

## **Rocky Springs Baptist Church**

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# Rocky Springs Baptist Church

By MISS NINA PEPPER

In March 1860 Needham Waterer of the Free Run Community of Yazoo County purchased some land from J.N. Anderson and Rabert Callahan of the area.

On August 6 of that year he deeded a portion, for \$40, to Joseph A. Young, Robert F. Johnson, P.C. Barfield and John C. McCormack, Deacons of Rocky Springs Church.

Described as "beginning at the NW corner of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of the NE $\frac{1}{2}$ , Section 26T.13, R1 West, running thence due South 7-7-100 chains to a stake, thence East 5-65-100 chains, thence North 7-7-100 chains, thence West 5-65-100 chains to point of

beginning, containing 4 acres, as long as used as a place of worship, and no longer."

Perhaps the War Between the States interfered with completion of the transaction for the deed was not filed for record until December 19, 1870, when it was notarized before J.W. Purvis, Supervisor of Beat 2.

Access to a spring on the land was assured. This leads one to wonder if the church was named for the spring, or if the early members, many of whom had come from the Bayou Pierre section of Claiborne County, had fond memories of another Rocky Springs Church, prominent in that area.

Thomas R. Boswell, builder of other churches in the community, built the first church at Rocky Springs. A one room building, with a section reserved for slaves, was constructed of lumber which was hauled from near Lexington by ox team. This building served until 1954 when it was razed and the present building erected.

In 1885 Richard Boyd left a generous bequest to Rocky Springs Church. His will dated July 7 was witnessed by J.R. Shurley, J.F. Taylor and J.T. Marshall, all of the community.

A list of early members, provided by Mrs. H.L. Mathews, contains the names of Pearce, Day,

Shurley, Hollowell, Chester, White, Taylor, Shepherd, Johnston, Nivens, Waller, Reid, Burns and Shell.

## Ministers

Names of many of the early pastors are not available, but a check of the early Marriage Records of Yazoo County, show that H.W. Portwood, Minister of the Gospel, officiated at the marriages of George H. Shell to Miss Mary Pearce on June 16, 1853; R.N. Pearce to Miss F. E. White on November 4, 1885 and Nathan Morris Whiye to Miss Elizabeth Belcher on September 11, 1859; and also when W.W. Shurley was married to Miss Mary R. White on

September 2, 1869; Alex A. Lomas performed the ceremony. Just before the turn of the century, T.J. Burks served 1894-1895; P.F. Miller 1896; W.M. Broadway 1898, R.D. Mann 1899, and C.M. Chapman 1900.

In the nearby cemetery are found the names of men and women long active in the church and in the community: White, Niven, Johnston, Stonestreet, Collins, Waller, McCormack, Barfield, Powell, Wilson, Day, Montgomery, Redditt, Ricks, Burns, Taylor, Shurley, Shepherd. Needham Waterer, who married Miss Lucinda McCormack, and died in 1873 at the age of 54 is buried there.

An unusual number of doctors are found here: Dr. R.F. Johnston, Dr. J.P. Thomas, Dr. T.H. Redditt, Dr. J. Bradley.

## Membership

For 114 years the membership of Rocky Springs Baptist Church has played an important and constructive part in the history of not only the Free Run Community, but also in the whole county and state.

## Bibliography:

Newspaper Clipping of Rocky Springs; Centennial Observance. List of early member provided by Mrs. H.L. Mathews; Rocky Springs Cemetery Records and Book BB, page 702, Yazoo County Deeds.