Statistical Sketch of the

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH at Fayette, Mississippi.

From the Human point of view, so far as the record shows, the thought of establishing a PRESBYTERIAN church in the Town of Fayette, Mississippi, found birth in the heart of Rev. Henry McDonald, at that time Pastor of Ebenezer Church, located about six miles east of Fayette. On May 30, 1854, Mr. McDonald addressed a communication to the Thomas Hinds Lodge No. 58 of Free and Accepted Masons at Fayette. This communication proposed that in as much as the Masonic Lodge owned a lot in the Town of Fayette and was contemplating building a lodge that the Presbyterians of the Town of Fayette and vicinity should furnish the means to build the lower story which should be dedicated and used as house of worship while the Masonic Lodge should use the upper building for lodge meetings, with the right of conducting ceremonial sessions in the church. After considerable negotiations, which, however, unfortunately were not placed in the form of deeds or recorded conveyances, an agreement was reached and the building constructed on the plan suggested.

Subsequently, at a meeting of the Mississippi Presbytery, held at Columbus, on December 9, 1859, a resolution was adopted -- "That the Session of Ebenezer Church be authorized to set off, when the way is clear, a part of the members of that Church to be organized into a Church at Fayette." Rev. H. McDonald and ruling elders, S. Tenney, J.H. Darden and D.H. Cameron, were appointed a Committee to attend to the organization.

Acting under this authority the Presbyterians met in their church at Fayette on February 25, 1860. All members of the Committee being present, the church was organized with the following members, all of whom had been, prior to that date, members of the Ebenezer Church, viz.:

Armstrong, Elizabeth   
Burch, Elizabeth   
Crawford, Catherine I.   
Crawford, Fannie L.   
Dangerfield, Adaline   
Darden, Jesse H.   
Darden, Susan

Doran, George H.   
Duncan, John H.   
Duncan, Pauline

Fox, Benjamin F.

Fox, Sarah A.   
Frierson, Grace   
Hamberlin, Belinda   
Harper, Ann T.

McCall, Henry S.   
McCall, Sarah S.   
McGinty, Zilpha

Owen, Samuel B.

Owen, Mary

Scott, Samuel   
Spielman, A.

Spielman, Mary A.   
Slaighter, Willie Anna   
Stuart, Ann

Tenney, S.

Tenney, D.L.

Torrey, George

Torrey, Mary Ann

Wade, Wilson W.

Wade, Martha W.

Wade, Martha   
Wiggington, Eliza Jane

The following officers were elected:

Ruling Elders: Jesse H. Darden

S. Tenney

Samuel Scott

Deacons: John H. Duncan

Samuel B. Owen

Trustees: W.B. Stuart,

W.S. Crawford

Benjamin F. Fox

W. L. Harper

George Torrey

It may be interesting to record that the first accession to the Congregation after the organization of the Church was Miss Angella Dennet, who was admitted upon examination of February 26, 1860.

The first infant presented to the newly erected altar for baptism was John Moore McCaleb, on April 27, 1862. The first death was that of one of the newly elected deacons, Samuel B. Owen, on June 29, 1860.

Rev. Henry McDonald continued to serve as Pastor throughout the first year, when Rev. A. McCallum filled the pulpit until December 1861, when Rev. George Hall, previously from Spring Street Presbyterian Church, New York City, was installed as regular Pastor.

In the light of impending events it appeared that the infant church was established at an inauspicious time. The storm signals of sectional differences, which afterwards culminated in the War of the Confederacy, were already visible upon the political horizon and threats of sectional strife were even then disturbing thoughtful minds throughout the Nation. In a few months practically all of the men in this section who were able to bear arms were called to the battle field; all to fight and many to die in defense of the Constitutional rights of the State which they loved; leaving the faithful and loving women to the equally as troubled fate of remaining in desolate homes, oppressed by sorrow and doubt and preyed upon by the terror of unspeakable possibilities.

During the more than four years of this eventful period the Presbyterian Church of Fayette survived only, or chiefly, because the Providence of God had placed in charge of its destinies the faithful Pastor, Rev. George Hall, and two equally faithful Ruling Elders, Jesse H. Darden and S. Tenney. They preserved the entity of the Church intact by holding meetings regularly, sending delegates to Presbytery and Synod.

Even after the bugles had sounded truce, and peace was declared, during all the troublous and humiliating days of reconstruction, the Church was held together without possibility of numerical growth by the few faithful leaders who were in charge. On November 5, 1865, Dr. P.K. Whitney, the only surviving Elder of the Providence Church, transferred his membership and was received as a Ruling Elder of the Church of Fayette.

As showing the very weakened condition in which the Church found itself during the reconstruction period mentioned we inset here its statistical report from April 3, 1873 to April 3, 1874:

Communicants added on examination none

Total in regular communication fifteen

Number of children in Sabbath School twelve

Pastor's Salary $175.00

Education none

Sabbath School Collection $22.35

When we contrast this report with the report of the same Church fifty years thereafter, and note the increase in membership, the growth of the Sunday School, the contributions to Benevolence, and Education, the payment of pastor's salary, the thoughtful mind is compelled to exclaim: "How hath the Lord blessed his people" and "What wonders are wrought in His name".

