

ELMIRA CHAPEL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1. Elmira Pierce Castleberry, wife of A.T. Castleberry II, who taught Sunday School as early as 1847 under a tall pine tree where the Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian Church was established. The three acre plot on which the church was built was deeded to the church by Joseph Castleberry, brother of A.T. Castleberry II and brother-in-law of John Rodden.
2. The first building erected for Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Built in 1897 on 35 acres deeded the church by James Rodden Castleberry, son of Elmira and A.T. Castleberry, it also housed a school for the children of the community of Spring Hill.
3. Young people standing at the side entrance of the 1897 church may have been members of a wedding party.
4. The original manse (parsonage) at Elmira Chapel built in 1898 for the first resident minister and his bride, the Reverend and Mrs. J.M. Robinson.
5. Top of page, the school-church built in 1897. Bottom of the page, Spring Hill School, built before 1910 and enlarged about 1915 by the addition of a second wing.
6. Top of page, The Elmira Chapel cemetery, set aside for burials in 1915. Bottom of the page, grave site of Mary Castleberry Clemens, wife of Claude C. Clemens. Mary Clemens was the first church member buried in the cemetery.
7. Two sources of God's bounty are pictured here, an oil well being drilled about 1931 during the oil boom and a lumber mill producing lumber from the surrounding forests. The mill is the Castleberry Brothers Mill. Standing in the foreground are Ethel Bussey Johnson and three members of the Bussey family.
8. After 1931, Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church prospered as 10 oil wells were drilled on church property. A sanctuary, a new manse, and an educational building were constructed. The influx of wealth made it possible for Elmira Chapel to assist in the building of other Cumberland Presbyterian churches and the Children's Home in Denton.
9. The interior of the sanctuary at Elmira, about 1940.
10. The congregation, probably photographed on the same date.
11. The church and grounds as they appeared about 1952. The entrance, originally an arched passageway with steps on each side, was replaced by an open porch with double doors, and a steeple was added.

12. Newly remodeled sanctuary of Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. About 1960.
13. Three ministers who served Elmira Chapel in the years 1933-1986: Reverend T.C. Stockton 1933-1942, Reverend Wm. A. Rawlins 1971-1986, and Rev. L.L. Thomas 1942-1971.
14. Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1978. On Feb. 19, 1978 after a four-year building program, a new sanctuary and music-education building was dedicated. Sanctuary in foreground, other buildings in background to left of picture.
15. Top: Chapel just off the sanctuary. Furnished by the children of George and Lillian Castleberry in honor of their parents. Bottom: Thomas Hall, so-named to honor Rev. L.L. Thomas, minister of the church for 29 years.
16. The interior of the sanctuary and the stained glass window behind the altar as viewed from the entrance hall.
17. Spring Hill school. Top left: First Kindergarten building. Top right: Spring Hill School Teacherage. Bottom left: First brick building Spring Hill School, built 1933. Bottom right: Panoramic view of the outdoor sports facilities of Spring Hill High School.
18. Architect's rendition of the present Elmira Chapel Cumberland Church complex.

Prepared by Frances M. Walker

Feb. 12, 1997
Rt 9 Box 609
Gilmer, TX 75644

Dr. Norman Black, Chairman
Gregg County Historical Commission
417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, TX 75644

Dear Dr. Black:

My apologies for delaying so long in writing you.

I thought it would be good to repeat by letter what I told you by phone Friday, Oct. 4, that Elmira Chapel of Spring Hill, Gregg County is celebrating one hundred years of Christian service as a Cumberland Presbyterian church.

Once a rural church with its inception an outgrowth of religious services held there by neighboring Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian church, the first services were held in a school built at Spring Hill in 1879. In 1897 a combined church and school house was built about 2 miles north of that site. The church was accepted in Marshall Presbytery in the spring of 1898.

To introduce myself, I am Frances M. Willis, a member of Elmira Chapel since 1960, an elder emeritus, and a member of the Centennial Committee. I have written a brief history of the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination which appeared in a collection of stories about churches of this area in a book called Country Faith and Fate: Churches and Cemeteries of East Texas, published in 1991 by the Northeast Texas Writers Organization, Mt. Pleasant.

The Elmira Chapel Centennial committee under the direction of our pastor, Kevin Ward, prepared a booklet Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future which was distributed Oct. 6, 1996, the day we began our year-long celebration. It is our desire to apply for a historical marker using information from that booklet and other sources.

Rose Mary Magrill of Marshall, Texas lent us a copy of the Heritage Committee application for Cumberland Presbyterian Churches of Harrison County. It should serve as an excellent guide for our efforts.

Her manuscript is 37 pages long and divided into three parts: Narrative History, 8 pages; Contributions, 17 pages; and Sources, 12 pages.

We have the Elmira Chapel narrative history and a bibliography almost completed and are in the process of writing about the contributions rendered by the church and its members.

Our application will not be as scholarly, nor as long, as that of the Marshall Cumberland Presbyterian Church, but it will surely reflect a church and members who have dedicated themselves to Christian service for almost 100 years in the community of Spring Hill.

In The History of the Creation of Gregg County Richard B. Levy wrote, "These places in Upshur County, afterwards included in Gregg County, had origin as school sites of the respective communities shortly before the creation of Gregg County and were places of quite importance from and after the creation of Gregg County in the year 1873, namely: White Oak, Springhill, Omega, and Tryon."

If you would like for me to send you the bibliography or a draft of the narrative before it is completed, please let me know. My telephone number is 1-903-734-5623.

We are grateful for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Frances M. Willis

Frances M. Willis
(Mrs. Clayton B.)
Member of Elmira Chapel
Centennial Committee

cc. Kevin Ward, Pastor
Committee Members: Hazel Stiver, Arlene Tekell, Tommy Tiffin

Feb. 25, 1997
Rt 9 Box 609
Gilmer, Texas 75644

Dr. Norman Black, Chairman
Gregg County Historical Commission
417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, TX 75602

Dear Dr. Black:

Enclosed in this envelope is a draft copy of the narrative history and bibliography for the Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church Historical Marker application.

The narrative history is longer than I expected it to be. We can shorten it and change its tone in whatever way you think is best.

I will continue to work on (1) the role of the church in several areas of service and (2) documenting works cited so that they may be added to the narrative history.

Your advice and directions will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Frances Willis

Frances Willis
Member of Elmira Chapel Centennial Committee
1-903-734-5623

cc: Pastor Kevin Ward and Committee

Route 9 Box 609
Gilmer TX 75644
October 15, 1997

Dr. Norman Black, Chairman
Gregg County Historical Commission
417 Moberly Avenue
Longview, TX 75602

Dear Dr. Black:

At long last I am sending you the photographs you requested. They are not actually photographs, but are color laser prints of photographs. The laser prints have numbered labels on the back and are identified by matching numbers on the two sheets of typed descriptions.

Also enclosed is one more page to insert in the manuscript. Please dispose of the page 13 which has "Theological" misspelled.

I am sending you under separate cover a copy of the book Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future prepared by the Elmira Chapel Centennial Committee for our 100th year celebration. I think you will enjoy it. Note that page 14 is entitled "The Buildings" and shows photographs I have not sent you.

The book has an error which I need to call to your attention. The list of charter members of Elmira Chapel on page 6 is incomplete because the names of the founding elders were not included. The founding elders were: R.W. Castleberry (Ordained at Pine Tree) 1872; J.A. Callaway (Ordained at Pine Tree) 1888; J.R. Castleberry (Ordained at Pine Tree 1888; and Ollie Callaway (Ordained Aug. 28, 1898).

Please return the large photograph of Elmira's three brick buildings and the congregation. Although the inked date on the back reads 1934 approximately, the date should probably be 1935 or 1936. The sanctuary was built in 1931, the educational building in 1934 and the new brick manse in 1935.

I am looking forward to the completion of this project and the culmination of the hope that Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church will receive an historical marker.

Sincerely,

Frances M. Willis

Frances M. Willis

cc: Reverend Kevin Ward and the Centennial Committee

INTIMATIONS

February 2 - 9, 1992

SUNDAY - 2 February

2:00 pm Eagle Court of Honor
for Clinton Alexander, in Thomas Hall.
Friends are invited.
Youth Choir Rehearsal
Unity Worship with First & Pine Tree
Churches at Pine Tree.
Dr. Marvin Leslie preaching
Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal
7:15 pm

TUESDAY - 4 Feb. (C.P. Church is 182 years old)
9:00 am Discovery School & Mother's Day Out

WEDNESDAY - 5 February

9:30 am "Happy People" (Sr. Citizens)
2:30 pm Choir for 1st, 2nd, 3rd grades
3:00 pm LOGOS Youth Club (Ends at 6:45 pm)
3:30 pm "Joyful Noise" Choir Rehearsal
6:30 pm Worship Committee

THURSDAY - 6 February

9:00 am Discovery School & M.D.O.

NEXT SUNDAY - 9 February

8:00 am Men & Boys' Prayer Breakfast
9:45 am Church School (Graded Classes)
11:00 am Worship
Noon Covered Dish Valentine Luncheon
4:00 pm Session Meeting
5:00 pm Youth Choir Rehearsal
6:00 pm Worship/CPYC/Children's Hour
7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal

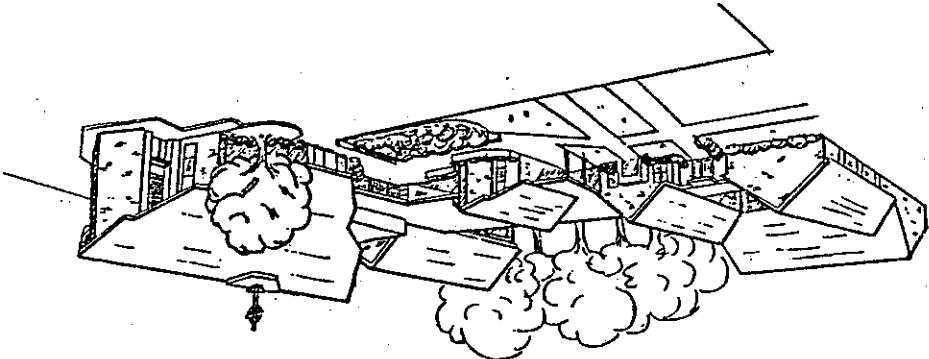
182 YEARS OLD

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was born February 4, 1810, in Dickson County, Tennessee. It was outgrowth of the great Revival of 1800, one of the most powerful spiritual revivals the United States has ever witnessed. Founders of the church were The Reverends Finis Ewing, Samuel King, and Samuel McAdow.
The birthplace shrine is in Montgomery Bell State Park. The shrine consists of the log cabins, and a separate chapel. During the summer months a minister is on the grounds to conduct worship and to tell the story of Cumberland Presbyterians.

