

A HISTORY
OF
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
MOUNT HOLLY, NORTH CAROLINA

1891-1991

BY
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HISTORY OF MOUNT HOLLY FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1891-1991

The Mount Holly First Presbyterian Church is celebrating its Centennial in 1991. It was a hundred years on January 4, 1991 that a meeting was held in which members of Goshen Presbyterian Church voted to join Presbyterians in Mount Holly in organizing a congregation and building a church on South Main Street, Mount Holly, North Carolina. This lot had been given to the Presbyterians in the late summer of 1890 by a noted evangelist, The Reverend William A. Phife. He held a series of meetings in an old sawmill building on East Central Avenue in Mount Holly. Seeing the interest of the people and the need for a Presbyterian Church, he bought and deeded to them a lot on which to build a church. Some lumber was ordered, cut and placed on the lot in the early Spring of 1891. Because of sickness and an epidemic of typhoid fever, the church was not built. It was not till the early summer of 1894 that the building was completed and services held.

Rev. Jonas Barclay was called as a supply pastor in March 1895. He gave Mount Holly part-time and Stanley part-time. Our church took on new life. In April Rev. William Black, the Synod's Evangelist, came to Mount Holly and held a series of services which resulted in increased membership. Rev. Barclay resigned in December, 1895, and the congregation was without a pastor for a long time. W. B. Rutledge was elected an Elder October 25, 1896, and installed November 8th. Other elders elected later were W. T. Johnson, Johnnie Moore, J. M. Springs and L. R. Welch.

For the next few years the pulpit was supplied by the Reverends: Robert Stimson, J. J. Kennedy, J. J. Jarrell and R. P. Smith. The Congregation on November 2, 1897 called Reverend Joseph Crockard, who stayed with them till his death in October, 1898.

The Church was served again by several different supply pastors, among whom were Rev. W. O. Sample who

served one year. During this year, two important events took place. First, on November 26, 1899, at a Congregational Meeting the name Goshen was voted to be changed to Mt. Holly Presbyterian Church. Second, on December 10, 1899, the church building was dedicated. For the next few years the Congregation had the pleasure of being served by R. Z. Johnson, George L. Cook and R. A. Miller. Rev. Cornelius Miller served from 1904 to 1906 as supply pastor.

Although the Mount Holly Church had no regular pastor, it did not become inactive. A regular Sunday School service was held every Sunday. Then in 1905, through the vision and efforts of W. T. Johnson, J. M. Springs and T. W. Springs, Sr., the lot north of the one given by Rev. Phife, was purchased and given to the Church. In February, 1906, Thomas Springs, Sr. purchased the lot on the south side toward the Methodist Church, and gave it to the Presbyterians. This is where the new Education Building now stands.

After the resignation of Rev. Cornelius Miller, R. Z. Johnson, R. A. Miller, McAlpine, and R. C. Anderson were supply pastors. On April 2, 1909, Rev. Sam L. Cathey accepted a call to the Mt. Holly Church. It was during his pastorate that a new Goshen Church was organized. Mr. Cathey saw his opportunity to do some mission work and conducted Sunday afternoon service at the old Goshen. He was also instrumental in the purchasing of individual communion cup service, bought March 23, 1914. Rev. Cathey left in December, 1916. Rev. F. A. Drennan was called April, 1917. He served until the summer of 1924. Rev. W. D. McInnis was called August 8, 1925, he stayed until April, 1930. It was during his pastorate in 1927 that a beautiful new spacious brick building was erected, at a cost of about \$42,000.00. The pulpit furniture was a gift from the old discontinued "Ladies Aid Society". The lights in front of the church were a gift of the Craig brothers, Milton, George and Paul. The windows were all memorials donated by different families. The first worship service in the new sanctuary was Mother's Day, May 13, 1928.

Rev. W. K. Beaty was called August 10, 1930. He served the Presbyterian Church for 13 years, performing the first wedding in the new church August 19, 1936 that of Miss Willie Dunn to Thomas Springs, Jr. He planned a most impressive "Dedication Service" for the Church on May 16, 1943. His resignation was accepted in August, 1943.

Rev. Willard G. Thomas was called March 5, 1944. It was during his pastorate that the church aided in the establishing of the Westview Presbyterian Church. He was a man of much zeal and interest. Rev. Thomas resigned in April, 1949.

