

A HISTORY OF THE SNEDECOR MEMORIAL SYNOD
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Purpose of the Study

In 1897 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States granted permission to certain Colored Presbyterians to call a convention for the purpose of organizing a separate and independent Colored Presbyterian Church. On May 20, 1898, the Afro-American Presbyterian Church was organized. This organization continued in existence until 1917 at which time it was reorganized into the Snedecor Memorial Synod, a constituent synod in the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Snedecor Memorial Synod continued in existence for thirty-five years, 1917 - 1952. On September 26, 1951, at the Westminster Church, Birmingham, Alabama, this synod voted to be dissolved.

Evidence shows that no previous study has been made of the complete history of Snedecor Memorial Synod. It is the purpose of this study (1) to present a history of Snedecor Memorial Synod; (2) to portray some of the factors that have affected this development; (3) to present some of the contributions which have been made by members of this synod; and (4) to record action leading to its dissolution.

Delimitations

Synod. A Synod is a court of the Presbyterian Church in the United States consisting of all the ministers and one ruling elder from each church in a district comprising at least three Presbyteries.¹

Snedecor Memorial was the only Negro synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Unlike other synods, it was not restricted by state geographical boundaries, but included the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

Presbytery. A Presbytery is a church court consisting of all the ministers and one ruling elder from each church within a certain district.² Snedecor Memorial Synod was composed of four presbyteries.

Snedecor Memorial. Snedecor Memorial was the name the synod decided upon in honor of James G. Snedecor for his outstanding work among Negroes as Secretary of the Executive Committee of Colored Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church in the United States from 1903 - 1916.³

¹ Presbyterian Church in the United States, Book of Church Order (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1945), p.50.

² Ibid., p. 45.

³ E. T. Thompson, Presbyterian Missions in the Southern United States (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1934), p. 205.

Religious Education. In this study Religious Education refers to the organized efforts of the Church to bring man into a closer relationship with God by encouraging loyalty to Christian ideals and the development of man's sense of spiritual values. Thus the Church attempts to foster and develop a knowledge of and a belief in God through its church services and the related activities of Sunday school, Young People's Work, Men's Work and Woman's Work.

Sources of Data

Materials used in this study have been secured from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States; the Annual Report of the Home Missions Committee; Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod; Minutes of the Afro-American Synod; The Christian Observer; The Presbyterian Outlook; the Annual Report of the Assembly's Committee on Negro Work; and Books with information about Snedecor Memorial Synod. Personal interviews were held with G. W. Gideon, T. J. James, W. J. Gipson, R. A. James, H. K. Holland and Geneva G. James.

CHAPTER II

THE ORGANIZATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Factors Leading to the Organization

Prior to the War Between the States, the various denominations, including the Presbyterians, sought to meet the religious needs of the Negroes. Especially commended by the General Assembly in 1825 for their work among these people were the Presbyteries of Charleston, Union, Georgia, Concord, South Alabama and Mississippi. Outstanding full time missionaries to the Negro were¹ Charles Colcock Jones, John B. Adger and John L. Girardeau.

Although the efforts of the Presbyterians to evangelize the Negro were sincere and unremitting, the results were not greatly impressive. At the outbreak of the War there were only 14,000⁺ Presbyterians numbered among the 500,000 Negroes holding membership in the Protestant churches of the South. This relatively small number of Presbyterians was partially due to the limited number of Presbyterian Negro ministers and to the emotional appeal of the Methodist and Baptist churches. The more adequate Home Missions Plan for reaching Negroes which had been developed² by the Methodists and the Baptists was also an important factor.

¹
E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 180 - 186.

²
Ibid., pp. 187 - 188.

When the War began in 1861, the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America delegated the responsibility for the evangelization of Negroes to its committee on Domestic Missions. This Committee was urged to give serious attention to the conduct of missionary operation among the Negroes, and the presbyteries were asked to cooperate in securing missionaries for the field.³

During the War this committee faithfully carries on its work with great hopes for the future. The abolition of slavery, however, brought drastic changes. "The freedmen proceeded to desert the white churches almost en masse in order that they might enter or form independent Negro churches of their own."⁴ They desired ecclesiastical as well as political freedom. Although it was the Negro who withdrew, few churches and presbyteries put forth much effort to retain them and these few were unsuccessful.⁵

The lack of a definite policy of the Southern Church to meet this problem of the status of Negro Presbyterians created confusion and complications throughout the Church. In 1869 the General Assembly adopted a plan proposed by Girardeau, a missionary to the Negroes. This plan proposed branch congregations for Negroes with

³
Ibid.

⁴
Ibid., p. 189.

⁵
Ibid., p. 191.

Negro elders and deacons, but under the care of white pastors. The plan was never put into effect. It was designed to keep the Negroes in the same position which they held in the Church prior to the War.⁶

In response to overtures from the Synods of Mississippi, South Carolina and Memphis, and the Presbytery of East Hanover, the General Assembly in 1874 approved a policy for the establishment of a separate and independent Negro Presbyterian Church, to be pastored by Negro preachers. The presbyteries of the General Assembly were encouraged to aid in the formation of such churches and in securing suitable men of piety for the ministry. The Colored Evangelistic Fund was set up and the General Assembly was invited to contribute. Presbyteries were privileged to draw on this fund for the propagation of their work in establishing Negro churches.⁷ It was the plan of the General Assembly that these churches should unite into presbyteries in due time and grow into synods which would eventually divide and unite into a General Assembly.⁸

In due time churches and presbyteries were organized. The complete realization of the goal of independent synods and a General Assembly was hampered by the lack of any great interest in

⁶
Ibid., p. 193.

⁷
Ibid., p. 195.

⁸
G. F. Nicolassen, Alexander's Digest (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1923), p. 319.

Negro Evangelism at that time. In 1875 thirty-five presbyteries reported that nothing was being done within their bounds for Negro evangelistic work. The extent of Negro work was represented by the twelve presbyteries reporting thirteen Negro churches within their bounds with two Negro ministers and a few licentiates and candidates. A few other presbyteries reported that Sunday schools and preaching were conducted by some of their white ministers.⁹

Further hindrance to the realization of the goal of independent synods was the lack of unity among the ministers in the Negro presbyteries. Some favored a separate synod while others felt that their financial strength did not warrant such a move. Efforts were continued in this direction for several years by A. L. Phillips, who had been appointed by the General Assembly as a commissioner to visit or correspond with the various Negro presbyteries to gather authentic information as to their wishes in the matter.¹⁰

In 1891 the five organized presbyteries were the presbyteries of North and South Carolina, organized in 1876; Central Alabama, organized 1890; Ethel and Zion, both organized in 1891; and Texas, whose date of organization does not appear in the report of the Assembly's Committee on Colored Evangelism. All of these presbyteries were independent bodies with the exception of Ethel which

⁹ E. T. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 195 - 196.

¹⁰ G. F. Nicolassen, op. cit., p. 316.

was a constituent of the Synod of Mississippi. The Presbyteries of North and South Carolina, Texas, and Zion were in favor of uniting to form a separate and independent synod. Central Alabama Presbytery doubted the ability of an independent Negro synod to exist alone. Ethel Presbytery opposed such a union because of lack of funds, numerical strength, and lack of review and control of the General Assembly.¹¹

The General Assembly approved the continuation of efforts for the establishment of a separate and independent ecclesiastical body. The Assembly also reaffirmed its pledge of financial and educational support and its willingness to enter into correspondence with said Church. A. L. Phillips continued his correspondence and visits with the Negro ministers in the attempt to bring about the necessary cooperation to make possible the organization of an independent Negro church.¹²

Members of the independent presbyteries, particularly E. W. Williams of Abbeville, South Carolina, campaigned in support of a separate church. In 1897 Williams attended the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States which met at Charlotte, North Carolina, to make known the desires of many of the Negro constituency for an independent synod. He presented

¹¹
Ibid., pp. 317 - 318.

¹²
Ibid., p. 319.

a request for permission from the General Assembly to call a convention for the purpose of organizing the synod.¹³ The General Assembly responded by the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas, this Assembly has learned of the purpose on the part of certain Colored Presbyterians to call a convention for the purpose of organizing a separate and independent Colored Presbyterian Church,

Therefore, be it resolved that should such a convention be called, any colored churches and ministers now under the jurisdiction of this Assembly are hereby permitted to withdraw for the purpose of joining said convention, should they desire to do so. And be it further resolved that a committee of which the Moderator of this Assembly shall be chairman shall be appointed to attend the convention bearing the fraternal greetings of this Assembly and give the colored brethren whatever advice they may desire.¹⁴

This convention was called to meet in the First Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama, in November, 1897. After a three day session, the convention adjourned to meet in New Orleans, Louisiana, in May, 1898.¹⁵ On May 20, 1898, in the Berean Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, the Afro-American Synod became a reality.¹⁶ E. W. Williams was unanimously elected Moderator and A. E. Reed was elected Stated Clerk. The standards of doctrine and polity of the Presbyterian Church in the United States were adopted. The hopes

¹³ Afro-American Synod, Minutes (N.p., n.d., 1904), p. 1.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

and aspirations of this body were that some day they might establish
 a General Assembly.¹⁷

The growth of the Afro-American Synod was very slow and discouraging. The three reasons as cited by E. T. Thompson give a clear picture of the problem which these pioneering men faced. He states:

First and foremost, the field had been largely occupied. While the Presbyterian Church attempted to hold its Negro Members in the status they had occupied before the War, the independent Negro churches had practically preempted the field. Second: When the Presbyterian Church attempted to build an independent Negro Church it aroused the active opposition of the other churches. There are many references to the jealousy, the opposition of the colored pastors. Third: There was the indifference of Southern Presbyterians to colored evangelism.¹⁸

The lack of financial assistance and the lack of interest and sympathy from the Church had a devastating effect on the Afro-American Synod. In 1915 the Executive Committee of Home Missions proposed that its presbyteries become an integral part of the Southern Assembly. Thus were proceedings begun which inevitably meant the end of the Afro-American Synod, but which opened new
¹⁹
 vistas for Negro Presbyterians of the Southern Church.

The Executive Committee on Home Missions in 1915 overtured

¹⁷ G. F. Nicolassen, op. cit., p. 323.

¹⁸ E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 204.

the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States to consider the status and work of the Negro presbyteries and churches in order to devise some definite policy for future development and a better plan for coordinating them for mutual counsel and help.²⁰ The Standing Committee on Home Missions reported to the¹⁹¹⁵ Assembly the following: "Our Colored Evangelistic Work continues about as usual, though your Standing Committee believes that a great step forward would be taken should a Colored Synod be established."²¹ The General Assembly reacted favorably toward the overture and the Report of the Home Missions Committee by the adoption of the following recommendation in 1915:

We recommend that the Executive Committee of Home Missions be instructed to prosecute vigorously the matter of Synodical Organization of Home Missions so far as may be practicable and wise, particularly in the dependent Synods.²²

The following Commission was appointed by the General Assembly to reorganize the Afro-American Synod: S. L. Morris, Executive Secretary of the Committee of Home Missions; A. A. Little, pastor of the Westminster Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Georgia; J. P. Praigg, pastor of the Carrollton Presbyterian Church, Carrollton, Alabama; and D. D. Little of Columbia, Tennessee. After

²⁰ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of the General Assembly (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication), 1915, p. 17.

²¹ Ibid., p. 71.

²² Ibid., p. 151.

conferring with the ministers of the Afro-American Synod, the date and place were designated for reorganization.²³

Salem Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was the scene of the organizational meeting which took place on May 14, 1917. G. W. Gideon presided. The name was changed from Afro-American Synod to Snedecor Memorial Synod.²⁴ This change was made to honor James G. Snedecor who had given so much of his life to minister to the Negroes.²⁵ The Commission which had been sent by the General Assembly rendered invaluable aid at this organizational meeting.²⁶

First Slate of Officers

In addition to G. W. Gideon who was elected the first Moderator, the other officers elected were A. J. McQueen, Stated Clerk, and R. M. Golightly, Treasurer. These men were representatives of the Presbyteries of Central Alabama, North and South Carolina, and Ethel respectively.²⁷

²³ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod (N.p., n.d., 1917), p. 16.