Elmira Chapel

Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Trinity Presbytery, Mission Synod

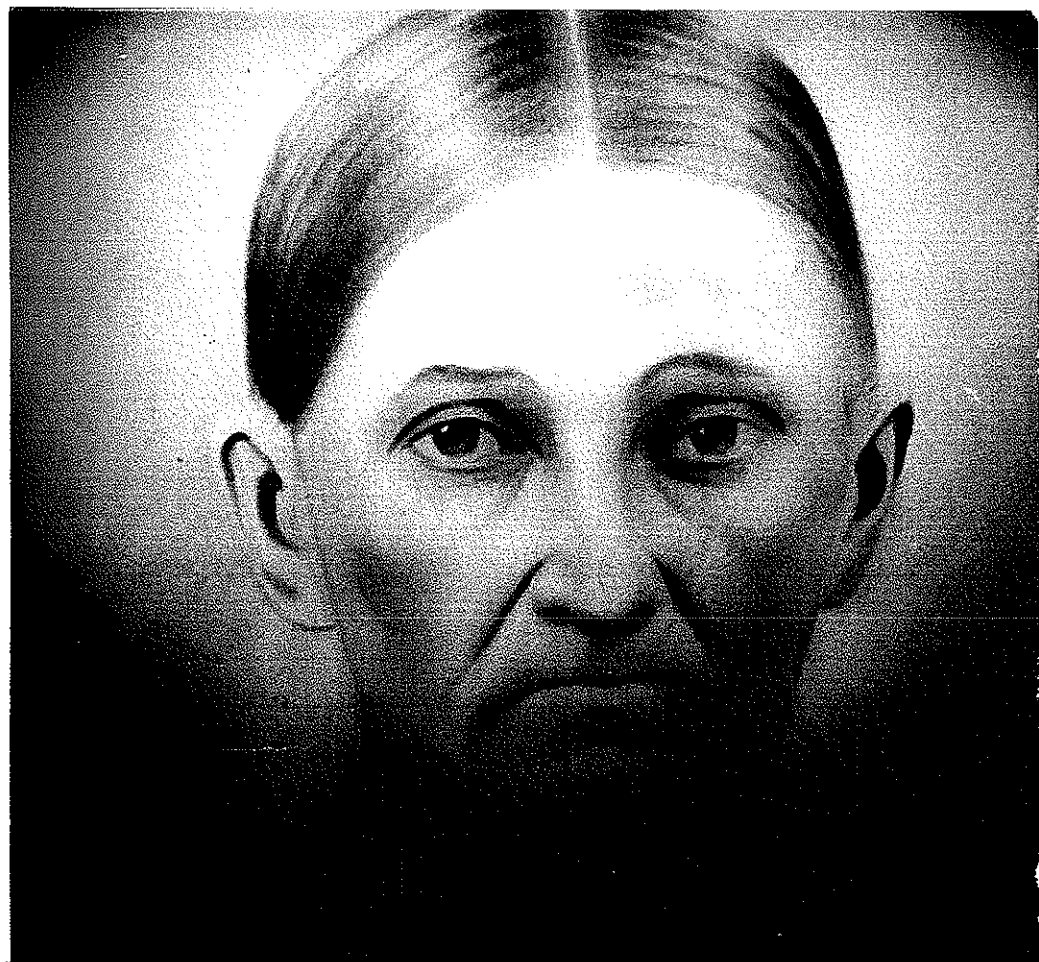


**3501 Elmira Drive
Longview, Texas 75605
(903) 759-2069**

**Paul V. Cook
Pastor
759-3746**

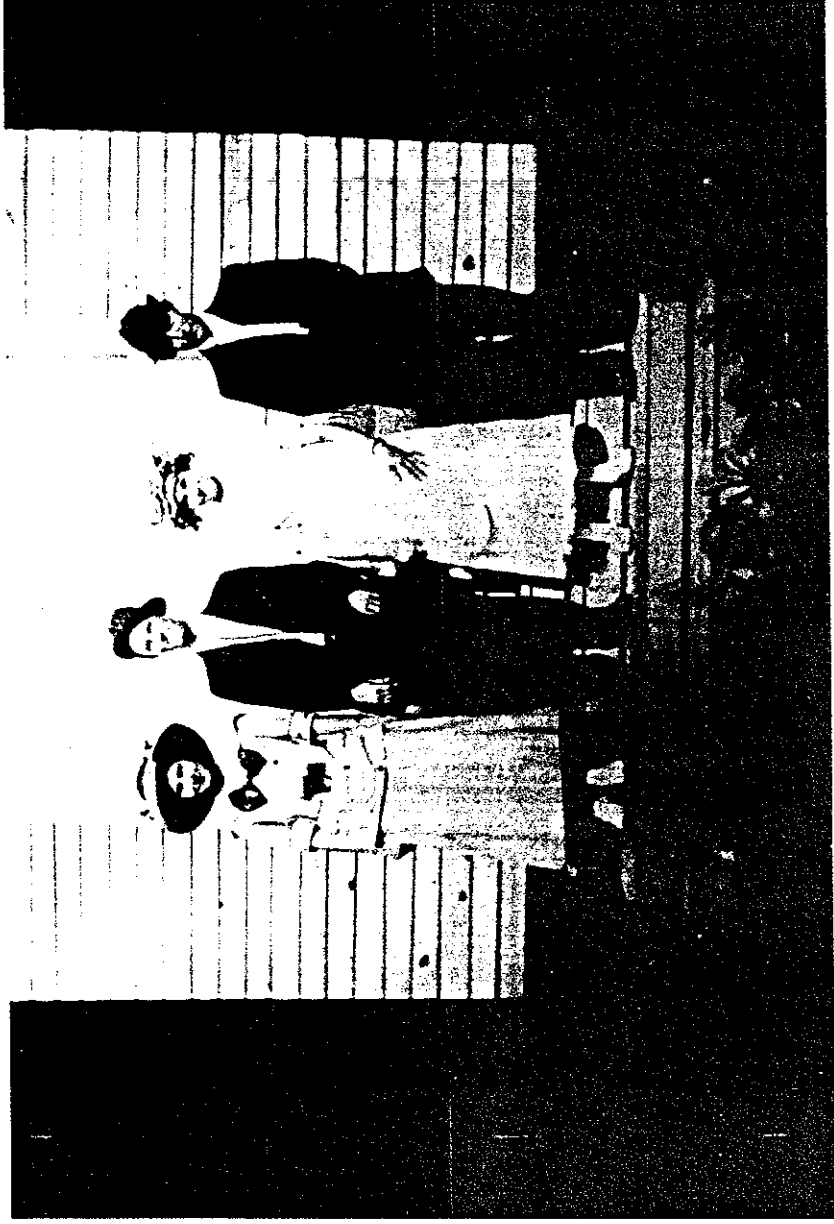
**Kip J. Rush
Minister of Education
759-3408**

**Jerry M. Compton
Music Director
297-9162**

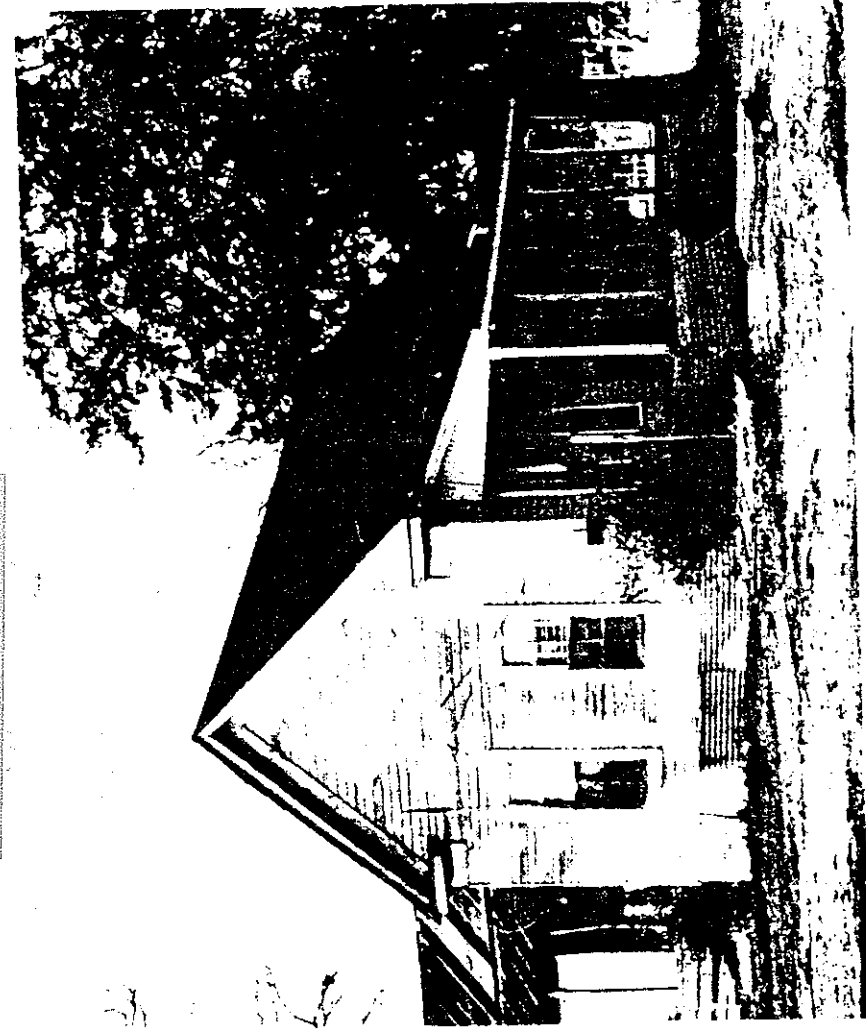




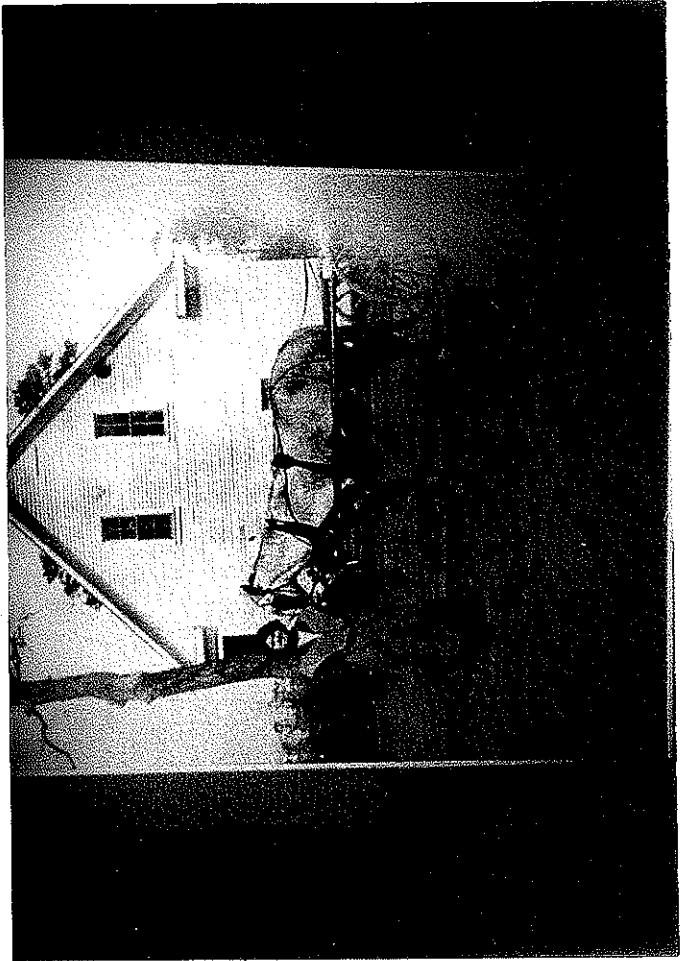
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~~1897~~
1897