The Congregation called Rev. D. O. McInnis on August 17, 1949 and he stayed until July 29, 1956. During that time a new Mohler Pipe Organ was installed as a gift mostly from Karl Reid Detter and W. F. Holland in memory of Mrs. Violet Holland Detter.

After Rev. McInnis left, the congregation called Dr. H. V. Carson, a retired teacher at Queens College, as supply pastor. On April 14, 1957, it was voted unanimous to call Dr. Carson as the pastor of this church. Dr. Carson stayed only nine months, resigning February, 1958. During his short tenure a gift of about \$8,000.00 was given to the church from the estate of the late Mrs. Belle S. Johnson, which was put in the "Building Fund".

In July, 1957, the congregation voted to sell the present manse, which needed repairs, and build a new one. The heirs of the late Mrs. Eunice Nims offered a lot in Woodland Park, where a beautiful new manse was built.

In June, 1958, plans were presented to the congregation for a new Education Building, the plans were accepted unanimously. The Educational Building was completed and used for the first time on August 10, 1959.

Rev. Charles C. Alexander accepted the call and came

to the Mt. Holly Church August 1, 1958. Rev. Charles Alexander and his family had the pleasure of occupying the new manse. He also had the pleasure of seeing the building and completion of the new Education Building. Many new members joined the church during his ministry. He was a dedicated pastor and liked by everyone.

On May 12, 1963, Rev. Alexander gave his resignation so that he might become a missionary to Brazil. It was accepted.

On October 6, 1963, a call was extended to the Rev. Wilson P. Rhoton, Jr. Rev. Rhoton, his wife Frances, and two children, Anne (2) and Porter (3 1/2) came to us from Glendale Presbyterian Church, Gastonia, North Carolina. After an installation service, the Women of the Church gave an informal reception. Members of the Mount Holly Ministerial Association and the teachers of the Mount Holly Schools were special invited guests, as well as friends from other churches in town. Under his splendid guidance and leadership, the church continued to go forward. Several major changes took place and many happy events were enjoyed during the next years.

In 1983 our denomination merged with the Northern Branch of Presbyterian Church forming the Presbyterian Church USA. Under the new by laws set up, a nominating committee was selected to place names of eligible members before the congregation; four elders and four deacons were elected each year for a term of three years.

In 1976 Mrs. Richard Rankin (Tee), was elected and was installed as the first woman to the Board of Deacons (Class of 1978). Mrs. Joseph Spears was installed to the Class of 1980. On December 31, 1979, our first Women Elders were installed:

1. Mrs. Richard E. Rankin Class of 1982,
and Class of 1993
2. Mrs. F. Boyden Nims Class of 1982
3. Mrs. C. Wearn Stowe Class of 1986,
and Class of 1990
4. Mrs. Thomas W. Springs, Jr. Class of 1987

5. Mrs. Charles R. Williamson Class of 1989
6. Mrs. Donna S. Love Class of 1993

An event long to be remembered was the celebration of Fifty Years in our Sanctuary Building on May 13, 1978. It began Saturday, May 12, 1978, at 6:00 P. M. in our Fellowship Hall with a Hamburger Supper. Afterwards we enjoyed an Audio-Visual Program which featured the mission and work of our congregation during the Past Fifty Years. On Sunday, May 14, at 10:00 A. M. (Sunday School Hour), we had a special program. The 11:00 Morning Worship Service was followed by a Special Cornerstone Service on the Front Steps. At noon was a Covered Dish Luncheon in our Fellowship Hall.

In 1974 Officers of our Church had set aside a room behind the Sanctuary to be our Historical Room. A committee composed of Mrs. Richard Rankin, Mrs. Thomas Springs, Jr., and Mr. Kenneth Moore had gathered items of interest to the congregation. This room was opened and enjoyed at the Fiftieth Celebration of the Sanctuary Building.

We had a very special occasion celebrated on November 13, 1988--the 25th Anniversary of Wilson and Frances Rhoton at our Church. Rev. Will Terry from Davidson delivered the sermon at the Morning Worship Service. All three Choirs presented special music and a tribute to the Rhotons was read by Henry Massey. The Mayor of Mount Holly, Charles Black, proclaimed this day, November 13, 1988 as "Wilson P. Rhoton, Jr. Day". A reception for the public was held that afternoon, to honor the Rhotons, approximately 400 guests attended. An article in the Mt. Holly News expresses the love and appreciation the Congregation and community has for Wilson Rhoton and family.

