

# THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

MARIE BANKHEAD OWEN, Editor  
EMMETT KILPATRICK, Co-Editor



Published by the  
**STATE DEPARTMENT**

**OF**

**ARCHIVES AND HISTORY**

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**SUMMER ISSUE**

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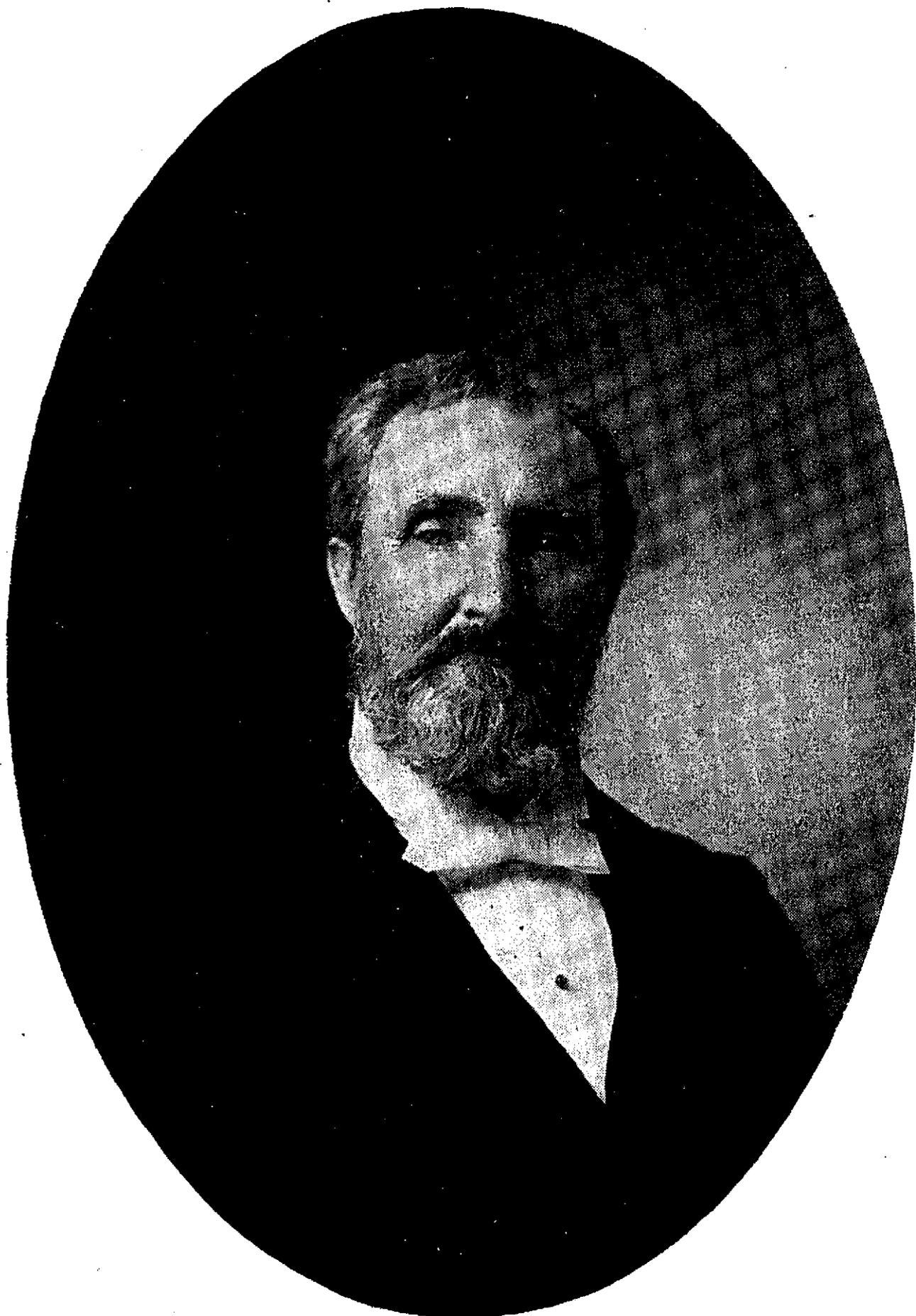
**History of Coosa County**  
**by Rev. George E. Brewer**

**Part II**

## EDITORIAL

This, the Summer Issue, 1942, Number 2, of Volume 4, of the *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, presents Part Two of the "History of Coosa County," by the late Rev. George Evans Brewer. Part One of this history appeared in the Spring Issue of this same volume.