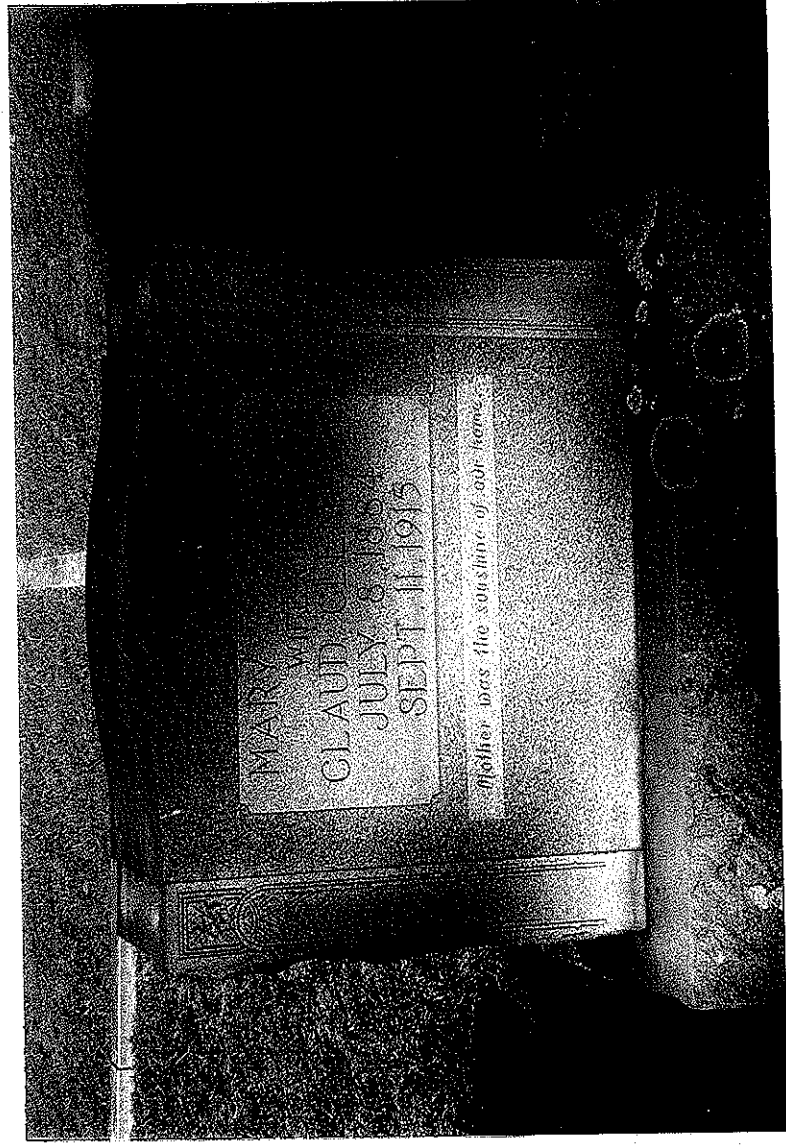
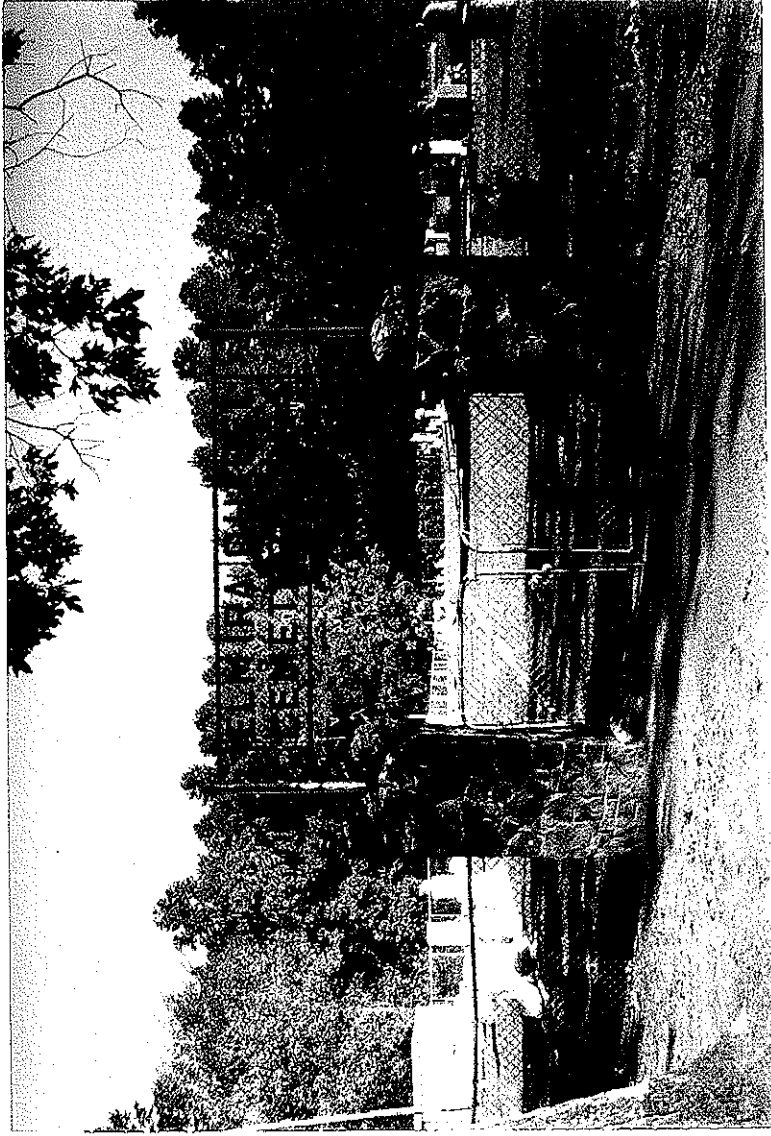


154 parsonage
1898

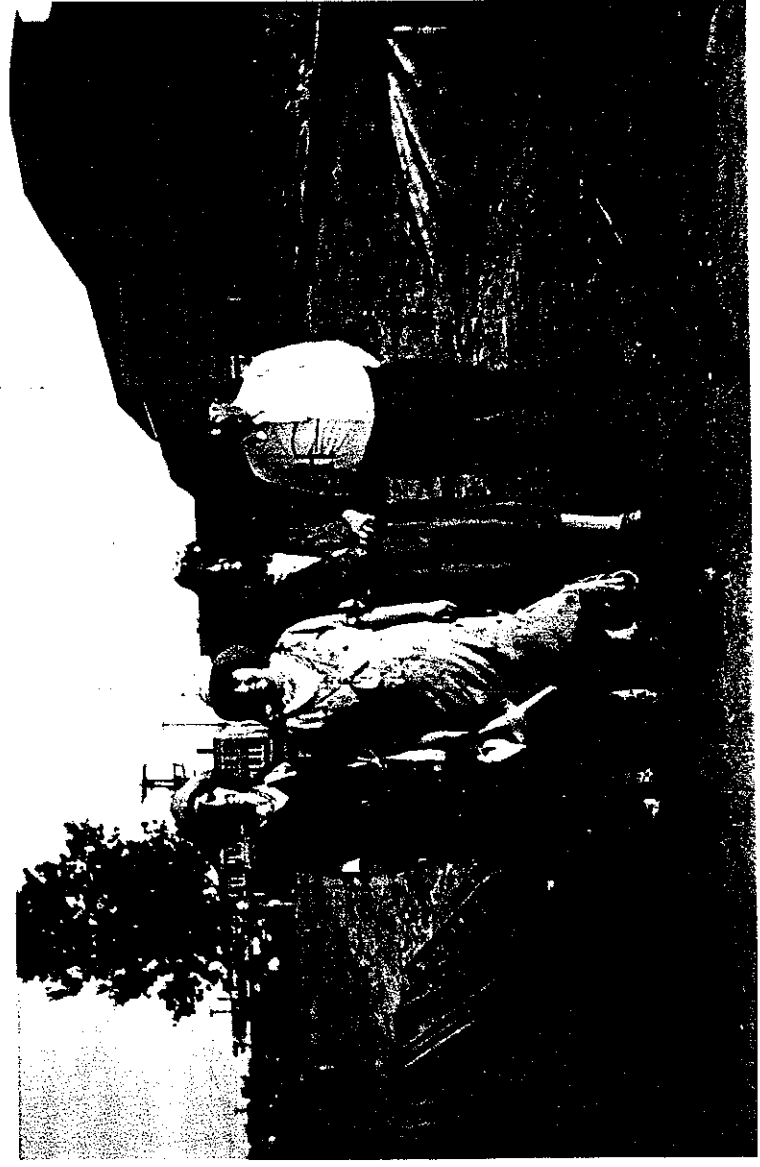
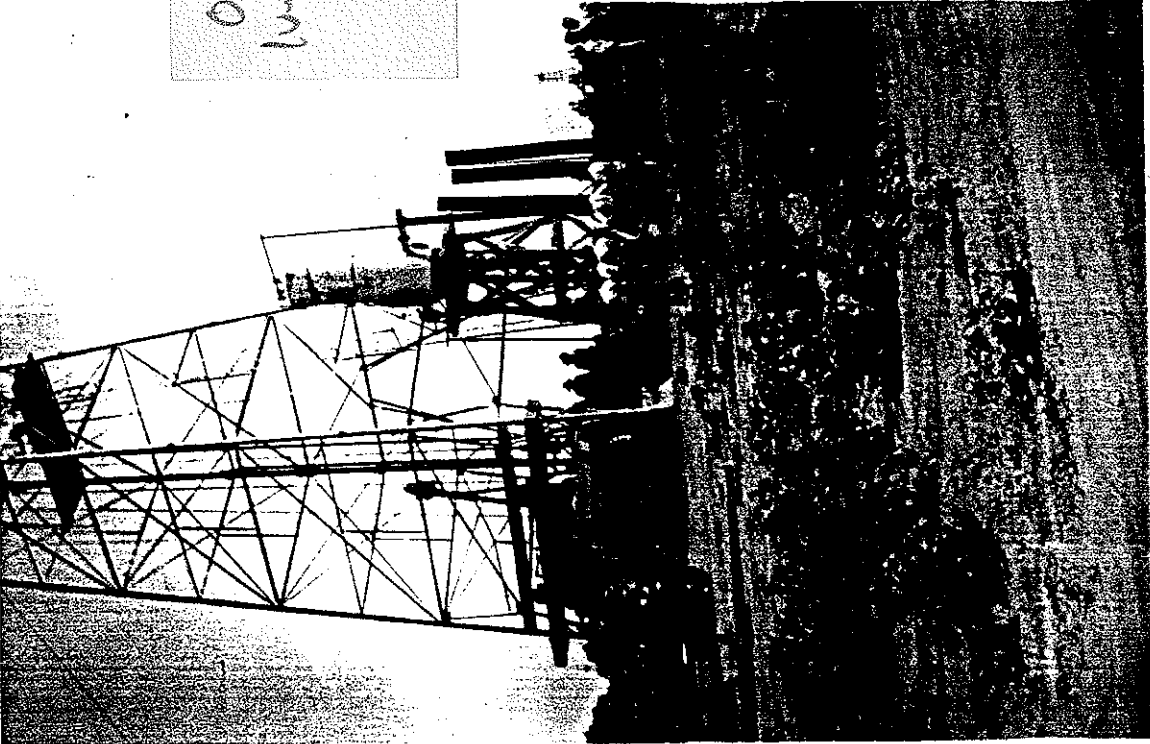


