

PROVIDENCE BAPTIST CHURCH

The Reverend Richard Woods founded and pastored the Providence Baptist Church in 1789. The area known as "The Woods Bottom" which belonged to the Woods family included acreage on the French Broad River about a mile and half above Douglas Dam and about a quarter of a mile from the river. Douglas Lake covered the Woods Bottoms in 1942.

There is no record of the early church building and other buildings in the area, but many of the early church members remember the many large oak trees standing among the tombstones, large marble stones like those used in cemeteries today. It is believed the cemetery was used until the early 1920s.

An 1829 Record book furnished the following dates and comments:

"The Providence Church met on the third Saturday of June, 1829, at Providence Meeting House in Jefferson County, State of Tennessee, with James Woods church clerk. On the third Saturday of June 1855, the Providence Baptist Church of Jefferson County met at Atchley Chapel in Sevier County. The third Saturday of June 1856 the church met at Samuel Pate's house. The third Saturday, July 1870 the church met at the Union School house."

"In February, third Saturday, 1876, the Primitive Baptist Church met at Providence." This book ends with the fourth Saturday of March 1887.

The church organized a Female Missionary Society the fourth Saturday of November 1888 and Randall Hill and his wife were ordained as deacon and deaconess the third Saturday of September 1880.

"The Baptist Church of Christ met as usual Saturday, July 6, 1895. A letter was granted to Joshua Atchley and wife, Emily Atchley, Thomas Atchley, Pleasant Atchley, Samuel Atchley and wife, Bessie Atchley, Minnie Atchley, Julia Maples, Matilda Haggard, Noal Haggard, Henry LaFollette and wife, Betty LaFollette, for the purpose of organizing a church at Powder Springs." This church was established about a mile from the present Providence Baptist Church.

A building committee appointed December 6, 1902; to begin plans for a new building included A. C. Atchley, W. M. Moon, and F. M. S. Hill.

At this time, the church was located in Sevier County just a few feet from the Jefferson County line on top of a large hill between the Columbus Leatherwood farm and the John Flynn farm, about a mile and a half from the present location of Douglas Dam.

It was announced on December 9, 1902 the old building would sell to the highest

bidder. Brother Jefferies preached the dedication service of the new building of Providence Baptist Church the second Sunday of November 1903. The building is still being used, having been moved and remodeled.

Sunday School records begin in the year 1900 with the following quotations from some of the early records:

“April 1900, N. B. Brock is superintendent and T. L. Roberts secretary. After scripture and prayer, the lesson was the first lesson in the second quarter. Advance Male Class No. 1 had six students present with three cents offering. Male Class No. 2 had six students and three cents offering. W. C. LaFollette was teacher. Advance Female Class had 11 students with no offering, N. B. Brock teacher.”

“The Intermediate Class had five students and one cent offering, the Primary Class four students and no offering. The Card Class had five present and one cent offering, making a total number present 45 with eight cents offering.”

Another book of records begins April 30, 1905, with W. C. LaFollette superintendent and still another book starts January 7, 1940 with C. R. Parrott superintendent.

Sunday, May 3, 1942, Sunday School and other services were held at Catlett's school on Flat Creek due to the building of Douglas Dam. The church and cemetery had to be moved and Providence members met at that location until August 9, 1942 when they returned to the church building at the new location on what is now known as Providence Road.

The church purchased the property from the Tom Connatser family. After a period of becoming established in this community, the church began to grow and in 1951, two Sunday School rooms were added to the front of the one-room building.

The church still used two wood stoves for heat in 1957 so the next improvement was addition of three more rooms and installation of central heating.

Three rooms were built and a new heating and air conditioning system installed in 1972. The church now has eight rooms with brick exterior.

The membership is very proud of Providence Baptist Church, thanking the Lord for His many blessings over these many years. Ralph Sims, the writer, is a deacon and trustee of the church. The present pastor in 1978 is the Reverend Tommy Pitner.

Pastor, Reverend Jerry Bailey.

Information, Ralph Simms.