"Twenty-five years ago on November 17, 1963, the Rev. Wilson P. Rhoton, Jr. preached his first sermon in the First Presbyterian Church in Mount Holly. At this time, he suggested that his new congregation begin each day praying, 'Not my will, but Thine be done' and urged the members to make it their prayer that they be committed to Christ and concerned about those around them."

"Rev. Rhoton, his wife, Frances, and two children, Anne (2) and Porter (3 1/2) were honored by the church at a reception on November 24, 1963. At the 7:30 service that night, Wilson Rhoton was installed as minister of the First Presbyterian Church."

Wilson grew up in St. Louis, Mo., graduating from the University of Missouri and the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. Through the years he has served on many committees in Concord Presbytery, recently being chairman of the Committee on Minister and His Work and the Annuities and Relief Committee. Rev. Rhoton has always been very active in the local Ministerial Association, serving as secretary and president. Many hours have been spent working with boys on various Boy Scout badges, being Chaplain at Boy Scout Camp Bud Schiele in Tryon, and serving on troop committees for Troop #12.

Wilson Rhoton has always helped and been a part of community affairs recognizing God's work goes beyond his own congregation, and for this the City of Mount Holly named him "Man of the Year" for 1984. At this time it was said, "Reverend Rhoton is a most helpful friend to all in our town--an energetic person who generates the kind of positive excitement among children, parents, church members and the community that any person would envy. He is a family man who lives a simple life built on strict morals and firm convictions--a true, sharing minister of God's Word. Fifteen years ago a member of the Presbyterian Church wrote a tribute to this dedicated and much loved family of four. Today we would like to use this, making changes in order to add ten more years."

We feel that most families in this area have had their lives touched by one of these four and we can certainly say that no one in the First Presbyterian Church is not better because his family came to us in 1963. We members of the First Presbyterian Church would like to say to the Rhotons, THANK YOU--

For letting us watch and enjoy those two lovely children grow up to be wonderful young people.

For making 35 gallons of iced tea for a homecoming and saying, "It's nothing. I can rest tomorrow."

For washing dishes by hand for a big crowd of 39'ers when the dishwasher broke down--and not complaining.

For dressing an old man's wound each day after day and saying you were glad you got to know him.

For being a friend to our young people--helping them with their problems over lunch or maybe during a golf game.

For remembering and understanding the elderly with visits, fresh produce and baked goods.

For mopping, dusting and vacuuming the church so willingly when no one is there to do it.

For showing what a loving family is by being one.

For not being afraid to preach against our sins, but doing it in a lovely way.

For helping us to be good stewards by telling us we are.

For helping us to know Christ better by your sermons and your life.

For being with us in our joys and in our sorrows--

When the new baby came and was fine and when it wasn't.

When the operation was successful and when it wasn't.

When you performed our wedding ceremonies after hours of prayerful counseling.

When our loved ones recovered from a wreck and when they didn't.

When you conducted the final service for a loved one and made us see even then there was so much love and joy in our world.

Again, thank you Wilson, Frances, Porter and Anne Rhoton for coming to Mount Holly. We smile when we think of each of you for you have always had a smile for each of us."

Edgar A. Guest wrote:

"I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,

I'd rather one should walk with me than merely show the way."

We Presbyterians feel that we have seen a sermon and

had this very special family walk with us for the past 25 years. For this we are truly thankful.

During the years 1963 to 1991 our Church was very active: The Elders and Deacons performed their duties faithfully. The Men of the Church met once a month with a supper or a breakfast. They served breakfast at the Special Sunrise Services on Easter Sunday and on Mother's Day. The Presbyterian Women, consisting of six circles, contributed much to the work and life of the church. Bible School was held each year. Cook-outs were enjoyed by our congregation at the lake home of Peg and Robert Jessen and the home of Arnold and Elizabeth Curtis. At Christmas, a Festival of Lessons and Carols was presented by our Choirs. Sunday School Christmas Party was always a joyful occasion. In 1975 we saw the planning and beginning of our Retreat at Camp Bethelwoods, South Carolina by Mrs. Charles Williamson. Under the leadership of Mrs. Cecelia Broome, cross-stitch decorations for the Chrismon Tree were first made at Bethelwoods with Mrs. Barbara Cathey teaching the ladies how to make beaded Chrismons. Our first tree of beaded Chrismons was enjoyed at Christmas in 1983. Mr. Henry Cathey fashioned a Cross from that tree branch and each year it is used at Lent and Easter Services.