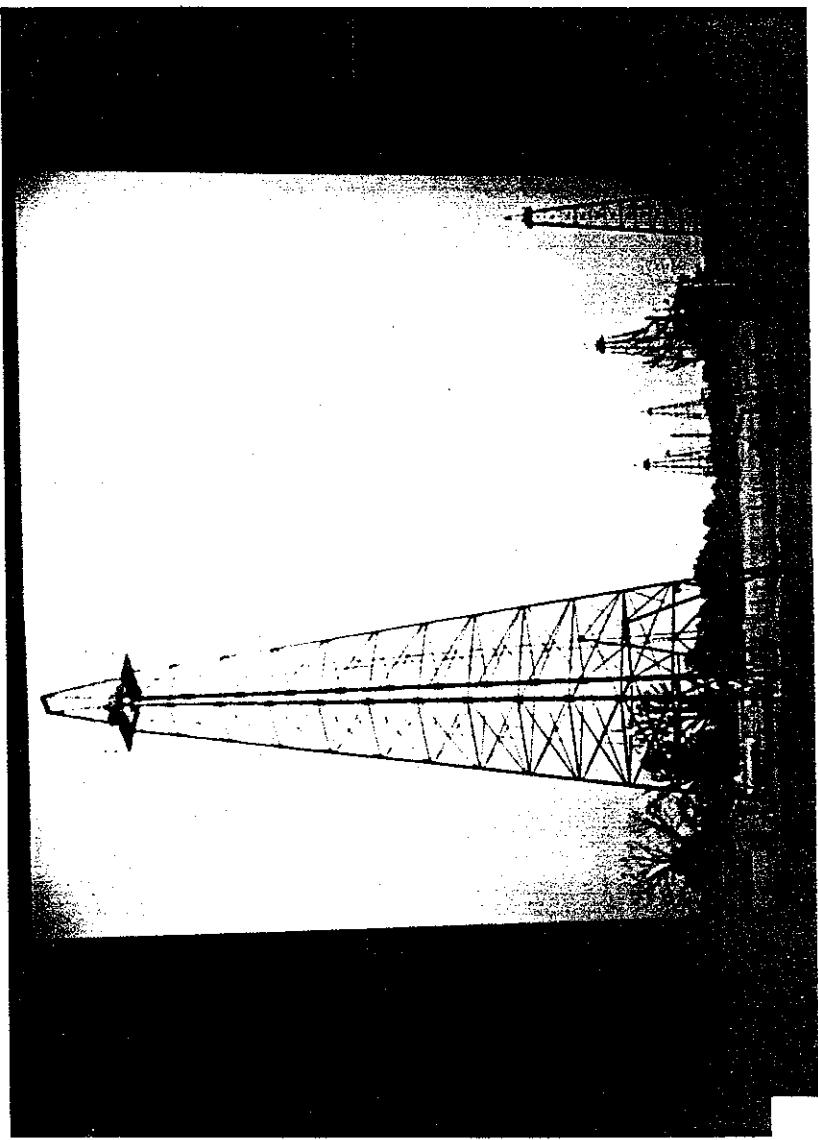
ORIGINAL PARSONAGE AT ELMIRA CHAPEL



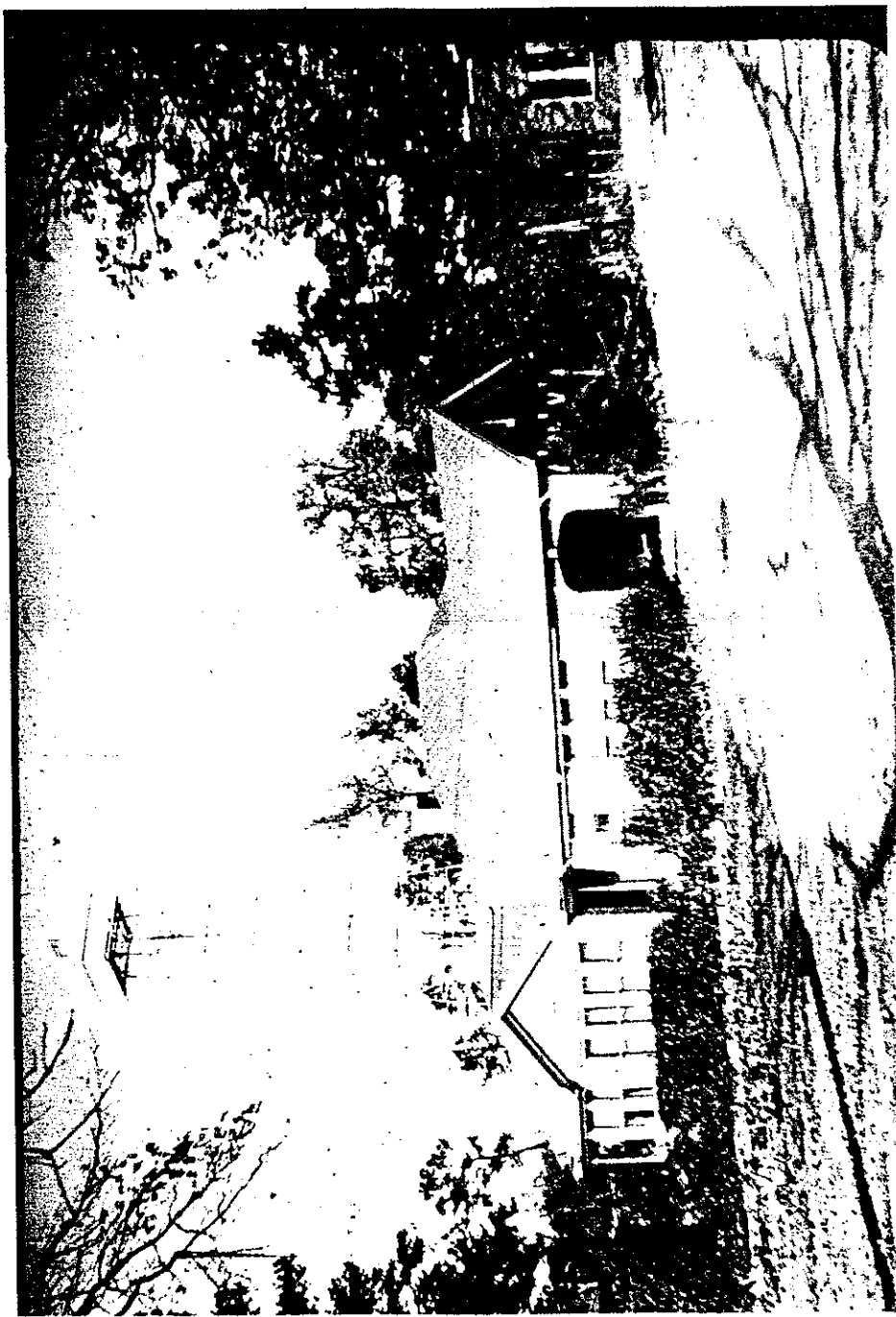


Oil well
lumber mill



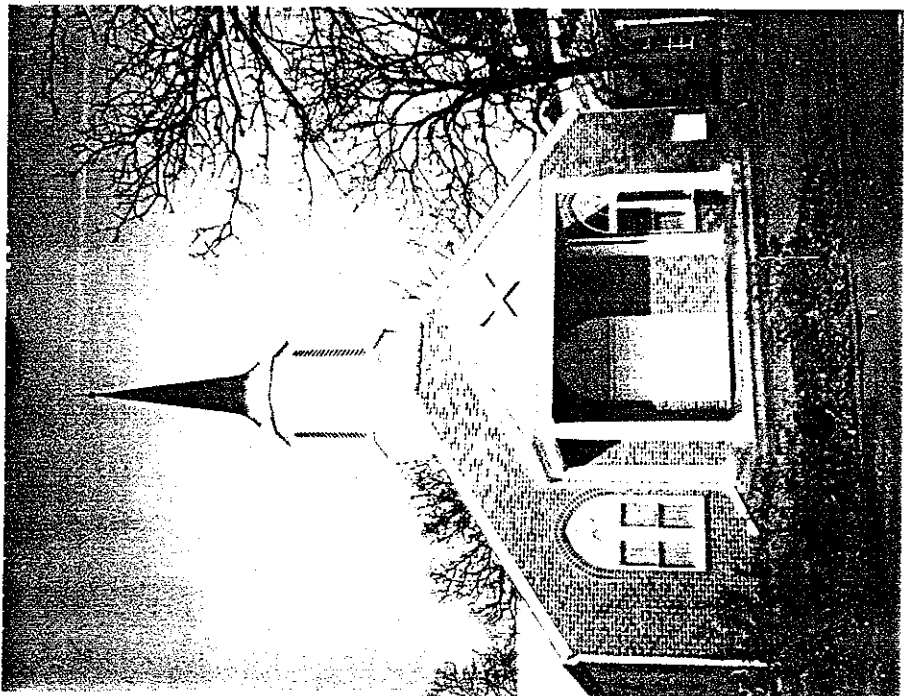


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1931?

