

Early History of Macedonia Baptist Church #2

Information about the organization date for Macedonia Baptist Church #2 rests in oral tradition and undocumented published material. The date carved in stone at the church says “March 8, 1840.” However, according to Rubye Sisson’s *From Trout Creek to Ragland*, our St. Clair Baptist Association minutes give two dates of organization: She writes, “The 1930 minutes give the date of constitution of Macedonia as 1846. The 1932 minutes claims 1840 as the beginning date.”

Adding to the puzzle is a Daughters of The American Revolution 1973 book, *Some Early Alabama Churches (Established before 1870)* which records: “...this church is said to be the oldest church in St. Clair County, and it is thought that it was organized in 1812. It is located in the mountains near Ragland. Records go back to 1840.” The article describes the first building as windowless and built of logs. Inside was a three-foot cube of rocks where pine knots were burned for light at night. A shaft running out the side drew smoke from the room. An added lean-to provided a seating place for slaves. The book lists Grizzells and Johnsons as the earliest known families. Unfortunately, the book gives no documentation for the 1812 date. Be that as it may, 1840 is carved in stone, and I will abide by that—and keep looking for earlier verification.

We do know that the first log building served as both church and school, and we have family stories of the school. Shelia McKinney, Church Clerk, recounted what her great grandmother, Lela Alverson Grizzell, told of attending the log school.

“The Alverson family settled these hills and valleys, and Lela’s brothers and sisters attended here. She and her older brothers and sisters walked to school from Macedonia Mt. where they lived. A pond ran over the road, and she remembered ice skating on the pond.

“The school had a pot belly stove, and when it rained they took off their boots and lined them around the stove to dry. They’d wrap their feet in their coats until their feet got warm. She [Lela] said the log church-school blew away in a storm.”

After the log building, the church constructed a wood-frame building, and after the wood, they erected the present brick structure.

Lela Alverson married Jackson Linder Grizzell, who later served as one of the church deacons. Mrs. McKinney observed that her granddaughter, Serenity, is the 7th generation Grizzell to attend Macedonia.

Mrs. McKinney has brought together a great deal of information about the church, some of which is tattered fragments of minutes from the 19th Century. As is so often the case with records, fires and time took their toll; however, what remains is treasured material.

Some of the documents record that the Singing Convention, or singing school, often met at the church. They opened the doors and windows of the church so those standing outside could enjoy the singing.

In the 1940s, Rev. Brown would drive from Birmingham once a month to pastor Macedonia. He had a family of six; so the church would “pound him”—that is, give him food supplies—each month. He would preach and the church sent him home with a carload of food.

Eighty-nine-year-old Louise Sterling, daughter of Jackson and Lela Grizzell, leads the singing at Macedonia. She started leading in 1950. There have been others over the years, but Louise has been the standby for sixty-eight years. Quite a record.

But why is 1914 Macedonia Baptist in Margaret known as #1 and 1840 Macedonia Baptist in Ragland as #2? Mrs. Sisson’s book gives the probable answer. Macedonia in Ragland did not consistently send yearly

reports to the Association, and when Macedonia in Margaret joined in 1914, it had been a few years since Ragland had sent a report. We can speculate that sometime after 1914 when Ragland started sending reports again, the Association arbitrarily designated Margaret as #1 and Ragland as #2—but that is speculation only.

So, we still have unanswered questions, and if anyone has additional information on this church, please send it to whitten93@gmail.com.