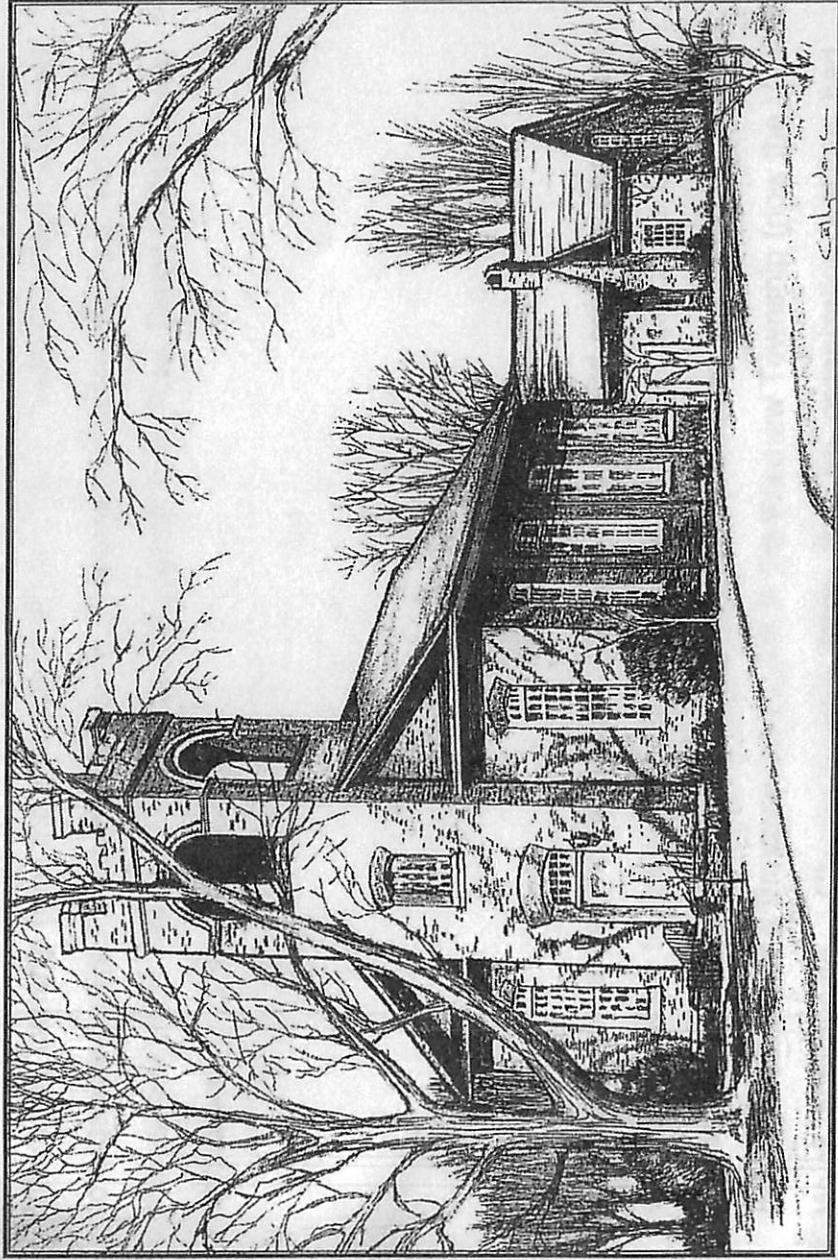


Van Wyck Presbyterian Church History

May 18, 1884 - May 17, 2009



Van Wyck Presbyterian Church
5140 Old Hickory Road
P.O. Box 68
Van Wyck, SC 29744

History of Van Wyck Presbyterian Church

Van Wyck, South Carolina

This narrative was prepared in May 2009 from church records, minutes of church meetings, and the personal recollections of members. It covers two major periods in the church's history. The first period was from 1884 to 1911, beginning when a small group of people from what was then known as the Waxhaw Township (now the community of Van Wyck, South Carolina) petitioned to organize Beulah Presbyterian Church. The second period began in 1911 when the congregation petitioned to build a new sanctuary on Main Street in Van Wyck, and covers events up to 2009.

Beulah Presbyterian Church

1884 to 1911

It all began on a warm spring day in 1884 when a devoted group of people met with a committee from Bethel Presbytery under the large oaks of the Crenshaw Plantation. The exact date was May 18th, and the meeting was called to discuss the organization of a Presbyterian church in the Waxhaw Township (now the Van Wyck community). Church records show that an organization petition had already been presented to the Bethel Presbytery by the people of the township. Both the Presbytery and the people of Waxhaw Township had appointed organization committees. The township was represented by E. B. Mobley, John L. Rodmond, and R. G. Garrison.