²⁴ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of the General Assembly, 1917, p. 30.

²⁵ E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 205.

²⁶ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of the General Assembly, 1917, p. 30.

²⁷ G. F. Nicolassen, op. cit., p. 113.

Presbyteries and Ministers

The synod was composed of the following Presbyteries with 37 ministers and 50 churches: Central Alabama, North and South Carolina, Ethel and Central Louisiana. ²⁸ The total church membership of the synod was approximately 1400. ²⁹

Ministers present at the first meeting and the presbyteries they represented were as follows: ³⁰

Central Alabama

G. W. Covington, Havana, Alabama
 L. M. Flournoy, Akron, Alabama
 I. C. H. Champney, Montgomery, Alabama
 G. D. Garland, Mobile, Alabama
 W. M. Lee, Bessemer, Alabama
 R. D. Roulhac, Selma, Alabama
 J. H. M. Boyce, Thomasville, Georgia
 G. W. Gideon, Homer, Georgia
 W. L. Terrell, Freeport, Louisiana
 W. A. Young, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
 G. W. Potts, Jefferson, Georgia

Ethel

R. M. Golightly, Byhalia, Mississippi
 C. B. Scott, Heidelberg, Mississippi
 L. J. Washington, St. Louis, Missouri
 W. H. Sheppard, Louisville, Kentucky
 J. A. Carr, Kosciusko, Mississippi
 B. Preston, Hattiesburg, Mississippi

North and South Carolina

G. S. Alford, Dillon, South Carolina
 A. J. McQueen, Rowland, North Carolina

28

Ibid.

29

E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 203.

30

Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod, 1916, p. 33f.

J. A. Wooding, Milton, North Carolina
 S. J. Morrow, North Wilkesboro, North Carolina
 H. Barnes, Florence, South Carolina
 W. H. Harris, Chester, South Carolina
 P. T. Willis, Letta, South Carolina
 A. J. Wilkinson, Timmons ville, South Carolina
 E. W. Williams, Abbeville, South Carolina
 R. B. Strong, Blackstock, South Carolina

Central Louisiana

J. W. Lee, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
 J. C. Stull, Frierson, Louisiana
 A. D. Wilkinson, Jackson, Louisiana
 A. M. Plant, Texarkana, Texas
 E. White, Frierson, Louisiana

Relation to the General Assembly

The relation of Snedecor Memorial Synod to the General Assembly is shown by the recommendations adopted in 1916.

1. That this synod is hereby reorganized, and shall be connected with the General Assembly, its presbyteries represented in the Assembly on the same basis as those of any other synod.

2. That the boundaries and membership of the presbyteries of this synod shall be so arranged as to constitute four presbyteries as follows: Central Alabama, Ethel, North and South Carolina, and Central Louisiana.

3. That the other presbyteries of the General Assembly be asked to consent to the transfer of Colored ministers and churches on their rolls for the purpose of this reorganization.³¹

Negro evangelization had been under the supervision of the Home Mission Committee of the Church since 1911. After the organization of Snedecor Memorial Synod, this Committee continued its supervision over its activities, electing R. A. Brown in 1922 as

³¹

G. F. Nicolassen, op. cit., p. 112.

General Superintendent of Negro Work. His devotion to his work has seldom been surpassed.³²

Financial assistance and encouragement were offered through the years. A helpful Institute and Bible Conference were conducted each year in connection with the meeting of the Synod. Commissioners to the Synod meeting were also aided in the matter of travel expenses. The ministers were given supplements to the salaries which were paid them by their churches.³³

A very candid picture of the relation of Snedecor Memorial Synod to the General Assembly has been given by Walter L. Lingle. He states:

Snedecor Memorial Synod is as much a member of our General Assembly as any other Synod, and Negro ministers and elders from its four Presbyteries go as commissioners to our General Assembly every year; and in the Assembly are entitled to all the rights and privileges that the white members have. Thus on the General Assembly level they are officially on an equality with the white commissioners. . . .

The four Presbyteries of Snedecor Memorial Synod send commissioners to our General Assembly every year, four ministers and four elders. Officially, they have all the rights and privileges that white commissioners have. Nevertheless, for years we have kept them segregated rather far back on one side of the auditorium. They had no part or lot in the proceedings of the Assembly. At a meeting of the Assembly at Montreat which I attended a good many years ago, the Negro commissioners were housed in the damp rooms under the porch of Geneva Hall

32

William M. Sikes, "The Historical Development of Stillman Institute" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, 1930), p. 59.

33

Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod, 1919, p. 95.

and had their meals in the kitchen of the old Alba Hotel, while we were comfortably housed in the hotels and had our meals in the hotel dining rooms. That is what took place at a meeting of our General Assembly.³⁴

At its organization, Snedecor Memorial Synod became theoretically a constituent part of the General Assembly just like any other synod. For thirty-five years two commissioners from each of the four presbyteries attended the General Assembly. These commissioners were theoretically on equal standing with all other commissioners but that ideal has never been realized.³⁵

Quality of Leadership

At the outset, cognizance must be taken of the attitude of the Church toward the training of the Negro ministry of Snedecor Memorial Synod to gain the proper perspective of the quality of leadership which it afforded. Stillman Institute has been the only school provided for theological training as well as for academic work. The statement made by James G. Snedecor, the fourth president of this school, at the Clifton Conference in 1908 is indicative of the general sentiment. He stated:

We did not organize it (Stillman Institute) especially to make Presbyterian preachers, but good Bible preachers. It was organized on simple lines. The English Bible was the principal

³⁴ Walter L. Lingle, "What Would Jesus Do", Christian Observer, 138:2-3, March, 1950.

³⁵ Walter L. Lingle, "Race Relations Day", Christian Observer, 140:2, February, 1952.

textbook and after thirty years we still keep it to the front.

Our academic department was an after-thought, forced on us by the lack of preparation of many ordained ministers who came to us for instruction. Many of them were middle-aged men who could scarcely read. In later years our students are generally younger and better prepared, and we are raising our standards as fast as we can.³⁶

It is significant to note that the securing of adequate funds for the support of Stillman was a major problem. The Church, generally, had never been sufficiently interested in the educational and spiritual welfare of the Negro people to give liberally for this cause. Often on personal visits throughout the Church, speaking in behalf of Stillman, Snedecor encountered even unwillingness on the part of churches and pastors to allow him the privilege of presenting the cause of Negro Work and asking for free will offerings.³⁷

This attitude on the part of the Church has gradually changed through the years as is evidenced by the following statement taken from the Report of the Home Missions Committee to the 1938 General Assembly:

Many of our ministers, though of excellent character, have had little training. . . . Many do not have suitable books or helpful religious literature. . . . If white ministers who have had the benefits of college and seminary training need books, how much more do the Negroes need them who have not had these educational advantages. Another necessity of our Negro work and one that becomes more pressing each year is more and

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W. N. Hartshorn, An Era of Progress and Promise (Boston: The Priscilla Publishing Company, 1910), p. 230.

³⁷

W. M. Sikes, op. cit., pp. 54 - 55.

better qualified candidates for the gospel ministry.³⁸

Another indication of the growing awareness of the necessity for adequate training for the Negro ministry is shown in the Home Missions Committee's 1943 report.

Our Church must be brought to understand that our Negro leaders require and must have the same type of instruction as our white ministers receive from our white seminaries.³⁹

In 1950, at the General Assembly which met at Massanetta Springs, Virginia, A. R. Batchelor, Executive Secretary of the Division of Negro Work, included the following statement in his report:

A door of opportunity is open for our Church in the field of Negro Work. Our Church has many shining examples of consecrated service in this field, yet we have not met our full share of responsibility for the evangelization of the Negro. . . . We, as a Church, must respond to our interest in the Negro Race.⁴⁰

Included among the recommendations made by the Division of Negro Work at the 1950 Assembly were the following which mirror the changed attitude of the Church toward Negro education.

(1) That the Church and Manse Fund of the Division of Negro Work and the Scrivener Fund for the education of Negroes for the ministry be commended to the generosity of the Church.

(2) That Race Relations Sunday be designated for the special study of Negro Work in the Assembly.

(3) That Stillman College become an Assembly's Institution effective immediately.⁴¹

38

Presbyterian Church, U.S., Report of Home Missions Committee, Annual Reports of Assembly Agencies, 1939, pp. 15 - 16.

39

Ibid., 1943, p. 23.

40

Ibid., 1950, p. 107.

41

Ibid., pp. 107, 108.

In addition to the limited education advantages which were offered the men of Snedecor Memorial Synod, consideration must be given to the fact that most of them had to support themselves by farming, or by teaching, or some other occupation.⁴²

The 1936 Report of the Home Missions Committee states that despite the burden of poverty and the many discouragements in the way, our Negro churches have carried on with courage and faithfulness.⁴³ Many of the ministers received meager compensation for their labors, but their devotion to their calling caused them to endure this and many other hardships that these churches might prosper. This statement is substantiated by letters from two of the ministers in Snedecor Memorial Synod. One minister wrote:

I can't do my duty when fixed as I am. My nights are often spent in the kitchen, my days in the schoolroom. I am trying to do three things - baking, teaching and preaching. I don't want to join the Northern Church and don't expect to, but I must support my family.⁴⁴

Another minister from Alabama wrote:

I am here working as hard as a man can work, minister or not, and getting no pay scarcely from the people. . . . I taught nearly twenty scholars during March and received so far the sum of fifty cents. Now how can I get on like this. Yet I am not going to quit. I am determined, God helping me, to go on,

⁴²

E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 203.

⁴³

Presbyterian Church, U.S., Report of Home Missions Committee, Annual Report of Assembly Agencies, 1936, p. 19.

⁴⁴

E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 204.

if I don't get a cent from the people here.⁴⁵

Further testimony of the quality of men in Snedecor Memorial Synod is given in this quotation from R. A. Brown, Superintendent of Negro Work, 1922 - 1931: "I have never heard one complain, though they have to give up many of the necessities of life to continue in this service."⁴⁶

Nevertheless, in spite of limited formal education and meager incomes, many of the ministers displayed native ability and consecration which enabled them to do very creditable work. Men of distinction sprang from the ranks of Snedecor Memorial Synod and proved themselves a credit, not only to their synod, but to the entire Church. Probably the most distinguished early minister of this synod was William H. Sheppard, D. D., F.R.G.S. After graduating from Stillman Institute in 1887, he spent a short time as a minister in Montgomery, Alabama, and Atlanta, Georgia. In the meantime he offered himself to the Executive Committee on Foreign Missions as a missionary to Africa. Along with Samuel N. Lapsley, he sailed from New York in 1890 to labor in the first missionary operation of the Church in the heart of Africa.⁴⁷ For twenty years he labored earnestly in this field. In recognition of his dis-

⁴⁵
Ibid.

⁴⁶
Ibid., p. 205.

⁴⁷
W. M. Sikes, op. cit., p. 108.

tinguished service, the British Government bestowed upon him the title of Fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society. Upon his return to this country in 1912, he became pastor of the Hancock Street Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, where he served with distinction until his death in 1927.⁴⁸

A further indication of the high quality of Sheppard's leadership is portrayed when S. H. Chester introduced him to an audience:

It is my privilege to introduce to you today perhaps the most distinguished and certainly the most widely known minister of our Southern Presbyterian Church. For one thing, he is the only minister on our roll holding a fellowship in the Royal Geographical Society of London. On behalf of the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, I wish to say that there is no missionary on our roll more beloved or more highly esteemed by the Committee under which he serves. During the time of his missionary service he has been called to represent us on many important occasions. He has stood before kings, both white and black kings, as our representative. He has never represented us anywhere that we have not had reason to be proud of the manner in which he has done it. He is now recognized in London and Brussels as one of the greatest of African missionaries. That for which the Foreign Missions Committee esteems him most is not the fact that he has achieved this prominence and recognition, but that having achieved it, he has come back to us the same simple-hearted, humble, earnest Christian man that he was when we first sent him out.⁴⁹

Other men from Snedecor Memorial Synod who have served the Church with distinction as foreign missionaries were L. A. DeYampert, A. L. Edmiston, P. H. Hawkins and A. A. Rochester. Their names⁵⁰ too have been inscribed on the roll of the faithful.

