

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 remodled 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. Wallis

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 Mobberly 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.
- 5:00 pm Youth Choir Rehearsal
- 6:00 pm Unity Worship with First & Pine Tree
Churches at Pine Tree.
Dr. Marvin Leslie preaching
- 7:15 pm Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal

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

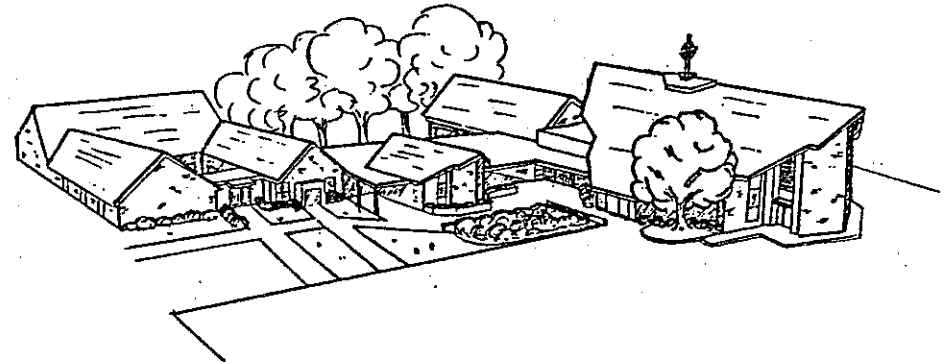
The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was born February 4, 1810, in Dickson County, Tennessee. It was outgrowth of the Great Revival of 1800, one of the most powerful spiritual revivals the United States has ever witnessed. Founders of the church were The Reverends Finis Ewing, Samuel King, and Samuel McAdow.

