

St. Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church

By Nita Thurman

When St. Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church meets in August 2006 for its annual Homecoming celebration, the church also will look back 100 years to its beginning in the African American community of Quakertown.

Quakertown was located where the Civic Center, city hall and the city park now sit between McKinney Street and Texas Woman's University. St. Emmanuel, known at first as Second Baptist Church, was one of three African American churches in Quakertown. It was organized in 1906, according to the cornerstone of the present church building at 509 Lakey Street.

Several people met in the Odd Fellows Hall in Quakertown to organize the church, including the first pastor, Rev. F. Scroggins, Rev. and Mrs. David Griffen, and Rev. and Mrs. L.J. Johnson and their daughters.

The original church was located on Sanders Street, an alley-like passage between Oakland and Terry Streets. When Quakertown was removed to make way for a the city park between McKinney Street and Texas Woman's University, a Mr. Alexander -- first name unknown - donated a lot for the new church on Lakey street. The property has since been expanded.

Rev. Scroggins left for another church while St. Emmanuel was still in Quakertown. He was followed by Rev. J.A. Ayers. At the time, the church met in a tabernacle -- a temporary outdoor facility. Some members believe the tabernacle had only a podium for the minister, while the congregation sat in the shade of the trees. Rev. Ayers oversaw construction of a frame church building at the site.

The city of Denton began acquiring land for the park in 1923, forcing Quakertown residents to move and often paying token amounts for their property. Rev. Ayers outspokenly opposed the city's actions, with the result that he had to flee threatened reprisal in the middle of the night.

The church rebuilt on Lakey Street was first a frame building, which was followed by a brick building, and that by the present brick sanctuary built in 1962.

Jewell Logan, a member of St. Emmanuel's for 71 years, remembers meeting in a room on the second floor of a building at the corner of Robson and Skinner streets while the new church was being built. A café occupied the first floor of the building.

Mrs. Logan and her sister, Henrietta Haynes Clark, are among the oldest living members of St. Emmanuel. The sisters were born in Dallas. When their father was killed in a construction accident, their mother moved to Denton, making the trip in a wagon. Jewell was two years old and Henrietta was three.

They joined St. Emmanuel in 1935 and have been stalwarts of the church ever since.

Among other church positions, Mrs. Logan served for 15 years as secretary of the Sunday School - beginning when she was 14 years old -- was youth director for 20 years, choir secretary and is still secretary for Mission I, an organization of senior women, and a Home Missionary. That means she is responsible for calling on homebound church members.

Mrs. Clark has also held a number of church positions, ranging from usher to choir president, youth director under five different ministers, and has worked in the training union and with youth. She was named Woman of the Year at St. Emmanuel in 1999.

The sisters also can look back at fund-raising campaigns for two churches. They sold fried chicken dinners, barbecue dinners and fish dinners; they sold clothing at Fred Moore Park, and helped stage plays and programs. When the church was built, each member bought a pew for \$10 each.

Ten ministers, beginning with the first organizing pastor in Quakertown, have served the St. Emmanuel congregation. The present pastor, the Rev. Lloyd Anthony Pullam, came to St. Emmanuel in 1987.

For its 100th anniversary celebration, the church is inviting all former and present members for a barbecue lunch on Saturday, Aug. 5, followed by a musical program that night. The Sunday morning service the next day will focus on the church's long history. Special guests for the service will be Pastor Lionel Griffin Sr. and Mr. Zion Baptist Church of Thibodeaux, La.

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