48
Ibid.

49
Ibid., p. 109.

50
Ibid.

There were records of distinction on the home fields as well as the foreign. Among the early ones was I. C. H. Champney, who graduated from Stillman in 1895. He took advantage of the opportunity to further his training and served as the pastor of the Salem Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. For many years he was the Stated Clerk of Snedecor Memorial Synod. After leaving Salem Church, the remaining years of his ministry were spent as the successful pastor of the First Colored Presbyterian Church, Montgomery, Alabama.⁵¹

One of the most eloquent ministers of Snedecor Memorial Synod was W. A. Young, who was known as the "Singing Evangelist". He has also been called the greatest preacher ever produced by Stillman Institute. S. L. Morris said this of him:

After graduating at Stillman, he served very acceptably and successfully as pastor of the Colored Presbyterian Church in Mobile, Alabama. The time having arrived for an advance movement in behalf of Colored Evangelization, W. A. Young was selected as the first General Evangelist for the Negroes in the South. He entered upon the work with great enthusiasm, and developed into one of the most efficient ministers of the whole Church. He conducted great evangelistic meetings on the islands of the South Carolina coast, in which large numbers were converted.⁵²

Another record of service is that of J. H. M. Boyce, for many years pastor of the Gregg Street Presbyterian Church, Houston,

⁵¹
Ibid.

⁵²
Ibid., p. 111.

Texas. Services were started in Houston without a single member or prospective member. Boyce has this to say of his work:

During the time of our labor in the Southwest we have had the pleasure of adding 203 members to the Church. Many of those were added from the sick rooms where they soon passed on. We have a present membership of 120 active members, among whom are some of the best people in the city. We feel God has greatly blessed our efforts here, and even under much opposition at times we have been able to carry on.⁵³

The Home Missions Study book for 1951 gives this account of one of Snedecor Memorial men, T. J. James, who has served well in the home field:

Well over a quarter of a century Mr. James has served the Lord as a minister of the gospel. For almost all that time he has ministered to one church - the church which he was instrumental in starting - the church which he serves so acceptably today. It has been a rich and fruitful ministry which he has enjoyed and which he continues to render with vigor and enthusiasm.

His life has been like a beacon light in the community where he lives. His influence has been felt by all alike, both black and white. With God's spirit leading all the way, he has cast his life as bread upon the waters in all of his dealings with his white friends in Hartsville. He knew not whether it would return to him. But it did. The white people of the community is considered by them an able leader among men and one who can be depended upon at all times.

An outstanding white minister in the Presbyterian Church, U. S., has said that Mr. James in many ways is one of the great ministers of our Church.⁵⁴

In spite of the many difficulties which Snedecor Memorial Synod has faced, the work has gone on. Credit for this goes not

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Ibid., p. 116.

54

Charles H. Gibboney, By Faith (Decatur: Bowen Press, 1951), pp. 104 - 105.

only to the ones who have gained special recognition, but to the ones who have labored quietly and effectively each day, reaching souls for Christ. Thompson has aptly said, "Southern Presbyterians had no need to be ashamed of their Negro preachers, or of their Negro members."⁵⁵

Stillman Institute

Stillman Institute has played a major role in the development of Snedecor Memorial Synod because it has been the sole attempt on the part of the Southern Presbyterian Church to fulfill its educational responsibility to the Negroes.⁵⁶ A further observation pointing up the contrast of educational provisions for Negro and white Southern Presbyterians is stated by Terry and Lee:

Under partial or total control of the Presbyterian Church, there are in fact, four theological seminaries, one training school for lay workers, fifteen senior colleges, nine junior colleges, and a considerable number of secondary schools - all for white students. These institutions combined have property and endowment valued in excess of forty millions of dollars.

It is significant that, in contrast with the large number of schools for white students, there should be only one institution for Negro students. This condition runs directly contrary to the fact that a large percentage of the population of the states in which the Southern Presbyterian Church operates is made up of Negroes. A possible explanation of its meager educational program for Negroes lies in the fact that the Southern Presbyterian Church has less than four thousand Negro communicants. Certainly one educational institution is adequate to care for

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E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 206.

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P. W. Terry and L. T. Lee, A Study of Stillman Institute (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1946), p. 43.

the needs of so small a number. On the other hand, it would probably be just as true to explain the fact that the Church has less than four thousand Negro communicants by recalling that it has had only one educational institution designed to serve their needs. However this may be, it is certainly true that Stillman's solitary character lends significance to it in the life of the Presbyterian Church.⁵⁷

Stillman Institute was established by the Church in 1876 for the purpose of the evangelization of the Negro people.⁵⁸ This move was made because the Church had come to realize that the most urgent need of the Negro people was an educated ministry.⁵⁹ In response to overtures which came to the General Assembly of 1874, largely due to the efforts of Charles A. Stillman, the Assembly appointed a committee to consider the establishment of an institute for the education of colored preachers. They were instructed to digest a plan, if they deemed it expedient and practicable, for the organization, management, and support of such a school, and report to the next General Assembly.⁶⁰ The committee, consisting of C. A. Stillman, D. D., J. O. Stedman, D. D., and Ruling Elder B. M. Estes, recommended to the 1876 General Assembly the establishment of such an institute to be located at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, under the care of Charles A Stillman.⁶¹

⁵⁷
Ibid.

⁵⁸
W. H. Sikes, op. cit., p. 39.

⁵⁹
W. N. Hertshorn, op. cit., p. 228.

⁶⁰
G. F. Nicolassen, op. cit., p. 324.

⁶¹
Ibid., p. 325.

The first faculty of Tuscaloosa Institute, as it was then called, consisted of C. A. Stillman, administrative head of the school, and Andrew Flynn Dickson, who did most of the teaching.⁶² Dickson, Stillman's boyhood friend, held the Master of Arts Degree from Yale University and was also a graduate of the Yale School of Divinity.⁶³

Difficulties were encountered at the outset because of the inadequate preparation on the part of the students for theological training. It then became necessary to include academic training in the curriculum. This department was opened under the leadership of A. L. Phillips in 1893, and the name was changed from Tuscaloosa Institute to Stillman Institute in honor of the founder, Charles A. Stillman.⁶⁴

The purpose of the academic department was not general education, but preparation to the theological department. Training for the ministry remained the solitary objective. The faculty consisted of two professors, one who taught theological subjects exclusively, and one who taught academic subjects.⁶⁵

It soon became apparent that the scanty academic training

⁶² Terry and Lee, op. cit., p. 48.

⁶³ W. M. Sikes, op. cit., p. 40.

⁶⁴ W. M. Sikes, op. cit., p. 50.

⁶⁵ Terry and Lee, op. cit., pp. 50 - 51.

which one man was able to provide was insufficient. Then the academic training was sub-divided into primary, intermediate and advanced courses. In 1899 the General Assembly approved the opening of the academic department to male students other than ministerial aspirants. Also girls under fourteen years of age were allowed to enroll as non-resident students. Thus the Southern Presbyterian Church embarked upon a broader area of service to the Negroes.⁶⁶

After several temporary locations for the Institute, the old Cochrane homestead in Tuscaloosa was purchased as the permanent home of Stillman Institute. It was located on the outskirts of the city, on a hill overlooking the city and surrounded by twenty acres of land suitable for cultivation.⁶⁷ Thus was made possible the dream of C. A. Stillman, who had envisioned such a location that the school might become self supporting and the students might have industrial training.⁶⁸

That this was an advantageous move was shown in the Report of the Executive Committee two years later when it stated that there was both a curtailment of expenses of the institution and a growth of independence and self-help on the part of the students.⁶⁹

⁶⁶
Ibid.

⁶⁷
W. M. Sikes, op. cit., pp. 51 - 52.

⁶⁸
Ibid., p. 44.

⁶⁹
Ibid., p. 52.

After a very fruitful and aggressive three year administration as Superintendent of Stillman, Phillips resigned in 1898.⁷⁰ His resignation was reluctantly offered, the decision being reached because of the failure of the Church to properly support the work.⁷¹

D. Clay Lilly, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Tuscaloosa, succeeded Phillips. For five years he labored courageously in spite of the many difficulties which he encountered.⁷² Then he too resigned, broken in health.

Lilly named as his successor James G. Snedecor, a member of the Assembly's Committee on Colored Evangelization for ten years.⁷³ Assuming his responsibilities in 1903, Snedecor addressed himself to the task of arousing interest throughout the Church in Negro evangelization, and particularly Stillman Institute. The school's lack of effectiveness may be attributed to the fact that it had never been adequately supported by the Church. Snedecor's earnest appeals did much to focus the attention of the Church upon its responsibility for education. Largely through his efforts is due the credit for Stillman's later growth.⁷⁴

⁷⁰
Ibid.

⁷¹
W. N. Hartshorn, op. cit., p. 228.

⁷²
Ibid.

⁷³
Ibid.

⁷⁴
Terry and Lee, op. cit., p. 52.

During Snedecor's administration, an additional twenty-five acres of land were added to the original twenty. Snedecor was dedicated to improving the mental, moral, and spiritual powers of the students under his administration and he also exerted great influence in the class room.⁷⁵ Ill health forced him to resign in 1916 after a very fruitful ministry.⁷⁶

For two years, following the resignation and death of Snedecor on 1916, William E. Hutchison served as Principal of Stillman. He has previously served as teacher at Stillman for six years. He was especially noted for his work as a Bible teacher.⁷⁷ Following the resignation of Hutchison in 1918, a two year tenure of office was held by R. K. Timmons.⁷⁸

Beginning with the administration of W. F. Osburn in 1920, the idea of preparation for the teaching profession for both men and women was stressed. Osburn was a layman, a graduate of Alabama Polytechnic Institute at Auburn, with both the B. S. and M.S. degrees.⁷⁹ He was very familiar with the academic requirements of the state.

Working in conjunction with R. A. Brown, Superintendent of

⁷⁵ W. M. Sikes, op. cit., p. 55.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

⁷⁸ Ibid., .

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 57 - 58.

Negro Work at that time, Osburn worked toward the goal of a standardized institution of both high school and collegiate grades. They organized the junior high school and the senior high school in 1926 in accordance with the recommendations of the State Department of Education. The high school was accredited in 1929.⁸⁰ The junior college was added in 1927 when the high school was well established. Through these departments efforts were put forth to train both men and women for various areas of service to the Church.⁸¹

During Osburn's administration the farm acreage was doubled, thus making it possible for increased enrollment of men and women because of greater opportunities for self help. Contrary to the original purpose in establishing the school, a minority of the students were preparing for the ministry. Most of the students were being trained for Christian leadership in other fields.⁸²

It was in September, 1922, that Stillman became co-educational.⁸³ Mrs. W. C. Winsborough, Executive Secretary of the Woman's Auxiliary of the General Assembly, was one of the important leaders in the undertaking which made this possible. The Women's

⁸⁰ Terry and Lee, op. cit., p. 52.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 52 - 53.

⁸³ W. M. Sikes, op. cit., p. 61.

