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FLINT HILL BAPTIST CHURCH

INTERESTING STORY OF A NOTABLE CONGREGATION.

TWENTY-ONE PASTORS IN 116 YEARS

Grand Old Grand-Mother of the Churches Retains the Vigor and Power of Youth,
and Looks Forward With Confidence to Additional Centuries of Usefulness.

The following sketch of FLINT HILL Baptist church was prepared by REV. **EDWARD S. REAVES**, the pastor, to be read on the occasion of the occupation of the handsome new church at FLINT HILL last Sunday. The sketch was prepared in the apprehension that Rev. **A. L. STOUGH**, the venerable former pastor, would not be able to be present. Much of the material had been obtained from Rev. Mr. **STOUGH**. Rev. Mr. **STOUGH**, however, was able to be present, and at the request of our representative Rev. Mr. **REAVES** gave up his own interesting and valuable sketch for publication in The Enquirer:

FLINT HILL Baptist church, under the original name of Sugar Creek church, was organized May 1st, 1792. The founder of the church was **JOHN ROOKER**, who was born in Northampton county, Va., March 12th, 1755, and removed to Warren county, N. C. whence he came to this community in 1790. In North Carolina he had been engaged as a teacher, and was a licentiate preacher. Eighteen months after his arrival the church was organized by Rev. **ABRAHAM MARSHALL** of Columbus county, Ga., who, himself was born in New England in 1748 and is described by Newman in his "History of the Baptist churches in the United States" as one of the most amiable, laborious and successful ministers of the time." He traveled much as an evangelist and possibly on one of these evangelistic tours his services, as an ordained minister were sought by Rev. **JOHN ROOKER** to organize the little band of believers which he had gathered, into a church. In an essay written by **JOHN ROOKER** in which he gives an autobiographical sketch when he was 85 years of age, he states that the number of constituent members was thirteen and that four others joined the church on a declaration of their faith on the day of its organization. According to Benedict most of these members came from Warren county, N. C., and constituted part of a colony, which settled on lands belonging to the Catawba Indians and in the surrounding country. The names of these first members of the old church are worthy of mention here. They are: **JOHN ROOKER, JOHN DINKINS, JOHN SMITH, JAMES SPEARS, WILLIAM PETTUS, JULIA**, (a negro servant belonging to Mr. **HARRIS**), **MARGARET DINKINS, CELIA WITHERS, MARY SMITH, ALICE SPEARS, ALICE WITHERS, MARY COOPER**. There are but twelve of

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these names, but it is supposed that the name of Mrs. **ROOKER**, wife of the minister, was in some way not recorded, which would explain the discrepancy between the earliest records and the statement made by **JOHN ROOKER** that the number of constituent members was thirteen. **JOHN ROOKER** became the first pastor of the church and continued in this capacity for forty-four years, or until 1836. No records of the church were kept for the first two years, and doubtless many interesting facts have thus been lost to us. The first deacons were **JOHN DINKINS** and **JOHN SMITH**. It may be of interest here to state, that the late Dr. **THOMAS H. PRITCHARD** in a sketch of Tryon Street Baptist church. Charlotte, published several years before his death, says that **JOHN DINKINS** was the first Baptist in Mecklenburg county, of whom we have any knowledge. He further says that it was through his influences that Rev. **JOHN HOOKER** came to these parts and that he lived in a home provided for him by **JOHN DINKINS**. A foot note on the first page of the original record book of the church says, that during these first two years, when no connected record was kept, that regular services were maintained and it is likely that during these years others were found to join the little band, and take their part in its struggles and triumphs. When the first house of worship was built, we do not know. But it was most likely a log building, and it is said to have stood in the rear of the old building. In 1794 the church sent delegates to Bethel association, which at that time covered eleven counties in North and South Carolina, and had thirty-two churches co-operating. Later, in 1811, the church transferred its membership to Moriah association and in 1866 joined the York association.

