

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Hickory Grove Church (Part 13)

Chartered around 1860, Bucklesberry's first local church operated under the Baptist banner until September, 1884 when it withdrew from the Union Baptist Association. In April, 1885, Hickory Grove adopted a resolution to align with the Methodist Protestant (M. P.) Church.

The first full year as an M. P. Church in 1886 was eventful. Installed the previous year as pastor, Rev. W. E. Swain preached his regular monthly first Sunday appointment at Hickory Grove in January. He partnered with several other local pastors in conducting a revival at the Methodist Episcopal Church in La Grange in February.

An illness requiring medical attention sidelined Rev. Swain temporarily in March. He resumed his post in April, only to be absent again in May:

1886, May 5: "Rev. A. R. Morgan, principal of the L. C. I. [La Grange Collegiate Institute], preached at Hickory Grove last Sunday, filling the appointment of Rev. W. E. Swain, the pastor, who is on a short visit to relations in the eastern part of our State." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

Hickory Grove received a visit in June from distinguished Rev. T. J. Ogburn, then-president of the M. P. Conference of North Carolina:

1886, June 16: "Rev. T. J. Ogburn preached the commencement sermon at the L. C. I. last Sunday. It was our pleasure to hear him, and although the preacher was evidently unwell, we have never heard a better sermon. Services were held Sunday night and the ordinances of baptism and communion administered. Monday the preacher visited and preached at Hickory Grove." (*The Daily Journal*)

Rev. Swain's pastoral leadership at Hickory Grove did not go unnoticed. By mid-year, charter member and journalist, Samuel Ivey (S. I.) Sutton (1834-1904) of Bucklesberry, who reported regularly on the Church's activities, commended Rev. Swain's service in a news column:

1886, July 7: "Rev. Mr. Swain preached at Hickory Grove last Saturday night and Sunday, his regular appointment. Mr. Swain has served the Church for over twelve months and has given the congregation, which has steadily increased, perfect satisfaction so far as we have been able to learn. We wish him much success in the work in which he is so earnestly engaged." (*The Daily Journal*)

For the duration of the year, Hickory Grove grew under Rev. Swain's direction, including establishment of a Sunday School, a fruitful revival meeting, and representation at the State M. P. Conference:

1886, August 4: "Preaching at Hickory Grove last Saturday night and Sunday by Rev. W. E. Swain, the pastor. We are glad to note that a Sunday School has been organized at this place." (*The Daily Journal*)

1886, October 7: "Rev. W. E. Swain preached at Hickory Grove last Saturday night and Sunday. The meeting will be protracted, how long we are not informed at this time." (*New Berne Weekly Journal*)

1886, October 14: "The revival conducted by Rev. Mr. Swain in Bucklesberry resulted in nine additions to the [Hickory Grove] Church." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

1886, December 8: "Rev. W. E. Swain and B. F. Sutton, Esq., left Tuesday to attend the M. P. Conference in Enfield." (*The Daily Journal*).

Like S. I. Sutton, Benjamin Franklin (B. F.) Sutton (1838-1897) was a charter member of Hickory Grove Church, as was his father, Hardy Sutton (1803-1861). Other charter members included Levi Hill, Sr. (1830-1893), Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. (1836-1900), and Josiah Sutton, Sr. (1810-1898).