Dormitory, built with contributions from the Women of the Church, the General Education Board of New York, and from the Assembly's Home Missions Committee, was named the Winsborough Building in honor of Mrs. Winsborough.⁸⁴

Osburn served well as principal of Stillman until his death in 1929. The period of his administration has well been called one of broadening outreach for Stillman Institute and Snedecor memorial Synod because of the wide influence the increased educational opportunities had on the religious work of the synod.⁸⁵

During the administration of A. L. Jackson, elected as principal in 1929, the junior college received accreditation from the Southern Association.⁸⁶ The Emily Estes Snedecor Nurses' Training School, opened in 1929, so improved its course of study that its graduates were enabled to pass the state examinations for registered nurses.⁸⁷

When the high schools in the vicinity of Tuscaloosa became accredited, there was less urgency for this type of training at Stillman. For this reason the high school department was discontinued and the major academic interest was placed on the junior

⁸⁴
- Ibid., pp. 59, 61.

⁸⁵
Terry and Lee, op. cit., p. 53.

⁸⁶
Ibid.

⁸⁷
, Ibid., p. 53.

college. The principal interest became the training of teachers⁸⁸ for the elementary school.

Further evidence of the change in trend is seen in the following statement:

The theological department has suffered a sharp decline. The number of students in recent years has dwindled until at the present time only two candidates are enrolled. Among the chief reasons accounting for this condition are the inability to grant degrees to graduates, an inadequate instructional program, and the limited number of constituents from which to draw candidates for the ministry. The situation of this department, therefore, is precarious and the future uncertain. Since the training of ministers has been and is so central in Stillman's history, the importance of this question cannot be over-emphasized.⁸⁹

After the resignation of A. L. Jackson in 1947, the school was without a president until 1948 when Samuel Burney Hay accepted the position. Prior to his coming to Stillman the Nurses' Training School was discontinued and the hospital closed. The name of the school was changed to Stillman College. The administration of the college was placed in the hands of the President and a Board of Trustees⁹⁰ approved by the Assembly.

Under the wise and capable leadership of S. B. Hay, the school has grown from a junior college to a four year college. Many other improvements have been made. Tribute to his leadership is found

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Ibid.

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Ibid., p. 54.

90

Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of General Assembly, 1948, pp. 144, 145.

in these words:

Our whole Church is gratified with the progress being made at Stillman under the leadership of Dr. Samuel Burney Hay whom we commend for it. On May 27th twenty-one young people were graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Education. During the year the student body reached an enrollment of 377, the largest in the college's history.⁹¹

In addition to being the only educational institution for Negroes supported by the Southern Church and the source of training for the ministry and lay workers of Snedecor Memorial Synod, Stillman has been the center for conferences and training schools.

Among the conferences held annually on its campus are the following:

Young People's Conference; Negro Women's Christian Conference; Minister's Conference; Woman's Auxiliary Training School; Training School for Vacation Bible School Workers; and the Men at Stillman Conference.⁹²

It is difficult to estimate the influence which Stillman Institute, now Stillman College, has had in shaping the life of Snedecor Memorial Synod. Despite its limitations, much good has come to those who minister and to those who are ministered unto because of its endeavors to provide an educated and Christian leadership for this synod.⁹³

⁹¹ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of General Assembly, 1951, p. 73.

⁹² Presbyterian Church, U. S., Report of Home Missions Committee, Annual Report of Assembly Agencies, 1947, p. 59.

⁹³ Interview with Thomas J. James.

Influence of the Home Missions Committee

Because of the failure to receive substantial support for the Negro churches, the Executive Committee on Colored Evangelism was discontinued in 1911 and the responsibility for Colored Evangelism was placed under the care of the Executive Committee of Home Missions. As a result of this change, the Executive Committee of Home Missions received a somewhat larger appropriation, but still totally inadequate for the work committed to its care.⁹⁴ This change, however, did not alter the previous pattern, for Snedecor remained in charge of the Department of Negro Work until he resigned because of failing health in 1916.⁹⁵

The Executive Committee of Home Missions, realizing the magnitude of its responsibility and its desire to do a more effective work among the Negro people, proposed to the General Assembly in 1915 that the Negro churches become an integral part of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.⁹⁶

This integration was realized in May, 1917, when the Snedecor Memorial Synod was organized as a member of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 204.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 205.

⁹⁷ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod, 1917, p. 16.

After the resignation of J. G. Snedecor in 1916, the Executive Committee of Home Missions continued its work among the Negroes without a Superintendent or a designated person responsible for Negro Work until 1922 when R. A. Brown was chosen for the position.⁹⁸ Brown was a man of noble character and "a fine mind". He loved the Negroes and had a real sympathy for them. The Negroes loved Brown, not only as their Superintendent, but as their friend.⁹⁹

A further indication of the influence of the Executive Committee of Home Missions upon the Snedecor Memorial Synod can be seen in the report of Homer McMillan, Executive Secretary, to the 1943 General Assembly.

For ten years following the death of Dr. R. A. Brown in 1931, because of the Committee's critical financial condition, the position of Superintendent was not supplied and the responsibility for the supervision of the Assembly's Negro Work was added to the duties of the Executive. R. D. Bedinger, D. D., who had served the Assembly's Committee of Foreign Missions in the Belgian Congo, and recently served as Superintendent of Home Missions in Asheville Presbytery, was chosen for this important position.

Dr. Bedinger began his duties as Superintendent of the Department of Negro Work, November 1, 1942, at the close of the Home Missions Emergency Campaign which he had been asked to direct. His time has been spent in visiting churches in the Snedecor Memorial Synod and the various Missions aided by the Executive Committee, for a better understanding of the progress and the needs of the work.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ E. T. Thompson, op. cit., p. 204.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Report of the Home Missions Committee, Report of Assembly Agencies, 1943, pp. 16, 17.

After the first five months of work with the Home Missions Committee, Bedinger reported the following:

The Executive Committee endeavors to do for the Negroes all that is done for the other races that are served by the Home Missions Committee. On the whole the Negro churches, handicapped as they are by poor equipment and a leadership that has not had the advantages of adequate training, are making a creditable progress. The membership of the church is composed largely of wage earners, small farmers, or those who have very little to give to the support of their church. The pastors of some of our Negro churches are dependent upon the Executive Committee for the major part of their support. Others, because their churches can contribute so little, farm or work at a trade to supplement the amount received from the Home Mission funds. The teachers in Sunday schools and the leaders of the Auxiliaries, earnest in purpose, do the best they can, though in many cases they have not had any training for these duties.

In Snedecor Memorial Synod there are 28 active ministers who serve 40 organized churches. There are 40 Sunday schools and 15 outposts with 2,803 pupils. There are 24 young people's organizations and 25 Women's Auxiliaries. In the synod during the year there were 27 Vacation Bible Schools with an enrollment of 2,386. The churches of the synod received 168 by profession of faith and 95 by letter. There are four affiliated ministers who serve churches in white presbyteries. 101

The following excerpt from the Home Missions Committee's 1946 report reflects its influence on Snedecor Memorial Synod:

It is the desire of the Executive Committee that the Negro members of our church receive every help in leadership, training and inspiration that is provided for others. To this end, there is a Superintendent to assist the Negro ministers in planning the work of their churches and to help them in the stewardship and evangelistic campaigns. Every year the ministers of Snedecor Memorial Synod are brought to Stillman Institute as guests of the Home Mission Committee for a week of Bible study; instruction in evangelism, Sunday school work, and stewardship; and for the discussions of their church and community problems. 102

101

Ibid.

102

Ibid., 1946, pp. 17 - 18.

A new agency was delegated the responsibility for Negro Work in 1947 by the General Assembly. The Home Missions Committee summarized its activities as regarding Snedecor Memorial Synod in its final report for Negro Work in 1947. An excerpt from this report follows:

The churches of Snedecor Memorial Synod have received assistance from the Committee's building funds and the Synod has received its just share of the Home Mission Emergency Fund. That they might have the same advantages as others served by the Executive Committee, the ministers of Snedecor Memorial Synod were brought to Stillman Institute each year for a period of Bible study and instruction in evangelism, stewardship, and Sunday school and church work. Some of the ablest ministers and teachers in the Assembly gave freely of their time to this service. The facilities of Stillman Institute were made available for the Woman's Auxiliary Training School of Snedecor Memorial Synod and for the Young People's Conference.

These facts are given to show that the Negro Presbyterian ministers, churches, auxiliaries, and schools have not been neglected but have received every consideration as members of the Home Mission family and the Presbyterian household of faith.¹⁰³

Beginning of the Committee on Negro Work

In 1946, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States approved a recommendation of an Ad Interim Committee making Negro Work a separate department from the Home Missions Committee. A Committee on Negro Work was appointed to take over this responsibility on April 1, 1947¹⁰⁴

Alexander R. Batchelor was called to serve as Executive

¹⁰³ Ibid., 1947, pp. 53 - 54.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

Secretary of this new Committee. The Committee was given the responsibility of working through, with and for the Negroes of our Southland. Batchelor stated in his first annual report to the General Assembly that the work of this Committee was Negro centered. He further stated that the work was to be one of Evangelism, church building and Christian Education for the Negroes.¹⁰⁵

The ever present problem of adequate finance presented itself to this new committee on Negro Work in its first year of operation. Batchelor reveals it in his first annual report:

Soon after the year began, we realized that an error had been made in reference to expected funds for this committee. We were faced with the fact that at its best our percentage could be expected to produce only \$65,000. Although we were promised \$100,000, we received about half that amount. We faced the possibility of retrenchment, not advance, in Negro Work. Advance anywhere along the line was out of the question. Attractive offers of new work had to be rejected. Requests for new churches were filed for future reference. We could not support more churches; we must support fewer.

We could not do more for Stillman; we must do less. We could not raise the salaries of our Negro ministers; we might have to lower them. Nothing could be done to improve building equipment. Our receipts from the churches for the year totaled \$51,851.93. It became necessary to borrow to pay sixty-five Negro workers who looked to this Committee for full or partial support.¹⁰⁶

During this first year of service, the Committee on Negro Work had direct responsibility for Stillman Institute as the school was temporarily without a president. The Committee was ably assisted

¹⁰⁵ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of General Assembly, 1948, pp. 141 - 142.

¹⁰⁶,
Ibid., pp. 143 - 144.

by Dean B. B. Hardy and his faculty,¹⁰⁷

The second Annual Report of the Committee on Negro Work showed encouraging reports of the response made by the Church to the needs of this Committee. The Church manifested its interest through praying and giving.¹⁰⁸

Because it has always been the policy of the Committee on Negro Work that Negro Work is for, with and by Negroes, its work was directed toward a cooperative campaign of evangelism, and the development and use of Negro leadership.¹⁰⁹

Through the efforts of this Committee presbyteries and churches have responded by organizing new work for Negroes. Jackson, Mississippi, Okolona, Mississippi, and Beaumont, Texas, reported new work in 1949.¹¹⁰ Anderson, South Carolina and Greenville, South Carolina reported plans under way for the organization of Presbyterian Negro churches.¹¹¹

Many other evidences of progress have been noted since the establishment of the Committee on Negro Work. Among these were the one day Institutes planned for each church in Snedecor Memorial

¹⁰⁷
Ibid., pp. 144 - 145.

¹⁰⁸
Presbyterian Church, U. S., Reports of Assembly Agencies, 1949, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹
Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹⁰
Ibid.

¹¹¹
Ibid., 1951, pp. 78 - 79.

Synod. Batchelor gives this account of them:

For the first time since the establishment of this Division, planned effort was made to visit every Negro church in our Assembly. We dared attempt this goal because the reorganization of our Assembly's Work has lightened the administrative responsibility of this Division. We are especially indebted to the office of the Treasurer of the Board of Church Extension for assuming full responsibility for our finances and at the same time sensing the constant and unique need of this Division.

