

## ANOTHER MILESTONE

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# Bullock Creek Church Plans Dedication Today

By SAMUEL BROOKS MENDENHALL

YORK, S. C., Aug. 1—Sunday, August 2, 1953, the date of the dedication of the fourth church edifice, will be another milestone in the history of Bullock Creek Presbyterian Church, which is located about 15 miles southwest of York, S. C. But let us turn back the clock some 190 years and follow the events through to the present time.

Between the years 1757 and 1763, there was a mass migration to upper South Carolina from Pennsylvania. These people were staunch Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. They were rigid in their moral and religious beliefs and strongly opposed to things which tended to be worldly.

Since these people were from Pennsylvania, it is only natural that they should send to that state for ministerial aid. Therefore, about the year 1765 Rev. Azel Roe and Rev. John Close were sent to these people and spent the summer in evangelistic labor. Honourable S. W. Williams contends that it was on the occasion of these meetings in 1765 that the church was organized. However, Dr. Howe, in his "History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina," gives the date of organization as 1769. Since the early sessional records have been lost, the correct date is not known. The latter is the accepted date.

In 1774, Rev. Joseph Alexander of Sugar Creek, N. C., came as first pastor. Rev. Mr. Alexander was an animated and forcible preacher and his coming introduced an era of prosperity for the church. Soon after he came Rev. Mr. Alexander obtained a grant of some 800 acres of land and erected near the present site the second house of worship.

Rev. Mr. Alexander was an ardent and fearless Whig. Filled with a sense of his country's wrongs, he was not reticent to advocate its cause in public and private. He was, therefore, disliked by those who favored the royal authority, but possessed the warm affection of those who opposed it. It is said that on Sabbath morning the men of the community habitually repaired to the church and stood guard around the old log meeting house while the pastor and his congregation worshipped.

Rev. Mr. Alexander was an eminent educator and in 1787 established at Bullock's Creek a most famous classical school. Courses taught were Greek, Latin, moral philosophy and mathematics. Among his pupils might be mentioned William H. Crawford, candidate for the presidency of the United States, and Governor Johnson of South Carolina.

On March 27, 1801, Rev. Mr. Alexander's pastoral relations were dissolved at his request and with the congregation's consent. For 27 years he had preached and taught

at Bullock's Creek. At the time of resignation the church consisted of 85 communicants. During his ministry he had baptized 11 adults and 753 infants. He received the Doctor of Divinity degree from the College of South Carolina in 1807. Having reached a good old age, Dr. Alexander remained with pastoral charge until his death on July 30, 1809.

In 1806, Rev. William Cummins Davis accepted a call from Bullock's Creek for two-thirds of his ministerial labours. A biography of Rev. Mr. Davis would present a most interesting and unique story. He was a brilliant man, but given to metaphysical speculation. As early as 1807 the Second Presbytery of South Carolina began to complain that he was adhering to doctrine deemed to be erroneous, but the First Presbytery of which he was a member was reluctant to take measures against him. Finally, after repeated charges by the Second Presbytery and repeated refusals to dispose him from the ministry by the First Presbytery, a most extraordinary incident occurred. The Synod dissolved the First Presbytery, assigning part to Second Presbytery and the part which Davis was in to Concord Presbytery, knowing that Concord would dispose him from the ministry. He was, as was expected, cited to appear before Concord Presbytery for trial, but knowing what the outcome would be, Rev. Mr. Davis withdrew from the Presbytery. A large part of the Bullock's Creek congregation followed him and in 1810 he organized the Independent Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. They erected a building a few hundred feet from the old church and for 54 years the two congregations, Independent and Regular were maintained. Churches were organized in Lincoln County, N. C., in Tennessee, and there was even one in Mississippi, but they were mostly in York County.

Except for a few years spent in Tennessee organizing churches, Rev. Mr. Davis served as pastor of Independent Bullock's Creek until his resignation in 1829. He died at Yorkville on September 27, 1831, in his 71st year. Thus passed from the scene a strange, harassed, misunderstood, but somehow an amiable personality.

