

A CHURCH IS BORN

(Edited copy)

In the Beginning

Situated as it was, along the Alabama border, Carroll County had become the buffer between the Indians to the West, and the settlers to the East. It was not uncommon for renegade Indians to approach a settler's house in an attempt at trade, even though banned from the State by law. Destitute after losing their vast land holdings, the Indians were willing to swap fresh-killed game for anything of value that the settlers had to offer, especially salt, sugar, and tools of all types. For fear of antagonizing the red men, the trades were usually made, even though the meat sometimes had to be destroyed, because of its poor quality.

By the year 1830, the population of Carroll County had grown to over 4000, with many of these new settlers migrating from counties to the South, bringing with them letters from their home churches. In July, of that year, a group of brothers and sisters, with their cabins built and their crops planted, had a desire to constitute themselves into a Baptist congregation. They called for the services of Elders James Reeves, John Frye, Moses Kelly, James Majors, and John Wood to form a presbytery to inspect their credentials. Finding them to be orthodox and orderly in faith and practice, the new church was constituted on July 17, 1830 as the Carrollton Baptist Church. Charter members were James Dowdy, John Williams, Thomas Sanford, Thomas Dowdy, Anah Hicks, Polly Williams, Sarah Dowdy, and Polly Chandler.

A conference was called immediately, in which James Dowdy, a previously ordained deacon, was named as deacon of the new body. Thomas Sanford was appointed clerk pro-tem. A petition was submitted to the Western Association for membership. The Western Association, at that time, consisted of 16 churches from Coweta, Troup, Meriwether, and Campbell counties. At the next meeting, Elder James Majors was called as the first pastoral supply.

During the conference in August 1830, a committee was appointed to locate a building site for the meeting house. It is doubtful that a church house was built, at this time, since there is no record of such, and the constituted church would quickly move to another location.

The first years were hard on the new congregation, as well as other Carroll County residents. Winters were characterized by extremely cold temperatures and heavy snows. In 1831 the ground was constantly frozen for two months. A late frost in April killed the vegetable crops. The ensuing years from 1832 to 1835 brought little relief from the harsh winters. In February of 1835, the temperature fell to a record 3 degrees. Together with the weather, the Spring flooding of streams, the fear of marauding Indians, and the lack of roads, it was sometimes difficult to attend services. As a result, only four meetings were recorded in 1830, eight in 1831, five in 1832, and seven in 1833.

Church records show that meetings were scheduled for the first Sabbath of each month, with conferences to be held on the Saturday before. The Lord's supper was to be held at least once each year, usually in August. The communion service consisted, then, as it still does today, of taking of unleavened bread, and pure wine. Another part of the service, given by Jesus as an example, was the washing of Saint's feet. While some churches may not practice "foot washing", Tallapoosa still believes that this is an important part of the service.

As was customary constituted churches would sometimes extend "Arms" to various locations when requested, to accommodate distant members, where travel was a problem. During the early years, Tallapoosa extended such "Arms" to the Eleventh district in May of 1833, to Isiah Beck's in May 1843, and to Soloman Holloway's in June 1848.

The last meeting held at the old location was in May of 1833. In June of 1833, the constituted church was moved to its 'Arm" in the Eleventh district. Also, at this time, the name was changed to Tallapoosa Baptist Church, reputedly after the Little Tallapoosa river where baptisms were conducted.

Discord Among the Baptists

Early in the nineteenth century a schism developed among the Baptists that was to affect their fellowship for years to come. The seeds of this discord however was sown two centuries earlier.

Jacobus Arminius, after studying under the French theologian Theodore Beza, became a professor of theology at the Leiden University in Holland. While he believed in the doctrine of predestination, he focused more on God's love than on God's power as relating to election.

Beza, on the other hand, upheld John Calvin's views on God's eternal decrees and the centrality of predestination in God's divine plan. He also believed in the doctrine that God determined the saved and the damned before the fall of Adam. He also advocated the absolute sovereignty of God, and the justification by faith alone, as taught by the apostle Paul. The King James version of the bible was based on Beza's work.

Upon the death of Arminius in 1610, a group of his followers introduced a theology based loosely on his teachings. They contended that election was conditioned by faith, that grace could be rejected, that the work of Christ was intended for all people, and that it was possible for true believers to fall from grace.

In 1784, Andrew Fuller, considered by some to be the founder of the New School, or Missionary Baptists, published a book titled "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation". In this book, Fuller maintained a general atonement with special applications, and urged that the gospel be freely offered to all people. He further taught that eternal life depended on the will of the person being saved rather than the grace of God, that no predestination exists, and that all people were free to accept or reject the gospel. These views moderated

and modernized Calvinism, but involved Fuller in a controversy with his brethren for over twenty years.