In cooperation with Mrs. A. L. Devarieste, field worker of the Board of Woman's Work, and L. W. Bottoms, Regional Director of Religious Education of the Board of Education, a series of One-Day Institutes was planned, which were to reach every Negro church in our Assembly. Although providentially hindered from accomplishing this goal in one year, we did reach about twenty-five local churches. The Secretary of the Division of Negro Work had separate conferences with pastors and officers of every one of these churches. It was a sample of the local contact so necessary to an understanding service for and with these earnest pastors and laymen of our Negro churches.¹¹²

The importance of increased emphasis on city work has been cited by Batchelor. An educated ministry and attractive buildings are necessary to appeal to an educated and cultural citizenry. The state of affairs in Snedecor Memorial Synod has been briefly summarized by Batchelor in the following statement:

There is a general population trend in the South, as in the whole nation, from rural to urban areas. Recent population charts indicate that strictly rural areas have had a decrease in population since the last census. This move has been stimulated by mechanization on the farm and by the development of industries in cities. This trend is having a serious effect upon our Negro churches. Two-thirds of the churches in Snedecor Memorial Synod are rural. During the last five years, the membership of Snedecor Memorial Synod has increased only 4 per cent. This does not mean that our Negro churches have failed in their evangelistic efforts. Last year's report indicated that they had a good increase of numbers during the year. It

112

Ibid.

does mean that those received into the churches, especially young people, are moving to cities. We have had few churches in cities to which they can go. It becomes evident that the development of urban Negro work is essential to the success of our whole program.¹¹³

¹¹³
Ibid., p. 79.

CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Church Service

From the beginning, the ministers of Snedecor Memorial Synod have endeavored to maintain a high standard in their worship service. In many cases their services were patterned after those of the white Presbyterian churches. In rare cases did the ministers allow the whim of their congregations to cause them to deviate from the high standard acceptable to the Presbyterian Church.¹

Because of the shortage of ministers and the distance to be traveled to churches, some congregations had preaching services only once each month. Still others had the services of a minister each Sunday. In the absence of the minister during the month, worship services were conducted by the elders and Sunday school was carried on.²

In most cases the service of worship was begun at approximately eleven o'clock and lasted approximately an hour and a half. The city churches had the advantage of choirs to lead in the singing. Many rural churches also had choirs, but some were forced to

¹ Interview with George W. Gideon.

² Interview with Thomas J. James.

rely on the pastor or other persons to lead in the singing. The hymns of the Church were predominantly used. The jazzy type gospel songs were usually frowned upon in most of the churches.³

Attendance at night services has been very limited. In most of the rural churches no night services were planned. Even in urban areas the night services which were planned often met with little success.⁴

The regular use of church bulletins is a standard practice in most of the city churches and some of the rural churches. Thus a dignified and orderly service is conducted with much conservation of time. The reception and dedication of the offering is included as a part of the worship services. It is only fair to state that there are some ministers who have become careless and allowed practices from other churches to seep in which are not always in keeping with the standards of the Presbyterian Church.⁵

Sunday Schools

The conducting of Sunday schools has been an important factor in the development of Snedecor Memorial Synod. Most of the churches were begun through Mission Sunday schools, in many in-

³
Ibid.

⁴
Interview with George W. Gideon.

⁵
Interview with Robert A. James.

stances conducted by white teachers. When the Sunday schools were taken over by the Negroes themselves, the problem of qualified leadership presented itself.⁶ This has continued to be a major problem throughout the history of the synod. In his report to the synod in 1944 as Chairman of the Religious Education Committee, W. J. Gipson made the following observation:

In the field of leadership training, we have not yet scratched the surface. Too few of our people are exposed to the right type of leadership training. The inadequately equipped department of Religious Education at Stillman is the primary source for most of our leadership training, and too few of our Presbyterian young people go there. The Conferences and Institutes have not been adequate to meet the needs.⁷

Religious Education generally did not receive too much consideration as such until Gipson became the chairman of the Synod's Committee on Religious Education. He labored earnestly in behalf of the religious education program of the synod during his stay in office. To his continued and sincere efforts is due much of the later progress of the synod in the area of religious education. In 1943 a Sunday school Extension Worker was employed for the summer months.⁸ During the summer of 1946, for the first time in the history of the synod, a Children's Worker was employed. Laboratory schools for Vacation Bible school workers were conducted and im-

⁶ Interview with Thomas J. James.

⁷ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod, 1944, p. 10.

⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

proved Bible schools resulted.⁹

Efforts to increase the numbers of qualified leaders for the Sunday schools have continued through summer conferences and through institutes of the local church, presbytery and synod levels. Though handicapped through the years because of lack of trained leadership, Sunday schools have been conducted through the synod by faithful persons who made up in diligence and consecrated service what they lacked in formalized training.¹⁰

Most of the churches of the synod have used the Uniform or Graded Lesson Series published by the Presbyterian Committee of Publication. The Sunday school has been and still is a vital part of the churches of Snedecor Memorial Synod. Many of the churches attribute their very continuance in existence to the fact that they were fortunate to have strong, well attended Sunday schools.¹¹

Growth in Sunday school enrollment throughout the synod has been negligible if numerical strength alone is to be considered. In 1918, according to the records, there were thirty-eight Sunday schools with a total enrollment of thirteen hundred and fifty-seven. In 1950 there were still only thirty-eight Sunday schools reported

⁹
Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod, 1947, pp. 11 - 12.

¹⁰
Interview with W. J. Gipson.

¹¹
Ibid.

with a total enrollment of twenty-four hundred and thirty-eight.

Young People's Work

Until 1935 there was no synod wide organization for the young people of Snedecor Memorial Synod. Some of the presbyteries had Sunday school Conventions annually, at which time the young people gathered. They followed no organized program of Youth Work, but had more or less general programs. Organized and functioning Youth Groups were very few in the local churches throughout the synod.

The Young People's League of Snedecor Memorial Synod was organized in 1935 under the sponsorship of Stillman Institute and its faculty. Six years later the president of this organization wrote:

In a very definite way we are being made to face the fact that we have at our disposal a great wealth of unused power in our church who are waiting anxiously to be used. The young people are no longer asking, "What's the use?" but are throwing back their shoulders and saying, "We must do something about it." What we need most is guidance in what to do and how best to do it.

Results of the training receives when the young people met once each year at Stillman were evident in the local churches.

¹² Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of the General Assembly, 1918, p. 271 and 1951, p. 304.

¹³ Interview with Geneva G. James.

¹⁴ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Reports of Assembly Agencies, 1941, p. 19.

Young People's Fellowship groups were organized and conducted successfully in many of the local churches.¹⁵

In 1946 Lawrence W. Battoms accepted the call to serve as Regional Director of Religious Education for Senebor Memorial Synod. This was the realization of a long time goal of the Synod's Committee on Religious Education. One of Bottom's first moves was to plan with this committee for a synod wide Young People's Conference.¹⁶

Youth Work witnessed a period of progress. The Young people's Synod's Council was organized along the lines of the new setup for young people as passed by the 1946 General Assembly. Adult advisers for this organization were elected.¹⁷ These organizations were also set up on presbytery and local church levels. Presbytery Rallies were held with competent leadership from both young people and adult advisers.¹⁸

The Synod's Council continues to meet each year. The Synod Youth Conference held annually at Stillman is an event toward which the young people anxiously look. Improvements in local Presby-

¹⁵
Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Senebor Memorial Synod, 1944, p. 9 - 10.

¹⁶ --
Ibid., 1946, p. 15.

¹⁷
Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁸
Presbyterian Church, U. S., Report of Committee on Negro Work, Reports of Assembly Agencies, 1949, pp. 10 - 11.

terian Youth Fellowships are evident as the result of these period of training and contact with other young people facing similar problems.¹⁹

Woman's Work

The first efforts toward Woman's Work in Snedecor Memorial Synod were the Colored Woman's Conference held annually at Stillman Institute. The first met in 1916 and its success led to the organization of others in other states several years later. An account of these conferences as given by Mrs. W. C. Winsborough, first Executive Secretary of the Committee on Woman's Work, Presbyterian Church in the United States, follows:

The original purposes of these conferences was to bring help in practical Christian living to colored women who were past school age, yet who wanted to help their race and especially their neighbors to build up a better community life. The sessions were conducted in the dormitory of a Negro college for a week during vacation. The faculty had both white and colored members, and the program included Bible study, home nursing, sewing, community betterment, sanitation, and allied subjects. The expenses of the delegate were usually borne by the local Presbyterian Auxiliary in the town from which she came, regardless of the denomination to which the delegate belonged. Later, many delegates paid their own way.²⁰

Some of the results of these conferences were noted by Mrs. Winsborough. The change in the heart and mind of most of the delegates was cited as being the most worthwhile result. Another

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Interview with W. J. Gipson.

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Hallie Paxon Winsborough, Yesteryears (Atlanta: Committee on Woman's Work, Presbyterian Church, U. S., p. 143.

far-reaching result was the change in attitude toward the Negro race by many white women who through a sense of duty had served in these conferences. One of these is recorded as saying, half laughingly, yet with glistening eyes and a break in her voice:

I think I never really 'got religion' until I spent that week trying to help those colored women. It was an experience I shall never forget.²¹

Doubtless the most lasting result of the conferences for Negro women has been the organization of Negro presbyterials, auxiliary to the four presbyteries of Snedecor Memorial Synod. In response to a request which went to the Auxiliary Office from the Negro women for the organization of presbyterials efforts were begun in this direction.²²

The four presbyterials were organized as follows: North and South Carolina, December 9, 1925; Central Alabama, December 15, 1925; Central Louisiana, April 10, 1926; and Ethel in the fall of 1938. Each has held annual meetings since its organization. Though organized, these women had no training in effectively carrying on the work of the presbyterial.²³

Mrs. S. H. Askew, Field worker of the Committee on Woman's

²¹ Ibid., p. 150.

²² Ibid., p. 151.

²³ Louise B. Miller, Growth of the Work with Negro Women, Presbyterian Church, U. S. (Atlanta: Committee on Woman's Work, n.d.), pp. 6 - 7.

Work, visited some of the Negro groups in the Assembly. She saw the need of working more closely with these groups and brought the matter to the attention of the Assembly's Committee on Woman's Work with the hope that a full time worker might be provided for them.²⁴

This hope of Mrs. Askew and the Committee on Woman's Work became a reality in 1942. The Auxiliary Birthday Offering was designated for work among the Negroes of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A portion of this gift was used for the employment of a Field Worker for the women in the Negro churches of the Assembly.²⁵ Miss Louise B. Miller, a missionary on furlough from Korea, was chosen for this service.²⁶

That Miss Miller entered her work with a keen insight into the needs of the people she was to serve is evident from her first report:

As I have visited eleven churches in the two Presbyterials of Snedecor Memorial Synod the impression has continued to grow that to our friends of that Synod are due a great deal of credit for the quiet, earnest way in which they are carrying on. These groups are for the most part, far separated and so miss the stimulus of contacts with fellow Christians whose Church program is the same. This is, of course, a handicap and often leads to a certain amount of discouragement. The churches

²⁴
Ibid., p. 3.

²⁵
Ibid.

²⁶
Presbyterian Church, U. S., Report of Home Missions Committee, Report of Assembly Agencies, 1943, p. 17.

in which one finds the most alive organizations are those few in places where white Christian friends of the same denomination are genuinely interested in them.

