

OLDHAM'S CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

According to Associational minutes, Oldham's Creek Baptist Church was organized in 1850. No documented evidence proves the date but because the church was among those forming the Sevier Association in 1886, plus historians' calculations, seems to point to the fact that 1850 was a most likely beginning date.

Minutes dating 1902 state that the church was organized in 1869.

The first building, as described by some of the older community people, was a log cabin at the foot of the hill where the community cemetery is located.

Vic Webb says that property was owned by the Dan McCarter family. McCarter was Vic's uncle by marriage. He recalls McCarter having told him about the log church. It was so highly attended that the church was full and there were more people outside than inside.

Pless Newman says the property was owned by the McCarter family... Absolom McCarter (buried in the Boogertown or Oldham's Creek cemetery). Absolom (A. B.) was Dan's father. Pless talked to Dan when he was 80 years old, and he told of the old log church. He remembered Dan saying they tied sheep to the bell of the church.

The oldest recorded burial in the cemetery was 1875, L. E. Maples, infant son of D. C. Maples according to County Historian, Beulah Linn.

Another building that may have been used for worship after the log church, according to Stella Marshall Catlett, (late 1980s), was a school house across the creek from the present church house.

Some of the early leaders at Oldham's Creek include Aaron Eledge, church clerk; A. B. McCarter, messenger to the Association in 1896. In 1900 J. M. Townsend, H. Bohannon, J. H. Williams, and Aaron McCarter were messengers to the Association. Mark Roberts was pastor and J. M. Townsend was church clerk.

Mr. and Mrs. Noah and Mandy Ogle donated a site on December 26, 1887 (church deed) on which a new church was built in 1904. Vic Webb remembers the building date as told by his mother who said it was built the same year Vic's older brother was born. A pre-1949 photograph shows the church to be approximately 24' x 30', but several additions were added through the years.

At first the pastor came the fourth Saturday afternoon and the following Sunday morning. As lighting and transportation improved, members met the second and fourth Sundays.

In the early 1900s, the church address was listed as “Stinnett, TN” with property values shown as \$300. Membership numbered 107. Around the turn of the century, Reverend D. B. Ogle was pastor.

Also in the early 1900s, Mrs. Jimmy Trentham, Molly, and Martha Jane Ogle organized a Sunday School, according to Albert Watson, grandson of Molly Trentham. In 1915, records show C. R. Sutton as Sunday School superintendent and Hettie Marshall as secretary. According to Lula Watson, Sunday School services were held every Sunday morning although the pastor came the fourth Saturday and Sunday.

Later, about 1937, the first Training Union was held, as recalled by Lula Watson. An organ provided the only instrumental music used in those early years.

About 1944, Buena Smelcer, Evolena Ownby, and A. A. Carlton came from other churches to help organize the first Vacation Bible School. Lula Watson of Oldham’s Creek was the first principal from the church and Kate Beck, Laura Watson, Gladys Dixon, and Maude Townsend taught classes.

In the spring of 1946, after community young men returned from World War II, the church held the first homecoming. A flag had been made with names of service men embroidered on stars with colors denoting the living and those who had died in the war. The flag was destroyed when the church burned. Names on the flag were Bill Blalock, Clyde Blalock, Ralph Blalock, Shirley Carver, Walter Dixon, James Gosnell, David Gosnell, Stanley Jenkins, Arthur King, Seldon King, Shermon King, George Maples, Hobart Maples, Cecil McCarter, Walter McCarter, Major McFalls, Arthur Ogle, Harold Parton, Wayne Perryman, J. H. Reagan, Woodrow Shular, Sam Shults, Dowe Townsend, Dillard Trentham, Albert Watson, Amos Watson, Noah Watson, Robert Watson, Bryson Williams, Carl Williams, Charles Williams, Carl Williamson, Everet Wilson, Grady Wilson, Herman Wilson, Howard Wilson, James R. Wilson, Lawrence Wilson, Paul Wilson, and Woodrow Wilson. Frank Henry and Charles Sizemore were the two who died in the war.

The church has observed Homecoming through the years, reuniting each year some of those from that first homecoming, those who have moved away from the church and community and those in attendance now.

Prior to 1949 the church auditorium served all phases of worship but records show that on September 24, 1949, a project to build three Sunday School class rooms was paid for in full.

The Sevier Association met at Oldham’s Creek in 1953 with visiting preacher Ernest Parrott providing the sermon. Dee Wilson was Sunday School director at the time. The Association met again with the church in 1986 just after dedication of the new building after the old one burned.

Before the building burned, about 1964, ten or twelve feet more space was provided for the auditorium and four classrooms and a library were added.

Dee Wilson and Luther Carver were hired by the church to work on the building project with volunteers working as well.

The schoolhouse, not being used at the time, was dismantled and used in church construction.

Ladies organized a Woman's Missionary Union in the early 1980s under the leadership of Linda Wilson.

Church members suffered a great tragedy in the early morning hours of the last day of 1984 when the church burned to the ground. An immediate building project began with volunteer labor and donations from individuals and sister churches.

Not one church service was missed from lack of a location to meet, during reconstruction. Members held worship services in the basement at the home of Shirley Shults, a deacon in the church, and his wife, Christeen.

The Saturday after the church burned, workers began clearing the rubble and for about a year and a half, folks worked Saturdays on the new building. The church dedicated the new building August 17, 1986 with Pastor Henry Morton in charge of the special service. Hal Wilson, building committee chairman, reported cost for the new building to be \$63,703, not including donated materials and volunteer labor.

At the dedication program, Association Director, Roy Miller, said; "God always has great things in store for His people when they are about His business. He never lets you down, never fails you, and never forsakes you."

The new Oldham's Creek church building, like the old, is an important part of the community. Eugene Wilson, a church member, said: "This building stands as a witness...to the community that we worship a true and living God."

Written by Veta Wilson King.