Luverne United Methodist Church has a long and relevant history. The first sermon preached in Luverne by a Methodist was preached in the Academy by Rev. W. S. Price of Little Oak sometime during the summer or fall of 1889. The Academy was located on the site of the old Luverne Grammar School just above where BB&T Bank is now.

The first Methodist Church of record in the present city limits of Luverne was the Emmaus Methodist Church at Emmaus Cemetery. Before the church was built, services were held in the Academy.

History does not record when the spirit of Methodism first came to this community. However, it is certain that a solid foundation for the growth of the Methodist Church in Luverne was laid long before either the present town of Luverne was incorporated or the present Luverne Methodist Church was organized. A Methodist Church, known as Ammaus (Emmaus) was located on the present site of Luverne (Emmaus) Cemetery, but records of the early church at Emmaus are not available. Even before the present town was founded, a news item from Old Luverne in the Rutledge Enterprise, a newspaper published at Rutledge under the date of January 13, 1888, stated that Rev. Mr. Jones of Brundidge preached at the M. E. Church on Sunday.

There was a large influx of residents from neighboring communities to the new town during the fall and winter of 1888 and the year 1889. The Methodists among the newcomers did not join the church at Emmaus. The records indicate that Rev. W.S. Price, who lived at Little Oak in Pike County, and who had been assigned to the Patsaliga Mission in September 1889, was one of the first Methodist ministers to preach within the corporate limits of the new town of Luverne. He preached during the fall of 1889 in the Academy, which was located on the site of the Luverne Grammar School and which was destroyed by fire in November 1917. The Academy was used as a place of worship by the community in general during 1889, as there were no churches within the town.

The Emmaus Church continued to hold services for a while after the organization of the new church at Luverne. As late as July 1890, Mr. Price conducted protracted services at Emmaus. A short time after that, the Emmaus Church was abandoned and its members became affiliated with the Luverne Methodist Church.

Rev. N.W. Beverly was the first regular pastor of the Luverne Methodist Church, which was then a part of the Rutledge Circuit, in the Union Springs District. Dr. Urquhart was presiding elder of the district at that time. Mr. Beverly preached his first sermon in Luverne on December 29, 1889, in the Academy. On that Sunday evening, the Methodist Sunday School was organized. For several years after its organization, the Luverne Methodist Sunday School met every Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm.

The members of the Luverne Methodist Church experienced a difficult struggle in building the original church. An informal meeting of the members was held in
early January 1890 to formulate plans for the erection of a church building on the present site of our church at an estimated cost of $1,000.00. By February 14, 1890, the brick pillars of the church had been built, but for some reason work was suspended shortly after that time. In August 1890, the Luverne Enterprise stated that it had been rumored that work would soon be resumed on the Methodist Church with this statement: "It will be an ornament to a town of double Luverne’s size, when it is finished, according to the plans shown by Mr. Folmar."

The Ladies Aid Society, of which Mrs. F.C. McDonald and president, and Miss Lucy Folmar (who later became Mrs. James S. Hawkins) was secretary, sponsored an entertainment in May 1892 at the home of Dr. James E. Kendrick for the purpose of raising money for the painting of the church. In fact, the first church building, when completed, was a very modest frame structure consisting of one large room and a vestibule. The Luverne Enterprise reported in April 1892 that the Sunday School was in a “flourishing condition.” The Sunday School hour was changed from 3:00 PM to 10:00 AM. In July of 1890, the Methodist Sunday School had 76 on roll and an average attendance of about 50. By 1899 there were 150 members on roll.

Soon the "little white church" was splitting at the seams with members and activities. Sunday School classes were held outside beneath trees, some in tents, and others in the nearby parsonage. The wheezy little organ could not carry a tune and the big fat round stove could not keep the bulging membership warm, even at prayer meeting. So it was imperative to build a new church. The members, however, became hopelessly split over where the new church should be built. Some said right where it was; others thought the new church should be built down town where the people were. This divide continued for months.

A new minister, Rev. John H. Williams, came to town and called the people together to consider the building of the new church. To this meeting came a young lawyer and his wife who had recently moved to town. As they walked to church that night, the young lawyer said to his wife, "This church ought to be built! It can be built!"

As the meeting progressed, one after another speaker arose to say why the church could not be built. The "no"s had a strong lead. Then the young lawyer got up and made a motion that the church be built. There was an astounding silence then two or three derisive laughs. Nobody would second the motion. But from the middle of the church came a very small, timid voice, hardly audible: "I second the motion."

The young lawyer thought this was some great old sister, strong in the faith, but it was his wife, so he launched into his speech as to why the church could and should be built. When he concluded, everybody started talking at once. The young presiding officer, the minister, in confusion himself, tabled the motion and adjourned the meeting. The meeting was adjourned - to meet around the big warm stove to talk about how the new church could be built.

The money pledged by the members was not collected and put into a lump sum. The Building Committee just began building and, day by day, as the money was needed, a member who had pledged was asked for his amount. When some of the money was pledged, a member said frankly, "I haven't this money now, but I will get it when it is needed." Some who pledged did not have the money then; others borrowed it if they did not have it. The young lawyer pledged $500 and when it was needed, he gave it. So the church was built and there was great rejoicing. It was necessary to place a $10,000 mortgage on the church to finish it. Mr. Bibb Folmar, a member, loaned this amount to finish the church.

The Reverend J.H. Williams was not here long after the initial move was made to build the church. He was succeeded by Reverend R.P. Cochran. It was under Brother Cochran that the church was completed.

For several years, the members just "enjoyed" their church. They rested on their laurels and not much was done about paying off the mortgage. But this did not satisfy some of the builders of the church. Among them especially was Steiner Odom.

Mr. Odom had been superintendent of the Sunday School for some years, having taken over from Mr. Frank Bricken in the little white church. During these early years, the Sunday School under Mr. Odom's able, consecrated, dedicated leadership became known as the "best Sunday School in Southern Methodism." This recognition came from Methodist Headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee. It was decided that the mortgage on the church must be paid - and through the Sunday School, as many other things, were being done in the church at this time.