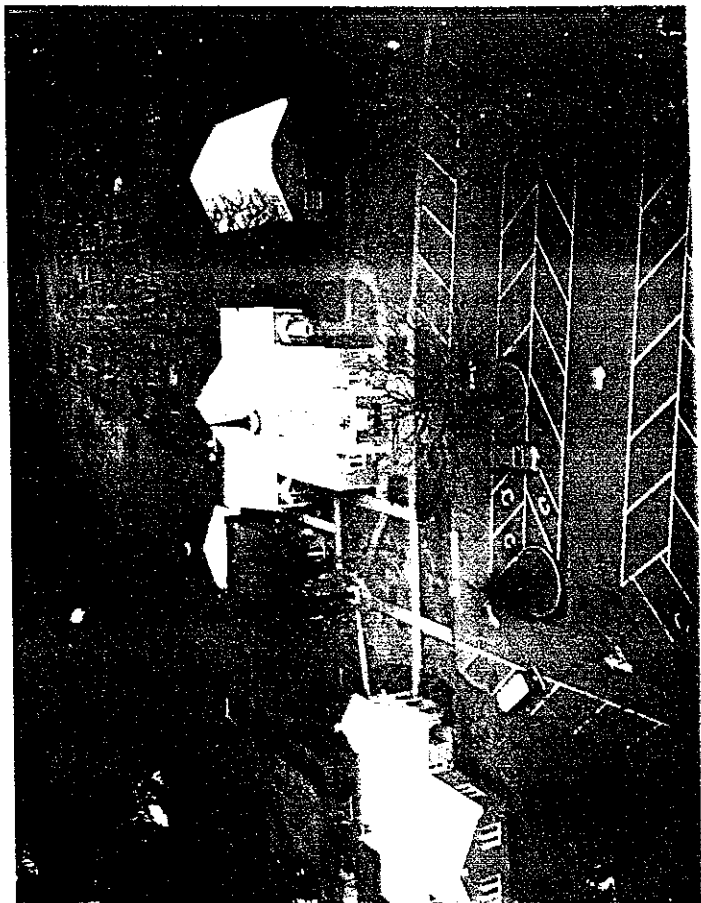








1952

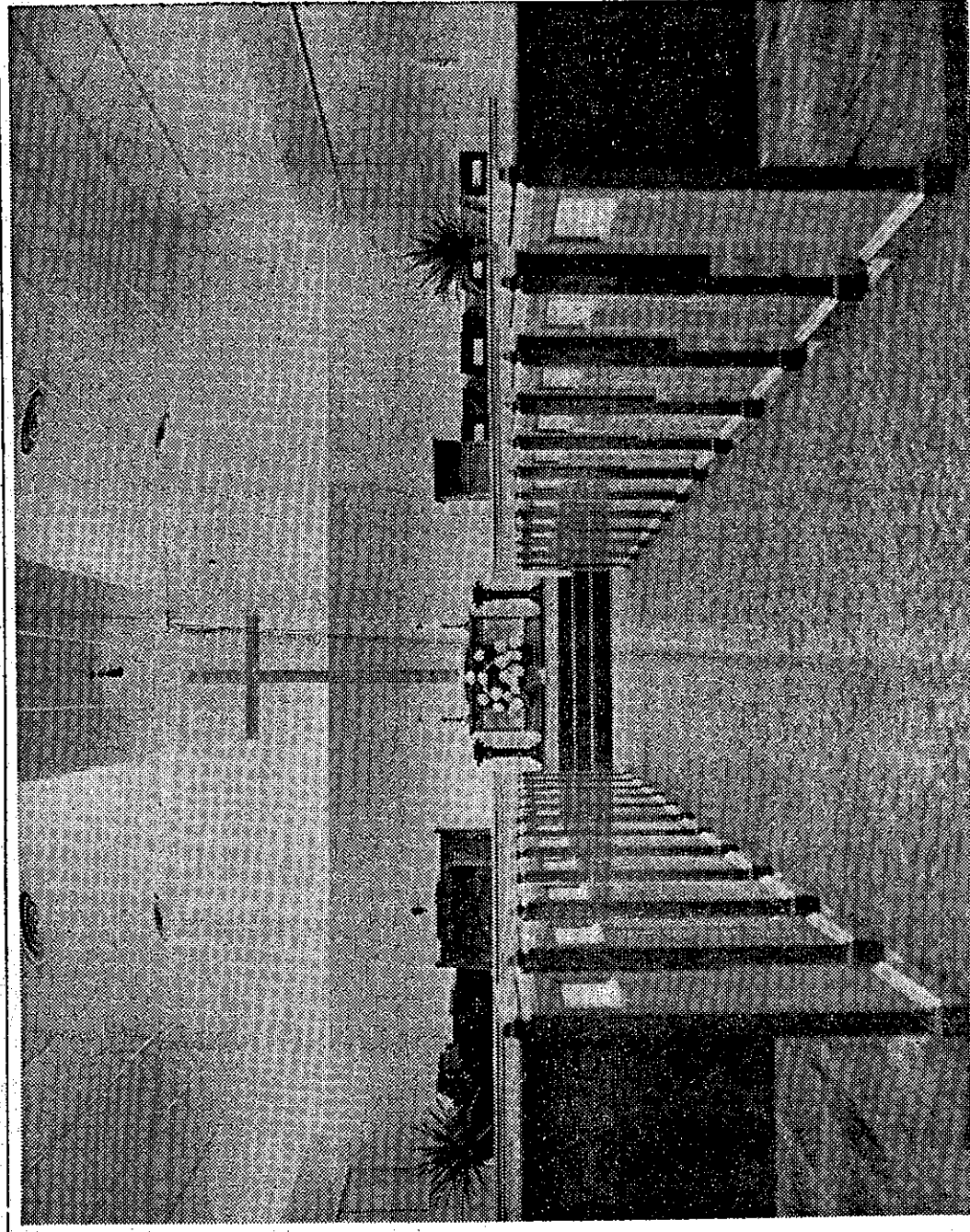


THE GREGGTON

"Complete News Coverage of Greggton and Surrounding Area"

VOLUME XI—NO. 33

GREGGTON, GREGG COUNTY, TEXAS, THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1934



ABOVE IS THE NEWLY REMODELED sanctuary of the Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church located in Spring Hill. A royal red carpet which begins in the entrance hall and runs down through the center aisle contrasts beautifully with the light white oak paneled walls. A large cross of reflective gold tile has

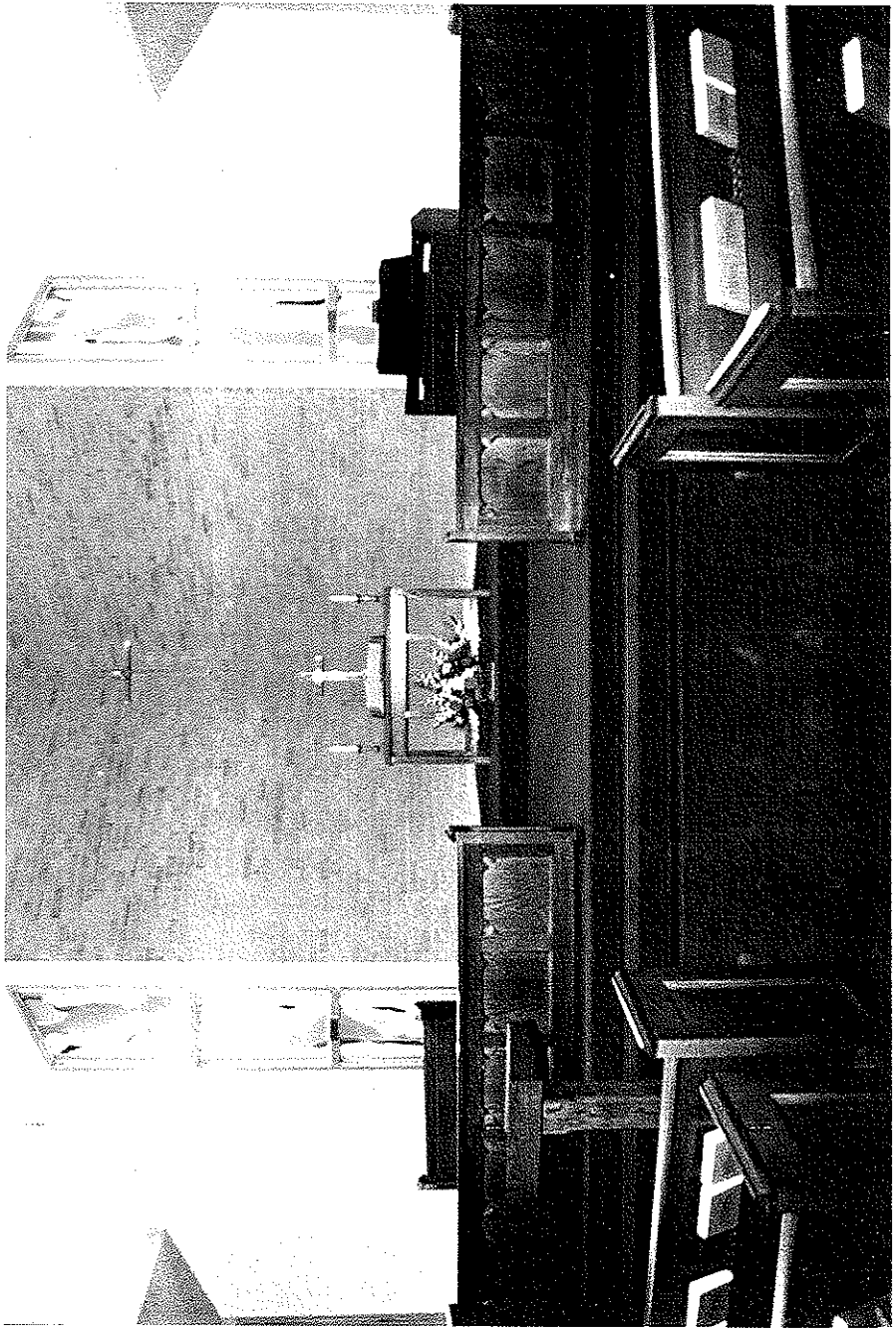
been placed on the wall behind the altar. Soft indirect lighting from the new arched ceiling and along the side walls enhances the beauty of the sanctuary. Dr. L. L. Thomas is pastor of the church.

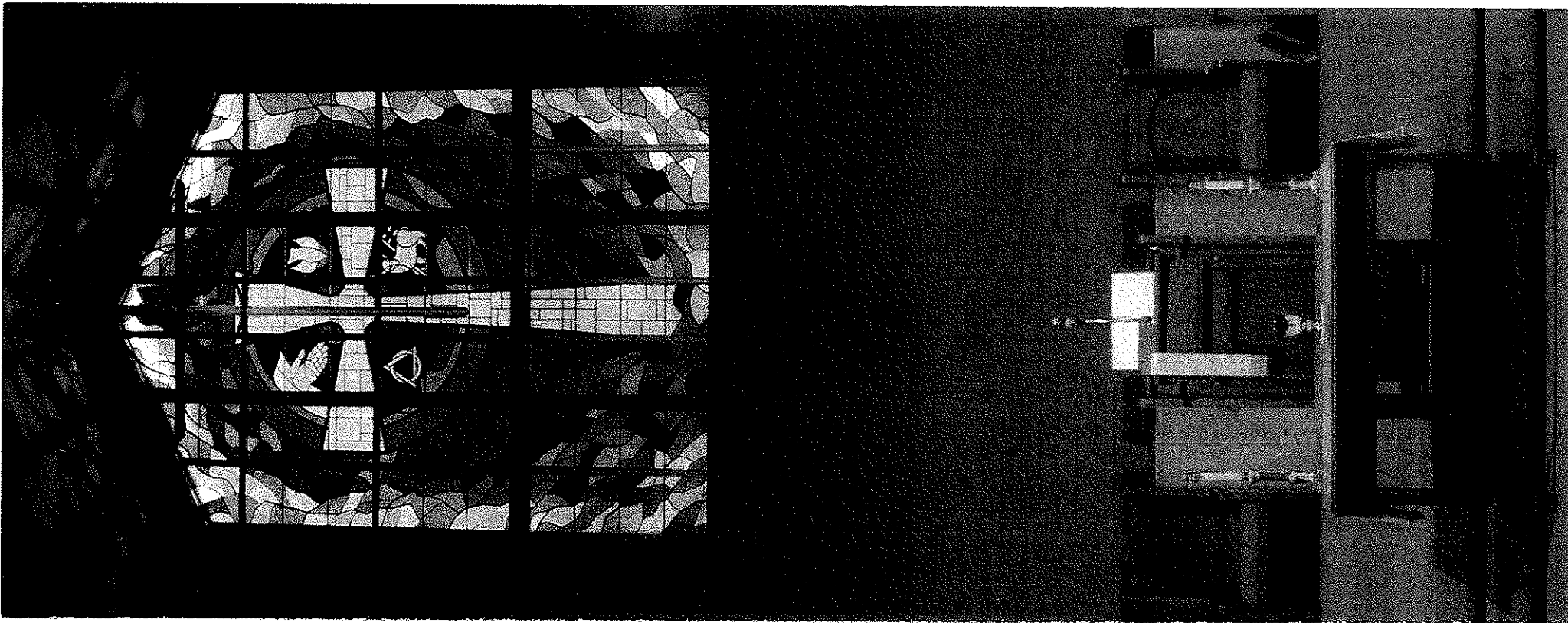
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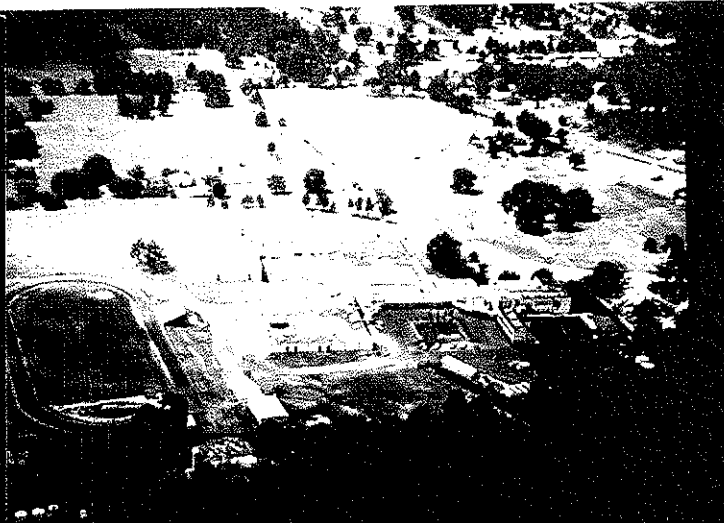
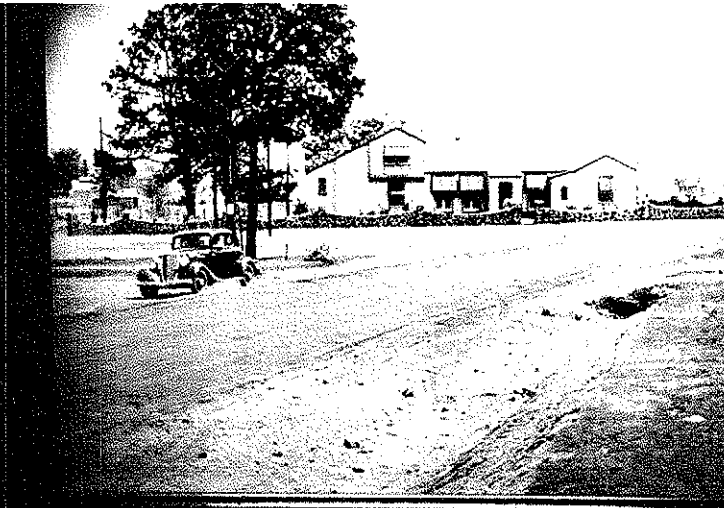
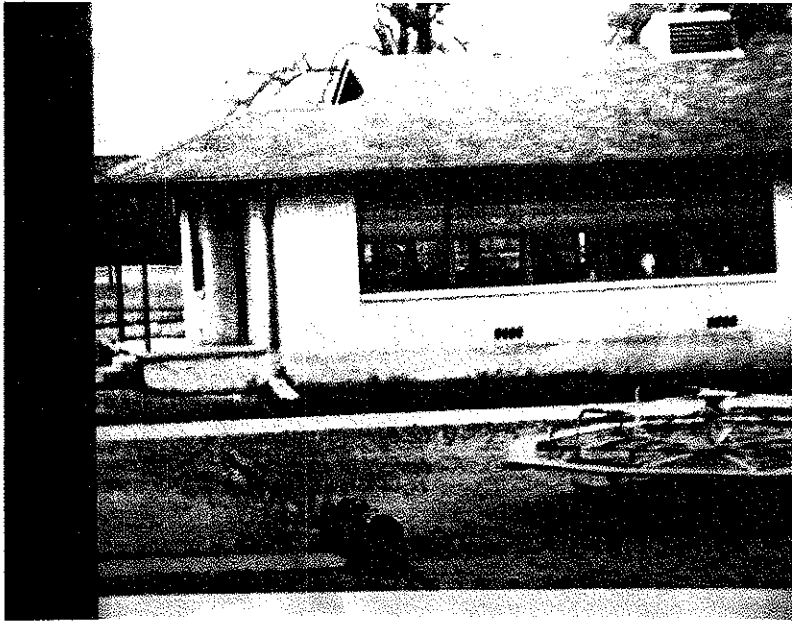


