**Slavery at Hopewell Presbyterian Church**
Designation Report Addendum
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Hopewell Presbyterian Church is one of the oldest Christian congregations in Mecklenburg County, having been officially founded in the 1760s by Scottish or Scots-Irish Presbyterian settlers. Chalmers Gaston Davidson described Hopewell as a "close-knit society in which the planting families were inextricably interwed," and by the antebellum era, it had become "the richest of the seven original congregations" in the county.[1] Prominent members of the congregation included John McKnitt Alexander (1733-1817) of Alexandriana, and his son Dr. Joseph McKnitt Alexander (1774-1841) of Rosedale; Major John Davidson (1735-1832) of Rural Hill; James Latta (1755-1832) of Latta Place; Hugh Torrance (ca. 1743-1816) of Cedar Grove; and William Sample (ca. 1736-1789), whose descendant William Azmon Sample (1803-1877) would purchase Latta Place in 1853.[2] As such, a majority of Hopewell's wealth came from the plantations of its congregation and therefore slavery.

It was not only members of the congregation that relied on enslaved labor; the pastors also participated in the practice. Davidson identified the "founding fathers" of the Hopewell Congregation as Rev. Samuel Craighead Caldwell (1765-1826), Rev. John Williamson, D.D. (1786-1842), Rev. Hugh B. Cunningham, D.D. (1817-1877), and Rev. Samuel Caldwell Pharr (1825-1884). All four of these men practiced slavery during their tenure at Hopewell.

Rev. Samuel Craighead Caldwell was pastor of Hopewell from 1791 to 1806. According to the 1819 census, he owned nineteen enslaved persons.[3] At the time of his death in 1826, he owned twenty-three enslaved persons, all of whom were sold to other prominent planters in the region and to members of the Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church. The inventory of his estate identifies the enslaved individuals as: Natt, Bill, Jo, Amos, Isaac, Jim, Alphred, Green, Ephraim, Levy, Ann, Rachel, Pricey, Caroline, Nancy, Hannah, Polley, Lidia, Charlotte and her child (whose name was not given), Mark, Catharine, and Hannah.[4]

After several years with no pastor following Rev. Caldwell's departure, Rev. John Williamson entered the pulpit in 1818, where he would remain until his death in 1842. Out of the four pastors, Williamson enslaved the most individuals. In 1820, he listed 15 enslaved persons, 10 of whom were children under the age of fourteen. By 1840, he listed 44 enslaved individuals, 24 being under the age of twenty-four. His estate in 1845 officially lists 49 enslaved individuals, who were then bequeathed to his two daughters and one Jane J. Hope. Washington, Stephen, Caroline, Mose, Jerry, Clarissa, Dave, Mary, Dina, Eliza, Amos, Flora, Julius, and Mime were given to the eldest daughter, Sarah Ann Williamson Caldwell. Milas, Claiborn, Randal, Noah, Ritta, Jinny, Adaline, Jema, Dinah, Margaret, and Mariah and her two children

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[1] Chalmers Gaston Davidson, *The Plantation World Around Davidson* (Davidson, North Carolina: Briarpatch Press, 1969), 55.

[2] Davyd Foard Hood, "Hopewell Presbyterian Church and Cemetery," *National Register of Historic Places - Nomination and Inventory*, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (July 1995), 25.

[3] "United States Census, 1820," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGH-Z8H: accessed June 23, 2023), Reverend Saml C Caldwell, Mecklenburg, North Carolina, United States; citing NARA microfilm publication, (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), roll ; FHL microfilm.

[4] "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663-1979," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-997V-S2BX?cc=1911121&wc=Q6WT-LB9%3A183210601%2C183222301%2C191377701 : 20 November 2015), Mecklenburg County, Caldwell, Samuel C, Reverend (1826).

Rose and William were given to Jane J. Hope. Finally, Cuffy, Charles, Gill, Ted, George, Venus, Lucinda, Isabella, June, Harriet, Clarissa, Rebecca, Lucy, Betsy, Louisa, Mary, Jane, Dick, John, Stephen, Affie, and Hannah were given to the minor heir Mary Louise Williamson.[5]

Rev. Williamson's estate was managed by his brother, Rev. Samuel Williamson, second president of Davidson College and temporary pastor of Hopewell from 1855-1857. Due to Mary Louise being a minor at the time of her parents' deaths, Samuel, already the executor of the estate, became the legal guardian to the young girl. Starting in 1846, he would regularly hire out the enslaved individuals under Mary Louise's name to other farming families in the county. The bill of sales within John Williamson's estate records provides more information about the enslaved men and women, such as births, deaths, and familial relations. For instance:

- Mary had an infant son named Ben in 1847, with whom she was hired that same year.
- Louisa was the mother of Stephen, Affie, and the young Isabella. By 1854, Affie was no longer being hired out with her mother.
- Betsy had three children. In 1854, she was hired out with one child, the next year with two, and the next year with three. It should be noted that the children were not demarcated as infants, such as Mary's son Ben.
- Clarisse had two children; in 1854, she was hired out with one, and in 1855, she was hired out with both. They were not designated as infants.
- Isabella (not to be confused with Louisa's daughter) had two children. In 1855, she was hired out with one, and the next year, she was hired out with both. They were not listed as infants.
- Hannah died on July 26, 1846, due to a prolonged illness, as mentioned in that year's bill of sale.
- The record in 1848 further notes that one of Jane's three children died in April of that year. Her surviving two daughters were named Sally and Angelina.[6]

