

Chapter XII

Early Churches of Grenada and Vicinity

In any discussion of religious influence in that part of the Choctaw Cession of 1830 which eventually became Grenada County, we must remember that settlement of new areas west of the Appalachian Mountains did not follow the pattern set up by back-country New England and Middle Atlantic State settlers as they pushed inland from the established settlements on the coast. In New England, for instance, new settlements were not attempted until the existing settlements could no longer support their increasing population. When this occurred, the surplus population had to obtain permission from the authorities of the existing settlement to move into the back country and establish a new settlement. When this movement took place the settlers, as a rule, went together, taking with them a minister, and frequently a teacher. Sometimes the minister served in the dual capacity of minister and teacher. On the other hand, the pioneers who settled the vast country west of the mountains usually came as individual families, or small groups of people closely allied by blood kinship or by former friendly association. They had to build homes and carve out farms as the first order of existence. Religious and educational organization usually came after, rather than with these pioneer settlers. In the early established little towns such as Pittsburg and Tullahoma (which later united to form the town of Grenada), saloons were built before churches. The earliest church on record in the area which was to become Grenada county was granted land on which to build a church in 1835, whereas as early as the summer of 1832 an enterprising merchant had set up a trading post in a tent on the banks of the Yalobousha River near the site of the present mill of the Mississippi Cotton Seed Products Company formerly known as the Grenada Oil Mill. Here he dispensed whiskey and other trade articles to itinerate traders operating the area, many of whom were "Squawmen" as evidenced by the many half-breed Indians having English sur-names. It was four years after the settlement of the two little neighboring towns on the Yalobousha before any religious organization purchased a town-lot on which to erect a church building. During the intervals between the beginning of the towns and the erection of churches, a few itinerate preachers made occasional visits to the towns, officiating in marriages, funerals and in occasional religious meetings in the homes of some of the people, but no organized church existed during the first four years of the existence of the towns.

The first religious influence to be exerted in the area came not among the early white settlers, but through the establishment of the Elliot Mission School, which was established 1818 near the present town of Holcomb. Here, fifteen years before the area was opened for land purchase by white people, The Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, an inter-denominational project of the Congregation and Presbyterian churches of New England, established a school in which Indian children were taught domestic skills, elements of Agriculture, reading and writing, as well as being instructed in the Christian religion. This school ceased operation some time between 1830 and 1833, but had an indirect influence on early Christian religious observance among the early white settlers, as John Smith, one of the Elliot Missionaries, became one of the first settlers in Pittsburg, and frequently had religious services in the Union Hotel which he had established in the little town. His daughter Harriett, wife of merchant James Sims, sold for a substantial consideration, the lots on which the first, present Methodist church was located. It is known that before any regular church organization existed in either Pittsburg or Tullahoma there were occasional union services in a log store building located on the north-east corner of the lot at the intersection of Church and Third streets. This use of the building probably gave name to the street called Church.

So far as land records indicate, the first organized church group to be

deeded land as the location of a church building was the Spring Hill Methodist Church. On November 13, 1835, James Marble conveyed to John H. Hines, Isaac Taylor, Lewis Miller, and James Trotter as "TRUSTEES OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AT SPRING HILL MEETING HOUSE" a little more than eight acres of land. The wording of the deed would seem to indicate that meetings were already being held at the place preceeding the granting of the deed. At the time when the aforementioned deed was executed, Spring Hill was a rather important cross-road point. It was here that the Grenada-Carrollton road which passed through the area, had a road branching from it, which road branched again near the site of the present town of Holcomb, so as to reach the ferries existing at the two little towns of Chocchuma and Tuscahoma. A tavern was located at the crossroad point of Spring Hill, and taverns were located in the towns of Chocchuma and Tuscahoma. We have no written records to substantiate the tradition that Spring Hill had been a meeting place for the Methodist people for a year or more before the deed for the church lot was given, and that services were held under a rough arbor of tree branches. There seems to have been doubt in the minds of some people relative to the validity of the original deed given to the Church. On December 15, 1855, twenty years after the first deed was executed, Jacob Poitevent and his wife Mary granted a deed to William Dubard, Ables Eli, William H. Beck, Green W. Trimble and Henry Heath, all trustees of the Spring Hill Church, the same land which Marble had granted the church in the first deed. In an endeavor to determine why some one thought a second deed necessary, we checked the original tract book and found that while James Marble is listed as purchaser of the land on which the church was located, he never obtained a government land patent to the land. Most early land purchases were made with a down payment and with several years to pay off the balance. If a purchaser defaulted in payment of the balance of the purchase price, the land reverted to the Federal Government. Of course if Marble had bought his land on the usual terms, he could give to the church only such title as he himself had in the land. Any sale made by him, and title granted, would be subject to the lien which the Federal Government had on the unpaid balance of the purchase price. Since Poitevent did purchase the land from the Federal government at a date later than the date of the deed granted by Marble, there seems little doubt that the original deed was defective because Marble never had legal title to the land. At this late date it is hard to realize the great contribution which the Spring Hill Church made to the religious life of the area. At this time, one hundred thirty one years after the date of the first deed transaction, the church still exists. Because of the shift of people from rural areas to towns and cities, the church does not now play as important a place in the religious life of the area as it once did, but it still has a place in the hearts of those who continue to look upon it as their place of worship, and of people now living in many different localities, who have loved ones and friends buried in the rather extensive cemetery located on the church lot.