A careful plan was worked out and submitted to the classes. Each class was given a certain amount to raise; beginning with the strong and able Ben Bricken Class of one hundred members, through every adult class, every department, down even to the nursery with the babies under the joyous, loving supervision of Mrs. Guy Folmar. Each class raised its quota - even the babies with their pennies. The mortgage was burned during an informal, but solemn service in the Ben Bricken Assembly Room. This took place during the Reverend R.A. Moody's pastorate.

When the finance committee met at the early time more than forty years ago, they said to each other, "We will
build a church to last a hundred years!" It was the wish of every committee member that the Luverne Methodist Church would again burst its seams - not only physically, but burst into the great spiritual beauty in the hearts of its members - blessing these and others far beyond this small town and on into infinity.

A tornado struck Luverne on March 6, 1944. The Methodist Church was hit hard. The damage was estimated at about $20,000 (Luverne Journal.)

On May 3, 1944, a revival meeting was held in a huge tent behind the Sunday School building since the church had not been repaired after the tornado. The Reverend R.J. Haskew was the visiting preacher. The Reverend A.H. Vanlandingham was the regular pastor at the time.

Repairs to the church following the tornado were completed in time for the White Christmas Program. The program was held in the main auditorium on Sunday, December 24, 1944.

On March 12, 1944, motion was made and seconded that the trustees of the Luverne Methodist Church be authorized to ask for and accept a donation of $5,000 from the General Board of the Church Extension for rebuilding the church after the tornado. It was reported by the Second Quarterly Conference Report on May 28, 1944, that the Sunday School had raised $11,198.41.

On the evening of February 27, 1949, Bishop Clare Purcell of the Birmingham Area of the Methodist Church preached in Luverne Methodist Church and dedicated the pipe organ during the service. The public was cordially invited through a story published in the Luverne Journal. (The church organ cost $6,000.00 installed.)

The narrow concrete steps to the front entrance was a hazard. They were replaced in September of 1950. Ralph B. Douglass of Norfolk, Virginia, formerly of Luverne, wanted to make a contribution to the church in memory of his mother and father. He asked his sister, Lila Douglass Fundaburk, to find out what was the greatest need at that time. In discussing this with other members of the church, it was decided that the greatest improvement that could be made would be to change the entrance. This work was done by L.D. Liles and Jesse Martin. A plaque was placed to commemorate the gift.

In loving memory of
Georgia Emma Douglass
and
Frazier Michel Douglass
This entrance given by their son
Ralph B. Douglass
September 1950

A building committee for the Fellowship Hall was elected on November 30, 1965. They met 17 times from January 1, 1966 to February 4, 1968. The committee was given the assignment of studying the educational and fellowship needs of the church.

The committee recommended to the Church Conference on April 3, 1966, that a two-story educational annex be built immediately to the rear of the church. Two assembly rooms and six class rooms were proposed for the second floor.

However, after further study, the committee decided that additional classroom facilities were not imperative at that time. Therefore, a fundamental departure was made in the original proposal. Instead of a two-story building, a plan for a one-story building was submitted for the following: (1) Fellowship Hall with dining capacity of 152, suitable also for a wide variety of indoor recreation; (2) Modern, well-equipped kitchen with a commercial type range, two hot tables, dishwasher and cabinets; (3) The new building to be connected to the present building by a lobby structure reaching from the front entrance of the new building to the east entrance of the present educational building; (5) Covered drive at the west entrance to the new building; (6) An elevator installed at the northwest corner of the Ben Bricken Room up to the space on the next floor occupied by the pastor's study. The new building to be air-conditioned and heated independently of the existing building.

In a report on February 4, 1968, the building committee made this statement: "Our generation has been the beneficiary of buildings and facilities which others have worked and sacrificed for. We now have the opportunity not only to participate in a project which will make a truly distinctive addition to our church plan, but more important, one which will enable us to expand the ministry and program of our church in the critically important areas of Christian fellowship and recreation. We are confident that our people will realize the gravity of the opportunity which we now have. It is not likely to come again."

Source: History of United Methodist Church, Luverne, Alabama - Published 1974.

Rev. Dr. Robert C. Yawn, is the current Pastor of Luverne UMC. Luverne UMC is located in the heart of Luverne, Alabama, at 88 East First Street.

The text and the 1925 photo are from: http://www.lumcal.com/
The color photos are from Google Earth.
Florala UMC, Florala, Alabama
A Snapshot in Time From June 1917

Florala is located in Covington County, Alabama, along the Alabama-Florida state line and on Lake Jackson, half of which is in Florala. Floral is bordered by Lockhart, Alabama, to the west and Paxton, Florida, to the south. Methodism has been preached in the Floral area since the days of the Circuit Riders. On June 26, 1917, a special issue of the Independence Industrial included a history of Methodism in this area written by W.C. McLauclin. Here is that history.

“...The history of Methodist ministration in this part of the country dates far back into the dismal and uncertain days of the past.

In Riley’s “History of Conecuh County” mention is made of the fact that several Methodist preachers traveled over this territory at different times and preached to the Indians and what few white people were scattered over this gulf coast country about the beginning of the last century.

The writer of that splendid little volume was a very devout member of the Baptist church, but he was quite impartial in his division of missionary honors and effort between the ministers of his own denomination and those of the Methodist church.

Long before the war of the 60s was ever thought of many traveling preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America preached at almost every crossroads and in almost every settler’s cabin throughout the gulf coast. Those preachers included among their number the celebrated characters Lorenza Dow and Simon Peter Richardson.

About the time of the civil war this immediate section of country was placed upon one of the badly scattered mission charges of the Alabama Annual Conference, which at that time was doing a considerable amount of mission work over Alabama and West Florida.

Later the Alabama Annual Conference was divided into two distinct conferences for the purpose of doing more direct and systematic work.

All of southern Alabama and all that part of Florida lying west of the Apalachicola River was included within the Alabama Annual Conference. It is so included to this day.

The Yellow River Mission was formed about the close of the civil war. This mission included several preaching appointments throughout this part of the country, which was then known as the McDade Pond Settlement.

Several of the early ministers who served this mission charge resided at or near Milton, Pensacola, Pollard, Stockton. One of these was Rev. HT Johnson, better known as “Devil Henry” Johnson, to many of the people of that age. This faithful man of God still lives and is able to do active pastoral work in his conference. Rev. JW Shores and Rev. JW Rush also did much preaching in this section. Rev. Shores is still living in Montgomery, though he was superannuated by his conference nearly a quarter of a century ago. He is now above 90 years of age and is one of the life pensioners of his conference.

