

By *Gaius C. Bolin, Jr.* *Proprietor*  
*E. T. Anderson*

For a person or an institution to reach one hundred years of existence is a noteworthy achievement and one meriting due and proper celebration and felicitation.

One hundred years ago is a long span and while the customs and beliefs of the people have changed somewhat in that time, nevertheless the everlasting truths upon which this church was founded and purposed to promulgate and to assist in placing on a more firm foundation in the world, remain the same.

To most of us to day the people and the events of one hundred years ago are mythical; we picture them to ourselves as being different from the people of the present, but in what way different we are unable to explain, but when we think or try to think of the people who formed the society of this church at the time of its founding and their manner of life, the same strange, mysterious feeling creeps over us as does when we read of the early history of America and the doings of the Pilgrim Fathers, but they were the same kind of people as we are to day, moved and motivated by the same impulses, with the same hopes, disappointments, joys and sorrows; the people, the human beings, are the same and the only things that have changed in this one hundred years are the customs, the beliefs and the manner of life.

One hundred years ago and on down the years the people of this church were more religious, more devout than those of to day and they had a sincere immovable belief in the existence of a Supreme Being and his dominion over the world and over the affairs of men and they lived for the most part a fearing life in accordance with their simple belief.

In the early days and down to within a comparatively recent period the church had three services a day on Sundays, besides the Sunday school and the minister was expected to and did preach three sermons each Sunday.

There were at least two nights each week when religious services were conducted, class nights and prayer meeting nights.

A great institution of the church here in Poughkeepsie and a part of its regular worship required by its Discipline or the resolution and acts of the conference under the jurisdiction of which the church functioned, was The Quarterly Meeting.

Quarterly Meeting Sunday was a banner day in the old Zion Church down on Catharine Street; on that day every member and every attendant at the church made it his and her business to be present at the services and people attended from all around the surrounding country, from out in our county, from Hudson, Kingston, New Paltz and other places in Ulster County, from Fishkill, Baxtertown, Newburgh, Peekskill and even New York City and Brooklyn.

Quarterly Meeting Sunday was a day when about every member of the church living in Poughkeepsie had company for Sunday dinner and every such person expected it, welcomed it, enjoyed it to the full and was always amply prepared for it so far as the gastronomic part of the day was concerned.

There are those living who recall those happy reunions at such times of those old time members and friends of Zion Church and it seems to day that they were beautiful from the sincerity radiating from every act and word of the participants.

On those occasions most always the presiding elder of the district would conduct the services and do the preaching, sometimes one or two visiting pastors besides the presiding elder would be present and sometimes the bishop himself would be present to carry on the services and you can be sure that on those old fashion Quarterly Meeting days God was praised in



on Church by supremely happy hearts. In the early part of the past seventy years distinguished bishops presided over the conference to which our church belonged, and they were distinguished for their ability, their learning, their character and their devotion to Christianity and the church.

Perhaps the most outstanding bishop over this church since its founding was bishop Joseph J. Clinton, a man of very distinguished appearance, with the bearing and the grace of a bishop, always immaculately garbed in ministerial attire, a wonderful executive and a learned, eloquent and convincing preacher.

He was the bishop over the conference to which this church belongs for a good many years and was probably one of the most respected and best loved minister anywhere.

There followed him as bishop Bishop Moore, a highly educated man of exceptional ability and although an humble, self effacing man modest and retiring in his general association with people he was one of the most learned and eloquent preachers of his time.

There are those living to day who recall that on occasions when it was announced in the daily papers that Bishop Moore would preach in Zion Church the city newspapers would send reporters to the church to report his sermons.

In the early days and on down through the years Zion Church has been blessed with earnest, sacrificing, hard working ministers, and it can be truthfully said that during the hundred years of the existence of The A. M. E. Zion Church in the City of Poughkeepsie the breath of scandal has never touched one of its ministers from the beginning down to the present time.

Perhaps they were not all highly educated either generally or theologically, but they were honest, sincere, God fearing men, leading their flock the best they knew how.

Among the old time ministers of this church are recalled the names of ~~Robert T. Thompson~~ ~~the~~ ~~man~~; Joseph R. Thompson, who was a distinguished looking man and had been educated both for the ministry and in medicine, he was both a preacher and a doctor of medicine; William H. Decker, who was presiding elder over this district for many years after his pastorate here, and Jacob Thomas, who was a forceful and eloquent preacher and one of the best executives in this conference.

