

HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS  
OF GREENSBORO

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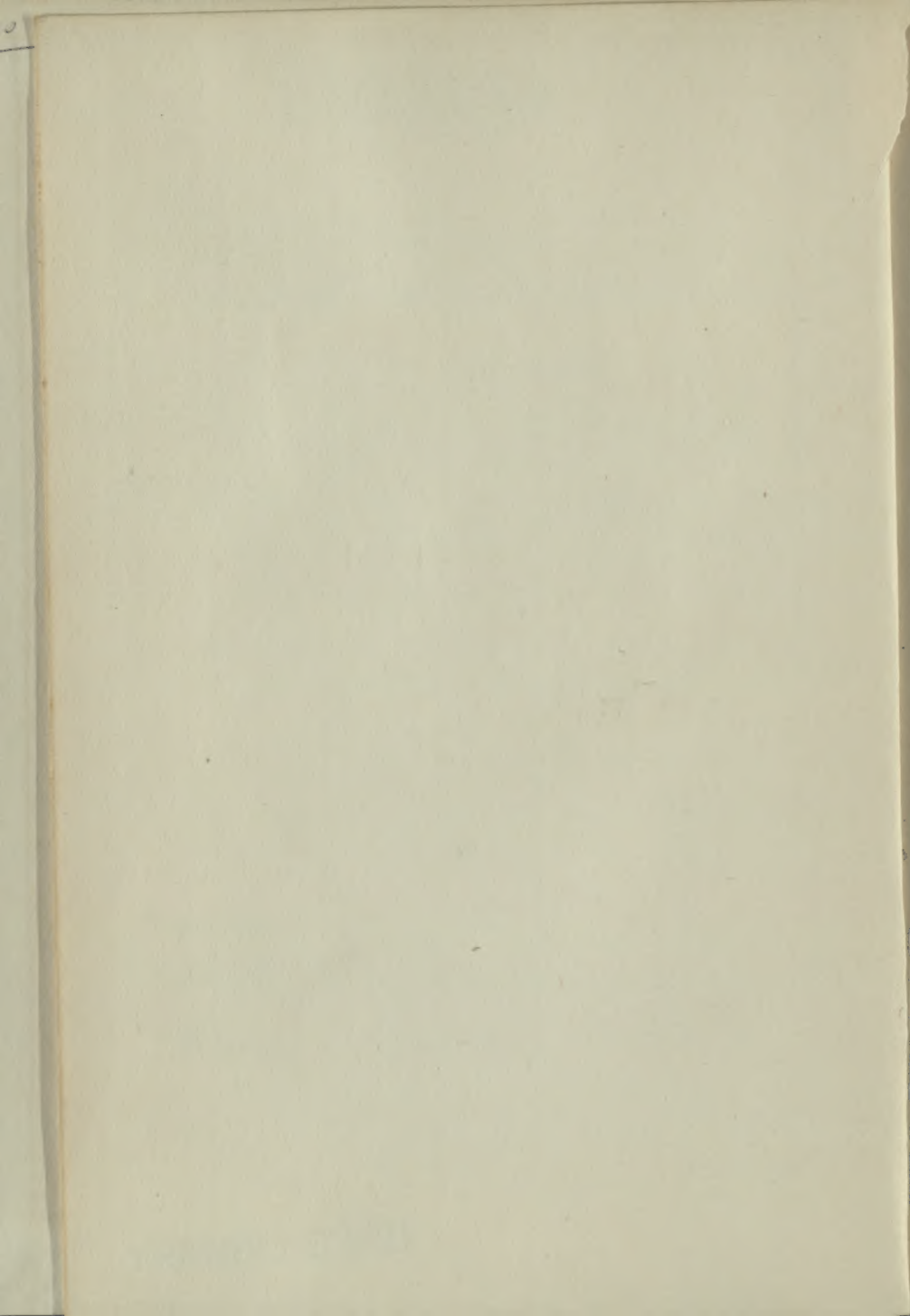
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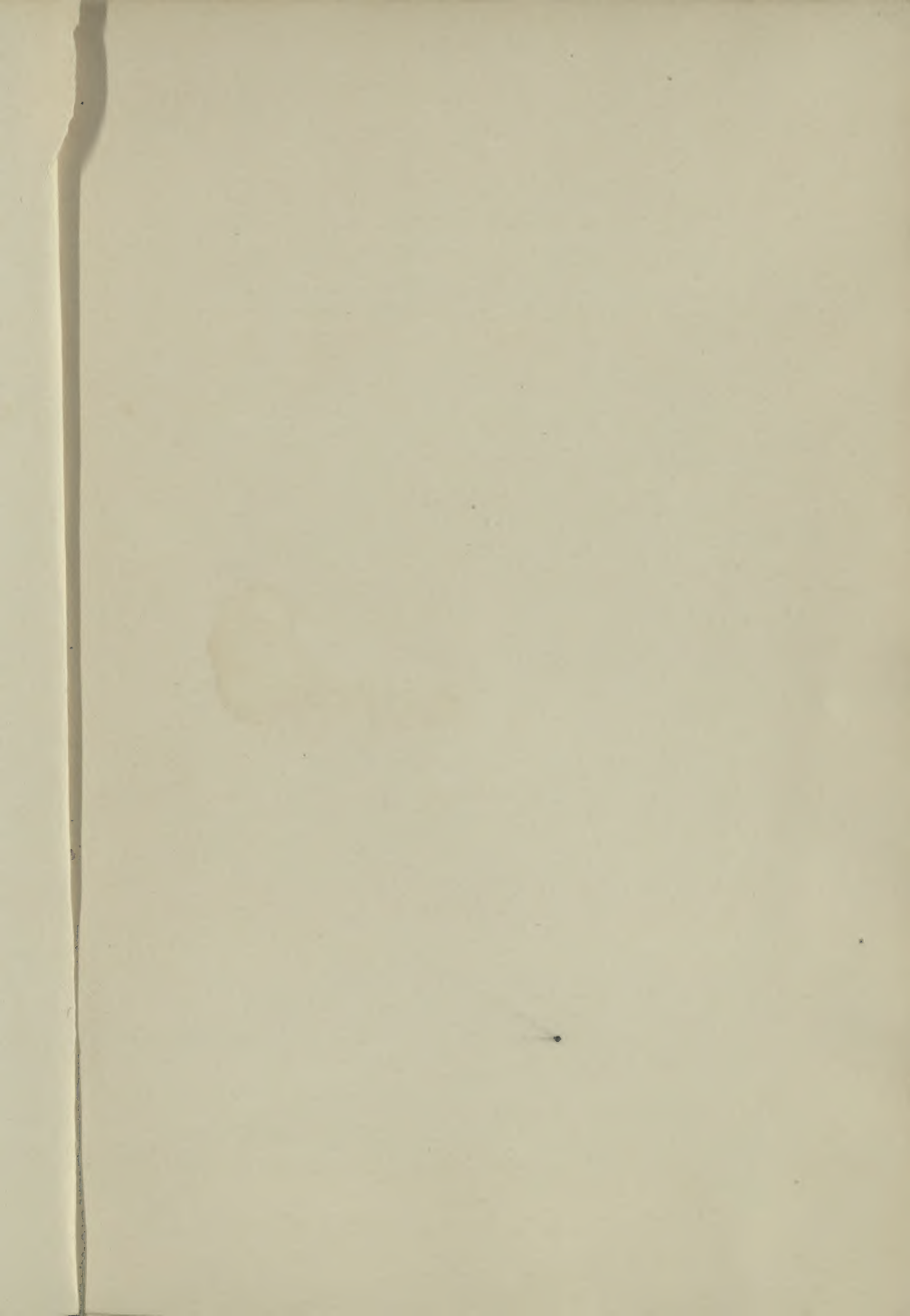