After the organization of a few weak churches in this pine wilderness they were changed from time to time from one mission charge to another as the conference thought advisable and expedient. They were preached to occasionally, the services increasing in number according as missionary effort was advanced in the territory.

The Floral mission was formed about 1890 with the pastors residing for number of years at Andalusia, Troy or elsewhere as they chose.

Rev. JA Green served the charge as pastor in 1890. ASJ Haygood, 1891-2; WT Ellisor, 1893; JW Breedlove, 1894-5; JF Price 1896; DBH Jeffcoat, 1897-8, JP Daughtery 1899, WE Gipson, 1900; CC Daniel, 1901; NW Beverly, 1902-4; JM Munn 1905; JA Seale, 1906-8; RH Lewis, 1909; WR Bickerstaff, 1910-11; DW Haskew 1912-14 and a part of 1915; EB Joyner, latter part of 1915; LHS Chappelle Jr., part of 1916; HE Jones latter part of 1916 and to date ion 1917 conference year, which will close November 30th.

This church today wields no small influence in the religious life of the people of Floral and neighboring towns. Its membership is large and its material wealth is considerable. A station parsonage was bought some years ago on one of the main residence streets of Floral where the pastors reside.”

www.floralahistory.com/
Humble circumstances surrounded the birth and life of our Lord Jesus Christ and also the initial organization and forerunners of First United Methodist Church of Dothan, Alabama. The life, death, and resurrection of our Lord have impacted the world for over 2,000 years. First United Methodist Church and predecessors have been forceful influences for many individuals and families in the community and surrounding areas. From both sources, rich legacies have evolved and continue to motivate and challenge adherents to a better way of life.

The purpose of Christ’s life on earth was to manifest God to man through His love, mercy, and grace. The Church was established as a means by which this goal would be accomplished. The metamorphoses of F.U.M.C. from an itinerant ministry held in a blacksmith shop and under a bush arbor with a fifteen-member congregation to the beautiful structure that exists today is evidence of man’s acknowledging God’s mission through Christ and the Church.

The Bible teaches that God’s resources are always greater than man’s needs. This principle is a strong link in the chain of events that have contributed to the development of First United Metho-
dist Church. About 1879 two piney wood trails crisscrossed each other near the intersection of Main and St. Andrews Streets. Nearby was a beautiful spring of clear water and a crossroads store which was also used as a post office. This with a small patch of cleared land constituted Poplar Head, which later became Dothan.

In 1880, Mr. J. P. Folkes and his son-in-law, Mr. W. J. Baxley, (both good Methodists) moved from the Rocky Branch Church Community northeast of Dothan to settle here. They were not content to be without a church. Records indicate that Rev. A. J. Coleman, Presiding Elder of the Marianna District, made overnight stops at Poplar Head as he rode on horseback over his district. Meetings were held in Mr. Folkes’ blacksmith shop. They read the Bible, had preaching, and prayer.

In the spring of 1880, Mr. Folkes and Mr. Baxley and several others who had moved in by this time built a brush arbor for their meetings. During the summer of 1881, a church was organized by Rev. W. U. Marshal, a local preacher. At this time, the congregation boasted fifteen members. Mr. Baxley, a charter member, was appointed first steward of the church. He served in that capacity until his death in 1929.

The Presiding Elder appointed Rev. Marshall to minister to the little flock until Conference in December. Rev. W. C. Price was appointed pastor of the Sylvan Grove Charge to which Dothan was attached, and served one year. In the winter of 1881, Rev. J. Z. Connelley, settled in Dothan. By now, the little village had some youngsters who needed a school teacher. Rev. Connelley was employed to teach the first school in the settlement. A school house was needed. Mr. Folkes donated the land, and the villagers built the school house, which was to be used as a church also. It was built on the land where Foster Street Church stood from 1904 until 1950.

The Conference of 1882 sent Brother Marshall back to Sylvan Grove Charge and in 1882 Dothan was assigned to the Headland Mission with Rev. J. T. Powell as pastor. He was the first itinerant preacher to live in Dothan. He was succeeded by Rev. J. B. Hudgens in
1884 and Rev. J. A. Noble in 1885. Following several pastoral predecessors and continued growth in membership and perseverance by the members, Rev. T. L. Adams came as pastor in 1886. It was during his ministry that Mr. Folkes had deeds drawn up and signed to turn over to the church that part of the land on which the Foster Street Church and parsonage later stood for several decades.

In 1890, Dothan was put on a circuit and Brother R. S. Adair, who had served in 1889, was appointed pastor. At this time, the Alabama Midland Railroad had been built through Dothan, and the town showed unmistakable signs of a growing city. The Methodist Church kept pace. Brother Adair set to work structure with a bay window in the rear, a back entrance, and two front entrances. It was painted white and had stained glass windows. One chandelier hung from the center of the building and in it kerosene lamps were used until later when electric lights replaced the lamps.

By 1891, Dothan was no longer considered a circuit appointment, and the Conference sent Brother Henry T. Johnson to serve as pastor. He served four years. One of the first organists was Miss Bertie Hill. Mrs. S. (Addie) Wilson a later dedicated organist-musician served Foster Street Church and First Methodist Church for several decades and is credited with taking the initiative to have chimes installed at First Methodist Church. The membership grew from one hundred eighty-five members at the close of his first year to three hundred at the close of his fourth year. After a substantial increase in Brother Johnson’s salary, the members knew there would be no funds for a parsonage. However, the undaunted Brother Johnson prepared his famous lecture titled, “If you wants possum, ax for hit.” He delivered this lecture in many towns, letting the proceeds go to the parsonage fund. Soon a comfortable six-room cottage was built and remained until 1908, when it was replaced with a spacious, two-story structure.

Brother Donnelly followed Brother Johnson and served four years. Under his able and earnest ministry, the congregation grew and the church prospered. The membership numbered four hundred and eighty-six and the minister’s salary had been increased to twelve hundred fifty dollars.

The following three years were under Dr. H. H. McNeill’s ministry. It was during this period and while Brother J. P. Roberts was Presiding Elder that the first district parsonage was built on St. Andrews Street at a cost of three thousand dollars, the greater part of which was paid by the Foster Street congregation.