Sixty odd years ago a minister by the name of Josiah Smith had charge of this church. He was a good man and a good minister, but a great stickler for being on time; he was a Canadian by birth and had been a cook on a whaling vessel for years before he became a minister and time was of the essence of everything he did.

When he first took charge of this church he told his congregation that the church services on sunday evening and sunday afternoons would start in the afternoons at four o'clock and in the evenings at 7.30 and on sunday evening when half past seven arrived promptly he would begin the services; maybe at half past seven there might be a half dozen persons in the church and they would be the old stand bys of the church; it did not make any difference at half past seven the services started, the hymn was given out, and if there was no choir and no body to start the singing of the hymn, he would start it himself and sing it himself, pray, announce his text and go ahead and preach.

In those days the major part of the congregation would come marching into the church somewhere from 8.15 to 8.30 and some of them later, and by the time the bulk of the congregation became comfortably in their seats Mr. Smith was announcing the closing hymn and pronouncing the benediction.

The congregation, the most of whom could have been in church on time, did not like this but Mr. Smith never stopped it, and by nine o'clock sunday evenings church was out.



The Rev. Mr. Smith had other ideas about time which some of those who are living today very vividly recall. Those old-fashioned ministers made regular calls on their parishioners through the week and one person now living in this city can really recall some times winter mornings when he would be starting the kitchen fire for his mother, hearing some one coming with a cane through the hall, leading from the front around to the kitchen door of his father's house, then a heavy rap on the door and when he opened the kitchen door lo! and behold there was Mr. Smith, making a pastoral call. He would come in wait for the rest of the family to get up and come down stairs and many times after breakfast was ready and he would be asked to breakfast his invariable and roguish reply would be "No I thank you, I have my breakfast in the morning"

But you can imagine the inward thoughts of a kid nine or ten years old up in the cold making the kitchen fire to have a social caller at that time in the morning always before seven o'clock and in the winter time too.

However, the old gentleman had travelled all over the world on board of ships, had been about in every country in the world, and he was a most entertaining and interesting person.

The old-time members of that early church some of them come back in memory, Isaac Deyo, Ann Gould, Mrs. Calder, the present William Haff's grandmother, Peter Atkins, the father of Mrs. Lena Anderson, and Mr. Atkins's wife, William Smith, the father of the late Mrs. Elizabeth Tunison, who too was a great worker in the church, Ann Lawrence, Robert Clair, Mary Ellen Hardenburgh, Abraham Bolin and his wife, Alice Ann Bolin, and many others who were ever faithful to the church and made many sacrifices in time and from their meager means to support and carry on the church.

One hundred years ago the inhabitants of this city who worshipped together and who finally founded this church worshipped in the old Lancaster School House which stood on the north side of Church Street between Market and Academy

and so on. At that spot that these early citizens of Poughkeepsie worshipped together and it was here that the A. M. E. Zion Church of Poughkeepsie, N. Y. was organized which is attested by the following public record, viz; KNOW ALL MEN by these presents that the male members of the congregation that statedly meets for divine worship at the Lancasterian School House in the Village of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County and State of New York, pursuant to due notice given did assemble at the aforesaid school house on the 12th. day of November, 1837, for the purpose of organizing themselves under the title of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Poughkeepsie, according to the provisions of an act of the Legislature of the State of New York for such purpose made and provided whereupon the Rev'd. William H. Bishop was called to the chair and William M. Dichasco, John Taber and Nathaniel Blount as inspectors of the election and John A. Cole was appointed secretary. The meeting then resolved to organize themselves under the above title and to elect three trustees who should serve for one year or till others be elected in their place.

Whereupon after balloting for that purpose the aforesaid inspectors declared that Ezekiel Pine, Uriah Boston and Peter Lee were elected to serve as the first trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Poughkeepsie.

Given under our hands and seals this 12th. day of November, 1837.

William H. Bishop, Minister. (L. S.)  
John A. Cole, Secretary (L. S.)

State of New York,

Dutchess County,

On this 12th. day of November in the year 1837 before me, Dav-