

Partial writings by Mildred C. Thompson, Past Historian (from our recent past):

Locust Grove History prior to 1900

"Located on Windsor Road (Route 3), one of the most historic sites in Mathews County, is Locust Grove United Methodist Church. This church serves a community built on and around the 18th century land holdings of the world-famous botanist, John Clayton. Windsor was his home for more than fifty years.

The church began as a Sunday School in the latter part of the 19th century and met in the public-school building. The area was known as Morgan's Branch as was the public school. The Sunday School that was meeting there adopted the same name. As the community grew and spread southward more space was needed for the Sunday School which was growing rapidly. The first project to raise money for the construction of a new building was held on the night of December 14, 1894. Many more projects to raise funds for the new building followed. A citizen gave a plot of land near the center of the community—the present site. A frame building was erected at an estimated cost of \$1500. Locust trees were planted for shade.

Previous to this time the families had been attending church services at Mathews Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This was inconvenient, considering the mode of travel at the time. The next step was to establish a church in the community to be used for church services as well as for Sunday School. Procedures were taken to join the Virginia Methodist Conference. A new name was necessary since the change to a new location. Locust Grove was suitably chosen because locust trees, a favorite yard tree of the vicinity, were already growing on the site. The new church was named Locust Grove Methodist Episcopal Church, South and was dedicated in the summer of 1900."

Locust Grove History from 1900 – 1940

"Locust Grove was dedicated in the summer of 1900. With the turn of the century, a new church was born. Before the end of the first decade more space was needed. Plans had to be formulated for enlargement. The end result of these plans was an addition across the back, giving the building a shape resembling a "T." This nearly double the former seating capacity; however, the new addition which the people were so pleased with wasn't satisfactory from the beginning. It was always very hard to heat and the shape of the two roofs made it awfully hard for the minister to be heard all over the building.

Few repairs were made during the years immediately preceding and during World War 1, so that the early twenties found the church building badly in need of repairs. Meetings were held and plans were made to completely rebuild the church building. The top of the "T" was removed entirely and the body of the "T" enlarged and extended backward. Most of the material from the old building was salvaged and reused. For added room and attractiveness, a recessed pulpit was added to the back of this structure.

While this building program was being instigated, both the Sunday school program and the church services were carried on in the large home of one of the members. This building served and adequately met the needs of the community and remained its central interest throughout the Depression Era and the years immediately following.

By the late 30's the Locust Grove Church building could not meet the growing needs of its membership. All classes were suffering from the handicap of crowded inadequate facilities. This pressing problem was carefully reviewed, and the late thirties saw a building fund established. Enough money had accumulated in the building fund to begin definite plans by the early 40's."

Partial writings by Mildred C. Thompson, Past Historian (Cont.)

Locust Grove History in Pictures- continuing church history into the 1940s:

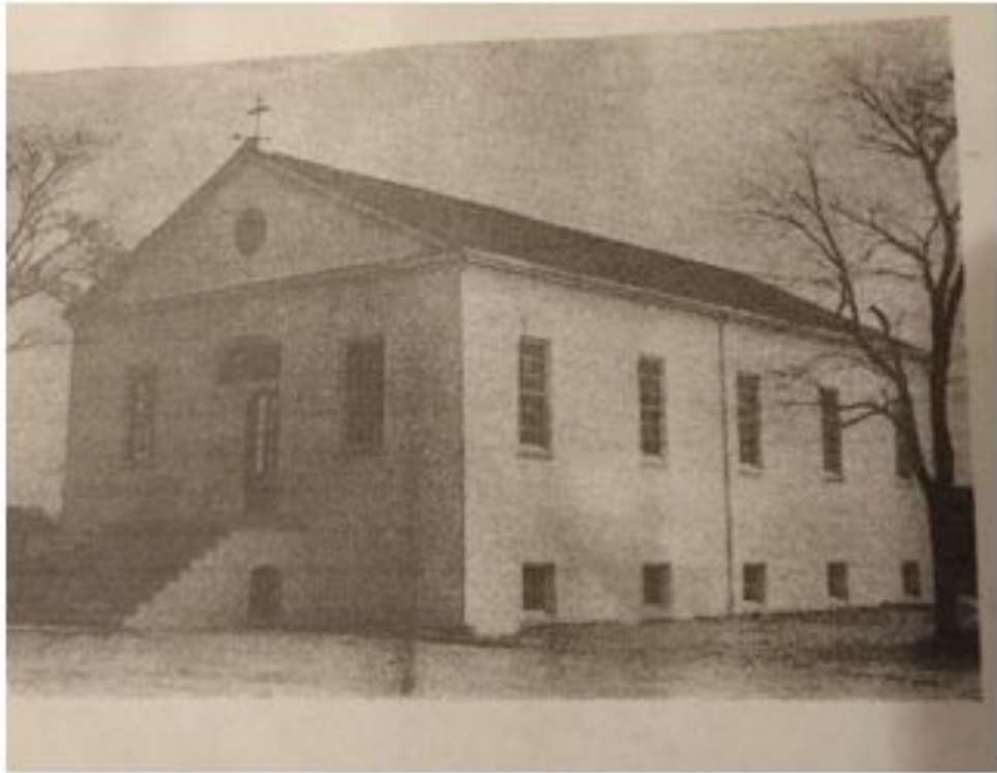
Trips were planned and made to inspect several existing church plans and many plans studied before one was found which seemingly best met the needs at the least possible output of money. A blueprint was drawn by an architect to meet specifically, the stated needs on the limited budget.

