

1856 - 1956
Alexander Methodist
CHURCH

Centennial Homecoming

September 23, 1956

CENTENNIAL HOMECOMING

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FOREWARD

Since a significant occasion, the centennial anniversary, is now occurring in the Alexander Methodist Church, we of the church feel that it will be worthwhile to compile a little of the history of the early church in order that the many friends and supporters of Alexander will have some of the old information which is in danger of being lost with the passing of another generation.

Much of the information that is herein compiled was secured from older members of the church. Many incidents related are second-hand information, and their veracity must only be assumed. In this pamphlet there is no intention to slight any one who made a significant contribution to the church. Neither is there any abusive purpose in repeating any of the incidents related. This does not begin to be comprehensive in its scope; it merely represents a compilation of fragments of information from the storied past of a rural church which has grown up with its neighbors, and which, through the years, has brushed against the passing eras of time.

We are especially grateful to the Reverend Fred Dibble, a former pastor who has diligently worked to compile much of the information which is produced here. Our thanks go also to Mrs. Gladys Bishop, the typist, whom the present pastor of Alexander feels proud to claim kinship with.

It is my hope that this little pamphlet will stir the memories of the old friends of Alexander, and win new friends as well.


Clifford C. Edge, Pastor
Alexander Methodist Church

Early Days

With its roots deeply embedded into the past of Brazos County, the Alexander Methodist Church stands upon a high hill overlooking the giant oak trees and the well kept cemetery beside a brook, as it has done for one hundred years. Time has not effaced the tranquil beauty of this setting, but the years have wrought so many transitions in the lives of those who have been faithful to the church.

It is hard for us to imagine that here was a church, a people, a way of life which had been established long before Bryan had its beginning. In this era before the railroad, Tabor was a stop on the stage line which ran from Wheelock to Booneville.

"Go West, young man," wrote Horace Greeley -- and Texas, a century ago was truly the frontier. It was Texas which was a "promised land" at that time, as California had been a decade earlier. The Civil War speeded this migration which brought to the Tabor area many of the families who were builders not only of one particular church, but of the whole region which they inhabited. A few of these early settlers whose lives have been through the years instrumental in the development of this area are the Tom Martin, C. A. LeFevre, John Leathers, Tom Holden, John Holden, Jeff Holden, W. H. Boyett, George Fullerton, E. W. Thompson, D. S. Purcell, and Hugh Henry families.

As the furrows were tilled, as home sprung up, and the laughter of children sounded forth, it was only natural that the inroads of civilization would bring -- the church! And so it did.

Robert Alexander

It was in 1854 when a little group first met under the guidance of the Rev. Robert Alexander, who was a noted circuit rider of a century ago. At the time of the founding of Alexander Church, Reverend Alexander was the presiding elder of the Huntsville District. Perhaps it is a tribute to the insight of this notable leader of early Methodism, when he saw the persons residing about the site of the present church, and recognized that here was a potential spot to plant a church - a church which was through the years to grow and flourish and become the Mother Church of cathedrals in cities not yet dreamed of.

Rev. Fred Dibble made an extensive research in the life of Robert Alexander, and pointed out that in the Carnegie Library in Bryan is a book, "The Life of Rober Alexander," which gives much information, that gives an insight into the era from which Alexander Church was born. In this history, according to Reverend Dibble, "It is stated that Robert Alexander, an outstanding leader in Texas Methodism for many years, was in 1854 presiding elder of the Huntsville District, and that during that year he organized Alexander Chapel in Montgomery County, and the following year enjoyed a stay in that locality."

Reverend Dibble in his travels journeyed to Montgomery County and interviewed representative members of families long established in that era who were well informed and of sufficient years to remember deeds of the distant past. These persons all informed him that they had never heard of an Alexander Chapel in that county, and from such evidence one may be justified that the statement in the book was an error and that the church referred to was in Brazos County instead. Such a correction would harmonize smoothly with other evidence that the organization of the church at Tabor was actually begun in 1854, and that the establishment of the church dates back to 1856.

First Trustees

It was in that year, after the little congregation had been assembling in a little log school house that stood on the plot of ground now owned by the church but perhaps 100 yards southeast of the present building, that Eliz Boatwright and John Singleton deeded the present grounds of the church to James Walker, William Lawrence, William L. Glass, and Harvey Mitchell, who were the first trustees of the church. The court records show that this transaction was made from an "ardent desire to promote the interest of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and for ten dollars."

Only fragmentary information has been secured concerning these first trustees of the church, although most of them still have descendants in the Bryan area. Harvey Mitchell was a relative of the George Henry family of the Alexander church, and of the Jim Henry family of Hearne. He was also related to the Weddington family of Bryan. He was buried at the Booneville cemetery east of Bryan.

Will Lawrence was a brother of the late Jim Lawrence, who was also a large land holder in the Tabor area. James Walker was a forefather of the Walker and Wilsom families of this church.

It was after the land was donated to the church that construction began on the first church. Logs were hand-hewn, but there was no crudity in the structure. All of the planing, sawing, and finishing work was, of course, done by hand, and credit goes to George Fullerton, Hugh Henry, Jim Walker, John Walker, and E. W. Thompson, who labored actively for many months in constructing this church. This church was a plain yet attractive building about the size of the present church. A feature of that church was a large double door at the north entrance.