Rev. Hugh B. Cunningham became the next pastor of Hopewell following Williamson's death. In addition to being one of the farmers that rented enslaved persons from the Williamson estate, he married the granddaughter of John McKnitt Alexander in 1842, thus gaining a 700-acre plantation within the Alexander land. An 1860 advertisement in the *Charlotte Democrat* details the tract of land and its "fine Dwelling house containing nine rooms with 8 fireplaces, and all necessary out-buildings."[7] Cunningham enslaved several individuals; in the 1850 slave schedule, he listed six individuals: one 29-year-old man, one 25-year-old woman, a 12-year-old girl, a 7-year-old girl, a 4-year-old boy, and a 2-year-old girl. Cross-referencing with the session minutes of Hopewell, the only names that can be found are Ephraim, Pricilla, and Julia Anne.[8]

In 1857, Rev. Samuel Caldwell Pharr took up the position of pastor at Hopewell, where he would serve until 1866. He was the great-grandson of John McKnitt Alexander and the grandson of the church's first

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[5] "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663-1979," database with images, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-897J-6ZT6?cc=1911121&wc=Q6W1-JMQ%3A183210601%2C183410401%2C200625501 : 21 May 2014), Mecklenburg County, Williamson, John & Sarah E (1845); State Archives, Raleigh.

[6] "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663-1979," Williamson, John & Sarah E (1845).

[7] R. B. Hunter, "Valuable Plantation for Sale," *Charlotte Democrat*, December 4, 1860.

[8] "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1850," database with images, *FamilySearch* (ark:/61903/1:1:MVC5-HKN: June 4, 2023), entry for H. B. Cunningham; "Names of Colored Communicants," n.d., Hopewell Presbyterian Church (Huntersville, N.C.) Records, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte. https://findingaids.charlotte.edu/repositories/4/resources/336.

pastor, Rev. Samuel Craighead Caldwell. In the 1850 slave schedule, he listed a total of 13 enslaved individuals: seven of them were under the age of 10, including a two-month-old girl. In 1860, he listed 15 enslaved persons; based on age only, it is possible that seven of them are the same individuals recorded ten years prior.[9] However, there are no records of their names, so it is difficult to say for certain. In the Hopewell session minutes, there is an entry for April 9, 1865, the end of the Civil War. It states that in an informal meeting, the pastor, Rev. Pharr, was "employed in addressing the colored people," though there is no elaboration on what exactly was said.[10]

The Hopewell session minutes have been particularly helpful in finding the names of the enslaved involved with the church. They date back to 1843 and record church happenings, such as the formation of committees, the addition of new members of the congregation, and occasionally dismissals and suspensions. According to the minutes, both white and enslaved individuals had to pass an examination to be admitted to the privileges of the church. The first instance can be found in the entry for October 4, 1844:

> At the same time, the following colored persons after being examined and baptized, were admitted to church privileges; Levi and Ella – property of Dr. M. W. Alexander; Andy and Moses, property of S. E. Williamson….[11]

The same template would be followed up until April 1865, though an interesting change in language can be seen in the entries after 1859. According to Hopewell's website, Presbyterians did not call the persons they enslaved "slaves," but "servants."[12] This term can be seen when in 1859, the entries no longer label the enslaved as "property" of their owners, instead now referring to them as "servants."[13]

Together with a roll of enslaved communicants, the session minutes provide the names of a total of 165 enslaved members of the church between 1843 and 1864. The roll of communicants is undated, though cross-referencing with the session minutes shows that it was last updated in 1864.[14] Due to the presentation of the names being in accordance with those of the enslavers, it means the names must be shown in conjunction to rule out possible duplicates:[15]

| A. A. Alexander | J. R. Davidson | J. S. Monteith |
|---|---|---|
| ● Caty | ● Julia Ann | ● Bob |
| ● Bob* | ● Perry | |
| ● Eliza | ● William | **R. B. Monteith** |
| ● Catharine | ● Alphonse | ● Matilda |

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[9] "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1850," entry for Samuel Pharr.

[10] Minutes of the Session, April 9, 1865, Hopewell Presbyterian Church (Huntersville, N.C.) Records, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte. https://findingaids.charlotte.edu/repositories/4/resources/336.

[11] Minutes of the Session, October 4, 1844.

[12] "Campus History," Hopewell Presbyterian Church, https://hopewellpresby.org/history/campus-history/.

[13] Minutes of the Session, October 23, 1859.

[14] The last additions to the roll were Stephen and Moriah, enslaved by Rev. H. Caldwell, and their admittance into the church can be seen in the minutes for September 17, 1864.

[15] Minutes of the Session, 1843-1872; "Names of Colored Communicants," n.d., Minutes of the Session. The asterisks (*) next to some of the names indicate that the roll has marked them as "deceased." Due to the last update of new members to the roll being in 1864, it is most likely that these persons passed away before or close to that date. However, we cannot rule out the possibility of edits being made after 1864.

