnson Brimm became a candidate for the ministry. After his graduation he held the Chair of Hebrew and Greek in Columbia Seminary. For many years he was a Professor of Bible at Presbyterian College of Clinton, S. C.

The Rev. Mr. Ketchum died in June 1876 while pastor of the church and was succeeded in October 1877 by Mr. T. M. Hollingsworth who was the first installed pastor. He served until the summer of 1884. "The attendance was good and the behavior of the members respectful and solemn." During his pastorate a manse was used for the first time; it was the little Rock Spring School house, somewhat enlarged with three rooms and a hall and painted white.

The Ladies Aid Society was organized in March 1881 with ten charter members. Mrs. Emma Johnson Luckie was instrumental in its organization. Mrs. James M. Liddell was the first president. Their work was confined to the community and the local church.

Mr. Fleming Pharr became a candidate for the ministry during Mr. Hollingsworth's pastorate and after graduation from Columbia Seminary held pastorates in southern States until his death in 1931.

Steady growth marked the ministry of the Rev. James L. King from April 1, 1885 to November, 1887. In July, 1888 he was followed by the Rev. Will A. Johnson who died on Feb. 19, 1890, after a short but fruitful period of service.

The Rev. Roy N. Abraham was pastor from 1890 to 1895. He married Miss Emma Plaster, daughter of Fredonia Johnson Plaster and Daniel Plaster. Several years after her death, he married Elizabeth P. Henderson, a sister of his former wife.

During his pastorate, Mr. John Thomas Butler began his preparation for the ministry. For more than twenty-five years he was a missionary in Central America. He married Anna Johnson Stevens, daughter of Gerdine and Mary Harris Johnson and sister of Mrs. Jessie M. Liddell, Don W. Johnson and J. G. Johnson, Sr. She accompanied him to Central America and served there until her death several months later.

Two daughters, Esther and May Butler, by a second marriage are missionaries in Central America. Their membership was at Rock Spring when they left for their field of labor. Mr. Butler died in Florida in 1939.

The Rev. Robert Lee Fulton was called in 1895 and served until 1902 when he resigned because of ill health. He died soon afterward at the home of his mother in Thomasville, Georgia. Mr. Fulton did much to arouse the interest of his members in reading church papers, religious history and good literature of all kinds. During his pastorate, the manse was enlarged by the addition of several rooms.

Dr. James L. Martin was pastor from 1902 to 1906. During Dr. Martin's pastorate, the closing exercises of the Sunday School were devoted to an explanation of one or a portion of one of the Shorter Catechism questions. This was followed usually by a doctrinal sermon except for the eighteen months during which he preached from the Book of Revelation. The members did not rebel against sermons of one to one and one half hours.

The Rev. E. D. Brownlee followed from 1907 to 1912. Under his ministry the church grew numerically. No longer was aid necessary from the Home Mission Committee. Four Sunday school classrooms, vestibule and steeple were added to the Church building.

Shortly before his coming, a Christian Endeavor Society was organized by Mr. Boyd and other laymen from North Avenue Presbyterian with Homer Head as first President. Under Mr. Brownlee's direction the young people's work thrived and at no time in the previous history of the church had young people manifested such enthusiasm and activity in the church work.

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The Ladies Aid Society was changed to Woman's Missionary Society devoting systematic study to foreign missions. Mr. Homer Head became a candidate for the ministry and after graduation from Columbia Seminary labored successfully in South West Georgia. In 1918 he died nobly in the service of his Master, sacrificing his own life while ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of his flock during the influenza epidemic.

The Rev. Linton Johnson was pastor from 1913 - 1918 and continued the work with young people. He resigned to join the Y.M.C.A. force in France during the first World War. The solos and duets of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson added much to the worship services.

Shortly afterward, Dr. William Huck accepted the pastorate. The manse which had fallen into bad repair and for many years had not been used for the pastor's home was repaired and redecorated and modern conveniences installed.

In 1921, the construction of a new church building was begun and after almost insurmountable obstacles were overcome, it was completed in 1923. Dr. and Mrs. Huck gave unstintingly of their own money, time and efforts to make this achievement possible; inspiring not only members but also outsiders to do the same.

The Christian Education phase was active at this time and the Sunday School was increased. During this period, Miss Lilla Head began her home mission work at the Pittsburgh College Mission, teaching there a number of years. Later she taught in Mary Holmes Seminary, a school for colored girls at West Point, Mississippi.

Miss E. Plaster also did volunteer work in the Pittsburgh Mission and Miss Minnie Paden and Mrs. Lucile Bailey Brockman in the Syrian Mission. In 1922 the Ladies and Missionary Society became the Women's Auxiliary and the circle plan was adopted. Mrs. William Huck was first president. In February 1924 Dr. Huck resigned to become Secretary of Home Missions in the Atlanta Presbytery.

The Rev. H. C. Hixon served the church three months of this same year and in October Rev. I. T. Hawk became pastor, serving until April, 1931. The church debt was decreased during this period.

The Rev. Wallace Alston accepted the pastorate of the church upon his graduation from Columbia Seminary in 1931, beginning his ministry in June. The manse and church building were repaired and redecorated in preparation for his coming. The Sunday School was reorganized according to latest methods and attendance doubled. A junior and young people's league were organized and a number of young people accompanied by Rev. and Mrs. Alston attended. There was a Boy Scout troop and Camp Fire Girls group as well. The Men's Bible Class was very active.

The first organized church visitation under direction of Mrs. Alston produced excellent results.

