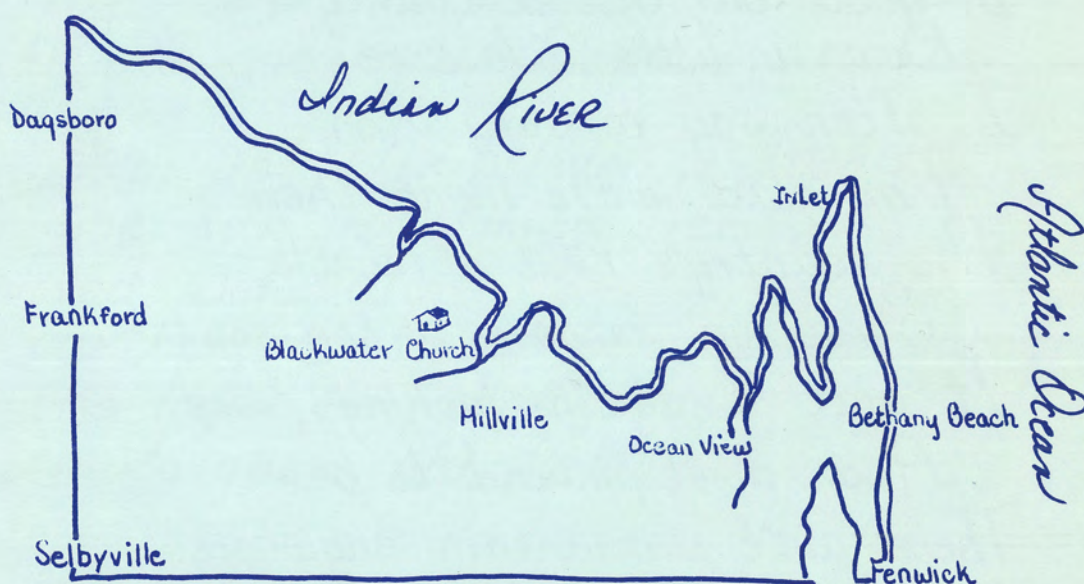




# Reflections from Southeastern Sussex



Compiled by  
*The Col. Armwell Long Chapter*  
*N.S. D.A.R.*

Illustrated by Margaret Betts Roltsch

## Wesley M.E. Church Clarksville

Wesley M.E. Church is located on the edge of Clarksville, Delaware. The original church site was purchased on December 18, 1873 from Miers B. Steel. More land was obtained on December 1, 1926 from Quimby Walker and on April 6, 1938 from John G. Walters.

A camp ground is maintained where for about 134 years services have been, and still are, held in late July. These religious services have been very well attended during the years by many people in the area. Many a lasting courtship was started by promenading on Wesley Camp Ground.

Several frame cottages were erected over the years in a large circle where families stayed during the entire time of the meetings. Some of these cottages still remain, but in later years many use trailers and campers. In the middle of this circle, a pavillion stands where the worship services are held by the regular minister, as well as visiting ministers, with special musical attractions. Just prior to the beginning of each service, someone goes around the campground ringing a bell announcing that service is about to begin. A store is maintained on the campgrounds where a variety of items may be purchased.

This was the last camp in Delaware to use the old wooden firestands for lighting purposes. These were replaced with electricity in 1943.

The original church was built around 1871 in the area where the cemetery is located, but in January of 1957 this church burned. Services were then held at Prince Hall Lodge, then the old school house on the campground, until the new church was completed in 1961 which was erected on the lot where Blackwater School once stood.

The new church building is constructed of brick, very attractive inside and out, with well kept grounds -- a church and congregation of which we are all very proud.



## St. George's Methodist Church Clarksville

After the Revolutionary War, the Methodists in Delaware were under the leadership and care of John Wesley. There were several who were denied Baptism and Holy Communion. These needs weighed heavily on John Wesley's mind and conscience. He discussed the whole matter with Thomas Coke, an ordained minister. Coke was asked to go to Delaware and ordain preachers. Francis Asbury was the leader of the Methodist movement in America. Thomas Coke came to Delaware to preach at Barratt's Chapel, near Frederica. He administered communion to about five hundred people. At the conclusion of the sermon, Thomas Coke met Francis Asbury. Asbury went up and kissed Coke on the cheek. A conference was formed and a rule was passed forbidding the preachers using intoxicating drinks and making a strong stand against slavery. The majority of the people seemed satisfied that the Methodists had fully organized themselves into a church.