By 1902, under Dr. McNeill’s leadership, the Foster Street Methodist Church had experienced such tremendous growth that a new church was needed. Some members left the Mother Church and formed South Side Church on St. Andrews Street. This church later moved to its present location and became Lafayette Street Methodist Church.

Two other churches were also sponsored by Foster Street Church: Flowers Chapel on the west side and Dellwood Chapel on the north. However, this division did not negate the need for more room. During these years of outgrowth, plans were being completed for a new brick church to replace the small frame building. In 1903 the cornerstone for the new church was laid. Some of the articles placed in the cornerstone included a Bible, the Georgia Wesleyan Advocate, the Methodist Discipline, and a copy of the Dothan Daily Siftings of that date. For the occasion, the choir sang, “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord.”

When construction on the new church began, the ladies of the church wanted to take part and the Missionary Society subscribed five hundred dollars to the building and then doubled it. They also paid for the new pipe organ which cost twenty-one hundred dollars. Later, the ladies paid for the green carpet which covered the auditorium and Sunday School Departments. Also, they gave one of the three beautiful memorial windows which added beauty and inspiration to the church. This organization has continued through the years and is known as United Methodist Women of First United Methodist Church.

Within a year (1904) the building (Foster Street Church) was completed at a cost of $32,000. It was a model of ecclesiastical architecture, built by J. C. Ward, Contractors. The pastor at this time was Rev. W. M. Cox. In 1907, the debt was paid in full. Three years later the new church was dedicated by Bishop E. E. Hass under Rev. W. P. Hurt’s ministry. The following year, 1908, a beautiful parsonage was built adjoining the church at a cost of $7,000.00. By 1909, a Sunday School annex was built and its full cost was amortized in 1912.

During Rev. R. A. Moody’s ministry, the ladies were given the right of laity and they served well in this capacity. One of the highlights of the growth of First Methodist Church was a ten-day revival preached by Evangelist Bob Jones in 1920. During the morning services, all stores were closed and more than 100 members were added to the church roll. In that same year, 1920, chimes and an echo organ were installed in the bell tower, at a cost of $8,000.00 – gifts from Mr. Joe Baker in memory of his mother. He was a member of F.M.C. and a local entrepreneur. Ironically, the first time the chimes were played was in March 1920 for Mr. Baker’s funeral.

F.M.C. continued to prosper under the ministries of Brother J. B. Cummings (1905-06) and Brother Hurt (1906-09). During Brother Hurt’s ministry, the church being free of debt, steps were taken to build a new parsonage. A committee was appointed and the beautiful
two-story parsonage was erected that year (1908) at a cost of $7,000.00 including furnishings.

Under the leadership of devout ministers (see roster) and faithful laity, Foster Street Church experienced continued growth, and in 1948 the decision was made to expand by building a church on a new and larger site. Farsighted ministers, leaders, and members rallied to the need and property on West Main was purchased. In 1949, the Foster Street Church property was sold to Mr. George Y. Malone, a long-time dedicated member of Foster Street Church and the First United Methodist Church, for the sum of $100,000.00.

In 1950, careful workmen removed the original marble cornerstone from Foster Street Methodist Church and placed it near the sanctuary of the new church, the First Methodist Church of Dothan, Alabama. A parsonage was built near the new location, and plans for relocating the church facility began in earnest. The first worship service was held there on August 21, 1950 in the fellowship hall. In 1955, under the ministerial leadership of Dr. Wilbur Walton, major additions were added: a chapel, an education wing, and an office wing. Also a balcony was added. Dr. Walton continued to serve F.U.M.C. after retirement in an ex officio capacity until his death.

In addition to sponsoring Lafayette Street Methodist Church in 1901, F.U.M.C. later sponsored the formation of Highland Park United Methodist Church in 1959. Two decades later (July 1979) First Methodist church substantially supported formation of Covenant United Methodist Church, which is a vibrant outreach in the community. F.U.M.C. was also instrumental in helping to establish Wesley Manor by donating land and $50,000.00. Each of these outgrowth facilities has made outstanding contributions to the needs of the community and surrounding areas.

On Christmas Sunday in 1979, F.U.M.C. was tragically damaged by fire. This misfortune struck in the year of the church’s centennial recognition. Following the catastrophe, it was necessary for the congregation to make arrangements to meet elsewhere. Services were held in Dothan High School auditorium for more than a year. On Palm Sunday in 1981, there was a triumphant return to the beautifully renovated First United Methodist Church on West Main.

On December 18, 1988, a Church Conference was held and voted to proceed with plans for a mammoth expansion program/project. On March 18, 1990, “Breaking of Ground” was laid. On October 13, 1991, the Christian Life Center was consecrated. The Christian Life Center offers a variety of opportunities to the congregation and the community for meaningful Christian activities.

Spiritual Life at First United Methodist Church has flourished in the past century. Under the capable leadership of the ministers (see roster) and staff, combined with the generous support of the membership, F.U.M.C. is recognized as a vital influence in Dothan and the Wiregrass area. God has richly blessed First United Methodist Church and may F.U.M.C. continue to work to the glory of God.


Church campus photo: Google Earth

**Troy First United Methodist Church**

Troy, Alabama

The original building was a small log structure, which was rebuilt as a one-story brick building in 1825. The new church was constructed at 121 South Mulberry Street.

In 1899, the Mulberry Street Church was completely destroyed by fire on Easter Sunday. The congregation watched as the church burned to the ground before their eyes. That morning, $100 was collected for missions service around the world. FUMC dedicated itself to trusting God and furthering the cause of Christ around the world.

Two years later, the current structure of FUMC was constructed on the corner of Franklin and Cherry Streets. 1956 and 1999 brought additional building space and renovations to the church building. In 2003 the First Place Christian Center was purchased to be used for youth groups, contemporary worship services, and church-wide gatherings. In 2006 the inside of First Place was completely destroyed by fire and had to be rebuilt. It reopened in January 2007 and many ministries continue to thrive within its walls.
Rural Southwest Alabama
Historical Methodist Churches in Wilcox County

The website [http://www.ruralswalabama.org/](http://www.ruralswalabama.org/) is dedicated to twelve counties located in rural southwest Alabama. This region is known for its rich and diverse heritage, historic homes and churches, and natural beauty. It is a treasure trove, especially for those interested in Methodism in rural southwestern Alabama.