Miss Barbara Fullerton currently has in her possession a hammer which was used in the first building program. This first church faced in a westward direction. This was indicative of the number of the early families which lived on that side of the church. Today, of course, the church faces east, which is, incidentally, the direction in which practically all the families now live who attend.

Mr. Jay Harris recalls that about fifty years ago, an elderly man named Mr. Norman chanced to drop by to talk "old times" with him. He asked Mr. Jay what ever became of that little chapel on the hill, which was being built near the Lawrence place at a time when he, as a boy, was doing transient labor nearby. This chapel was, of course, Alexander. The date set by Mr. Norman for the erection of the church corresponds with the dates we give elsewhere.

Second Church Built

The second church was built in 1908 while D. W. Gardner was pastor, and was patterned much as is the current Cottonwood Baptist Church. In fact, the latter church was built only a year after Alexander completed its second building. The fact that that church was a copy of the Alexander Sanctuary was undeniable. The Alexander church, sadly, was not kept in the physical condition that the Baptist church of compatible design was, and so it was necessary to rebuild it after it was still a comparatively new building. Some members have said that the accoustics were quite poor in this sanctuary.

Miss Mae Walker, the current adult Sunday School Teacher, recalls the excitement which was generated over the building of the second church. She mentions the fact that the church was lighted by old wall lamps, which at that time were considered the best source of illumination possible. The benches in this church were thick and white. Miss Walker mentioned that she attended a singing school at the time of the completion of this church, and was so excited over the new building that she had difficulty learning the material taught. Those active in the work of the church at this time were Joe B. Walker, W. H. Benbow, George Wilson, George Walker, Walter Armstrong, and E. E. Wilson.

The present building was dedicated on September 22, 1940, during the pastorate of Rev. Willard Smith. Rev. Jesse Thompson, a former pastor, preached the dedicatory sermon.

Circuit Pastors

The early days of the church were characterized by circuit pastors who were forced to travel great distances. Many times this necessitated spending the week-end with different families of the area. This was especially true when the church was on a circuit with a town as distant as, say, Anderson, which even today represents a sizable distance with modern paved highways.

The organizational changes of early Methodism may certainly be discerned by a look into early church history. According to Rev. Dibble, "Alexander Chapel was on different circuits at different times. These changes have made research into its history difficult. At one time it was on Bedias Circuit, another time with College Station. In 1938 it was with Bedias, in the Huntsville District, W. F. Bryan, presiding elder. Pastors of Bedias were R. A. Gates, W. F. Stevens, and A. A. Kidd. It is uncertain if Alexander was with Bedias all this time. About this time Ed Barcus was also presiding elder of the Huntsville District."

There is evidence that Alexander Chapel has at various times been in the following districts: Bryan, Huntsville, Navasota, Marlin, Caldwell, Chapel Hill and Galveston; the latter appears to be applicable perhaps sixty or eighty years ago.

In 1880-1881, there was a Bryan Circuit, of Chapel Hill District, with B.D.Dashiell the presiding elder, and Samuel Barker and J. R. Dunn, pastors. In 1879, J. M. Wesson was pastor of Bryan Circuit. Brother Wesson, of course, is most remembered for the Wesson Church, which he founded about six miles southeast of Alexander.

Other pastors of Bryan Circuit were: W. R. Kennon (1875); A. W. Smith (1873-1874); E. H. Holbrook (1872). During these pastorates the charge was in the Huntsville District. From 1868 to 1871 it was in the Galveston District, the presiding elders being J. M. Wesson and Robert Alexander, and the pastors, W. S. Smith, J. B. Huckabee, and H.V.Philpot.

From 1856 to 1864 the church was a part of the Booneville circuit and a part of the Springfield District, with the presiding elders being Mordecai Yell (1856); O.M.Addison (1857); W. H. South (1860); and the pastors, Jos. D. Moore (1856); James Price (1857); Joel T. Davis (1858); Francis E. Wilkinson (1859); and Byron Garden in 1860.

In 1861 and 1862 James G. Johnson was presiding elder of the Springfield District and R. Crawford, pastor of Booneville Circuit; in 1863 and 1864 L. B. Whipple was the presiding elder and W. S. South the preacher in charge. Mrs. Tom Walker says that Brother South was a man of medium size whose son, Horace South, was a teacher in Allen Academy when it was first moved to Bryan in 1887.

In 1865 the Booneville Circuit was in the Caldwell District with Daniel Morse the presiding elder and J. R. White the pastor.

Joe Mickel

Perhaps one of the best known of the early pastors was Joe Mickel. It is said of Reverend Mickel, that he was a man who was hard to forget. An outstanding characteristic of him was the fact that his face was as smooth as that of a woman. It was not necessary for him to shave. This made him distinctive in appearance at a time when beards were generally in vogue. Reverend Mickel's parents lived in Jamaica. It is said that when an infant he had a Negro maid who was very devout. This maid asked permission from Joe's parents if she could daily pray that this baby might some day grow up and become a Methodist preacher. Partly as a joke, and partly to humor the faithful old Negro, permission was granted. The family was surprised when the little boy eventually joined the Methodist church. By the time the family had journeyed to Brazos County, and Joe had decided to become a minister, the whole family had been converted to the Methodist faith.

