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North Carolina Department of Archives and History
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Raleigh, North Carolina
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
99 N. SALISBURY ST.
RALEIGH, N. C.
ADDRESS BY WILLIS G. BRIGGS
ON 140TH ANNIVERSARY
MARCH 16, 1952
FILMED:
RED. RAT.: 10/1
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instituted and proved popular, long anticipated events. The horse-drawn Experimental Railroad from the Capitol out east to the lawn of Mrs. Charles Parish, site of the present Gatling home near the Federal Cemetery, delighted adults as well as children. Annual Sunday School excursions lasted until the advent of the automobile revolutionized our mode of life. A special car or train with an early start would carry the happy throng sometimes to the stone church of Dr. Haywood, or to the then popular resort Littleton and at least once, I believe, to the sea shore and back. The annual Christmas cantatas are ever to be remembered.

The Raleigh Register in 1828 mentions that Governor John Owen visited the Sunday School held in the Presbyterian church, and composed mainly of children from Baptist and Presbyterian families, and lent his encouragement. The same paper mentions that the wife of Governor James Iredell barred card playing from the Governor's palace during his administration. About this time the erratic agrarian, Mrs. Ann Ruggles and was among those to found a Unitarian acting as Superintendent of this Sunday school. She mentions this fact in her book but evidently got his name wrong for the Raleigh Unitarian was Joseph Gales, publisher of the Raleigh Register, active in every good movement, in the Bible Society, which sought to put a copy of the Bible in every Raleigh home, in the Temperance Society, in the African Colonization Society, and in the Peace Society. Dr. Jeremiah Buttle, secretary, before which the pastor of this Baptist church preached the annual sermon as early as 1823. Of the latter Society, Gales sadly wrote in 1835 among the evil tendencies of war, “It raises up a crop of heroes to claim all the honors in the county for twenty years afterwards.”

The Urban Sunday Schools gave place to those of the different denominations about 1832. Certainly about 1844 when Mr. Peter Fanshaw was received into the church by letter from a Virginia church and soon became Superintendent of the Sunday School new vigor was imparted. Annual picnics or outings were inaugurated as of grave moment come in every life; some date hallowed by tender indelebile memories. Such an event was the Centennial Celebration of this; the First Baptist Church of Raleigh, 1912. Dr. W. C. Tyree was pastor and the speakers included former Congressman John Nicholas and my father, Thomas Henry Briggs. Thirty more years have now glided by. Names then so freshly familiar have faded away; to a more senile lingering remain do the stauwms of yesterday stand. Those Dr. Columbus Durbin, Dr. G. T. Bailey, Dr. W. B. Cobb, Wiley J. Palmer, John C. Scarborough, Col. J. M. Heck, Major W. W. Vass, Major Gus Lewis, W. G. Upchurch, John G. Williams, John Armstrogn, L. H. Adams, Deacon James H. Alford with his men’s Bible class, the ever present Jordan Womble, Jr., the irrepressible J. C. Marcom and the three saintly old ladies, Lucinda Briggs, Sarah Towner and Selina Jenkins, seated side by side at the front, their feet resting upon provided foot stools—these and many others were outstanding figures in this church around 1912. A century ago.

Recollections of childhood are the more vivid about the Sunday School. These families, evidently got to the infant Andrew Johnson was a tailor by trade; an occupation the then Raleigh infant Andrew Johnson was raised on. The Raleigh Union, in Raleigh and Presbyterian families, and lent

The Raleigh Register December 23, 1853, mentions the presence of Rev. Mr. Ballard, Agent of the American Sunday School Union, in Raleigh and a service held in the interest of Sunday Schools, assisted by Rev. Wm. M. Pfeufer.

Baptist Church, which has

pointed out the site once occupied by the Cool Springs Church in eastern Wake County and said the mounting block was still there in his boyhood.