In this article, we will take a look at some of the historical Methodist churches located in Wilcox County. Photos and text are from the Rural SW Alabama website (link which is provided above.) The beautiful photos were made by Billy Milstead. These and the accompanying text are used here by permission.

Wilcox County was established on December 13, 1819. The county was named after Joseph M. Wilcox, a US Army lieutenant who was killed in Alabama during the Creek War.

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**Gastonburg UMC, Gastonburg, AL**
205 Boiling Spring Rd., Catherine, AL
GPS coordinates: 32.210490, -87.440149.

This Victorian style church was built during the 1890s. The interior of the sanctuary has been altered very little since the church was built. The stained glass windows are original except for a few pieces that had to be replaced due to damage. The back rooms on the church were added during the 1960s. Air conditioning was added to the building during the 1970s.

This church is located west of Highway 5 approximately 0.3 mile on Boiling Springs Road in the in the community of Gastonburg in northwest Wilcox County.

Source: Dan Wilkinson (church member).

Rev. John Bonner is the pastor and services are held every Sunday (except the 5th Sunday).

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**Canton Bend UMC, Canton Bend, AL**
3460 Hwy 28W, Camden, AL
GPS coordinates: 32.056528, -87.350556

The Canton Bend United Methodist Church congregation was organized on December 12, 1897. In 1910, Percy Smith and Irvin Smith deeded land for the church building. This land adjoined the cemetery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Canton whose organization dated from the 1830s. (The Presbyterian Church disbanded and its building was torn down.)

The Canton Bend United Methodist Church building was erected beside the old cemetery during the years of 1912 and 1913. The light fixtures are original to the building. Before being converted to electricity, the nickel plated brass fixtures were lowered and filled with oil. In 1989, leaded glass windows were added to the church. The windows are patterned after the windows of the chapel at Bellingrath Gardens in Mobile.
The brick entrance was added in 1989. Construction of the fellowship hall that includes bathrooms and a kitchen was completed in 2005.

The cemetery beside the Canton Bend Methodist Church dates back to the early years of Old Canton. In 1823, Ann Smith, wife of Duncan C. Smith, died at the age of 23. Her husband was away on a trip to North Carolina at the time of her death. She was buried in a grove of oaks near the spot where she and Duncan had said farewell. Upon Duncan’s return to Canton, he deeded the property where Ann was buried to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church for a cemetery. Percy and Irvin Smith, who deeded the land for the United Methodist Church, were descendants of Duncan Smith.

This church is located beside Highway 28 at Canton Bend in Wilcox County. The pastor is Rev. Brian Dovey, services are held on the 2nd & 4th Sundays.

**Pine Apple Methodist Church**  
Pine Apple, AL  
GPS coordinates 31.867389,-86.98958

Founded by circuit riders as the Methodist Episcopal Church South, the first minister was Rev. A. Gillis. Several additions have been made to the 1872 original building, including the present altar and front classrooms of the main sanctuary. The two-story educational building was erected in the early 1950’s.

The Victorian style steeple consists of ornamental cast iron finial, tin sheeted cone, bell, and bell pavilion with jigsaw work brackets and balustrade. The cemetery contains late 19th and 20th century monuments, mostly divided into familiarly grouped plots.  

This church is a contributing property to the Pine Apple Historic District that’s listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

It located on State Hwy 10 across the road from Moore Academy in Pine Apple, AL.

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**Furman Methodist Church**  
Furman, AL  
GPS coordinates 32.004750,-86.964556

The original church building was constructed in 1857 on the present site of land.

The current building was finished in 1882. It has six box columns and an unusual octagonal bell tower capped by a lightning rod.

This church is a contributing property to the Furman Historic District that was added to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on May 13, 1999.

It is also included in Alabama Tapestry of Historic Places, published by the Alabama Historical Commission.

This church is located on Freedom Farm Road across the street from the Furman Post Office which is approximately 150 yards north of the intersection of and Highway 21 and Freedom Farm Road Road.

Sources:
1) NRHP “Furman Historic District” Registration Form  
2) Alabama Tapestry of Historic Places, published by the Alabama Historical Commission. ♦
A History of Liberty United Methodist Church, Henry County, AL

Liberty Church is located on Co. Rd. 92, just off 95 N., nine miles north of Abbeville, Alabama in the Screamer Community, in Northeast Henry County. The property on which the church site was decided July 30, 1873, to the Trustees, Richard A. Whitehurst, William Fletcher Watford, and Daniel Jordan Peacock by Giles Jefferson and Sarah Ann Dixon Peacock for use of the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

Liberty Church, also known as Liberty Chapel, was originally located on a site three or four miles northeast of the property described above. The church building was situated on the banks of Liberty Creek, and housed both white and slave membership. Cemeteries were estab-lished on the hillside above the creek, whites on one side of the road and slaves on the opposite side. A portion of the cemetery is evident today in the overgrown wooded area by the presence of a few gravestones. This site is beside a dirt road still listed on the Henry County tax maps as the Old Liberty Church Road.

No deed has been found to establish the date of the organization of the church, but there is good reason to believe it existed in the 1830's and thereafter. The first site was very near the early village of Otho, a steamboat landing on the Chattahoochee River. Rev. Anson West states in his "History of Methodism in Alabama", that settlements were established in the very early days within the Townships of Seven and Eight, Range 28 and 29, in the NE corner of Henry County. On page 281, paragraph 2, he gives names of persons who were Methodists and pioneers in the first decades of the Methodist walk in Southeast Alabama: Grantham, Lucas, Peacock, Pittman, Whitehurst, Williams and Weatherby. These surnames are among those listed on the oldest church roll in existence. These families also owned land in the area described by West, according to records in early Henry Co. deed books. A statement in Rev. Anson West's obituary says he was "licensed to exhort" at Liberty Chapel, Abbeville Circuit Nov. 3rd, 1855. The Rev. Wade Hampton Weatherby was a "circuit riding preacher" and was probably Liberty Chapel's first pastor. He is buried in the old cemetery, but a headstone has not been found.