Marie Bankhead Owen, Editor.



*Rev. George E. Brewer*



# HISTORY OF COOSA COUNTY

BY REV. GEORGE EVANS BREWER

## PART II

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### CHAPTER VII

#### SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES

It was desired by the writer to have given a fairly full account of the schools and churches of the county, but he has failed in his efforts in this direction, and must be limited to what he can call up from memory, except as to the Missionary Baptist Churches, which can be more fully set forth as the history of that denomination extending to 1895, written by himself, may be consulted.

The first school outside of Wetumpka, about which anything is known, was one at Nixburg, taught first perhaps by a Mr. Nix. From the first a school was kept up here and at times it was flourishing, especially was this true when Jerre Gary in the latter forties gave tone to it. He was followed in 1849-50 by a Mr. Kirkpatrick from Tennessee, who was a good teacher. In 1851, A. G. Brewer, who the year before had a fine school three miles above, took charge of the school at Nixburg, and was very successful, but gave up the school sometime in 1852 to become the editor of *The Christian Telegraph*, a Methodist Protestant paper of Atlanta. For some years the school was held up to a high standard, and reached its climax under Fred Oliver, after the war. The next school was in the Oakchoy neighborhood, started in 1837, taught by a Mr. John Brown. Here the children of J. W. Suttle, George Johnson, Spears, and the Harrells received their first school instruction. This school was broken up by a disturbance growing out of a fight between Eli Harrell and Hezekiah Spears, which originated in children's tales. Next, and soon after, Charles Bulger, a nephew of M. L. Bulger, began a school rather in the same section, at Pine Grove, where he taught for two years. This neighborhood has usually kept up a good country school. John W. Brewer, a brother of the writer, taught here two years after the war. At an early period not later than 1837, the Scotch people had a school at the Carolina Church settlement. At Malcolm Smith's, on Hatcheesofka, there

was a good school at an early date. From about 1840, schools were had in most neighborhoods where there were children enough to form one. It would be tedious and unprofitable to undertake to name all these. Only those most noted will be spoken of. For some years good teachers were employed for the school in the neighborhood of Reuben Jordan. This school had a wealthy patronage.

About Sockapatoy and Bradford's Factory schools were maintained and for some years Dr. John N. Slaughter had a very flourishing one called "Washington Academy." Rockford kept up a good school from about 1851, called the "Alabama Masonic Institute." Before this time John Hannon, Thomas Crawford, William Lee, and J. S. Bentley are remembered as teachers. A. L. Chapman gave the school a start such as it had not before had. He was followed by Geo. E. Brewer, and he in turn by S. B. Brewer. Others are not remembered well enough to state particulars, until after the war, when a Mr. Mackey revived the school. He was followed by T. J. Pennington, who for several years kept the school up well, until retiring to his farm and county superintendency. Since then the school has had several fine teachers. Good schools were also kept up at Equality and in the neighborhood of Joseph and Monroe Parker.