The first religious congregation to purchase a lot in Grenada was the First Presbyterian Church. We do not know when this church was organized, nor where it met before the erection of its first church building. On January 16, 1838, the "Proprietors of Grenada" conveyed to George K. Morton, John Moore, Nathaniel S. Neal, L. C. Caldwell, R. T. Briarly, U. Tyson, and E. P. Statton, Trustees of First Presbyterian Church of Grenada lot number one hundred thirteen. The consideration involved was one hundred thirty seven dollars and fifty cents. The lot, located east and north of the intersection of Line and Second streets, is the location of the present Presbyterian Church Building. Soon after the purchase of the lot the congregation began construction of a building which was to serve as their place of worship for a period of approximately sixty-two years. They erected a two-story frame building. The lower story was used for church purposes while the upper story was used as a meeting place for the Masonic Order. On January 5, 1900, The Grenada Sentinel reported that the Presbyterial Congregation had decided to erect

a new church building which was to cost from "seven to ten thousand dollars". It was some time after this decision before any considerable progress was made relative to a new building. It is very probable that the delay arose from the need to accumulate money to pay for the new building. In the year 1903, the Sentinel carried an advertisement in which the church officials advised that they would receive bids on the old church building, said building to be demolished and materials removed from the church lot.. In 1904, the same paper carried a news item that the new building, then in process of construction, was expected to cost sixteen thousand dollars. We note from newspaper items of the period that during the interval between the demolition of the old building and the completion of the new one, the congregation held services sometimes in the City Hall and sometimes in the City White School Building. Although the building must have been completed in 1904, we have not found any record of the actual date of completion. This building, with some renovations and additions has continued to serve the Presbyterian Congregation down to the present time.

The second sale of a lot in Grenada to a religious congregation came on September 4, 1838. By this transaction Hiram Coffee, Joseph McRaven, John and John A. Lane, John Shields, Samuel Puckett and John Smith "Proprietors of Grenada" conveyed lot two hundred forty two in the West Ward of Grenada to the following named Trustees of Grenada Baptist Church: John H. Baker, James G. Hall, John Pontivent, John G. Jones, Henry Allen, James Y. Blocker, Jeremiah T. Talbert, Charles R. Taylor and Howell Edmonds. The price paid for the lot was three hundred dollars cash. The men who sold the lot were owners of the old town of Pittsburg, and before the union of the two towns, did business under the title "Proprietors of the Town Company of Pittsburg". A few weeks before this transaction, a Baptist Congregation consisting of twelve members had been organized. In the interval between the organization of the congregation and the purchase of the lot, several new members had been received into the church. The lot purchased was the south half of lot 242, which lot is located north and east of the intersection of Margin and College streets. At the time of the sale College Street was known as Pittsburg street, and the deed lists the lot as fronting a certain number of feet on Pittsburg street. For some un-explained reason the Baptists never erected a building on this lot, though they seemed to have retained some sort of title to, or claim on the lot. In 1849 the church gave a quit claim title to James Slider for the sum of one dollar. In 1850 Slider sold this lot to E. F. Moody for the sum of one hundred fifty dollars. It seems strange that a lot which sold for three hundred dollars in 1838 became so useless, or worthless, to the church that eleven years after the church had purchased the property, that organization was willing to give a quit claim title to Slider for a trifling sum, and that, within one year, Slider was able to sell the lot for one hundred fifty dollars. It is possible that there may have been some sort of defect, or suspicion of defect of title relative to the lot.