According to Reverend Dibble, "There is a tradition that the Reverend Mickel once had a vision of being in heaven, which seemed to impress itself in a peculiar and forceful way on his memory. His happiness was thorough and complete, and as the dream passed and he realized that he was returning to the reality of earth a sense of deep regret at leaving that happy place came upon him very strongly." It has been a legend that Methodist preachers love to eat fried chicken. Perhaps this belief was borne out by Brother Hersey, one of the first pastors of the church. When Miss Barbara Fullerton was a little girl, he and his wife stopped at the Fullerton home for dinner. Reverend Hersey was so anxious to eat that he went into the kitchen and turned his plate (in those days plates were kept upside down except when one ate) even before anyone else could get to the table. Before the others arrived, he had taken four of the most choice pieces of chicken and placed them on his plate. A bit vexed over being relegated to eating the leavings Barbara admonished the minister, "Don't you even say the blessing before you eat?" (Which he had failed to do on that occasion.) The little girl was immediately ushered out of the house by her grandmother for the obvious purpose. Although many years have passed since that incident, Miss Barbara feels that she was justified in "sassing" the preacher, for the subsequent reprimand which Mrs. Hersey gave her husband was long remembered.

Another incident regarding Brother Hersey's legendary appetite occurred after he had spent the week-end with the Fullertons and other families of the area. Upon departing, he carefully outlined to Mr. and Mrs. George Fullerton the near starvation which would be upon him before he arrived at his distant destination of Millican. With sympathy for his plight, Mrs. Fullerton filled a basket for him and sent him on his way. Late that same evening, W. H. Boyett was aroused from bed by the departing minister who stopped to say good-bye. It was again made evident that it was necessary for food to be included in order for the trip to be made. Getting dressed, Mr. Boyett went to his storehouse and generously loaded Brother Hersey with peaches and other produce. His chivalry was a little too great, however, for he insisted on loading the minister's wagon. It was here that friendly relations ceased for a while, for the back of the wagon proved to be a veritable grocery store -- with all the community having donated food for Reverend Hersey's trip.

J. C. Huddleston and H. D. Huddleston were brothers who were exceptionally popular

Pastors from 1903 to 1908 were J. P. Skinner and Thomas Beck. More recent pastors were D. W. Gardner, E. Payne, W. H. Beaty, J. F. Garrett, J. H. Phillips, H. B. Daily, King Vivion, Jesse Thompson, Monroe Vivion, Oscar Hargis, H. M. Seacord, L. C. Lilly, R. A. Gates, W. R. Adams, Willard Smith, H. M. Horne, Burton S. Smith, W. H. McGown, Walter Day, R. D. Peterson, Lang Spell, Bob Sneed, Fred Dibble, and Cliff Edge.

Alexander church has served under 51 pastors, with many having risen to high ecclesiastical honors. One former pastor, King Vivion, is currently Bishop in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. His brother, Monroe Vivion, is the executive secretary of the Texas Conference, and one of the outstanding modern ministers of this jurisdiction.

Other pastors of Alexander, about whom less information is known, are Rev. Philpot, Rawledge, Fawler, Myers, Hensley, Chadwick, and Cooper.

Wesson Church

The Wesson Church was a sister Methodist church of Alexander for many years. The fact that many of the current families of Alexander were originally from that area indicate that much of the present membership of Alexander stems from old Wesson church. Mr. J. K. Presnal was one of the trustees of the Wesson church. Sadly, the church never did survive the lifetime of its founder, and when Rev. J. M. Wesson was an elderly man he requested that his last sermon be preached at Wesson church. The church was then in its last days, and was without a pastor, so Brother Wesson filled the pulpit for what was to be the farewell sermon for both him and the church, for which he had labored so faithfully. Mr. John McCallum recalls the poignance of the occasion, in which he states that the sermon, to his recollection, was based on Jeremiah 8:22 -- "Is there no balm in Gilead, Is there no physician there?" The old Wesson church was torn down about 1900.

Reverend Lemon was a pastor of Alexander and Wesson during the 1880's. He stated that, although they were Presbyterians, there was no family more faithful to Wesson than was the J. A. D. Robinson family. Wickson Presbyterian church, which was located not too far from the Ernest Beard home, and was the church of the Robinsons, as well as the Freemans, Harrises, and others, had services on alternate Sundays from Wesson, and the congregations divided their time between the two churches. The interdependence of the two churches is shown in the fact that Wickson closed its doors about the same time that Wesson did.

Another early rural Methodist church in the Alexander area was the Hickory Grove church which was located not too far from the present Shiloh Baptist church about five miles from the Wheelock community. Mrs. Lucy Sample Harris, who joined the Alexander church at the age of 16, recalls that her grandfather, Mark Sommerville, was an active steward of this Hickory Grove church.

A Methodist church was also located in the Edge community which was later absorbed by the Free Will Baptists; and which now remains vacant. A Methodist church was also in the Benchley area, as well as at Prospect.

Many of the early members of the Alexander church alternated between that church and the old Red Top Presbyterian church located to the west of Alexander. Older residents of the area recall "Parson" Wilson who lived in the Edge community and who held services at Red Top, as well as at other Presbyterian churches of the area.