Robert T. Daniel was born in Virginia, 1773; moved to this state; married Persephone Cain Filber of Chatham County; was baptised at Holly Springs by Rev. Isaac Hicks and was soon thereafter active in the ministry, a co-worker with Needham Whitfield and Nathaniel Gully among the well known Baptist ministers of that day. In 1811 as pastor of Bethel Church Rev. Daniel reported to the Association an increase of 100 in the membership during the year. He preached the ordination of Rev. Daniel J. George Nance, a once famous preacher in the Raleigh church for about three years and from 1815 until 1821 the pastor of the Raleigh church was successively served by Rev. Josiah Crudup, Rev. Thomas Crocker and Rev. James Woodberry. About 1816 when the membership did not exceed 75 white people a church of wood as a cost of less than $700 was erected upon the property of Mrs. Mary Dudley, on South Person Street, present site of the Salvation Army Citadel or the Hellenic Church. In 1827 by permission of the State the church was moved across Person Street on Moore Square, which thereafter became known as the Baptist Grove. Some of the faithful women performed the work of the church with skill and care. Dr. Daniel's namesakes, Daniel Briggs, are active in the Weldon, N. C., Baptist church at the cost of about $800 was erected upon the lot south of Raleigh, as its first President. Rev. Daniel terminated his second pastorate of the Raleigh church of about three years in 1826 when he was succeeded by Willie P. Mangum, also a Federalist. He was promptly expelled from the church, along with two other men, and never restored in membership so far as is recorded.

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a protracted meeting in Raleigh. One colored sister, Aunt Ritta, became so hoarse in her manifestation of joy that three able-bodied men were commissioned to forcibly remove her from the church whenever occasion required. The last instance of "shouting in church" was fifty or more years ago during the pastorate of Rev. John W. Carter, D.D., of giant stature, titanic brain and tremendous voice. When Dr. Carter got on his favorite theme of Moses, described him leading the oppressed Children of Israel out of bondage, across the dry bed of the Red Sea, with towering waves chasing and out of sight be. Mr. Charles Abrams, the cobbler, would rise from his seat and publicly express his joy over this deliverance two thousand years ago.

During the war years Dr. Teasdale was in Mississippi, where he won the friendship of President Jefferson Davis of the Confederacy. He had a plan to succor suffering, neglected orphans of soldiers who wore the gray. President Davis of course approved the plan and in the winter of 1864 Dr. Teasdale made his way through the two fighting armies, reached Washington and President Lincoln gave his old friend a pass through the Union lines in the further-ance of his scheme to help the destitute orphan children in the South. However, three months later the war ended and Emancipation was dead. Speaking of Dr. Carter, he did not falter in his commendation of what he considered the sinful world, known as the "Negro problem". At that time catolettes had not gained wide popularity and Dr. Carter thundered that there was one good thing about "these coffin tasks," they killed the very people who could be best spared.

This location and this beautiful church is a lasting memorial to the forethought and untiring zeal of Rev. Thomas E. Skinner, born in Perquimans County in 1825, died in Raleigh in 1906. His father, Charles Worth Skinner, was one of the most extensive and wealthiest planters in New Carolina. The last member of the family, death at 89 years of age, "woke to a new life" under the guidance of "that wonderful evangelist" Robert T. Daniel and joined the Bethel Baptist Church. He was one of the 14 organizers of the Baptist State Convention in 1830 and contributed literally untold thousands of dollars thereafter to every project of his denomination. Dr. Teasdale was the youngest son, born on a great estate, with funds that would more than pay his way through the neighboring plantation, 1,300 acres in cultivation and as many more acres in pasture, woodland and swamp. At the age of 11, he attended the then known Wake Forest Institute and later graduated from the University of North Carolina and came to hopes of the Baptist church at Hertford. Even the humble James D. Nunn, who would later serve as the principal of the school, described him as "one of the finest men of his time." When the church was completed 40 years later, a great seven clock, witha tower, was erected near the church. At the time of the church's dedication, the clock was said to be the largest in the state. The clock, which was donated by Dr. Skinner, had a diameter of 12 feet and was made of iron. It was mounted on a wooden frame and powered by a water wheel. The clock was located on the east side of the church, facing the entrance, and was visible from the street.

When Dr. Teasdale visited the new church, he was so impressed with its beauty and strength that he donated $1,000 to the cause. This gift was matched by the state government, which contributed $500. Dr. Teasdale's gift was used to construct a new pulpit, while the state government's gift was used to purchase additional property for the church. The church was completed in 1844, and Dr. Teasdale presided over the dedication ceremony. He was so pleased with the new church that he said, "I have seen the hand of God in this church." The church became a center of religious and cultural life in the community, and Dr. Teasdale remained active in its affairs until his death in 1906.