- Washington
- Joseph
- Amanda
- Penda

**G. W. Alexander**
- Fanny

**J. D. Alexander**
- Andrew Jackson

**J. M. Alexander**
- Henry

**J. R. Alexander**
- Margaret

**J. W. Alexander**
- Philip

**L. Alexander**
- Dela

**M. Sophia Alexander**
- Tom
- Sarah

**Dr. M. W. Alexander**
- Levi
- Ella
- Work
- Minerva

**R. D. Alexander**
- Barry
- Robert

**Dr. Robert Alexander**
- Robert

**Mrs. V. W. Alexander**
- Catharine

**Alexander (first initial not given)**
- Mary

**David Allen**
- Hannah
- Miles

**Robert Davidson**
- Charlotte
- Hannah
- Nancy

**Dr. W. S. M. Davidson**
- Mona
- Moriah
- Millie*
- Jane
- Abba
- Anna
- Pheby*
- Carolina
- Celia
- Hugh

**Mr. French**
- Malinda

**Thomas Gluyas**
- Jessi*

**Colonel Harry**
- Rachel

**Dr. W. J. Hayes**
- Mary Moriah
- Mary Ann
- Fanny

**A. R. Henderson**
- Ned
- Charity

**D. Henderson**
- Hesam

**Robert Henderson**
- Aleck

**H. B. Henderson**
- Betsy

**J. Henderson**
- Humphrey
- Ben

**J. D. Henderson**

- Amanda
- Jack
- Joseph*

**W. A. Sample**
- Lewis Phifer*
- Henry
- William
- Matilda
- Jonah*
- Dovey

**Sample** (first initial not given)
- Jena

**Mrs. M. Torrance**
- John*
- Isabella
- Joseph
- John
- Ibby
- Dilsy
- Harriet
- Sylva

**Torrance** (first initial not given)
- Flora
- Joe
- Minda
- Melisa
- Lucy
- Sibey

**D. Vance**
- Nancy

**M. A. Wallace**
- Matilda

**William Wallace**
- Dovey

**Mrs. Whittle**
- Eliza

**J. Wilkes**
- Zeno

**S. E. Williamson**
- Andy

- Nancy
- Caroline
- Lock
- Harvey
- Sarah and her unnamed child

**A. Barry**
- Judy

**Jane Barry**
- William
- Caroline
- Thomas
- Sally
- Peter
- Sarah and her unnamed child

**J. H. Beams**
- Margaret
- Violet

**Mrs. J. Blythe**
- Unnamed woman

**Alexander Caldwell**
- Robert
- Cyrus

**Rev. H. Caldwell**
- Stephen*
- Moriah

**A. B. Davidson**
- Cyrus
- Hampton
- George
- Humphrey

**E. C. Davidson**
- Milly
- Nancy
- Lawson

**Dr. J. M. Davidson**
- Hannah

- Wilson
- Sela

**William Henderson**
- Joe

**Isabella Kerns**
- Samuel
- Caroline
- Julia
- Charlotte

**J. D. Kerns**
- Andrew
- Lucinda

**J. H. Kerns**
- Maurice
- Margaret
- Charlotte
- Nicey
- Dovey
- Elisse

**J. M. Kerns**
- John
- Mary
- Cuffy
- Dinah
- Violet

**Kerns (first initial not given)**
- Tom

**J. H. Little, J. L. Little, William Little**
- Ephraim

**Martha McCoy, sr.**
- Pheby

**Martha McCoy**
- Judith

- Moses
- Lucy

**Mrs. C. J. Wilson**
- Amy
- George Washington

**J. A. Wilson**
- Diana
- Delia

**Dr. Isaac Wilson**
- Mary Eliza
- Martha Rosana
- Peter

**Margaret Wilson**
- Mary
- Dyannah
- Lucinda
- Cynthia Ann
- Washington
- Dovey
- Matilda
- Nancy
- Matilda
- Margaret
- Sarah

**Mary Wilson**
- Amy

**P. A. Wilson**
- Dick

**Roscinda Wilson**
- Lucy

**Mrs. S. A. Wilson**
- Edy Caroline

The session minutes also included information on the baptisms performed on enslaved members of the church, especially the infants. In all likelihood, those baptized were not all infants but rather children. Either way, Hopewell's records indicate that 94 children were baptized, and there are several baptisms with no date recorded, while the rest occur between 1860 and 1865. The records will usually list at least one parent, and many of them provide dates for the baptisms. Oftentimes, the parents were enslaved by different people; as such, the list was organized by parents rather than their enslavers:

*No parent listed*:
- Offy, enslaved by A. Alexander, was baptized (no date given).
- William Robert, Cyrus Sylvester, and John Hamilton, all enslaved by W. A. Sample, were baptized in the church (no date given).
- Abby and Caroline, both enslaved by Dr. W. Davidson, were baptized in the church (no date given).

