

THE HISTORY
of
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Moody, Texas

November, 1980

PERRY BAPTIST CHURCH

The desire in the breast of our forefathers to "Go West" has played a great part in the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as the plea for religious freedom. The founders of our churches packed their trunks in the north and east, they did not forget to put in their Bibles to carry west. It is of interest to us to know that among the first groups to settle at Perry, many were Baptist. William Hancock, the leader of the first group of settlers, was a staunch Baptist. The McClain family which followed the next year, was also Baptist, and was destined to play a great part in establishing the work of Christ, not only in Perry, but in surrounding communities.

We judge for ourselves about the number of Baptists among the early settlers by looking at the records. The settlement--that is the first white settlers--came in 1852, under the leadership of William Hancock, as stated in the preceeding chapter. The first of March, 1855, the first Baptist church, and the first church organized, was organized. Then, late in the fall of the same year, the first church building was erected. For there to have been enough to organize and to build a church, there must have been a good many faithful Baptists in the village.

But let us turn our attention to the organization of this first Baptist church, and take a look at the building. During the autumn of the year of 1854, Elder S. G. O'Brian, pastor of the Baptist church at Waco, preached the first Baptist sermon in Perry. It no doubt was preached in the home of Daniel McClain. About five months later, in March, 1855, Elder S. G. O'Brian returned, preached again in the home of Daniel McClain, and acted as moderator in the organization of the church. The following are a few of the charter members of this church: Isaac McClain, E. W. McClain, Susan McClain, and Josephine McClain, Brother Moses Ogden and Sister Polly Ogden. We are sorry we could not find a more complete list of the first membership. The church went into the call of a pastor immediately, and Elder S. G. O'Brian was elected to serve. Brother Isaac McClain was recognized as the

first deacon, and Brother E. W. McClain was elected the first church clerk. We have no records of the ordaining of more deacons, but we are sure that very soon the pastor and church had more ordained, and they were chosen outside of the McClain family. The minutes of Brother W. W. McClain, the church clerk, cannot be located. Some say that he later went north and carried the book with him. This history would be far more interesting were those minutes to be found.

We have already stated that the first house of worship was built in the fall of 1855. The building was no doubt worthy of its noble membership, and an honor to the Lord. It was small yet well built and stood for years as a memorial to that faithful little band of Christians who dared to do things in a great way.

We are told that the very foundation of the building was of hewn oak, hauled from the valley of the Leon River; that the uprights and rafters were of hewn cedar also from the Leon; and that the weatherboarding was of dressed clapboards. The benches were of nice pine lumber, made in Houston, Texas, and hauled from that place to Perry in the old fashioned wagons. From the description thus given one can readily see the time and toil, and great expense of erecting this first Baptist church. It was remodeled in 1870.

The church stood on the south side of the cemetery on a little mound. For twenty-eight years it served in this place as a meeting house where the Christians might find and worship the Lord. Hundreds of souls found refuge in the Lord while attending services in it. The work in full is to be given in chapters to follow.

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

As has been stated in a previous chapter, Elder S. G. O'Brian was elected pastor of the Perry Church upon its organization in 1855, about the first of March. This first pastor was an illustrious preacher. He came to Texas in 1852 and took the position as Professor of Mathematics in Baylor University at Independence. Although he was a capable teacher of Mathematics in Baylor, it took only

one year to convince him that he ought to preach the Gospel since the Lord had called him to do that kind of work. Let Rev. Z. N. Morrell in his book, "Flowers and Fruits of Forty-Six Years in Texas" tell about how Elder O'Brian began his work. "In the fall of 1855, I received information that he was willing to resign his position in the school, where he received a salary of twelve hundred dollars, and accept a position as missionary or pastor, if one half this amount could be secured for him. I had never seen him, but this made a deep impression upon my mind, as we were greatly in need of ministers among our feeble churches, and I wrote to him and urged him to visit us. He came, and in the spring of 1854, settled in Waco, and for six years served that church (Waco) in connection with others in surrounding country."

The Waco (First Baptist) church was organized by Elder N. T. Byars, on the 32nd day of May, 1851, with four members. Elder Byars served as pastor until the arrival of Elder O'Brian, at which time the church numbered nineteen members. Under his ministry this church steadily increased in numbers and efficiency, until in 1860 it numbered one hundred and forty-four members. The other churches in the surrounding country Bro. O'Brian served in connection with his work with the Waco church were the Bosqueville Baptist church, organized in November, 1854, and the Perry church. The fourth church to be organized was the Bold Springs (West) church in 1858, and the Onion Creek (McGregor) church in the same year. Speegleville followed in 1859.