During its history the church has had a good many members who were Indians. To it probably belongs the credit of first giving the gospel to the Catawba nation, among whom they maintained a mission station. In 1806 a noted Indian by the name of **MUSH**, together with his family, joined the church upon a letter from Lower College church, Va. He was of the Pamunky tribe. The next day after becoming a member of the church, he was licensed to preach. He is described as a man of talent, who developed into a popular preacher, who was frequently called upon to preach on great occasions such as the annual meetings of the associations and at conventions. He was a man who could have been largely useful, but unfortunately in early life he learned to love "fire water" or strong drink, which ever proved to be a deadly curse to the Indians. The church after bearing with him many years, finally stopped him from preaching, but retained him as a member on condition that he should not manufacture, sell, nor use intoxicating drinks. After this he reformed and in 1837 died, still being a member of the church. This leads us to remark that in those early days our Baptist fathers were strict disciplinarians. They would receive no one excluded from another church without the consent of the excluding church. They required private offenses to be settled according to the teachings of our Savior as given in the 18th chapter of Matthew. They made a broad distinction between the church and the world, and took a decided stand against dancing, and such other worldly amusements as many of our people now resort to. They were extremely careful about receiving candidates for baptism, and each one was required to give before the church an account of the Lord's dealings with his soul. Such a time was made a great occasion. Relatives and friends were invited to come forward to hear the religious

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experience related, and many were melted to tears through these recitals and it was not uncommon that conversions followed upon such testimonials of God's dealings with individual souls, the testimonial meeting has ever been a fruitful source of divine blessing and it is believed by the writer that we do not today make as much use of this service as we ought.

The early devotional spirit of the church is attested by the fact that in 1795 they agreed to have prayer meetings every Wednesday afternoon at the home of the preacher. This item is worthy of special note for it indicates that the spiritual tone of the church was rich.

In 1810 the church agreed to purchase twenty copies of Watt's Child's Catechism, but recorded their dissent from the teachings of this work with reference to baptism. This indicates the meager supply of literature in those early days, and the care with which our fathers guarded the doctrinal teachings they put into the hands of their children. Just when the first Sunday I school was organized we do not know, but it was probably during the pastorate of the Rev. **PETER NICHOLSON**, many years later. But whether they had a Sunday school or not, the purchase of the catechisms proves that they did not neglect the spiritual training of their children.

The church was from the first, full of the missionary spirit. That a mission to the Catawba Indians was maintained by the church has already been stated. In further proof of the missionary spirit which pervaded the church. Dr. **THOMAS H. PRITCHARD** in the historical sketch of Tryon Street church, already referred to in tracing the early beginnings of Baptist history in these parts, after recording the organization of FLINT HILL church in 1792, tells next, of a missionary society organized in 1815. which had the promotion of missionary interest as its object. The date of the organization of this society is noteworthy as being just one year after that of the Missionary Convention of the United States, which came into being in response to the need of an organized agency for the support of JUDSON and RICE, who on going out to India, became themselves converts to the Baptist faith, and thus created a demand for missionary contributions from the churches. They continued earnestly in this work until a Rev. Mr. **OSBORNE**, who was a leader in the ranks of anti-missions from Baltimore, came among them poisoned their minds against missions. But this was only for a short while. They soon returned to the support of the mission movement, and the church has been ever since a missionary body. The progressive and missionary spirit of the church is further attested by the fact that it sent out arms in several directions, and established places of worship, some of which grew into independent churches. One of these arms was Chalk Level, beyond Sugar creek. Another was at Ezell's meeting house, where Marvin now is. A church was organized here called Buck Hill, which was disbanded in 1859 or '60, after which the remaining members were organized into the Pleasant Valley church.

Sardis, beyond the Catawba river, was another arm of the church, which in 1836 was organized into a church by sending out thirty-eight members. Because of death and removals, this church afterwards became extinct. Mill Creek church, beyond the Catawba river, was also an arm of the church which

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developed into a church. In 1833 ten members were dismissed to form in Charlotte which was the beginning of organized Baptist effort in that city. Owing to discord and deaths, this first church disbanded, but the survivors were afterwards organized into the Tryon Street church of that city.

FLINT HILL is also the mother of Union, Fort Mill, Oak Grove and Pineville churches. It is entitled to be hailed today as a mother, yes, and a grandmother of churches. Heavy drafts have been made upon her vitality and life to form organizations elsewhere. And still the call of the city draws away from her sons and daughters to swell the working forces of the cities and towns. It is safe to say that there is scarcely a nearby church anywhere which does not number among its best and most useful, former FLINT HILL members. What this old church has meant for the up-building of God's kingdom on earth only the last day can reveal. May it go on doing its gracious work until the Master himself shall come to claim his own. On August 9th, 1811, the first worship was held in the second building, which stands where the new building is now located. This building which was of logs was enlarged in 1838 by adding a frame addition. Two years previous to this, In 1836, **JAMES THOMAS** was called to the pastorate to share the labors with Rev. **JOHN ROOKER**, who was now getting too infirm to meet the demands of his responsible position. During the two years' service of Rev. **JAMES THOMAS** over a hundred members were added to the church. Father **ROOKER** seldom preached after this, but in 1837, the people met at the church of worship and no preacher being present, they repaired to the home of the now aged **ROOKER**, who preached to them a touching sermon on "Finally, brethren farewell." In 1836. he did his last baptizing, the associate pastor being sick. He was then very feeble and had to call in the help of two deacons to baptize the twelve candidates. The sermon referred to above was possibly the last one he ever preached. He died June 21st, 1840, aged 85 years, 3 months and 13 days. The church supported him while he lived, and his widow after his death. From Major **W. A. GRAHAM's** "History of South York Association," I have learned that he also served Hebron and Lower Rahama churches from 1800-1819. He is described in this work by one who remembers him in her father's home as a "lovely Christian gentleman." That he was a faithful workman, his labors bear abundant proof. He has left behind a monument more enduring than brass, for while his grave, in the cemetery hard by the church, is marked by a marble slab, his name is held in loving remembrance by hundreds of the descendants of the fathers who through his ministry were brought to the Savior. Following is the inscription upon his tomb:

"In memory of Elder **JOHN ROOKER**. who was born on the 12th day of March, 1755, in the state of Virginia. and departed this life on the 24th of June. 1840, in the 84th year of his age. In 1782 he united himself with the Baptist church. In 1783 he entered the ministry and in 1792 became pastor of Sugar Creek, (now FLINT HILL) church, in which he remained until the time of his death."

In the midst of joy we now have sorrow. Evil reports followed Mr. **THOMAS**. He was tried by a council, convicted of immoral conduct and excluded from the Lisleville church, Anson county, N. C., of which he was a member. This was a

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heavy blow to the Baptists. The church was well nigh in despair. It declined to such an extent that they could hardly get enough members together to hold a conference. But realizing that they must hold the fort, the faithful ones got together and called another pastor, Rev. **WILLIAM NOWELL**, in 1841, who served them until 1842. Rev. **JOHN P. PRITCHARD**, father of Dr. **THOMAS H. PRITCHARD**, served the church as a supply 1843-44. He had been one of the ten members dismissed in 1833 to begin the eventful career of Baptists in Charlotte. **PRITCHARD** was followed by Rev. **WILLIAM C. PERRY**, who served the church as pastor 1844-'45. Rev. **JOSEPH P. PRITCHARD** was then recalled and served the church 1845-'46. Rev. **W. W. ROLLINS** came next as pastor In 1850, and served until 1852. He was followed by Rev. **G. W. ROLLINSON** of North Carolina, in 1854, who served the church but one month, giving up the pastorate because of the great distance he had to travel. Rev. **MILTON GARRISON**, a member of the church, served as supply from May, 1854, to August, of the same year, when he was succeeded by Rev. **PETER NICHOLSON**, who continued In the service of the church until 1862. In September, 1855, subscriptions were taken to erect a new house of worship, which was perhaps occupied the next year, as the deacons were then constituted trustees with the order from the church to sell the old building and to paint the new one. In 1861 the civil war came on and the church gave the strength of her manhood to defend the principles for which the south fought through four weary years of struggle and hardship. The pastor. Rev. **PETER NICHOLSON**, accepted a chaplaincy in the army and Rev. **A. M. CROXTON** occupied the pulpit for a short time. In 1864 Rev. **W. C. OWENS** became pastor and served until 1866. He was succeeded in 1866 by Rev. **A. L. STOUGH**, who remained with the church until 1876. It was during this pastorate, in 1867, that the church discontinued the monthly business meetings, holding quarterly meetings instead. The monthly business meetings had been kept up for seventy-four years. The annual call was also abolished, the church extending an indefinite call instead. In 1870 an additional acre, the gift of Mrs. **JAMES GLOVER**, was added to the cemetery. Rev. **A. M. CROXTON** again supplied the church from June, 1876, to October of the same year, when Rev. **B. G. COVINGTON** began his pastorate. He remained with the church until 1882. It was during this pastorate, in 1880, that the most far reaching revival in the history of the church was held, by Dr. **TEASDELL**, one hundred being added to the church by baptism. The church at this time raised the pastor's salary to \$1,000, which is the largest salary the church ever paid.