Mr. Rhoton drilled our young people in the Catechism. Upon reciting it, they received a New Testament and gift of money, from Mrs. Willis Holland, Mr. Leonard Jones and the Belk Foundation. Bibles were given to our High School Students upon their graduation. Our college students have been remembered with gifts through the years by the Circles.

Mrs. Thomas Holland served as organist and choirmaster for over 25 years, leading our Chancel, Youth and Junior Choirs. She served her church with dedication and zeal, enriching our worship through her excellent music. A reception was given in 1983 upon her twenty-fifth anniversary as our organist. On October 22, 1984, the Session of our Church received a letter of resignation from Mrs. Holland.

August 4, 1985 Bruce David Ullem joined our staff as organist and choir director. Because of the death of his mother, he served us just a little over a year.

In 1987 Mark Wingate assumed the leadership of our Musical Department. The Choir consists of Chancel Choir, Junior Choir and Youth Choir. Beautiful new blue choir robes with reversible stoles in gold, white and red were bought for our Choir members. Mark served well and faithfully as our choir leader until January 1991.

Property was added to our Church Assets: In 1968 the vacant lot behind the manse was bought and added to the manse lot. In 1969 the property behind the Church, 50 ft. x 264ft, containing two houses was purchased by the trustees for \$15,000.00. In 1988 our church received the home of Mr. & Mrs. Avery Smith, willed to the church upon the death of Mrs. Smith.

The Deacons air-conditioned the Educational Building in 1969. Our new kitchen in the Education building was remodeled in 1977, with new stove, sinks, dishwasher and cabinets. The church had a complete "going over" in 1987: Columns rebuilt at the top; new steps at the front of the church; a paint job inside and outside; pews cleaned and stained; bathrooms remodeled.

We have had two scholarship funds set up in our church to assist college students in their education:

1973 Susan Ballard Memorial Scholarship Fund

1979 William Rawlins Scholarship Fund

Support and partial support has gone out to four missionaries: Rev. and Mrs. Lyle Peterson in Japan; Rev. and Mrs. Howard Carmeron in Congo; Rev. and Mrs. Lawrence Durr in Brazil, Rev. and Mrs. Charles Alexander in Brazil; Revs. Carlos and Deborah Clugy-Soto in Africa and Venezuela. Circle #4 has given partial support to a missionary through the years.

Circle #3 helps support two children at Presbyterian Home for Children at Black Mountain, NC

Mr. Charles Wearn Stowe, a son of our Church, graduated from Columbia Seminary in Decatur, GA and was ordained in October 10, 1954. James M. Young, a son of our church, graduated from Union Seminary in Richmond, VA and was ordained a Presbyterian minister July 29, 1980.

Honorary Life Memberships have been given to:

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| Mrs. Richard E. Rankin | 1976 |
| Mrs. Willis F. Holland | 1989 |
| Miss Annie Belk | 1989 |
| Mrs. Thomas W. Springs, Jr. | 1990 |
| Mrs. Walter B. Brown | 1991 |

From 1965 to 1973, our Church sponsored a week-day Kindergarten. Mrs. H. J. Lark was the teacher from 1965-1971 and 1972-1974. Mrs. Stewart Hubbeling was the teacher 1971-72.

The Church has also sponsored: a softball team; Little League Baseball Team; Daisy Girl Scout Troop #430; Brownie Girl Scout Troop #125; Junior Girl Scout Troop #169; Cadette Girl Scout Troop #22; Senior Girl Scout Troop #7; Boy Scout Troops #60 and #12; Cub Packs; Meals on Wheels; the Mount Holly Community Relief Organization (C. R. O.); Overeaters Anonymous Support group meets at our Church on Saturday mornings. The Gaston County Multiple Sclerosis Support Group meets once a month at our church.

"The 39'ers", our Senior Citizen organization was started in 1973 by Mrs. Mary Frances Holtzclaw and Mrs. Peg Jessen, and later Mrs. Doris Connell. This group enjoys covered dish luncheons and chartered bus trips. At this time, Sue Loftin, assisted by Anita Jones are the co-ordinators and leaders of the 39ers.