Even though the Building Fund had been growing for several years, it was not large enough and several thousand dollars would have to be borrowed. (It should be noted that the first buildings were constructed for only hundreds of dollars and contributions of time and talents but that in the present era thousands were needed).

Final decisions being made, and a contractor engaged, work began. The old building was put on rollers and pulled back and excavation made for the new. The members had decided to build a brick church but after thoroughly investigating the total cost it was suggested that cinder blocks be used with a brick veneer instead, thus saving many hundreds of dollars. It was finally agreed that the new building was to be constructed of cinder blocks and later brick veneered when the necessary funds could be made available. At the time this seemed to be a wise plan and met with unanimous approval.

The entire educational facility was provided for on the lower level (basement) of the new structure. Besides the combination social - assembly hall, this area was planned to consist of the furnace room, kitchen, numerous classrooms, and storage room. Between the lower and upper level, a rest room was provided. On the upper level or main floor of the building provision was made for the Sanctuary, choir room, pastor's study, cloak closets and another rest room.





Locust Grove History from 1949

Members of the Youth Fellowship of 1949 were mostly comprised of the same members of the Active Adult Fellowship Class of 1970. Those members in 1949, took on as one of their long-term projects to do the landscaping and care of the church yard. Dreams were indeed coming true.

Enthusiasm was mounting in the membership of the church and the surrounding area. Annual conference records were improving, all district records were improving, and organizations were showing an all-time high of increased activity and output.

Within three years, the membership was able to complete the upstairs and the Sanctuary with its furnishings, which included all new pews, runners for the aisles, and the purchase of a new electric organ. The church also received many gifts such as the altar hangings, altar set, offering plates, and the painting of Christ by a member.

During this time, the church was able to increase the pastor's salary to seek by 1952, with its sister church Mathews Chapel, superior pastoral leadership. As a result a most capable young minister, who was just entering the Virginia Conference was sent to the charge and allowed by request to remain and guide and work with them for the next seven years.

By mid-October of 1952 reorganization of the entire church program was underway according to the most recent revision of the Discipline of the Methodist Church. Before long, all necessary offices and committees were set up and functioning efficiently.

Locust Grove History in the 1950s

The fifties saw the church debt paid off, the perma-stone finish applied to the building and a portico added to the front entrance, making a much more attractive building.

Progress along other lines then in the church building itself was made. Everyone, for instance, experienced a great thrill the first Sunday the choir appeared in its new robes and were also greatly impressed from time to time with the many new renditions of special music.

In 1952, the first wedding was held at Locust Grove. Lloyd Daniels was pastor at Locust Grove from 1958- 1960. Daniels had to leave early and was filled in by David Draine.

In this period also, the great need for a new home for the minister and his family could no longer be pushed aside. The parsonage committees got to work and in record time, plans were drawn up and the new parsonage under construction and completed.

At the homecoming Day celebration, September 14, 1958, a little less than ten years after construction began on this lovely church home, the members of Locust Grove bowed humbly in sincere prayers of thanksgiving. Each warm heart dwelled with gratitude and thanksgiving, and with fond memories for the inspiration of each guiding spirt gone on before.

Pastors of Locust Grove Church from 1900...

Rev. John S.Pribble (Curcuit Preacher)	1900
Ware	????-????
Craig	????-????
Jackson	????-????
Salmon	1927-1931
Clarence England	1931-1935
J. T. Mills	1935-1939
Jack B. Taylor	1939-1943
O. L. Gochenour	1943-1947
Boyd E. Hudson	1947-1949
William B. Epps	1949-1951
Charles E. Carpenter	????-????
Lloyd Daniels	1958-1960

Locust Grove History (Looking Back in the 1970's)

Looking back in Locust Grove history to the 1970s. This is a picture of the men's choir group from the 1970s. They were invited to sing from time to time at other churches, and of course sang together from time to time at our own church.

Pictured" organist Brenda Clements with men's choir beginning front row from left to right: Pete Cray, Alex Dinwidde, Soles Howlett, Reverend Robert Taylor - back row left to right: Guy Kemp, Dicky Clements, Ralph Hearn, and Danny Howlett.