*One parent listed*:
- Eliza, enslaved by Jane Whittle, had her children, Eliza and Leroy K. Anderson, baptized in the church (no date given).
- William, enslaved by W. A. Sample, baptized his son Thomas Rankin in the church (no date given).
- Dovey, enslaved by W. Wallace, had her son John Henry Henderson baptized. Her daughter Mary Jane baptized on July 29, 1860, and her two daughters Caroline Elizabeth and Charlotte Delia Dianna on June 7, 1863.
- Sarah, enslaved by David Allen, had her daughter Jane Elizabeth Roscinda baptized (no date given). Her other daughter Margaret Isabella Davidson was baptized on August 2, 1863.
- Millie, enslaved by Dr. W. Davidson, had her daughter Sarah Ann baptized (no date given). Her son Rufus William was baptized on September 14, 1861, and her daughter Sarah Jane on July 5, 1863.
- Ann, enslaved by Dr. W. Davidson, had her son Samuel baptized (no date provided).
- Judy, enslaved by A. Barry, had her four children (Robert Benjamin, Sarah Louisa, John, and Louis) baptized on May 20, 1860. She baptized her son Samuel on June 22, 1862. Her daughter, Amy Charlotte Alexander, was baptized on March 20, 1864. Amy's father was Laban (sp.), who was enslaved by J. H. Harry.
- Millie, enslaved by E. C. Davidson, had her two children, Hannah Louisa and Mark, baptized on May 20, 1860.
- Humphrey, enslaved by Miss J. Henderson, had his daughter Eliza Elizabeth baptized on August 5, 1860.
- Cynthia Ann, enslaved by Margaret Wilson, had her daughter Marietta baptized on October 21, 1860.
- Lucinda, enslaved by Margaret Wilson, had her daughter Julia Caroline baptized on April 21, 1861.
- Amy, enslaved by Mary Wilson, had her two daughters, Mary Alice and Margaret Lucinda, baptized on May 5, 1861.
- Mary, enslaved by Samuel Blythe, had her daughter Julia Octavia baptized on May 14, 1861.
- Celia, enslaved by Dr. W. Davidson, had her four children (Harriet, Cornelia, Silvey, and Charlie) baptized on May 18, 1861. With Lawson (enslaved by E. C. Davidson), she had a son, John Miranda, who was baptized on July 10, 1864.
- Lucinda, enslaved by Robert Hunter, baptized her daughter Amy Emma on June 22, 1862.
- Dovey, enslaved by Margaret Wilson, had her daughter Harriet Lara (sp.) baptized on June 22, 1862.
- Julia, enslaved by J. R. Davidson, had her son Robert Jefferson baptized on June 22, 1862.
- Andy, enslaved by J. D. Kerns, had his child Francis Marian Barnet baptized on May 15, 1863.

- Mary Ann, enslaved by Dr. W. J. Hayes, had her son Joseph Scott baptized on May 16, 1863.
- Joseph, enslaved by A. A. Alexander, had his three sons, Samuel Cisero (sp.), Joseph Lafayett (sp.), and William Lee, baptized on May 28, 1864.
- Mary Eliza, enslaved by Dr. Isaac Wilson, had her three children, Leonora, Emily, and Lara Isabella, baptized on September 17, 1864.

*Both parents listed*:
- Ben and Caroline, both enslaved by Mary Davidson, had their daughter Fany Isaeblla Moor (sp.) baptized (no date given).
- Thomas and Caroline, both enslaved by Jane Berry, had their three children, Alexander, Thomas, and Sarah, baptized in the church. (no date given).
- Locke and Sarah, both enslaved by Jane Berry, had their four children (Mona, Catharine Ann, Richard Celit (sp.), and Dovey Elizabeth Locke) baptized in the church. (no date given).
- John Torrence and Eliza, both enslaved by A. Alexander, had four of their children (Anne, John, Mary, and Lotty) baptized in the church. When they baptized their daughters Susan and Lorna, they were then being enslaved by R. Monteith. (no date given).
- Jud and Matilda, both enslaved by R. Monteith, had their four children (Isabella, June, Caroline Elizabeth, and John) baptized in the church. (no date given).
- Wilson and Dela (sp.), enslaved by J. D. Henderson and L. Alexander, respectively, had their son James Romulus Henry baptized on June 17, 1860.
- Robert and Matilda, enslaved by Dr. R. Alexander and Margaret Wilson, respectively, had their son Wade Sylvester baptized on August 18, 1860.
- Ephraim and Eliza, enslaved by William Little and R. D. Whitley, respectively, had their son Rufus Bernard baptized on January 14, 1861.
    - Ephraim, then enslaved by J. H. Little, also had a daughter, Rachel, with Pheby, who was enslaved by Ms. Nat McCoy. The child was baptized on June 26, 1864.
- William and Nancy, enslaved by W. A. Sample and E. C. Davidson, respectively, had their son Robert Florence baptized on July 21, 1861. Their daughter Cinthia (sp.) Ann Jonah was baptized on March 20, 1864.
- Henry and Dovey, both enslaved by W. A. Sample, had their son Ephraim baptized on June 22, 1862.
- Ben and Phebe, enslaved by Mrs. M. Davidson and Dr. W. Davidson, respectively, had their daughter Margaret R. Moon baptized on September 14, 1861, and their son Steven Wilson Davidson on June 21, 1863.
- Robert and Nancy, enslaved by Alexander Caldwell and W. B. Harry, respectively, had their children John Baxter and John Edward Caldwell baptized (the latter on August 2, 1863).
- Ben and Rachel, enslaved by James A. Henderson and Mrs. A. A. Harry, respectively, had their daughter Sarah Elizabeth baptized on August 2, 1863.
- Zeno and Martha, enslaved by Capt. J. Wilkes and Dr. Isaac Wilson, respectively, baptized their four children (Adam, Mary, William, and Isaac Wilson) on May 28, 1864.
- Hesam and Amanda, enslaved by D. Henderson and A. A. Alexander, respectively, had their son Calvin Eli baptized on May 28, 1864.
- Thomas and Caty, enslaved by Jane Barry and A. A. Alexander, respectively, had their daughter Julia Emma baptized on May 28, 1864.
- Lafayet and Nancy, enslaved by S. Withers and Mrs. M. Wilson, respectively, had their child Adlade (sp.) baptized on July 10, 1864.
- Washington and Margaret, enslaved by E. C. Davidson and Dr. W. Davidson, respectively, had their daughter Mary Jane baptized on September 17, 1864.
- Stephen and Moriah, both enslaved by Rev. H. Caldwell, had all six of their children (David Thomas, Samuel, Stephny, Dovey, Harper, and William Green) baptized in the church on Sept. 17, 1864.