The Church Newsletter is sent out monthly to every member of the congregation. Mrs. Cecelia Broome and Mrs. Tee Rankin began our Newsletter in December, 1985. This Newsletter is done through the Church Office by Mrs. Sue Loftin, who has served as the Secretary and Treasurer of our Church for the past 22 years.

Our church has received many gifts over the years. In 1968 our Church pews were covered with green velvet cushions in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Frank B. Rankin. They were the parents of Dr. Richard E. Rankin. Also the Rankin family gave the carpet in Sanctuary. A brass Cross was given and placed on our Communion Table by Mr. and Mrs. Yates Springs, in memory of his parents, Dr. and Mrs. W. J. Springs. A Founders Stone was given by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas W. Springs, Jr. in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas W. Springs, Sr. A Baptismal Fount was given by Mrs. Avery Smith in memory of Mr. Avery Smith. In 1974 a silver Communion Service was given by Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Loftin and Chuck in memory of his mother, Mrs. Sara Springs Loftin. In 1976 a oak Secretary was placed in our Historical Room by Mr. Kenneth J. Moore in memory of his parents, Mr. & Mrs. Frank G. Moore. A stained Wood Cross, hanging over the Choir Loft in the Sanctuary was made and given by Mr. Edwin Eccles, Easter 1975. Brass Urns for flowers and candlesticks, to be used on the side of the pulpit, were given by Mr. and Mrs. Arnold L. Curtis in memory of Mr. Patrick O. Rafter, Mrs. Curtis' father. In 1977 two mahogany candle stands, with acorn carving, were placed in front of our Sanctuary by the Frank G. Moore Family in loving memory of Mrs. Kitty Moore Harris and Mr. Jack L. Moore. An amount of money was given by the Pierce Family in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Clarence W. Pierce, to be used in furnishing the Historical Room. Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Loftin carpeted the Church Office and Study. A Kneeling Bench, made by Mr. Jack Stevenson, to be used during wedding services, was given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Robinson by their children. A Computer and Printer were given to the Church Office in memory of Mr. Earsen G. Loftin by Mr. & Mrs. Charles E. Loftin and Chuck. In 1987 a beautiful table and lamp were given to the Ladies Bible Class by Mrs. Esther Ward Wilson in memory of her mother, Mrs. Clara B. Ward. A lectern was given to the Men's Bible Class in honor of Mr. Robert L. Ward by his family. Flags were given to be placed in the Sanctuary by Mr. Willie B. Rhyne in memory of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harry J. Cherry. Two pews for the choir loft were made by Mr. Jack

Stevenson and donated by Mrs. Nell R. Holland. A pall, lectern, hymnbooks and T.V. in the Nursery, were given in memory of Mrs. Bess O. Craig. A Color TV camera and receiver was given in memory of Mrs. Virginia Clemmer by Mr. Coit Clemmer in 1986; this is used in the Ladies Bible Class to receive the Sunday Morning Worship Service, this way those unable to climb steps can participate in our Morning Worship Service. A \$5,000.00 donation was given by Mrs. Doris C. Connell and Mr. J. Milton Craig, Jr. in memory of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Milton Craig, to be used as a building and grounds maintenance fund. A Communion and Easter Scarf, a Chrismon tree skirt, a stole were made by Miss Jane Patrick and given by her and her mother, Mrs. Henry Patrick. Our Church shared in the Estates of Miss Bain Henderson, Mr. Horace Nims and Miss Mary Hutchison.

One of our life-long members was taken by death December 29, 1972, Mr. Willis Fronberger Holland. He joined this Church in the very early years of our history. Mr. Willis Holland served as Sunday School Teacher, Supt., Choir Member, Deacon and Elder. He was clerk of the Session for many years. He was the author of our History of the Mt. Holly Presbyterian Church giving a fully detailed history 1764-1963.