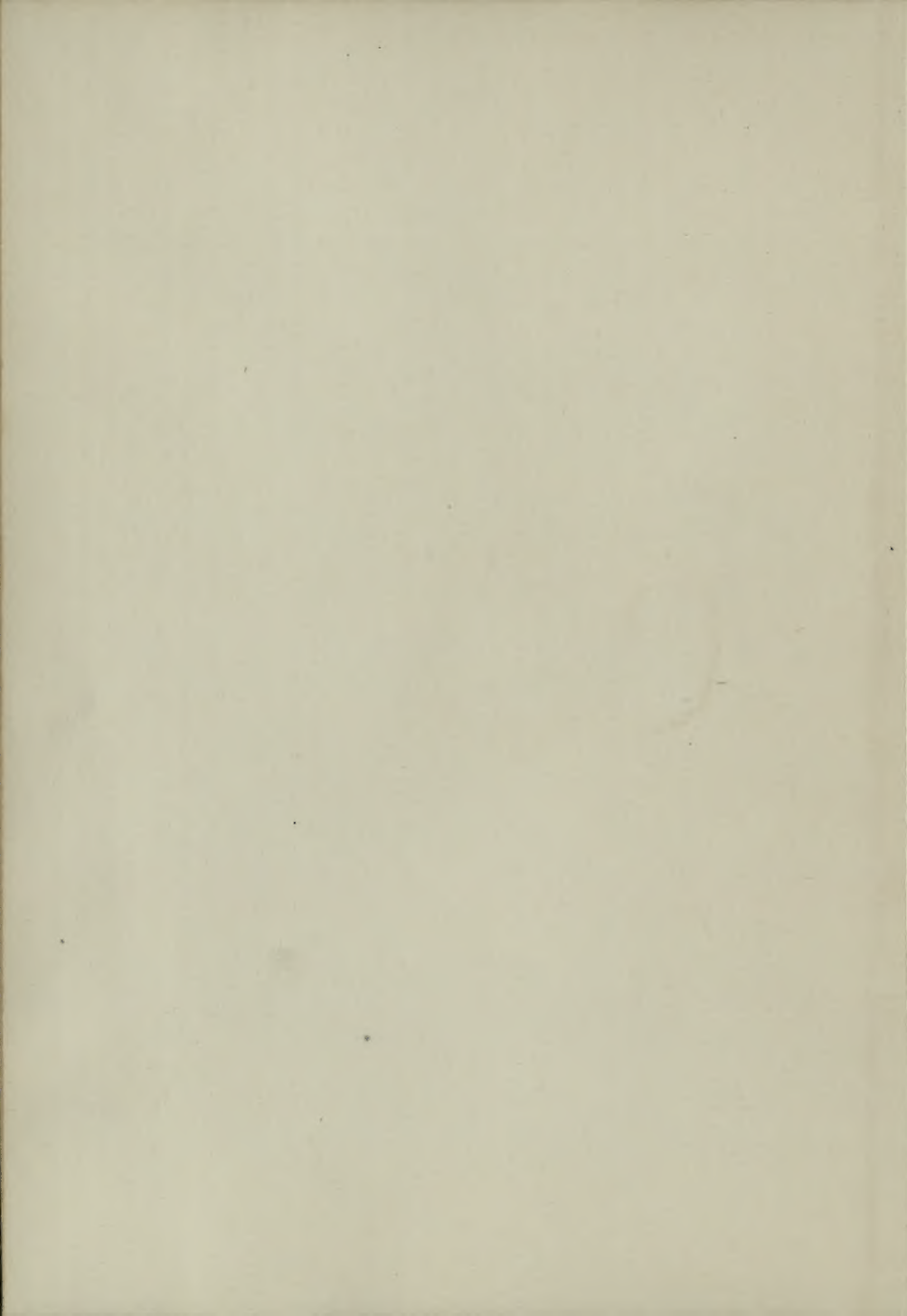
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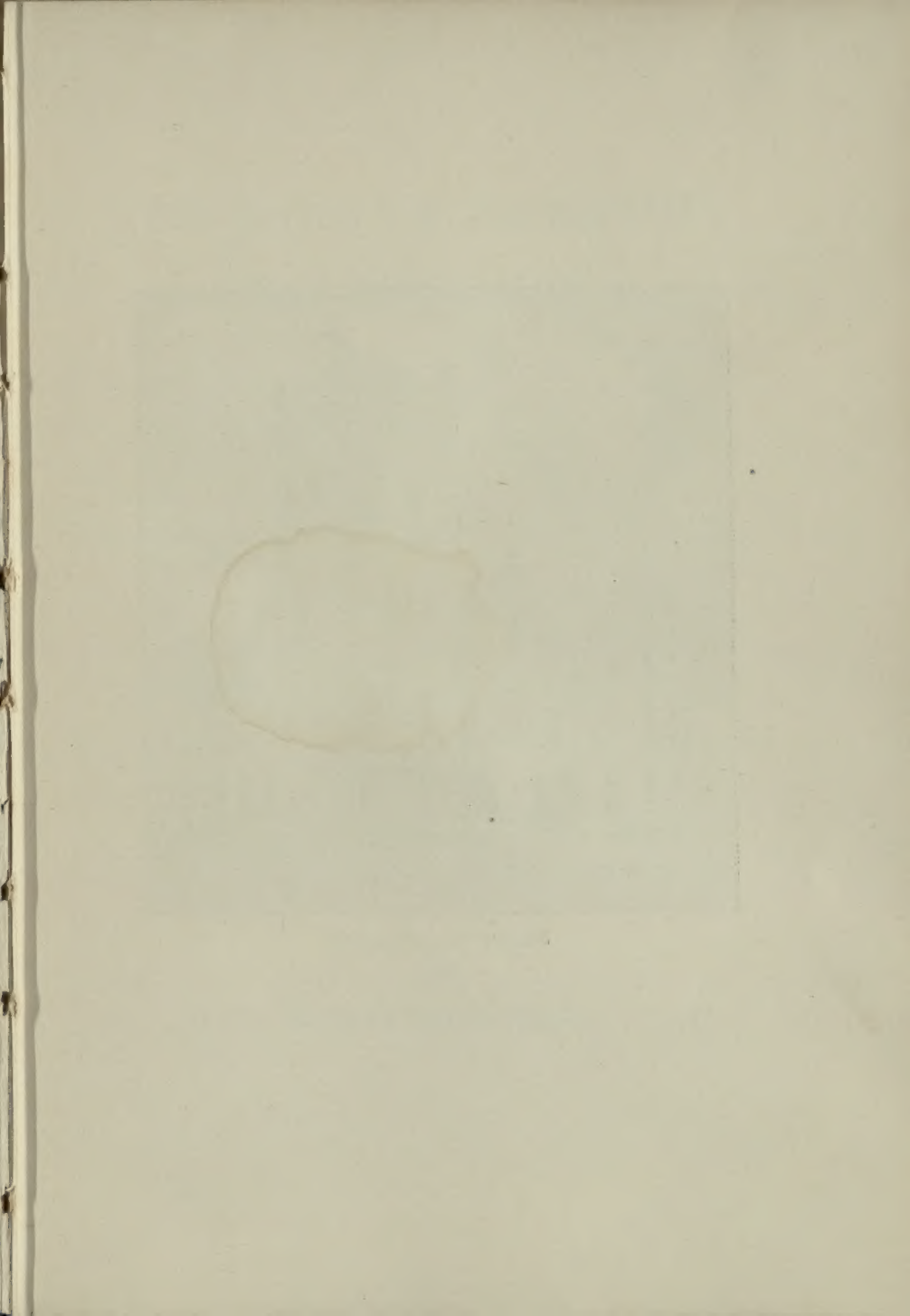
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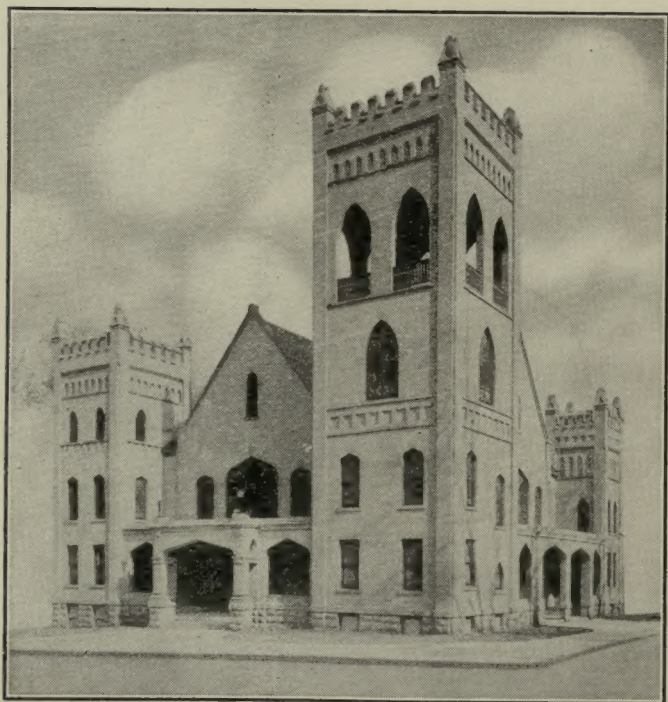










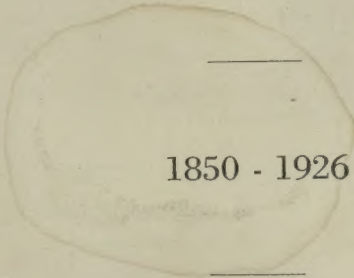


PRESENT BUILDING, 1926



# THE HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS OF GREENSBORO, N. C.

*With particular reference  
to the work and growth  
of the First Baptist Church*



1850 - 1926

BY  
WALTER WHEAT ROWE

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## INTRODUCTION

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The writer of this sketch, Dr. Walter Wheat Rowe, came to Greensboro in 1883, directly from the University of Maryland, where he had graduated in dentistry. For forty-three years he has been a member of this church. At different times he has served as deacon, church clerk, church treasurer, clerk to the board of deacons, teacher in the Sunday school, and was the first superintendent of our Cherry Street mission, later moved and organized into Proximity Church. In the early days of this church, when it was struggling for existence, he was constantly loyal, faithful and true. After R. L. Vernon moved to Charlotte, Dr. Rowe became, by virtue of years of service, senior deacon of the First Baptist Church and still occupies that position. He states that as the years go by he becomes a deeper rooted Baptist, and becomes firmer in his belief that the fundamental doctrines taught by our church are scripturally right.

His wife, Mary Dyson Rowe, daughter of Thomas Dyson, was the adopted daughter of Rev. E. F. Baldwin, missionary to the Berbers, with headquarters at Tangier, Morocco. She spent two years at Tangier with the Baldwin family. She died about twenty years ago. Both Dr. Rowe and his wife were born in Philadelphia. Mrs. Rowe was a faithful member of this church and a devoted friend of our orphanage.

Dr. Rowe's work in collecting and compiling the history of this church is a labor of love which will grow in value with the passing of the years.

A. WAYLAND COOKE.

Greensboro, N. C., September 15, 1926.



TO OUR PASTOR  
DR. J. CLYDE TURNER  
WHO FOR SIXTEEN YEARS HAS PATIENTLY AND GENTLY  
SHEPHERDED THE FLOCK, THIS HISTORY IS  
LOVINGLY DEDICATED

## FOREWORD

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There has been a short history of the founding of our church to the present time, but in justice to the faithful brothers and sisters whose efforts to establish an enduring church, those pioneers who, in the face of adversity, went prayerfully and sturdily along laying a foundation they knew not how strong, how deep, let us see who they were and what they did to make it possible for us to "carry on."

Surely it can be said of them that they "fought a good fight," that "they kept the faith," and that they have (or will have) received the crown of righteousness that our Heavenly Father has prepared for his faithful servants.

W. W. R.

## PASTORS

The following have served as pastors of the church:

Elder Elias Dodson.  
Amos Weaver.  
----- Jackson, 1851  
John Mitchell, 1859-'61.  
Patrick Fountain, 1865-'67.  
F. H. Jones, 1868-'70.  
J. B. Richardson, 1871-'74.  
Thomas Hume, 1875.  
S. F. Conrad, 1876.  
H. Petty, 1878.  
Trezvant Harrison, 1879.  
E. F. Baldwin, 1880-'84.  
W. R. Gwaltney, 1885-'90.  
W. B. Wingate, 1890-'92.  
C. A. G. Thomas, 1893-'95.  
Livingston Johnson, 1895-1901.  
W. C. Newton, 1901-'02.  
Henry W. Battle, 1903-'07.  
J. L. White, 1908-'10.  
J. Clyde Turner, 1910-

## THE FIRST BAPTIST IN GREENSBORO

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In 1820, when Rev. Wm. Paisley came to Greensboro to establish a Presbyterian church and school, there were eighteen or twenty families and only one professing Christian in the little village, Major Jones Johnson, who was a Baptist.

This item was copied from a paper, and has been corroborated by others. There seems to be no further account of Major Johnson in the *Colonial Records* or from any other source.



## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNING OF THE WORK AND ORGANIZATION

About 1850, Elder Elias Dodson (called "The Indian Missionary"), working under the Baptist Home Mission Board, came to Greensboro and found five loyal sisters meeting together and trying to keep alive a little unorganized church. He preached to them in the old court house which stood in the middle of the street, at the intersection of Elm and Market Streets, now known as Jefferson Square.

In his report to the Baptist State Convention (1850) he said that he had baptized ten converts at Greensboro. To this little handful he preached intermittently for several years. We can find no record that this was a permanent organization.

The Methodists having moved into their larger building on West Market Street, they sold their old house in 1851 to the Baptists. It was purchased with private funds by Elder Dodson, and was located on the exact site of A. V. Sapp's store on South Elm Street. Some years later this property was bought from him by the Beulah Association, of which the church was a member. At the meeting of the Association in Yanceyville in 1872, the trustees of the Association were authorized to deed the property to the Greensboro Baptist Church.