In 1870 the Church lost the services of the Rev. George Hall who had so faithfully served the Congregation and the people generally. Through all the trying years of the Confederate War and long thereafter no adequate written record is left of the great good which this Servant of the Lord accomplished. During all the hardships of warfare, in every stricken home, at every bedside of sickness, his kindly voice and tender supplications were heard. He married the young, he baptized the infants, he attended the sick, he buried the dead. He is now in the fullness of his own reward.

From 1870 to 1876 the Church was without regular pastor, but was dependent upon the occasional visits and sermons of the pastors of nearby churches. Among these, on May 14, 1876, appears for the first time in the records of the Fayette Presbyterian Church, the name of the Rev. C.W. Grafton -- a name which since that time has for fifty years shed luster upon the great Presbyterian denomination of which he is today the Nestor and Agamemnon. Scholarly, learned, eloquent, a breathing example of Christian manhood. Forceful in the pulpit, wise in counsel, his admonitions to a God-fearing life are but the reflection of his own walk and conversation.

In 1876, owing to the financial stringency at that time existent through out the entire Southern States, it was deemed advisable to execute a new agreement between the Masonic Lodge and the Presbyterian Church as to the future control and occupancy of the building which both had contributed to erect.

PASTORS:

Since 1876, the Church has been served as Pastor by the following:

Rev. J.S. Shaw

Rev. W.B. Bingham

Rec. Charles Oberschmidt   
Rev. W.P. Dickey

Rev. E.W. Ford

Rev. E.M. Stewart

Rev. J. G. Johnson

Rev. George M. Smiley

Rev. J.V. Currie

RULING ELDERS:

No list of Ruling Elders who have served this Church would be complete which did not, without detracting from the record of any, single out for special mention the sublime courage and fidelity under the most trying circumstances, in hours of sorrow, sickness and death, through lean years of financial famine, of two into whose hand the destinies of the Church rested for so many and such trying years. One, Jesse H. Darden: the other, Dr. Prosper K. Whitney. The first, already a Ruling Elder of Ebenezer Church, became a Ruling Elder of the Fayette Church in 1860, and from this to his death, when his grey hairs went with honor to the grave in 1895, he was in very truth the horsemen and the chariots of Israel. In time of financial stringency such as is hard now to imagine, he gave with prodigal hand of his moderate means to every Christian cause. To him, more than any other source looked the Church in its hour of trial for succor and for strength. The other being the only surviving Ruling Elder of Providence Church, united with the Fayette Church in 1865, established the Sunday School, and from that date until his untimely death in 1894, in the prime of life, for thirty years he served as Ruling Elder of the Church and as Superintendent of the Sunday School. A Christian physician answering the call of sickness, or distress from whatever source, at whatever hour it came, responding as promptly to a request for ministration in the humblest cabin in the vicinity as to one which came from the more   
lordly plantation mansion. His professional skill, his ministering kindness, his hopeful and helpful services recognized no race, nor creed nor social station.

The Ruling Elders have been: Jesse H. Darden, S. Tenney, Samuel Scott, Dr. P.K. Whitney, W.L. Harper, R. H. Foreman, P.K. Whitney, Jr., W.S. Davis, M.C. Harper, Thomas C. McNair, J.W. Bell, C.H. Jenks and T.B. Stone.

In 1909, the agreement which was entered into between the Church and the Masonic Lodge in 1876, came up for renewed consideration, the thirty-three years stipulated in the tentative agreement having expired. Prior to this date the Church, without being advised of any friction or dissatisfaction on the part of the Lodge, had expended a very large sum in the repairs, improvements and beautifying of the Church structure. In 1909 this friction culminated in demands being made by the Lodge of the Church which the Church, in conscience, felt itself unable to accede to. The result was an unfortunate litigation which resulted in the Church vacating the building erected by its original members and consecrated by a half century of prayers and service. The details of this litigation will not be given and is simply referred to as demonstrating again the mysterious ways which an omnipotent God employs his wonders to perform and illustrate again how all things work together for good to them that love and serve the Lord. Cast out of the tabernacle which their fore-fathers had built, spurred by necessity, the Church bent its energies and of course succeeded in erecting a building of their own dedicated, consecrated and devoted to the worship of God alone.

In this, as in every other good work, the women of the congregation performed a large and noble part.

The present officers are Rev. J.V. Currie, Pastor; Ruling Elders, M.C. Harper, P.K. Whitney, J.E. Torrey, and Jeff Truly; Deacons, O.S. Gillis, G.B. Harper and W.W. Bisland.

So, as this is written in 1926, the Presbyterian Church of Fayette, few in members but militant in spirit, conscious of short comings, but eager to serve, humbly labors in its predestined sphere for the advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

(signed) Jeff Truly