1978











TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

George W. Bush • Governor
John L. Nau, III • Chairman
Curtis Tunnell • Executive Director

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

January 12, 1998

The Rev. Kevin L. Ward
Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church
3501 Elmira Road
Longview, TX 75605

RE: ELMIRA CHAPEL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
18" x 28" marker w/ post
Job # 04898, Gregg County

Dear Mr. Ward:

I am pleased to notify you that the State Marker Review Board has reviewed and approved the above-referenced topic for an Official Texas Historical Marker.

Payment for the marker, in the amount of \$550.00, is now due. Please complete and return the enclosed payment form at your earliest convenience. Once payment for the marker is received, the application will be placed in line to have the marker inscription written. The inscription will not be written until after funds have been received. When the text is prepared, a copy will be sent to you and any parties listed below for review and approval.

The Texas Historical Commission congratulates you on your efforts to record and preserve Texas history.

Sincerely,

Cynthia J. Beeman

Cynthia J. Beeman, Administrator
Official Texas Historical Marker Program

pc: Dr. Norman Black, Gregg CHC



TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

George W. Bush • Governor
John L. Nau, III • Chairman
Curtis Tunnell • Executive Director

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

May 1, 1998

Dr. Norman Black
Gregg CHC
417 Moberly
Longview TX 75602

Re: ELMIRA CHAPEL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
18" x 28" subject marker with post
Gregg County, Job #04898 - inscription revision

Dear Dr. Black:

Enclosed is the revised inscription for the above-referenced historical marker. I have tried to incorporate most the changes that you suggested, but various style and spacing requirements may have required some compromising.

If you approve the inscription, please sign and return the enclosed copy of the text. If not, please let me know and I will work on it further with you. To avoid any unnecessary delays, please consult with all parties listed below before returning your approval or submitting any suggested revisions.

As mentioned in earlier correspondence, the marker will not be ordered for casting until a final inscription is approved by all parties as documented by the return of each person's signed copy of the inscription.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Emily C. Bell, Historian
Local History Programs
History Programs Division

Enc.

c: The Rev. Kevin L. Ward

Texas Historical Commission Staff (ECB) 3/27/98; rev 4/28/98

18" x 28" Official Texas Historical marker with post
Gregg County (Job #04898)
Location: 3501 Elmira Road, Longview

**ELMIRA CHAPEL
CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

PINE TREE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN

CHURCH BEGAN SPONSORING SUNDAY

SCHOOL CLASSES IN THE SPRING HILL

SCHOOLHOUSE AFTER 1887. THE REV.

W. M. ALLEN BEGAN TO PREACH THERE

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOONS IN 1891. THE

REV. J. M. ROBINSON BECAME THE FIRST

RESIDENT PASTOR AFTER THE DIVISION

OF THE TWO CHURCHES. THE NEW CON-

GREGATION WAS NAMED FOR ELMIRA

CASTLEBERRY, MATRIARCH OF A PROMINENT

PIONEER FAMILY. HER SONS, JAMES R. AND

RICHARD CASTLEBERRY, WERE FOUNDING

ELDERS OF THE CHURCH. JAMES R. GAVE

35 ACRES OF LAND AND MATERIAL FOR

A SCHOOL/CHURCH BUILDING IN 1897-98.

ALWAYS ACTIVE WITH OTHER DENOMINA-

TIONS AND IN YOUTH, COMMUNITY AND

MISSIONARY OUTREACH PROGRAMS, THE

CHURCH CONTINUES TO SERVE THE AREA.

PLEASE CHECK ONE AND SIGN:

- I approve this text as written.
 Please consider the revisions as noted on this copy.

Wynnan H. Moseley
(signature) Gregg Co. A. C. 5-18-98
Chair

(1998)

Rt. 9, Box 609
Gilmer, TX 75644
April 18, 1998

Dr. Norman Black
Gregg Co. Historical Commission
417 Mobberly Ave.
Longvivi, TX 75602

Dear Dr. Black:

Our pastor, Rev. Kevin Ward, asked me to contact you about the letter from the Texas Historical Commission which enclosed the proposed inscription for Elmira Chapel's historical marker.

We have some reservations about the inscription and would like to suggest changes.

The word "split" used twice with reference to the division of Elmira and Pine Tree would be better described as a division of the Mother Church and the Spring Hill "branch" or "chapel." It was not unusual for established churches of that time to sponsor churches which were called "chapels" or "branches" knowing that the sponsored church would become a separate entity. This is made clear by Rose Mary Magrill in her historical plaque application CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIANS IN HARRISON COUNTY August, 1996, pp. 3 and 6.

The description of and reason for honoring Elmira Castleberry by naming the church "Elmira" needs clarifying. She would be better described as the matriarch of a pioneer family. Her death at this particular time should not be emphasized. The church was named for her because two of her sons, James R. and Richard W. were founding elders and because one of them, James Rodden, gave 35 acres of land and materials to build a two-story church-school house and a manse in 1897-1898.

The most prominent person in this story of Elmira Chapel and Spring Hill school was James Rodden Castleberry. While it may not be possible to include enumeration of all his gifts to the church, I surely feel that his name should appear on the plaque. Richard Watkins, his brother, was important in the development of the church for his family was actively involved over a longer period of time in the early years. The 35 acre tract James R. gave the church made the growth and future dominance of Elmira and Spring Hill community possible in that area. Land was wealth and land with oil brought greater wealth. That wealth was used generously for the benefit of the school and community.

One of the most significant phrases written in the story of the gift of the land and materials for the first church building is "and the people did the work."

All of this has been documented in the history and sources which accompanied the application for the historical marker.

I am suggesting a few changes in the wording and at this time am sending a copy to you for your perusal. We liked the portion of the proposed inscription describing the service Elmira Chapel has given the area.

I will be out of town for most of the next two weeks coming back each weekend. I will attempt to contact you by phone next week to learn what you think of these suggested changes.

Thanking you again for your considerable assistance, I am

Sincerely yours,

Frances M. Willis

Frances M. Willis, Member
Elmira Chapel Historical Committee

cc: Committee

Enclosure

ELMIRA CHAPEL
CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES WERE SPONSORED BY PINE TREE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE SPRING HILL SCHOOLHOUSE AFTER 1887. THE REV. W.M. ALLEN BEGAN TO PREACH THERE ON SUNDAY AFTERNOONS IN 1891.

REV. J.M. ROBINSON BECAME THE FIRST RESIDENT PASTOR IN 1897 AFTER THE DIVISION OF THE MOTHER CHURCH AND THE SPRING HILL "BRANCH." (or substitute "chapel") THE NEW CONGREGATION WAS NAMED FOR ELMIRA CASTLEBERRY, MATRIARCH OF A PROMINENT PIONEER FAMILY. HER SON, JAMES R., GAVE 35 ACRES OF LAND AND MATERIAL FOR A NEW TWO-STORY SCHOOL-CHURCHHOUSE AND A MANSE IN 1897-98. IN THE FIRST YEARS OF THE NEW CENTURY, THE TWO CHURCHES OFTEN SHARED PASTORS. FROM 1910, THE COMMUNITY AND CHURCH GREW STEADILY. ALWAYS ACTIVE WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS AND IN YOUTH, COMMUNITY AND MISSIONARY OUTREACH PROGRAMS, ELMIRA CHAPEL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CONTINUES TO SERVE THE AREA.

(Might substitute following "Spring Hill "branch":
THE NEW CONGREGATION WAS NAMED FOR ELMIRA CASTLEBERRY, MATRIARCH OF A PROMINENT PIONEER FAMILY WHOSE SONS JAMES R. AND RICHARD W. WERE FOUNDING ELDERS. JAMES R. GAVE 35 ACRES OF LAND AND MATERIAL FOR A NEW TWO-STORY SCHOOL-CHURCHHOUSE AND A MANSE IN 1897-98. IN THE FIRST YEARS OF THE NEW CENTURY, THE TWO CHURCHES OFTEN SHARED PASTORS. FROM 1910, THE COMMUNITY AND CHURCH GREW STEADILY. ALWAYS ACTIVE WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS AND IN YOUTH, COMMUNITY AND MISSIONARY OUTREACH PROGRAMS, ELMIRA CHAPEL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CONTINUES TO SERVE THE AREA.



Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

417 Moberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

April 21, 1998

Emily Cole Bell, Historian
History Programs Division
Texas Historical Commission
P. O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

Re: Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church Historical Marker
Application, Job # 04898

Dear Emily:

Usually when the representatives of a congregation request changes in the proposed marker inscription I try to resolve them. In this case I thought it best to send the entire letter from Mrs. Willis, who wrote the narrative, to you.

Personally, I liked your inscription. I do know, however, that in East Texas most people think any kind of a split in a church as being a strong negative. I do not know how all the changes the pastor and Mrs. Willis desire can be included on an 18" X 28" marker. Good luck!

Sincerely,

Enc.

P.S. I'll see you in El Paso before you read this.

Route 9 Box 609
Gilmer TX 75644
September 1, 1997

Dr. Norman Black, Chairman
Gregg County Historical Commission
417 Mobberly Ave.
Longview TX 75602

Dear Dr. Black:

Enclosed is the manuscript written as an application for an official state historical marker for Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Spring Hill.

Also enclosed is a photocopy of the deed conveying acreage to Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church: J.R. Castleberry to Elders of Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 15 Sept. A.D. 1917. A substitute deed for an earlier deed which was lost. Vol. 34, 124-125. Elders of that date as named in the deed were: R.W. Castleberry, J. H. Alexander, W.I. Denson, G.A. Castleberry, and E. Holland.

I will inquire about a glossy print photograph of the present church structure and determine what other church photographs are available.

We will be waiting for further instructions on the procedure for obtaining the marker. The church address is 3501 Elmira Drive, Longview, TX 75605, Telephone Number is 759-2069.

Sincerely yours,

Frances M. Willis

Frances M. Willis, Member
Elmira Chapel Centennial Committee

cc. Centennial Committee Members
Rev. Kevin L. Ward
Hazel Stiver
Arlene Tekell
Tommy Tiffin

The State of Texas Before me, N. V. Fisher J.P. and Esquire Notary
 County of Gregg Public in and for Gregg County, Texas, on this
 day personally appeared J. R. Eastberry known to me to be the
 person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument
 and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for the
 purpose and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of Office, this 18 day of
 October A.D. 1897. N. V. Fisher, J.P. & Esquire
 Notary Public.

The State of Texas I do hereby certify that the above and foregoing
 County of Gregg is a true and correct copy of the original deed
 and certificate of acknowledgment as filed for record in my
 office on the 20 day of Dec. 1897 at 5 o'clock P.M. and recorded
 January 4 A.D. 1898 at 11:30 o'clock A.M.

Wm. J. Shaw
 County Clerk, Gregg Co., Tex

The State of Texas I know all men by these Presents:
 County of Gregg That J. R. Eastberry of the County of Gregg
 State of Texas for and in consideration of the sum of One
 Hundred Dollars to me paid, by R. W. Eastberry, H. Alexander, W. A.
 Prather, Wm. J. Deason, J. C. Eastberry and C. Albyrd. Elders of
 the Church of Christ in Texas and Presbyterian Church the
 receipt of which is hereby acknowledged have granted, sold
 and conveyed, and by these presents do grant, sell and convey
 unto the said J. R. Eastberry, H. A. Alexander, W. A. Deason, C. Albyrd, R. W.
 Eastberry & H. A. Eastberry. Elders as aforesaid of the Co. of
 Gregg, State of Texas, all that certain tract or parcel of land sit-

OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER DEDICATION
ELMIRA CHAPEL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sunday, October 4, 1998, 1:30 P.M.

M.C.

Welcome to the dedication of an Official Texas Historical Marker: Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. This marker is authorized by the State of Texas and sponsored by the Texas Historical Commission and the Gregg County Historical Commission. The Gregg County Historical Commission is an arm of the county government, appointed by the county judge and commissioners court. It is the responsibility of the historical commission to preserve our county's historical heritage and to encourage others to do the same.

Cumberland Presbyterians began work in Texas with the coming of Sumner Bacon in 1829. The first Cumberland Presbytery was organized in 1837, and in 1843 the Cumberland Synod of Texas was organized at Nacogdoches. Just 44 years later this church began Sunday School classes. So, it is indeed fitting and proper that we, today, commemorate this church with an Official Texas Historical Marker.

INVOCATION We will now have the invocation by Reverend Leslie A. Johnson, Assistant Pastor of Elmira Chapel.....Thank you
Rev. Johnson.

QUESTS We usually have some guests at these ceremonies and I would like to introduce them. (Do so)

ADDRESS And now Reverend Kevin L. Ward, Pastor of Elmira Chapel will bring us his address...Rev. Thank you, Rev. Ward.

DEDICATION I would now like to dedicate this historical marker to the pioneer and early members, the present members and the future members of the Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

UNVEILING Mrs. Frances Willis, who is the historian who compiled and & wrote the history of this church which made the this marker possible, will now unveil the marker. Following the unveiling, Pat Terrell will read the text of the marker....Thank you, Mrs. Willis and Terrell.

BENEDICT. Rev. Ward will give the benediction.

Thank all of you for coming!

Elmira Chapel dedicates state historical marker

On Sunday, Oct. 4, at 1:30 p.m., church members gathered under the trees at Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Spring Hill to dedicate an official Texas State Historical Marker for Elmira Chapel, with Dr. Norman W. Black, chairman of Gregg County Historical Commission, acting as master of ceremonies. This ceremony was the culmination of the church's celebration of its 100th anniversary, the third observation in the 2-year period, 1996-98.

Frances M. Willis of Glenwood had received the 1997 Award in Cumberland Presbyterian History from the Historical Foundation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, on Sept. 27,

for a history written as an application for the historical marker.

The history award, presented by J. Richard Magrill, Jr. of Memphis, Tenn., executive director of the Board of Stewardship, was given for the paper entitled: "Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Spring Hill" which presents the history of the first 100 years of mission and ministry by the Elmira Chapel Church to its community and the larger Cumberland Presbyterian family."

The Dedication Address for the Marker was made by Rev. Kevin L. Ward, pastor of Elmira Chapel. The marker inscription was read by Pat Terrell, Elmira Chapel Elder.



Gregg County Historical Commission

417 Moberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

October 22, 1997

Cynthia J. Beeman, Administrator
Official Texas Historical Marker Program
Texas Historical Commission
P. O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

Re: Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church Historical
Marker Application.

Dear Cynthia:

Enclosed is the application for the above church. The church is located in the northern portion of Gregg County and within the Spring Hill Independent School District. The histories of the Pine Tree Presbyterian Church (1847), Elmira Chapel and Spring Hill School are closely intertwined.

Mrs. Frances Willis, a very talented lady, and her committee worked very long and hard to produce this historical narrative. I was constantly receiving corrective and augmented information to make, I think, as accurate a paper as possible on her subject.

The historical photographs I selected to send are made, for most part, using the new digitizing process and are not true photo copies. The ones I received in color, I copied on the copy machine and am sending both color and B&W. A lot of detail was lost in my copy process. The photograph of the church congregation in front of the 1931 sanctuary is, of course, a copy machine copy. I must return their original photograph as it is one of the church's prized possessions. Mrs. Willis furnished me with many more interesting pictures which I did not consider germane to this application. For example, there is a photograph of the Spring Hill School complex, the church's next door neighbor, which includes a fine picture of the Spring Hill Teacherage.

Thank you very much for considering this worthy subject.

Sincerely,

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.

Enc.

APPLICATION FORM
OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

(PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH SIDES OF FORM.)

This marker is for (title or subject): Elmira Chapel

(Title subject to change by THC staff and/or State Marker Review Board.)

County: GREGG

Marker location (street address and city, or specific directions from nearest town on state highway map):
3501 Elmira Road, one fourth mile East of Highway 300 (Gilmer Road). Marker location proposed to be on south side (front) of church near Elmira Road.

Distance and direction of marker topic from marker site (if applicable):
Proposed marker location about seventy-five feet north of church entrance.

APPROVAL OF COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The application and narrative history must be approved by the county historical commission before forwarding to the Texas Historical Commission.

Signature of CHC chair or Marker Committee chair: Norman J. Mack D.D.

Date: October 22, 1997

Address: 417 Moberly Avenue, Longview, Texas 75602

Phone: 903-757-2261 FAX: 903 753-5337

The CHC chair or Marker Committee chair automatically will receive all copies of correspondence regarding this marker project.

PERMISSION OF OWNER FOR MARKER PLACEMENT

Permission for placement of a marker must be obtained by the property owner. Please provide the name of a contact person if the owner is an institution, organization, or public entity. This section need not be completed if the marker is to be placed on right-of-way maintained by the Texas Department of Transportation.

Name: Rev. Kevin L. Ward

Contact person (if applicable): 3501 Elmira Road, Longview, Texas 75605

Mailing address: 3501 Elmira Road, Longview, Texas 75605

Phone: 903-759-2069 FAX: _____

Owner's Signature: Kevin L. Ward

Do you wish to receive copies of all correspondence concerning this marker application? Yes No

To whom should the request for payment be addressed?

Name: Rev. Kevin L. Ward

(Provide contact person if payee is an institution, organization, or public entity.)

Mailing address: 3501 Elmira Road, Longview, Texas 75605

Phone: 903-759-2069 FAX: _____

Does this person wish to receive copies of all other correspondence concerning this application? Yes No

Is there anyone else to whom all correspondence concerning this marker application should be addressed? (One additional name and address only, please.)

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone: _____ FAX: _____

(over)

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS

In order to facilitate delivery of the marker, neither post office box numbers nor rural route numbers can be accepted. If the marker is to be placed on the highway right-of-way, it will be shipped directly to the district highway engineer.

Name: Dr. Norman W. Black

Street address: 417 Moberly Ave., Longview, Texas 75602

Phone: 903 757 2261

TYPE AND SIZE OF MARKER DESIRED (Please check one only.)

Subject Markers

This type of marker is solely educational in nature and conveys no legal restrictions to the property. Subject markers are appropriate for topics such as cemeteries, church congregations, businesses, persons, events, and institutions. These markers should not be attached to buildings. If the marker is to be attached to a surface other than the foundry-provided post, please provide the requested information in the space below.

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16" x 12" grave marker (comes with mounting bar) | \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 27" x 42" marker with post | \$850 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 27" x 42" marker without post (see below) | \$800 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18" x 28" marker with post | \$550 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18" x 28" marker without post (see below) | \$500 |

If not on post, to what (block of granite, gate post, etc.) will the marker be attached? _____
Type of material? (wood, stone, etc.) _____

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Markers

Markers conveying the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) designation are reserved solely for historic structures deemed worthy of preservation for their architectural integrity and historical associations. The RTHL designation does carry a measure of legal protection for the structure (see Marker Policies 13 through 18) and for that reason we must have a legal description (lot and block numbers) for the property to be designated. The most commonly used marker for conveying this designation is the medallion and plate (also referred to as a building marker); however, the 18" x 28" or 27" x 42" size marker may be ordered for those who wish a greater amount of historical information to appear in the marker text. Careful attention should be paid so as not to damage historic building material if the marker is to be mounted directly onto the structure. The THC staff can provide alternate ideas for mounting upon request.

- | | |
|---|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medallion and 16" x 12" plate with post | \$400 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medallion and 16" x 12" plate without post (see below) | \$350 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 27" x 42" marker with post | \$850 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 27" x 42" marker without post (see below) | \$800 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18" x 28" marker with post | \$550 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18" x 28" marker without post (see below) | \$500 |

If not on post, to what (building, gate, etc.) will the marker be attached? _____

Type of material? (wood, stone, etc.) _____

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY (lot and block number; metes and bounds):

Before forwarding your material to the Texas Historical Commission, please check to make sure you've included the following items. Incomplete applications cannot be considered and may be returned to the applicant.