The rising of Liberty Creek during spring rains, and the decline of Otho, gave the congregation reason to move the church site in 1873. Tradition holds that the church building was dismantled, transported to, and rebuilt on property given by the Peacock's. This structure was also used as a schoolhouse for the Hilliardsville Community for many years. Cemeteries for both whites and blacks were established.

In 1914, the church building was again dismantled and reassembled a few yards to the front and North of the former site to give more room for the cemetery. In this third structure, materials originally used in the very first church building were incorporated to form the wood frame House of Worship. The building remained the same until 1964, when the wooden shell was enclosed with brick and the interior walls and ceilings were covered with paneling and ceiling squares.

The church was wired for electricity in 1948 when the Pea River Electric Cooperative brought electric power to the community. A well was drilled and an electric pump installed in 1973, which made it possible to add bathrooms and kitchen facilities.

Remodeling of the fellowship hall, a new kitchen, three Sunday School rooms and another bathroom were completed in 1988. In 1990, the sanctuary was completely renovated with a choir loft, vestibule, and a beautiful steeple with a lighted cross added. Donations of stained glass windows as memorials or in honor of someone were installed in July, 1991. The fellowship hall was completely rebuilt in 1996. Water from the Bakerhill Water Auth. was hooked up in 1998. The parking lot was expanded and a storage building with bathroom was built in 2000.

The above described church building was completely destroyed by fire Tuesday night, February 6th, 2007. Services Sunday following the fire were held in the parking lot. Screamer Fire Dept. offered the use of their education room, and Sunday services were held there until a new building was completed, and Wednesday activities were held at Gordon Hudspeth's farm house, his old home place.

The cemetery at Liberty was listed on the Alabama Register of Historic Cemeteries on December 5, 2007. The certificate is on the "Memories Of The Past" wall in the fellowship hall of the new church.

The first Morning Worship Service in the new church building was Palm Sunday, March 16th, 2008, with Pastor Diane Kelly preaching the first sermon. The last service before the fire had been Communion Sunday, and Communion was observed the first Sunday in the new church, with District Superintendent Dr. Herb Sadler assisting Rev. Kelly.

Dedication / Homecoming Service was held Sunday, April 13th, 2008, with 196 in attendance. Dr. Herb Sadler preached, and Rev. John Bryan, a former pastor, spoke about what Liberty UMC meant to him. Liberty was his first church in 1953.

On March 31st, 2008, Liberty was named the small membership "Church of the Year" for 2007 at a District Laity rally and banquet, and a plaque was presented from the Dothan District of the Alabama/West Florida Conference.

Rev. Ron Ball is the current pastor.

Source: Henry County Historical Group
http://www.hcch.org/research/churches

Liberty United Methodist Church
341 County Road, 92, Abbeville, AL
31681335, 85.202264

Photo: Google Earth
Elmer Dean, a jeweler by trade, along with 37 other charter members, organized the Trinity Methodist Church in the Wright community on October 30, 1960. Dwight Eisenhower was president and a gallon of gas cost 31 cents. In lieu of a church home, the members met in the cafetorium of W.C. Pryor Jr. High School.

Church leaders got the OK to begin the search for a 3- to 5-acre tract for a church home. They almost immediately homed in on property at 403 Racetrack Rd. NW.

The land was acquired on January 3, 1961 at a price of $14,200. The church struggled for months with low membership and an even lower cash flow; but, after months of prayer, the membership grew and they set to building a church home of their own:

The church’s groundbreaking ceremony landed it on the front page of the Playground Daily News, which later would become the Northwest Florida Daily News.*

In February 1963, District Superintendent Si Mathison met with church leaders and predicted that in five to 10 years, “Trinity will be one of the stronger churches of our area.” In the meantime, however, they would have to share a full-time pastor with the Destin Methodist Church until both churches reached a place where they could stand alone. Amid their own financial struggles, members of Trinity Methodist had also regularly supported the newly organized Destin Methodist church with $50 contributions.

Pastor Douglas Newton moved into the recently acquired parsonage in early June of 1963 and became Trinity’s first ordained pastor. He also served the Destin Methodist Church.

Construction work on the church was completed in late August, and the consecration service was held on Sept. 1, 1963. Over the next few months, membership in the Sunday school program and church grew and grew. By January 1964, membership had tripled to almost 160.

Trinity UMC was organized in 1960, not quite 57 years ago, as William Hatfield, the Editor of the Northwest Florida Daily News and member of the Trinity congregation, describes in this article he wrote for the paper on the church’s golden anniversary.

Many of the churches written about in our Newsletters are over 100 years old. Some are even approaching their 200th anniversary. But younger churches also have interesting stories -- stories of dedicated people who saw the need to bring God’s word to their community and who struggled to build God’s churches there. Trinity UMC, Fort Walton Beach, Florida, is one of those.

Trinity UMC had outgrown its new church and was already looking at expanding Sunday School classrooms and adding a small kitchen area.

The second phase of construction began that year and was completed a year later. Trinity’s growth over the years continued, and in 1973 the facilities were expanded even further.

A new sanctuary was completed in September 1976 and a new Fellowship Hall and education building was added in 1981. The vision continued to evolve. In its 50th year in 2010, Trinity embarked on a building program to renovate its sanctuary and this was completed by the beginning of 2011.

Today, more than 1,100 members call Trinity their church home. The church includes almost every type of ministry from prison wards to soup kitchens, from the streets of Fort Walton Beach to the mountains of Ecuador, from a vibrant youth ministry to a thriving retiree base.
Trinity UMC Pastors, Charter Members, and Logo

Senior Pastors:

(L to R, bottom row to top row)
Elmer F. Dean 1960-1963
Douglas C. Newton 1963-1968
Walter E. Edwins 1968-1970
Robert V. Greenwood 1970-1972
Joseph H. Bullington, Jr. 1972-1978
James T. Ross 1978-1985
John W. Bryan 1985-1986
Thomas Lane Butts 1986-1993
Wesley H. Wachob 1993-1997
Paul D. Wolfe 1997-2001
John H. Bonner 2001-2008
Bobby Ellisor 2008-2011
Sterling Boykin 2011-present

Associate Pastors: Nancy L. Watson, 2004–2010; M. Christina Hale Shaver 2010-2016

Charter Members

Elmer F. Dean
William Dean
David H. Greer
Berta Jones
Ed R. Bilby
Harold Showers
Alden Derthick
Howard W. Wolford
Janette Mills
Richard B. Roberts
Thomas F. Nelson III
Carl George Gicker
David H. Greer II
Ken Bilby
Jack Bilby
Clarence Fetting
Thomas F. Nelson Jr.
Lawrence Allmon
Harold D. Visser

Jean Dean
David Dean
Virginia Greer
Edna S. Nelson
Barbara Bilby Cable
Lillian Showers
Wilma Derthick
Madge Wolford
Martha Roberts
Clyde Howard Nicholson
Burnetta Nicholson
Dorene Gicker
Ben Bilby
Claudia Adams
Roberta Lamont
Lula Fetting
Linda Nelson Smith
Frances Allmon
Adele Visser

The emerald color of the image reminds us of our location on Florida’s Emerald Coast on the northern Gulf of Mexico.

