

PARTIAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST OF COMANCHE COUNTY

Compiled June 18, 1973

It is uncertain when and where the first Church of Christ building was located in Comanche, but we do know there was an early church, or congregation in the early history of the county. The first minister was George William Montgomery, who was born in 1818 in Mississippi. He came to the county in 1855. (History of Comanche County by Eulalia Nabers Wells - the late Mrs. Earnest Wells - pages 103 & 104). His wife, Aunt Carolina, she was called, was the daughter of Joseph Hicks and a sister of Mrs. Fletcher Neely. George W. Montgomery had one brother, W.A. Montgomery (who came with him), born in 1837, and a sister, Catherine, born in 1831. George W. Montgomery had two sons, five daughters, and one step-son. The Montgomerys moved to Comanche and bought blocks 32 & 33. Besides being a preacher, he was a doctor, school teacher, and Chief Justice of the county. He was administrator of the first will probated in Comanche County of Mr. Foreman. At one time he maintained a doctor's office on the south side of the square. When the Civil War broke out, it was voted by the people of Comanche County for him to remain in the county to give medical attention to women and children. In 1869, he bought a 480 acre farm from Jessie Mercer. Jerry Vines and his wife now own this land, about 7 miles south of Comanche. On the west side of the field, he moved into a log house built by Mr. Mercer, which is still standing. About 3/4 of a mile southeast he built a log church which was also used for a school house, called Big-Eye. Quoting from history of Comanche County by Mrs. Wells, "No evidence of the church building is to be found, other than a few foundation stones." (Pg.104) Some of the early members were the Holmesys, Campbells, and W.R. William Shoemaker, Clarence Bryant, whose ministry began here in 1929, recalls having conducted Mr. Shoemaker's funeral service. The preacher Montgomery died March 12, 1877. Another church established was in the west end of the county, called Willow Spring, which was a school house where 200 pupils attended. Members were the Crockett, Wagley, Wagnon, Ryes, Rogers, and other families. George Montgomery's sister, Katherine who married Abraham Wagley, were probably originators of this large congregation.

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Mrs. Tom Shoemaker, widow of the late Tom Shoemaker whose father was W.R. William Shoemaker, now lives at 804 N. Lane, attended the last series of meetings ever conducted at the Montgomery ranch which was in 1900. She said they did not use instrumental music in the worship and the members referred to it as the Church of Christ. She states that non-members referred to it as the Campbellite Church, or Christian Church. Mrs. Shoemaker also remembers W.H. (Billy) Montgomery, the brother of the late J.A. (Bud) Montgomery who was a member of the Pearl Street Church of Christ until he passed away in 1935. When big camp meetings were held at Big Eye they would take up collections after the services. Billy Montgomery would wait until everyone else had donated and then he would match this amount.

These two brothers W.H. (Uncle Billy) and J.A. (Bud) Montgomery were the sons of George William Montgomery according to Mrs. Earnest Wells (pages 103 & 104) and Mrs. Tom Shoemaker. Curtis Montgomery who passed away June 25, 1970 was the son of J.A. (Bud) Montgomery.

Lawrence Lanford, who now lives at 2400 Austin Ave. Brownwood, was born in Comanche County in 1889, recently gave the following information: In 1902 when the church in Comanche divided over instrumental music, he was there. The church then was located on the lot just west of the county jail, on West Central Street. At that time W.T. (Billy) Lee (who in 1911 became brother Lanford's father-in-law), Bill Ellis, Charlie Baxter (former owner of the building on the SE corner of the square now being torn down) and W.C. Bradshaw were elders of the congregation. Baxter and Bradshaw lead the group that left the church because they wanted instrumental music in the worship. Later Bradshaw came back and worshipped with the Pearl Street Church many years before moving to Junction, Texas and then to Abilene. Hart Shoemaker, his son-in-law, passed away in Abilene recently. He was a member of the Christian Church, perhaps a by-product of Bradshaw being associated with that church for awhile.

Lawrence Lanford said, "The church building just west of the jail burned in the year of 1906 or 1907." After which they worshipped in the Court house 2 or 3 years. During that time he recalls, when he was 17 or 18, that he was ask for the first time to conduct the services for the Lord's Supper. The reason he gave for remembering it so well was because he was so scared and Mrs. Claude Cox coming to him after the services trying to encourage him.

W.C. Lanford (Lawrence's father) Tom Dabney and Claude Cox were elders during the time the church was located and built on N. Pearl Street. He had a good reason to remember it - he and his wife were the first couple to be married in it, December 24, 1911. He thinks it was built in 1910. He said there were not many church wdddings in those days. That building burned in 1952 which was replaced with the present building.

Another pioneer preacher, S.B. Ribble, and Leslie C. Wells who came to Comanche in 1881, preached all over the county - Sidney, Bibb, Farmer's Branch, Stag Creek, etc.

The following is a list of preachers who lived here and worked with the church for various periods of time. The church supported the preaching of the gospel when it was first organized in the county about 1855 by appointment preachers and what was known as "protracted" meetings.

