

# Greene County

MAGAZINE

## Mount Paran: A Short History

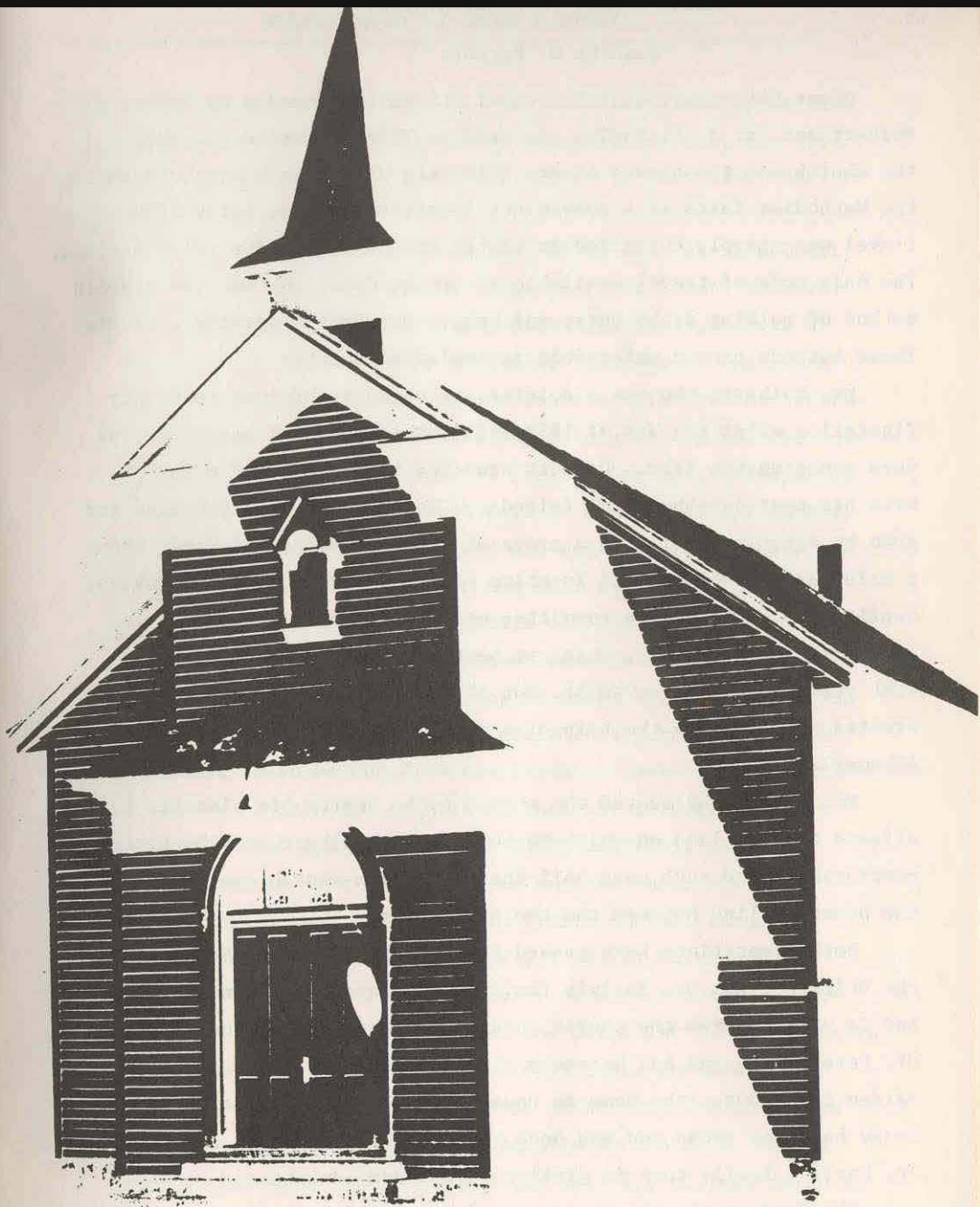
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Mount Paran Methodist Church

Blanche M. Parrott

Mount Paran Methodist Episcopal Church was founded by Robert Holbert and Dr. J. F. Early. Located on Virginia State Rt. 629, the church was the answer to Mr. Holbert's desire to have a church of the Methodist faith in a convenient location. In the early 1850's travel was sharply curtailed in winter months and during rainy seasons. The only mode of travel available to Greene Countians was the age-old method of walking or by horse and buggy, or perhaps astride a saddle. These methods proved unfeasible in inclement weather.

Mr. Holbert, who was a soldier, returned to his Greene County Plantation after the War of 1812 and planned to spend his remaining days managing the farm. Holbert broached the subject of a church with his near neighbors and friends. The plan was well received and soon an arbor was built in a grove of trees on Holbert's land, about a mile west of the present location of the church. A week's revival swelled the ranks, and a committee was formed to raise money.

