



MOUNT EBAL CHURCH STANDS IN SHADE OF GIANT OAK

(Staff Photos by Braxton Younts)

# Denton's Mount Ebal Church Endures With Serene Beauty

By BRAXTON YOUNTS  
Enterprise Staff Writer

of this affiliation until 1919 when members moved their membership. In other words, the church  
Sexton's Meeting House. These stone stands, about three

# Denton's Mount Ebal Church Endures With Serene Beauty

By BRAXTON YOUNTS  
Enterprise Staff Writer

DENTON — Like the mountain for which it was named, Mount Ebal Church sits atop a promontory surrounded by fertile valleys in the southeast corner of Davidson County.

According to Biblical students Ebal means aged collection. This is true of the present Mount Ebal, which time has passed lightly by while endowing it with a serene beauty.

According to a history compiled by the late Judge J. O. Garner, the church was organized in the latter part of 1861. First appearance in minutes of the quarterly conference of the Davidson charge of the Methodist Protestant Church regarding the old church was dated Oct. 26 of that year.

In the record, the name of William Sexton was listed as a member of the conference. Then, the same minutes show that the next meeting of the quarterly conference was invited to meet at Sexton's Meeting House.

For several years the name of William Sexton was included in the quarterly minutes, with his appointment listed as Sexton's Meeting House, Sexton's School House, or as just Sexton's. The last time this appointment was in the minutes is for the second quarterly conference of April 29, 1871. The minutes of the next meeting of the conference, Aug. 5 of the same year, carry the notation that the fourth such meeting would be held at Mount Ebal.

According to the historians, "it is reasonable to conclude that the work of Mount Ebal Church had its beginning in a school house which is known to have been located on William Sexton's farm in the year 1861."

It is thought that in 1871 the first church structure was built, a log building. This building sufficed until 1883 when the present church was built.

## Davidson Charge

When the first church there began functioning it was made a member of the Davidson Charge. It remained a member

of this affiliation until 1919 when it became associated with the Denton Church, now Central Methodist Church.

Mount Ebal, since its earliest history, was noted for its camp meetings, held in the summers. That it was then easily accessible is known because it was at or near the confluence of five roads.

However, with later changes in the road system Mount Ebal became more and more isolated until now there is only one way into the grounds and it remains unimproved.

Judge Garner noted that Denton's growth also probably contributed to the gradual lessening of the Mount Ebal's prominence, for as the little crossroads village of early years grew into the Denton of today, many Mount Ebal

members moved their membership. In other words, the church has simply "gone to town," as he said.

But this is not to say or infer that Mount Ebal is dead. Seeing that this won't happen, at least in present day times, is the Mount Ebal Memorial Assn. This group is dedicated to the perpetuation of the church and its grounds and cemetery.

## Annual Meeting

In commemoration of this the association holds its annual meeting at the church grounds on the first Sunday of each June. On June 4, 1955, a marker commemorating the founding of the church was dedicated. The granite memorial stands at the side of the church.

It is between two fire stands which were put up in the early camp meeting beginnings of

Sexton's Meeting House. These stone stands, about three feet high and rather wide, were used to hold pine knots which were ignited at sundown to provide illumination for the night-time services which were held under a large arbor adjacent to the church, because the church couldn't accommodate the large crowds of worshippers.

However, the arbor as well as the camp houses and tents in which the families attending meetings lived, have long since been removed. Now, sitting in what Judge Garner described as "park-like surroundings," Mount Ebal Church remains mute evidence of religion of another day.

## Narrow Road

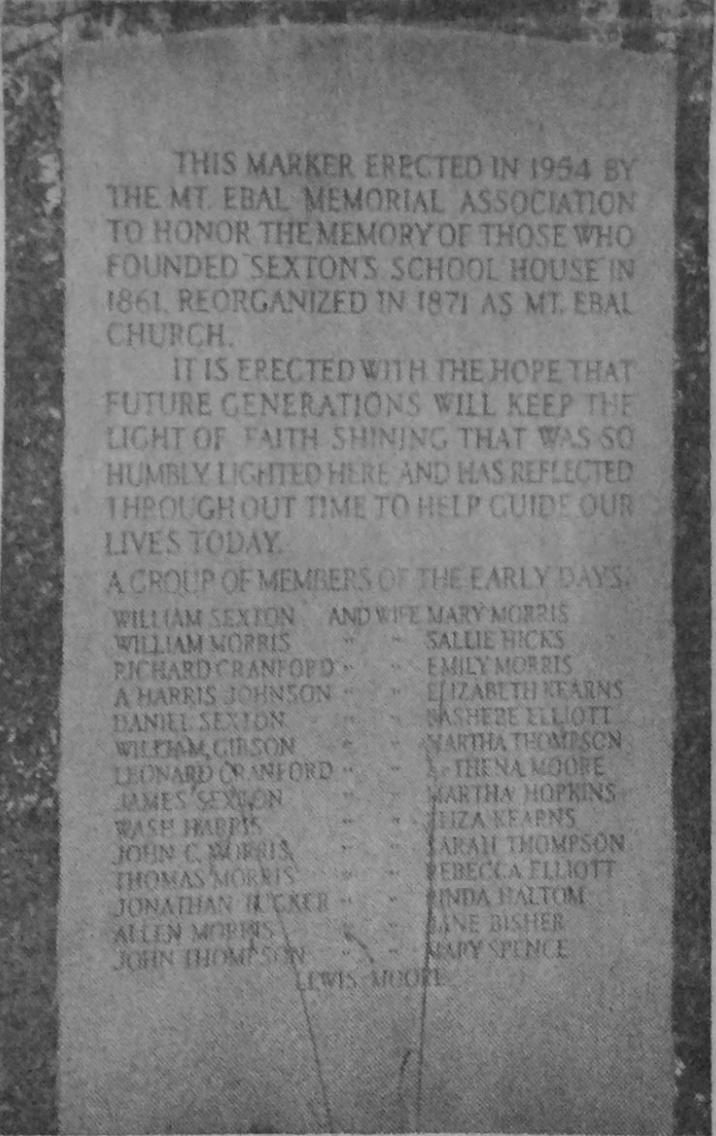
As Judge Garner said, "Mount Ebal is reached by a narrow road or driveway leading off from the main highway, which at one place winds tortuously between huge boulders with barely enough space for one car to get through." From all appearances these boulders have bordered the entry to the grounds since the church's inception.

In the center of the approximately four acres which the church and cemetery occupy is a giant oak tree. From its size one wonders if it wasn't a fairly large tree when the area was first used as a camp meeting. No doubt it has shaded many devout worshippers from the hot summer sun. Today, standing in the center of the church yard the oak appears perfectly symmetrical.

The church building is tribute to its makers, who Judge Garner reported, received the sum of \$60 as full compensation for building the "meeting house."

"The lumber for the floor and ceiling was cut from native forest pines, thoroughly dried and planed and matched by hand. Although it has been standing for 71 years (in 1955) the little frame 'Meeting house' is in a perfect state of preservation."

And in 1961, through care of the Mount Ebal Memorial Assn. those words remain true and the church still stands as silent memorial to those who have gone before the present generation.



MEMORIAL PLAQUE





**CEMETERY BLENDS INTO COUNTRYSIDE**