On July 13, 1839, the Baptist Church purchased another lot. This time they obtained a lot in the original town of Tullahoma, now the East Ward of Grenada. Samuel Smith sold to Howell Edmonds, James G. Hall, Henry Allen, John G. Jones, John C. Baker and Jeremiah T. Talbert designated in the deed as "Trustees of the United Baptist Church of Grenada", the south one half of the one half lot 185. We wonder if any significance may be attached to the two terms "Trustees of Grenada Baptist Church" as written in the deed to the lot in the West Ward, and "Trustees of the United Baptist Church of Grenada". At the time there was a serious diversity of opinion among Baptists relative to foreign missions. We know that some Baptists in the county, under the leadership of Francis Baker, were against stress on foreign missions and were called Primitive, or Hardshell, Baptists. The Grenada Church, as it finally became established was a missionary church. It is possible that some sort of accord had been brought about between factions of the denomination, and the resulting church became known as the United Baptist Church. This may account for the abandonment of the first site

purchased for a building, and the purchase so soon thereafter of another site in another ward of Grenada. This lot was rather expensive, the selling price being one thousand dollars. The Baptist Congregation began construction of a brick building on this site. Slow progress was made on the building, possibly because the Panic of 1837 had now hit the country with full force and money was very hard to come by. Before the building had been completed and occupied, a tornado which struck Grenada demolished the incomplected church building. This was a hard blow to the Baptist people, and it would be two decades or so before they would again attempt to build a pretentious church building. By another of those curious lot transactions the Church authorized Lott S. Humphrey, David Beck and George Donkin to act as commissioners for the church and, as such, to give a deed to Mrs. Grizzell Land, by which the church transferred its interest in its part of lot one hundred eighty five to Mrs. Land for a consideration of fifty dollars. Seven years earlier the church had paid one thousand dollars for the lot on which they had erected the ill-fated building which was demolished by the tornado. What had caused such a decrease in value of the lot? We do not know. It is possible that when the lot was purchased by the church there was already on it a building of some value, which building was torn down to make way for the brick church building. After the destruction of the church building there was nothing of value on the lot. Since the original price of one thousand dollars was a very high price for a small lot in the residential section of the city in the year 1839, it is conceivable that part of that price was for the value of an existing building as well as the lot.

No doubt feeling impoverished by their ill fortune with the tornado destruction, the church then bought another lot, and erected thereon a less pretentious building than the one first attempted. On July 13, 1847, the church purchased from John Duncan part of lot one hundred seventy three, for a consideration of one hundred dollars. The deed related that Duncan conveyed the lot to "Henry N. Bingham, treasurer of the Baptist Church of Grenada, for use and benefit of said church a part of lot one hundred seventy three, beginning at an ally on the south side of said lot and running north sixty eight feet six inches towards the Presbyterian Church, and east to the street which separates said lot from lots originally owned by the late Samuel Smith, and west to Line Street which divides the east and west wards of said town". A frame building on this lot served the Baptist church until 1888 when a new brick church was built on the corner lot north and west of the intersection of Second and Main streets. This lot is now occupied by the Frank Evans building. In the deed to the lot purchased in the west ward and never used for a church building, the Articles of faith of the church are set out and made a part of the deed, with the provision that should any of the church members depart from the faith as set out by the articles in the deed, the property should then be vested in any members of the church who continued true to the doctrines set out by Articles of faith found in the deed. In subsequent deeds to lots acquired by the church, no mention is made of these articles of faith.

