

Museum News: Church of Christ

By C. W. (Bill) Smith

Although there were many members of the Church of Christ faith in Sanderson from an early time, the first families to hold regular services were the J. B. Harrell family and Mrs. George Fenley, wife of the first sheriff of Terrell County and a local rancher, and her children. This all occurred shortly after the turn of the 20th century.

The first meetings were held in the old school house which sat at the top of Persimmon Street, where the Church of Christ building now stands. That building was vacated as a school when the new red brick school was completed in 1911, although Church of Christ services could have been held there previous to that time. Services were also held in the Terrell County Courthouse. The congregation organized formally in 1917.



In the early 1920s Mr. J. B. Harrell purchased the property where the old school stood and donated it to the church. In 1925 the old school building, which sat towards the back of the lot on Persimmon, was demolished and a new building constructed in the present spot near the street. Mr. Earl Hardgrave, a rancher north of Sanderson and a faithful church member, came to town during the week and ran the construction of the new building. Materials were purchased at Kerr Mercantile and work was begun. In October of 1927 a parsonage was completed just to the south of the new building.

Robert E. Griffith was the first preacher to live in Sanderson and work with the church. Before that, visiting preachers came and went on a monthly or weekly basis, as available. Protracted meetings, or, "revivals" were held often and the membership increased.

Venice Wunneberger of Austin was selected as second pastor in September, 1927.

Rev. Griffith was pastor once again in 1931.

At a much later date a fellowship hall was built adjacent to the sanctuary.

Today the congregation has grown smaller, as with all the churches of Sanderson, and the present pastor is Kenn Norris.