Jasper McAdory taught several successful schools, the last at Hanover. At its close he bought the farm of John A. Pylant and quit the school room. Mt. Olive usually kept up a good school. At Buychville a good school was kept up for a good series of years, in fact, hardly ever without one. Among its earlier teachers were Conrad Wall, William Holtzclaw, George E. Brewer, and Major Isaac Hall. Later Fred Oliver there, as wherever he taught, had a very large school. Its present teacher, who has been there several years, is Samuel Bentley. A good school was usually maintained at Antioch Church, especially in the days of the Rogers. Concord was another neighborhood that usually employed good teachers. John and William Hannon and John Hunter were for years good teachers who taught in different parts of the county. But the ranking school of the county was the Central Institute, a Baptist high school, located on the Plank Road, twelve miles north of Wetumpka. It was instituted and fostered by the Central Baptist Association from 1854 to 1860, when it was sold to Prof. Thomas C. Bragg, who for several years maintained its high standard. The building

was a good, well arranged two story brick structure. There was also a good female academy under Mr. Walkley kept up here, contemporaneous with the Institute, which was a male institution. After the establishment of the Public School System of Alabama in 1856, there has been a steady improvement in the schools of the county. In more recent years, since Goodwater has become a place of mercantile importance, it has had a good graded school to dispense learning among its young. At one time while Capt. John H. Clisby lived in the Weogufka country they had a good school there, taught by Thomas Crawford, a smart man and in some respects a rare genius.

Among the schools of note, but of brief existence, was an academic one established by Rev. McAlpine, a Presbyterian minister, at Pine Flat, near the fine home of John A. Graham. He was followed by Rev. A. G. Brewer in 1850. It was consolidated with the Nixburg school, in 1851.

The exact dates of the organization of the first churches cannot be given, but it was as early as 1834 that Smyrna, near Goodwater, was constituted. It is believed to be the oldest church of the county outside of Wetumpka. The Baptists were all united at this time, and the agitation on missions was just beginning. A convention is said to have been held with this church in 1835, and an association formed, but its name has not been preserved. In the split that came some years later, Smyrna went with the anti-mission party, who call themselves "Primitive Baptists." It has so remained, and still exists at the old location. There is a large cemetery attached.

Bethel is thought to have been constituted not long after and still remains located in the edge of Brooksville. It also went with the Primitives. There is a large cemetery here.

Antioch west of Nixburg was constituted about the time of the other two. The Association is said to have met with it in 1837, when the feeling upon missions produced so much confusion, that Luke Haynie, a preacher among them, induced a dissolution. The church dissolved some years later. No other association was formed until 1845, when the Central came into existence, and later the Primitives formed the Wetumpka Association.

Near this same time Shiloh was formed, some three miles north of Nixburg, and had a number of prominent families connected with it for some years. The first session of the Central Association was held and it was formed here in 1845. The strife on the mission question had grown in intensity, until fellowship was destroyed, and a separation became necessary. Some churches as bodies were for missions, some for anti-missions; some were divided, and mutually withdrew from each other, the majority holding the property and church records, the others either forming new churches, or going to some neighboring church of affinity. Even families divided, husbands and wives, and parents and children not unfrequently going with different factions. William Salter and James P. Goggans remained with the missionaries, their wives went with the others. A preacher of the missionary once came to Goggans' seeking lodging, and made the plea to the madam saying, "I am on the Lord's business." She replied, "If the Lord has put his business in your hands I think he has made a very poor choice."

James F. Edens was a member, minister, and for a time pastor of Shiloh, but went with the Primitives. John Bates then became pastor and after him Benj. H. Wilson. He called the meeting in October 1845 with Shiloh church that resulted in the formation of the Central Association which became by far the most influential and numerous religious body in the county. Joseph Hill was a minister in Shiloh, who died a few years back having passed more than a hundred years of life, and last year Stephen D. Ray died over ninety who was in the constitution of the church. Obadiah Moore and David Radford were ministers, once members. The church has not been so strong since the war as before, and the population changed so that thirty years or more ago it changed its location, going several miles north. There was a large cemetery at the old location, and a good many of Coosa's prominent citizens are buried there.

Those who took sides with the Primitives from Shiloh went into the organization of Fish Pond, which took its name from the Indian town. This has continued its existence, and has been a strong church. There has been kept up an annual singing by Mr. Albert Holloway for about fifty-eight years, on the first Sunday in May. It is the most noted gathering in all this region of country. The people come for miles in all directions, and

bring their baskets of dinner, spending the day in singing, eating, and social enjoyment. The cemetery here is large.