During the intervening years the church was supplied by one minister after another until Elder Amos Weaver became the first permanent pastor. Elder Weaver was the grandfather of Dr. Rufus W.

## 12 HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS OF GREENSBORO

Weaver and Dr. Chas. P. Weaver, whose boyhood days were spent in Greensboro and whom we are proud to claim as former members of our church.

Elder Weaver was succeeded by Elder Jackson. R. N. Churchland (licensed by the Liberty Associ-



ELIAS DODSON

ation to preach the gospel) supplied during this interval. Then brighter days came, and with them, like a benediction, came Dr. John Mitchell (1859-1861), who instituted the first permanent organization of the church. Quotation from the old Minute Book reads as follows:

## Greensboro Baptist Church

Constituted

March 13th, 1859

"According to previous appointment, a church was constituted in this place today to be known as 'The Greensboro Baptist Church,' composed of the following members: Peyton H. Bilbro, David W. Motley, Catherine Jolly, Eliza Harwood, Mary D. Gregg, Mary Hiatt, Mary E. Bilbro, Louisa N. Bilbro, Mary A. Shackelford, Mary Barns.

"Also the following [who were supposed to be colored]: James Gretter, Susan Gretter, Moses Patrick, Aggy Morehead.

"Elders Thos. E. Skinner, Levi Thorn and John Mitchell composed the presbytery. The church covenant was read by Elder Mitchell; the charge delivered by Elder Thorn; prayer by Elder Skinner; benediction by Elder Thorn."

The church covenant was the same verbatim as our present covenant.

The rules of order were so rigid that one wonders in the present age how many of our membership could keep and are keeping them.

Quoting from Brother A. Wayland Cooke's short history of the church:

"An organization was brought about and Elder Dodson for many years preached to this little germ of a church, whose membership consisted for some-time of only a few women, whose names are here given that coming generations as well as the present may love their memory. One of them, Mrs. Mary Hiatt (now our beloved Sister Payne, whose genial smiles greet us on almost every Sabbath), we feel ought to be called the mother of the church. Along with

her the other four, consisting of Mrs. Catherine Jolly (mother of Mrs. C. E. Holton), Mrs. Pattie Cole, Mrs. Mary Thomas and Mrs. Martha Newton, who might well be called the charter members of the



JOHN MITCHELL

church. The last two named are the grandmother and aunt respectively of Mr. John Thomas."

Thus was laid, with much faith and prayer and earnest looking to God for guidance, the church, feeble in infancy, growing stronger and stronger under a loving Father's approval, until it has become



a mighty power for good in this community and exerting an influence in many other directions.

After the organization until 1873 in April, Brother Peyton H. Bilbro, who was clerk during this interval, resigned and Brother T. B. Yarborough was



F. H. JONES

elected clerk in his stead. Until this date there is no church record since the foundation in 1859. Brother R. L. Vernon was elected clerk of the church July 10th, 1874; then an unbroken record to September, 1912.

Here let us insert the names of pastors and their terms of service until the coming of Dr. J. B. Richardson:

Amos Weaver; ..... Jackson, 1857; John Mitchell, 1859-'61; Patrick Fountain, 1865-'67; F. H. Jones, 1868-'70; J. B. Richardson, 1871-'74.

## CHAPTER II

### BUILDING OF THE SOUTH ELM STREET CHURCH

With the coming of Dr. Richardson began the struggle for a suitable church building, the old building purchased from the Methodists being inadequate and unsafe.

Let Dr. Richardson tell in his own graphic way the struggle of our people in their efforts to rear this house of the Lord:

“Sometime during the winter of 1870 and '71 at the request of Brother W. B. Crump, I made my first visit to Greensboro. I knew no one living there then. I preached my first sermon in what was then known as Garrett's Hall, the only one in Greensboro. I had only three hearers, viz., Brother W. B. Crump and Sisters M. A. Dixon and Potts. They had, on Saturday evening, paid \$3.00 for the use of said hall to hold our Sabbath service in. This sum we had to pay for every Sabbath we used it. This we did for some time. On this first visit I found that there were only about a dozen members of the church living in and around Greensboro, and they were all poor save Sister Payne, (then Mrs. Hiatt) who had not then moved to Greensboro, though I think she had a home there. It was some six months or more after this visit before Sister Payne joined hands with us.

“The above three first named were the only ones who covenanted with me at first to go forward in God's strength, they agreeing to pay my railroad

expenses and board bills to visit them once a month. Our good Sister Jolly was then living; but, being an invalid, she could seldom be with us. There were one or two other sisters whose names I cannot now recall. On the edge of the town Brother P. H. Bilbro



J. B. RICHARDSON

and wife lived. These were all the Baptists belonging to the church I found in the town. Some six or eight lived in the country, including the families of William and Thomas Buchanan, some four or five miles away. I visited Greensboro six months before I received an invitation to visit any family outside



the Baptist denomination, and (in confidence) such was the contempt in which the Baptists were held by many, I was often hissed as I walked the streets and more than once while I was preaching.

“With my first three hearers, who had called me to the pastorate of the church, we organized a Sunday school with Sister Dixon as superintendent, also a weekly prayer meeting. With this little handful as a beginning, we unfurled our banner to the breezes of Greensboro.

“I mention the above to show the spirit dominating Sister Dixon. It was no idle task she assumed when she faced the frowns heaped upon the Baptist cause in that day, being a lady of high culture and refinement and reared in Richmond, Virginia, where the Baptists were so strong and predominant. Brother W. B. Crump, a cobbler, watchman at the railroad station and a wage earner, was the humble supporter of Sister Dixon and the only brother to stand by her side at this period of the situation. With mine own eyes have I seen Sister Dixon on the way to her Sabbath school, wading through snow six or eight inches deep, with a babe in her arms and leading another little child by the hand, going thus for one-quarter of a mile before the sidewalks had been cleared of snow. Such faithfulness justly inspired her pastor. Often I would say, ‘Sister, how can you face such opposition, and struggle on so faithfully?’ Her reply invariably was, ‘Thus my Savior led. I am only trying to follow Him, and I am happy in the work!’

“Had we no house of worship at this time? Yes, the church owned a little old brick building on South Elm Street, but it was considered unsafe for services.

It was an old dilapidated building bought by the Baptists, I think, before the Civil War, and we could not use it. [This was the church bought by Elder Dodson from the Methodists in 1851, and the same in which Dr. John Mitchell perfected the first organized church.]

“Under the leadership of Sister Dixon we gathered a nucleus—a few faithful ones—and set out to build a new house.

“About this time Sister Hiatt married Col. John Payne and settled in Greensboro and, being an ardent Baptist, though of a Methodist family, she at once came to the side of Sister Dixon. Different in temperament and training, they yet became such co-laborers as but few pastors have ever known in pioneer work. Soon Miss Eliza Hillyard, a sister of Mrs. Dixon, joined them. These sisters made a trio of most consecrated servants of Jesus. In their mission to rebuild Zion’s wall, no quarrying work was too menial for their hands.

“Then about this time the Lord gave us a young brother, the first in our number, who soon proved to be a worthy worker in our great struggle. He at once became as the right hand of his pastor. His name was R. L. Vernon.

“It was inspiring to the weakest to see this band, with the new members coming in, facing difficulties apparently insurmountable. Sisters Dixon and Payne leading, they went to their work with a spirit conscious of victory, and with that faith that removes mountains.

“These leaders often said to their pastor, ‘Toil on, victory is ours; we see it, we feel it, we know it. Some day the Master will give us great power in His

service.' At this far away day I can see this Gideon's Band going into the enemy's camp with the shout of victory.

"One attack of theirs I shall never forget. It was on this wise: We had our new house so nearly completed that we were holding services in it; but there was a note against us for \$700.00 in the bank, secured by a mortgage on our house and lot. One Saturday we were notified that our note would go to protest on the following Monday. The pastor was told by treasurer R. L. Vernon that there was only \$150.00 in the treasury to meet it. On Sunday our little band met, laboring under this heavy burden. They had, as they thought, done all they could to pay off a previous amount. The bank said that if we would pay \$300.00 on Monday they would extend the balance of the payment sixty days, they still to hold the mortgage as security.

"After a sermon to about twenty hearers, of whom thirteen were members, the leaders of the band said, 'Let us try!' and to the struggle they went, Sisters Payne and Dixon leading. Their effort made and money counted, they still lacked \$60.00 of having the necessary \$300.00.

"Silence reigned for a few minutes; silent prayers ascended to the Throne of Grace, and tears were seen in many eyes. Sister Payne broke the heavy suspense by saying, 'This house shall not be sold.' Sister Dixon replied, 'Never! Never!' Brother Vernon repeated the echo. So to their second effort they hurried, when lo! we had \$500.00 to meet the note.

"The next morning at 9 a. m. we were at the bank. It had been said that the \$300.00 required could not

be raised, and that the church must go under the hammer. This was what some people had hoped for. The bank teller counted the \$500.00 in great astonishment, asking, 'Where did you get all this money?' The answer was readily given that the little weak Baptist people had raised every cent of it. The result was that the mortgage was handed over to us, and all the time we wished was given us to pay the remaining \$200.00 without interest.

"In this great victory Brother Vernon and Sisters Payne and Dixon led us. Let me say in conclusion that in all their efforts to establish our cause in Greensboro, to build and furnish our church, these noble sisters never resorted to festivals and like means to raise money. They relied upon the helping power of God to move the people to come to His help against the mighty. Never in all my forty years (spent mostly in pioneer work) have I seen and known such workers. Others, their equals or superiors, there may have been, but it has not been my fortune to know them. In our earthly feelings Heaven is now more attractive as we think of the trio in the higher service they loved so much on earth.

Fraternally,

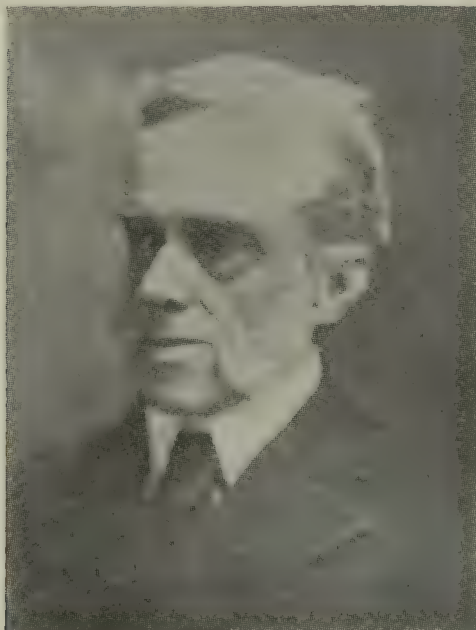
J. B. RICHARDSON.

"High Point, N. C., March 11, 1904."

In speaking of the financial struggle of the church at this period, Dr. Richardson, in his modesty, does not say that he had anything to do personally towards raising these amounts; but the writer, who knew Dr. Richardson as a giver who did not let his left hand know what his right hand doeth, feels assured that he was not behind the others in liberality and down-

right hard work in the erection of a house of worship that was considered quite a credit to our denomination at that time.