The church history, which at best is scanty, does not reveal what year the arbor was built, but it is certain that the church was erected in 1854 with the help of a Mr. Rhoads, an architect from Albemarle County.

Dr. Early, who wanted the church to be nearer his plantation, offered to give land on which to build. Mr. Holbert and the doctor compromised, and each gave half the land. The church was built on the boundary line between the two plantations.

Both plantations have passed from ownership of the Earlys and the Holberts, but Dr. Early's family's plantation mansion still stands and is visible from the church yard. Guilford Hall is now owned by Mr. Peter Weeks and has become a showplace in the county. During Garden Club tours, the home is usually open to the public. The large house has many rooms and was once used as an academy for girls. Dr. Early's family took in girls to board and educate.

The deed to the church is recorded in Deed Book 4, page 454 in

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the Greene County Clerk's Office. The deed was filed by William G. Chapman and admitted to record by Robert Pritchett, the first Clerk of Greene County, on April 28, 1855. It testifies that, on November 20, 1854,

"John F. Early and Elizabeth, his wife, and Robert Holbert and Sarah, his wife, of the first part and Robert Holbert, John F. Early, I.G.E.D. Davis, Nathaniel Early, George W. Shearman and Tabner (sic) Marshall, Trustees of the other part witnesseth that for and in consideration of the veneration respect and affection of the said grantors for the holy religion of the Christ and for the further consideration of five dollars to them in hand paid to them by said trustees have given, granted, bargained and sold and do by these presents give, grant bargain and sell unto them the said trustees a lot of land to contain one and a half acre lying and being in the county of Greene immediately on the road known as Belles Road at the top of Cooks Hill upon the land between the lands of the said grantors a portion of which said lot is to be cut from the lands of each of the said grantors to have and to hold to them the said trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and their lawful successors forever which general warranty upon the trust nevertheless that they the said trustees shall authorize and cause to be erected upon said land for which purpose the said lot of land is especially devised a house of worship for the use and benefit of the Methodist E. Church South, other orthodox denominations of Christians to have the privilege of using the said house of worship for religious service when not occupied by the said Methodist E. Church South upon which said trustees the said lot of land is to be held forever in witness whereof we have hereunto set out hands and affixed our seals this the 20th of November 1854."

This document was witnessed by Arthur Stephens, Notary Public, 26th April, 1855.

As previously noted, early records of the church are unavailable. The earliest Record Book available begins in 1919.

According to a history of the church compiled at the time of its 150th anniversary celebration, the church was dedicated in 1854 by a Rev. Mr. Hoyle of Madison Court House. Mr. Hoyle also named the church, choosing a name from the Bible.

Drawing further from the church history, it is seen that certain repairs and renovations have been made to the church. In the beginning, it was a simple, long, high ceilinged hall with three windows on each side. According to the history, the church has been reroofed twice. Around 1880, a new shingle roof was put on by J. Eheart of Greene County and again in 1900 the present tin roof was put on by Sandy Rhoades of Stanardsville. At about the same time interior improvements were made. Walls were papered, carpet and pews were bought and a new pulpit was made and presented to the church by J. T. Harlow. The vestibule was added in 1920. Mr. Harlow did the work. Of course, it has been painted since the history was compiled but at that time it had had only four coats of paint in 100 years, perhaps typifying the universal poverty of the South during the period succeeding the Civil War.

Sometime during the 1880's, the history says, the church was painted by Brown Bros. of Earlysville. In 1909 Jack Grove of Alexandria painted it, Eugene and Ashton Cox of Earlysville painted it again in 1920, and Jesse Powell of Greene County painted it in 1936. In 1937 the interior was redecorated with plastered walls, metal ceiling, hardwood floors and lights. The latter was a donation from Miss Fannie Mary Early, a Greene Countian who had gone to Washington, D.C. and worked there for the government. Miss Fannie was a daughter of one of the church's earliest members, Mrs. Mary Alice Stonnell Early Parrott. The lights were generated by a Kola

unit.

Other gifts to the church include a piano from Mrs. E. T. Early, Bible from the late W. S. Chapman, collection plates from Mrs. G. T. (nee Chapman) Lancaster of West Virginia, communion cloth from Mr. E. T. Early and Mrs. G. T. Gilbert. John S. Chapman, New York attorney, gave a baptismal bowl in memory of his mother, Mrs. J. S. Chapman, Sr. The land for the cemetery was given by the late P. Z. Smith. Stained glass windows have been installed (eleven in all) by members of the church or in their memory. A communion service was given by Mrs. Tom Douglas of Albemarle County in 1938.