Mount Carmel was also one of the early churches, and sided with the Primitives. But little is known of it.

Friendship church was in existence in 1846. It was between Sockapatoy and Bradford's, and once had a strong membership, but was depleted by death and removals, until it dissolved in 1870. Patrick McKinney, Wm. Corbet, and Saml. Gray, with their families, were among its last members.

Harmony was constituted about 1846 or 1847 in the eastern part of the county, several miles from Brooksville. For a long time John H. Colley, one of its members, was its pastor. He died at an advanced age just a few years since, and is buried in its cemetery. A few years back the church was moved nearer Brooksville.

Good Hope church was in the southeastern part of the county, eight miles west of Tallassee. It was a good strong church, in a pretty part of the county, and had a good membership. Five entered the ministry from its membership, Benj. Timmerman, Y. D. Harrington, Joseph Norton, Calvin Swindall, and O. C. Swindall. Others have been ordained since the church was cut off into Elmore. There is a well kept cemetery attached. In 1871, and for two or more years, it had four deacons over eighty years old, Mr. Fielder, Norton, Timmerman, and Chas. Gregory.

Union church was one of the very early churches, and was in the constitution of the Association. It was located a mile above Central, until after the Central Institute had been established, when it was moved down to the village. This was a good church with a strong membership before the establishment of the school. Afterward it was very strong, so many persons of means and influence going there to educate their families. It once had seven ordained ministers members of it, Joseph Bankston, James Russell, Platt Stout, James Jeter, A. T. Holmes, B. T. Smith, and Bright Skipper. Joseph Bozeman, who died a few years since, the popular and beloved pastor of the first Baptist church at Meridian, began his religious life here. There are two cemeteries belonging to this church.

Mt. Gilead, several miles northeast of Central, was another one of the early churches. It is Primitive, and located in a pretty place. It has never been a strong church. It has a cemetery.

The time when Concord was constituted is not known. It joined the Central Association in 1848, but it existed before that time. It was for a series of years one of the strong churches intellectually, financially, and numerically; and though it has lost in these particulars, it is still a good church. Sterling Speer was ordained here, and was a young growing minister in power, when cut off by death. The cemetery is large.

Salem joined the association in 1848, but the writer is of opinion it had an earlier existence. It was not far from Hatchett Creek, and between Rockford and Weogufka. It was never a strong church, but had some fine members.

Poplar Springs was constituted in 1848, and grew rapidly, so that in a few years it had a larger membership than any other in the Association. Meetings of wonderful power used to be held, such as the writer has seldom seen elsewhere. For several years a number of the members had temporary houses built, and had meetings just after the order of Camp meetings. They usually had able pastors, until an unfortunate disturbance led to a split in the church which has never been entirely healed. Many of its influential members moved away and died. Rev. J. R. Steely, Hardy Jones, and J. M. Butler were members. The cemetery is large.

Mt. Zion was established about 1849, about eight miles northeast of Wetumpka. It was in a pretty belt of pine land. Rev. Joel Nichols and Robert Stewart were members. Nichols was baptized at Old Elam church, near Montgomery, in 1824. The church went down soon after the war.

There was, for a time from 1849, a Missionary Baptist church called Bethel, but its location and history are unknown to the writer.

Antioch church was constituted in 1849, about 12 miles nearly north of Wetumpka. It still exists, and has been a good church, and once had a strong membership in the days of the

Rogers, Lawsons, Holifields, and Holtzclaws. There is a well-kept cemetery here.

Weogufka was one of the early constituted churches, being nearly as old as the white settlement, but did not join the Central Association from the Mulberry until 1849. It was a strong church for a number of years, but became weakened by the death and removal of a number of the Taylors, Calfees, Mooneys, Lindseys, Hughes, Calloways, and Thompsons. It is on Weogufka Creek not far from where the Rockford and Marble Valley road crosses it. Its cemetery is large.