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

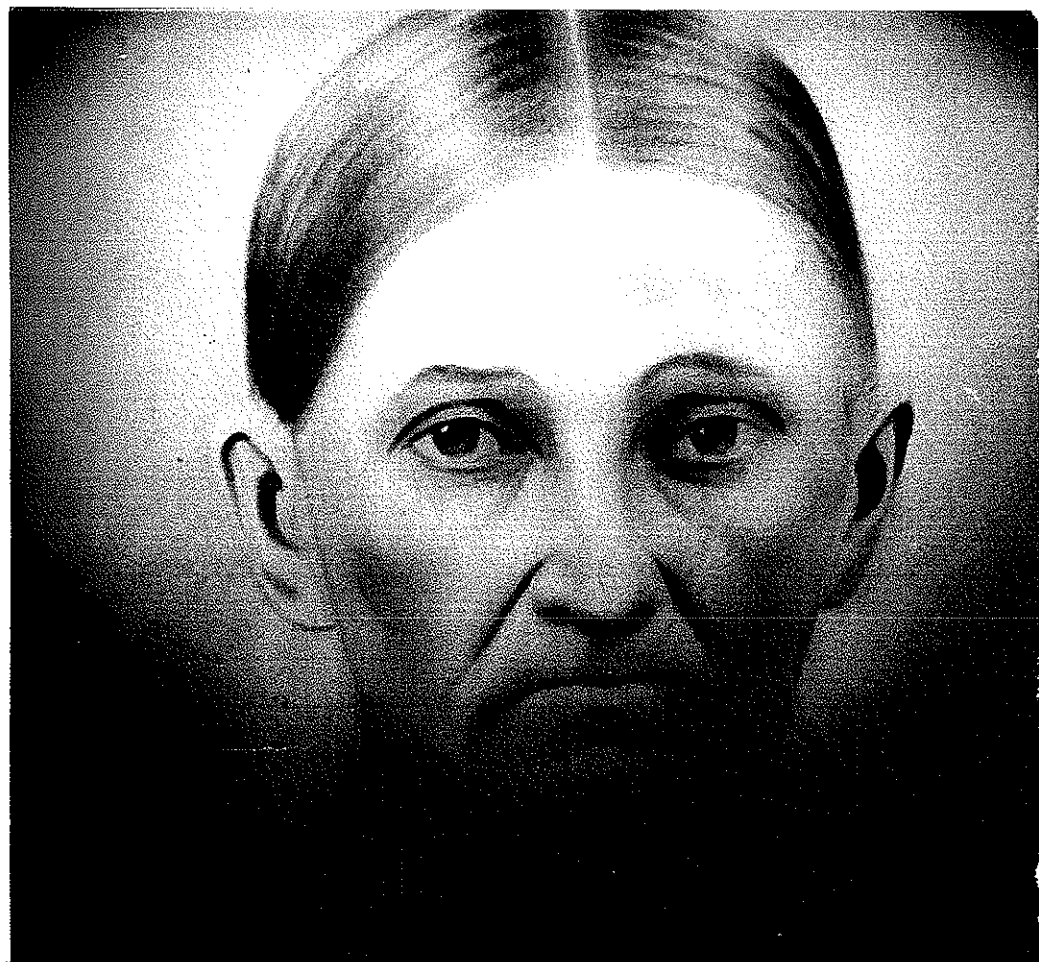


3501 Elmira Drive
Longview, Texas 75605
(903) 759-2069

Paul V. Cook
Pastor
759-3746

Kip J. Rush
Minister of Education
759-3408

