

MOUNT EBAL CHURCH ENDURES

Mount Ebal Methodist Church is located Southeast of Denton near a tributary of Tom's Creek. Mount Ebal Methodist Protestant Church has not opened its doors for regular worship services since before World War II.

It is not known when the church organized, but according to 1861 records of a quartely conference of the Davidson charge of the Methodist Protestant Church. William Sexton was a delegate to the conference. These same records indicate that the conference was invited to "Sexton's Meeting House" for the next session.

The reference "Sexton's Meeting House" or just "Sexton's", often appeared in the records of the conference. The name Mount Ebal appeared in the conference records for the first time on August 5, 1871.

On Sexton's farm, it is reasonably certain that around 1871 a log structure was built.

The Rev. A.J. Laughlin was the pastor. The log structure was replaced in 1883 by the present structure, according to a historical sketch written in 1940 by the late Rev. George L. Curry.

Members of the congregation during the early history of the church includes husbands listed with their wives: William Sexton and his wife Mary Morris; William Morris and wife Sallie Hicks; Richard Cranford and Emily Morris; Harris Johnson and Elizabeth Kearns; Daniel Sexton and Bashebe Elliott; William

Gibson and Martha Thompson; Leonard Cranford and Bethena Moore; James Sexton and Martha Hopkins; Wash Harris and Eliza Kearns; John C. Morris and Sarah Thompson; Thomas Morris and Rebecca Elliott; Johnathan Tucker and Rinda Haltom; Allen Morris and Jane Bisher; John Thompson and Mary Spencer; and Lewis Moore.

In 1883 the frame building measuring 36 by 48 ft. was constructed of native pine. John T. Sexton and Alfred Thompson were the contractors. They agreed to construct the building for \$60.00.

The floor and ceiling were planed and matched by hand tools. The seats also were sawed out of two inch maple boards by hand. The pews and original pulpit can be seen in the church today.

Soon after the frame building was completed, a new arbor was constructed near the church to serve as a location for camp meetings.

The annual camp meetings were held in late summer when crops were laid by. When the season for the annual revival approached, preparations were made in advance in order that all work on the farm, save the most urgent and necessary might cease for a week or 10 days during which the revival was in progress.

Those whose circumstances would permit, moved to the church grounds and camped in log cabins or tents grouped around the church arbor.

In the late 1800's, 25 or more camp houses of both frame and log construction were grouped around Mount Ebal Church and its arbor. Light was furnished to the campers by pine knot fires on top of stone "fire stands ", three to four feet tall. The arbor and camp houses have disappeared, but some of the unusual stone "fire stands" remain today.

At one time, five horse and buggy roads converged at the church, but by 1940 only one small road led to the church over which an automobile could travel.

Once a year on the first Sunday in June, former members and friends of the church began holding a homecoming day. At one of these early events, the Mount Ebal Memorial Association was formed. The association now is ably led by Stewart Sexton of Denton. The association keeps the aging church building in repair and maintains the church grounds, including a small cemetery on a four-acre site near the church.

On June 4, 1955, a marker commemorating the founding of the church was dedicated. The granite memorial stands at the side of the church as a silent memorial to those who have gone before the present generation.