Many do not recall that Mr. Hugh Henry, who was so instrumental in the building and development of Alexander, was actually a member of this church. Despite his service to Methodism, Mr. Henry remained always a loyal and staunch Presbyterian. He was truly a devout Christian to both faiths.

Today all the rural Presbyterian churches have disbanded. Many of the members of the Methodist church were attained when the Presbyterians abandoned rural activities many years back.

Mrs. Mandie Parker's oldest sister, Clara LeFevre, married Jim Henry at this same old Red Top church. It seemed that it was a fad of the day to be married by Parson Wilson regardless of denomination. Mrs. Parker joined the Alexander church when Red Top ended its services; and except for a brief stint at the Steep Hollow Methodist church, (which was a church that survived only a short time) Rev. Jesse Thompson pastored this church at the same time he did at Alexander and Prospect, has belonged to Alexander ever since.

Fullerton Wedding

Mrs. Ella Blanton mentioned the early wedding customs, and the times when the participants of the wedding "stood up" with the newly weds. Most weddings at that time were in the homes. A wedding which drew much attention, and at which many of the members of the Alexander church "stood up," was the wedding 66 years ago of John and the late Mattie Fullerton. They had been married for 65 years at the time of Mrs. Fullerton's death. John Fullerton is now the oldest living member of the Alexander church, having only this summer celebrated his 90th birthday. The Fullerton wedding took place at the old Broach home located near the present Thompson place where the Lehman's now reside. A near neighbor to the Broaches was the Purcell family. Mrs. Purcell was a Boggs, and was related to Miss Lettie Boggs.

Not all weddings were performed by ministers, however. The grandfather of the present pastor, Mr. Lee Edge, performed the ceremony of Lee Wilson and Bell Mainard when he was Justice of the Peace.

"Shouting Methodists"

Early Methodism was often characterized by shouting and other emotional outbursts, but the Alexander church has never been known for this type of religious fervor. Wesson was perhaps the site of more of this. It has been stated that the elder Mrs. Presnal, the mother of the late J. K. Presnal, would be given to shouting at this church. Perhaps modern Methodism could use a little of this enthusiasm.

One incident in which there was shouting at Alexander is recalled by Mrs. Mae Thompson Henry; "Burl Barnett was a good, religious old Negro that had been reared by a white family from whom he took his name. He would go to the church and stand outside by a window. One night he was touched by the sermon and began to shout. One of the horses that was tied close by broke loose, and one of the members (Will Martin) told Burl to stop shouting. Burl had been taught to cook well and my mother hired him, as we usually had a lot of guests during the protracted meeting. When we got home that night (after the shouting incident) my mother said, 'Burl, you may shout all you want to now. The horses are all loose in the pasture.'"

Although "shouting Methodism" did not exist to any strong measure, there was at one time a little flurry of feeling which was created over sanctification. One of the older ministers, a Rev. Royal, was an extremely devout man -- it was said, in fact, that he refused to enter the sanctuary without first kneeling and praying at the steps of the church. He believed zealously in the "second blessing," as he called it. This theological doctrine remains hazy today, although it is comparable to the current Negro Holiness, or "Holy Roller" church. In its nature, a lot of frenzied emotions were employed, and members of the church grew puzzled as to the validity or the meaning of this. Finally, a delegation went to Rev. Mickel, who was at that time the presiding elder. The situation was explained to him, and he was asked whether the employment of emotional devices was necessary. Mr. John McCallum recalls Brother Mickel's answer, "When a person goes to bed in the dark of night, the wind is blowing, and the rain is beating down, and the thunder is roaring, and all seems to be in a tempest. You go to sleep, however, and when you awaken, you look out and see the sun beaming down serenely over everything, and there is no darkness and no storm. There is the sun - risen even before you awoke. It isn't necessary to remain awake all night rebling and cowering and evoking the presence of the sun. So it is with this 'sanctification.' You get it without being frenzied about it. If you get it, it comes in silently." Rev. Royal served the church from Millican, where the church has frequently been attached.

Organ versus Piano

Alexander church has always been noted for the harmonious spirit among the congregation. It has seldom been involved in the petty squabbles which so often beset other congregations. One occasion in which there was a slight murmur of disapproval was when there was a debate as to whether to employ a piano or an organ. Many of the old homes had parlor organs around the turn of the century and before, and some people had distaste for the piano, which to them was not a finished instrument. Some felt that the piano was more fitted for sacred music, however, and it seemed as if there would be a breach in the church. The matter was finally put to a vote, and the piano won out over the organ, so for two generations the church has employed a piano instead of an organ. The old organs, of course, were hand-pumped affairs, and far crys from the modern electric organs. There are still many persons who can play the organ very adeptly, including Mrs. Mae Henry, who has such an instrument in her home. Current pianists for the church are Miss Maggie Benbow and Ralph Stevener.

Pet dogs were also the cause of discord at one time. It was recalled that at one time C. A. LeFevre and others had dogs who had the habit of following their masters to church. This created an annoyance when the animals entered the church. No amount of entreating would keep the dogs out of the building, so finally someone (who luckily remained anonymous) placed poison near the church which killed several dogs. Among those destroyed was the pet of Mr. LeFevre. He stated that his dog wasn't especially useful, but that it was such a pretty pet to have to die.

