

## The Henderson Baptist Church

The Henderson Baptist Church was organized at the Henderson meeting house, Pitt County, North Carolina, on July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1808. The <sup>organization</sup> church was first called the Pitt Swift-Creek Baptist Church, but by common consent this name soon gave place to the name which is the subject of this sketch. The church was located, when first organized, in the south central part of Pitt County near Swift-Creek

Swamp.

The charter members of this church come from the Red Bank Baptist Church, which was located about eight miles north east of where the new church was organized. These members were, - Jonathan Fellows, James Ringold, Chas. Holdren, Reziah Mills, Peggie Stokes, Sarah Hellen, Elizabeth Hellen, Sarah Tucker.

There were present at the organization Elders Amiziah Biggs and John McCabe both of whom preached at

on that occasion.

After the organization was effected, and the preaching was over the Church held its first conference. The doors of the Church were opened for the reception of members. Four presented themselves as candidates for baptism, viz - James Powell, Kiddy Powell, Jemimah Petitt and Grace, a black woman.

At the following conferences the Church officers were duly elected. At the conference of 15 Sept. 1809 delegates were appointed to attend the association.

which was soon to convene  
with the Bear Creek Church.  
The church sent thirty shillings  
to the association by its del-  
egates.

By the end of the second year  
the membership had reached thirty  
and the church seemed to be  
in good condition even though  
they had called no pastor. It was  
in November, 1810, before a regular  
pastor came to take charge of the  
work. At this meeting Rev. W<sup>m</sup>  
P. Biddle of the Loudon Bridge  
Church, of Virginia, was present  
& preached. After preaching

was over the Church sat in  
Conference and extended a  
call to Mr. Biddle to become  
their pastor. The call was  
accepted and he served the  
Church as pastor until 18<sup>45</sup>~~30~~.

At the April Conference in 1811  
Bet & Grace, black women, were  
brought up before the Church  
to give an account of a dispute  
which had taken place between  
them. Joe, a black man,  
was the witness in the case.  
Says the minutes, "After hearing  
in detail the witness Grace & Bet  
were both excommunicated"

Occasionally members were excluded for drunkenness, lying, fornication, deferred payment of debts etc. The colored members were often excluded for stealing, - especially for stealing chickens. Members, both black and white, were sometimes excluded for being absent from conference meetings.

The records show that once each year the church had a three days meeting in its early history. At this meeting visitors from the sister churches were always

present. Business of a general nature was attended to, several sermons were preached, the Lords supper was served etc.

Nothing of unusual importance occurred in the church for several years after its organization. Meetings were held regularly, money was raised to be sent to the Association each year, the growth of the church was gradual.

The discipline of the church was carried out very carefully. At one time Elisha Harrison was very severely dealt with for swearing but finally he

was restricted to membership.

At the regular Conference in August 1820 Jacobus Blount was granted license to preach, this is the first man licensed by the Church to the gospel ministry.

At the April Conference of 1830 Wm. Cox & Jesse Petit were both brought before the Church charged with fornication. Upon a thorough & continued investigation both were found guilty and "excommunicated" from the same Conference of 1830 the following



Clipping is taken. —

"It is agreed that we raise ten dollars to assist Bro. Wait on his way while preaching the gospel to the destitute of our state wherever God may be pleased to direct him."

In June 1846 Rev. J. D. Ellwell was chosen pastor of the church. During the first year of his pastorate several special meetings were held, and as a result of these meetings about thirty new members were added to the church. The services rendered the church

by his preaching seemed to be very satisfactory and beneficial to the church. The following is a copy of the December minutes in the third year of his ministry for the church.

"At our December meeting, commencing Saturday before the 1st Sunday, 1848, a prospect of a revival appeared and the meeting was protracted and continued for two weeks. Bro. Jno. D. Ellwell, pastor of the Church, and Bro. Thos. Potter preached the word day and night. In conference

at different periods, Bro. Stevell  
moderator, the following persons  
came forward for membership, viz, -  
Jno. W. Dawson, Levi Dawson, Alfred  
F. Ryal, Fenner Nelson, Sarah  
McLohon, Joseph Wothington, W. H.  
Smith, Alfred Lane, J. C. Jenkins,  
Charity Dawson, Susan Dawson,  
Jemima Hodder, Elizabeth  
McLohon, Lois Wothington, Nancy  
Edwards. The colored applicants  
were, Ben, Bob, Daniel, Miles,  
Miriam & Rachel. After giving  
satisfactory evidence of their faith  
in Christ all these were  
received. Eleazar Ellis Ch. Clk.<sup>12</sup>

The Church continued in a very flourishing condition during the five years that Mr. Elwell was its pastor.

Following him as pastors were Thos. W. Royfield, Reuben Newton, J. K. White, — Whitson + Spivey. During the pastorate of these men there was evidently very little activity in the Church. The last minutes of any meeting of the Church at the Handcove Meeting house was in July 1867. The anti-missionary spirit which had crept into the Church with the waning effect of the war

was no doubt the cause of the  
disorganization of the church at  
Hardscree Meeting House.

In 1881 the church was reorga-  
nized. The following is a copy, in  
part, of the first minutes after  
reorganization.

"Through the instrumentality of  
Rev. W. B. Knight the scattered  
members of the Hardscree Church  
were collected together at the  
Worthington School house on  
the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in May 1881 and  
reorganized, after which the doors  
of the church were opened for the

reception of members, fine were received - - - - - as candidates for baptism." One month after this the church met for service in Mr. J. C. Cox's shop. Regular worship was continued in this shop for nearly two years. At the August meeting of 1882 a committee composed of Richd M<sup>r</sup>. Lowhon, R. P. Corroll and A. G. Cox were appointed to procure funds and have a church house built. By May 1883 the new house was ready for use. The church at this time assumed the name "Antioch

Baptist Church". Rev. Mr.  
Knight served the church as pastor  
for three years.

The following is a list of the  
names of pastors and length of  
service they rendered the Church  
at Antirach:

Rev. Thos. Carrier - one year.

Rev. W. J. Fulford - five years.

Rev. C. S. Cashwell - one year.

Rev. J. J. Barker - two years.

Rev. A. D. Hunter - two years

Rev. R. D. Corroll - two years

Rev. W. F. Pilber - one year

Rev. G. N. Bury - one year

The town of Winterville

having grown up about one mile from the Dutch Church it was decided in 1898 to build a new house of worship and move there. The church retained its old name of "Dutch" until the ~~summer~~ May Conference of 1907 when it was decided to change it to "The Winterville Protestant Church".

Since the church has been moved to Winterville Revs. W. L. Bilbro, J. H. Faulkner, C. W. Blanchard, and J. H. King have served it as pastors. The church now has about one hundred



members, practically all of whom contribute regularly to its support. Regular preaching services are held each first and third Sundays. Prayer meeting services are held on Sunday and Wednesday nights.

I find from the records of this Church that ~~was~~ sixty years ago Pitt County had eight Missionary Baptist Churches with a probable membership of as many hundred. Today the county has a population of about 35000 people and only five Missionary Baptist Churches

with a membership of  
about four hundred.

Jr. Thesis  
C. J. Jackson