

Old Concord . . .

A Fairfield Landmark

CONCORD Presbyterian Church at Woodward, in upper Fairfield County, is a small, unpretentious house of worship. In comparison with many beautiful and ornate urban churches, the little rural edifice becomes even more humble in appearance. Concord has the singular distinction in these modern times of being a church without electricity. At rare night services, this deficiency requires the lighting of venerable kerosene lamps which hang from the ceiling.

To one school of thought, the traditional Presbyterian plainness in inside furnishings and unadorned outer walls and windows make for drabness. To others, the appearance of Concord church brings back nostalgic memories of numerous old country churches which, among many other things, have in countless cases fallen victim to the march of progress.

But whether the visitor is impressed or unimpressed by the appearance of this small church by the roadside at Woodward, its past history and present struggle to remain alive is of more than passing interest. Concord's history is the story of a goodly portion of upper Fairfield, and the bones which rest in its cemetery represents 8 to 10 generations of pioneers, soldiers, statesmen, planters, educators, and merchants. The dead also represent many ordinary people whose names will never attract public notice save as they are etched on their tombstones.

According to a historical sketch published in 1896 by the Rev. M. R. Kirkpatrick, the pastor at that time, there is evidence that divine services were held in the vicinity of Concord as early as 1785. The section was settled by Scotch-Irish immigrants, and the first minister to preach for the people of Concord was the Rev. Robert McClintock, lately come from Ireland. Formal organization occurred in 1796, when these Presbyterians after wandering from one place to another, chose the Woodward site for their house of worship.

The present building, which stands in a grove of oaks across the railroad from the highway,

was erected in 1818. This date appears high over the doorway, and directly underneath is the figure of a star. Apparently the significance of the star has been lost on most of the present membership. Extensive repairs have been made through the years, one of the most meaningful being the removal of the gallery reserved for slaves.

Concord's pews and pulpit furniture are plain. The lamps overhead and an ancient pump organ in one corner represent traditional equipment hardly to be found extensively any more.

The casual visitor may enter the church (apparently the door is never locked), and though he may be a Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist or otherwise, he can be influenced as much toward worship as if he were in a great cathedral. As one stands in Concord's little sanctuary, he can well wonder at the number of persons who, through the long years, have been brought along the Christian way through not only this small rural church but also its thousands of counterparts in America.

Along with sister houses of worship in Fairfield, Concord was not spared the ravages of war in the 1860s. The members became impoverished and many went off to war, never to return. History records that the pastor, the Rev. T. W. Irvin, faithfully ministered to the congregation during the dark years. Often he returned his salary to the people, saying that he could not accept that which they needed so much to keep body and soul together.

Concord felt the wrath of Sherman's army as it passed through. The Bible was removed from the pulpit, and the communion service, tokens, and baptismal font were taken by Union soldiers. Yankee depredations supplied many a topic of conversation for years to come as oldtimers gathered under the trees of the old church.

But of all the stories to come from Concord, none is more touching and symbolic than that told about the devotion of a Negro named Isaiah Moore for a white man named Thomas William Brice. Major Brice was

one of Fairfield's best known citizens of another day. He

fought in the Confederate War with Co. D, 6th Regt., SCV, and in the process lost an eye.

Thereafter he always wore a black patch across the missing eye. Returning to Woodward after the War, "Major Tom" became a prominent merchant and farmer, and a stalwart member of Concord. In 1908 death removed him but not his influence from the community.

Among others, the influence of Major Tom lived on in Isaiah Moore, a faithful servant who had followed him through the War and remained his good friend until death separated them. When the Major died, Isaiah lived on for another 10 years. When death neared, the old Negro made a request that he be buried as close to the grave of Major Brice as possible. These instructions were carried out, and today his small marker is seen a few yards away from the Brice family plot in which Major Tom is interred.

The inscription on Isaiah's tombstone was written by the son of Major Brice. It states that he was "about 75 years old," and then there is a unique epitaph reading, "As Good as Ever Fluttered."

Isaiah Moore is still remembered by the older members of Concord as a great student of the Bible. In keeping with an older generation of Presbyterians, Isaiah could recite the Shorter Catechism "from front to back and back to front," and once received a Bible as his reward for this difficult assignment. Nevertheless, he is also remembered as being superstitious, often heating a horseshoe red hot, allowing it to cool, then hanging it over his door "to keep away the witches." For all of his goodness, some of Isaiah's race felt he was going to hell because he loved to play a fiddle he owned.

With a past deep in history and tradition, little Concord continues to be a site of worship for the Presbyterians of Woodward. A part of Bethel presbytery, the church reports about

40 members. Services are held every other Sunday, the supply pastor being A. B. Plexico, a student at Columbia Seminary.

It has been necessary in recent days to enlarge the cemetery at Concord. An ever increasing "cloud of witnesses" makes such a move necessary. Whether the little church can continue, in the face of changing times and shifting populations, remains an unanswered question. But there is a loyal remnant at Concord, perhaps just as hardy as their forefathers, and it could well be that the present and future of this small Presbyterian congregation may be as bright as the past, when the final summation is given.

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The State:



This is a frontal view of Concord Presbyterian Church at Woodward. The large cemetery is off to the left and behind the building. Built in 1818, this old house of worship is a landmark in upper Fairfield, and once fell victim to Sherman's marauding soldiers. It is located approximately a couple of hundred yards from US 321 and about 40 miles north of Columbia.

Old S. C. Church Will Also Be The Newest

By MRS. FRANK McINTOSH
Special to The Observer

KINGSTREE, S. C. — A young South Carolina minister who saw his first church burn now is watching a new one rise.

For the Rev. C. Jerry Hammett, son of the George B. Hammetts of Kingstree, this amounts to building again.

The Old Rock Creek Presbyterian Church, first organized in 1770, had been inactive for half a century when it was reorganized Nov. 4, 1956.

Hammett, a graduate of Clemson and Columbia Seminary, took the rural church near Greenwood as his first pastorate.

Often called the "mother of Presbyterianism" in Greenwood County, the Old Rock Creek Church's congregation had once spread to form churches at Greenwood, Cokesbury, Ninety Six and Coronaca.

The newly organized congregation met in 1956 in a white frame building erected in 1815. This building had replaced an original structure made of logs from the surrounding forest.

Under young Hammett's guidance, the congregation added four Sunday school rooms to the frame building. By this year, a six-room manse had been built and the old Quarry School building had been renovated as a community center.

Then, after services one Sunday morning this past spring, the white frame church itself burned to the ground. That evening and for the Sundays since, the congregation has met in the school building.

A new church has been rising through the summer — one of traditional design with a tall steeple, and made of broken blue granite. In addition to a sanctuary that will seat 250, there will be nine

Sunday school rooms, a session room and a minister's study.

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