

Museum News: First Baptist Church of Sanderson

By C. W. (Bill) Smith

In January of 1899 the railroad Chapel Car Goodwill was sent out by the Baptist General Convention of Texas to do missionary work in Sanderson. It had already organized churches in Comstock and Del Rio. The groundwork was laid for a new church and families were interested in carrying through.

According to an El Paso newspaper article First Baptist Church of Sanderson was organized about Aug. 12, 1900 after protracted meetings led by Rev. King of Alpine and Rev. E. C. Ely of Waco. It was associated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Rev. King was selected as the first pastor. The official date for organization in church records is 1904.

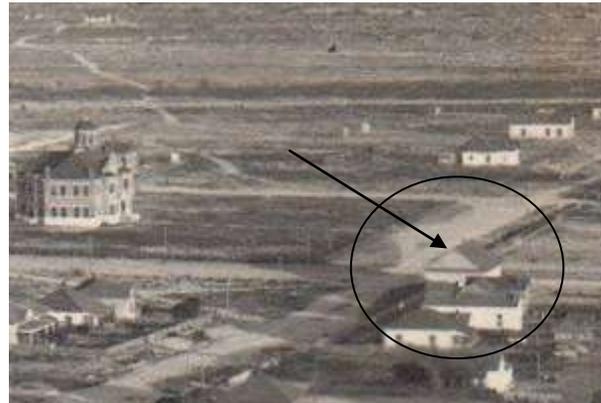
For the first few years meetings were held in private homes or the skating rink, which sat on a spot northeast of the old Sanderson High School gym where the old shop sits today. Rev. King would come by train from Alpine once or twice a month and conduct services, in time to return on the evening train.

Baptists being Baptists, baptisms were held wherever enough water for full immersion could be had, which usually was at Three Mile Mill north of Sanderson or at a dirt tank two miles east of Sanderson. Baptisms were attended by people of all faiths and ended with dinner on the grounds at the baptismal spot, with each family bringing enough to provide for guests. The new church built in 1929 contained a baptismal tank in the sanctuary and outdoor baptisms were held occasionally but no longer necessary.

From about 1911 onward the church raised money for a new building. A major protracted meeting in early 1914 added to the congregation and plans were drawn up to construct the building. In March of 1914 construction was begun at the southwest corner of 1st and Hackberry.

The building took several years to complete but was finished by 1920. It was soon outgrown and a new building was constructed in 1929 on the northeast corner of the same intersection. The old building was demolished and the property sold to the school district, which built a superintendent's home on that spot.

The new building was quite modern and had a full basement, with classrooms on the west side for Sunday school. A parsonage was built to the north of the new building.



Only known picture of the original First Baptist Church, 1920



Mrs. Scuff Raney being baptized at a tank two miles east of Sanderson.

Through the years the traditional Baptist groups were organized...Baptist Men, Woman's Missionary Union, Bible study groups, Baptist Young People's Union, Royal Ambassadors, Girls' Auxiliary (Girls in Action,) Mission Friends and Sunbeams.

In the 1970s a new Sunday school and fellowship building was built to the west of the church. Although the congregation has grown smaller, as with all churches in Sanderson, they have remained active in Southern Baptist tradition, work and missions.