Rev. **MILTON GARRISON** again served the church as supply from October, 1882 to 1883, when Rev. **L. C. HINTON** came to the pastorate, serving 1884-1885. In this year the Young People's society of the church was organized and for a time maintained four prayer meetings within the bounds of the church. It was during the same year, 1885, that the church purchased a lot and a six-room house in Pineville, which became the pastor's home. Rev. **J. K. FANT** came to the church as pastor in March, 1885, and served most acceptably until 1888, when he was succeeded in July following by Rev. **C. T. SCALFE**, who resigned In January, 1889, greatly to the regret of the congregation. Rev. **F. O. S. CURTIS** came to the church In July, 1889 and remained in its service until August, 1894. During his pastorate he baptized seventy-five into the fellowship of the church. In 1894, after much deliberation, it was decided to

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build a house of worship five miles west of the church, by voluntary contributions, where services might be held as an arm of the church. The Chapel, as It was designated, became Oak Grove church during the pastorate of Rev. **M. W. GORDON** in 1903.

Rev. **S. M. HUGHES** served the church for about six months during 1894, but was forced to resign because of feeble health. He died soon after, loved and lamented by the people whom he served for a short while. In 1895 the church again sought the services of Rev. **A. L. STOUGH**, who became pastor of the church the second time in 1895 and served until 1902, when on account of the growing infirmities of age, he retired from the pastorate, carrying with him the love and veneration of the people whom he had served so faithfully for eighteen years. He was succeeded July 1903, by Rev. **M. W. GORDON**, who served the church with great efficiency until March, 1905. It was during this pastorate that the movement was started, which developed into the new building. To Brother **GORDON**, in a large measure, is due the credit for the undertaking by the church of so large and costly a building. The first committee to secure plans was appointed in November, 1903. In February, 1904, plans were adopted which on further investigation were found to call for too large an outlay of funds. In April, 1904, the plans for the present building were adopted and in August of that year, timber was cut on the church grounds and sawed into lumber on the church lot. Subscriptions aggregating about \$5,000 in five annual payments were taken. Rev. **M. W. GORDON** was succeeded in the pastorate, April, 1905, by Rev. **J. D. HUGGINS**, who closed his pastorate with December of the same year.

The present pastorate began January 1st, 1906, without any break in the continuity of the church services. In August, 1906, the first brick were placed on the ground and on September 25th, 1907, ground was broken for the new building. The corner stone was laid November 7th. The building, erected by contract in any of our towns or cities would cost not less than \$10,000. but more probably \$11,000. For the generous and self-sacrificing efforts put forth to secure this beautiful, substantial and commodious building, due credit should be given to the membership as a whole. For the membership as a whole, the pastor has nothing but words of praise and thanks. To the building committee the church is indebted for faithful and self-denying service. It is the opinion of the pastor that a church was never served by a more faithful committee, while too much cannot be said in recognition and praise of the service rendered by Brother **JAMES F. BOYD**, chairman of the building committee.

The church during the one hundred and sixteen years of its history has had twenty-one pastors and three supplies. The total membership, during these years would aggregate about two thousand. Many of them have gone elsewhere to join other churches and cast in their lots with other folds. But the great majority of them have passed on to join the choir invisible and to worship before the throne in that abiding city where they have no need for houses built by human hands, but where the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple. Blessed old church! May we who are here now and those who shall come

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after us, with the passing of the fleet-footed years, prove ourselves worthy successors to that great company who have gone before us.

Rev. **EDWARD S. REAVES**

EDWARD S. REAVES, pastor of FLINT HILL Baptist church, was born near the town of Mullins, In Marion county, S. C., August 15th, 1866. He attended the neighborhood school in his youth and was prepared for college at the Mullins academy. Entered Wake Forest college, Wake Forest, N. C., in the fall of 1888, whence he was graduated June, 1892, with the A. B. degree, having made the average grade in his studies for four years of 92½. He was honored during his school days by election to a responsible office In his literary society, and by being made one of the editors of "The Wake Forest Student." a leading college magazine. For two years after graduation he taught the Aulander Male Academy at Aulander, N. C. It was during this time, July 28th, 1893, that he was ordained by his home church to the full work of the gospel ministry. October, 1894, he entered the Southern Baptist Theological seminary. Louisville, Ky., to prepare himself for his life's work, from which institution he was graduated in 1897 with the degree of Master of Theology. During his seminary course he was again honored by his fellow students by being twice elected to a position on the editorial staff of "The Seminary Magazine." His first pastorate was Yorkville and Fort Mill churches, where he served 1897-1900, next he became pastor at Statesville, N. C., where he served 1900-1903; thence he removed to Murfreesboro, Tenn., where he served as pastor 1903-1906, entering upon his present field as pastor of FLINT HILL and Fort Mill churches January 1st, 1906. Each move has marked an advance. He was married August 8, 1900, to Miss Mamie Meacham of Fort Mill, who for who for two years taught the primary grades in the Yorkville Graded School.

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