During this period of struggle, 1870 to 1874, we might say that the church of our Baptist faith became



THOMAS HUME *See p. 24.*

firmly established. Dr. Richardson during this period was state missionary to this section. When it was decided to build a new church, Dr. Richardson solicited funds from many points in the state. These outside contributions amounted to about \$1,755.53.

Many brothers and sisters of like faith and order became so interested in Brother Richardson's plea that they not only gave liberally but at considerable sacrifice.

Dr. Richardson resigned in November, 1874, to take charge of the work of Corresponding Secretary of the State Mission Board. In 1875 Dr. Thomas Hume became pastor. Dr. Hume, in telling the writer of his short pastorate, spoke of the loyalty and faithfulness of the little band of believers and of their struggle against great odds for existence. Truly this golden-tongued orator must have drawn many who were not members of the church to hear him, even as his coming in after years always meant a crowded house.

From 1875 to 1878 the membership was increased by letter and baptism from about 20 or 25 to 108. (See Minutes of June 4th, 1875, for request to form Buchanan Church, September 30th, 1876.)

In March, 1876, Brother S. F. Conrad became the pastor, filling this position until April 1st, 1877, when at this time his resignation as pastor was regretfully received. Brother Conrad was instrumental in forming the Buchanan Church, which was called an arm of the Greensboro Baptist Church. During Brother Conrad's pastorate there were many additions to the church, and he left it much stronger spiritually and numerically than when he came.

Just at this time Brother W. R. Gwaltney was secured as temporary supply until Brother Conrad's place as permanent pastor could be filled. The records tell of this devout man's coming and of the first invitation from the Greensboro Church to the Beulah Association to meet with them.



In February, 1878, the church decided to hold a series of meetings, which continued nearly a month. These meetings were signally blessed. Rev. J. W. Fackler, an evangelist from Georgia, upon invitation,



S. F. CONRAD

began the series, and Brethren Petty, of Chatham, Virginia, and A. C. Dixon, of Chapel Hill, at the request of the church, came as helpers in the meetings. Rev. A. E. Kitchen, a member of the church living at New Garden (Guilford College), entered heartily into the meetings and rendered valuable

service. The result was a gracious outpouring of the Spirit and a number of additions to the church, by baptism, experience, and by letter.

February 14th, 1878, the church called Rev. H. Petty, of Richmond, Virginia, as its pastor for the



TREZVANT HARRISON

ensuing year. Brother Petty came, but did not stay longer than from February to June.

June 27th, 1878, Rev. Trezvant Harrison, of Apex, N. C., was called to the pastorate at a salary of \$500.00 for the whole of his time. This was quite an advance over what had ever before been raised for

pastor's salary by the church itself. The State Mission Board supplemented this by a liberal contribution. Brother Harrison served the church until January 18th, 1880. There seems from the records to have been quite a lull in the growth of the church during the year 1878.



E. F. BALDWIN

Brother Harrison was elected Secretary of Foreign Mission Board, and resigned to enter that work.

Rev. E. F. Baldwin was unanimously called to the pastorate of this church in June, 1881. Brother Baldwin's coming seemed to mark an era of pros-

perity. Repairs were made on the church building inside and out. The Ladies' Aid Society provided a handsome carpet. A new organ was installed, and a good sister of means living in Philadelphia, Pa., donated a beautiful communion service. Then in January, 1883, Dr. W. A. Nelson, of Shelby, N. C., came and conducted a series of meetings which lasted several weeks. Dr. Nelson was a gifted evangelist, preaching with the power of the Spirit, and the result was a gracious revival and the conversion of many precious souls.

On December 16th, 1884, the resignation of Brother Baldwin was read. He asked to be freed from this work to enter on what he considered to be a greater work for the Master in the foreign field. During Brother Baldwin's absence the pulpit was acceptably supplied by Rev. J. M. Batchelder.

Brother Baldwin, returning from Algeria, N. Africa, after a tour of inspection of that country, and seeing its needs, decided to accept the work in that field under an English mission board of which Hon. H. Grattan Guinness (well known in America) was secretary. Returning to N. Africa, he located in Tangier, Morocco. There was a public leave-taking of Brother Baldwin and his family, in which the pastors of different churches participated. This farewell service was held in the old West Market Street Methodist Church, as at the time this church had the largest auditorium in the place.

To prove that the Lord does not let His work languish and that the faithful should not grow despondent, the heart of that great and good man, soldier of the Cross, pioneer and church builder, Rev. W. R. Gwaltney, was filled with desire to take

up the now flourishing work in Greensboro and, a financial canvass being made of the church and additional amounts pledged from the State Mission Board and several interested Raleigh brethren, we succeeded in raising an amount sufficient to extend



W. R. GWALTNEY

the call to Brother Gwaltney. Brother Columbus Durham, then Secretary of the State Mission Board, rather skeptically remarked: "The Greensboro Church wants a whale, but it hasn't water enough to float a minnow." Well, our "whale" came and we floated him, taking good care of him and his

family, and during his five years pastorate we not only relieved those Raleigh brethren who so generously supplemented his salary, but during the latter part of his stay we were so strengthened financially and numerically that for the first time we were able to stand on our own feet. Praise be to the One Most High! we were free from help from the State Board, to whom we owed a great debt of gratitude for helping us to attain this end. The writer believes that the Board saw a great future for our Greensboro Church, and at this time was giving a larger amount than to any other church in the state.

Just as Brother Gwaltney and his family were comfortably installed, and the future looked bright and promising, the writer came upon this notice in the church record: "At about 4:30 a. m., Sunday, July 6th, 1885, the church was entirely destroyed by fire; no insurance."

I quote from one of the then younger members some instances occurring before and after the fire:

"The general fire alarm was at that time given (by someone appointed for that purpose) by pulling a separate rope attached to a tapper on the court house bell, the operator tapping a certain number of strokes to indicate the ward in which the fire was. We heard it ring for the fourth ward, and as our fire-fighting equipment was very inadequate, all within sound who could go rushed to the scene of the fire. We found Mr. John W. Wharton's general store—a long frame building—ablaze and past saving. This store was situated right adjoining our church building. In a very short while we saw that it was impossible to save this building, so we made every effort to save the church. Ladders were placed



and soon scaled by some of the most agile young men. The writer remembers four of the young men of the church who were the first to go to the roof and help form the bucket brigade. These were (beside the writer) Lee Browder, Martin Dixon and John Thomas. These young men fought the fire until it was seen that the building was doomed, and their position became perilous. In the meantime others had removed all the church furniture, seats, secretary's desk, the new organ, communion set and new carpet. Hot, tired and almost in despair, Brother Gwaltney and quite a number of his members met at a little distance from the crowd, who still lingered about the burning building, and commended us for doing our best to save the church and its contents. He stated that we had been kindly offered the use (temporarily) of the Y.M.C.A. rooms, which were then situated in what is now known as the Vernon Building, one door north of Belk Company's building, and that we would hold our Sunday morning service there at 11 o'clock. After a well-earned rest we assembled in this hall. It was pitiful to see the look of hopelessness upon the faces of our faithful little band as they talked one with another about our loss. But soon Brother Gwaltney arrived and, amid the silence, he began to tell us that a Divine Power had permitted this seeming calamity to happen, and that he for one was willing to bow before the One who doeth all things well, and say, "Not our will, but Thine be done." There were several fervent prayers offered for Divine comfort and guidance. Just at this time a note was handed Brother Gwaltney and, after hastily reading it, we

knew the message was one of good cheer. Here is what he, in substance, read:

“Rev. W. R. Gwaltney,

“Dear Sir: I just passed by the spot where your little church stood, and my heart was singularly stirred. I want to be the first to give a substantial token of my sympathy.

Your friend and well-wisher,

7-26-'85

David Schenck.”

“The note was accompanied by a substantial check. This gift was the first gleam of hope that came to our stricken people, and we took it as a direct indication that the Lord wanted us to ‘carry on the work that He had established, and to achieve greater things than had ever before been accomplished.’ We could not help but feel that the gift from this big, public-spirited man was inspired of God.

“It became manifest that we had chosen wisely in calling Brother Gwaltney as our pastor. No man could have been better fitted at this crisis to inspire the efforts of our little band. We settled down temporarily (to await the further indications of the Lord) in what was then known as Bogart’s Hall, where we moved our rescued church furniture.”

Just here let me digress to tell of the coming of Brother R. W. Brooks. My! What a brother he was to hold up the pastor’s hands, and to inspire new life into fainting hearts! More will be said of him in the memoirs of some of the faithful brothers and sisters who bore the heat and brunt of the battle in the earlier years of our church’s history.

Brethren R. W. Brooks, R. L. Vernon and J. A. Dodson were appointed a building committee. Early

in October, 1885, the lot upon which the burned church was situated, together with the brick, was sold for about \$2,000.00 to Mr. W. P. Wharton, owner of the adjoining property. A more suitable site was secured (on the corner of West Washington and Greene Streets) from Miss Minnie Morehead. We had at that time a wonderful location, but still no church building.

## CHAPTER III

### ERECTION OF WEST WASHINGTON STREET CHURCH

Brother Gwaltney was known as a church builder, and an arrangement was made for him to make a state-wide canvass on behalf of our building fund, his salary to continue the same and his traveling expenses to be met out of the amounts contributed. But our people at home were far from idle. While contributions were coming in in response to the earnest and eloquent pleadings of our pastor, yet the writer is quite sure that the major part of the necessary funds were secured right here at home.

In looking over the minutes of June 6th, 1886, we find that there were still insufficient funds to warrant the building committee letting the contract for the new church. Nearly a year had elapsed since the burning of the old building. This condition prevailing as late as July 14th, 1886, the trustees were empowered to sell sixty-five feet of the new church lot, fronting on Washington Street, the proceeds to be added to the building fund. The building was then begun, with Thomas Woodroffe as contractor.

As late as August, 1886, Brother Gwaltney suggested that a special meeting be called to ask the Lord's blessing and guidance at this crisis in the building of our church, "for our hearts are sorely burdened at this time." As late as April, 1887 (a month before the dedication of the church), there was still \$600.00 needed before its completion. This



WASHINGTON STREET BUILDING

amount was collected and the church dedicated May 15, 1887.

There were at this time no funds for seating the church, and 100 chairs, at \$65.00, were ordered from Thomasville. The trustees were instructed again to hasten the sale of the church's adjoining lot. This was accomplished October 3rd, 1889, when the lot on Greene Street at the rear of the church was sold to J. B. Field for \$100.00 for a ten foot alley. This was applied to discharge the overwhelming indebtedness incurred for seating the church. Thus was the struggle ended as far as the financial debt was concerned.

About this time the name of the church organization was changed from the Greensboro Baptist Church to the West Washington Street Baptist Church.