The third church congregation to buy a lot in Grenada was the Methodist Episcopal Church. This purchase was made on July 9, 1839, when Proprietors of the Town Company which had developed the former town of Pittsburg, conveyed to John Gibbs, John A. King, James Sims, William Bush, William Lake and R. M. Spicer,

"Trustees in trust - for the uses and purpose hereafter mentioned- for and in consideration of three hundred dollars in hand paid at and upon sealing and delivery of these presents the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, has given, granted, bargained, sold, released, confirmed and conveyed, and by these presents doth give, grant, bargain, sell, release, confirm, and convey the said party of the second part and their successors, trustees in trust for the uses and purposes hereafter mentioned the north half of the south half of Survey eight

south of the river, and in the west ward of said town of Grenada beginning 1.58 chains north of the south east corner of survey number eight, and runs thence north 1.58 chains to a stake thence west 3.11 chains, thence south 1.58 chains, thence 3.11 chains east, containing by estimate .49 of an acre of land, in trust that they shall erect or build thereon a house, or place of worship, for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, according to the rules and discipline which from time to time may be agreed upon by the ministers and preachers of the said church at their General Conference in the United States of America; and in further trust and confidence that they shall at all times whenever hereafter present such ministers and preachers belonging to the said church as shall from time to time be duly authorized by the General Conference as the ministers and preachers of the said Methodist Episcopal Church or by the Annual Conference authorized by the said General Conference, to preach and expound God's holy word therein; and in further trust and confidence that as often as any one or more of the trustees herein before mentioned shall die or cease to be a member of the said church according to the rules and discipline of the said church, then in such case it shall be the duty of the station minister authorized as aforesaid who shall have the pastoral (sic) charge of the members of the said church to call a meeting of the remaining trustees as soon as conveniently may be, and when so met the minister or preacher shall proceed to nominate one or more persons to fill the place or places of him or them whose office or offices has or have been vacated as aforesaid, provided that the person or persons nominated shall have been one year a member or members of the said church immediately preceeding such nomination, and at least twenty one years of age; and the said trustees so assembled shall proceed to elect and by a majority vote appoint the person or persons so nominated to fill such vacancy or vacancies in order to keep the number of trustees forever; and in case of an even number of votes for and against the nomination, or nominations, the Station Minister or preacher shall have the casting vote-providing nevertheless that if the said trustees or any of their successors have advanced any sum of money, or any shall be responsible for any, sum or sums, of money on account of the said premises, and they the said trustees or successors be obliged to pay the said sum, or sums, of money, they or a majority of them shall be authorized to raise the said sum, or sums, of money by mortgage of the said premises after notice given to the pastor or preacher who has the oversight of the congregation attending divine service on the said premises, if the money due be not paid to the said trustees or their successors within one year after such notice is given, and if such a sale take place the said trustees or their successors in office after paying the debt and other expenses which are due from money arising from such sale shall deposit the remainder of the money produced by the sale in the hands of the Stewart, or Stewarts, of the society belonging to, or attending divine service, on said premises, which surplus of the proceeds of such sale so deposited in the hands of the said Stewart, or Stewarts, shall be at the disposal of the next annual Conference authorized as aforesaid, which said annual Conference shall deposit said money according to their best judgement for the use of the said society."

The above quotation is given with the spelling and punctuation, or lack of punctuation, as best made out from the somewhat faded manuscript from which this copy has been made.

The lot conveyed by this deed is located almost west of the Grenada County Library. It is interesting to note that two of the trustees named were also