The image itself shows the distinctive roofline of our sanctuary.

Our name is written boldly with pride.

We are proud to be a United Methodist Church and to let everyone know our denominational affiliation.

The Alabama-West Florida Conference Historical Society’s
Annual Meeting, September 21, 2017
At the Oldest Methodist Church in Florida, Pensacola FUMC

The First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL dates back to 1821, when a mission was established by the Mississippi Conference and the Reverend Alexander Tally was appointed as missionary to Pensacola. At that time, the areas that later became the states of Mississippi and Alabama as well as the area now known as northwest Florida were all part of the Mississippi Territory. The mission began by holding meetings in the courthouse and the old theater of Pensacola.

In 1827, a lot was purchased on the north-east corner of Intendencia and Tarragona Streets and a church was built. The first services were held on June 2, 1828.

More information about the 2017 Annual Meeting will be provided in later issues of this Newsletter.
Methodism came late to Florida, which except for a brief period of English control, was a Spanish territory and thus closed to Protestantism.

It came to Florida with the circuit riders who followed the trails across the border from Georgia after the United States took control of the territory from the Spanish in 1819.

In December 1821 the Mississippi Conference assigned a preacher, Alexander Talley, to Pensacola, in what was known as West Florida. Eventually, the Panhandle came under the jurisdiction of the Alabama Conference and later the Alabama-West Florida Conference, where it remains today.

Work in the peninsula of Florida, historically known as East Florida, came officially under the South Carolina Conference in January 1822, when the first appointment to Florida, that of Elijah Sinclair, was made to Amelia Island. In 1831 the South Carolina Conference was divided and the newly formed Georgia Conference assumed the Florida work.

When the U.S. took formal possession of Florida from Spain in 1821, there were but two real towns, St. Augustine and Pensacola, the capitals of East and West Florida. Between the two was mostly wilderness inhabited by none-too-friendly Indians. Circuit riders, however, held worship services in homes, barns, stables, blockhouses, brush arbors, and courtrooms, intent on conquering the wilderness of Florida for Christ.

One of those was Isaac Boring, who fortunately for us kept a diary. Beginning in 1828 he made almost daily entries for twenty-three years. One of the most important extant sources of the history of Methodism in the period covered, the diary furnishes an intimate picture of the life of the frontier circuit rider.

My presentation is ISAAC BORING, but, believe me, his ministry in pioneer Florida was definitely not boring!

Boring was born in Georgia in 1805, while Florida was still Spanish territory. He was converted at age 14 and received his first appointment at age 20. I can identify with him - I was converted at 14 and received my first appointment at 20.

In true Methodist fashion, Boring served a different appointment every single year.

In 1828, he received perhaps the most dreaded appointment the South Carolina Conference had - missionary work in Florida, in its very first decade as American territory. He would serve three successive appointments in Florida (1828, 1829, and 1830) in the territory's three major appointments - Pensacola, St Augustine/Alachua, and Tallahassee.

When his time in "purgatory" was over, Boring left, never to serve in Florida again. He would serve the South Carolina Conference as a highly effective itinerant and presiding elder; he was even mentioned for the episcopacy. But it was not to be. He died of cholera at General Conference in 1850.

Boring was not the first Methodist preacher to enter the Florida Territory - there had been illegal Methodist preaching even under Spanish rule. But Boring was among the first. He had the distinction of serving all three of the major appointments - west, east, and middle. He built the first Methodist meeting houses in each appointment. But what makes him such an important figure in Florida Methodist history are his surviving journals. Much of what we know about those early years we owe to Boring's accounts - replete with his quaint and inconsistent spelling and punctuation.

Boring reckons he traveled about 620 miles on horseback from Camden, S.C., to Pensacola in 1828, to begin the new appointment. He arrived in Pensacola on March 12 and sold his horse to the previous preacher, Rev. Hardy, for $100, so that Rev. Hardy would have transportation to his next destination.

Boring writes about preaching at the Pensacola courthouse at eleven o'clock on Sundays and then again at candlelight. He mentions "the Sabbath school" and prayer meetings and preaching Sunday afternoons to "the colored people." During the week, he was in the outlying parts of his charge, preaching in a schoolhouse, meeting in homes. He preached to soldiers at the nearby fort. He bewailed the sight of drunken sailors on shore leave:

"Sin brings men down, to a level with the bruits, and sinks them down to eternal torment." One day, he
Discouragement is not new to Methodist preachers. Boring wrote in his journal, at various times during that year: “Few people in Pensacola are anxious to hear the Gospel, and those who are are not much affected by the word; may the Lord have mercy upon this people, and may He awaken, convert and sanctify many souls here this year.” “I am sorely distressed for Zion’s peace and prosperity in this place. I try to preach, and pray in public and in private but I see no fruit of all my toil and pain.” “I know that I am not as zealous and faithful as I should be, O Lord lead me by thy spirit, increase my faith give me more zeal and fill me with perfect love that I may be instrumental in thy hands in raising a church in this town that shall stand and prosper untill this place becomes famous for its pietie.”

By June, his tone was more hopeful: “This day for the first time the citizens of Pensacola met in the Methodist Episcopal Church to worship the God of Heaven. [The new church was built!] At half past ten I preached; I spoke with liberty and the congregation was very attentive. I do hope the Lord will honor this house with his presence and power in the awakening and conversion and Sanctification of many souls.”

Six months later, it was time to leave Pensacola: “I feel that my work is closed with these people. My feelings are of an uncommon kind—I am sorry to leave the people who are in their sins and I am sorry to leave those who love and follow Christ but I hope God will take care of them and save them from sin.”