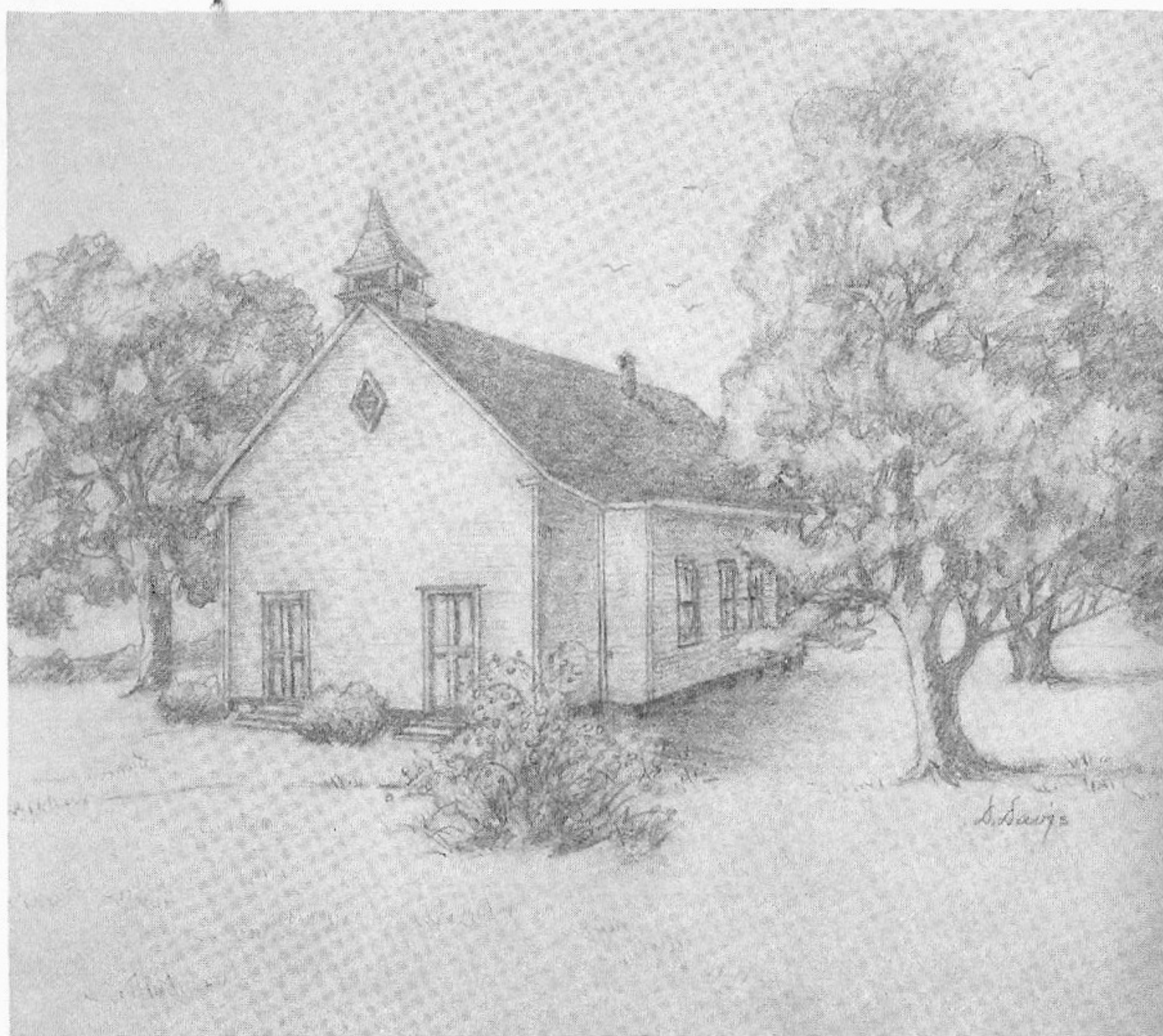
At this time our membership is 267 with a Sunday School enrollment of 120. We have Sunday School Classes from Nursery to adults. There are five adult classes: The Fellowship Class, The Friendship Class, The Sojourner Class, Men's and Ladies' Bible Classes. We have a youth group and three choirs, Chancel, Youth and Junior.

Plans are in the making to celebrate our Centennial. Not being sure of an specific organizational date, we will celebrate during the year 1991. Those on the Planning Committee are: Kimmie Koerber, Anne Farmer, Co-Chairpersons, Cecelia Broome, Sue Loftin, Jim Love, Kenneth Moore, Tee Rankin, Nancy Smith, Willie Springs, Gary Wilhoit, Mark Wingate.