In October and November 1932 a successful effort to clear the church building of indebtedness ended on the 62nd Anniversary of the church on November 13, 1932, when the building was dedicated to the service of God.

Following the resignation of the Rev. Mr. Alston to accept a call to Lexington, Kentucky, the Rev. Richard T. Gillespie also a Columbia Seminary graduate, began his first pastorate in June 1933.

Under the inspiration of Mr. Gillespie's leadership many members and friends were influenced to make gifts to the church. A new chancel and organ were installed at the meeting of the Atlanta Presbytery during this period. The chancel, planned by an elder architect Charles H. Hopson, was completed. The various pieces were given as memorials.

The new seating was made possible by a legacy of the late Mrs. Henrietta Head. The King Memorial Organ was the gift of Clyde King, Sr. in memory of his father the Rev. James L. King, pastor 1885-1888. A bronze tablet was unveiled in his memory by his great-grandchild, Frances King.

The Church School of Missions was held each year during the pastorate with excellent attendance and substantial interest.

Mr. Gillespie endeavored during his pastorate to develop a deeper sense of reverence for the house of God for the Worship services. After 4 years of fruitful ministry Mr. Gillespie accepted the call to the Thomasville, Georgia Presbyterian Church.

In September 1937 the Rev. Henry Edward Russell became pastor of the Church. The following year he married Miss Ala Jo Brewton of Vidalia, Georgia. The new Manse was completed during this period and other improvements made on the church building. The session room was beautifully furnished as a gift from Mrs. Mina B. Narmore, mother of Dr. Phil B. Narmore, elder. There was a gain of about fifty members made during the five years. In December 1942, Mr. Russell accepted a call to LaGrange Presbyterian Church.

On the first Sunday in February 1943, the Rev. Bonneau H. Dickson, Chapel Minister of the Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Ga., for eight years, began his work and was installed on the evening of February 21, 1943.

The church made a gain of 70 members in the next two years, the largest membership in its history. The Sunday School more than doubled in average attendance. The manse was freed of debt, the grounds beautified and further needed improvements made in the basement which added greatly to the physical comfort of the church.

In 1948 the first Director of Christian Education was employed. A suite of offices for pastor and church secretary were provided.

On the 78th Anniversary, Chimes were dedicated and five infants, fifth and sixth generation from descendants of charter members were baptized.

In 1940-1950 due to growth the Sanctuary had to be enlarged—removed tall folding doors. In 1953 the first summer pastor came and a secretary was added to the staff.

The education building was added to the Church. Later, due to continual growth of the Sunday School, the second activities and Educational Building was erected.

It was during their first appearance

March, 1957, Mr. Wardlaw, his wife and Orangeburg, South and Teddy J., 7, at

Kindergarten and Mr. Wardlaw, a native ground and building roofing and extensive were started on a v continued to grow in m

Anne Wardlaw participation, the last conventions at Montr

The Wardlaws had and respected by the

CHARTER

DANIEL JOHNSON, JA

DEACONS W

MRS. JOSEPHINE MCCABE
(wife of John Mabe)

LUCY ARMIENDA LIDDELL
(wife of James M)

MRS. ELIZABETH LIDDELL
(wife of Edwin P)

MRS. ELIZABETH SMITH
(wife of Robert H)

MRS. SARAH GOODWIN
(wife of Hezekiah)

D. L. PLASTER

W. F. LUCKIE

MRS. MARY GOODWIN

DANIEL NOBLE JOHNSON

WILLIAM J. HEAD

It was during this period that the church night suppers made their first appearance.

March, 1957, marked the arrival of Hubert Golden Wardlaw. Mr. Wardlaw, his wife and children ("G" and Teddy J.), came here from Orangeburg, South Carolina. "G", 16, is a student at Westminster and Teddy J., 7, attends Spring Street School.

Kindergarten and youth activity programs were further stressed. Mr. Wardlaw, a native of Marietta, Georgia, was instrumental in the ground and buildings programs. It was during this period that new roofing and extensive redecoration was completed. Family Suppers were started on a weekly Sunday night basis, and the church continued to grow in membership.

Anne Wardlaw has been instrumental in accelerating womens' participation, the ladies of the church increased their attendance at conventions at Montreat, North Carolina.

The Wardlaws have proved themselves able church leaders, loved and respected by the members of Rock Spring.

CHARTER MEMBERS NOVEMBER 12, 1870

DANIEL JOHNSON, JAMES W. SMITH, and JAMES M. LIDDELL, Elders.

DEACONS WERE: JOHN MABLE and JEROME BEARSE.

MRS. JOSEPHINE McCARTY MABLE
(wife of John Mable)

MRS. SARAH PLASTER BEARSE
(wife of Jerome Bearse)

LUCY ARMIENDA LIDDELL
(wife of James M. Liddell)

EMMA D. JOHNSON LUCKIE
(wife of W. F. Luckie)

MRS. ELIZABETH LIDDELL PLASTER
(wife of Edwin Plaster)

FREDONIA JOHNSON PLASTER
(wife of D. L. Plaster)

MRS. ELIZABETH SMITH
(wife of Robert H. Smith)

LUCY BROCKMAN HEAD
(wife of R. M. Head)

MRS. SARAH GOODWIN CHESHIRE
(wife of Hezekiah Cheshire)

DANIEL REEDER

D. L. PLASTER

HENRY TANDIE HEAD

W. F. LUCKIE

MISS ALDORA REEDER

MRS. MARY GOODWIN

MISS MAGGIE MAYES

DANIEL NOBLE JOHNSON

MISS LEE CHESHIRE

WILLIAM J. HEAD

MISS SUE BROCKMAN