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Speaking of the fountain a visitor once inquired if that was used to baptize babies.

Dr. Skinner was not only a great organizer but a profound student and scholar. Perhaps the gospel he preached was not modernistic. He believed in sermons on funeral occasions as a means of reaching some who otherwise seldom attended divine services. This reminds that Dr. Carter the first Sunday each year would warn his congregation that some would pass away during the ensuing twelve months and their pastor would not say one word about the departed except what was strictly true. Among the notable preserved funeral sermons by Dr. Skinner was in November, 1893, on the death of Rev. Henry M. Tupper, who came here a chaplain in the Union army in 1865 and founded Shaw University. Dr. Skinner pictured his friend Dr. Tupper as “Able, Honest, Independent, Spiritual, Earnest, Brave and Successful.” Dr. Skinner’s pastorate here was from 1856 to 1886 except two years during the war and from 1868 to 1874 when Rev. Thomas H. Pritchard, later President of Wake Forest, was pastor. The Historian Dr. Archibald Henderson has truly described Dr. Pritchard as one of this state’s greatest scholars and orators. In 1861 he was pastor of a Baptist church in Baltimore, Md., was arrested and imprisoned because he openly sided with the Confederacy. He was finally released, expelled from the North, and gladly preached to Lee’s heroic soldiers. Dr. Pritchard and Dr. Richard Mason, rector of Christ Episcopal Church, were personal friends and sincere admirers of each other notwithstanding their doctrinal differences. They engaged in a learned controversy on the subject of infant baptism. Dr. Pritchard’s Thanksgiving sermon in the Raleigh Baptist church November 18, 1872, published in pamphlet, on “Religious Liberty,” is the ablest presentation of that subject I have found. It should be re-published and a copy in the hands of students of history.

Dr. Skinner was succeeded in 1887 by Rev. J. L. White and he was followed in 1889 by the eleven-year pastorate of Rev. John W. Carter, D.D. The next pastor, Rev. Alex. A. Marshall, died in 1902, age 46, and is buried in Oakwood Cemetery here. Rev. W. C. Tyree, D.D., served for eight years during which time the church was enlarged at a cost of $32,000 or more. Rev. Thomas W. O’Kelly D.D., served from 1911 until his death in 1927 at the age of 66. He is also buried in Oakwood. This was a period of church expansion and the addition to the Sunday School was built. During the pastorate of Rev. J. Powell Tucker the parsonage opposite the church was sold to the state and later a home for the minister was bought on Carr Street. Rev. S. L. Stealey, now head of the Wake Forest Theological Seminary, was followed in 1943 by the present pastor, Rev. Broadus E. Jones. In 1874 letters were granted ten members** and they formed what is now the great Baptist Tabernacle Church with an enrollment of over 3,000. Thus within 140 years this church has grown from nine white people to a membership of over 2,000. Instead of one little meeting house the City of Raleigh has ten white Baptist churches; the result of heroic struggle and sacrifice.

Then though oft depressed and lonely
All our fears are laid aside
If we but remember only.
Such as these have lived and died.

**Jacob S. Allen, Needham B. Broughton, J. F. Broughton, Mrs. Mary Broughton, Mrs. Mattie Harton Booker, Mrs. Carrie Costner, Mrs. Cornelia Holloman, Henry Mitchell, Wm. T. Womble.

Note: Bequests to the church or the Woman’s Missionary Society: James D. Nunn, 1875; Selina Jenkins, 1889; Wm. E. Faison, 1911; Mrs. Virginia Swepson, 1901; Miss Fannie E. S. Heck, 1915; Eugene Schilling, 1929; Mrs. Mollie B. Wyatt, 1929; Mrs. Sarah O. Briggs, 1930; Mrs. Annie Wade Parker, 1930; Mrs. Elizabeth B. Peete, 1949; W. S. Penny, 1948; Mrs. Elizabeth Briggs Pittman, 1949.
State of North Carolina
Department of Archives and History
Raleigh

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(Signed)  

Camera Operator

Date 2-26-63