

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Hickory Grove Church (Part 36)

The most challenging issue that Hickory Grove Church ever faced was the attempted take-over of its property by the Union Baptist Association and former pastor, Rev. Bushrod Washington (B. W.) Nash. The legal battle began in 1889 and ended in 1910 with a judgment from the Court in favor of Hickory Grove, permanently putting the matter to rest.

The low point for the Church possibly came in 1898 soon after the sixth and final lawsuit was filed. For the next three years or so, Hickory Grove found itself without a pastor to oversee the flock. Shy of lay speakers, the doors of Bucklesberry's first church were probably closed much of the time.

The long ministerial drought was over by 1902 when the Methodist Protestant (M. P.) Church Conference appointed Rev. G. L. Reynolds to fill the pulpit at Hickory Grove and the other churches in the La Grange Circuit:

1902, January 16: "Rev. Mr. Reynolds will preach his first sermon as pastor of the M. P. Church on Sunday morning." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

Whether Rev. Reynolds actually pastored the entire year is questionable. By mid-summer, he was ill and unable to attend the M. P. Church Sub-District Conference in Brinkleyville, NC:

1902, July 24: "Thirty-eight delegates were present, and quite a number of visitors. Rev. G. L. Reynolds, of La Grange, was the only ministerial member absent. He was ill..." (*The North Carolinian*, Raleigh)

Rev. Reynolds' service at Hickory Grove and the other local churches was short-lived. The M. P. Conference assigned him to Guilford, NC in 1903 and named Rev. W. C. Kennett as his successor. But Rev. Kennett never came to La Grange. Instead, the Conference appointed Rev. J. F. Dozier to La Grange by early 1903.

Rev. Dozier eventually brought needed stability to Hickory Grove after a likely four-year absence of pastoral leadership from 1899 to 1902. Although he did not preach the first Sunday service of the new year, Rev. Dozier was promptly in place by February, 1903:

1903, January 27: "Rev. J. F. Dozier failed to fill his appointment at Hickory Grove Sunday." (*The Daily Free Press*)

1903, February 10: "Rev. J. F. Dozier filled his regular appointment at Hickory Grove Sunday." (*The Daily Free Press*)

With Rev. Dozier's pastorate came renewed vision for Hickory Grove. Over the next two years, the Church garnered special attention from the State M. P. Conference president, who paid personal visits to Bucklesberry to preach:

1903, March 10: "Rev. T. M. Johnson, of Greensboro, president of the North Carolina Conference of the M. P. Church will preach at Hickory Grove next Saturday at 11 a.m." (*The Daily Free Press*)

1904, February 9: "President [Rev. T. M.] Johnson, of the N. C. Conference [M. P. Church], preached at Hickory Grove Sunday." (*The Daily Free Press*)

Rev. Dozier remained a faithful pastor from 1903 to 1908. His seven years of dedicated service to the congregation at Hickory Grove was undoubtedly a welcome relief from the oppressive litigation they faced at the time. Rev. Dozier moved to the Albemarle, NC in 1909.