

Rev. W. C. Campbell, D. D., Celebrates the Fortieth Anniversary of Pastorate

The congregation of the First Presbyterian church of Roanoke, Va., very fittingly celebrated, July 2-4, 1921, the completion of forty years of service by its pastor, the Rev. William Creighton Campbell, D. D., as its pastor.

On Saturday, July 2, 1881, Dr. Campbell arrived at Roanoke, and on the following day, Sunday, July 3, 1881, at 11 o'clock, preached his first sermon to the congregation from second Corinthians 13:5.

As an introduction to the celebration the congregation held a reception at the manse of the church from 6 to 10 P. M. on Saturday, to which all the congregation and friends of Dr. Campbell were invited. Delicious ice courses were served by a bevy of young girls. In the receiving line with Dr. Campbell were his daughter, Miss Mary Campbell; his son, Mr. Creighton Campbell, and wife, of Bluefield, W. Va.; Miss Amelia McKown, of Martinsburg, W. Va.; a niece, and his other son, Mr. L. B. Campbell, of Philadelphia, Pa. (His other daughters, Mrs. Greenland, of Fort Wayne, Ind., and Miss Anna Campbell, of China, being unavoidably absent). During the hours mentioned the manse was crowded with guests more than four hundred having called, to honor their pastor and friend. The guests, upon arriving, were given souvenir books, containing events which transpired during the forty years Dr. Campbell has served the church as its pastor, and also a brief history of the former pastors of the church, together with a brief statement of its organization.

At the morning service on Sunday, July 3, 1921, Dr. Campbell occupied the pulpit and preached to a crowded church. Dr. Campbell prefaced his sermon with a short statement that in preparing the sermon, which would be suitable to the occasion, he was overwhelmed with material for its fabrication, and he was met with difficulty in eliminating that which should be left out and using that which should be put into it.

Dr. Campbell reviewed briefly the history of the city of Roanoke, of the First Presbyterian church, and en passant some of the events that have happened during these forty years. Dr. Campbell came to a village of less than 900 people in 1881, and has seen that village grow to a city of more than 60,000 during the forty years he has been here. The membership of the Presbyterian church of Roanoke, which greeted him on July 3, 1881, of less than 100 members, has grown until the mother church has a little short of 1,000 members, and there are seven other churches or missions that have been created from its membership.

Dr. Campbell also briefly mentioned some things personal to himself, stating that his ancestors had occupied the same lands in Northern Virginia for nearly 200 years, showing that they were not much inclined to change, and that the "tinge in his blood possibly accounts for the protracted stay in this place." He mentioned some of the representative men of the early days of his ministry in Roanoke, and pointed out how few of them have not "passed over the river." He paid tribute to the noble men who had preceded him as pastor of this church: Urias Powers, Henry M. White, James P. Smith, Alfred Jones, John S. LeFevre and John C. Dinwiddie. Of the elders and deacons of the church in 1881 there were three of the former and four of the latter, all have gone to their reward. Of the membership of the church the speaker could recall only thirteen now living. The church now has twenty elders and twenty-two deacons.

During these forty years Dr. Campbell has been called to other fields and other work, and was also tempted to engage in business and speculation which presented attractive opportunities for accumulation of wealth. But all of these he has steadfastly turned away from and has remained in the service of his God and this church and its congregation. He rejoiced with its people when they rejoiced and wept with them when they wept.

At the night services it was the original intention of the committee in charge to have the only surviving predecessor of



Rev. W. C. Campbell.

Dr. Campbell, the Rev. James P. Smith, D. D., to preach, but owing to the great age of Dr. Smith he could not attend, and failing to get another speaker, Dr. Campbell preached from the same text used on July 3, 1881, to-wit, 2 Cor. 13:5; subject, "Self-Examination."

On Monday, July 4, 1921, at 8 P. M., there was a general reception held at the church, to which all the congregation and friends were invited. Short addresses were made by prominent church and business people filled with reminiscence and felicitations to Dr. Campbell. At the conclusion of the services the congregation presented Dr. Campbell with a handsome purse.

The press of the city took cognizance of the anniversary of its pastor by the First Presbyterian church in their news column and editorially, and also printed in full his Sunday morning sermon.

Dr. Campbell's Sermon.

This is a very unique occasion to the most of you as it is to me, as very few of you have attend-

ed the fortieth anniversary of a pastor. To-day I am standing almost to the minute where I stood forty years since and preached my first sermon in this community. July 3, 1881, 11 A. M., I reached Big Lick a little after midnight of July 2d, and I stopped for the night at the Neal House, located on the north side of the railroad at its intersection with Commerce Street. At that time the freight station, express office, telegraph office and the post-office were all under the same roof of a building that stood where the present old freight station is. The volume of business done at that time may be inferred from the fact that one man, Mr. George Rhodes, personally attended to all of the business done. The day was made memorable to me because of a telegram flashed over the wires that Mr. Garfield, the President of the United States, had been assassinated that day in Washington City.

Only Thirteen Remain.

I can recall the names of some who sat before me that morning of July 3d. All but thirteen are either dead or removed and residence unknown. Of the thirteen only nine are now connected with this church and living within its bounds. The elders of that day and the deacons are all gone.

Since I stood before this congregation forty years ago we have passed through a wonderful period, eventful to me, to you and to our country and to the world.

Born in Valley of Virginia.

Just a word about myself. I was born in the Valley of Virginia and in the county of Berkeley, and in a little town called Gerardstown that lies at the foot of the beautiful North Mountain. From that mountain the Valley stretches eastward for twenty-five miles to the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountain. The space between the mountains is a charming rolling section of fertile lands with its attractive homes and towns and cities.

