



FREEDOM HILL CHURCH



“No slaveholder can be a Christian!”



A mile south of here is the site of Freedom Hill Wesleyan Methodist Church, a simple frame building that measured 27 by 36 feet and was dedicated in March 1848. When local residents sent a plea for a minister to the Wesleyans in Ohio in 1847, the Rev. Adam Crooks accepted the call. Among the most outspoken of southern abolitionist groups, the Wesleyans held to the principle that no Christian could in conscience own slaves, a position similar to that of the Quakers. Confrontation with the dominant

slave-owning society here was inevitable. Pro-slavery mobs attacked the congregation and fired small arms at the church door. The sanctity of the pulpit was no protection, but the congregation and Crooks refused to renounce their beliefs.

Members of the congregation were active in the Underground Railroad and thereby put their property, families, and lives at risk. Nearby are several hiding places that runaway slaves used. During the Civil War, members of the congregation concealed deserters, draft resisters, and escaped Federal prisoners of war. If they had been caught, they would have been confined in the Confederate prison in Salisbury. North Carolina's government did not acknowledge the Wesleyans as pacifists, in contrast to the official attitude toward the Quakers. Conscription wagons took many Wesleyans away to forced military service.

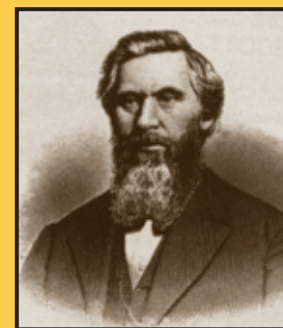
The old church has been moved twice, and now stands on the campus of Southern Wesleyan University in Central, South Carolina.



Bullet-riddled door to church, ca. 1970s – *Courtesy North Carolina Office of Archives & History*



Freedom Hill Wesleyan Methodist Church, photo ca. 1950s
Courtesy Friends Historical Collection, Guilford College



The Rev. Adam Crooks – *Courtesy Southern Methodist University*

The Rev. Adam Crooks (1824–1874), who came to North Carolina from Ohio in 1847, was tarred and feathered in effigy, beaten, poisoned twice, barred from speaking at the courthouses in Guilford and Forsyth counties, and jailed in Randolph, all for his faith. He asked his congregants, “Can you give your life for the cause?” In 1851, North Carolina forced him to leave, but he had already planted Wesleyan abolitionist churches in North Carolina and Virginia. The physical abuse he endured contributed to his early death.