

Re-Typed Copy of Original

LIBERTY CHURCH

Liberty, one of the first Baptist churches organized in this section, now serves as the Post Chapel for Camp A.P. Hill. The present building was constructed in 1850. Made of brick, it is a one-room rectangular building with two front doors and two rear doors and galleries running along both sides and across the back.

The church's history, however, goes back further than this, for on August 23, 1796, a contract to build Liberty Meeting House was drawn up. (Early records of the church have been lost, but an authoritative copy of this contract was preserved by Miss Augusta Bradley. These papers were given to the Reverend Amos Clary in July of 1938 to have copies made. The Reverend Clary died in August of that year, and to date the papers have not been found).

Under this early contract, James Pittman and William Taliaferro engaged Absalom Bradley to build Liberty Meeting House for the sum of 50 pounds. The building was to be 20 x 32 feet with a shed 10 feet wide, and there was to be a five foot pitch the entire length of the building. In the first building there were to be two galleries, 8 x 20 feet.

Rev. Clary had sketched some facts concerning Liberty prior to 1827. Liberty was a member of the Goshen Association until 1813; and the Reverend Hipkins Pittman is said to have been Liberty's first pastor. During the decade of 1790 to 1800, Reverend Pittman was a resident member of Reed's, now Mt. Horeb Church; and the distance was not too great for him to have ministered unto Liberty. (Reed's church was, according to Campbell's Colonial Caroline, John Young's church which was actually an "outhouse" dedicated to the worship of God). It is said that Reverend Pittman was once threatened with the whip for preaching, but the threat was never carried out. In 1801 he preached at Massaponax Church and labored at Fredericksburg Baptist Church, then pastor of White Oak Church in Stafford County. After 1819, we hear no more of him.

There are no records to show who served Liberty from 1819 to 1827 when Reverend Lawrence Battaile became pastor. Under his care, Liberty grew and prospered. During the years 1830 to 1851, the names of 193 white and 396 Negro members appeared on the church rolls. In 1832 Liberty reported 277 members.

There were many meetings held for the instruction and discipline of the colored members. Church discipline was strict and impartial. Throughout the years, charges were brought for non-attendance, intemperance, immorality, dishonesty, dancing; and attending balls, barbecues and the theatre. Later, one who danced was, by that act, excluded from the church.

In these meetings, held on Saturdays, many members related their experiences and were received for baptism. All business was transacted by the male members of the church.

Re-Typed Copy of Original

Rev. George W. Trice was pastor 1848-1868. Liberty erected a new house of worship and dedicated it in 1850. It is a substantial, one room rectangular brick building with galleries around two sides and end. The gallery accommodations were for the use of the large Negro membership. In August 1868 a resolution provided for dropping the names of all Negro members who wished to unite in forming a church of their own. Any member, who wished, could retain membership. In 1877 Liberty gave to the support of two Negro Sunday Schools.

Early records of Liberty were destroyed July 14, 1939 when the home of Mrs. George M. Keyser, acting clerk, was burned. Rev. Amos Clary, pastor in 1925, left some notes and meager information. We can mention some of Pastorates:

Rev. James D. Coleman, August 1868 – 1878
R. H. W. Buckner, Supply
Rev. A. B. Dunaway, April 1879 – March 1886
Rev. A. G. Loving, November 1887 – May 1889
H. J. Ramsey, Supply
Rev. C. W. Trainham, July 1890 – Dec. 1893
Rev. James T. Eubank, Nov. 1895 – Dec. 1903
Rev. James Long, Jan. 1904 – June 1906
Rev. James T. Eubank, Jan. 1907 – 1919

These Pastorates included Bethesda Church from August 1868 to June 1906.

Rev. S. B. Overton was pastor Jan. 1920 – Nov. 1923
Rev. Clyde Parker, Supply
Rev. Amos Clary was pastor June 1925 – 1938
Rev. J. R. Noffsinger, pastor Jan. 1939 – Aug. 1940
Dr. Ryland Sanford had charge during the last few months of Liberty's existence.

An all day service was held the first Sunday in June 1941, after which the U.S. Government took over the church property into the A.P. Hill Military Reservation.