

EAST ROCKINGHAM PENTECOSTAL HOLINESS CHURCH
By H.P. Robinson

The history of the East Rockingham Pentecostal Holiness church is just another example of that miraculous development that ~~has~~ characterized ~~in~~ ~~many~~ the growth of the unnumbered religious congregations in the cities and villages across this Nation. From a very small and ~~in~~ unostentatious beginning this church has developed into one of the finest plants in Richmond County.

In the year of ¹⁹¹⁸ ~~1919~~ Rev ~~E.D.~~ Norton erected a Gospel tent in East Rockingham on the same spot of ground upon which the church now stands. This revival proved to be a typical revival for those times. It lasted for 47 days and at the close a new church was organized ^{in the home of Rev. Walter Patterson,} with only ~~seven~~ ^{seven} charter members. They were Rev and Mrs Walter Patterson, Rev and Mrs John Sears, John Pate, Mrs Lucy Beam and Mrs ---- . ~~Like other churches of that time~~ with few exceptions but At that time East Rockingham was undeveloped ~~except~~ for the Mills and Mill houses.

With very little money but a ~~large~~ great deal of faith and zeal this little group of seven members went to work. Rev. J. B. Sears, one of the members, gave a plot of ground to erect the first church building. With free labor and contributions from a few friends a small crude wood building was erected. ~~Like other~~ Rev. E. D. Norton ~~was~~ organized the church and was the first pastor.

He pastored only two years and was followed by Rev. J. E. Bauknight who stayed only one year. ^{E. D. Norton - J. E. Bauknight - George A. B. Kanipe - H. D. Wiggins - A. W. Little}
From 1918 until 1929 the following pastors served ~~in succession~~ in succession some staying only one year and others not more than two or three years.

In 1928 the first little wood structure was blown down by a storm and was salvaged by the pastor ^{A. B. Kanipe} who was also a carpenter and a new larger ~~building~~ frame building was erected with two large Sunday School rooms forming a T across the back of the church.

The people worshipped ~~under~~ in this building until 1932 when under the progressive direction of Rev. Walter Patterson plans were drawn to build a

larger brick veneer church ~~with an educational plant~~ including a basement for an educational plant. These plans were made and agreed upon by the congregation and work was begun. In order to erect the new church on the same lot as the old; the old church was torn down. At this point a tragic thing happened that almost paralyzed the building program of this little church. The depression hit the country and the Pentecostal Holiness church of East Rockingham was no exception, they did not escape. But their faith ~~did~~ not waver and their courage did not fail. With Dan Hatcher as Foreman and Rev Walter Patterson the Pastor to lead them the work on this new church went right on in spite of the depression. Such men as the late Claude Flowers and E. H. Sparks were of inestimable value during those trying times of sacrifice ~~and~~ when the Pentecostal Holiness people built the first brick church in East Rockingham.

The membership showed an appreciable increase from 1918 until 1932. Starting with only seven they now had an enrollment of 70. Considering the high moral and spiritual standards required in those days for membership in this church, this is a remarkable growth.

This building when complete was a credit not only to the congregation but to the entire community. It was a 40x60 auditorium with a choir and vestibule and a large basement with ten Sunday School rooms.

Rev. Patterson served as pastor from 1930 until 1935. Under his leadership the church made remarkable progress. At the time of his transfer the enrollment was almost one hundred.

~~Following~~ From 1935 until 1947 the following men served as pastor. Rev. R. E. Powers, Rev. T. M. Swails, Rev. J. L. Wall. Rev. W. L. Patterson (a second term) Rev. Col. B. Bigby ~~and~~ Rev. M. L. Moore and Rev. M. L. Canady. Rev. Col. B. Bigby served the church for two years 1943-44. During which time a modern two story brick parsonage was built valued at approximately ten thousand dollars.

~~Following~~

In 1947 Rev H. P. Robinson moved into the parsonage and since that time has pastored the church.

From the year of 1935 until 1947 the membership had decreased to seventy, and the Sunday School was a little less than two hundred.

Rev and Mrs Robinson came to Rockingham soon after their marriage in Atlanta Ga. Mrs Robinson is from Atlanta and Rev. Robinson is a native of Lake City S. C. This was their first appointment after their marriage.