My father's family have lived in that section for 180 years. The old home, now owned and occupied by a relative of the same name, has been in possession of the family for 159 years. My mother's family, with the prefix "Van" to the name, were from Holland, and have lived within sight of the same mountain for nearly 200 years. It will be seen that I have come from stock not much inclined to change. That tinge in my blood possibly accounts for the protracted stay I have made in this place.

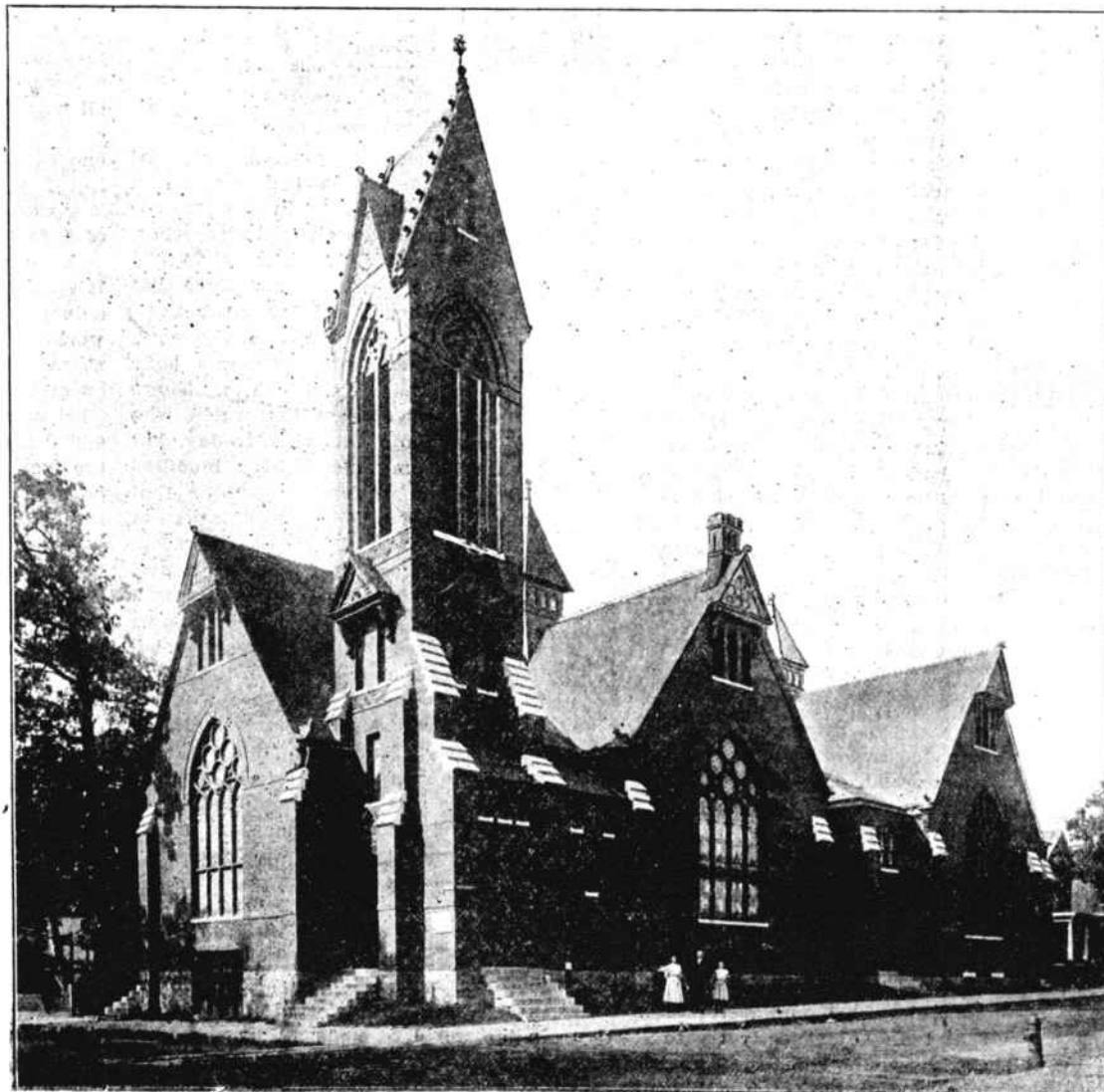
My ancestors were patriotic, and took part in all the struggles of our country. My great-grandfather was a captain in the Revolutionary Army. My grandfather was a major in the War of 1812. My mother had two brothers in the War with Mexico. My own father joined a company in the Civil War, but a delicate constitution made it impossible for him to serve. My own son spent nearly two years in the army in France during the late World War.

I was taught in the schools of my native town.

I was brought up in a Presbyterian community, and the church and the school house stood side by side. My teachers were nearly all college men or ministers of the gospel. I graduated from Hampden-Sidney College in 1876. Three years later I graduated from Union Theological Seminary, Virginia. I was principal of Duffields Academy for one year. For two years I preached in Harper's Ferry. I was called to pastorate of this church in 1881.

Was Then Big Lick.

Roanoke at that time was called Big Lick. It was a small place of about 900 people. Commerce Street and Salem Road and Franklin Road were its streets. Roanoke was then a small place set down in the midst of wheat and corn fields and meadow lands and wood lands that came to the edge of the town. To-day a thriving city of 60,000 people like a jewel encircled by its ring of emerald greets the eye. The Big Lick of forty years since is the Roanoke of to-day with its stately buildings, its thronged streets, bustling with traffic, its trolley cars, its autos and its hurrying crowds. The business of the place was small. It had a few stores and the usual trades of the small town, black-



First Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Va.