Perhaps not entirely harmonious was an incident which Mrs. George Wilson recalls concerning her son. When Elmer was two years old, Rev. J. P. Skinner was just beginning a sermon when young Elmer broke away from his parents and recited from the rostrum, "Here I stand, black, ragged and dirty. If you don't give me a kiss I'll run like a turkey." -- and he did, although not fast enough to elude

Mr. George Wilson, who promptly dissuaded any future recitations inside the church.

Protracted Meetings

Well remembered are the old-fashioned revivals, or "protracted meetings." Many of the early revival meetings were held outside the church in brush arbors. One which was especially remembered was conducted by Dr. J. F. Betts. The old revivals were noted for the singing of the fine old hymns. A favorite of Miss Mae Walker was "Oh, how I love Jesus."

Early transportation to the church was, of course, by wagons. Mrs. Verna Wilson Harrison recalls the days when her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Wilson, would hitch up the two mules, Jude and Monk, to the wagon and pile the large family into it, heading for church; "We would go on our way, and the kids had lots of fun jumping in and out of the wagon, and by the time we got to church we kids looked as if we were just out of a sand bed or a mud hole. I remember we went to church and all of the larger children had to sit on the front pew, while the smaller children had a quilt in some corner or in the isle of the church. There has been a great change in these modern days; we have all the conveniences that any one could wish for, and yet we go to church less. My prayers are that we may all see our needs and strive to live in a way that is pleasing to our Savior."

In mentioning the Wilson family, note should be taken of the fact that four members of that family married Walkers: Ezra Wilson married Mary Walker, Mary Wilson married Tom Walker, Dora Wilson married Joe Walker and Lou Wilson married George Walker. The many children who were born of these unions were double first cousins, and most are still active in the Alexander church. It has been said that when these four families were all present in the church, that it was almost full. Of the original parents mentioned, only Mrs. Tom Walker is currently alive. Her brother, Mr. George Wilson lives in Tabor and is an active member of the Alexander church. His daughter, Mrs. Herbert Henry, is the current teacher of the primary department in the Sunday School. A home coming would be significant if only the many descendants of the Walker and Wilson families were gathered together. It is significant that the nearest neighbors to the church are Joe, Clarence, and Miss Mae Walker, all of whom are active stewards or trustees of the church.

Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Wilson united with the Alexander church around 1912, and it was during this time that the church was noted for its many younger members.

The largest congregation at any one time was perhaps at the turn of the century. The church was said to be crowded at all times. The church was, of course, at that time on a circuit with preaching only once a month, as were several other churches of a proximate distance, some of which were already mentioned. The congregation would alternate among the several churches. Therefore, each church would house several congregations at the same time. Today the churches have shifted and consolidated so much as have the rural schools. The ease of transportation into Bryan or other spots formerly distant has removed the isolation which was once a part of the rural scene, and the small churches find themselves competing for membership with places formerly considered distant.

Alexander School

The compactness and solidarity of the early neighborhoods is shown in the early schools of the area which were closely knit with the churches. Alexander school was located but a few hundred yards from the church, and the membership there was virtually the same as that of the church. Mrs. Minnie Broach, John Cobb, Susie Benbow, and others so faithful to the church formerly were employed as teachers of the school. Miss Benbow, who was later Mrs. Earl Presnal, and who was such a tower of strength in church affairs, taught for the first time in the Alexander school. Among her pupils was the late Evan Benbow, son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Benbow, who during his first day of school was so afraid that he remained in the wagon until dismissal time. Even today most of the older families of Alexander have lives closely knitted to the school.

Alexander school was thought to have been closed around 1915. Miss Bessie Risinger was also a former teacher, as was Bertha Walker, currently Mrs. Fred Locke of Bryan. Other teachers at Alexander were Captain J. A. Hester and Miss Lettie Boggs (also teachers at Harris School), J. W. Bandy, Elvira Jackson, and Bill Brogdon.

Oddly, many of the current members of the church attended the old Harris school, which was located on the old Jim Lawrence Place near the current Jay Harris home. Most of these families originally attended Wesson church, which was disbanded long before Harris school closed its doors. The former students of Harris school had their first reunion last spring, and an amazing number of the students are current members of Alexander church.

Conversely, the other two schools of the Tabor area, Blanton and Cottonwood, were closely linked with the Cottonwood Baptist Church because of their proximity to it. Even today, a large percentage of the members of the Baptist church were educated in these two schools, which were located not too far from the Hill Daniel place. It is hoped that next spring, the reunion which last year was for Harris School, will also include the other three schools which were so instrumental in developing the early days of the Tabor area. All four schools were eventually merged into the present Tabor High School, and that school, after erecting the present plant, bowed to the consolidation movement, sending its students into Kurten and Bryan.

