

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Hickory Grove Church (Part 3)

The claim by Rev. Dr. Esek Arnold Wright (1842-1920) that Bucklesberry's first local church, Hickory Grove, was established as a Baptist congregation in its early years may be unsettling to some. Skeptics may question his truthfulness, since the Church has been associated with the Methodist Conference for so long.

But there is no evidence to suggest that Dr. Wright had an axe to grind, so to speak, or that his intent was to fabricate a story that would sow discord. Shared in last week's article, the level of detail of Dr. Wright description of Hickory Grove's transition from Baptist to Methodist affiliation is believable. Further, although he wrote his account in 1906, some fifteen years after he visited Hickory Grove in 1891, it was published by the *North Carolina Christian Advocate* (Greensboro), which bolsters Dr. Wright's truthfulness and credibility.

Other historical records support his claim, too. With few exceptions, the majority of these reports indeed point to Hickory Grove's early roots as a Baptist church:

1869: "Lenoir County...Churches and Pastors...Hickory Grove, near Moseley Hall, W. D. Meacham [pastor], Meth[odist]..." (*Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, Raleigh)

1873, November 6: "We learn from the *Baptist Review* that the annual association of the Baptist Church of North Carolina, which closed its session, with the church at Hickory Grove in Lenoir County, Saturday the 25th ulto., was a meeting of unusual interest to the ministers and delegates who were in attendance." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

1877, January 1: "We are requested to announce that Elder B. B. Holder will preach at Luceon [Lousin] Swamp the 1st Sunday of the present month; at Hood Swamp the 2d Sunday; at Friendship the 3rd Sunday; and at Hickory Grove the 4th Sunday. He will also be at Hull Road on Tuesday before the 2nd Sunday." (*Goldsboro Messenger*) Note: Rev. Holder was a missionary/preacher with the Neuse Free Will Baptist Conference.

1880, November 25: "The sixth annual session of the United Free Will Baptist Conference will convene with Hickory Grove Church, Lenoir County, this week." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

1881, August 25: "We were pleased to receive a visit last Monday from Rev. Wm. Byrd, of Harnett County, Grand Prelate of the order of Knights of Pythias for North Carolina. Elder Byrd has just concluded an extensive visitation among the churches of the Mount Zion Association,

holding protracted meetings at Hickory Grove, Hookerton, Lucian [Lousin] Swamp and Hood Swamp. At Hickory Grove there were twenty-five accessions to the Church." (*Goldsboro Messenger*) Note: Rev. Byrd preached for Baptist churches in 1881. The Mount Zion Association was affiliated with the United Baptist Conference of churches.

1882, January 22: "Rev. B. W. Nash, editor of the *Baptist Review*, was in town Saturday. He preached at Hickory Grove on Saturday and Sunday." (*Kinston Journal*)

1882, June 28: "Rev. B. W. Nash, editor of the *Baptist Review*, was in town Saturday on his way to Hickory Grove, where he preached Sunday..." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1882, July 27: "Rev. B. W. Nash, held the quarterly Association of Baptist at Hickory Grove last Saturday and Sunday. His services as pastor [are] appreciated by a large number of the congregation at that place..." (*New Berne Weekly Journal*)

More on the Baptist origins of Hickory Grove Church will be shared in next week's Bucklesberry article.