The Southern Presbyterian Negro men and women are seeking to know and carry out our church's program in the same way that the stronger Synods are doing. In that they need not only understanding, sympathetic friendship, but also wise guidance in the use of all the splendid materials provided by every agency of the church. If the stronger white churches need special workers in every branch of their work to interpret this material and put it to use, surely the weak isolated Negro churches must have help.²⁷

Prior to Miss Miller's coming as Field Worker, the only avenue which had been open to the Women of Snedecor Memorial Synod for training in the business and activities of an auxiliary or presbyterial was the Christian Conference sponsored by some of the synodicals. As these were interdenominational, the Presbyterian program was not stressed. Many times few Presbyterian women were chosen to attend these conferences. Those who did soon realized the great need of the women of the synod for further training in the Church's program.²⁸

This need was met in a measure through the visits of the Field Worker, but this proved inadequate. To broaden the opportunities for training, in 1943 the four presbyterial presidents for the first time were privileged to attend the Woman's Auxiliary Training School at Montreat, North Carolina. At Montreat they

²⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁸ Louise B. Miller, op. cit., p. 4.

gained new and broader vision of the work.²⁹

Since only four women attended the Montreat Training School, other plans were set in motion that every woman in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. might have an opportunity for training. In August, 1944, the first Woman's Auxiliary Training School was held for the women of Snedecor Memorial Synod. The program of that first school was set up by the Secretary of Woman's Work and members of the Staff of the Committee on Woman's Work. Sixty-six women from ten states attended. Of this number fifty-eight were members of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A total of one hundred and twenty-one credits was given at this first school.³⁰

With the exception of 1945 when war time travel restrictions prevented the gathering, annual Woman's Training Schools have been held at Stillman since 1944. Woman's Work has moved forward as a result of these periods of training. Evidences of growth have been seen in the local churches as well as in the presbyterials. More women have assumed leadership responsibilities.³¹

In July 1946, the Committee on Woman's Work and the Woman's Advisory Committee approved the appointment of a Negro Assistant Field Worker for Snedecor Memorial Synod. Mrs. A. L. Devarieste of

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 4 - 5.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

³¹ Arena L. Devarieste, Presbyterian Negro Women's Work, 1946 - 1950 (Atlanta: Committee on Woman's Work, Presbyterian Church, U. S., n.d.) pp. 1, 2.

the Berean Church in New Orleans, Louisiana, was chosen for the position. Because of her affiliation with the nursery school of the Berean Center in New Orleans, Mrs. Devarieste agreed to divide her time equally between the two services until June, 1947, at which time she became full time Field Worker.

For many years after the organization of the presbyterials, the women of Snedecor Memorial Synod looked forward to the time when they might be organized into a synodical. How this dream became a reality has been recorded by Mrs. Devarieste:

During the meeting of Central Alabama Presbyterial, April 9 - 10, 1948, the question of Blessing Box offerings was discussed by the executive board. One of the women conceived the idea that if four presbyterials are to continue pooling the Blessing Box offerings for some definite objective, there is a need for an organization of the four groups. A recommendation was made by the executive board to the presbyterial which was adopted and sent to the other presbyterials for consideration and approval, if approved by each executive board. The approval of the Committee on Woman's Work was asked for and after the regular procedure on such matters, including reference to the Woman's Advisory Committee, the Committee on Woman's Work approved the organization of the Snedecor Memorial Synodical. The Snedecor Synod had hoped for such approval and had recommended that the organization be approved.

On August 23, 1948, the organizational meeting was called to order by the Secretary of Woman's Work, Miss Janie W. McGaughey, who presented Mrs. H. D. Haberyan, representative of the Committee on Woman's Work, to conduct the meeting. A provisional Constitution and By-laws was adopted after which the Snedecor Memorial Synodical was organized. The following officers were elected:

Mrs. W. T. Ford, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, President

Mrs. Moses E. James, New Orleans, Louisiana, Vice-President

Mrs. H. A. Martin, Montgomery, Alabama, Secretary-Historian

Mrs. Vaughn Parrish, Scotlandville, Louisiana, Treasurer

A budget of \$150.00 was presented and adopted. The first project of the synodical was establishing a Scholarship Fund for assisting a worthy boy or girl to attend Stillman College, to be financed by Blessing Box funds.³³

The growth and development of woman's work in Snedecor Memorial Synod has been well summarized by Mrs. Devariate who has labored earnestly as a servant of the Church. Her statement follows:

An annual meeting of the synodical has been held each year since the organization. There is now a complete staff of officers. Two part-time scholarships have been given, as well as contributions made towards the purchase of the synod's mance for the regional director.

The women assume responsibilities in the Woman's Training School at Stillman, serving as teachers, leaders of recreation and worship services. The president, along with others, presides at the evening meetings. They also assist with the registration.

The women are serving as adult advisers in the local churches, in the presbyteries and in the synod. They serve as counselors in youth conferences. Some have prepared articles about the Training School and other conferences which have appeared in Church publications. Some serve as representatives on the Planning Committee for Training School. Eight hold diplomas from Training School.

Honorary Life Memberships are still being given. Almost every past presbyterial president in Snedecor Memorial Synodical has been so honored. One of the first Honorary Life Memberships was given by the women to Miss Louise B. Miller, first Field Worker with Presbyterian Negro women, who served in that capacity for five years, 1942 to 1947. The present Field Worker has been so honored.

There are now forty-eight organized Women of the Church groups throughout the General Assembly. The women are more and more realizing the blessing and joy there are in being good stewards. They are more willing to give their time, talents and possessions that the work of the Church might progress.³⁴

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Arena L. Devariate, op. cit., pp. 3 - 4.

34

Ibid., pp. 4 - 5.

Men's Work

The year 1947 was an eventful year in the history of Snedecor Memorial Synod. The laymen embarked upon a program that had met with little success in previous years. This fact is revealed in the report of W. J. Gipson as chairman of the Synod's Committee on Religious Education in 1944:

Organized Men's Work as such has not functioned very well, because this phase of our Religious Education program was one of the last we approached. However, we do have a number of churches with Men's Bible Classes. We have a few churches with Men's Organizations functioning in an organized form. Here we especially urge the churches to give more prayerful study to adult education in order that out adults may become more aggressive in the promotion of Men's Work and Bible classes.³⁵

Three years later a dream long cherished by Gipson became a reality as was indicated in his report to the 1947 meeting of the synod:

The objective of Men's Work is to inform and activate every man for whom the local congregation is responsible. Red tape is cut to a minimum. Organizational details are for practical purposes only, therefore are flexible and adaptable to local situations.

The Men's Work in our Synod has made definite progress although it still has a long distance to go. The first Men-at-Stillman Conference was held August 1 - 3 at Stillman with about fifty men present. These men represented thirty churches with a total man power pool of seven hundred. The Regional Director was in charge of the conference. . . . The first organization of the Men-at-Stillman was formulated.³⁶

³⁵ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod, 1944, p. 10.

³⁶ Ibid., 1947, p. 12.

After its organization, Men's Work grew and developed. Batchelor reported to the General Assembly in 1948 that the Men's program which has meant so much to the Church as a whole was finding a place in the Negro church. Thus advanced another phase of development in Snedecor Memorial Synod.³⁷

That the organization of the laymen of Snedecor Memorial Synod continued to make advancements is indicated in the report of the Regional Director to the 1949 meeting of the synod:

The Men of the Church also sounded the note to go forward. The Council of the Men-at-Stillman met in Atlanta last January. The men on the Council found understanding of what was expected of them. The Men's Conference this year was the result of their planning. While the number of men present was not as large as it should have been, the program was very outstanding.

The Council has also inspired and guided in the presbyteries the work which is gradually taking form. The Atlanta district of the North and South Carolina Presbytery is doing an outstanding piece of work.

We need to work for a fuller developed Men's work in the presbyteries and for a larger attendance at the Men-at-Stillman Conference.³⁸

³⁷ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of the General Assembly, 1948, p. 146.

³⁸ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod, 1949, p. 17.

CHAPTER IV

DISSOLUTION AND FINAL MEETING

Factors Leading to the Dissolution

Leaders throughout the Church have been concerned for many years about the apparent lack of growth of Snedecor Memorial Synod. Walter L. Lingle expressed his concern in an article entitled "What Would Jesus Do". In considering the attitude of the Church toward Negro Work during the years, he stated:

For the most part, we have approached this work with an attitude of superiority. In our work we have kept the Negroes reminded by word and deed that we consider ourselves their superiors. This may work after a fashion in some departments of life but not in religion. It would be better if we were to leave the question of superiority to the Lord who is a better judge than we. His estimate might surprise us.¹

Lingle also pointed out the difficulty of maintaining an effective synod when the churches involved were scattered throughout the entire South. Hundreds of miles had to be traveled to attend synod meetings. The presbyteries faced the same problem. This problem was even greater because of stringent financial conditions under which the members of the synod lived.²

In his consideration of the problem faced by Snedecor Memorial Synod, Lingle proposed a suggestion for the Church to think

¹ Walter L. Lingle, "What Would Jesus Do", The Christian Observer 138:3, March 29, 1950.

² Ibid.

about. He prefaced his suggestion by stating that he was concerned in this article only with the religious problems and not the social, economic and political race problems. The following excerpts are from his article which reverberated throughout the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and was one of the major factors which lead to the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod:

From a practical as well as a Christian point of view, the time has come when we will have to abolish the color line in our religious work if we wish to reach the present generation of Negroes. Perhaps we do not realize that the whole level of Negro education is being raised, and that thousands of graduates are going out from their high schools, colleges, and universities every year.

.....
 It is my conviction that the time has come when we will have to do our religious work among the Negroes of this generation on terms of Christian equality or not at all. We will have to remember that the ground around the Cross is level.

Now let me venture a suggestion for our Church to think about. We have tried various methods in our religious work among the Negroes and none has seemed to be very successful. There is one plan that we have not tried. Why not dissolve Snedecor Memorial Synod and its Presbyteries and receive their ministers and churches into what we have chosen to call our white Presbyteries? Let the Negroes retain their local churches where they can best develop their own leadership. But let the ministers and elders who represent their churches become members of our Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly on equal terms. A few of our Presbyteries have already tried that plan and seem to have found it mutually helpful.

In that event the Negro churches would receive aid from the home mission agencies of the Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly just as other churches do. By thus combining the help and co-operation of all the agencies, our Church might be able to reach the Negroes in a much larger way than we have ever done before. I wonder what would Jesus do. We certainly need to seek the mind of Christ more earnestly than ever before.³

³
Ibid.

Lingle's writing provoked serious thought by concerned and interested people of the Assembly. Manifestations of the considerations and deliberations which the matter of Snedecor Memorial Synod received came to the 1950 General Assembly in the form of overtures from variously located presbyteries. Their overtures follow:

(33) The Presbytery of Lexington-Ebenezer overtures the Ninetieth General Assembly that the General Assembly adopt in some practicable, workable form the ideas on elimination of the Synod of Snedecor Memorial and the several Negro presbyteries along the lines outlined by Dr. Walter L. Lingle in his article appearing in the April 10th issue of the Presbyterian Outlook.

(34) Whereas, there is a growing feeling that the Negro churches ought to be a part of the white presbyteries in which they are located;
Whereas, this procedure is Christian;
Whereas, this would eliminate long distances and extra travel to Church courts;
Whereas, this would manifest a real spirit of Christian unity and would enable the whole work to make far better progress;
Therefore, the Presbytery of Brazos respectfully overtures the General Assembly to take specific action toward the abolition of the Snedecor Memorial Synod and make possible the integration of the Negro presbyteries and the white presbyteries.

(35) The Presbytery of Lexington respectfully overtures the General Assembly: To study carefully the matter of the dissolution of the Snedecor Memorial Synod and its component presbyteries and their integration into other existing synods and presbyteries of our Church.

(72) The Presbytery of Kanawha respectfully overtures the General Assembly: That it dissolve the Snedecor Memorial Synod, and receive our Negro churches and ministers into full fellowship with the white presbyteries, in which they are geographically located.

(77) The Presbytery of West Hanover respectfully overtures the General Assembly to abolish the Snedecor Memorial Synod and its presbyteries, and to integrate its churches into the presbyteries within whose bounds they are now located.⁴

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Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of General Assembly, 1950, pp. 31, 32.