J.D. Moss 9/26--9/28
 Alvin Mitchell 9/28--9/29
 Clarence Bryant 9/29--9/32
 A.C. Nance '34--'37
 Roy Gulley 1938
 A.C. Nance 1939(died here)
 R.C. Ledbetter '40--'45
 Leon Meeks '47--'49
 Frank Lilly '49--'51
 Monty Manchester '51--'56
 Clarence Bryant '56--57
 James Holland '57--'58
 Tilden McFerrin '58--'62
 Nelson Stark '63--'65
 Rex Tilley '62--'63
 Dennis Kellogg '65--'66
 R.G. Parkinson '66--'68
 Dale Scott '68--'72
 Herman Beauchamp '72--'73
 Robert Grace '73--'78

Other Early Preachers ? :

Odis Gatewood
 John F. Nichols
 Martell Pettie

Bill Humble ? 50-52

Thomas Johnson '78-'92

Dan Flournoy '92-'94

Tommy Moore '94-'97

Jeff Sweeten '97-'03

Gerald Stockstill '03-

Don Rollins

James Haught - '19

Compiled by Clarence Bryant and Gaston Boykin with the help of others

gives them a wonderful corner in the best part of the city, one hundred and fifty by one hundred and fifty feet. On this lot is a residence with six rooms to be used for class work, in addition to their large house.

The present eldership is composed of the following names: W. W. Stirman, W. W. Foster, W. O. Beeman, G. W. Sozebee and B. J. McHam together with a splendid Deaconship.

Brethren Price Billingsley, C. R. Nichol, S. H. Hall, J. B. Nelson, L. S. White, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Thos. E. Millholland, E. W. McMillan, W. D. Campbell and the writ-

er have assisted in the meetings for the church.

C. D. Crouch, C. A. Buchanan, Ernest Christian, Early Arceneaux, R. D. Smith have preceded Bro. L. S. White as local ministers. Bro. White began Oct. 1st, 1924. Since that date the membership has been increased by about six hundred and twenty seven, many by baptism a number restored and many others identified by statement. In our recent meeting there were forty baptisms and about fifty two otherwise added to the fellowship, making about ninety two from all sources.

The writer was urged to return for another meeting, and as his time was promised till late in the year 1929, he promised to return in October of that year, the Lord willing.

B. M. Taylor of Dallas, that dignified, Christian song leader and preacher, assisted in the last week of the meeting. Bro. Dunaway, the home leader led for the first week. But was called away by the death of his father. He has our deepest sympathies.

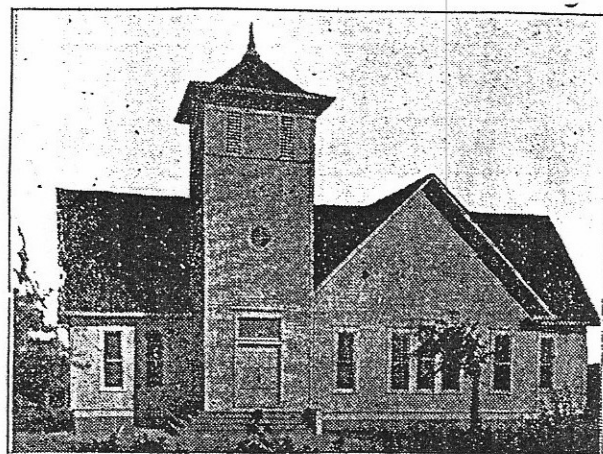
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

This writing is from Ontario, California, the land of sunshine and flowers, orchards and gardens, pleasure and beauty, snow capped mountains and eternal springs; with orange groves like Texas cotton fields, and grapes that equal in splendor those of ancient Canaan, if possible.

The churches are coming to the front in this country, and in a few years we will hear much from this section. The meeting is drawing

Comanche Church Building

J. D. Moss,
Minister



large crowds; had to move to the Legion Hall, and it was filled twice Sunday, and we are back to it tonight.

From here I am to go to Long Beach, Ninth and Olive Streets, to assist Ernest Beam and those brethren for the rest of November. My home in Ontario is with Bro. Samuel E. Witty, the local minister, and we are too busy to write more, will report later.

"Shout, Shout, we are gaining ground,
Glory hallelujah!"

"I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."—Phil. 4:13.

COMANCHE

The Comanche church is one of the older churches of the country. The first building was burned in 1912, but on the ground was rebuilt the same year, a modern building that will seat six or seven hundred people.

Many good preachers have preached for the Comanche church—among them, Arceneaux, Cypret, Holton, McClung, Carney, Schultz, Speck, Scruggs and Lyle Price.

The present elders are C. L. Cox and J. F. Redwine; and J. A. Montgomery and J. J. Johnson are serving as deacons.

Bro. Jas. Dee Moss, is the present minister. Bro. Moss is one of our promising young men of sterling character, and will be heard from in the years to come. He was born in Lingleville, Erath county, April 15th, 1906; son of M. C. Moss, spent two years in A. C. C., held his first meeting in July, 1927, at Desdemonia, with



seventeen baptisms and eight restorations.

Large crowds are attending all services in Comanche; the young people's meeting has grown to three times its former size; and they are not backward in any of the work assigned them.

We are glad to publish to the world, as a means of suggesting to others, just such constructive, aggressive and life-filling reports as this one.—H. W. B.

Take special notice of Brother Lanier's lesson outlines on another page. These are fine for ladies' Bible classes and young peoples' classes, too. He is to furnish us twenty-six of the lessons. Brother A. O. Colley has worked out some fine lessons that we plan to publish soon. Read his article in another column of this number.

The only road to the perfect unity of the people of God is the complete abandonment of everything held for doctrine and for duty, not stated or implied in the New Testament, and all accept the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.