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The horrific institution of slavery dominated the cultural and economic climate of pre-Civil War North Carolina. However, I want to shed light on a brighter aspect of our state's history by sharing a story of activism, bravery, and steadfast faith executed by a small community of North Carolinians that has been obscured and forgotten. Located in Alamance County, Freedom's Hill Wesleyan Methodist Church was the first Wesleyan abolitionist church in the South, dedicated in March 1848 (Freedom's hill church). Standing at only 27 by 36 feet and made entirely of logs, Freedom's Hill served as a symbol for the church's seemingly small beliefs standing against an entire institution and culture of slavery, with doors bearing bullet holes as a physical reminder of intimidation (Nicholson). Though the original building has been relocated, the foundation of rough field stones remains intact and standing strong. And just like the congregation, their little building withstood the wrath of angry mobs and is still standing to this day.

Freedom's Hill Church was founded by Adam Crooks, a Wesleyan Methodist minister who "loved God and hated slavery" (Adam Crooks (activist)). Crooks felt a calling from God to found a church in the South with a congregation of courageous, anti-slavery Christians. Wesleyans like Crooks and his congregation held the belief that no Christian could own slaves, as this directly violates the Biblical rules and actions that God calls Christians to live by (Marker: Freedom Hill Church: "no slaveholder can be a Christian!"). This new denomination held similar beliefs to the Quakers, but were not seen as pacifists by any means. The Wesleyan Methodists were instead very outspoken and not afraid to stir up tension in order to make change (Nicholson). Though Crooks planted the church, he could not carry out its mission on his own, and had a steady support system of local North Carolinians to depend upon. Some of these names include Hugh and Simon Dixon, William Thomson, Ira Hinshaw, Macajah and Phoebe McPherson, Alfred Vistal, and George Councilman. Unfortunately, most of the female members and wives are not mentioned by name.

As any abolitionist in the pre-Civil War South, members of Freedom's Hill Church faced extreme adversity for their beliefs and activism. Racist mobs shot at the church doors and attacked the congregation (Marker: Freedom Hill Church: "no slaveholder can be a Christian!"). Members were tarred and feathered, kidnapped, poisoned, jailed, and lynched. But even so, Freedom's Hill never wavered in its beliefs. Members also took immeasurable risks by participating in the Underground Railroad and resisting the Confederates on their home turf, hiding draft dodgers and prisoners of war from local authorities. If members of Freedom's Hill were caught for any of these crimes, they would be locked up in the Confederate prison, located just minutes from my school in the heart of Salisbury.

One Freedom's Hill member who was specifically targeted was Macajah McPherson, one of the three original church trustees (Nicholson). McPherson was attacked by angry mobs of pro-slavery vigilantes and lynched. Miraculously, McPherson survived the hanging, and was nursed back to health by his wife Phoebe, an avid church member and abolitionist herself. Macajah McPherson's grandson Monroe Roach went on to continue the legacy of his grandfather and Freedom's Hill. With Roach's help and blessing, Central Methodist Church was gifted a gavel in 1975 made from the wood of the branch that McPherson was hanged on (Nicholson). In that same year, Rev. R. H. Kindschi, the pastor of Neighbors Grove Wesleyan Church, repaired Freedom's Hill, and it is currently located on Southern Wesleyan University's campus (Freedom's hill church).

Freedom's Hill is a living reminder that North Carolinians must not remain silent in the face of injustice. If these average citizens could stand up to slavery while risking their lives, then we have an obligation to advocate for disadvantaged people today. My father is an ordained Wesleyan minister and currently pastors a local Methodist church. He originally introduced me to Freedom's Hill, and says that its legacy transformed the religious atmosphere of North Carolina denominations. Freedom's Hill inspires him as a pastor and others, religious and non

religious alike, to continue fighting for equal rights and advocating for justice in our state.



Works Cited

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