Petition to the Presbytery

Petition for the organization of a church in Waxhaw Township, Lancaster County, South Carolina, to be known as "Beulah Presbyterian Church."

We, the undersigned subscribers residing in the vicinity of Curetan's Store and Waxhaw Post Office in Waxhaw Township in the county of Lancaster and the state of South Carolina, do respectfully petition Bethel Presbytery to organize a Presbyterian Church in the section of said land. And we do promise to pay the amounts attached to our names for the promise of building said church, viz:

W. F. Harris	5.00	Joseph Crenshaw	5.00
John A. Estridge	5.00	James M. Moore	10.00
R. T. McDowell	1.00	W. J. Crenshaw	2.00
D. N. Eswin	1.00	M. C. Harmon	10.00
R. H. Massey	5.00	J. D. Nisbet	10.00
Mrs. E. B. Mobley	25.00	E. W. Porter	10.00
Mrs. J. H. Stewart	10.00	R. S. Stuavant	1.00
Mrs. R. G. Garrison	15.00	C. J. Griffin	10.00
J. L. Tellmond	5.00	E. W. Tyler	1.00
J. M. Yoder	5.00	Robert Vaughan	5.00
M. B. Massey	5.00	Mrs. J. M. Moore	1.00
R. L. Durant	5.00	John Robinson	1.00
Mack Tellmond	5.00	R. K. Tenant	1.00
M. J. Griffin	.50	T. C. Estridge	5.00
Samuel Strain	5.00	A. T. Morrison	3.00
R. S. Cambell	2.50	J. M. Ivey	25.00
R. B. Reid	2.00	Peter Garrison	10.00
E. B. Mobley	50.00	J. F. Steele	25.00
E. W. Nisbet	20.00	James H. Stewart	20.00
John L. Rodmond	50.00	J. B. Porter	5.00
R. G. Garrison	25.00	R. J. Belk	20.00
J. A. McGuirt	20.00	T. N. Dunlap	5.00
J. T. N. Rogers	2.00		

The Presbytery was sympathetic. Rev. H. B. Platt, L. N. Robinson, J. H. Thornwell and W. W. Walkup, an elder from the Tirzah Church, were asked to act as a fact-finding committee, to visit the Waxhaw Township, and to report back at the fall meeting.

The visit went well, and at the fall meeting of the Presbytery, Rev. Platt's committee recommended that a church be organized in the Waxhaw Township. The Presbytery endorsed the committee's recommendations and approved the organization of a church under the name "Beulah." With this sanction, the church was formed. Charter members were;

E. B. Mobley from Waxhaw Presbyterian Church

Mrs. E. B. Mobley Waxhaw Presbyterian Church

James F. Steele from Waxhaw Presbyterian Church

Ann E. Steele from Six Mile Presbyterian Church

Permelia D. Steele from Six Mile Presbyterian Church

Mrs. Sarah Porter from Six Mile Presbyterian Church

Edgar E. Porter from Six Mile Presbyterian Church

James B. Porter from Six Mile Presbyterian Church

Mrs. Margaret B. Porter from Six Mile Presbyterian Church

Sally A. Stewart from Six Mile Presbyterian Church

Thomas R. Porter on Examination of Faith

E. B. Mobley was elected and ordained an Elder.

Later, on August 3, 1884, the following were received:

R. G. Garrison from Ebenezer Church

Cally V. Garrison from Fort Mill Church

Mrs. Mary Jane Nisbet from Waxhaw M. E. Church

E. W. Nisbet from Waxhaw Presbyterian Church.

Others quickly joined the group.

On September 5, 1884, three new members were received.

James H. Stewart from Fort Mill Presbyterian Church

M. C. Harmon from Waxhaw Station Presbyterian Church

J. M. Flow, Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, Monroe, N. C.

On September 7, 1884 - Mrs. Jane Rodmond on Profession of Faith.

On November 15, 1884 - Mrs. L. T. Nisbet from Marvin Presbyterian Church.

On March 1, 1885 - Dixon Porter from Pineville Presbyterian Church.

James F. Steele and R. G. Garrison were elected and installed as elders, and James H. Stewart and Marcus C. Harmon were installed as deacons.