We then had a modern and, at that time, the most handsome church building in the city. Sometime prior to this (1889) or to be exact, November, 1888, the Baptist State Convention met with us, and many were the expressions of admiration and commendation as the brethren from all over the state saw the result of the noble sacrifice of our people.

The church debt now a thing of the past, Brother Gwaltney was free to devote his whole time to the home interests of the church. After the coming of the convention and its accompanying inspiration, it was decided to hold a series of revival services. Rev. R. Vandeventer and Dr. J. L. White followed each other in this meeting, the first laying the foundation for a wonderful revival. Dr. White then came and found the field white for the harvest, and the result was a great revival and a gracious outpouring of



the Spirit. There were about one hundred professions, among them some of our most substantial citizens. Thus did the Lord bless a faithful pastor and a devoted, praying people.

Now came two events which cast a shadow over our people and really over the city.

First, the recorder glances at the church's statistics and notes the following entry: "December 12th, 1889, Sister Mary A. Dixon, after years of faithful labor, entered rest." Thus we lost a beloved worker who kept alive the first little spark, from its organization to this time, until there was a great, strong and spiritually-minded membership to carry on the work that she unceasingly, prayerfully and faithfully began and labored until the time of her entering a well-earned rest.

Second, the resignation of our beloved pastor, Brother Gwaltney, in 1890, to take up the greater work of secretary of the Ministerial Education Board, and also accept the pastorate of the Wake Forest Church. Thus, with the resignation of Brother Gwaltney, another epoch in the history of our church was closed. Faithful, enduring, God-fearing and God-serving, this man still was spared quite a number of years to carry on his special work as pioneer and church builder, as evidence his great work in Hickory and other places.

1890-92 Rev. W. B. Wingate was called to the pastorate. Son of Dr. Wingate, of Wake Forest College renown (beloved by all who knew him), Brother Wingate served us faithfully and the work prospered for two years. Then his resignation and withdrawal from the ministry occurred.

In August, 1892, Rev. C. A. G. Thomas accepted

a call to this church and served it acceptably for two years. Rev. Thomas was a fearless preacher. The church grew strong under his ministry and, as Brother Cooke says, "He always preached to a crowded house."



C. A. G. THOMAS

During Brother Thomas's ministry, Rev. Rufus W. Weaver was ordained, and supplied our pulpit quite frequently, and, while teaching here in the graded schools, was also pastor of the First Church in High Point.

Brother Thomas was a neighbor of the writer

during his pastorate, and he and his estimable wife proved worthy friends in a critical time of sickness. Large of stature, he had a great big heart filled with love for his fellowmen.

In 1895 came Rev. Livingston Johnson (now the



LIVINGSTON JOHNSON

state's beloved Dr. Livingston Johnson, editor of *The Biblical Recorder*.) Dr. Johnson's coming was like a benediction. We thought the church in excellent spiritual condition when he came, but under his ministry the church was placed upon an even higher spiritual plane than we know it had ever enjoyed since

the writer's connection with it; modest, unassuming, showing the spirit of his great Master in his daily walk and conversation, this simple sincerity making him beloved not only by his own people but by those of other denominations. During Dr. Johnson's ministry denominational prejudices were nearer to being broken down than at any period in Greensboro's history. Dr. Egbert W. Smith, who had succeeded his father as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, and Brother Johnson became great friends, so much so that they were termed David and Jonathan.

A recent letter from Brother Johnson tells of his love for Greensboro and the First Baptist Church in the following sentence: "I think those days were the happiest in my life."

One incident will show how close to God our people were walking: Mrs. Johnson was an ideal pastor's wife. Sometimes when Brother Johnson was unavoidably called upon some mission away from town—even when she was in poor health, and had the care of a growing family thrown wholly upon her,—she would bravely say, "Go, and the Lord be with thee!" There came a time when this noble Christian woman was, through sickness, brought to the very borderland, on the brink between earth and her heavenly home. All had been done that could be done by their good Christian doctor, and he plainly told the family that hope for her recovery must lie in the hands of the Great Physician; that, from a human standpoint, she would hardly last through the night. Brother Johnson, almost in despair, wrote a note to one of the deacons and telling him of the serious situation, asked, as it was the Wednesday prayer meeting night, if he would not explain the

critical situation, and devote the entire service to prayer for his beloved companion's recovery. Who dare dispute that our God is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God? Prayer after prayer went up from sincere and agonizing hearts. Shall we ever dispute that the strong arm of our God is shortened? What could we expect if our prayers are uttered subject to the Divine will? Well can we remember how our hearts were filled with gratitude and praise, as we heard from the home of the pastor that the crisis was passed and that improvement was seen from that hour.

It has been said that our people were at this time living very close to God, during the six years Brother Johnson was our pastor. One summer there was a long drought, and people were beginning to pray earnestly for rain. We met as usual at the mid-week prayer meeting, and besought the Lord to withhold no longer the rain that was in His power to shower upon the parched earth. That night an abundant shower fell, and the shower was followed by a good season of rain.

Of the work of expansion during Brother Johnson's stay, we will write in a separate article on *The Expansion of the Work*.

During the six years of Brother Johnson's pastorate we, for the third time, entertained the State Convention, and as before, their coming was followed by a season of revival. These meetings, the writer thinks, were conducted by Dr. J. F. Love, our present secretary of the Southern Foreign Mission Board. So it will be seen that our church at this time was making greater progress spiritually, financially and numerically than at any former period.

In December, 1901, Brother Johnson was elected secretary of the State Mission Board. Never had there been so much unity and harmony, never a brighter outlook for the future, and we one and all thought never such a man for the work at that time, but, after much earnest prayer, Brother Johnson decided that there was a field for greater usefulness in the Master's cause in serving the people of the state. So with heartfelt regret on the part of pastor and people we gave up this lovable pastor that he might enter the greater work.



W. C. NEWTON

Then Rev. W. Carey Newton was called from Goldsboro, and entered the work about March 1st. The church continued to grow under his short ministry. Many were added by baptism and by letter, and the writer wants to note the fact that at this time our finances were in the hands of a committee whose perfect system of collection for missions



and home expenses kept the church entirely out of debt, a condition never before known in its history.

Then Brother Newton, whose heart had yearned for some time for those destitute of the Gospel in China, felt the call to go as a missionary to those people. At a meeting of our Piedmont Association at High Point, just prior to the meeting of the State Convention (the Foreign Mission Board had before this expressed their regret at being unable to send Brother Newton immediately to China), Brother Newton by his earnest plea, and being so eminently fitted for the work, the Association unanimously agreed to pay one year's support for Brother Newton and his family, the Greensboro Church contributing \$500.00 of this amount.

Of Brother Newton's wonderful success in this work, and that he was truly called of God to point the way from the darkness of heathendom to the marvelous light and liberty in Christ Jesus our Lord, we who have followed him and his family through their years of faithful service can bear record.

Brother Newton and family still keep their membership with this church.

## CHAPTER IV

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, WEST MARKET STREET

In 1902 the name of the church was changed from The Washington Street Baptist Church to The First Baptist Church, being (as Brother Cooke says) "the original and mother church of all the other Baptist churches in the city," it was thought by the members that we were entitled to this distinction. Further quoting from Brother Cooke's history:

"For some months in the early part of the present year, 1903, we were without a pastor. The pulpit was supplied by different ministers until a call from the church was accepted by Dr. Henry W. Battle, of Petersburg, Va., a man of eloquence, piety, ability and genuine christianity. His coming ushers in the brightest prospect the church has ever known, and already is manifest a spiritual quickening and fuller Christian life."

During Dr. Battle's pastorate, 1903-1907, much occurred of historical interest. Again was our church edifice outgrown and we felt it necessary to look about for a suitable site for a larger, more modern and adequate structure. We now had a membership of 458. Further statistics show as follows:

In 1909, church membership .....	538
In 1909, Sunday school membership .....	392
In 1910, church membership .....	586
In 1910, Sunday school membership .....	385

A building committee was appointed, consisting of the trustees of the church, who were as follows:

M. W. Thompson, C. E. Holton and Lee H. Battle. This committee was first empowered to select a suitable site for a new church building. It was found that, after considerable search for an ideal location, a lot on the corner of West Market and Eugene



HENRY W. BATTLE

Streets could be secured, on which stood a dwelling at that time called the Winstead home. This was in the latter part of 1905. The Winstead house was moved directly south of its present site to Sycamore Street. The sale of our West Washington Street building to the Grace Methodist Protestant Church,

December 6th, 1906, was for a consideration of \$12,500.00. At this time the church owned a parsonage on West Washington Street, a few doors west of Eugene Street. The lot was 76x200 feet, and was sold by Lee H. Battle, J. B. Stroud and C. E. Holton, trustees, to Dr. Z. T. Brooks, November 2nd, 1907, for \$4,000.00. These statistics are just a matter of record.

To return to our present location: We have a lot 100x152 feet that was conveyed to M. W. Thompson, C. E. Holton and Lee H. Battle, trustees, by W. F. Trogdon and wife (Lizzie S.) and Maria A. Winstead, March 23rd, 1906, for \$6,000.00 cash, and a further agreement to pay Mrs. Winstead \$30.00 per month during her lifetime.

A contract was then let to Messrs. Winningham and Fries to erect our present church building at a cost of \$55,000.00. The present parsonage lot, 62x322 feet, on the north side of West Gaston Street, was conveyed (together with the house thereon) to the trustees, J. B. Harrison, J. B. Stroud and R. L. Patterson, by Thomas D. Sherwood and wife, April 3rd, 1911, for a consideration of \$6,500.00.

An additional Sunday school space in the basement of the church has been recently built, it being impossible to obtain additional room at the side or rear of the building. We now have a Sunday school of sixteen hundred members. The church auditorium seats about seven hundred people comfortably; the annex about three hundred; full capacity of both, about fourteen hundred.

Our present membership is twelve hundred, a net gain of seven hundred and forty-two since 1910,

when the present pastor, Dr. J. Clyde Turner, took charge.

During the remainder of Dr. Battle's pastorate Greensboro rapidly grew to be quite a city. Many new people were coming in and many were added by letter



J. L. WHITE

and by baptism. Dr. Battle closed his labors with us the latter part of 1907 to accept a call to his former pastorate at Petersburg, Va.

For several months we were without a pastor; but the Lord sent us quite a number of the state's strongest preachers as supplies. Among these were

Dr. R. T. Vann, our beloved former pastor Brother L. Johnson, Dr. Edmund Harrison, who was then living with us and whose presence was always a benediction, Dr. C. H. Nash, still spared to his many friends, and others.

Our thoughts were then directed to a brother who came to us in the most wonderful revival the church has ever known (the latter part of 1889). This great soul-winner, who was specially gifted as an evangelist, accepted the pastorate of the church and served as pastor from 1908 to the middle of the year 1910. During all of Dr. White's pastorate scarcely a service went by without a response to his urgent appeal to the unconverted to turn from sin and accept the Lord Jesus.