- Ephraim and Penda, enslaved by Rev. H. B. Cunningham and Mrs. A. Alexander, had their daughter, Harriet Elizabeth Agnes, baptized on September 18, 1864.[16]

It is fair to assume that the congregation used enslaved labor to build the church, the first frame structure being built in 1833 and other renovations completed in 1860. Those renovations included a separate entrance for the enslaved on the west side of the structure, called the "servant's entrance." It is part of a blind stairwell that leads to the gallery. With its construction, white members would not be able to see the enslaved entering and exiting the building.[17]

The only anecdotal evidence of the construction that survives is that of Lewis Phifer, enslaved by William A. Sample. According to an oral history with Frank Sample conducted by Charles William Sommerville:

> He cut gold stones, corn mill stones, milk troughs, steps, gate posts, and under pinning for houses. He cut the gate posts for the old cemetery at Hopewell Church; also the steps for this church, and those for the First Presbyterian Church. They were hauled from the William A. Sample farm, over the old Plank Road by David I. Sample, who used a four-horse team. Lewis also cut his own tombstone which leaned against a large oak tree on the William A. Sample farm for many years. After his death it was placed at his grave by direction of David I. Sample and the assistance of colored men on his farm…. Much of the work of Lewis Phifer is still in use in the Hopewell section and other parts of the county.[18]

In addition to the cemetery gate and the main steps, Lewis cut the stone steps for the separate entrance for the enslaved. Other details on Lewis can be difficult to find. His name can be seen on the roll of communicants, though the roll notes him as "dead." Given that the roll can be dated to approximately 1864, and the gate post was erected in 1845 and the gallery in 1860, Lewis died sometime between 1860 and 1864. Because Sample bought the Latta property in 1853, Lewis's grave is most likely somewhere within the bounds of the former Latta plantation.[19]

There is no evidence that the enslaved members of the church were buried outside of the church's cemetery walls; ground-penetrating radar shows no graves outside of the stone barriers. In all likelihood, the enslaved were buried on the properties of their enslavers. According to the oral histories gathered by Sommerville in 1937, there are various unmarked cemeteries near the church:

> Mr. Jim Kidd told the writer of two slave graveyards near his place, and Mr. C. Ross Parks of one six hundred yards back of Miss Ava Parks' home. Mrs. Taylor Nance indicated one a little east of her home. None of these have markers.[20]

Other prominent cemeteries include the McCoy and Kerns slave cemeteries. The McCoy cemetery is located southeast from the church and contains an estimated 75 gravesites.[21] Northeast of Hopewell is the Kerns cemetery, a private cemetery located off the corner of Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road and Kerns

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[16] "Colored Infant Baptisms," n.d., Minutes of the Session.

[17] "Campus History," Hopewell Presbyterian Church.

[18] Charles William Sommerville, *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church: For 175 Years from the Assigned Dates of Its Organization, 1762* (Charlotte, N.C.: Hopewell Presbyterian Church, 1939), 81.

[19] Hood, "Hopewell Presbyterian Church and Cemetery"; "Campus History," Hopewell Presbyterian Church;

[20] Sommerville, *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church,* 314.

[21] The McCoy cemetery is associated with St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Although members of the McCoy family were members of the Hopewell congregation, the McCoys who created the cemetery were members of St. Mark's. You can learn more about the cemetery through the church's website found here: https://www.stmarksnc.com/greater-mccoy-slave-cemetery.

Road. It is estimated that 75 people are buried there. In 1936, Thomas Wilson wrote briefly about some of the individuals buried there:

- Morris Kerns, brought here from Africa and a member of Hopewell Church. He died in the 18th century.
- Harvey Allen belonged to the Kerns' clan and was sold to David Allen. He was a member of Hopewell Church.
- Natt Caldwell belonged to the Allen clan and was sold to Elic Caldwell. He married an Alexander.
- Bill Berry's children were: Hugh, Jerry, and Martha. These are all buried in the Kerns' cemetery.[22]

There are a few instances in which the formerly enslaved remained with the church after the end of the Civil War. For instance, in 1868, one Violette Kerns applied for admission into the church, and in 1871 she baptized her two children, Frank and Sarah Caldwell.[23]

One notable anecdote found within the session minutes involves one Joseph Allison, formerly enslaved by the Torrance family. In March 1866, he applied for a certificate to transfer to another church, but due to charges of disobedience being held against him, the congregation decided to hold a trial. Joseph did not reappear before the church, and by April, the congregation suspended him. Records show that Joseph most likely moved out of the area, as there is a Joseph Allison that appears on the 1870 census in Statesville, North Carolina.[24]

The lack of evidence in the session minutes of formerly enslaved members of the congregation suggests that they formed other churches after the war. Sommerville identified three churches that branched away from Hopewell: Caldwell Presbyterian Church, Miranda Presbyterian Church, and Hopewell A.M.E. Zion Church. Hopewell A.M.E. Zion is the only remaining active church.