The new Beulah Church congregation moved swiftly and named a building committee. E. B. Mobley, John L. Rodmond, R. G. Garrison, James F. Steele, and E. W. Nisbet served on that committee. Isom McGuirt and James Crenshaw donated one and a half acres of land for the building site "in a convenient place" in the Waxhaw community. The site was located adjacent to the current home of Keith and Carolyn Starnes on highway SC 75, several hundred yards west of its intersection with highway SC 521.

Builder A. A. Bradford agreed to construct the building for \$225.

Mr. Bradford was also a fast mover and the church building was completed in the summer of 1885. Rev. J. H. Thornwell conducted the dedication service before a large congregation on November 1, 1885. The enthusiasm of the group and the urgency of their task took them from a petition to a twenty-two-member congregation with a new church building in only twelve months. This was quite an accomplishment.

The Beulah Church building was a plain white frame building with green blinds. Sunday school and preaching services were conducted twice a month. Bob McGuirt was superintendent of Sunday school. (The Beulah Church was later used as a one-room school and the photograph in the present Vaughan Memorial Room was taken during that period.)

Van Wyck Presbyterian Church

1911 to 1939

The session met on July 2, 1911 with barely a quorum in what would turn out to be the prelude to a significant event in the church's history. Present were Rev. James Russell, the moderator, and elders G. L. Vaughan and R. H. Massey. Mr. Vaughan was appointed to attend the upcoming meeting of Bethel Presbytery at Bullock Creek. R. H. Massey was appointed his alternate. The congregation had previously voted to petition for the construction of a new church building in the Van Wyck community and Vaughan's role was to present the petition. It formally requested that the Bethel Presbytery give Beulah Church authorization to construct a new sanctuary and to sell the old church building to help finance the new construction.

The Presbytery approved the petition, and in 1911, after 27 years of faithful service, the old church was sold. The lumber was used in several houses in the community.

A building committee was named consisting of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Nisbet, J. M. Nisbet, Mr. and Mrs. W. N. Ashe, G. L. Vaughan, and James H. Stewart.

It's interesting to note what church records in 1912 stated:

Statement of work and cash on the Van Wyck Presbyterian Church up to June 1, 1912:

Salary for preacher for past year	\$ 180.00
Gift of a lot	200.00
Building work on foundation	<u>955.00</u>
	\$ 1,335.00

The new Van Wyck Presbyterian Church began with twenty-eight charter members. C. S. Massey and R. H. Massey donated the building lot on Main Street in Van Wyck. Julian Starr was the architect and designed a beautiful, classic structure that would seat 125 people. W. N. Ashe gave the brick and other materials. It was completed in 1912. The construction was unusual in that the walls and partitions, from the foundation to the roof, were two feet thick and constructed of solid brick, all donated by Mr. Ashe.

The new Van Wyck Presbyterian Church began with twenty-eight charter members. They were:

William N. Ashe

Mrs. S. W. Nisbet

Mrs. William N. Ashe

Miss Loma M. Nisbet

F. J. Anderson

Miss Louise Nisbet

Columbus Griffin

Mrs. Wesley Plyler

Nancy Gamble

Miss Jeanette Plyler

M. C. Harmon	Wesley Plyler
Martha Harmon	Mrs. Sally Stewart
Mrs. Pearl P. Hudson	Walter S. Stewart
Ralph Gordon Hudson	Miss Ethel Vaughan
Miss Eva Massey	G. L. Vaughan
Mrs. R. H. Massey	Mrs. G. L. Vaughan
R. H. Massey	Samuel L. Vaughan
Mrs. Monnie P. Massey	Louise Vaughan
J. E. Nisbet	P. L. Wolfe

On September 24, 1914, the session *"instructed Mr. Wes Plyer to see about having trees planted on the church lot."* Some of these beautiful oaks surround the church today. The sanctuary was carpeted and re-painted during the pastorate of Rev. John Jackson Brown.

1940 thru 1950

In 1940 and 1941 the education building was constructed and in 1945 dedicated to Samuel L. Vaughan, Jr., an airman who lost his life when he was shot down during World War II.

The Baptismal Fount was added in memory of Rev. John Jackson Brown.

In the three years from 1947 to 1950, the sanctuary was completely re-decorated. The frosted glass in the windows and the red and blue glass in the transoms were replaced with stained glass. New carpet, pulpit furniture, and communion table were donated by Mrs. J. Marion Moore in memory of her husband. W. Oliver Nisbet built the arch and choir rail and installed paneling around the rostrum in memory of his father, John Edwin Nisbet. These were made of native walnut from trees cut on the Nisbet home place. Mrs. William H.