Early Members

Early records of the church have, sadly, not been retained. The earliest record found, dated near the turn of the century had the following persons listed as members of the church. Of course, many of the earlier listings passed on before the list was complete, so all of these persons were not members at the same time. The following persons were at one time members of the early church: Mattie Fullerton, Martha LeFevre, Carrie Seale, Mary Blanton, W. H. Boyett, Horis Boyett, Willie Boyett, Mrs. C. A. Thompson, Eva Rudasill, Gus LeFevre, John McCallum, John Fullerton, W. E. Elliott, Mary Elliott, W. S. Martin, Robert Martin, Lula Martin, Mary Fullerton, S. E. Dean, John F. Holden, C. A. LeFevre, H. G. Brogden, Fannie Wilson, Susie Rudasill, Maggie Thompson, Elijah Thompson, George Henry, May Henry, Charles Holden, Mandy Parker, T. F. Josie, Minnie Josey, Lee Josie, Ernest Boggs, G. R. Guess, Carl Sealy, Mary Scrimpton, Lilly Crenshaw, Robert Elliott, Bess Stallings,

W. T. Stallings, Elizabeth McWhorter, Albert McCallum, J. B. Walker, Dora Walker, Sallie Wilcox, Mark Rudasill, Annie Josie, Mills Josie, Mattie Benbow, James K. Presnal, Mollie Presnal, Mary Seale, Claude Boggs, Ruby Wilcox, Katie Wilcox, Hugh Boggs, Jim Sealy, Carrie Schrimpton, Paul Fullerton, Chilton Boyett, Ola Wilson, Pearl Walker, Lillie Wilson, Carry Boyett, Ollie Roy Dean, J. S. Henry, Clara Henry, Katie Henry, Lulu White, Walter Parker, Hubbard Seale, Clarence Scains, J. A. Scains, George Wilson, John Walker, Rufus Chappell, Martha Hudspeth, Una Mae Walker, L. T. Wilson, Minnie Wilson, Hattie Glose, Louis Glose, J. H. Lummas, Emma Lummas, M. A. Crenshaw, Nettie Whitten, John Whitten, Hattie Lindsey, W. M. Boggs, Daisy Scrimpton, Jimmy Wilson, Willie Walker, Myrtle Holden, Blanche Wilson, Ruby Hudspeth, Etna Robertson, Claude Henry, Carry Cartledge, Ollie Cartledge, May Sabo, James Beard, Walter Lindsey, Mattie Josie, Will Josie, Mae Parker, John Moore, S. H. Beal, A. E. Beal, C. A. Jenking, Tom McCallum, Ezra Wilson, Anna Lindsey, Clarence Walker, Ernest Walker, George Walker, Lou Walker, Fannie Walker, W. E. Thompson, Madamie Lee Ball, Eva Ayers, Curlena Josey, Ruby Elliott, Emma Stallings, Cecil Broach, Ray Wilcox, Henry Stallings, Betty Franklin, Abbie Elliott, Inez Cartledge, Lizzie Gandy, Mary Worsham, Henry Worsham, Fannie Worsham, Plumer Worsham, Mrs. Mills Josey, W. M. Johnson, Walter Wilcox, Addie Hensley, J. M. Hensley, Julia Blums, Gussie Hensley, Stell Hensley, Mrs. Minnie Elliott, John Dunn, Marvin Thompson, Mrs. Annie Thompson, and W. E. Thompson. Many of the spellings were here incorrect, and an attempt was made to reproduce them correctly.

The oldest living female member of the church is Mrs. Ella Blanton. She is the sister of Mr. Walter Holden, who is also a lifelong member of the church. In talking with Mrs. Blanton, we learned of her aunt, Jane Fullerton, who was faithful in the early church. Mrs. Blanton mentioned that the first school she attended was the old Alexander school located at the foot of the creek near the bridge which has been recently reconstructed. Judge Board was her first teacher, she recalls. The Holden family lived at the present Marshall Peters place. Mr. Tom Holden came to the Tabor area from Tennessee in 1876, from Murphysborough. He was educated in Austin and Fort Worth. His brother, Jeff Holden, also was formerly from Tennessee.

A sister-in-law of Mrs. Blanton is Mrs. Horace Holden of Bryan. She recalls her old school days at Alexander, and her schoolmates, Barbara and Effie Fullerton, Tom and John McCallum, Stella Covington, Mae Thompson, Lidge Thompson, Emma Purcell, and Mandy Parker.

McCallum Family

One of the senior members of the church is Mr. John McCallum. Mr. McCallum has only recently retired from his trade of brick masonry. He mentions that he has lain the bricks for a large number of the present homes in rural Brazos County. He was also actively engaged in the gin business in Tabor.

Mr. McCallum pointed out that in the early days of the church there was little social mingling of the sexes. Even married couples separated upon entrance into the church. Men sat upon one side of the sanctuary and women on the other.

It might be interesting to note that at the last revival meeting there were five brothers and sisters and one sister-in-law of the McCallum family present at the revival. Also present were Mr. Tom McCallum, Mrs. Annie Thompson, whose late husband, Mr. Marvin Thompson, was for so long the faithful superintendent of the Sunday School, Mrs. N. H. McWhorter, and Mr. Albert McCallum. Mr. Albert McCallum known as "Buck" to his many friends, is the man to whom goes the credit for the fact that the Alexander cemetery is the best kept rural cemetery in Brazos County. We take pride in the upkeep of the graves, which exceeds many of the city cemeteries. Mr. McCallum has been president of the cemetery association since its organization, and has been instrumental in the homecoming celebrations which have brought so many old friends together. Mrs. Maggie McCallum is a sister-in-law to the five.

