

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Hickory Grove Church (Part 2)

Purportedly chartered in 1860, the first local church established in Bucklesberry was Hickory Grove, located on Kennedy Home Road. The bricked monument out front identifying it as a United Methodist Church suggests to passersby that it may always have been with the Methodist Conference.

But in the record of his visit to Bucklesberry and Hickory Grove in 1891, Rev. Dr. Esek Arnold Wright (1842-1920) indicated that the Church was affiliated with the Baptist denomination in its early years. An evangelist at the time, Dr. Wright came to this area to preach a two-week long revival meeting at the Church with Rev. William L. Harris, pastor in La Grange.

Below are Dr. Wright's recollections of the consequential revival at Hickory Grove. Published in the *North Carolina Christian Advocate* (Greensboro) in 1906, he also documented the Church's denominational transition from Baptist to Methodist:

"On account of some dissatisfaction with their pastor [Rev. B. W. Nash, Baptist], the members of this church [Hickory Grove] in the spring of 1891 sent for Brother Harris, who resided at La Grange, to come out to the church and preach, explaining the doctrines, government and polity of the Methodist Protestant Church. This Brother Harris did, and, after hearing him, the members called a Conference together of all members, male and female, and resolved to go into a body to the Methodist Protestant Church. They also instructed the Board of Trustees to make a deed of trust and church building to the Methodist Protestant Church of North Carolina."

"In a short while all this was done, and then they unanimously called Brother Harris to be their pastor until Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, which he (Brother Harris) consented to do. So when I went to these [revival] meetings with Brother Harris I found this church organized under the Methodist Protestant banner, and working well. A good membership of about 150, and well-equipped Sunday-school with about one hundred pupils and six or eight good teachers. At the fall Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church this church was received into full fellowship, recognized as being of the same 'faith and order,' and was attached to the La Grange Circuit, and Brother Harris was sent to be their pastor for 1892."

"Brother Harris and this humble scribe [Dr. Wright] held a two weeks' revival here, commencing the first Sunday in September, 1891, and held, both morning and night, a meeting which was said to be the best ever held in that part of God's heritage. We had a crowded house at every service—from 200 to 300 additions, and the interest went on all this time with unabated interest until the

close on Sunday, the third Sunday in September. We had twenty-six conversions [professions of faith], twenty-two of whom united with this church. This brought the church up to one hundred and seventy-two members. On the last Sunday of the meetings there were present at least five hundred people—made up of people for miles around—some from La Grange and some from Kinston."

"Before this vast audience I was put up to preach at the morning service of this Sunday. I used as my text St. Mark's Gospel 12th chapter from the 28th to the 34th verses, inclusive, making the pivotal point in my text, 'Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God;' I had, throughout my discourse, the undivided attention of that large and intelligent congregation. This church is located in one of the most fertile sections of Eastern Carolina, and is inhabited by as a refined and well-educated people as can be found in the same area in the 'Old North State.' These people are not only refined and educated, but are also on a very elevated plane of morality, while those who profess religion have a deep flow of heartfelt, experimental Christianity—old time Holy Ghost religion. After the morning service a bountiful repast was spread for that vast multitude all things good for the inner physical man."

[Caption to accompany picture]

Hickory Grove Church, Bucklesberry community, about 1940.