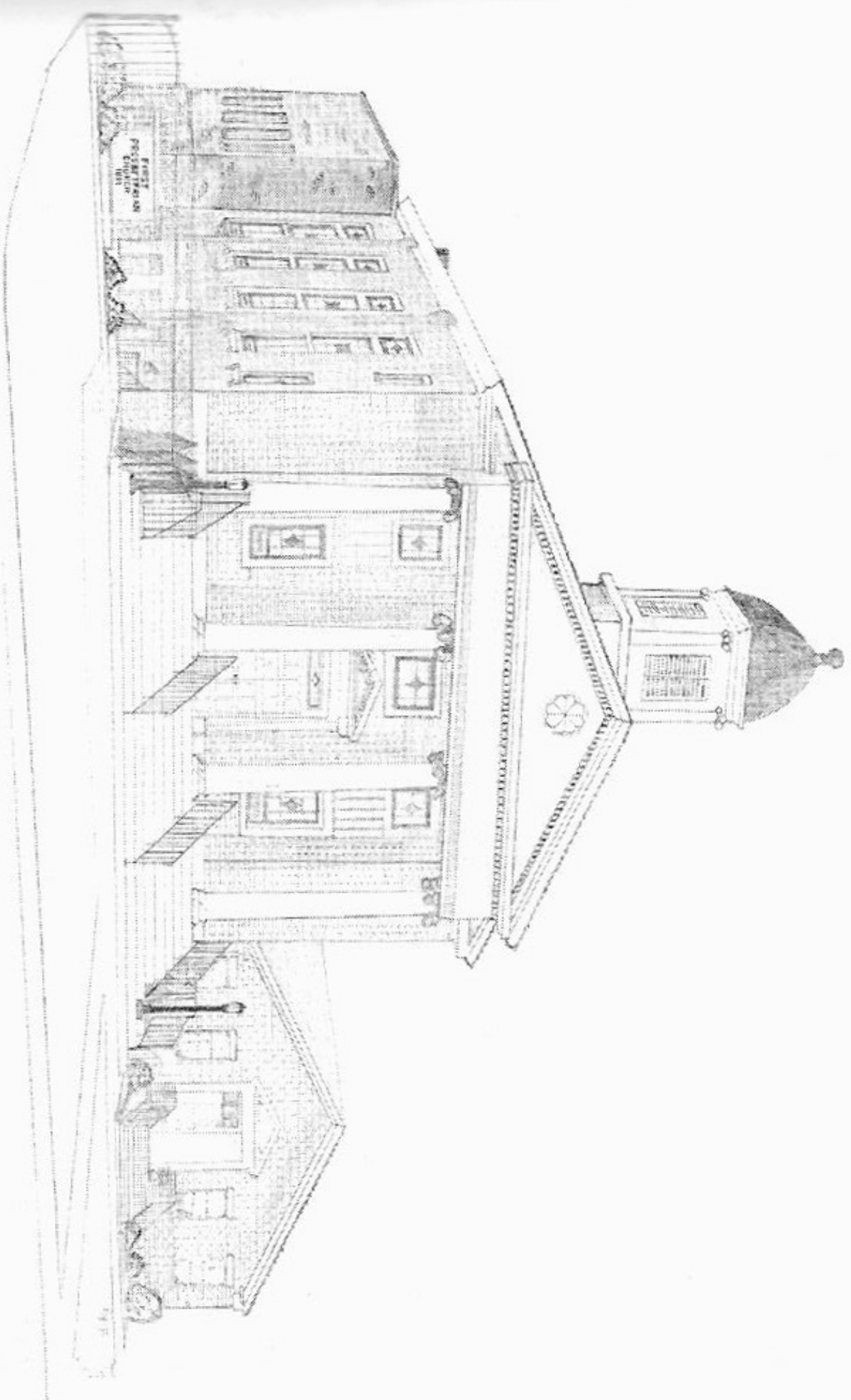
During our Centennial Year our Church History is being brought up-to-date. A new Church Directory with pictures and addresses will be made. We started the year off on Sunday, January 6, 1991 with a Covered Dish Supper. Members of our Mt. Holly first little church Mrs. Willie Springs, Mrs. Edith Carpenter, Dr. Richard Rankin, gave some history and reminisced of years gone by. A Lenten Supper was observed each Wednesday night during Lent with the Circles serving soup and sandwiches and Mr. Rhoton teaching the Bible.

Many years have come and gone, many members have come and gone, but we have the same God who rules over us. He has blessed us in the past, He blesses us at the present. We pray for his rich blessings in the years to come.

Willie Dunn Springs
(Mrs. Thomas W. Springs, Jr.)
May, 1991



1894 — 1927



1928 — Present