Mr. Albert McCallum tells it on himself that upon one occasion Rev. R. A. Gates was telling a joke about three Scottsman brothers who were completely adverse to contributing financially when the collection plate was passed. Bro. Gates added that in order to avoid making a contribution, one of the three brothers would pretend to faint and the other two would carry him out until the collection had already been taken up. This joke had only a routine response of laughter until John and Tom McCallum, who chanced to be late comers that day, walked in just as Rev. Gates finished telling his joke and prepared for the receiving of the offering, and headed for their brother Albert, who had been previously seated. Needless to say, the house rocked with laughter.

Perhaps no member of the Alexander church has been more active in various civic activities than has Mr. John Moore. Long active as a teacher at Harris and other schools of the area, Mr. Moore in more recent years has been active in ranching and politics. Both he and his wife, the former Tillie Chatham, have been long-time members of the church.

Old Hudspeth Home

Miss Tillie was born in the old Hudspeth house where the Arnold Steveners now live. Mrs. Stevener is the chairman of the commission on education. Ralph Arnold Stevener represents the fourth generation that has lived in the same location. The late Mr. Will Hudspeth was the son of Bob Hudspeth, or "Grandpa," as those who loved him referred to him, and a sister of the late Mrs. Mollie Presnal. Other children of Will Hudspeth who are still living in this area are Mrs. Lute Woodall, Mrs. Ruby Conrad, Mrs. Martha Shannon, Mrs. Maudelle Worsham, and Mr. Roland Hudspeth. It is noted that Roland Hudspeth was born just three days distant from the father of Alexander's present pastor. The Hudspeths have throughout the years made significant contributions to the Tabor area and to the Alexander church.

Mrs. Mollie Presnal and her husband, James K. Presnal, were active supporters of the church. Although Mrs. Presnal passed away at a comparatively early age, Mr. Presnal was active until his death only a short time ago. For many years he was the oldest active member of the church, and his community birthday parties were gala annual affairs. Children of Mr. Presnal, in addition to Mrs. Moore, are Mrs. Walter Holden, Mrs. August Kern, Mr. Charlie Presnal, Mr. Will Presnal, and Mr. Earl Presnal. Long associated with the Presnals is the late Mr. Henry Hudspeth, who spent much of his boyhood with the J. K. Presnal family. The younger Presnals are all active in the church today, most being stewards or trustees. The Bill Presnals

and their little son, Scottie, who have recently returned to this area following his stint in the service, represent the fourth generation of Presnals in the Alexander church.

One of the senior members of the Alexander church is Mrs. Mandie LeFevre Parker of Bryan. Although she has moved into town, she still is a faithful attender at Alexander. She represents one of the many who reside in Bryan who attend the church at Alexander.

Much credit for the church goes to Mrs. Mae Thompson Henry, who has been a long-time steward of the church. She has kept extensive records of the early church, and to her I am indebted for many incidents of the long ago. She gave me several which I quote as she wrote them down for me:

"My parents were returning home from church on a Sunday night long years ago, and found that my youngest brother was missing. Thinking possibly that he had walked home with some neighbor boys, my father walked back to the neighbors, the Parkers, and asked if my brother had walked back with Jim, one of their boys. They said that he had not. My father hurried back to the church and opened the door. My brother was awakened by the flash of a match lit by my father. He stuck his head up over the top of the bench to see what was taking place."

"On a Sunday morning long years ago my parents were on their way to church when they passed a neighbor's house, the home of Mr. and Mrs. "Judge" Barmore. Mrs. Barmore thought it was unusual for them to be going to church on Saturday morning. She ran out and asked what had happened. They replied that it was Sunday and they were on their way to church. She said, 'Mr. Thompson, will you please run up in the field and tell Mr. Barmore to unhitch from the plow. I'll put my cake aside, and we'll soon be on our way to church.'"

"Many years ago my parents had as neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Duck Walker. Mrs. Walker was in need of two yards of embroidery to trim her baby's dress. She sent her husband to Bryan to buy the embroidery. He, not being familiar with material, brought back two yards of mosquito bar and handed it to his wife to see how she liked it. She opened the package, and to avoid hurting his feelings said, "Oh, that is beautiful." Then she said she had business in the kitchen and ran to the sink to keep her husband from seeing her laugh."

Mrs. Henry made mention also of the Lawrence, Kions, Broach, and Tebo families, all prominent in the early days of the church.

Mrs. Henry's children are all members of the Alexander church. Miss Ola Mae Henry is the church treasurer and the chairman of the commission on finance. Mr. Billy Henry and Mrs. Melba Satterwhite of Bryan represent the fourth generation of the Henry family active in the Alexander church.

Home Demonstration Club

Long associated with the Alexander Methodist Church has been the Tabor Home Demonstration Club. Active in this fine civic organization, according to Miss Maggie Benbow, the Secretary, are Mrs. Victor Harris, the president, and Mrs. Ruby Conrad, Mrs. Hubert Henry, Mrs. A. J. McCallum, Mrs. Morris Moore, Mrs. Will Presnal

Mrs. Nolan Welch, Miss Mae Walker, Mrs. Oliver Wilcox, Mrs. Lute Woodall, Mrs. Arnold Stevener, Mrs. Hawley West, Mrs. D. H. Ralls, Mrs. Eula Locke, Mrs. W. R. Henry, Mrs. Joe Fickey, Mrs. Clyde Wilson, Mrs. Arthur Webb, Mrs. Carol Cooper, Mrs. John Barnes, Mrs. Roy Barnes, Mrs. Lewis Ayers, and Mrs. Sterling Abbott. Most of these ladies are quite active also in the work of the church. One of the significant contributions of this group has been the restoration of the former Tabor High School into a community center for the surrounding area. All of the ones that utilize this convenient building owe a debt of gratitude to this group.