In 1850 three new Baptist churches were constituted, Rockford, Shady Grove, and Bethesda. Rockford church never had a large membership at any time, but it was always an active, progressive body, and exerted a strong and good influence in the Association. It has sent into the ministry Geo. O. Brewer, J. P. Shaffer, and Chas. Bentley. Shady Grove was five miles below Rockford, to the west of the Turnpike. Though a good church, it was never a strong one. Bethesda was constituted in 1849, near Brooksville, and is still in good condition. Rev. Darius Martin, who has been clerk of the Association so long, joined here, a boy, was set apart to the ministry, and has served it as pastor a number of years. Catt Smith was a member here and was perhaps ordained here. There is a large cemetery here; Rockford, Bethesda, and Shady Grove each have cemeteries.

Paint Creek and Providence were organized in 1851, and that year united with the Association. Paint Creek was near the creek of the same name, in the northwestern part of the county, and only maintained an existence for about six years. Providence is in what is now the southwestern part of the county, then the western, and not far from the Coosa River, on the River Road. There is a cemetery here, in which some of the very early settlers are buried.

Mt. Olive was constituted in 1852, and the name of the church has been placed upon the neighborhood and post office. This has been a good church from the start, and has had no lapses such as often mark the history of churches. W. C. Brown has been a leading member and deacon since soon after its organi-

zation. Rev. J. W. Fulmer has been a minister in her membership about thirty-five years. The cemetery is large.

Mt. Zion was a few miles from where Eclectic now is, and for some years was a right flourishing church, but it finally dissolved, and went into other neighboring churches. A few years after the war another church was constituted near by, called Antioch No. 2. But it has since been absorbed by Eclectic.

Union Springs joined the Central Association in 1853 from the Mulberry. It was constituted in the early settlement of the country, not far from Marble Valley. It is in a good country, and has been a strong church during most of its existence. The neighborhood and church were right much disturbed just after the war by what was known as Shermanism, originated by Mr. Sherman, a sort of religious fanatic, who claimed to possess wonder working power, and denounced right earnestly the existing order of things in the churches.

In 1855, in the present limits of Goodwater, a church called Spring Hill was constituted, and continued a few years, but never became strong enough to build a good house or keep up the organization. After Goodwater became a place of business in 1883 a church was constituted, that has become a strong church, with a good building, costing several thousand dollars.

In 1857, about six miles below Sylacauga, Bethany church was formed, and did right well for a time. At the close of the war, political differences caused a rupture ending in the split of the church. Those who were of the Republican sentiment held the house, but the others organized what has since been known as Macedonia, a very good, though weak church. Bethany did not survive long.

In 1858, a church was constituted near Travelers Rest, on the Trace, called Sardis, but it never became a church of strength. There was one constituted at Mt. Moriah, some four miles below Weogufka church, on the same creek. While it has kept up its organization it never became a church of much power, and for a good many years has been a member of an Association organized in opposition to progressive church work.

Lebanon church was constituted in 1859, below Buyckville on the Trace, on a beautiful site, surrounded by a pretty country. It has been a prosperous church, though never very strong. Within the past few years a trouble arose among them, leading finally to a split, each party claiming to be the church. This, of course, is a bar to the progress of either.

Southwest from Rockford, about nine miles east of the Jackson Trace, there was a church established named Wayside. While never very strong, it was able to maintain a fairly vigorous life from just before the opening of the war until within some years past it has become stronger.

No churches were constituted during the progress of the war, but in the summer of 1865, Olive Branch, a little below Shady Grove, westward, was organized, but it never became strong, being too much circumscribed in territory. There was another a few miles east of Union Springs, in the northern part of the county, called Holly Springs, but neither did it ever accomplish much.

Hatchett Creek church began its existence in 1868, near the mouth of that large creek. It never became a church of strength.