members of the Town Company which was selling the lot. They were James Sims and John A. Lane. Assuming that the church was erected in the same year in which the deed was granted, this first Methodist Church served the congregation for a period of thirteen years. It is interesting to note that during this thirteen year period the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist Churches were almost within a baseball throw of each other. The Episcopal church, to be built later, as befitting its Church of England ancestry sat as a more dignified distance away. There is a tradition, which has long had credence among the members of the Grenada Methodist Church, that when a later church building was erected it was constructed on a lot donated by James Sims and his wife Harriet. There is no written evidence available that this tradition is true but, on the contrary, there is authentic evidence that the belief has no foundation in fact. In order to present this written evidence we quote the following excerpt from the deed by which Sims and his wife conveyed the block presently occupied by the Methodist church and Sunday School building: The deed from which we quote was dated September 17, 1850: The deed defines James Sims and Harriet Sims as Party of the First Part and William Lake, A. S. Brown, M. K. Mister, J. P. Mitchell, James Sims, George Lake, E. F. Gibbs, E. F. Moody, and J. P. Tarpley "Trustees in trust for the uses and purposes hereafter described". It also reads that the conveyance was made for consideration of five hundred dollars to them in hand paid. Of course this block conveyed to the church consisted of five lots which today are very valuable, but we must remember that when Mr. and Mrs. Sims sold the lots to the church, the Panic of 1837 still was in effect and money hard to come by. At this time many lots were being sold at tax sales. Mrs. Sims had bought in two of the lots conveyed to the church at a tax sale for the ridiculous price of two dollars and thirty four cents. We believe, although we have not been able to substantiate the fact, that Mrs. Sims obtained the remaining two lots conveyed to the church in a wholesale purchase of lots from A. Bew, by which she paid six hundred dollars for about fifty lots in the former town of Pittsburg. We may be sure that, whether she obtained these two lots from Bew, or from some other person or tax sale, she paid a very small price for the lots. Today such a sale of these lots would be a very generous gesture, but then it was a profitable real estate deal. With the purchase of this block of lots, and the erection of a church thereon, the old church lot and building were no longer needed by the Church. Soon after the erection of the new Methodist Church building, the trustees of that church conveyed the old church and church lot to an educational institution of the Methodist denomination known as Bascomb's Seminary. The institution was named in honor of a Methodist Bishop by the name of Bascomb. It advertised as an institution doing both high school and college work. For a number of years it was a competitor of the Yalobousha Female Institute which was established by the Baptist denomination. Neither of these two female schools were able to survive the ravages of the Civil War.

Probably the first Baptist Church to be established outside the town of Grenada was the Antioch Church. On February 16, 1839, Joseph and Moses Collins "in consideration of our desire to promote the worship of Almighty God and the love and affection we bear toward that branch of the regular ordained Baptist Church" granted to William Minter, Joel Hill, Michial Talbert, William Tullis, Macon Minter, Humphrey Hood and John Wilbourn, Trustees for the Baptist Church at Antioch an area of land located about one mile north east of the present village of Hardy. For a number of years this was one of the stronger county churches. Joseph Collins and his son Moses were extensive property owners. Some of their decedents still reside in the city and county of Grenada.

On November 25, 1850, a Baptist Church was established a mile or so north-east of the present Grenada Airport. Thomas P. Bowles and his wife Mary, for a consideration of one dollar, conveyed a ten acre square lot to Lewis Aldridge, Jesse Griffis, and Hillary Talbert, Trustees of Mr. Parin Missionary Baptist Church. It is probable that the church had been established before the deed

of conveyance, since in the description of the land conveyed after the metes and bounds had been given we have the statement: "so as to contain the church building and grave yard". Lewis Aldridge later became President of the Yalobousha Female Institute. Griffis and Talbert were business men of considerable substance.

On December 25, 1850, a deed was granted to a Methodist Church which deed conveyed two acres of land located about seven miles east of Grenada to A. Rosamond, Jesse Verhine, William M. Beard, James M. Read and Levine P. Peacock, "Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church". The consideration involved was one dollar. The name of the church is not stated in the deed. On July 8, 1852, Anderson C. Smith and his wife Ann in consideration of the love and affection which we have for the church granted a ten acre tract of land to "The Session of the Old School Presbyterian Church called Hope." This tract of land is three or four miles southwest of Grenada. We have no information as to just how active a church was located on the site, nor how long it continued as a place of worship.

The Episcopal Church was a relatively late comer to Grenada. The first written evidence of the existence, or proposed establishment of an Episcopal Church in Grenada, is a deed dated October 12, 1870, by which Thomas C. Buffington conveyed to Joseph Weatherly, R. S. Ringold, J. W. Bishop and John Powell "the vestry of Grace Chapel Parish" a fractional part of lot one hundred eighty five in the east ward of Grenada. This is the lot on which the present church and parish house are located. We do not have the date of the erection of the first church building, but we do know that it was replaced in 1877 by the existing building. Some time before the erection of this second church building the name of the Parish had been changed from Grace Parish to All Saints Parish. Like the Methodist and Baptist Congregations, the Episcopal people attempted to provide a school for their children. In the year 1879, the Church purchased the so-called Masonic Academy, or as it was sometimes called, The Brick Academy. This was a four room brick building which the Masonic order had erected on the lot now occupied by the Lizzie Horn Elementary School building. The Masons seem not to have been very successful in the educational endeavor. After the purchase of the building, the Episcopal people ran a parish school for several years. Usually, if not always, the Rector of the church served as principal of and teacher in, the school. The church has never been strong in point of number of members, but has had among its members many of the outstanding business men and civic leaders of Grenada.