- completed application form signed by the county historical commission
- narrative history with reference notes and bibliography
- photograph of the proposed marker location
- map indicating marker location and other sites related to the marker topic
- historic photo of property and current photographs of all elevations (RTHL markers only)
- legal description of property (RTHL markers only)
- floor plans (RTHL markers only)

Mail completed applications to:

Local History Programs, Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, Texas 78711-2276
512/463-5853

Additional items, including directional signs and replacement parts for 1936 markers, are available. Please contact the Local History Programs office for a separate order form.

**Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church
of Spring Hill**

Prepared
by
Frances M. Willis

For
Members of the Centennial Committee
Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church
Pastor Kevin L. Ward
Hazel Stiver
Arlene Tekell
Tommy Tiffin
Frances M. Willis

Longview, Texas
September 1997

ELMIRA CHAPEL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF SPRING HILL

Spring Hill is named by Richard B. Levy, 1st County Clerk of Gregg County, as a school site of "quite importance from and after the creation of Gregg County from Upshur County in 1873."¹ The Spring Hill school and church grew out of the needs of the developing community. This history is the account of the commitment and cooperation of the church and school.

Tradition holds that it was in the year 1887, that a gathering of citizens about seven miles northwest of the town of Longview met and made provision to build a schoolhouse. The site selected for the one room school was near a creek flowing from a spring in a cliff behind the building, hence the name Spring Hill. One teacher, Jim Christian, was hired to teach the 65 students. School started at eight in the morning and frequently lasted until nightfall. (Site was a short distance east of the present day intersection of Birdwell and Gilmer Road.)²

Soon, nearby Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian Church began sponsoring Sunday School classes at the schoolhouse and in 1891 Rev. W.M. Allen, who came monthly to preach at Pine Tree on Sunday morning began preaching in the afternoon at Spring Hill.³ These services continued and Spring Hill became a "branch" congregation or "chapel" sponsored by the Pine Tree Church. Minutes of the Pine Tree Session of July 5, 1895 demonstrate the relationship of the two bodies:

"On motion there was a Revival Meeting appointed to be held at Spring Hill commencing on Friday before the third Sabbath in July. (Ministers to be asked to hold this meeting were Bro. E.H. Keasler and Dr. Henrick [sic] of Longview.)"

Most of the church-going residents at Spring Hill were also members of the Pine Tree church and attended both services but as time passed the school-church at Spring Hill became the center of the growing community.⁴

On October 28, 1897, Pine Tree Session met in the home of Bun E. Rodden to consider separation of Spring Hill from Pine Tree. Session minutes record that the division was made and the new church was named Elmira's Chapel. Rev. J.M. Robinson, who began preaching for Pine Tree and Spring Hill in 1896 became the first resident pastor at Spring Hill.

He described the sequence of events as he remembered them in a letter to Elmira Chapel written in 1947 shortly after he and his wife celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary at Manitou Beach, Winslow, Washington:

"I took charge of the Pine Tree Church, the first of September, 1896. The Spring Hill Community was conducting a Sunday School under the leadership of J.W. Lawrence, who asked me to assist by teaching the Bible Class, and preaching a short sermon each Sunday. We met at three p.m. each Sunday. About the middle of October, we started a prayer meeting which grew very rapidly.

"The Spring Hill building was terribly dilapidated. So we began to talk about better quarters. The Public school was conducted in this building. Elder James Castleberry gave the lumber and nails, and the community did the work, in the spring of 1897.

"The purpose of the building was two-fold; the first floor was for church purposes, the second for the public school. We finished the building and moved in the First of September, 1897. Then came the agitation for separation from Pine Tree, and the Session Meeting at the home of Bun E. Rodden. But for some reason we postponed action. There was no friction.

"But here comes another story. Mr. James Castleberry and I were driving to Moss Lake. I told him of my coming marriage, the third of November, 1897. His answer was, 'You will need a place to live.' He then said, 'There are 33 acres plus between my place and John Callaway's. I'll deed that to the church and furnish the lumber and nails for a 5 room manse,' which he did. We moved into the manse the last of March 1898. Mrs. Elmira Castleberry passed away, and I suggested that we call the church Elmira Chapel as a memorial to her, which was adopted. Mr. James Castleberry told the people that he was ready to make out the deed for the property but there was no organization. I called a meeting the next Sunday for the purpose of organizing Elmira Chapel Church.

Quite a number entered into the organization and we elected the following elders: James Castleberry, John Callaway, Richard Castleberry, and Ollie Callaway, who was elected session clerk. Up to the time of the organization we were under the Pine Tree Session. Sorry that I cannot give you the exact date of the organization.

"We shall always treasure the happy days of remembrance of the good people of Elmira Chapel. May all of you enjoy the Christian wealth, as recorded by Paul. Read I Cor. 3:21,23. Our prayers are that God will make you a power for good in your individual and collective life.

Love,

J. M. Robinson." 5

From the best information which can be secured, Elmira Chapel was organized with 54 charter members. It was not until the spring of 1898 that the church was duly constituted as a Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

Marshall Presbytery Minutes, July 1-2 1898:

"NEW CONGREGATION. The organization of Elmira Chapel congregation, ordered at the last Presbytery, was reported, and its representative, Elder J. A. Callaway, appeared and took his seat." 6

At the end of the first year, Elmira's report to the General Assembly showed an increase in membership to 61, and 42 attending Sunday School. The value of the church property was given as \$1000 and the amount paid the pastor \$205.00. 7

Through the years since the reorganization occurred splitting the two churches, Elmira Chapel, at Spring Hill, and Pine Tree, the mother church, have served their communities well. Pine Tree is thought to be the oldest organized Protestant church in Gregg County. Mrs. Elmira (Pierce) Castleberry and her husband A.T. Castleberry (Aaron Trice Castleberry II) were charter members of the Church organized by Reverend Solomon Awalt in 1847 with fifteen members (referred to as sixteen charter members.)

Joseph Castleberry, brother of A.T. Castleberry II, deeded three acres of land May 13, 1848 to the "Cumberland Presbyterian Church" to be used for "Church and school purposes." On this land stood a large pine tree where Elmira Castleberry is credited with starting Sunday School classes for children and where later, before a log building was constructed, religious services were held on Sunday and Reverend Awalt conducted a school for children on weekdays.⁸

The Castleberry's were pioneers. Aaron Trice Castleberry and his sons, William H., Stephen H., Joseph, and Aaron Trice II arrived in Texas from their former home in Alabama about 1835. They acquired large tracts of property in Shelby County under Mexican law and became Citizens of the Republic of Texas. (Joseph's property is recorded in San Augustine County.) The elder Castleberry died about 1838 and by 1850 other family members had moved north of the Sabine River acquiring land in Upshur and Harrison counties.

The Joseph Castleberry deed to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church conveyed 3 acres of land "at or near the old Camp made by Stephen H. Castleberry and A.T. Castleberry. . . ,"
(land located in the southeast quarter of Upshur County until 1873 when Gregg County was created). It was here that Elmira Pierce Castleberry, wife of the above named A.T. Castleberry II, taught Sunday School under the tall pine tree for which the Pine Tree community was named.⁹ And it was James Rodden Castleberry, their son, who, in 1897, gave the 35 acre tract and building materials to build the manse and the two story building which housed Elmira's Chapel and the Spring Hill School.

Two of the sons of A.T. and Elmira Castleberry became wealthy, according to the standards of that day, by harvesting the timberland they owned or purchased. A.T. Castleberry III and James Rodden Castleberry organized a firm for that purpose known as "Castleberry Brothers", with James R. Castleberry as the President. The Castleberry Brothers Lumber Mill of the Spring Hill community was a thriving industry at the turn of the century.

From the bounty of God's world came the generous gift of James R. Castleberry for the building of the church and school in Spring Hill. He and his brother, Richard Watkins Castleberry, were elders at Elmira Chapel from its inception, having first served as elders at Pine Tree CP Church. (Richard W. ordained at Pine Tree in 1872, James R., at Pine Tree in 1888.)¹⁰

The lowest ebb in the life of the two churches, Pine Tree and Elmira Chapel, was soon to occur after the attempted union of Cumberland Presbyterian Churches with the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (1903-1906) and in the recovery period which followed. Many church properties were lost and the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination bitterly divided by the issue. Missionaries were appointed by the denominational board to gather the scattered churches which remained into organized presbyteries.¹¹

During that time it was difficult to obtain ministers and the two churches continued to share the spiritual leadership of ministers who held services for both Elmira and Pine Tree

Ministers for Elmira Chapel 1897-1933

*Rev. J. M. Robinson 1897-1901 *Rev. W. R. Harber 1910-1915
 *Rev. W. V. McGhee 1902-1904 *Rev. A. W. Yell 1916-1919
 *Rev. W. R. Edwards 1904-1905 *Rev. R. S. Garrett 1920-1921
 Various Supplies: 1905-1909 *Rev. B. E. Bowmer 1922-1925
 Rev. W. A. Boone 1909-1910 *Rev. W. R. Harber 1925-1933

*Indicates pastors serving both churches.¹²

Often the ministers were paid with vegetables and farm products or found it necessary to farm themselves as they carried on the ministry to the church.¹³ For more than five years, 1905-1910, no resident minister could be secured for

Elmira Chapel. For two of those years the Reverend W.A. Boone, pastor of the Marshall church, came to Spring Hill to preach on Thursday nights as he continued serving Cumberland Presbyterian churches in Harrison County. A faithful few Elmira members held prayer meetings and conducted the work of the Sunday School.

The small church received new spirit and new life with the coming of Reverend and Mrs. W. R. Harber in 1910. Mrs. Harber revitalized the work of the Missionary Women. The Harber's ministry continued through 1915. In 1925 they returned and served until 1933.¹⁴

As the community grew, the need for additional school facilities increased. By 1910, Spring Hill school, having acquired land from Elmira Chapel, had built a frame one-room, one-story building. Miss Mattie Southerland, the Principal was assisted by a second teacher for the eight grade school. A. A. Castleberry was the trustee. By 1915 another room was attached for a larger school with a stage and other up-dated facilities. At first, one well, located between the two buildings, provided water for the new school and the church.¹⁵

The 1897 two-story building continued to be the meeting place for the Elmira's Chapel congregation. About 1927 the top story of the old building was removed and a new hipped roof, sloping down on each of the four sides from the ridge, was mounted on the building, giving it the new "bungalow" look.

The remodeled one-story, one-room building became the place where the church and Sunday School services were held. The five room parsonage, built in 1898, remained standing under the large oak trees opposite the church on land often used for recreation by the school or the community.¹⁶

Wealth and increased membership arrived with the discovery of oil in the area. The first oil well was brought in on church property on March 13, 1931, one of the earliest wells of the Gregg County Field. "East Texas Church with \$300 Annual Budget has Daily income of \$250 from Oil Well" proclaimed the headline of The Cumberland Presbyterian, denominational publication (taken from the April 9, Times Herald, Dallas.) The Marshall Evening Messenger noted: "Congregation Holds Prayer Meeting Following Bringing in of Producer." The article continued, "They came from their homes, from the fields and the sawmill nearby, to rejoice in their blessing. . . ."17

One immediate use of this new found affluence was for the erection of a modern brick sanctuary built in 1931. A brick educational building was built in 1934 and a new brick manse in 1935.

Donations to home and foreign missions, educational work, ministerial relief and other benevolent causes of the denomination's world-wide program, described by Rev. W.R. Harber