Four Baptist churches of the Primitive order have already been named among those early constituted in the county, viz.: Smyrna, Fish Pond, Mt. Gilead, and Bethel. There were others constituted at a later date, but the time, and other facts have not been obtained. There is a church of this order below Buyckville a few miles, which was in existence in the fifties. Swamp Creek is a church near the creek of the same name, between the Turnpike and Trace, that had an existence as early as the fifties. It is not nor has it been very strong. Mt. Pleasant is another in the neighborhood of McAdory's, but its history is unknown. Pleasant Hill, about Bazemore's Crossroads, had an existence probably in the forties or earlier, as Foscue and the Bazemores were members, and they were early in the country. Marble Valley likely had an early origin, but the writer has only known of it since about the opening of the war. Liberty Hill, on the Smith's Ferry road  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Rockford, was constituted sometime after the war, probably not more than twenty-five years ago. If there are others in the county they

are unknown to the writer. This denomination is not very strong in the county, but numbered among its members, a good many very valuable citizens.

The M. E. Church, South, is the next most numerous and influential denomination to the Missionary Baptists in the county, but the writer, after soliciting several of its people to give information, whom he thought could and would, has failed to get what he desired, for it was his wish to have given briefly a statement of the churches of the different denominations, and their location, as he has of the Baptists. He searched the "History of Methodism," by West, for it, and failed there. So he can only give such as is recollected by him. Some of the first comers who knew Rev. Mr. Willis, say that as early as 1835 he came a missionary of the Methodists and labored in Oakchoy and Nixburg neighborhoods, and succeeded in forming the church at Nixburg, and at Jordan's. He was a relative of the Suttles on the maternal side.

It is presumed that the first M. E. Church was the one at Nixburg. This existed perhaps as early as 1834 or 1835. It was later made a church of the Methodist Protestant denomination, by its leading members adopting the tenets of that body. It was for a good while a strong church of that order, and was the leading church at Nixburg. There is a large cemetery there in which sleep a number of those who figured in the early settlement of Coosa. Camp meetings were held at Nixburg for a few years about 1850, and before.

A few miles southwest of Nixburg, there was a good strong church that was called Ebenezer, but often spoken of as Ellis Chapel, from two prominent members familiarly called "Uncles Ben and Nathan Ellis." This has always been noted for its congregations. There is a large cemetery there.

In the neighborhood of Reuben Jordan and the Spiveys, between Nixburg and Elkahatchie, there was a M. E. Church established about 1837 or 1838, called Wesley Chapel. This was a good strong church. In 1847 a Camp Ground was established here, and continued seven years. It is claimed there were 48 conversions the first meeting. Willis gathered this body together. (History of Methodism, p. 675.)

The writer attended a meeting here in 1850.

Still farther northeast, later, there was and is another church with a good membership, in the neighborhood of Mr. William Rogers. This is close to the county line.

There is another church near where Shiloh now stands, about 8½ miles east of Rockford, but this church has been organized probably since the war. About half way between that and Rockford, there is another called Mt. Pisgah, on the Rockford and Kellyton road, as is the one just before named. This church has been noted for good meetings and congregations. There was a M. P. Church near here, once with a large membership.

A Methodist church existed from an early date about Sockapatoy and Bradford which had a membership in which there was both property and culture. It is thought, but not known, that a church of this order was near where Goodwater now is. One is there now.

The first church at Rockford was a Methodist church, begun about 1839. It held sway until 1850, but from then the Baptists took the lead. They have, however, always kept up their existence.

At Hanover from an early period they have had a church with a good membership called Andrew Chapel. There is another up in the Mt. Olive neighborhood, and one built in the latter fifties between Hanover and Rockford, called Sears' Chapel for John Sears, the noted Millwright. At each of these churches there is a cemetery. A large stone shaft marks the resting place of Sears, the leading spirit.

There is a Methodist church also not far from the Weogufka church, but its name or date is not known. There is also one in Marble Valley, and one in the neighborhood of Stewartville.