On December 22, 1876, a deed was granted to a number of men who made up the trustees of a church which was to become and continue one of the strongest country churches in the area. By this transaction John S. King, for a consideration of ten dollars, conveyed to George W. Williams, T. B. Williamson, M. P. Burk, and A. Lucious as deacons of the Providence Baptist Church 16.7 acres of land located a mile or so southeast of the present community of Gore Springs. The extensive cemetery on the church grounds has gravestones which mark the graves of many of the prominent early settlers of the eastern part of the county. The names on the gravestones in the church cemetery seem to indicate there was a church before the date given above.

Since many of the pre-Civil War churches had galleries for the colored slaves, some people have the idea that the Negroes had no churches of their own. This is not true, although the number of Negro churches existing before the war were comparatively few in number. We know that one such church existed in Grenada a number of years before the outbreak of the war. On February 10, 1847, only thirteen years after the founding of the town of Pittsburg, James Sims, acting as administrator of the estate of Luther Granberry, deeded to Edward Moody, Edward G. Gibbs, Donald Robertson and James Robertson, "Trustees in trust for the uses and purposes hereafter mentioned the north-east corner

of the east half of northwest one fourth of Section eighteen, Township twenty two, Range five East, containing one acre, for the use of the colored (or black) members of the Methodist Episcopal Church South of the United States of America and in faith, trust and confidence that they shall at all times forever hereafter permit such ministers and preachers belonging to said church, as shall from time to time be duly authorized; to preach and expound God's Holy Word." At the time of the conveyance the site was just outside the city limits but is now in the city and located near the Bus Station. We know that some of the trustees were white men, and it is probable that all of them were of the white race. At the time when the conveyance was made, slaves were not eligible to own property, and so far as we know, none of the men named as trustees were "free men of color", which was a term used to designate slaves who had become free men. We know that Sims was an influential member of the White Methodist Church, and it is possible that this new congregation of Methodists resulted from the desire of Negroes who once had attended the White Methodist Church, but who now wanted a church of their own.

The concern shown by white people relative to religious services for the Negroes did not die with the abolition of slavery resulting from the defeat of the Confederate States, but continued even during the reconstruction period when many of the freed slaves were arrogant and difficult to handle. An evidence of this post-war concern of white people for Negro church members is evidenced by a deed by which in 1870 George W. Ragsdale conveyed town lot number 119 in the West Ward of Grenada to the colored people of the Baptist Church: "The said part of the first part for and in consideration of the welfare and prosperity of the Colored People of the Baptist Church do hereby grant the party of the second part full possession and privilege to lot one hundred nineteen, the same to continue as long as the part of the second part conducts themselves with good behavior and pays tax on said lot. Now if the party of the second part shall mis-behave in an unbecoming way or fail to pay taxes on said lot, or cease to use said lot for church purposes then this instrument shall be null and void, and said lot with all the appurtenances shall be at the control of the party of the first part." This lot is located on Water street a little south of the intersection of that street with Pearl street. From the wording of the deed I feel that we may presume that the congregation of the new church was to be made up of Negroes who at one time attended the White Baptist Church. We know that Mr. Ragsdale was a member of the White Baptist Church, and for a time was President of the Yalobousha Female Institute after that institution became known as Grenada Female College. When we read that part of the deed which cautions about "Mis-behaving in an unbecoming manner" we wonder what type of mis-behavior would be considered as becoming. Another post-Civil War Negro church to acquire a deed for a church lot was the Prospect Baptist Church. A. V. B. Thomas for a consideration of one dollar deeded a two acre lot to the Trustees of this church. This land is located southwest of Holcomb. On August 14, 1884, M. G. and Sally Dubard, for a consideration of one dollar, granted a lot seventy yards by thirty five yards to "the trustees in trust of the Africian Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. This lot was located in what is now known as the Sweethome neighborhood and lies several miles a little southwest of Grenada.