During the balance of Dr. Battle's and all during Dr. White's pastorate, the church was hampered with the remainder of the debt upon the building.

Then came the year of our Lord, 1910, and with it came into our midst our present pastor, Dr. J. Clyde Turner, to pour oil on somewhat turbulent waters. Brother Turner came to us in the full vigor of his young manhood, and it has been good to have him and his estimable wife with us for sixteen years—sixteen years of such delightful quiet and peace as the church for several years had not known. By peace and quiet we do not imply inaction, for very soon after Brother Turner's acceptance of the pastorate he had selected the most willing workers and had each in his or her place doing a work, individually and collectively, for the upbuilding of the Master's Kingdom in our midst. The writer believes in scattering a few flowers along life's pathway, and in bestowing a few words of praise where merit is due.



We must say in closing these words of tribute to our faithful pastor: Brother Turner has had occasion to visit where sickness has prevailed and where hearts were sad from bereavement, and we can speak from the great depths of experience. Surely the Lord



J. CLYDE TURNER

inspires him to say just the right word of comfort and give the best advice to the stricken ones.

It was seven years after the coming of Brother Turner that a last and successful effort was made to clear our church entirely of debt, so that we might dedicate it as wholly unto the Lord; but this was

accomplished in a systematic and business-like way, and at last, Sunday, April 8th, 1917, on a beautiful spring morning we met, and with joyful hearts, a large congregation assembled and the following program for the dedication of our church to the Lord was carried out:

#### DEDICATION OF BUILDING

Organ Prelude  
 Doxology  
 Invocation  
 Anthem by the Choir, "Come, Ye Faithful"  
 Hymn 613  
 Scripture Reading by Rev. Raleigh White  
 Solo, "He Is Risen," by Mrs. W. A. McKnight  
 Prayer by Dr. C. H. Nash  
 Offering  
 Hymn 502  
 Dedictory Sermon by Dr. Livingston Johnson  
 Statement by Treasurer of Building Fund  
 Burning of Notes  
 Dedictory Prayer by Dr. J. Clyde Turner  
 Dedictory Hymn 615  
 Benediction.

To conclude this memorable day, at the evening service, Rev. Walter N. Johnson delivered a forceful and heart-searching sermon on "Dedication of Self."

So, during forty-three years of membership, experiencing many of the great spiritual uplifts, as well as the darkness of the valley, in the church and among the membership, the writer can say: Experience, the great teacher, tells us that the foundation of the Church Terrestrial is an unshaken belief in a Divine Creator. Without the various revelations, which we must accept as Divine, the world would be chaos. Can we not continue the journey with the same steadfast faith that these brothers and sisters who have gone before experienced?

## CHAPTER V

### EXPANSION

The first effort to extend our work was the formation of the Buchanan Church, east of the city. This was effected during the pastorate of S. F. Conrad, 1876-1878, and was at that time called "An Arm of the Greensboro Baptist Church."

This mission did not grow or thrive very much, preaching services were irregularly held, and it was maintained largely for the benefit of a few members who lived in its vicinity. For a while it existed as a separate organization, but after a few years struggle, the members again transferred their membership to the mother church. This chapel membership was composed largely of the Buchanan family, hence its name.

On May 6, 1887, Mr. S. S. Brown donated a lot for a mission chapel and Sunday school, near the railroad in East Greensboro, a little distance from Bennett College (colored). Dr. Benbow's cotton mills were then running, and several small industries were located in the neighborhood; so that quite a number of white families were living in the vicinity. Brother R. W. Brooks became actively interested in establishing a denominational work there, and after carefully going over the field found that a chapel could be built at very small cost and that part of the seats secured from the old church that was burned could be used, and at a meeting of the church, at the above date, quite a good bit of enthusiasm was aroused. The money for the building was raised

and Brother Brooks instructed to proceed with the building, which was completed in a few months. Some of our best workers volunteered to cooperate with the people in that neighborhood, and an active, live Sunday school was formed which grew rapidly in numbers and interest. This work was kept up with unabated interest until, owing to large manufacturing interests developing in other parts of the city and the people moving from the neighborhood, it was thought best to discontinue the work and devote our efforts to a more thickly settled neighborhood.

In 1899 our Sunday school had grown to such proportions that it became a crying necessity for more room. Brother R. W. Brooks and his brother A. F. Brooks were leading spirits in the building of an annex in the rear of the church building. These brethren contributed largely of their time, means and labor towards the erection of this building. With this additional room both our Sunday school and church grew rapidly.

### **Eller Memorial Church**

In the spring of 1896 the Cone Manufacturing Company began the erection of the first of their big mills at Proximity. Realizing what a wonderful thing the coming of these enterprises meant for Greensboro and the different denominational causes, we found that Mr. Ceasar Cone was willing to donate a site for our new mission chapel within view of the new mill (then in process of erection) on Cherry Street, Proximity. Brother Johnson asked as many of our members as were willing to go out there one bright Sunday afternoon in May, to organize a Sun-

day school. Quite a number responded, and we met with a Brother W. R. Andrews under a big oak tree, and there covenanted to take up this promising work for the Master. That afternoon we decided to organize a Sunday school and, in the meantime, try to find a temporary place for meeting. Mr. Cone let us use an old log house far out on Church Street, until we could build our chapel. Here the first Baptist Sunday school was organized, and the writer had the honor of being its first superintendent.

Then came a canvass for funds to erect a chapel to meet the needs of the incoming people. It was decided to build a more elaborate building than for any mission work we had heretofore undertaken. Everything was done systematically, and Brother Andrew Brooks became our contractor and the writer treasurer of the building fund. During the summer the building was erected, and we held our first service in the late fall, in our new mission chapel, which was well filled for the occasion.

Thus was the seed planted for our work in this big mill district, and it has indeed been as seed sown in good ground springing up and bringing forth a rich harvest for the garner house of the Lord.

Soon a church organization was formed and Brother G. L. Merrill became the first pastor.

As the little cluster of houses grew into a village it was found that a more central location would be necessary, and the Cherry Street Chapel was moved to Walnut Street and called the Walnut Street Baptist Church. This was added to and remodeled from time to time; but such was the rapid growth of the church that plans were set on foot for the erection of the present beautiful structure, the Eller Memorial

Church, which has recently been dedicated to the Master's service.

### **Forest Avenue Baptist Church**

Sometime during the latter part of the year 1905, the First Baptist Church decided that the time had come to begin a work in West Greensboro. Some months prior to this a Sunday school had been organized on West Lee Street, and was flourishing under the leadership of Brother J. C. Olive as superintendent. With several of the brothers and sisters from the First Sunday school as teachers, this school was held in a rented house far out—farther out than the present building (Forest Avenue Church) from the center of the city. It was soon found that plans for a more enduring work must be made, and Brethren O. Joe Howard, J. S. Moore, Azor Shell and O. W. Monroe were appointed a committee, and were to select and secure by purchase a suitable lot in West Greensboro, near the North Carolina College for Women. After much effort Brother O. W. Monroe found a suitable lot on what was then known as Kildare Avenue. This property was secured for \$900.00, and the trustees of the First Baptist Church gave a note for the money. Subscriptions were taken and more than \$1,000.00 was pledged to pay for the lot. Later, after Forest Avenue Church was organized the First Church took over all the subscriptions and gave the new church a clear title to the lot.

About November 1st, 1905, a committee, consisting of Brethren Azor Shell and O. Joe Howard was appointed to secure a house for a preaching place near the lot that had been purchased. A store building belonging to Brother H. M. Howard was



rented and furnished for the service. This building was 20x40 feet, very poorly ventilated. The congregation worshipped here until the new house was completed.

The same committee that had been authorized to secure a lot was appointed to secure a missionary. Dr. Livingston Johnson, Corresponding Secretary, recommended Rev. Chas. E. Maddry, who was then a student at Louisville Seminary. The work was presented to Brother Maddry, and he was invited to come as its first pastor. Brother Maddry accepted the call and preached his first sermon on the first Sunday in February, 1906, from Luke 2:11. The next Sunday a Sunday school was organized with W. E. Harrison, superintendent, O. W. Monroe, assistant superintendent, J. W. Bloxton, secretary, and O. T. Leonard, treasurer.

The work grew rapidly from the start and before the pastor had been on the field a month it was found that a church was necessary, and on the afternoon of the 11th of March, in the chapel of the North Carolina College for Women, Brother L. Johnson, State Secretary, who had preached at the morning service, sat with the presbytery consisting of the pastor and deacons of the First Church. The covenant and declaration of faith was read and adopted. The letters of forty-six members were presented and accepted and, according to the usual form, a church was constituted with Brother Chas. E. Maddry as pastor, H. E. Peele, clerk, O. W. Monroe, treasurer. About \$4,000.00 was raised at this meeting towards the fund for the new church building. \$500.00 was given by the Home Mission Board towards the building fund. The lot on Forest Avenue was freed from mortgage

and presented by the First Church as an asset to borrow on, if necessary to do so, to complete the building. In November, 1906, Brother Maddry was employed for his full time. This work has grown, with the blessing of the Lord, far beyond the expectations of those who founded it, and Forest Avenue Church is now contemplating further enlargements on an extended scale.

### Asheboro Street Church

Quoting from some notes written by Brother W. H. Eller:

"In June, 1897, Brethren Livingston Johnson, R. W. Brooks, W. H. Eller and W. S. Kivett met at a vacant store building on South Elm Street and organized a Sunday school, electing the following officers: W. F. Clarida, superintendent, W. S. Kivett, secretary. With songs of praise, earnest prayer and reading of the Scriptures we launched a Sunday school in South Greensboro, realizing that it was an humble beginning of the great work that has been accomplished by our Asheboro Street Church. There were present at the inception of this work. Dr. Johnson, Rev. G. L. Merrill (pastor of the Cherry Street Mission), Rev. Rufus Weaver, Mrs. P. G. Welch, Mrs. Whitt R. Stone, Mrs. W. H. Matthews and about seventy others.

"On July 2nd, 1899, the church was organized in a little store building on South Elm Street, and was called the South Elm Street Baptist Church. There were seven charter members, viz., C. H. Money, J. L. Stack, E. J. Jarvis, W. S. Kivett, Mrs. L. M. Hackney, Miss Katie Mahan and Miss Fanny Mahan.

On July 10th, Rev. J. A. Hackney was called as pastor.

"In 1900 a small church building, a short distance in the country, was purchased and moved to a lot on East Whittington Street. The name of the church was then changed to Southside Baptist Church.

"Rev. J. A. Hackney served as pastor until latter part of 1901. Rev. J. M. Henly succeeded him, and served until December, 1903. Rev. Thomas Carriek was Brother Henly's successor. His pastorate included the years 1904-1905. In January, 1906, Rev. C. E. Maddry was called, and he served as pastor from January to November of the same year.