News spread slowly to the southern part of Delaware concerning the organization of the Methodist Church. The settlers of Baltimore Hundred, Sussex County, were holding religious meetings in their homes. Many of the settlers were able to read and write; these were the people who led the religious groups. The meetings were held on Sundays, but each night, the Bible was read followed by family prayer. An emissary of Francis Asbury spread the word to these religious people explaining the organization of the Methodist Church. As the years passed, a group of men met and decided they would build a church. The plan was discussed at all the religious services held in the homes and a unanimous decision was given. A farmer, Mr. George Johnson, gave one acre of land in back of a store owned by Mr. Ebie Townsend. The interested people all helped build a church 16 feet by 18 feet. Large trees were felled by the men and the log cabin type church was soon completed. A fireplace was built on one side of the church. There were four windows covered with glass imported from Philadelphia. This product was sent by schooner landing at Townsend's Landing located on the Indian River.

Very little heat penetrated through the building and women brought "foot warmers" to church with them. It was quite a treat for these people to have their own church and they were very dedicated people.

The pews were made from rough logs, and there was a raised platform and podium for the minister.

The membership grew by "leaps and bounds," thus making it necessary to enlarge the church. This addition was 20 feet by 25 feet and it also was made of logs.

The lighting used during the era were sconces which were placed around the front and to the rear of the sanctuary.

A gallery was built for the slaves as there were a few slave owners living in the area. The men placed posts to support the gallery and whenever the women entered the church with their "hoop skirts" they had difficulty getting by. These

women created such a furor the men removed some of the posts. In those days, females were seated on one side and the males on the other side.

A new roof of cypress shingles was put on the old church and the new addition. Four additional windows were put in and the shutters on all the windows were bolted like a stove.

Before 1860, the "Circuit Riders" rendered their services and there were several men who claimed to be "experienced" leaders.

A great many of the hymns were chanted and some were sung to the tune of a pitch pipe or tuning fork.

The services began at 10:00 a.m. and at 12:00 the congregation ate their lunch. At 1:00 p.m. the second part of the services began and concluded at 4:00 p.m.

During 1840 - 1860, the following ministers served at the church: Rev. J. Redman, George Burk, T.O. Ayres, John Brandt, George Watson and Josiah Kidney. Rev. T.O. Ayres started the first choir, but this activity didn't prove very successful as some of the women were jealous because they couldn't sing. The minister soon realized that "trouble was brewing" and it would be better to discontinue the choir.

A tithing man, holding a long pole with a rabbit's tail on the end, watched the congregation. If he noticed a member sleeping (young or old), the member was awakened by the rabbit's tail tickling the nose.

The minister was paid \$24.00 per year. Often times some members were unable to pay in money so they paid in produce and meat.

The sexton was paid \$12.00 a year. He had to cut wood for the fireplace and haul it to the church.

Around 1858, a cemetery was started and the different families had their plots.

The Old St. George's Church was located across from the Bible Store on the road to Tuckahoe. Not far from the road there are two graves with markers.

In 1880, the members who held important positions in the church met and decided to build a new church. This idea was unanimous among the members of the entire congregation. The building committee included E.H. Wilson, Ebenezer Townsend, Thomas R. Steele, Joshua C. and Peter Townsend.

A tract of land was purchased from John Steele. The church was to be 32 feet long by 50 feet. These members were determined to donate enough money to pay for the new church. During this time the land was poor and so were the people. Corn was selling for \$.50 a bushel, eggs \$.10 a dozen, and chickens were \$.08 a pound. These people were very religious, cooperative, and industrious. With these qualities, they were very successful as the church was built and dedicated in the spring of 1880. The old church was torn down and the timbers were sold to Mr. William Steele to be used in building a barn.

The new church was located in a little town named Clarksville. When the new church was completed most of the bodies were removed from the cemetery to the new one.

Rev. E.H. Nelson was the preacher in charge during 1881 and the leaders of the church at that time were T.S. Williams - Presiding Elder; Isiah Ellis - Exhorter, and Sunday School Superintendent - John R. Steele.

The exterior of the church was clapboard painted white and the roof was wooden shingles. Stoves were used for heating purposes and oil lamps were suspended from the ceiling for lighting. The interior was blue wash paint with wooden panels.

In 1928, the present church was rebuilt and again, in 1937, several improvements were made.

The interior of the church today is one of charm and dignity. The oil lamps were replaced by chandeliers (electric). The walls have a tendency to give a rustic atmosphere and the stained glass windows are gorgeous depicting the events in Christ's life.

In 1961, aluminum siding replaced the clapboard and the Sunday School rooms, Nursery, and Church Office were added.

Trees are in front and on the side of the church, thus enhancing the beauty of the edifice. The people of this area are humble, full of compassion, sociable, and very friendly. The words of the hymn, "The Little Church in the Vale," describe this church very effectively.



## Blackwater Presbyterian Church

Clarksville

Blackwater Presbyterian Church was built in 1767 and is located mid-way between Frankford and Ocean View, or what is now Route 26, about one mile west of Clarksville, in Baltimore Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware. It was supposedly the sixth Presbyterian Church organized in what is now Sussex County, Delaware, but was then considered a part of Maryland.