Caldwell Presbyterian Church, not to be confused with the church of the same name on East 5th Street in Charlotte, was the first of the churches to be formed. Congregation members came from both Hopewell and Gilead Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and it used to be located near Beatties Ford Road. In 1905, records identify Rev. Matthew I. James as pastor and the church having 110 members, 6 elders, 3 deacons, 8 new members, 7 baptisms, and 94 members in Sunday School. In 1937, Rev. Robert L. Moore was the pastor, and the church had 67 members, with 53 in Sunday School.[25] The cemetery, located on Brown Mill Road, has an estimated 50 enslaved individuals buried there.

Miranda Presbyterian Church was formed by formerly enslaved members of Hopewell in 1869. Also known as "Slab Top," it used to sit half a mile west from Beatties Ford Road and two miles south from Hopewell. Although the records of the first sessions have been destroyed, the names of the first members have survived: Buck Blythe, Coleman Birch, and Alexander Henderson. The Assembly report of 1905 reported Rev. George Carson as pastor, 4 elders, 4 deacons, 64 members, and 62 in Sabbath School. In

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[22] Sommerville, *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church,* 314.

[23] Minutes of the Session, May 10, 1868; "Colored Infant Baptisms," n.d., Minutes of the Session.

[24] Minutes of the Session, March 4, 1866; Minutes of the Session, March 18, 1866; Minutes of the Session, March 25, 1866; Minutes of the Session, April 15, 1866; "United States Census, 1870", database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW8J-7FD : 29 May 2021), Joseph Allison in entry for Daniel Allison.

[25] *General Assembly Minutes* (1937), pt. 1, 458, quoted in Sommerville, *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church*, 82.

1937, Rev. Samuel Fullwood was pastor, and the church had 61 members, with 61 in Sunday School.[26] In 1958, the congregation merged with Catawba Presbyterian Church.[27]

Buck Blythe, who was once enslaved by the Blythe family and later changed his name to William B. Harvell after the war, can be considered the founding father of Miranda Presbyterian. Harvell ran the Sabbath School that later inspired the formation of the church, and he later became a prominent Black Republican leader who helped establish the Fusion Party. At the Republican Convention of 1884 in Mecklenburg County, he led the rural faction of Black Republicans in a walkout after the city faction took control of the convention.[28]

Another prominent member of the church was Rev. Adolphus Beatty. According to oral histories from Mrs. Abner Alexander and Mrs. Frank Vance in 1935, Beatty's mother was enslaved by Margaret Wilson and a member of Hopewell. His great grandmother was Rose Alexander, who was enslaved by Major Thomas Alexander.[29]

Hopewell A.M.E. Zion was originally a Presbyterian congregation founded in 1869, but it soon joined the Methodist denomination. The original meetings were held in a small house called the Whitacre House, leading to its colloquial name of "Whitacre Church" or "Little Hopewell." When a schoolhouse was built for Black residents in 1882, the church used the building for their services. After more land was acquired in 1888, the congregation built a dedicated church building. The original is most likely gone, as Mecklenburg County lists the church's oldest building as being constructed in 1978.[30]

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[26] *General Assembly Minutes* (1937), pt. 1, 457, quoted in Sommerville, *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church*, 83.

[27] "Miranda Cemetery," The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Story, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, https://www.cmstory.org/exhibits/cemeteries-mecklenburg-county-cemeteries/miranda-cemetery.

[28] Andre Kearns, "W. B. Harvell: From Slavery to Political Leader," Medium, https://andrekearns.medium.com/w-b-harvell-from-slavery-to-political-leader-bc977cd156ce.

[29] Sommerville, *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church*, 82-83.

[30] Sommerville, *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church*, 83; "Property Record Card for 11333 Beatties Ford Rd, Hopewell A M E Zion Church," Mecklenburg County, https://property.spatialest.com/nc/mecklenburg/#/property/26135.
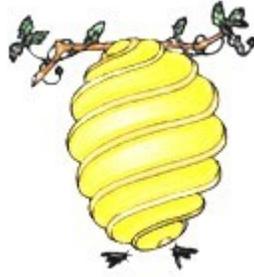
# HOPEWELL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



*This report was written on January 5, 1977*

1. **Name and location of the property:** The property known as Hopewell Presbyterian Church is located on Beatties Ford Rd. in the northern section of Mecklenburg County.

2. **Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner and occupant ofthe property:**The present owner and occupant of the property is:

Hopewell Presbyterian Church
RFD 3
Box 441
Huntersville, NC

Telephone: 875-2291

3. **Representative photographs of the property:** Representative photographs of the property are included in this report.

**4. A map depicting the location of the property:** This report contains a map depicting the location of the property.



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The computerized records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office do not contain the most recent deed book reference to this property. However, the original indenture which provided property for purposes of religious activities on this site dates from March 31, 1777. Current information can be acquired by reference to the parcel number of the property (01517109).

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:**

Hopewell Presbyterian Church is one of the oldest Christian congregations in Mecklenburg County. Indeed, religious services began as early as the 1750s, when itinerate ministers from the Presbyterian Synods of Philadelphia and New York, as well as an occasional evangelist from the back country, preached to the Scotch-Irish settlers. Attracted to the region by the fertile bottom land along the Catawba River, the farmers of Hopewell developed a cotton economy of considerable size and vigor. Coming to Hopewell to worship in its first century were such leaders of the local gentry as John McKnitt Alexander, Major John Davidson and Alexander Caldwell. The burial ground at Hopewell contains the graves of four signers of what according to local tradition was the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

Sometime before 1760 the Hopewell congregation erected its first meeting house a simple log structure. During the Revolutionary War (c. 1777) the log structure gave way to a frame building, which served as the meeting house until the 1830's. In 1833

or shortly thereafter Rev. John Thomson (the first pastor installed at Hopewell had been Samuel Craighead Caldwell in 1792) guided the church through the rigors of build a brick meeting house which according to one estimate was to cost $3000. That the congregation selected the Federal Style for its new house of worship is not surprising. After all, this was the style which the plantation owners of Hopewell had selected for their homes.