The current Sunday School superintendent and the chairman of the membership and evangelism commission is Mrs. Tot Broach Ralls. The Broach family has long been active in support of the church activities.

Present Officers

Mr. Oscar Wilson is the current chairman of the board of stewards and Mr. J. T. McCallum is the church lay leader. Earl Presnal, Charlie Presnal, and Clarence Walker are trustees. Stewards of the church are Herbert Henry, Miss Maggie Benbow, Vaughn Conrad, Mrs. Herbert Henry, Mrs. Mae Henry, Albert McCallum, John M. Moore, Tom McCallum, J. T. McCallum, Mrs. Will Presnal, Mrs. Arnold Stevener, Mrs. Marvin Thompson, Joe Walker, Miss Mae Walker, Mrs. Tom Walker, and Mrs. Oliver Wilcox.

Challenge of the Future

While we look toward the past with reverent pride, we now turn toward the future of the Alexander church. Since we are in the period of transition we realize that Alexander church must meet future needs as it has met past needs if it is to flourish and grow. Improved transportation facilities and other adyents of recent years have left the area around the church no longer an insular community, but rather a part of a larger, expanding, metropolitan area. In order for us to adequately serve present needs, we have increased our services until we are now meeting every Sunday for the first time. The circuit church finds a loss of interest on days when there is no worship service, and we rejoice that it is possible for us to now provide a full church program. As the only rural Methodist church in a large area, we feel that we have unlimited possibilities for future growth.

The nature of the church is now in a period of change as the economy of the area has shifted from rural to urban. Numerous rural families were once supported in areas where now only few resign. The ever increasing cost of labor, and the lure to the city of low income groups has almost ended the era of the tenant farmer. Mr. John McCallum points out that at the turn of the century he migrated to Beaumont to try to make his fortune in the city. He worked as a riveter on oil tanks, and adds that although he grew quite adept, his pay never rose above \$2.75 per day, which was the pay for a top riveter. The caulker was the highest salaried man at \$3.00 per day. These wages, after city expenses were deducted, were not as high as an efficient farmer made at that time, so Mr. McCallum went back to Tabor to remain the rest of his life. The fact that hourly wages now often exceed that daily

figure, and that farm income has not risen proportionally indicate that securing labor for the farm is quite difficult. Therefore, the church does not have as large a rural population to draw from as it once did. Mr. Charlie Presnal points out that even as late as the early 20's, the hands would gladly put in a day's labor for Mr. Robinson just to get a gallon of his delicious syrup, which was milled at a grove of cedars near Earl Presnal's pasture. Today there are few syrup producers left in the area, and Mr. Charlie Presnal points out that the current gallon of syrup represents an expenditure that makes it a luxury.

Growth of Bryan

The future of the church looks toward the growing community of Bryan, whose city limits have only recently been extended to one-half the distance from the business district to the church. A growing diversity of jobs in the area provide a steady source of income for families, and an increasingly large number of persons have been migrating back into the rural areas to commute back and forth to Bryan. The challenge to the church is to meet the needs of these persons who have all of the advantages and tastes of city dwellers.

I believe that the Alexander church has unlimited possibilities; for in a large area there are always those who desire a rural type church. We cannot deny the fact that Bryan will some day be a large town. And Bryan will either kill us or build us. And now is the time to decide which it will be.

We are now at the crossroads. We cannot help but regret that through the years many persons who have been reared in this church have allowed their ties with Alexander to be severed. We hope that from now on, we will have the strength as a church to hold the interest of all persons who are ever connected with it. Despite the fact that special interest on occasions such as the homecomings are vital to the church, the future rests on those who are continually active and loyal to the church. A church can only live as it has active workers within it. The current membership of the church, which numbers 106, is faithful and loyal to the church, but we have so many others in this area who think of Alexander only in terms of the cemetery - and the homecomings. It is the hope of the present pastor to make every Sunday a homecoming. It is a joyful occasion for one to come home, but it is even more constructive and significant when one stays home.

We rejoice that we have been able to improve the physical surroundings of the church. We have installed rugs, curtains, furnishings, and have completely renovated the Sunday School rooms. May the environment of this church never fail to be conducive to a worshipful attitude. Let us build. The future of this church can begin with you. This church doesn't want merely love, it wants loyalty. There is a place of active service in this church for every person. The need for stewardship in the church of God has never been greater than it is today in Alexander church. We are now making our big push for recognition, not for what the church was, but for what it is, and what it can be. Hitch your wagon to a star - place your time - your talents, where those 100 years from now can look back at those of us here today who have built this church to its greatest ~~era~~ era. And we can do it.

There are no privations, no hardships today involved in working for this church. Merely the foundations have been lain at Alexander. Let's build upon them.