Boring was not happy to receive another appointment in Florida: “I was much astonished and hurt at the pointment. I did complain but I did wrong. I hope the pointment will be to the Glory of God. I am to receive $50 from the Missionary Society for my support.”

In St Augustine in 1829, the only suitable place for worship was the government house. Unfortunately, on Boring’s first Sunday there, “an Episcopal officiated according to the Episcopal mode and preached a very short sermon which he had before him on a paper.” Note the Methodist disapproval of the brevity of the sermon and the fact that it was not extemporeous!

This appointment was far more extensive than the one around Pensacola; it covered all of northeast Florida and involved a circuit of about 200 miles. It included Jacksonville and Alachua and Palatka, as well as tiny settlements and isolated families in between. His journal mentions many river crossings by boat or horseback; he mentions deep woods and rain and darkness and rain and being lost for hours at a time. He mentions preaching to just “two persons” or “a few persons” or “there was so much wind and rain that no persons met to hear preaching.” Boring prayed with horse thieves; was interrupted by drunks; and had to expel several Jacksonville Methodists for dancing. By May 1829, in St Augustine, he “commenced divine service in the Methodist Episcopal church—dedicating the first Protestant church that has been built in this place for more than a Century past.” His second new church within a year’s time—and 400 miles apart!

Much of Boring’s ministry this year was not to whites, but to blacks and Indians. Many blacks had escaped to the wilds of Florida and lived in settlements near or with the Indians. “I intend to try to preach, first, to the blacks amongst them. I am in hopes that if the blacks who can understand English will hear preaching, they will influence the Indians to hear it. I go to them not knowing what will be the consequence. I hope it is of the Lord, and that the Lord will open the door for his gospel to be preached in this nation of Indians.” Accordingly, Boring went to “a town of Negros” whose patriarch was an old man named Pomp. Pomp was receptive and gathered about 50 to hear Boring preach. “I laboured to impress their minds with the character of the Divine Being, with a proper sense of right and wrong, to convince them of their fallen and unholy state, and the necessity of having their sins pardoned and their hearts changed.” “All the blacks manifested a very friendly disposition, and a desier that I should visit them often.”

He visited several more black settlements on “Withlock-coochie creek” and at the “Wawhoo swamp.” About 50 blacks and 20 Indians heard Boring at Wahoo; the blacks interpreted the sermon to the Indians. “These Black people appeared to be very thankful that I had visited them—some of the old ones had heard black men preach; so that there was a little knowledge of Christianity among them.”

Boring’s efforts among the Indians were less fruitful. Though several smaller chiefs seemed open to his preaching, the head chief, John Hicks, was adamantly opposed. Boring warned him that people who lived bad lives would go, when they died, to “a bad world.” Hicks told him “that many of the white people did not attend to the good talk and that they were as wicked as himself. What a lamentable truth! Will not the heathen rise up at the day of Judgment and condemn many who are raised under the sound of the Gospel?” Boring was convinced that he could do nothing more, but his hope was that the awakened blacks might be able, eventually, to reach the Indians.

Boring’s third year in Florida was in Tallahassee, the territorial capital. Very few entries in his journal for that year were available to me. Only that he had to conduct a church trial on his very first Sunday, that there were “only 17 white persons and 4 colored who profess to be Methodist in this town,” and that “this Society is in a lamentable condition!”

As the former “presiding elder” in Tallahassee, I was mortified to hear of this! Nevertheless, Boring did get a church built and—then went on to bigger and better appointments in the civilized world to the north of Florida!

Extracted from the Proceedings of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Historical Society Annual Meeting, 2015
Executive Committee and Officers of the AWFC-HS

Jim Young, President
Rev. Ed Shirley, Vice President
Sharon Tucker, Recording Secretary
Mary Ann Pickard, Financial & Membership Secretary
Carolyn Coker, Member at Large
Craig Reynolds, Member at Large
Joyce Stimak, Member at Large
Myrtice Carr, Previous Past President

The Historical Society Website
http://www.awfhistory.com/

Please visit the website for the AWF Conference’s Historical Society. This website was created so that we may be more accessible to everyone with information and offer an avenue of interaction concerning our shared interest in Methodist history. Please browse through the pages to learn more about early Methodism in America, Alabama, and West Florida. We will be adding more to our internet files through the efforts of volunteers (we invite you to be one), members of the Historical Society (you can become one), and our conference archivists (we have some good ones). We regularly plan events where we enrich our knowledge of history, enjoy fellowship, and actually visit a historic location.

We’re Also on Facebook!

Follow us on Facebook. Enter “AWF Historical Society” in the search box at the top of your Facebook page. “Like” us – Follow us! Participate with comments and photos. Invite your friends.

The AWFC Historical Society Newsletter

The newsletter is published quarterly and all comments and suggestions are welcome.

If you would like to submit an article or a notice or an announcement for publication in the AWFC Historical Society Newsletter, please contact the editor, Jim Young, at youngjmy@cox.net or by phone at 850 862-8642.

Ask the former generation and find out what their ancestors learned, for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow.
Job 8 KJV

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Summerfield Methodist Church, Dallas County, AL

Photo by Billy Milstead
Rural Southwest Alabama
Alabama-West Florida Conference Historical Society
Membership Application
Membership is from Annual Conference to Annual Conference
2016/2017

When you join between annual conferences your membership is valid through the
remainder of the year plus between the times of the next two annual conferences.

Please Provide Following Information for Individual or Church. Check the
one that applies:

____Person  ____Church  Name:________________________________________

If individual write the name of your church below:

________________________________________

Address:________________________________________

City: ________________  State: ________________  Zip: __________

Phone: ______________________  E-Mail: ______________________

SELECT MEMBERSHIP TYPE

____ Annual Membership $15
____ Student Membership $8
____ Donation to Society

Total Amount Enclosed: $____._____  Make checks payable to: AWFC
In Memo/For section write “AWFC Historical Society”

Send this Membership Application to:

Methodist Archives Center
1500 E. Fairview Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36106

Are you the historian for your church?  ____Yes  ____No
Are you interested in being a member of the Commission on Archives and
History (COAH)?  ____Yes  ____No  ____Need more information