### NEW PASTOR

In 1829, Rev. R. Y. Russell had become pastor of Bullock's

Creek. Under his splendid leadership the church membership greatly increased. Of particular interest is Rev. Mr. Russell's diary. On the fourth Sabbath of May, 1852, Rev. Mr. Russell writes, "Today was a day of humiliation." Two elders were at variance and despite the preacher's efforts, refused to be reconciled. Also, an infuriated father abused him for baptizing his children at the mother's request, got the church roll book and erased their names for the infant membership.

A new building was erected in the latter 1850s and dedicated in June, 1860. That building had been used to the present day.

Toward the end of 1850, a sentiment for reunion had been growing in the Independent Convention. Subsequently, on December 11, 1863, the Independent Presbyterian Church voted unanimously to unite with the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America.

Let us now return to the regular church. In 1817, Rev. Aaron Williams was ordained as pastor. His was a difficult task; rebuilding a church torn by dissension. But a revival, commenced shortly after he began his ministry, resulted in adding 78 members to the church. Rev. Mr. Williams resigned in 1833 and after several years moved to Arkansas.

In 1835, Rev. William B. Davies came as pastor. Partly due to his poor health and partly due to the fine work of Rev. Russell at the Independent church, the membership of the regular church dropped as low as 55.

### SUPPLY PASTOR

Rev. John A. Davies was stated supply from 1856 until 1861. A vacancy of two years brings us to the period of reunion. The united church reported 235 members. Rev. Mr. Russell continued as pastor until his death on Nov. 5, 1866, preaching on alternate Sabbaths at the old and new churches.

A long list of fine pastors have served the church since then, but to mention them would take too long. Since 1950, the church has been under the direction of Dr. Tilden Scherer. During his ministry it became apparent that if they were to meet the demands of a modern rural church some radical changes would be necessary. Therefore, in October, 1951, the congregation voted to build a new church. After one and one-half years of labor the church has been completed. This brings us to the present — 1953.

On August 2, the service will begin with the annual meeting of the Cemetery Association. Dinner will be served on the church lawn from 12:30 until 1:30. At 2 p. m. the service of dedication will begin. Dr. Edward Lilly of Charleston, S. C., is to preach the dedicatory sermon.

Thus, we have briefly followed the old church's history through 190 years. We have observed her times of toil and tribulation, we have seen her hours of dissension and adversity, but we see that through all these the church, the bulwark of the community, is still shining and still witnessing to the glory of God.

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# 2 York Churches Mark 190th Year

By JOHN SMITH

YORK — "From Dan to Beersheba" is Biblical but in York County it is also geographical.

This fact was brought out yesterday as two York County churches both observed their 190th year.

More than 300 members and friends gathered at the Bullock Creek Presbyterian Church for services and a picnic.

Some 250 others gathered at Beersheba. There was good weather, quantities of good food and good times as old friends got together.

Both of these churches were formally organized in 1769, although congregations existed prior to that time.

Bullock Creek Presbyterian Church was originally called Dan. Early settlers moved on up the creek a few miles and in good Scotch-Irish tradition named their new church Beersheba, after the Biblical journey.

Huck's defeats at Brattonsville and Kings Mountain possibly found their origin at Bullock Creek. Dr. Joseph Alexander, a

Princeton graduate, gathered patriot leaders at his churches after the fall of Charleston and spurred them on to continue the war for a time. The British under Huck were defeated shortly after and the first resistance after Charleston's capture.

Dr. Alexander's home was used as a hospital during the Revolution. Afterwards, in 1787 he conducted the first classical academy in this section of the state. South Carolina charted Alexander College in his honor.

The first marked grave in the cemetery is that of Mary Feemster who died in 1776. Her son and grandson were both officers in the Revolution and in the church.

The Independent Presbyterian Church was organized by William C. Davis at Bullock Creek in 1810. Beersheba can also claim the birthplace of a Presbyterian division. Bethel Presbyterian was organized there in 1824.



**Beersheba** — Mrs. Meek Dickson and Sam T. Smith are members of Beersheba Presbyterian Church (background). It's one of the original "four B's"—Beersheba, Bullock Creek, Bethesda and Bethel Presbyterian Churches—founded in York County nearly two centuries ago.