In the late 1850's the brick meeting house was altered. The brick floor was removed; a

vestibule and gallery were constructed. The people of Hopewell Presbyterian Church added a pulpit. Additional modifications to the structure have occurred since the Civil War. Nonetheless, enough of the original fabric remains to convey the sense of history and love of heritage which is associated with the congregation today.

**7.     A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains an architectural description prepared by Jack O. Boyte, A. I. A.

**8.     Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in N.C.G.S, 160A-399.4:**

**a.     Historical and cultural significance:** Hopewell Presbyterian Church is historically and culturally significant for two reasons. First, the meeting house has architectural significance as one of the oldest and finest Federal Style churches in Mecklenburg County. Second, the church is one of the oldest and most respected Presbyterian congregations in Mecklenburg County.

**b.     Suitability for preservation and restoration:** The architecture is in good repair and certainly can he preserved in its current configuration. Restoration of the structure would also be possible.

**e. Educational value:** The property has educational value because of its association with events and personalities important in the history of Mecklenburg County. Its architectural importance adds to its educational value.

**d.     Cost of acquisition, restoration, maintenance or repair:** At present the Commission has no intention of purchasing this property. Indeed, it is unaware of any intention on the part of the present owners to sell. It assumes that all costs associated with renovating and maintaining the structure will be paid by the owner or subsequent owner of the property.

**e.     Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property:** The Commission believes that the structure and property should continue as a place of religious worship.

**f.     Appraised value:** The current tax appraisal value of all implements on the property is $335,180. The current tax appraisal value of the 19.16 acres is $38,320. The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the rate upon which Ad Valorem taxes on the property are calculated.

**9.     Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places:** The Commission judges that the property known as Hopewell Presbyterian Church does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. Basic to the Commission's judgment is its knowledge that the National Register of Historic Places expanded the federal government's recognition of historic properties to include properties of local and state historic significance. Because of its association with events and personalities important in the history of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, Hopewell Presbyterian has local and regional historic significance and is therefore eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

**10.     Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of historical importance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County:** Hopewell Presbyterian Church is historically significant to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County for two reasons. First, it is one of the oldest and finest Federal Style churches in Mecklenburg County. Second, it is associated with people and events important in the history of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

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Bibliography

*An Inventory of Older Buildings in Mecklenburg County and Charlotte for the Historic Properties Commission.*

Chalmers Gaston Davidson, *The Plantation World Around Davidson* (1973), pp. 5056.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office.

**Date of Preparation of this report**: January 5, 1977

**Prepared by**: Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission 139
Middleton Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28207

Telephones 332-2726

## *Architectural Description*

*by Jack O. Boyte*

Encouraged by Gabriel Johnson, Governor of the North Carolina colony during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, Scotch emigrants spread rapidly through the North Carolina wilderness west of the Yadkin. Into the Piedmont plateau came hundreds of these freedom loving Presbyterians to settle. Nourished by the fertile and relatively secure Mecklenburg forests and savannas, these people established organized churches even before there were Presbyterian congregations in the earlier frontier towns of Salisbury and Fayetteville. At Hopewell the growing Scotch-Irish community established one of the most important Presbyterian churches in the North Carolina Synod. Joining its sister eighteenth century congregations at Centre and Poplar Tent in north Mecklenburg, Sugaw Creek nearer the village of Charlottetown, Providence to the south near the Waxhaw Indian lands, Rocky River to the east and Steele Creek beside the Catawba River to the west, Hopewell provided social and educational occasions for its members as well as spiritual sustenance.

Early shelter has been described as "a crude log structure," likely a brush tent similar to that said to have been used at Providence. Within a few years the congregation likely built a substantial building resembling the typical skillfully crafted log plantation houses still in evidence in north Mecklenburg. In the issue of Monday, November 22, 1830, the *Miners and Farmers Journal* carried this advertisement:

"Proposals will be received on Thursday, the 6th day of January next at Hopewell church "Mecklenburg County) for building and finishing of a church at said place. The walls to be of brick on stone foundation 43 by 65 feet 20 feet high. The roof to be covered with tin. Arched ceiling. It is contemplated at present to have four doors, 12 windows, 14 by 16 glass and 18 lights each. Door and window sills to be rock, etc."

From this extraordinary document came a late federal building which forms the core section of the present Hopewell Church sanctuary building. Much of this original structure remains, though the church has been slightly modified from time to time. In the 1860's the prospering congregation embarked on a major expansion and renovation program. One change which was made is recorded in the session minutes as a matter of great controversy -- sloping the nave floor. Whatever the debate, the ayes won the argument, for to this day the auditorium floor exhibits a gently sloping

surface -- one which is quite unusual for churches erected in those years. Though now remodeled with modern narrow oak strips, tradition has it that the original floor was square brick with chamfered edges.

Today's Hopewell edifice exhibits characteristics typical of the mid-nineteenth century meeting house architecture and favored by other Mecklenburg Presbyterian congregations of the time. It is likely that the original building of 1830 lacked many of these features and they were added during the expansion of the 1860s.