"In the summer of 1906 the church building was moved to a suitable lot on Asheboro Street and the name was changed to Asheboro Street Baptist Church. In October, 1906, the Forest Avenue Church called Brother Maddry for his full time. Then came Rev. A. C. Hamby, serving the Asheboro Street Church until the spring of 1908. Succeeding him came Rev. W. F. Staley, who was its pastor about four years. During this period an adjoining lot was purchased, giving ample ground for the present modern and beautiful church building.

"Followed the pastorate of Rev. W. P. Walker, 1912 to 1915. During his ministry the present house of worship was built and completed at a cost of about \$11,000.00.

"Then came Rev. W. Raleigh White, who bravely faced a church debt of \$3,600.00, a church still dependent for help from the State Board to supplement pastor's salary, and a small congregation and Sunday school. During his pastorate Brother White and the faithful members removed the balance of the

debt, cleared themselves from the State Mission Board, and made a substantial increase in the amount subscribed to pastor's salary. Then came the dedication of the building, November 29th, 1917. Since then this church has grown rapidly, numerically, spiritually and financially until, in these respects, the daughter has become a formidable rival of the mother church. Yet the mother smiles, puts forth her hands and says, 'God bless you, my daughter!' "

## CHAPTER VI

### MEMOIRS

#### R. L. Vernon

In writing about the early struggles of the church, Dr. Richardson says: "About this time, i.e., September, 1876, there came a young brother with a letter from the Sandy Creek Church, Va., R. L. Vernon. He soon proved a worker worthy of our great struggles, becoming at once as the right hand of his pastor. A more helpful brother no pastor ever had."

The writer has been informed that Brother Vernon came to Greensboro as a telegraph operator for Lieutenant W. H. Watlington, who was engaged in construction work on the railroad between Greensboro and Danville, 1873. There is an old adage, "Beware when all men speak well of you." To Brother Vernon this did not apply. We have never known or heard of a single criticism of him from the time he came to our midst to the time we had reluctantly to say "good-bye" to him and his excellent family, when they moved to Charlotte several years prior to his death. Modest, unassuming, and of a lovable character, as the writer knew him, so his fellow townsmen knew and loved him.

A young man of such sterling worth could not but be recognized as worthy of promotion by his employers and he rose from one position to another until, a short time prior to his death, he filled the

position of traveling passenger agent, which position called him from Greensboro to Charlotte.

While yet a young man Brother Vernon married Mrs. Jos. Ector. To them four children were born: Robert Willis, William, Estelle and Ernest. A happier, more congenial family we never knew. Just one shadow fell upon them while they were in Greensboro: Robert, their eldest son, a remarkably promising young man, following in his father's footsteps, while taking a business course in a northern college, fell a victim to that dreaded disease, typhoid fever, from which he suddenly died. The taking away of this bright Christian boy, just as a useful future was opening before him, caused a gloom to fall over our entire community. Young Robert Vernon had a small savings account at the time of his death, and his father told the writer that he wanted to put a memorial window in the church to Robert's memory and that he and Mrs. Vernon thought that this would be an appropriate way to use the money. As a result of this decision, we have the beautiful window in our present church building which was removed from our Washington Street church. The writer remembers standing with Brother Vernon in the gallery of the new church, opposite the window soon after it had been placed, and heard him express his approval of its present position.

Returning to Brother Vernon's faithful service to his church: He was the third clerk of the church, serving from April, 1874, in an unbroken service until April, 1885, a record of eleven years. Brother Vernon showed his interest in keeping a perfect record of all the church's proceedings, and wrote it



all in full in an unusually clear and legible hand. May 30th, 1874, he was elected a deacon. I quote from his own handwriting, which shows how deeply this occasion stirred him: "Our meeting on this night was a most melting one, and will long be felt and cherished as given by our beloved Master!" (R. L. V. in recording minutes of this occasion.) The writer spoke of him as being modest and unassuming; that did not mean that he was of a passive nature, for he could be firm and unyielding when he was upholding a cause that he thought was right.

As a deacon, church treasurer, trustee, Sunday school superintendent, and treasurer of building fund (he ably and acceptably served in all these offices), Brother Vernon saw the church in some of its greatest moments, which always happen at the time of its greatest faith. Thanks be to our God, he never saw a church without works, for "faith without works is dead." He has gone to that city of which the inspired apostle said, "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it!"

### R. W. Brooks

R. W. Brooks and wife were received by letter from Manchester, N. C., Baptist Church, July 6th, 1885, just twenty days before the disastrous fire that destroyed our church, shortly after we had secured Dr. Gwaltney as our pastor. Thus were these two earnest workers given to us at this time of our great need.

Brother Brooks entered heartily into the work of rebuilding and did so much to inspire our people at this critical time that we could not but feel the

leading hand of the Lord in his coming. August 16th, 1885, Brother Brooks was elected chairman of the building committee, with R. L. Vernon, treasurer, and John A. Dodson. Later on he became the superintendent of the Sunday school. It was largely through his influence that the Sunday school annex was built and the Sunday school received an impetus hitherto unknown. His brother, Andrew F. Brooks, was also a great help at this time, both entering into the work, furnishing material at cost and their own time without cost, in the enlargement of the West Washington Street building and the building of the East Greensboro and Cherry Street Missions.

Deacon, Sunday school superintendent, church builder, and faithful in all his church duties, so we knew him and loved him. In our struggle we fought shoulder to shoulder. Brother Brooks was a decided character; he was never on the fence, was either positively for or against a project, and his decisions usually carried great weight, for he was nearly always in the right. A peculiar characteristic of his was his warm welcome to strangers, though not favoring their being put forward in church work until they were proven fitted for the work; this meant spiritually and naturally gifted, for, said he, "I am naturally suspicious of all who come by way of Chicago."

Yes, we loved this great warm-hearted friend, loved his rugged character, loved him as a man, loved him as a leader among men. Brother Brooks was moderator of the Piedmont Association for a number of years, elected year after year until ill health forced him to resign—thus showing his popularity throughout the state and the confidence placed in

him by all who knew him. Brother Eller, who was clerk of the Association during the years that Brother Brooks was moderator, affectionately refers to him as "Our little Bob Brooks." Might he in all love have been called: "Battling Bob?" For many are the spiritual interests some of our brethren still remember when we, with Brother Bob as leader, fought for what we thought was God's will.

Weaver, Newell, Brooks, Vernon, Monroe, Spencer, Lincoln, Shell, Combs, Eller—all consecrated leaders—how we miss them! How each one in turn appears vividly before us as we write! These brethren, in the face of many adversities, went prayerfully and manfully along so that posterity might be the gainer; surely they planted that we might reap the fruit of their labors.

Brother Brooks was quite popular as a leading citizen and occupied many positions of trust in our community during the years he served his church and denomination so faithfully. Most of his family are still living, though in different parts of the state. Mrs. Catherine Brooks Tucker, for many years our faithful Sunday school organist, is the only one of his children living in Greensboro.

### W. R. Burgess

Brother Burgess and family came to us from Ramseur, N. C., April 17th, 1889. He was baptized and received into full fellowship of the church Sunday, July 29th, 1889. Together with the writer he was ordained as a deacon and served as church treasurer during the latter part of Brother Gwaltney's pastorate. In 1892, on account of

failing health, he moved to Orlando, Fla., where he entered rest the following year, October, 1893.

Mrs. Burgess, Walter B. Burgess (son), Mrs. Flora Watson, Mrs. W. J. Braddock, Mrs. B. T. Barr and Mrs. G. W. Johnson (daughters), are still living. Mrs. C. S. Watson is the only member of the family living in Greensboro and is still a faithful and loyal member of our church. During the few years Brother Burgess was permitted to be with us he entered heart and soul into church work and left an impress and memory never forgotten by our older members and all who came in close contact with him. Surely he was a brother whom we all loved for his modest, unassuming manners and his many virtues as a Christian and as a man.

### Dr. J. B. Richardson

High Point, N. C., 1912.

"In the death of Dr. J. B. Richardson, which occurred at his home September 7th, many besides his loved ones feel a sense of personal bereavement. His home city, denomination, and the cause of Christ sustained a great loss in the departure of this valuable servant of God. He was a member of the Greene Street Church at the time of his death, and for ten years had taught a large Bible class there. To his faithful ministry and pastoral work the church is to a large extent indebted. The great multitude who attended his funeral included friends from all over the state, and shows a lovely tribute to one whose esteem was so well merited, and a fitting recognition of his great usefulness."

Of Brother Richardson's great work as pastor of this church, 1871-1874, his notes sent to the writer

and recorded under the heading, "Church History," is an eloquent testimony of his sterling worth, and the great reason why we should pay sincere and heartfelt tribute to this faithful and consecrated soldier of the Cross.

### **Mrs. Dixon and Mrs. Payne**

Mrs. Mary A. Dixon, Born in Richmond, Va., October 10th, 1838.

Died in Greensboro, N. C., December 11th, 1889.

For thirty-seven years a child of the King.

Mrs. Mary A. Payne, Born August 8th, 1832.

Died January 19, 1904.

She was the friend of the poor and sorrowing.

These two sisters, Brother R. L. Vernon and Brother W. B. Crump were mentioned by Doctor Richardson in his memoir of the church during its early struggles as being of invaluable aid in building the foundation for our great and growing work in Greensboro.

### **Dr. H. B. Marley**

Dr. Marley was received into the fellowship of this church by letter December 23rd, 1876. From the time of his becoming identified with the church he entered actively into the church work, holding various positions of trust for a number of years. He was during this period an active member of the spiritual committee, trustee, and often presided as moderator at church conferences. Brother Marley, as we knew him, was of a very gentle and unassuming disposition. He was faithful to the church's interests

and sincerely mourned by those who knew him best when he entered into rest.

Mrs. H. B. Marley (nee Miss Nannie Margaret Buchanan) had the distinction of being with Dr. C. E. W. Dobbs (who in after years became a noted preacher and writer, pastor of several prominent churches in Kentucky, and secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention), the first candidates for baptism after the organization of the church in 1859. They were baptized June 26th, 1859, in Buffalo Creek. Dr. Matthew T. Yates was present at the ceremony and offered prayer. Mrs. Marley, recently deceased, was one of our most loyal and devout members, and the oldest member of the church in point of membership at the time of her death. Sister Marley was the mother of Mrs. G. P. Crutchfield and Henry C. Marley, a deacon in our church, both active church workers.

### **W. B. Crump**

This brother is one of the three that Dr. Richardson named as forming the nucleus of the little band he found here at his coming; in fact, it was this brother who extended the invitation to him to come and preach to the little handful of Baptists in Greensboro. Laboring with Sisters Dixon and Payne, he was faithful for many years to the cause he loved so well.

### **A. G. Newell**

Brother A. G. Newell and wife were received by letter from Reidsville, N. C., church December 25th, 1874. Of Brother Newell, the writer, as he takes up his pen, feels almost unworthy to write, for the years



we were associated with him were as hallowed days. We used to look upon him as our peace-making deacon, for he was always the one who poured oil upon the troubled waters. Prominent in every good word and work, as in his church work so in his everyday walk and conversation, all who came in contact with him recognized him as a man who lived close to his God. Elisha like, the writer has often wished that a double portion of his spirit might fall upon him. Sister Newell did not live many years after they moved to Greensboro. In 1882 Brother Newell married Miss Mary Sampson, who for many years was an invaluable member of the First Church and who now, and almost since its foundation, is a faithful member of the Asheboro Street Church.