The following recommendation was passed by the 1950 General Assembly:

That overtures 33 from the Presbytery of Lexington-Ebenezer, 34 from the Presbytery of Brazos, 35 from the Presbytery of Lexington, 72 from the Presbytery of Kanawha, and 77 from the Presbytery of West Hanover, all with reference to the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod, be placed in the hands of the Board of Church Extension with instructions that it study the whole matter and bring back recommendations to the next meeting of the General Assembly.⁵

The matter of Snedecor Memorial Synod was before the Board of Church Extension at each of its meetings during the following year. The matter was presented to the presbyteries involved, should the dissolution be effected, and to the Snedecor Memorial Synod by the Secretary of the Division of Negro Work. Each group availed themselves of the opportunity for questioning and discussion.⁶

The recommendations which follow came as the result of the careful and prayerful deliberations of the Board of Church Extension.

As we have endeavored to discover God's will in this matter, in the light of what would be best for our Negro churches, their pastors and members, and as we have tried to sense the dominant desire of our Church, we have been led to the conclusion that we should at this time dissolve Snedecor Memorial Synod, but that we keep our Negro presbyteries. This can be a forward step that may mean much to our Negro Work.

We therefore recommend:

1. That Snedecor Memorial Synod be dissolved.

⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

⁶ Presbyterian Church, U. S., Report of Board of Church Extension, Reports of Assembly Agencies, 1951, p. 105.

2. That the name of North and South Carolina Presbytery be changed to Georgia-Carolina Presbytery; and that the Synod of Georgia be asked to receive it as one of its Presbyteries; and that Grant Chapel, Darien, Georgia, and Second Church, Thomasville, Georgia, be transferred from Central Alabama Presbytery to Georgia-Carolina Presbytery.

3. That the Synod of Alabama be asked to receive Central Alabama as one of its Presbyteries.

4. That Central Louisiana and Ethel Presbyteries be combined to form Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery and that the Synod of Louisiana be asked to receive it as one of its Presbyteries.

5. That the Negro churches be considered a region for the promotion of Religious Education and Women's Work; and that representatives of this region be included in Assembly planning groups; and that its name be Snedecor Region.

6. That Stillman College be asked to establish a lecture series that shall be a time of fellowship and spiritual refreshment for Negro ministers; and until this lecture series be endowed that the three Negro presbyteries, the Board of Church Extension, the Board of Education and Stillman College be asked to bear the cost.

7. That this plan become effective immediately following the approval of the Synods involved.

8. That Snedecor Memorial Synod be asked to set up the Snedecor Region plan.

9. That the Board of Church Extension be given the responsibility for carrying out the plan.

These recommendations represent our best thought in this matter. They are brought to the Assembly for its consideration. The Board of Church Extension stands ready to follow the Assembly's directive along these or other lines.

Prior to the meeting of the General Assembly in 1951, the Snedecor Memorial Synod met in a call meeting at the Westminster Church, Birmingham, Alabama, on April 12. The Secretary of the

⁷
Ibid., pp. 110 - 111.

Division of Negro Work presented the paper, "Shall We Dissolve Snedecor Memorial Synod and Its Presbyteries?". After much discussion and deliberation the synod voted to be dissolved, subject to the approval of the General Assembly. The changes in presbyteries as suggested by the Division of Negro Work were approved.⁸

At the 1951 meeting of the General Assembly, the Division of Negro Work of the Board of Church Extension presented the recommendations which have been previously listed with this addition:

That the General Assembly appoint a commission with the power to dissolve Snedecor Memorial Synod when the synods and presbyteries involved have taken the actions contemplated and defined.⁹

The report of the Board of Church Extension, including the recommendations regarding Snedecor Memorial Synod, was adopted by the General Assembly.¹⁰ After the adjournment of the General Assembly, the Moderator appointed the following Judicial Commission on Snedecor Memorial Synod:

Rev. Harry K. Holland, Chairman; Ministers: J. L. Plexico; A. E. Dallas, Jas. I. Paisley, Wm. T. Baker, E. B. Wooten, W. H. McIntosh, W. E. Phifer, C. D. Patterson, Dwight M. Chalmers, J. B. Ledford, B. O. Wood, J. K. Roberts, G. H. Patterson. Ruling Elders: E. B. Van Keuren, Dr. W. C. Tate, Adrian Williamson, H. C. Morris, E. H. Nicklies, E. O. Harder, Jr., R. B. Winchester, Sam Criswell, J. J. Norton, J. J. Love, Earl A. Brown,

⁸
Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of Snedecor Memorial Synod, 1951, p. 2.

⁹
Presbyterian Church, U. S., Minutes of General Assembly, 1951, p. 84.

¹⁰
Ibid., p. 74.

C. Raine Sydnor, Frank L. Taylor.

The report of this Judicial Commission of the General Assembly on the matter of Snedecor Memorial Synod follows:

The Commission appointed by the 1951 General Assembly to dissolve Snedecor Memorial Synod was officially notified by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly that all of the conditions relative to this action have been met, namely -

1. Snedecor Memorial Synod took the following actions:
 - A. Changed the name of North and South Carolina Presbytery to Georgia-Carolina Presbytery.
 - B. Transferred Grant Chapel, Darien, Georgia, and the Second Church, Thomasville, Georgia from Central Alabama Presbytery to Georgia-Carolina Presbytery.
 - C. Combined Central Louisiana Presbytery and Ethel Presbytery and formed Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery.
 - D. Voted its approval of the General Assembly's plan for its dissolution.
 - E. Sent an overture to the Commission requesting that the above changes not become effective until April 1, 1952.
2. Synod of Alabama voted its approval of the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod and expressed its readiness to receive Central Alabama Presbytery as one of its constituent presbyteries.
3. Synod of Georgia voted its approval of the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod and expressed its readiness to receive the newly named Georgia-Carolina Presbytery as one of its constituent presbyteries.
4. Synod of Louisiana voted its approval of the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod and expressed its readiness to receive the newly formed Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery as one of its constituent presbyteries.

This information was submitted to the members of the Commis-

sion by mail, and they voted to answer Snedecor Memorial Synod's overture in the affirmative and to dissolve Snedecor Memorial Synod as of April 1, 1952.

Since the Synods and Presbyteries involved have taken the actions contemplated and defined in the General Assembly's recommendations, the Commission hereby declares Snedecor Memorial Synod dissolved as of April 1, 1952.

As a matter of procedure, the Commission suggests that Snedecor Memorial Synod hold a meeting as soon after the close of the current Church year as possible to conclude any unfinished business, and to effect the new Presbytery organizations.¹²

The report of this Commission has been included in its entirety because of its obvious importance in the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod. A letter from the Chairman of this Commission stated that the action of the Commission was unanimous.¹³

Reaction of the Church at Large

The question of the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod evoked varied reactions throughout the General Assembly. There was a small but persistent group which strongly advocated the establishment of an independent Negro Presbyterian Church.¹⁴ Another group was in favor of maintaining the status quo, waiting for time and Providence to make the changes.¹⁵

The men of Snedecor Memorial Synod wanted it clearly under-

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Harry K. Holland, letter to the investigator.

¹³

Ibid.

¹⁴

Presbyterian Church, U. S., Report of Board of Church Extension, Report of Assembly Agencies, 1951, p. 109.

¹⁵

Ibid., p. 110.

stood that they were not seeking a change which would bring personal benefits or privilege, but were seeking for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

Reactions of individuals in the Church were recorded by the Presbyterian Outlook as these persons responded to the question, "Do you favor the abolition of Snedecor Memorial Synod and the transfer of ministers and churches to those (white) presbyteries in whose bounds they are located?" Their statements follow:

J. R. McCain, President Agnes Scott College - This would be my personal preference, but I think those who have the responsibility for Negro Work ought to formulate and present plans for changes.

Alex. R. Batchelor, Assembly's Director of Negro Work, Atlanta - There is a great need for a more wholesome contact between Negro and white Christian leaders. As I see it, this is a "must" for the days ahead. If this will accomplish it, I am all for it.

Leon R. Anderson, Negro minister of Charlotte, North Carolina - Yes. The Negro minister needs all the experience and support of the Church at his disposal. Inferior training, inadequate tools to do a difficult work in an isolated environment is asking for the impossible.

W. J. Ginson, Negro minister of Jackson, Mississippi - I would favor the move if the white presbyteries concerned were to declare themselves unconditionally ready for this step.

Harry M. Moffett, Minister, University Church, Austin, Texas - Yes. The present set-up presents an insurmountable obstacle to work among the Negroes from the standpoint of travel and finance in addition to keeping the Church at large ignorant of the need and possibilities.

L. W. Bottoms, Regional Director of Religious Education for Snedecor Synod, Atlanta - Yes. The church is a psychological

organism - the Body of Christ - made by God; not a man-made organization. It is not psychologically healthy for either part of the body to be divided on the presbytery or synod level because of race. A weak synod like our Negro synod cannot carry the gospel to its race. The Negro congregation can be the fist, but it needs the strength from the arm of the synod and presbytery in which the Negro church is located.

Albert C. Holt, First Church, Jacksonville, Florida - No, not now. Sooner or later this troublesome problem will work out. Too much bitterness to force it now.

C. H. Williams, Negro minister of Tuscaloosa, Alabama - Definitely. I am wholeheartedly in favor of the abolition of Snedecor Memorial Synod and the transfer of its ministers and churches as stated above. It will not only strengthen Negro work, but it will mean much to our entire church.¹⁷

Reactions of other individuals to the matter of the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod were found in the Letters to the Editors column of the Presbyterian Outlook. Wm. H. Williams of Little Rock, Arkansas, wrote:

Three cheers for Dr. Lingle. It is reassuring that a venerable and esteemed leader of our denomination takes a positive stand - and at this time - upon abolishing Snedecor Synod.

May this come to pass promptly and in a spirit which will indicate to our Negro brethren that our church wants and needs them and appreciates their long-suffering patience and almost inconceivable loyalty.¹⁸

From Radford, Virginia, came the following reaction:

I would like to express my opinion that Dr. Batchelor has done a very objective piece of research, and it seems from his report that the fairest step at present would be to dissolve

¹⁷ "About Snedecor Memorial Synod", The Presbyterian Outlook, 132:4, May, 1950.

¹⁸ W. H. Williams, "To the Outlook", The Presbyterian Outlook, 132:2, May 22, 1950.

Snedecor Synod but leave the presbyteries intact, looking toward the dissolving of the presbyteries later.¹⁹

Despite the scattering of individuals in the Assembly who opposed the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod, the action taken by the 1951 General Assembly to approve this dissolution is indicative of the consensus of opinion of the majority.

Final Meeting

Ministers and elders of the dissolved Snedecor Memorial Synod met in the Brown's Memorial Church, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Friday, April 25, 1952. The purpose of this meeting was to conclude unfinished business of the synod. Presbyteries were also instructed to complete unfinished business and to effect the new presbytery organizations.²⁰

In accordance with the plan of action drafted by Alexander R. Batchelor, Secretary of the Division of Negro Work, and approved by E. C. Scott, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the presbyteries followed these procedures:

Central Alabama Presbytery will take the following action: In accordance with the action of the Commission of the General Assembly and the approval of Snedecor Memorial Synod, Central Alabama Presbytery hereby dismisses Second Presbyterian Church, Thomasville, Georgia, and Grant Chapel Presbyterian Church, Darien, Georgia, to the Presbytery of Georgia-Carolina as a

¹⁹ Josephine Stewart, "To the Outlook", The Presbyterian Outlook, 132:2, December 25, 1950.

²⁰ Interview with W. J. Gipson.

part of the procedure in dissolving the Synod of Snedecor Memorial and reorganization of the Presbyteries.

It will be necessary, of course, for Central Alabama Presbytery to elect a new Clerk. Central Alabama Presbytery is to become a member of the Synod of Alabama.

The following action will be taken by the Georgia-Carolina Presbytery: In accordance with the action of the Commission of the General Assembly and the approval of Snedecor Memorial Synod, Georgia-Carolina Presbytery hereby receives into its membership the Second Presbyterian Church, Thomasville, Georgia, and Grant Chapel Presbyterian Church, Darien, Georgia.