There was a church below Traveler's Rest probably called Lykes Chapel, where John Lykes had his membership, and another in the neighborhood of Varners, nearer the river. Still lower down, in the neighborhood of the Olivers, Knights, Hannons, and Whetstones, there was another with a well-to-do

membership. About a mile east of Buyckville, there was a chapel, but it was never strong.

Between Buyckville and Mr. Humphries there was a Chapel that for a series of years was a strong body called Providence Church. Here Mr. Humphries had his membership. Above this, not far from the Turnpike, was the Speers Chapel. In the Murchison neighborhood there was an old church, still perhaps existing, but the name not known.

At Brooksville there is a Methodist church, which was among the early places of worship in the county, though never very strong. There was a Methodist church remembered near Dr. Edwards, above Central, and one now in Eclectic, that had been there long before Eclectic was thought of, when that was part of Coosa. Eli and Fletcher Williams and Kidd and Whetstone were members. Another near the Plank Road, to which McCain, Thornton, and the Rev. Barney Elliott belonged, existed for years before the war. These are all that are remembered, but there were probably others. The following facts are obtained from the "History of Methodism," viz.:

The first circuit rider sent to Coosa Circuit was Rev. James P. McGehee, for 1839, the year the circuit was created; 1841, Rev. George W. R. Smith; 1842-43, Revs. Jesse Ellis and Edward W. Barr; 1844, Theophilus Moody and J. W. Ellis; 1845, John Hunter and William Ira Powers. The writer remembers that John Hunter and James Towles were on the circuit in 1854 or 1855.

The Methodist Protestants had churches as remembered by the writer, one at Nixburg already spoken of. They also had one at Pine Grove, east of Nixburg a few miles, where the large Nolan family had their reunion in 1902. There was one near Rev. Albert Crumpler's, east of Turnpike, called Pleasant Hill, which was for some years a right strong body, where large congregations gathered. There was another at Concord, about 4½ miles east of Rockford. And one 4 or 5 miles north of Nixburg, and Flint Hill, about five miles west of Rockford. There were probably others but are not now remembered. This denomination has not been so strong since the war, for just after it, a large number went into the M. E. South, as much, contended for by the Protestants in their organization, had been incor-

porated into the M. E. System. Most of the talented ministers of the Protestants, and many of its ablest laymen, went over. Rev. Albert Crumpler, A. G. Brewer, James Vanzandt, David Messer, and William Nolan were the principal resident ministers.

Of the Presbyterians, the first church was at Carolina, and for a time it was a strong church, but death and removals finally broke it down. The writer has been told that Alexander Smith deeded the land for the graveyard that was used by them, and has since been used by others. Presbyterians in our section have not been given to occupying the country like Baptists and Methodists. The Presbyterians have another church above Sockapatoy called Webster, that had a pretty good membership, and still continues, unless the church at Goodwater has absorbed it.

There was a church also between Weogufka and Marble Valley that was kept up for some time from as early as the fifties. It may still be in existence. Later there was another established at what was called Pine Flat, three miles above Nixburg. This was named McAlpine, and yet exists. There is a cemetery there. If there were other Presbyterian churches in the county the writer has not been able to learn, except the small organizations of Cumberlandds at Nixburg, Sockapatoy, and Rockford, kept up by Jonathun Mitchell for a number of years. He was a very earnest consecrated man.

It is not known by the writer whether the "Christians or Campbellites" ever succeeded in establishing any churches in the county or not, or others than those named. It would have been much more satisfactory to have given a better view of the churches than has been given, for their influence has had much to do with changing the drinking and rowdy habits that prevailed in so many places for many years. Most crossroads, and many other places had their drinking shops, and Saturdays and public days had much that was bacchanalian about them. The improvement went on gradually, until the temperance agitation from about 1848 to 1854 gave it a rapid forward movement. By 1856 the crossroads doggeries, as they were called, were mostly gone. Since the war there has not been anything like the old practices of drunken rowdyism that prevailed earlier.