Myron Newell, W. H. Newell and Mrs. Ollie Newell Hill, sons and daughter of Brother A. G. Newell, still survive him. Mrs. Hill is still a faithful member of the First Church.

### **Mrs. C. E. Holton**

Mrs. Holton was a daughter of Mrs. Catherine Jolly, one of the earliest members of our church. At an early period of her life she united with the church, and during the thirty years the writer knew her the Greensboro church had no more faithful worker. Always in her place at the church services, for many years president of the Woman's Missionary Society, thus in her modest, unassuming way leading her fellow-sisters in every good word and work.

Not satisfied with doing her individual part, she led her children to become valuable workers in the church she loved so well. For several years after she was called to her heavenly home, her

daughter, Mrs. J. C. Murchinson, filled her mother's place as one of the best church workers. Miss Alma McDonald, another daughter, was especially gifted as a Sunday school teacher and worker, loved by many members of her class who still speak in loving terms of her. Mrs. Queenie Maxwell, the youngest daughter, did not unite with the church until a short while before the family left Greensboro, but she was a faithful attendant and loved the church and its work. Brother J. C. Murchinson and wife, of Orlando, Fla., were sorely missed when they left us—Mrs. Murchinson in her work among the ladies of the church, Brother Murchinson as a beloved deacon, faithful in that office with all its responsibilities.

Brother Charles E. Holton, husband of Sister Holton, was also a valuable church worker, for many years a trustee of the church, chairman of the music committee and choir leader.

J. C. Murchinson and wife are now living in Orlando, Fla.; Miss Alma McDonald and Mrs. Queenie Maxwell at Jacksonville, Fla.; Charles E. Holton at Tampa, Fla.

### O. W. Monroe

Oscar W. Monroe came to us from Fayetteville, N. C., and united with our church by letter June 15th, 1889. Entering at once into the activities of the church, he soon proved an invaluable worker. Rather impetuous by nature, this trait was overbalanced by his warm-heartedness as evidenced by his many friends in whom he took a personal interest. None knew him better than the writer, for we were co-workers in many of the church enterprises. Brother Monroe was a loyal member of our church,

faithful to all its interests and loyal to its pastors, occupying the office of deacon most of the time from his reception into our membership to the time of his entering rest.

An interval elapsed, when during the organization of the Forest Avenue Church, Brother Monroe moved his membership there and was extremely helpful in securing a church lot and also in the building of that church. Just as soon as he saw that Forest Avenue Church was well organized and able to stand alone, he moved his membership back to the mother church. He was almost immediately elected treasurer of the current expense fund, to which office he was peculiarly fitted and served the church in this capacity for several years. Brother Monroe was one of the best treasurers the church has ever had and the finances were well kept up during his term of service.

Always intensely interested in the progress of the Sunday school, he was at the time of his leaving us in Dr. Moseley's Men's Bible Class.

Several years after he came to Greensboro he was married to Miss Lula Clegg. To them were born five children, Sarah, Magdalene, William, Thomas and Rebecca. Sister Monroe is still one of our most faithful members and is active in the work of our Woman's Missionary Society and all the church interests.

### Rev. W. H. Eller

Rev. W. H. Eller and family were received by letter early in the fall of 1894. A true follower of the great Master will not stay long in a community without identifying himself with the Lord's work

and His people. So it was with Brother Eller and his interesting family. I want to quote in detail a paper written for the memorial services at White Oak Baptist Church, April, 1923, for it embodies in part at least some of the work Brother Eller did as an organizer:

"It is a pleasure for me to speak a few words of tribute to the memory of an old friend whose sterling worth no one knows better than myself.

"Brother Eller was a pioneer (few of whom are living now). When he first came to Greensboro it was our privilege to have him and his family as next door neighbors. Brother Eller was not until several years later actively engaged in the ministry. Yet, even then, I knew he was continually feeling the urgent call of the Master to devote his entire time to His service, finding that he could do a more active work in strengthening the outlying points in this and adjoining territory.

"Brother W. H. Strickland writes, as pastor of the Proximity Baptist Church, for the Biblical Recorder, under date of July 17th, 1907: 'On the first Sunday in June, 1907, Brethren Maddry and Eller went with me to organize a Baptist church at White Oak, with thirteen as charter members, afterwards holding a tent meeting, as a result of which we baptized forty and received by letter and restoration about twenty-five, with the hope and earnest prayer that we can reach the one hundred mark before our Association meets.'

"Thus the beginning of a great work in your White Oak district. It will be seen that Brother Eller was indeed a great organizer. The Gibsonville Church, if not organized by him, was greatly helped

by his devoted ministry. The Asheboro Street, Revolution, Proximity, White Oak, Magnolia Street, Pomona, Hamtown, Bessemer, and maybe other outlying churches, were inspired by him. This was his beloved work. Due to his efforts many a little Baptist church rears its modest spire in hamlet and village; the number we do not know.

"Had he confined his work to the First Baptist Church, where he and his family had always retained their membership, I feel as though we could have known him better. But now I know, as never before, that he heard the divine call to larger fields and more useful service. When we gave up Brother Eller as an active worker in our church, we missed his charming personality, his magnetic influence and his wholeheartedness.

"As neighbors, he and his family were kind, hospitable, sympathetic in the hour of trouble and the best of friends to those around them.

"Brother Eller was much interested in collecting, studying and writing the early history of the people of our denomination, and left much valuable data. For several years he was clerk of the Piedmont Association.

"Truly a great worker; a man, indeed, sent from God. An humble servant, God-fearing, God-serving; how could we help but love him, for was not his face continually lighted from the heart within, which was, indeed, a reflection of the Divine light? May we not hope to meet in our happy heavenly home our Brother Eller and his faithful Christian wife, his co-worker in all his enterprises, for they were dear to us here below. We knew him as 'our beloved organizer.' "



When they came into our midst they brought with them their three daughters, viz., Misses Julia, Carrie and Bessie Eller. Miss Julia married our beloved deacon, J. S. Moore, but, after a few years of happy life, was called to the heavenly home. Miss Carrie married our brother, P. G. Welch. Miss Bessie married our deacon, Whitt R. Stone. Both daughters are active in the church work and in all the denominational interests their parents loved so well.

### **William M. Combs**

Will Combs, as we loved to call him, for he was one of our very own boys, became a Christian and joined our church when he was just a boy in his teens. Will's church life was just as much a part of him as was his everyday life and was as vital to him as the very air he breathed.

Graduating from our city high school in 1904, with the highest honors of his class, he immediately entered upon a work that seemed congenial to him and for which he proved eminently fitted. Mr. J. Addison Hodgin, then manager of the savings department of the Greensboro Bank and Trust Company, took young Will into his employ as a collector, but he soon proved his ability to occupy a more responsible position and was promoted from one position to another until he became assistant manager, which position he held for several years, until, at the death of Mr. Hodgin, the directors of the bank unanimously elected him manager of the department he was so well equipped to serve.

About 1908 or 1909 he married Miss Frances Kicklighter, of Atlanta, Ga. To them was born a daughter, Carmella. Now, could we go on and tell



of further usefulness in their church and community of this unusually bright and useful young couple, it would be much pleasanter to write; but God's ways are not always our ways, for just as the future looked so bright for them, Providence saw fit to let them be tried in a veritable fiery furnace of affliction (scripturally speaking). First, the giving up of a happy home; then to Saranac Lake; then to Albuquerque, N. M., then, still grimly fighting, to Sera Medra, California; his devoted mother and wife, who had so nobly stood by him during the twelve years of his fight for life, had to see him go. We who dearly loved him could only extend our deepest heartfelt sympathy to the returning members of the family who came with our brother to lay him to rest. Surely such faithfulness, such devotion, shall receive its reward in the hereafter we are all looking toward so longingly.

Brother Combs for some years was our church treasurer and a deacon, and one of the organizers of the Business Men's Bible Class, taught by Brother Cooke. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Combs. His parents, two sisters, a brother, and wife and daughter, survive.

### Deacons

Among our faithful deacons of the past who have entered rest are the following: P. D. Weaver (father of Dr. Rufus W. Weaver and Dr. Charles P. Weaver), C. E. Lincoln, J. L. Spencer, Azor Shell, and W. W. Workman. (Vernon, Newell, Monroe, Brooks and Combs are mentioned in special memoirs.)

Other male members who were faithful and zealous helpers were: John A. Dodson, Rev. R. R. Moore,

P. L. Woodson, R. H. Smith, Joseph E. Blanchard, C. B. Wilson, M. C. Workman, F. A. Matthews, R. D. Mesley.

### Women

As it always has been and probably will continue to be, there are the faithful women who deserve special mention. The following sisters were always known for their faithful attendance and ready service when called upon: Mrs. H. A. Siddall (Miss Laura Boner), not only a great church worker but one of our best Sunday school teachers. J. B. Stroud, C. C. Johnson, the Harrington brothers, and others now living, can testify to this devout woman's influence in their lives. Mrs. E. J. Lynch, Mrs. E. F. Reinecker, Mrs. A. H. Alderman, Mrs. Mary Belvin Thomas, Mrs. W. A. Albright (mother of Mrs. J. W. Crawford and Mrs. W. H. Matthews), Miss Mary Matthews, Mrs. R. H. Smith, Miss Emma Daisy Smith, Mrs. W. W. Rowe, Mrs. Rosa Lindley, Mrs. M. C. Workman, Mrs. John A. Dodson, Mrs. W. H. Eller, Mrs. Julia Eller Moore, Miss Nannie Weaver, Mrs. R. D. Mesley, Mrs. Jane Brookbank Smith, Mrs. Mary Peele. (Mrs. Holton, Mrs. Payne and Mrs. Dixon are mentioned in special memoirs.)

In closing this history, the writer feels that he must mention a few of the faithful workers still living, who have been members of our church for 35 years or more. They are as follows: A. T. Vernon, John Thomas (deacon), W. W. Rowe (deacon), C. W. Jennings (deacon), George Smith, George W. White (deacon), W. H. Matthews and J. S. Moore (deacon Asheboro Street Church), Mrs. A. A. John-

son, Mrs. Ollie Newell Hill, Miss Mamie Smith, Miss Flora Swain, Mrs. G. P. Crutchfield, Mrs. Catherine Brooks Tucker, Miss Mary Whittington, Mrs. Geo. W. White, Mrs. Mary Sampson Newell (Asheboro Street Church), Mrs. Hattie Sampson Vernon (Asheboro Street Church), Mrs. John W. Crawford and Mrs. W. H. Matthews (Asheboro Street Church), Mrs. I. W. White.