During the years from 1829 to 1837, bitter controversy arose over the establishment of such enterprises as Sunday schools, theological seminaries, bible societies, state conventions, mission boards, and others. Opposition was sweeping the country, led by such anti-missionaries as John Blackstone, James Gray, Jordan Smith, and Claborn Bateman. Widespread publicity by Elder Gilbert Beebe, in his publication "The Signs of the Times" also helped fan the flames of dissention.

Individual churches, as well as Associations were caught up in this bitter struggle, with long lasting results. In 1819 Hephzibah and Piedmont Associations passed non-fellowship resolutions against those supporting such enterprises. In 1830 Ocmulgee Association withdrew from the state convention because of the convention's support of such enterprises.

A formal and final split occurred in 1837 when many churches, desiring to remain with the New Testament teachings of salvation by grace, rejected these new innovations and came to be known as Old School, or Primitive Baptists. Those embracing the new teachings were called New School or Missionary Baptists.

During the first few years, Tallapoosa and her sister churches within the Western Association, were able to keep themselves aloof from the so-called mission controversy. In 1835 however, discontent reared its ugly head. Some of the leaders in the association were leaning toward the movement and member churches were faced with the choice of supporting these activities or actively opposing them. In 1837 Tallapoosa, along with ten other churches, left the Western Association because of its support of these enterprises. These eleven churches formed the Primitive Western Association. It was not until 1840 however, that a formal resolution was drafted censuring all those who advocated any of the "benevolent" enterprises.

Near the end of 1840, Tallapoosa, along with ten other churches, left the Primitive Western Association to form the New Hope Association. During the Association's meeting in 1841, in order to sever all ties with the Missionary Baptists, the New Hope Association, including Tallapoosa, took the title of Primitive Baptist.

Even though Tallapoosa Church was constituted in 1830, no record can be found of a meeting house being built until 1840. In conference on July 25, 1840, a committee, consisting of Whitaker Butler, John Warren, and William Avera, was appointed to locate and purchase land for this purpose. Records show that a five acre tract from land lot 58, in the tenth district was acquired from John Avera on May 4, 1841. The first building was purported to be a one room cabin. In 1848, a school was built across the road on church property. A few years later the school was moved to a location near the present site of Old Camp Methodist Church. About 1900 the school was rebuilt from materials salvaged when the Methodist church was remodeled.

During this time, slaves were encouraged to attend church by their masters. A special area was set up for them near the back of the church. Many of these were converted, and joined Primitive Baptist churches. From 1841 to 1848, Tallapoosa listed nine black brothers and sisters on membership roll.

Winds of War

Over the years, differences had developed between the Northern and Southern regions of the country over political and economic issues. Foremost among these were states rights and slavery. By 1860, the controversy had become intense that compromise was impossible. With the election of Abraham Lincoln, as president in 1860, on a platform denying the extension of slavery, eleven states, including Georgia, seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America. Hostilities erupted with the firing on Fort Sumter by Confederate forces. Against seemingly impossible odds, the Confederate States survived for four years, finally surrendering in 1865.

Prior to the war, in Georgia, four out of nine persons were slaves, and many of the Whites lived a very Spartan lifestyle. Property was centered in the hands of a few, with one-tenth controlling nine-tenths of the wealth. Share cropping and tenant farming were substitutes for paid farm labor.

While there were no major battles fought within Carroll County, at least three raids by Union forces were reported. The first two, under Stoneman and Posseau, did little damage. In April of 1865, ten days after Lee's surrender, a detachment of 5000 men from Sherman's army camped just West of Carrollton. These troops, under the command of General Crexton, ransacked the town as they passed through, burning all the buildings from Rome street to Alabama street.

While it would be almost impossible to list all those that served during the war that had ties to Tallapoosa Church, a few have been identified:

- James C. Attaway - Served with the Army of Northern Virginia. Wounded and discharged in November 1861
- Eli Cole- Joined the Army of Tennessee in 1862. Later discharged.
- Jonathan Holcombe- Joined the Army in 1861. Later discharged under exemption in July 1861.
- James Johnson- Joined the Army in May 1862. Deserted in July 1863
- James J. Johnson- Served with the Army of Tennessee. Wounded in Mississippi .
- George Simpkins- Joined the Army in October 1861. Discharged in April 1862. Reenlisted in the Georgia Volunteers in May 1862. Captured in Greensboro in April 1865, but released.
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- Hardy Wiggins- Joined the Army of Tennessee in March 1862. Wounded and captured at Vicksburg. Released and recaptured at Nashville.

The close of the war brought little relief to the area. Tallapoosa Church records indicate that very few meetings were held during this period. Only three members were received between 1860 and 1865. Only twenty two were received during the ensuing decade.