To the original church, which was one tall rectangular room, a wide narthex was added. Around the sides of the twenty foot high nave a balcony was installed. On the east side high granite steps lead to an exterior door set in a panelled recessed alcove. From here one enters a narrow stairway which rises steeply to one side of the balcony. Benches were here for slaves to attend services. On the opposite side, and probably separated by a simple wood rail, were seats for the congregational overflow.

This part of the balcony was reached by way of a second set of stairs rising at the west side of the narthex. Details in both stairways are severely simple. Treads and risers, as well as some wall surfaces, are hand planed boards with no elaboration. Hand rails are simple rounded members. There is no molded trim here and very little in the balcony. Outside brick walls are covered with plaster, applied irregularly.

The outside walls of the original structure are locally made brick laid in precise Flemish bond with glazed headers. These walls begin on a low random ashlar stone foundation, then rise twenty or more feet to a broad smooth stucco frieze. Above this is an overhang more than two feet wide hand planed from one piece of material and resting on a heavy cyma bed mold. This overhang soffit and bed mold are continuous through the entire length of each side and show no joints, as would likely have occurred had the original building included these architectural features. This wide overhang continues up the gable rake at the front.

Toward the front on each side one can see straight joints in the brick courses where the original corners were. Rising five or six feet above the ground, these joints even show queen closers typical of nineteenth century brick work. Of course the later walls erected in 1860 match this early work closely, including queen closers at the corners.

On each side of the building are four windows which start at granite sills some three feet above the nave floor and rise sixteen or more feet to simple brick heads. Laid in plain Flemish bond on cast iron lintels, these heads show no jack arch or other decorative treatment, a detail which again emphasizes the obvious severity of the earliest building. The windows have triple sash. Top and lower sash have twelve lights each, and the center is glazed with twenty lights. These windows are likely from the 1860 construction period. Details of construction, muntin thickness, and quality of remaining old glass indicate this date is the more accurate. Suspended on

cast iron pintels at each window are louvered wood blinds whose mortise and tenon construction and iron hardware are typical of the mid-nineteenth century.

The 1860 front facade departs strikingly from the primitive simplicity of the original sides. There are three arched openings. Centered in the front, a wide opening contains eight foot high four panelled double doors. Above this entrance are twin windows much like tall transoms, each glazed with six lights. Over this is a fan light arched head, and above are brick soldiers laid on a circle to follow the arch. Surprisingly, these brick are straight units laid in tapered mortar joints to form the circle. At each side, starting on granite sills, are tall narrow two sash windows with curved circular glazing above. Over these windows brick arches are formed with straight headers laid, again, in tapered mortar joints. Recognizing the rough finish appearance of this work and the lack of uniformity in the brick sizes, the builder in 1860 scored each joint with a narrow tool and painted this grapevine joint with white paint to give the allusion of narrow and straight mortar joints. There are vestiges of this original paint still remaining.

While the original instructions to the builder specified a tin roof, the present cover is steep pithed slate tile. Rising from a molded cave, with no original gutter, there are two broad uninterrupted surfaces terminating in a high ridge connecting gable ends.

From the arched main entrance one enters a simple narthex where smooth plaster covers all walls. At the left is the balcony stair of hand finished wood. There is no chair rail. Window and door casing is simple and are edged painted wood. A simple molded cove occurs at the ceiling. The interior partition at the nave is the original thick exterior brick wall which has been plastered to match other interior surfaces. In this wall there are two door openings centered at the side aisles in the nave. These single leaf doors are set in recessed panelled alcoves and still retain the original wood surfaces with bead and quirk panel edges. Doors and cast iron butts are from the 1860 construction, though the original knobs and latches have been replaced.

In the narthex there is one of the original high back pews. Hand fabricated from wide pine planks which still retain characteristic plane marks. This bench is a graphic example of the skill of the craftsman who labored on the church in 1830.

In the meeting room there are many details remaining from the mid-nineteenth century construction and several from the earlier work. Supporting the balcony at each side are three equally spaced tapered round wood columns, obviously hand fabricated, and with simple rounded capitals. The face of the balcony is finished with hand planed wide planks and simple molded edges. The balcony railing consist of repeated thin slats with urn shaped fret work sawn in a regular pattern. Window sills are heavy wooden boards with ovolo edges. Casing is square edged similar to that in the narthex. Wall surfaces and the soffit of the balcony show smooth painted plaster from original construction.

Ceiling and floor surfaces have been refinished, though it is likely that the original ceiling was smooth wood planks which are probably still in place. There have been changes made in the chancel end of the nave which include a new choir alcove, so this portion of the room reflects little of the original conformation. There are doors at the ends of the side aisles which are likely where the original openings occurred. The first plan had four doors, so this appears to conform such a beginning. The early statement that "12 windows are contemplated" indicates that there were likely tall windows overreach of the four outside doors in the original building.

Not part of the church building itself but an important historic architectural element is the delicate hand wrought iron gate still implanted in granite posts a short distance south of the church front. Obviously part of the original loose laid stone wall which at one time enclosed the eighteenth century cemetery, this iron work exhibits extraordinary craftsmanship, and should be carefully preserved. The gate is strikingly similar to hand made gates known to be still in place at the old entrances to the Centre and Providence Cemeteries.

In the history of Mecklenburg County architecture the work of the early Scotch-Irish Presbyterians must be considered among the most influential. At Hopewell is a rare and significant building built by these pioneers. This surviving structure illustrates a number of important architectural features from the second quarter of the nineteenth century and a delightful example of meeting house design.