

History of the Conway Methodist Church and Parsonages

This is a brief compellation of work by Carl Sessions,
Paul Quattlebaum, Greg Martin and others.

The first known church site in this area was known as the “Old Camp Ground” two miles west of Conway on the Georgetown road. In those days the only road to Georgetown from Conwayboro was present-day Ninth Avenue; and it distinguished the outskirts of town. The Campground Cemetery is still maintained.

Bishop Asbury preached here in Conwayboro at the Episcopal Church which is now the site of Kingston Presbyterian Church.

The first Methodist Church to be organized in Conway was in 1828 by a small group of women in Mrs. Jane Norman’s boarding house on Main Street, which was midway the block between Third and Fourth Avenues [recognize Norman Alley?] Her garden was where the Trestle Restaurant and adjacent office are now. “Aunt Jane” placed a bowl at the entrance to her dining room to collect funds for a building, and that bowl is here today.

In 1842 Mary Hillen donated property on Fifth and Main to the Church, referred to in some reports as the Waccamaw Church; or Conwayboro Church, Waccamaw Circuit.

In 1846 the first sanctuary of the then Methodist Episcopal Church was built on the site of the Hut, previously called “the Little Church.” A small wooden building facing Main Street, the men entered the sanctuary through the door to the left and sat on the left. Women entered through the right-hand door and sat to the right.

The first church bell that rang in Conway was given by Mrs. Charlotte Norman Congdon, and it first tolled at her funeral in the Methodist Episcopal Cemetery, adjacent to the wooden sanctuary.

In 1852 the first parsonage was built and was later the site of F. A. Burroughs's residence. It is now the site of the Peoples Federal Building.

Prior to 1864 the ministers who served this church were itinerants. It is recorded that Lewis Scarborough preached here during 1841—1842.

In 1875 Burroughs and Collins donated land out Elm Street, across 9th Avenue on the left. The second parsonage was built there and was used until late 1916.

The Women's Foreign Missionary Society was organized in 1878, one of the oldest Missionary Societies in South Carolina.

In 1898 the original wooden church was dismantled and the lumber was sold to Col. D.A. Spivey [Spivey Hood's great-grandfather]. The lumber was used to build a residence on Fourth Avenue which is within the white building across from Hamp's Hardware parking lot.

The Gothic style brick structure was built thereafter on the original site and cost \$3,500—membership was 113. The first marriage in the new sanctuary was Miss Lella Burroughs to Col. Hal Buck [Buck Cutts's grandparents].

Our Mission Style sanctuary, where we are today, was completed in 1910 at the cost of \$13,000 to a membership of 208. Seating capacity was 500. The first service was held October 9, 1910.

The wooden structure which was originally the Norton Drug Store on Main Street, was moved "with a stump puller and mules" to Laurel Street

before 1891. The church purchased the house and lot from Dr. J. C. Norton October 20, 1916. It became the third parsonage. The Norton Drug Store later became Platt's Pharmacy and now is the site of Waccamaw Gallery.

The Service Class was formed in 1917 for women. The Hut Bible Class for men began in 1919.

In 1938 an education wing was added. The structure began behind the sanctuary and went West just past the nearby sidewalk.

In 1940 the Women's Foreign Missionary Society changed its name to Women's Society of Christian Service.

Mr. & Mrs. Edward Burroughs purchased the Laurel Street parsonage in 1943; it was extensively remodeled, and it is now the home of Dick and Wanda Kleine.

That same year, 1943, the church bought the house and lot on the corner of Laurel Street and 5th Avenue from the heirs of J. A. Lewis—parsonage number four.

The education wing was expanded to the west in 1952 to what was the common area at the base of the steps.

The Laurel & 5th parsonage was purchased and dismantled by C. E. Sasser in 1954. First Church then purchased a lot on Elm Street and the present parsonage was completed in January, 1955.

The all-time high membership of 1,200 occurred in 1958, and Trinity Methodist was formed. At that time Conway Methodist Church became First Methodist Church.

The Gothic-style sanctuary which could seat 600 was completed in 1961 at a cost of \$164, 000, and included education and administrative space that connected to the 1952 education wing.

The uniting of Women's Society of Christian Service and Wesleyan Guild in 1972 created The United Methodist Women.

The Schantz pipe organ was installed in 1973 at a cost of \$58,000.

On October 9, 1988 the needlepoint pulpit chair covers and altar kneelers, donated and stitched by Methodists and friends were dedicated.

The Family Life Center was consecrated November 14, 1999.

On October 10, 2010: After One hundred years and one day, we gather once again in the 1910 sanctuary as our education structures from 1938 and 1961 sanctuary are being renovated.

Mary Ellen Rogers Scarborough