We believe more should be said about Elder O'Brian. He was a man of education, and believed, as a Christian, that it was our duty to train the mind of effective service in the Lord's vineyard. He was the first president of the Trinity River Associational Baptist High Male School at Waco in 1856. This school was later known as Waco University, and still later became a part of Baylor University, now at Waco. His appearance, in public or private circles, commanded respect. Something over medium height he weighed about one hundred and eighty-five pounds. His manners were simple, natural, and earnest. He possessed a free, open countenance and was so perfectly conscious of his own honesty of purpose that he did not suspect others.

About 1864 or '65 Elder O'Brian was called to serve the historic churches at Cameron, Port Sullivan, and Little River in Milam County. There is no doubt but that he had much to do with the success of the Port Sullivan Baptist College, and organized several churches in that district which are testifying for Christ to this day. In September, 1867, Elder S. G. O'Brian died at the young age of forty-seven years. He was serving the three churches mentioned above at the time of his death.

In the McClain family which came from Perry, Illinois and settled here, was a fine young man by the name of John. John was born November 26, 1826, in Knox County, Tennessee. Very soon after his birth his parents moved to Illinois, where at the age of twenty-six, he became a Christian and joined the Baptist church at Perry. The Lord had not only saved the soul of young McClain, but had laid his hand upon his life as a minister of the Gospel. Before starting on the long journey to Texas, the church there licensed John to preach. He was not ordained until August 9, 1857 at Owl Creek, near Gatesville, upon the request of the Perry church. He was present at the organization of the Perry church, and was one of its charter members.

In 1857 Elder S. G. O'Brian resigned the pastorate at Perry, and the church began looking about for a worthy successor. The pulpit committee did not have to look far nor long in order to find someone who could take up the work and carry on. Even though the prophet of old, and Jesus later on said;--"A prophet is without honor in his own country," here was a young man who held the respect and confidence of his own people enough that he was elected pastor of his own home church. So it was that Elder John McClain served lengthy pastorates of the Perry church, and for several years served as Missionary for the Leon River Baptist Association. Churches in Coryell, Bell, Williamson and Milam counties also shared in the usefulness of this great man of God.

"Uncle John McClain," for he was known by that name, in his later years lived at Eagle Springs, just over the line in Coryell County, Texas. Here he lived, where he could view his former fields of service, among an endless number of friends and

relatives. Twenty-six years ago on June 13, he quietly passed over the Jordan to be with the Father, and friend, and loved ones.

Thus far we have intentionally talked more about the first two pastors of the Perry church, than we have about the work of the church itself. This has been done for three reasons. First, the actual work of the church is not known since the clerk's records cannot be found; second, by giving to the reader an insight to the life of the first two pastors, they can easily see the type of work the church would be expected to do; third, here are two preachers who laid the foundations for the present work, and are therefore worthy of an honorable mention.

Soon after the organization of the church it joined the Trinity River Association, an Association which extended north and east over a very large territory. Four years later, in 1859, it joined the Leon River Baptist Association. During this year the church held a very prominent place in the Association under the leadership of its fine pastor, Elder John McClain.

One of the great meetings held in the history of the church occurred soon after Elder McClain became pastor, Elder W. B. Eaves, one of the ministers who sat on the presbytery which ordained Elder McClain, assisted the pastor in the meeting. There were about fifty additions to the church, thirty-seven being by baptism. This is the first revival we have any record of being held in the church. We are sure, however, that some good ones were held under the leadership of Pastor O'Brian.

And so the curtain falls on the first five years with Christ in Perry Baptist church. We can sum the period up by saying that it was, for soon the dark clouds were to gather and hang heavy over the hearts of the little congregation.

PERIOD OF THE CIVIL WAR

When the Leon River Association met at Florence, Williamson county, Texas, September 21, 1860, Elder J. Clabough, Chairman of the Committee on Domestic Missions, said in part in his report to that body: "The past year has been one of spiritual

dearth--and sad decline in religion is a fact too deeply felt to be denied. The cause of Christ is languishing--churches and missionaries report but very few baptisms, and no revival spirit." Did Elder Clabough have the Perry church in mind when he made this report to the Association? Could it be possible that Perry, which had such a good start now be on the down grade? No doubt the work was not going so good, and it had a pretty good cause not to.

In the summer of 1860 a severe drought served a hard blow to the people of Central Texas. Records show that there were practically no crops made. There were only \$26.50 on hand when the Association met, and this had to go for the printing of the minutes. We are glad to state, however, that a Brother T. P. Chapman came to the rescue of the work, and loaned the Association enough money to liquidate the balance due to the Missionaries.

There was something far worse than a money panic and a drought approaching which the already struggling Association must meet and live through. That was the dark cloud of the Civil War. It was already being felt in the church and Associational work. There is no doubt but that the little Perry church, the youngest of them all, was having the struggle of its life for a mere existence. The war lasted four years, beginning in 1861.

