

# The History of the Mt Mitchell Community

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*Mitchell Lifts Self Out of Civil War Depression*

**Mt. Mitchell** - The man on horseback came early to Cabarrus County. The saddlebags carried food for man and animal.

It carried a lot of other things, too, like the Bible. He was somber attired, but his mission was a cheerful one. He was a minister.

His influence is seen and felt in this county today and throughout the nation. In the early days he was known as a "Circuit Rider".

You've heard of that man, that minister. His was not a "soft" seat. The Circuit Rider was a man of great stamina. He had to be strong to endure the hardships of the circuit.

He undoubtedly came to Mt. Mitchell community, and he has left his tracks in the sands of time here. Too, he left his mark in other ways. You can see that mark on a visit to Mt. Mitchell.

Why Mt. Mitchell?

"That's an excellent question", said Martin M. Walters. "I suppose it was named so in honor of the district superintendent, the Rev. J. S. Mitchell".

Why the mountain?

Mr. Walters had no answer for that question. Neither does the church history. But the church history does answer a lot of other interesting questions about this interesting community.

The flowers - the larkspur, the wild geraniums, the dogwood and the redbud - colored the hills of Cabarrus that spring in 1865.

Gen. Robert E. Lee had surrendered at Appomattox to Grant on April 9. The country was in upheaval, torn by a four year war and there was talk of carpet bagging, there was talk of the then impending legislation to abolish slavery. There was a lot of talk about a lot of things. In the Mt. Mitchell community there was talk about a church - a Methodist Church. There were not many Methodists in the community. In fact, there were not too many people living in the area that is known today as Mt. Mitchell.

What the community's name was prior to taking its present name, is not recorded. Supposedly it had no name. No matter.

The few persons in the neighborhood got together at the old Shinn school house. There were 13- persons in the group. They organized the church. But they failed to make any immediate record of the organization. In fact, a record was not entered in the Conference Journal until April 12, 1869. The church history says, "The organization was made by the Rev. S. A. Roper, pastor-in-charge, and the Rev. J. S. Mitchell, district superintendent.". The church history continues, adding that "Mount Mitchell was for many years on a circuit with the Old Smith's Chapel now Midway church in Kannapolis, Oak Grove and Asbury churches in Mecklenburg County. Later, Oak Grove and Asbury churches were taken off leaving Midway and Mount Mitchell until the Methodist unification in 1939."

Names prominent in the community when the church was first organized included the Bensons, Alexanders, Clarks, Cooks, Pattersons, Brantleys, Dayvaults, Sides, Weavers, Yosts, Finks, Deals, Ludwigs, Grahams, Barringers and Walters. The church grew. It was the pivot upon which the whole community turned. In 1886, says the church history, "the Sunday School had an enrollment of 50 members.". But there were revivals. They came at a time of year when the crops had been "laid-by" and people had spare time from tilling the soil to attend church. "The revivals were well attended", says the history, "in the day and night services. Much interest was manifest, and new life was infused in this little band of worshippers.". All who took part in the church's services and its programs were not members of Mt. Mitchell.

The records of the church say as much.

"In the early Nineteen Hundreds", it continues, "there were only three stewards on the official board. The Sunday School had many teachers who were not members of the church.". "Mrs. Emma Patterson and Mrs. Effie Edgison, who were not members of the church, were teachers. Through their efforts new life was infused in the church and a healthy growth was observed."

Mt. Mitchell was a community of neighbors in those days, as it is today. The man who didn't "have" was helped. The same held true for the church. Money was hard to come by then. When the church needed a new roof, members and non-members got together and put one on it. The record continues, "The church building needed a new roof. But the members were only able to raise half enough to do the job. But a good neighbor who was not a member of the church, paid the other half."

The good neighbor went a step further.

"He bought the preacher a suit of clothes. The community as a whole became great friends of our church", says the record.

The community, as a whole, is still a friend of the church. This is manifest in the new \$76,000 building that was dedicated in

appropriate ceremonies on Sunday, Aug. 14, 1955. The cornerstone laying for this church was held at the annual home-coming

services Aug. 9, 1953. The church history continues its story: "The Rev. Channey came sometime later (after 1886) and held a

revival, which was the real beginning of life at Mt. Mitchell. Other denominations joined in the great revival, and a good Lutheran

was on the committee to appeal to the Bishop for the appointing of this man of God as their Pastor.". Later, the records continue,

Mr. John Dayvault was made superintendent of the Sunday School. There were five classes in the one-room building.

The Sunday School operated only nine months a year. That was in the day when the men sat on one side of the church, the

women on the opposite. Mt. Mitchell church was growing. By 1925 two classrooms were added to the church. This gave the

Sunday School more operating room for its growing membership. This was only the beginning.

In 1933 the church building was completely overhauled with an additional 10-feet built on the north side and the entire building

was brick veneered. Four additional class rooms were constructed. Church history says that "After unification in 1939, Bethpage

church was placed with Mt. Mitchell. A short time thereafter Mt. Mitchell became a station for about two years. In the fall of

1951, South China Grove was placed on the charge. In 1946 China Grove was removed and Mt. Mitchell became a station

charge.". Mt Mitchell was on the move again.

"In 1951," the church history continues, "the church school and congregation increased to such an extent that something had to

be done to take care of the increase. Plans matured for a new church building and an auditorium 40x80 feet. Included in the

plans was an educational building with 19 class rooms. The auditorium would seat about 400."

The committee who undertook

this project consisted of Paul Griffith, B. B. Troutman, Ray Troutman, W. C. Troutman, R. G. Troutman, Ralph Simmons,

Vann Christy, York Walter, Conley Graham and J. A. Cook, Jr.. Church membership now is more than 400 and there are

about 300 on the Sunday School rolls. The Rev. Robert A. Foster is the present minister of the church.

The history of Mt. Mitchell church is the history of the Mt. Mitchell community. And the community is a monument to that man

dressed in a somber suit, astride the horse. Like Johnny Appleseed, he sowed his seeds where the soil was fertile. They came up,

and you can see the result of his efforts in the handsome new building the people of Mt. Mitchell will be worshipping in today.

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By and For

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