However the deep consecration and spirituality of the membership of the church together with their fine christian character and vision for progress the church almost immediately began to start an expansion program.

The first project was in the interest of the young people of the church, Seeing the need of some place of recreation for christian young people that would be closely associated with the church. ~~Wakxxxx~~ The officials of the church got together and came up with a large Fellowship Hall, equipt with kitchen and dineing room and ample ^{space} ~~room~~ for Young people gatherings and social functions for all of the Auxiliaries of the church.

The "FELLOWSHIP HALL" as it is called by the people of the church is the one point of thriveing activity of the church. It is used by the Womans Auxiliary of the church. The P.H,Y,S. for Socials. The children for "Story Hour". The Sparks "emorial S.S. Class as a class room. The Boy Scout Troop that is sponsored by the church. and for any function of any group in the church of a social nature.

At this point it is necessary to introduce you to a unique phase of the East Rockingham Pentecostal Holiness church, a work of service to the community , town and county, that stands in a class apart. In 1920 a large tent ~~xxxx~~ revival was sponsored by the church, havins as the special guests speakers Bishop J. H. King and Rev Segosky. From this Meeting Bishop King organized a Camp Meeting Association. This Association in 1922 erected a huge open air Tabernacle on the lot adjacent the church building, that ~~xxxxxxx~~ had a seating capacity of from twelve hundred to fifteen hundred.

This association grew into amighty spiritual effort in East Rockingham. One of the remarkable features about it has been that ~~ma~~ in these Annual Camp Meetings people of all faiths and denominations can come and do come and feel

at home. In these meetings denominational lines are erased and everybody worships God together. These Annual meetings for the past 34 years has brought to East Rockingham some of the most outstanding speakers and singers and musicians from all parts of the world, To bless our town and help make Rockingham a better place to live.

The little group of people in the home of Walter Patterson in the year of 1918 when they united themselves into a brotherhood and started a work of faith have made a contribution to Richmond County through the efforts of the Rockingham Camp Meeting that will live in generations yet to come.

In 1950 the Sunday School and church had outgrown the housing facilities and something had to be done to accommodate the ever increasing crowds. After much deliberation it was agreed to tear down the old open air Tabernacle and build a new, modern brick auditorium that would serve as a sanctuary for worship services and as a Camp Meeting Tabernacle.

By this time the church membership had grown to about 250 and the enrollment of the Sunday School was nearing 500. With this great group of energetic people who had a mind to work it was easy to raise the money and begin work on this new building.

With Mr Edward Chisolem as Architect and Mr Jesse Phifer as Contractor the Antecostal Holiness people of East Rockingham soon realized their dream come true.

The old church building has been converted into an educational building and the new Sanctuary with a seating capacity of over eight hundred is serving its purpose well. With the Sunday School departmentalized from the Nursery up to the Adult Bible class the prospects are bright for even a greater increase in attendance and efficiency in the Sunday School.

The East Rockingham church is an evangelistic church. She has not only been content to expend her labors at home. Within the last three years members of this church had built a church in Ellerbe, and worked up a congregation and at this time they have a thriving Sunday School, a Young Peoples Society, and a full time pastor Rev Thelma Player. The most recent

evangelistic effort has been the purchase^{of} the old Methodist church in Cordova. ~~and~~ This building was remodeled and re-decorated and on last Sunday an opening service was held with approximately 200 people present. This will be the second new church sponsored and fostered by the East Rockingham Pentecostal Holiness church within the last three years; and the end is not yet.

The spacious parking lots together with the Parsonage, the Educational building, the Fellowship Hall, and the New modern Auditorium is very conservatively valued at \$125,000.

The evangelistic and benevolent arm of this church has been reaching out into every needy nook and corner of the county to bring the gospel of good will and hope to every needy person possible.

Every Sunday groups of people from the church visit the County jail, the hospitals and into homes of the sick and unfortunate. Christian literature is distributed by the Evangelistic society of the church in places where it will do the most good. Prayer meetings every week are held in different parts of the city. Indeed the East Rockingham church believe that the religion of Jesus Christ is a practical religion that not only helps men to heaven but helps men, women boys and girls to be better citizens and neighbors in this life.