

Hall history

The Rev. Mr. Barrett first Central pastor

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Many ministers are at rest in our beautiful and historic Alta Vista. All of them have left a monument to themselves in our area either in church buildings or by inspiration of a Christian life.

The EAGLE, April 29, 1922, records the obituary of one of these "soldiers of the cross."

"Rev. J.L.R. Barrett...one of the best known and most beloved Baptist ministers in this section of the state died last Saturday, at the home of his sister Mrs. A.N. Cox, N. Bradford St., after suffering a stroke. The funeral was held at the First Baptist Church.

"Rev. E.F. Campbell was in charge. Tribute was paid to his memory in fitting talks by Prof. T.H. Robertson and W.I. Hobbs. He was 81 yrs. of age and had been a minister for 50 yr.

"He was connected with the Baptist State Mission Board for 40 years. Most of his work under the board was that of organizing new Baptist churches in Northeast Georgia.

"He had been a resident of Georgia practically all his life with the exception of four years served in the Civil War as a member of the famous Cobb's Legion.

"He was a brother-in-law of the late A.D. Adair of Atlanta having married his sister, Miss Mattie Adair, in 1870. He is survived by one sister, Mrs. A.N. Cox, and one son, E.D. Barrett of College Park."

How many new Baptist churches were organized by the Rev. Mr. Barrett is not known, but it is on record that he helped establish "Chestnut Street Baptist Church" and became the first pastor. This church was later-relocated and renamed. It is now known as "Central Baptist Church."

The "History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia with Biographical Compendium," c. 1881, p. 23, has an interesting write-up about this Baptist minister.

"JAMES LEGH RICHMOND BARRETT...he was born in Sumter County, S.C., but the greater part of his life has been passed in Georgia, as, when he was quite small, his father, William G. Barrett, removed to Clarke County, and settled near Athens. His pious and intelligent parents instruct-

ed him not only in the principles of individual and social ethics, but also in the higher duties growing out of our relation to God and to eternity.

"...Grace wrought together with parental fidelity and he 'found Christ, or rather was found of Him', at so tender an age that when he was called on to lead in prayer, shortly after his baptism, the congregation was melted to tears by the simple, earnest pleadings of one so young.

"...Under the light of these (Christian) teachings, immediately after his conversion, he organized and conducted a Sunday-school at Buena Vista church, near his father's residence...Grace prevailed over nature (his feeling highly unworthy) and he was licensed to preach by the Buena Vista church. He received instruction in theology from Dr. P.H. Mell, of Athens, until an opportunity presented itself of attending the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He passed through two sessions at this institution, and his standing in his classes was good, but feeble health prevented his remaining longer.

"On leaving the Seminary, he acted for several months as city missionary of the Second Baptist church, Atlanta. (This is now the wealthy Second Ponce de Leon church) In this field he labored hard, and was instrumental in building up the McDonough street and West Hunter street missions. He was unanimously called to the pastorate of the Lawrenceville church in 1874. He served acceptably several churches in Gwinnett County; married Miss Mattie S. Adair, and estimable and pious young lady of Gainesville, Ga., and accepted the pastorate of the church at Mayaville, Jackson County, a flourishing little town on the Northeastern Railroad.