

Terrell County Memorial April, 2018  
Sanderson, Texas

# Museum News

## First Baptist Church

The Story of Sothern Baptists in Terrell County



*The new First Baptist Church of Sanderson, constructed in 1929.*

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



*A group of men and boys crowd around the observation deck of the Chapel Car Good Will, enlisted by the Baptist General Convention of Texas to bring the Gospel to the far reaches of the West Texas frontier. Dedicated as a church on wheels, technically, it was the first church building in Sanderson. The Good Will traveled all over the state of Texas, wherever rails ran, then toured the next forty years throughout the western US. It visited Sanderson in January of 1900.*

date for organization in church records is 1904. The first three charter members were Mr. and Mrs. Y. C. Slover and Fred Savage.

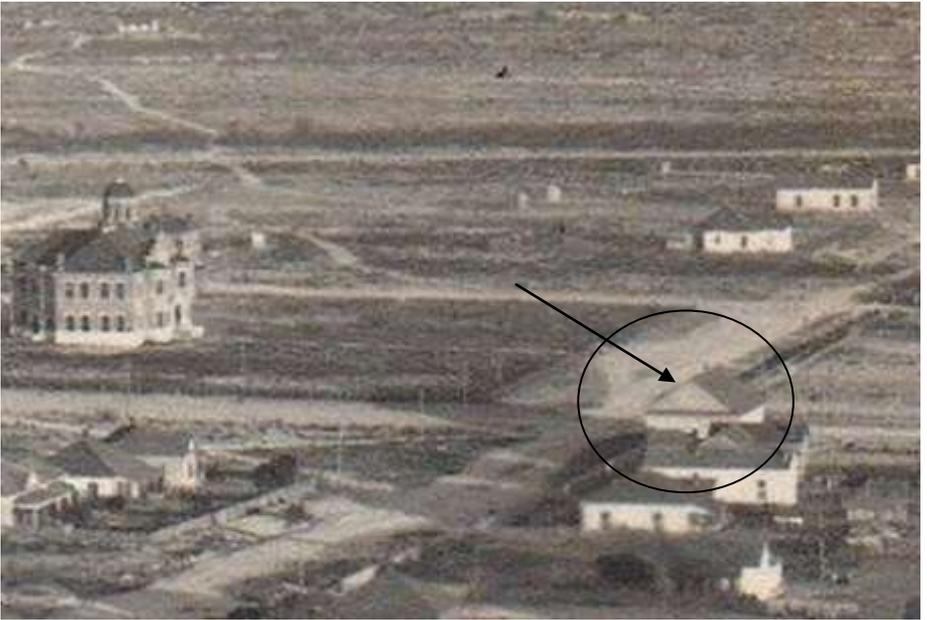
For the first few years meetings were held in private homes or the skating rink, which sat on a spot northeast of the old Sanderson High School gym where the old shop sits today. Rev. King would come by train from Alpine once or twice a month and conduct services, in time to return on the evening train.

For some time, union services with the Presbyterians were held in their new church building.

Baptists being Baptists, bap-

tisms 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, completed 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 only known picture of the first building built by the Baptists in Sanderson, at the southeast corner of 1st and Hackberry. The old courthouse can be seen in the distance, circa 1915.***

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. Today that area is the location of the Frankie Cash Administration Building and is presently home to the Terrell County

EMS.

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

The church was faced with a dilemma. In 1927, a disgruntled former pastor attempted to form a splinter congregation which met at the Princess Theater, which at the time was located somewhere in Sanderson,. The building we know as the Princess was not completed until 1929. Apparently the effort failed and First Baptist continued to thrive.

Through the years the tradi-



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

tional 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 1981 a new Sunday school and fellowship building was built to the west of the church and the parsonage sold and moved across

the street. The white two-story house north of the church was purchased as a parsonage. This was under the leadership of the Reverend Paul Tatum.

Although the congregation has grown smaller, as with all churches in Sanderson, they have remained active in Southern Baptist tradition, work and missions.