In 1954 Delmas LeTellier made and gave the church a brass cross. The same year, a new register of attendance, offering board and hymnal were obtained for the church. Mrs. Ennis Gilbert and Mrs. Wilbur Deane gave altar hangings in 1952 and the late George C. Davis donated drapes in the anniversary year. Delmas LeTellier installed a new chancel rail in 1954 in memory of the late J. I. Detamore. Mrs. Margaret Bickers and her family gave new collection plates in memory of her late husband, Nelson Bickers.

In 1959 Sunday School rooms were added to the church. Old flues were torn down and central heating installed. New hymnals were purchased in 1968. Mrs. J. R. Graves (Addie Scribner) gave two brass flower vases in 1971 in memory of her mother, Mrs. George Scribner. Mrs. Pauline (Scribner) LeTellier gave two solid brass candlesticks in 1970.

It is worthy to note the many gifts that the church has received, but the most notable gift was not mentioned in the short history of the church. James I. Detamore (8/20/1872 - 6/12/1935) willed the church \$1,000 to be put on interest to assist in paying the pastor's salary; secondly \$600 to be put on interest, interest to be used to help in paying the salary of a special preacher to assist in the revivals; thirdly \$250 to be put on interest, interest to be used for the upkeep of the cemetery at Mount Paran Church. He

also entailed a house and seven acres of land after the death of his brother and his five children to be sold and put on interest, interest to be used for the upkeep of Mount Paran Church in any way it should be needed.

This will is recorded in Will Book #3, page 136 in the Clerk's Office of Greene County. It was probated December 12, 1935. Mr. Detamore's brother, J. W. Detamore was appointed as executor of his will. Robert Watson, Arthur May, Roy Detamore, H. S. Dickerson and Robert Fray were appointed appraisers of his estate. The land has been sold and money put in trust for the church.

The following is a list of ministers who have served at Mount Paran Church:

Roy E. Payne 1877-1880	Rev. W. A. Oser 1911-1912
Rev. Robert W. Watts 1877-1880	Rev. J. B. Lavinder 1912-1915
Rev. Richard Furgerson 1880-1881	Rev. H. J. Brown 1915-1920
Rev. James F. Brannin 1881-1883	Rev. J. B. Askew 1920-1923
Rev. James H. Crown 1883-1887	Rev. W. W. Trent 1923-1925
Rev. James Boggs 1887-1889	Rev. J. N. Ragsdale 1925-1929
Rev. Columbus S. Wamsley 1889-1890	Rev. L. B. Bland 1929-1933
Rev. Charles L. Bane 1890-1892	Rev. Burnett and R. G. Pullen 1933-1934
Rev. Robert F. Beadles 1892-1895	Rev. W. L. Asher 1934-1935
Rev. John Q. Rhodes 1895-1897	Rev. O. L. Hager 1935-1937
Rev. W. A. S. Conrad 1897-1901	Rev. J. B. Lavinder (second time) 1937-1938
Rev. Ernst F. Hall 1901-1905	Rev. L. C. Vaughan 1938-1942
Rev. William B. Moore 1905-1907	Rev. W. E. Pollard 1942-1943
Rev. J. K. Holman 1907-1911	

During the period from 1943 to 1964, the following preachers supplied at Mount Paran Church:

Rev. Blackwell	Rev. Leon Lee	Rev. Agee
Rev. Sydney Sandridge	Rev. Peter Burkett	
Rev. Bernard Via	Rev. George Waters	
Rev. Donald Flynn	Rev. Canoles	

Smith  
Phares Z. Smith  
1857-1936  
Mary E. Smith  
1855-1937

Magdalene N. Bickers  
September 14, 1931  
October 5, 1931  
Gone to be an Angel

Bickers  
Franklin Lemuel Bickers  
May 7, 1904  
September 28, 1957

Willie Anthony Bickers  
11/2/1903  
At Rest

William H. Bickers  
May 28, 1902  
October 17, 1968  
James C. Bickers  
March 5, 1913  
May 15, 1969

~~James Thomas Bickers~~  
~~October 4, 1879~~  
March 28, 1954  
Sue Tatum Bickers  
December 14, 1876  
February 16, 1962

Jimmie E. Bickers Price  
January 10, 1856  
October 14, 1933

Richard R. Raynor  
February 19, 1937  
August 28, 1974  
Betty B. Raynor  
August 16, 1940

Jame W. Raynor  
Margaret Raynor  
Russell D. Raynor  
March 1, 1900  
November 17, 1971

2 Riddells

Carl C. Roach  
May 3, 1909  
August 12, 1934  
Larry J. Roach  
January 15, 1920  
June 8, 1944