Moore is responsible for the beautiful organ, which was given by members and friends of the church in memory of the elders, W. N. Ashe, J. E. Nisbet, R. H. Massey, T. W. Plyer, J. M. Moore, and G. L. Vaughan

For twenty years Sunday school and preaching services were held twice a month in the Presbyterian Church and twice a month in the Methodist Church, alternating every Sunday.

1951 thru 1969

Many improvements were made during this period. In 1951 when Rev. Laurence Williams was called to the church, and the congregation wanted him to live in the community. To provide for this, a manse was built adjoining the church.

1952 A new heating system for the church was installed.

1953 Water was piped into the church kitchen.

1954 The Sunday school rooms were plastered, the kitchen refinished and cabinets installed.

1955 Mr. and Mrs. Glenn C. Alexander installed the water heater. A restroom and storage closets were added.

1956 Banquet tables and chairs were given to the church by Mrs. J. Marion Moore and Miss Marion Moore.

1957 The outside of the sanctuary and Sunday School building were painted.

1958 Lancaster County paved the parking areas on the side road and in the front of the church.

1959 A new amplifier was purchased for the organ and inside shutters were added in the Samuel L. Vaughan, Jr. Memorial Room.

- 1960** An accordion partition and inside shutters were installed in the Sunday school. They were gifts of Mrs. J. Marion Moore and Miss Marion Moore. The brick walks to the front and side doors were provided by Mr. and Mrs. James W. Moore. The Women of the Church planted the boxwoods that border the front walk. The sanctuary and Sunday school were re-roofed.
- 1961** The walls of the sanctuary and Sunday School classrooms were repainted through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Moore, Mr. and Mrs. James M. Moore, and Miss Marion Moore. Mrs. Moore also had the manse porch enclosed in glass jalousies.
- 1969** The original pews, which were purchased "second hand" from the First Presbyterian Church in Rock Hill were replaced.

The Storm Clouds of 1973

But all was not good, and in the summer of 1973, Van Wyck Presbyterians suddenly found themselves in the eye of a storm. With only one week's notice, the session called a congregational meeting for July 1, 1973, a time when eleven members were known to be away on vacation. The purpose was to vote on a proposal to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church U. S. The vote was twenty-two to fourteen in favor of withdrawal.

On July 2nd, the Monday night following the vote, the session met again, this time at W. H. Moore's home. At this meeting, W. O. Nisbet told the session that he would remain loyal to the Presbyterian Church U. S. He was told that since a majority of the session was opposed to that position and the congregation had voted to leave the Presbyterian Church U.S., all records, members, property, etc. were no longer under the control of Bethel Presbytery. At that point, Mr. Nisbet walked out of the meeting.

The loyalist group worked hard to remain in communication and attended church and participated in worship. However, after being told that they no longer had authority in the church, they gradually stopped attending.

Bethel Presbytery did all they could to support the loyalists, who by now had started holding their own monthly services in the homes of members. They established a reconciliation committee and asked for a meeting with the old separatists session, but the meeting was fruitless and did nothing to unify the church.

Finally, representatives of Bethel Presbytery and the loyalists met. They decided to notify the separatists that the session was dissolved and the Van Wyck Presbyterian Church was now under the care and direction of the Bethel Presbytery. They were ignored and a court action followed.

During this lawsuit to return the church to Bethel Presbytery, the separatists stated that if the court ruled against them and the First Church, Rock Hill, and awarded the property to Bethel Presbytery, they would no longer contest the rights of Bethel in Van Wyck. The courts did rule in favor of Bethel Presbytery, but the separatists did not live up to their promise and appealed the decision. This appeal was also won by Bethel. Still, the separatists and First Church of Rock Hill would not surrender the property. A final lawsuit was filed jointly by W. O. Nisbet and Bethel Presbytery for a return of the church to the Bethel Presbytery. It succeeded and the church was at last returned to Bethel Presbytery.

This bitter disagreement between two local groups resulted in a division of not only the church but also the community. Many said that the major problems stemmed from misunderstandings and poor communication. But whatever the reason, there was still hope that eventually the Presbyterian Church could be one church again, and any moves toward reconciliation would have been welcomed by the Van Wyck Presbyterian Church.