Because of its strategic location in North Mississippi Grenada became a center of much regional religious activity. Levin Lake, who came to the old town of Tullahoma in 1835, is authority for the information that in 1838, before the local Methodist Congregation had constructed a church building, there was a meeting in Grenada of a Methodist Conference which included churches from North East Alabama. This Conference held its sessions in the second story of a store building located on the north side of the Grenada town square. Because of distances to be traversed, and the primitive methods of transportation, many of the delegates were late in arriving. This delayed the work of the Conference and caused the work of the Conference to last for two weeks.

Bishop Morris came five hundred miles from Ohio to preside over the sessions of the Conference. On at least two occasions Grenada was the meeting place of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Many of the early ministers of the different religious groups were men who received little compensation for their service. Most of them made their living by farming or by some other type of endeavor. James G. Hall, first minister of the Grenada Baptist Church had a farm a few miles north of Grenada, although at the time of his death during the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878, he was living in Grenada. He preached not only in the Grenada Church but also in other Baptist churches throughout the area when he was not in the pulpit of the Grenada church. Francis Baker was a primitive, or "hardshell", Baptist preacher who lived near the early town of Troy and served churches in that vicinity. He was instrumental in founding the Yalobousha Baptist Association, but later withdrew his churches from that association because the association believed very strongly in foreign missions. During the early years of religious activity in the town and area, people were much less tolerant in regard to members of denominations other than their own, and frequent newspaper controversy was carried on in the pages of the local newspaper relative to different points of religious belief. The most heated such controversy was carried on by Rev. McCracken, Rector of the Episcopal Church, and President Newell of the Methodist institution which began as a Methodist District High School and developed into Grenada College. Mr. Newell, had been the pastor of the local Methodist Church before assuming the responsibility of directing the Methodist educational institution.

The ministers of the town of Grenada deserve great credit for their faithful service to their flocks during the Yellow Fever Epidemic. So far as we have been able to ascertain none of them deserted their posts of duty. One of them, Rev. Hiram T. Haddick, pastor of the Baptist church, was out of town when the epidemic broke out but returned against the advice of some of his members. After a time he became ill and died a victim of the fever.

Early Churches

The Episcopal Rector, Rev. McCracken, survived the epidemic and was very busy in helping the people during the period when the disease was so prevalent. Rev. McCampbell, the Presbyterian minister died during the epidemic. There may have been other deaths among the ministers of the town, although we have no information to that effect. A Baptist minister who was not serving a Grenada church at the time he died during the epidemic period. He was the Rev. Armstrong, who had come to Grenada to head the College which would later come to be a Methodist institution. An editorial by the editor of the Grenada Sentinel soon after the end of the epidemic seems to point the finger of suspicion to some minister, or ministers, as not standing up to their responsibilities during the epidemic period. An excerpt from that editorial is quoted in the chapter of this work devoted to Newspapers and Newspaper Men.

One interesting incident in connection with a colored church occurred just after the attempt on the part of some citizens of Grenada to prohibit the sale of whiskey within the corporate limits of the city. The Grenada Sentinel supported the cause of prohibition while the rival paper, The Grenada Gazette was controlled by the liquor interests. In the first election, held in 1888, the prohibition ordinance was defeated. The Rev. J. I. Garrett, who was minister of one of the colored churches of the town, became indignant because twenty five of his members voted against the prohibition ordinance and summarily expelled the offending members from the church. When the people who favored the continual sale of liquor in the city heard of this action they raised money to buy a lot and materials so that the expelled members could build a church of their own. We do not know if this action had any particular effect, but the

fact remains that in another election, a few months later, the sale of liquor in the city was outlawed. While the saloons operated in the city, the money realized from the license fee charged the saloon operators was used for the purpose of public education. In an argument against the prohibition movement, the Grenada Gazette had the following quoted reference to the possible loss of school revenue: "It costs \$1014.57 to run the free school of Grenada Town for four months." (Four months was the length of the term of the public school at that time.) "The school tax paid by the people is \$195.00 which with \$222.00 poll tax leaves \$597.57 to be provided by some other source. Now where is the deficit to come from when the saloons are closed? This is a serious question to every poor man who has children to educate, and we prepare them in advance, not to kill the goose that lays the golden egg." It is of interest that just seventy eight years ago half or more of the four month public school term in Grenada was paid for by revenue derived from the license fees paid by saloons.