It is the firm belief of the writer that the Perry Church lived on, that it never died, during this whole four years of the war. The writer realizes that there are no records to verify his belief yet, below will be given his reasons for thinking as he does. We first quote from the minutes of the Association for the year 1865: "The Association has kept up its regular annual meetings during this cruel war, and transacted the usual business of the Association; but owing to the scattered and embarrassed condition of its membership, and the almost impossibility of getting the work done, the proceedings of the same have not been printed." It would have been well had Clerk C. F. Clabough included in these, the first minutes of the Association in five years, a short sketch of the work done by each church during the war. But he failed to comment, yet tabulated the churches who were

PASTORS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

S. G. O'BRYAN.....	1855-1857
JOHN McCLAIN.....	1857-1860
- A. G. PERKINS.....	1870-1872
- A. W. JACKSON.....	1872-1873
W. B. TIPETT.....	1873-1875
JOHN McCLAIN.....	1875-1880
T. A. MANGUM.....	1880-1883
C. P. LUMPKIN.....	1885-1886
G. W. CAPS.....	1886-1889
C. P. LUMPKIN.....	1889-1890
- C. H. COLTUARY.....	1890-1891
- C. F. MAXWELL.....	1891-1892
N. A. SEALE.....	1892-1895
R. C. MEDEARIS.....	1896-1899
LAYTON MADDOX.....	1899-1901
- C. C. GADDY.....	1901-1903
- S. H. POLLARD.....	1903-1905
- E. C. BURTON.....	1905 (6 Mo.)
J. R. CROOM.....	1906-1909
J. C. COOK.....	1909-1910
LAYTON MADDOX.....	1911-1912
W. A. KNIGHT.....	1912-1915
L. L. SAMS.....	1915-1918
J. A. McIVER.....	1918-1922
KARL H. MOORE.....	1922-1926
H. H. HARGROVE.....	1926-1929
A. H. ETHRIDGE.....	1930-1933
ODELL JAMESON.....	1933-1935
E. N. STROTHER.....	1935-1939
W. W. BRISTER.....	1939-1943
O. B. DARBY.....	1943-1947
LERAY FOWLER.....	1947-1950
RAY V. MAYFIELD.....	1950-1954
CHARLES A. OSBORN.....	1954-1956
R. B. BAKER.....	1957-1958
MARION FORD.....	1958-1961
GEORGE H. BRITTAIN.....	1962-1968
KENNETH ROGERS.....	1968-1970
MARION FORD.....	1971-1978
DONALD G. SMITH.....	1978-

INTERIM PASTORS

J.M. GAMBREL.....	1873
W.R. WHITE.....	1895
T.A. MANGUM.....	1875
JOHNNY TRAFTON.....	1956
ARTHUR TYSON.....	1961
ROY COOPER.....	1968
MARION FORD.....	1970
DR. BEN OLIVER.....	1977

LICENSED BY THIS CHURCH

HARRY H. MUIRHEAD.....	1897
(Missionary to Brazil)	
JACK MILLER.....	1900
FORREST MADDOX.....	1900
BURGESS BAGGETT.....	1932
ARTHUR KNIGHT.....	1919
THURMAN THRASHER.....	1934
DAN HEROD.....	1944
JOHNNY TRAFTON.....	1956
MIKE HARGROVE.....	1957
MIKE AULIE.....	1968
J.F. (DOC) COMBS.....	1974
R.P. MOORE.....	1894
J.B. GREEN.....	1894

As this church history goes to press (October 1980), we have secured pictures of all but seven men who has filled our pulpit as pastor. Any information on these men would be appreciated. They are as follows: Perkins, Jackson, Coltuary, Maxwell, Gaddy, Burton, and Pollard.

A FEW FACTS ABOUT INTERIM PASTORS

We have had some wonderful men of the faith fill our pulpit when we were without a pastor and in need of spiritual guidance while we were in the process of securing a pastor.

Dr. W. R. White: was a former President of Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Johnny Trafton: was ordained in FBC of Moody. He married a home town girl, Dorothy Ashabanner. Her parents owned and operated the variety store formerly owned by David Haggard. The Jack Irvins bought out the Ashabanners.

Authur K. Tyson: was President of Mary Hardin-Baylor University in Belton, Texas.

Marion Ford: was a former pastor and was recalled the second time after his Interium Pastorate.

Roy Cooper: was the Chaplain at Hillcrest Memorial Hospital in Waco.

Dr. Ben Oliver: he and his wonderful wife Edith became members of our church in September 1976. Mrs. Oliver was born in Brazil to missionary parents. She came to Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and this is where she met Dr. Oliver. They were married and served as Missionaries in Brazil for 32 years. They also served in Angola, Africa for one year.

We have been blessed to have these two saints of God in our midst. Dr. Oliver preaches the word of God from his Greek bible. He is still going strong for the Lord at age 76.