

# Historic Center Arbor

— *Built in 1876* —

## Named to National Register of Historic Places in 1991

Center United Methodist Church dates back to 1830, the period when there were great Revival Meetings in the area. A Revival was held in the home of James Penry, about two miles west of this location, and there the group of Methodists which became Center United Methodist Church was organized. Daniel Dwiggins, a local preacher, was one of the early leaders.

The first deed recorded is November 14, 1833, when John Smith, party of the first part, conveyed to the Methodist church in the United States of America, two acres on the Wilkesboro Road in Rowan County. Davie County was created three years later, in 1836, from Rowan County.

The first church, a log structure, was built where the cemetery is now located. In 1872, a wood structure was built just in front of the arbor, and in 1931–1932, it was moved just west of the present church and remodeled. The construction of the brick church was begun in 1953 and completed in 1956. The wood structure was removed in April 1956.

During the early years of Center United Methodist Church, the membership found it necessary to have a camp meeting site. One of the early leaders in this movement was the Reverend Vincent Walker, another local preacher in the area, and a member of the church. Rev. Walker lived to age 92 and is buried in the cemetery.

**The Arbor was completed August 26, 1876.** The logs for the structure were cut on the Billy Tutterow farm, about two miles south of the Arbor on Hunting Creek. As you will notice, the structure is put together with wooden pegs in the “timber-frame” style. The citizens of the community cut the logs, hewed the ones that needed it and fit the structure together. There was originally a board roof on the building made of hand-hewn boards. Simeon Gowans, a native of the community, nailed on the last board. People came from great distances and camped out for the camp meetings held here each year.

The board roof was replaced with a metal roof in 1923 and new benches with backs were put in the Arbor. The structure began spreading, and it was decided to put threaded rods in the Arbor and this was done under the supervision of Brice P. Garrett, a local woodworking shop owner. About 1925, church member Luther M. Tutterow, whose home and separate general store stood across the road from the Arbor, installed a Delco Power System for his home and store and also had lights installed in the Arbor. That system lighted the Arbor until Duke Power began service to the area in 1933.

After the Camp Meeting days the Arbor was used each year the first Sunday in September for the Christian Harmony Singing. During the early thirties, when the people who could sing songs from the Christian Harmony Book began to get past singing, the service was changed to Homecoming. Great throngs of people came to the Center Arbor to worship and fellowship.

On June 6, 1976, the United Methodist Churches of Davie County held a Methodist Bicentennial Service under the Arbor. The service involved all the churches in Davie County. During the month of May, 1976, with a grant from the Davie County Board of Missions and Church Extension (and other funds) the stage pews were repaired, and the building was painted.

The Arbor was used for many Homecomings from 1955 until 1976. On Sunday, September 5, 1976, Walter Anderson, a prominent Layman in the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, of Raleigh was the speaker as Homecoming was once again held under the Arbor. After the service a bronze plaque was dedicated to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Arbor.

The Arbor has been repaired several times since 1923. In 1941 the German siding replaced the old weatherboarding, and windows were installed at the back of the stage. The structure was painted white, and the roof has been painted several times. In May of 1989 a storm which produced a tornado in nearby Farmington blew off several pieces of the metal roof and that damage was repaired. Around 1991 some renovations were undertaken by church members in which the flooring on the stage was replaced along with some of the smaller beams and some steel plates were added in a couple of areas to strengthen some original beams. At this time the windows on the back of the stage were replaced with wooden louvers which were hand crafted by church member Lawrence Carter (the grandson of Brice P. Garrett). During this time Greensboro TV reporter, Roy Ackland, featured the Arbor and the volunteers remodeling it on his segment titled “Roy’s Folks.”

On September 3, 1991, the Center Arbor was named to the National Register of Historic Places. On Sunday, April 26, 1992, the Arbor was rededicated in a Service of Celebration. A plaque was dedicated commemorating the Arbor as a Historic Building on the National Register.

In the spring of 2004 a large wind storm swept through the area and seriously damaged the Arbor. The high winds estimated at 70+ mph ripped off a large portion of the Arbor’s old hand-crimped metal roofing. The extensive roof damage and some other structural damage required the entire roof to be replaced. A new standing-seam metal roof was installed to resemble the older hand-crimped roof.

The Arbor continues to serve the community hosting Homecomings for Center United Methodist Church, housing exhibits for the community’s annual Center Fair, an occasional wedding and various other events in addition to holding its place as a local landmark and one of Davie County’s most historic buildings.