

BELAIR UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Adam Ivy's maternal grandfather was the Rev. Adam Clarke, a personal friend of John Wesley, founder of the Methodist church in England.

One of David Hagins' grandfathers was Col. William Hagins, a Revolutionary War hero who may have been the first white man to live inside the Catawba Indian Land of Lancaster County. Colonel Hagins died in 1790 and was buried in the old cemetery of Six Mile Creek Presbyterian Church.

In 1835, David Hagins and Eliza, his wife, both Presbyterians, in exchange for \$1 deeded 6 and one-half acres of their Catawba lease to Rev. Adam Ivy and some Methodist friends for the building of a church. The deeded acreage was completely surrounded by Hagins' land but was within walking distance of the "Great Road" and Hagins' Inn which served as a stagecoach stop between Lancaster and Charlotte.

Reverend Ivy and the other founders named their church Mount Ararat. Tradition has it that the first church was an "arbor," a rough-hewn shelter made of saplings and tree branches, but the WPA survey of churches made in 1937 says that the first church was constructed of hewn logs.

In 1841, Belair Village was laid out between the church and the "Great Road." A plat shows that Belair Village had three streets and 98 lots. The village is known to have boasted several stores besides Hagins' Inn which contained a tavern and post office and Dr. Charles L. Clawson opened a medical office.

A history of Pleasant Grove Church, Union County, N. C. states, "Around 1850-1860 there were 17 churches on the Pleasant Grove Circuit with four campgrounds in connection with them. One was a Bellair Church in South Carolina. Not much is known about its size but more than likely it was very small."

The late Mrs. Alice Collins Dickson, a life-long member of the church, collected some facts about Mount Ararat (the name was changed to Belair Methodist Episcopal Church of the South in 1918).

Mrs. Dickson reported that a second church building, ca. 1882-84, was a one-room building with two doors in front (there are still two front entrances). At that time women customarily entered the left door and the men the right door.

Camp meetings attracted crowds from surrounding areas who arrived on foot, as well as in wagons and buggies. The people would be summoned to services by someone blowing on a "conk" (conch) shell used for a horn. Mrs. Dickson says that at camp meeting time, there were three services a day, each lasting several hours.

Bessie Rodgers Pettus, 91, a life-long member, recalls camp meetings when she was a child living with her grandparents who lived near the church.

Mrs. Pettus in 1994 wrote: "My grandmother Rodgers said she helped to cook breakfast for forty people who had come from her old home at Catawba in York County to camp meeting at Mount Ararat. People would come in wagons with their children and stay overnight. The men would sleep in the wagons. These wagons were loaded with chickens, eggs, food, quilts for the children, and feed for the mules. Some that lived near enough would go home for the night, leaving their wagons and buggies at the church. They would unhitch their mules from the wagons and tie them to trees in the woods.

"Services were morning and afternoon. If they had a night services they had to have lanterns in the trees to be able to see to get around outside."

The church Mrs. Pettus first knew as Mount Ararat is today called Belair United Methodist Church, still a country church but with a lovely sanctuary far-removed from its humble beginnings.