In accordance with the action of the General Assembly and approved by the Synods of Georgia and Snedecor Memorial, the Presbytery of Georgia-Carolina is to become a part of the Synod of Georgia.

The following action will be taken by Ethel Presbytery: In accordance with the action of the Commission of the General Assembly and the approval of Snedecor Memorial Synod, Ethel Presbytery hereby takes action merging our presbytery with Central Louisiana Presbytery to form Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery and adjourn this meeting to meet as the new Presbytery this afternoon at 3:00 p. m. o'clock, at which time the new presbytery will be organized.

By common consent of the Moderators and Stated Clerks of Ethel and Central Louisiana Presbyteries, L. W. Haydel will convene the meeting of the new presbytery and preside through its organization. The Presbytery of Louisiana-Mississippi is to become a member of the Synod of Louisiana.

The following action will be taken by the Central Louisiana Presbytery: In accordance with the action of the Commission of the General Assembly and the approval of Snedecor Memorial Synod, Central Louisiana Presbytery hereby takes action merging our presbytery with Ethel Presbytery to form Louisiana-Mississippi Presbytery and adjourn this meeting to meet as the new presbytery this afternoon at 3:00 p. m. o'clock, at which time the new presbytery will be organized.

By common consent of the Moderators and Stated Clerks of Ethel and Central Louisiana Presbyteries, L. W. Haydel will convene the meeting of the new presbytery and preside through its organization.²¹

²¹

Interview with E. C. Scott.

The climax of this one day's session was a banquet where the members of the newly organized presbyteries had fellowship with representatives of the synods which had received them as constituent members. The representatives were as follows: Robert H. Walkup, E. L. Nelson and Albert B. Link of the Synods of Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana respectively. Other representatives were: Frank A. Mathes, Vice-Moderator of the General Assembly and Samuel B. Hay, President of Stillman College. William Holmes Borders, pastor of the Wheat Street Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, was the guest speaker for this occasion.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The Organization and Early Development. This investigation has been concerned with a history of Snedecor Memorial Synod, the only Negro synod in the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Factors leading to the organization of Snedecor Memorial Synod had their origin in 1861 when the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America was organized. The evangelization of Negroes was delegated to the Executive Committee of Domestic Missions. Although this committee carried on its work faithfully during the war years with great hopes for the future, the lack of a definite policy of procedure greatly hindered its efforts in meeting the problems resulting from the emancipation of the slaves.

In 1869 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, adopted a plan for organizing Negro congregations with Negro elders and deacons under the supervision of white pastors. This plan was never effective because it was designed to keep the Negro in the same position he occupied prior to the war between the States. After five years, in response to overtures from the Synods of Mississippi, South Carolina and Memphis, and the Presbytery of East Hanover, the General Assembly adopted a policy for the establishment of a separate and independent Negro Presbyterian Church to be pastored by Negro ministers. Presbyteries were encouraged to seek

men of suitable piety for this ministry and to make financial contributions for the establishment of Negro churches. The ultimate goal was the formation of presbyteries, synods and finally a General Assembly.

In due time churches and presbyteries were organized but the realization of the goal of independent synods and eventually a General Assembly was hampered by the lack of interest in Negro evangelism. Further hindrance was the lack of unity among the ministers of the Negro presbyteries.

In 1891 there were six organized presbyteries, five independent and one a constituent of the Synod of Mississippi. A. L. Phillips was appointed by the General Assembly to visit the Negro ministers and churches in an attempt to bring about the necessary cooperation to make possible the organization of an independent church. E. W. Williams, in his campaign for the support of a separate church, met with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1897 and presented a request to call a convention to make plans for the organization of a separate church. The convention was called in 1897 and the Afro-American Synod was organized on May 20, 1898, in the Berean Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, Louisiana. The growth of this Synod was very slow and discouraging.

In 1915 the Executive Committee of Home Missions overtured the General Assembly to consider the status and work of the Negro presbyteries and churches in order to devise some definite policy

for future development and a better plan for coordinating them for mutual counsel and help. This step was taken in 1917 when the Afro-American Synod was reorganized into the Snedecor Memorial Synod as a member of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

The Snedecor Memorial Synod was composed of four presbyteries, thirty-seven ministers and fifty churches. This synod was under the supervision of a General Superintendent of Negro Work, maintained by the Home Missions Committee. Commissioners from Snedecor Memorial Synod attending the General Assembly were theoretically on equal standing with all other commissioners, but that ideal has never been actually realized.

Five of the ministers from Snedecor Memorial Synod served with distinction on foreign fields and many others served faithfully of the home front.

Stillman Institute was organized in 1876 for the purpose of training men for the gospel ministry. Elementary grades were later added and continued as a part of the curriculum until 1939. The school became co-educational in 1922. The junior and senior high school departments were added in 1926 and in 1927 Stillman became a junior college. The high school department was dropped in 1939 and Stillman became a four year college in 1950.

The General Assembly in 1946 adopted a recommendation creating a separate department for Negro Work, known as the Executive Committee on Negro Work. In 1950 it became the Division of Negro Work

under the Board of Church Extension. Alexander R. Batchelor became its first executive secretary and continues to serve in this capacity.

Religious Education. The Ministers of Snedecor Memorial Synod endeavored to maintain a high standard for their worship services. Most worship services were begun at approximately eleven o'clock and lasted approximately an hour and a half. Because of the shortage of ministers some churches had preaching services only once or twice a month.

The Sunday school has always been an important factor in the development of Snedecor Synod, many of the churches having been begun through mission Sunday schools. When Sunday schools were taken over by Negro leadership, the problem of training arose. This problem has been foremost throughout the history of the synod and has never been adequately solved.

The Young People's Work of Snedecor Memorial Synod was organized in 1935 under the sponsorship of Stillman Institute and its faculty. This organization was known as the Young People's League of the Synod. Local churches followed in organizing youth groups. Presbytery and Synod Councils were later organized. The first Synod's Youth Conference was held at Stillman Institute in 1946 and has continued until the present. Youth work was reorganized along the lines approved by the General Assembly and the organization became known as the Presbyterian Youth Fellowship. These conferences at Stillman were designed to lead the young people into the right

relationship with God through the program of the Church .

Women's Work in Snedecor Memorial Synod had its beginning in 1916 under the influence of Mrs. W. C. Winsborough, the first Executive Secretary of the Committee on Woman's Work of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. A Christian Conference for Negro women was held at Stillman Institute in 1916 and was the forerunner of similar conferences sponsored by several synodicals in later years. These conferences were interdenominational and were designed to help the women to lead better Christian lives in their communities. In 1925 the first presbyterial was organized and the other three presbyterials soon followed. The synodical was organized in 1948. The first Training School for the Women of Snedecor Memorial Synod was held in 1944 and has been held each year since with the exception of 1945. Its program is designed to train the Women in the program of the Church.

There were no organized efforts on the synod level to relate the men of Snedecor Memorial Synod to the program of the Church until 1947 when the men met at Stillman Institute in the first Men-at-Stillman Conference. Since this first conference, local churches have organized their man-power and men of the Church groups began functioning.

Dissolution and Final Meeting. For many years leaders throughout the Church were concerned with the apparent slow growth of Snedecor Memorial Synod. Walter L. Lingle's article in the Christian Observer, 1950, was a clarion call to the Church to con-

sider the work of its Negro constituency. Echoes came from many quarters of the Church. After the General Assembly placed the matter of the dissolution of Snedecor Memorial Synod in the hands of the Board of Church Extension, the Assembly approved the recommendations of the Board in 1951 that Snedecor Memorial Synod be dissolved and its presbyteries become members of white synods.

A small group insisted that a separate Negro church be re-established while the majority agreed that Negro presbyteries be intergrated into white synods. A minority in Snedecor Memorial Synod opposed its dissolution. A commission appointed by the 1951 Assembly voted in November, 1951, that Snedecor Memorial Synod be dissolved March 31, 1952. Therefore Snedecor Memorial Synod now occupies its rightful place in the annals of history.

Conclusions

The major conclusions growing out of this study are:

1. From its organization in 1917, though handicapped by limited formal training and financial support, the ministers of Snedecor Memorial Synod have labored faithfully and courageously to maintain the high standards of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.
2. The continual shift in population from rural to urban areas and the fact that two thirds of the churches in Snedecor Memorial Synod are located in rural areas have been contributing factors to the slow growth of this synod.
3. The accomplishments of Snedecor Memorial Synod may appear meager when compared with stronger synods but when all circumstances are considered, it is amazing that the Synod managed to survive as long as it did.
4. Ministers and laymen of white congregations, receiving the call to work in Snedecor Memorial Synod, have labored courageously for the growth and development of the synod.
5. Stillman College, formerly Stillman Institute, has played a major role in the development of leadership in the Snedecor Memorial Synod.
6. One inevitably is led to the conclusion that far greater

and more effective work in the advancement of the Kingdom of God among Negroes would have been possible had this area of the Church's program received adequate support, interest and encouragement through the years.

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Rev. G. W. Gideon, Atlanta, Georgia.

Rev. W. J. Gipson, Jackson, Mississippi.

Rev. Harry K. Holland, Marietta, Georgia.

Mrs. Moses E. James, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Rev. R. A. James, Scotlandville, Louisiana.

Rev. T. J. James, Hartsville, South Carolina.

Dr. E. C. Scott, Atlanta, Georgia.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

MEETINGS OF SYNOD WITH MODERATORS

<u>A.D.</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Moderator</u>	<u>Presbytery</u>
1917	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	G. W. Gideon	North and South Carolina
1918	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	R.M. Golightly	Ethel
1919	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	A.D. Wilkinson	Central Louisiana
1920	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	Wm. Lee	Central Alabama
1921	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	A.J. Wilkinson	North and South Carolina
1922	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	C.B. Scott	Ethel
1923	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	J.W. Rice	Central Louisiana
1924	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	G.R. Cousar	Central Alabama
1925	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	G.S. Alford	North and South Carolina
1926	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	A.M. Plant	Central Louisiana
1927	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	J.H.M. Boyce	Central Alabama
1928	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	H.V. Green	Central Alabama
1929	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	J.A. Carr	Ethel
1930	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	T. J. James	North and South Carolina
1931	No meeting		
1932	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	W.J. Bishop	Central Alabama
1933	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	I.C. Harper	Ethel
1934	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	A.J. McQueen	North and South Carolina
1935	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	R.D. Roulhac	Central Alabama
1936	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	C.B. Scott	Ethel
1937	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	G.W. Gideon	North and South Carolina

<u>A.D.</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Moderator</u>	<u>Presbytery</u>
1938	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	I.C. Champney	Central Alabama
1939	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	L.M. Flournoy	Ethel
1940	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	J.H.M. Boyce	Central Alabama
1941	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	R.A. James	North and South Carolina
1942	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	P.L. Thomas	Central Alabama
1943	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	A.L. Edmiston	Central Alabama
1944	New Orleans, La.	G.W. Gideon	North and South Carolina
1945	Selma, Ala.	W.J. Gipson	Central Louisiana
1946	Hartsville, S.C.	M.E. James	North and South Carolina
1947	Heidelberg, Miss.	W.L. Densby	Central Alabama
1948	Tuscaloosa, Ala.	J.H.M. Boyce	Central Louisiana
1949	Scotlandville, La.	E.E. Newberry	North and South Carolina
1950	Mobile, Ala.	L.R. Anderson	Central Alabama
1951	Birmingham, Ala.	C.H. Williams	Central Alabama

Stated Clerks

1917 - 1918	A. J. McQueen	North and South Carolina
1918 - 1943	I. C. H. Champney	Central Alabama
1943 - 1947	L. M. Flournoy	Ethel
1947 -	R. D. Roulhac	Central Alabama

Permanent Clerks

1918 - 1943	L. M. Flournoy	Ethel
1943 - 1947	C. E. Tyler	Central Alabama
1947 - 1951	M. E. James	Central Louisiana