

IT IS POPULAR WITH TOURISTS

# Church Is Two Centuries Old

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Special To The Observer

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Let's drive down and visit another of the Palmetto State's historic old churches.

This time it is the Indiantown Presbyterian Church in Williamsburg County, in the central low country, about 30 miles northwest of Georgetown.

Indiantown Church has been a congregation for more than two centuries, having been founded around 1757. The history of the area dates back at least another 30 years prior to the founding of the Church, or the early 1730's.

Settlement of the Williamsburg County section can be traced to 1732, when a group of immigrants from Northern Ireland established a community along the Black River, near the landmark, the King's Tree.

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This saw the beginning of a steady influx of Scotch - Irish settlers, who spread their Calvinist (Presbyterian) views, thus dominating the religious atmosphere of the county for years to come.

In the history of the Indiantown Church, produced in 1957 by James F. Cooper, in connection with the Church's bicentennial, he states that these new settlers were "hardy, toughened by rugged terrain and harsh climate, fiercely jealous of their rights, thrifty and hard - working, kind, generous and hospitable, intensely loyal to family and clan, and above all deeply religious."

The Scots were a sturdy lot, accustomed to hard work, and soon the land responded

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to their treatment and care by bringing forth abundant crops.

By 1755, there were a good many residents living near the old Indian town. Many of these new settlers came over from the King's Tree, or from overseas, and some from the colonies up north.

Although the records indicating the actual founding of Indiantown Church are vague, it is known that it was an "offshoot" of the Williamsburg Church, founded in 1736.

The people at this time were busy living history, and they weren't too preoccupied with writing it down. More than one account seems to verify that it was prior to 1760 when the Church was organized.

Again, Mr. Cooper, in his history, states that the Black Mingo River "was formerly navigable for sloops as far upstream as the old Mingo and Indiantown Swamp. It is from this settlement or camp that our Church and Community derive their names."

The Church was in the midst of two conflicts, the Revolution

and the Civil War, and many of their finest young men gave their lives for both causes. It was a part of the battleground for the Revolution, although such was not the case in the Civil War. Indiantown probably suffered more under Reconstruction than during the War itself.

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In about 1872, Mr. A. R. Kennedy became pastor of Indiantown Church, which had been without a minister during Reconstruction. Mrs. Kennedy was a sister of Woodrow Wilson, and during their three-year stay, their young daughter died. She was buried in the churchyard creating a tie with one of America's great Presidents, who had himself spent his boyhood in South Carolina.

Indiantown Presbyterian Church is still an active congregation today, having more than doubled its membership in the period from the 1920's to the 1950's. They erected a Fellowship Hall in 1948, and have renovated their other buildings over the years.

The entire story of Indiantown Church couldn't possibly be condensed here, but you should drive down and see it one day soon. Talk to some of the members of the congregation and hear firsthand some of the incidents that made this Church such a vital part of South Carolina's history.

You'll find it on combined S.C. Highways 521 and 261, about 8 miles southwest of the town of Hemingway.