Jerry M. Compton
Music Director
297-9162

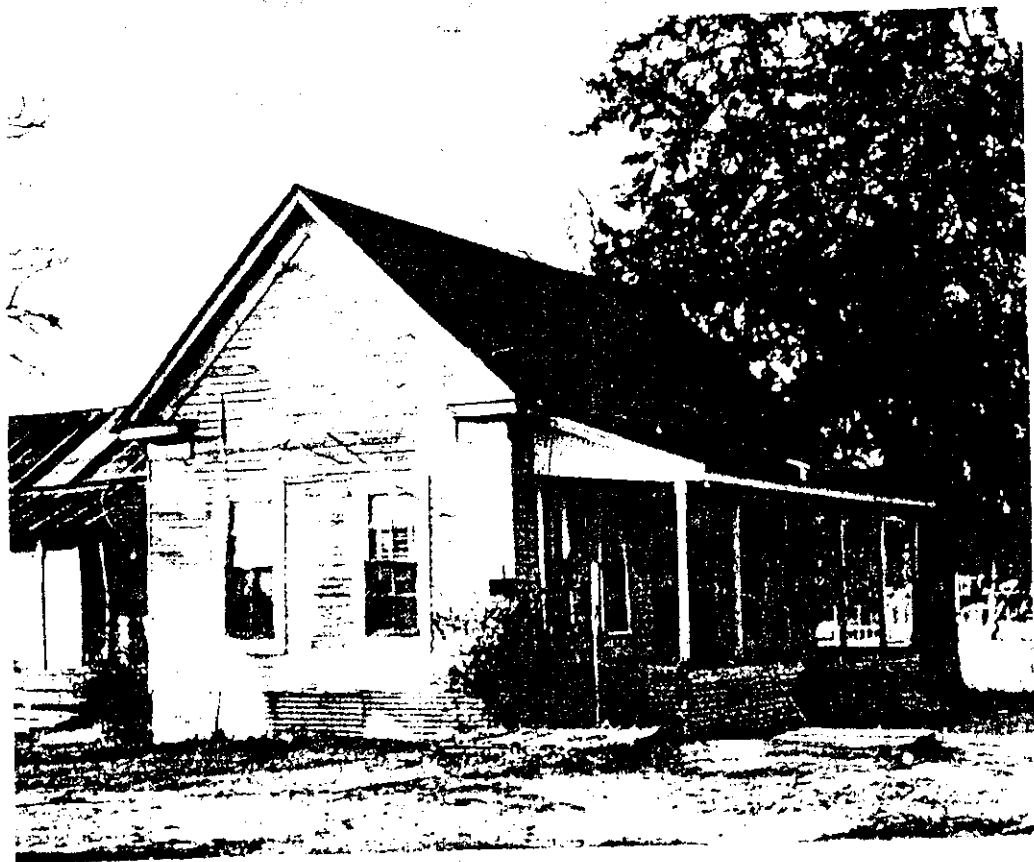




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1897

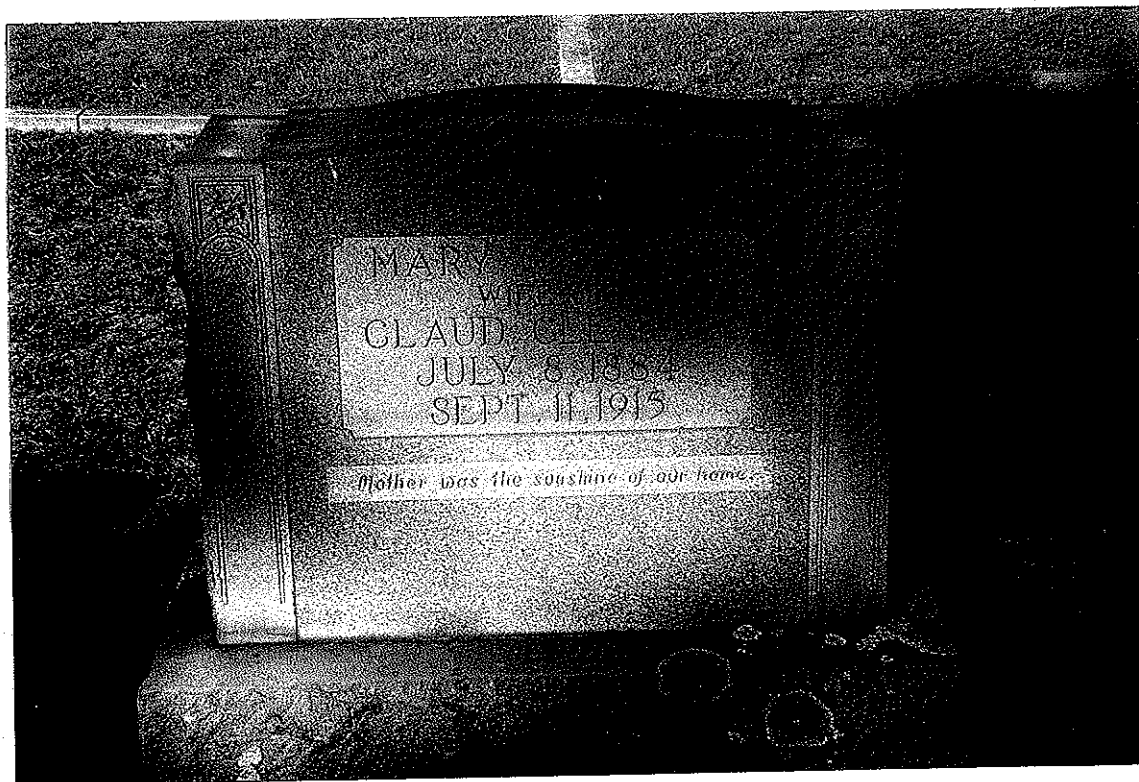
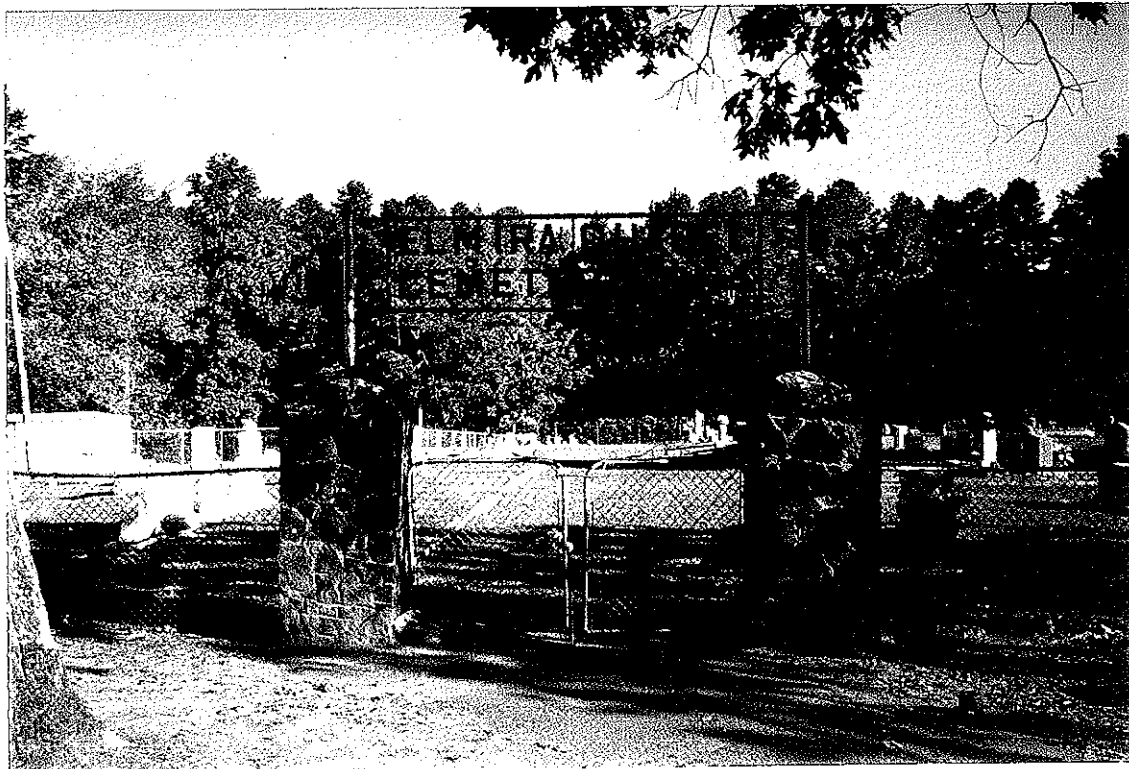


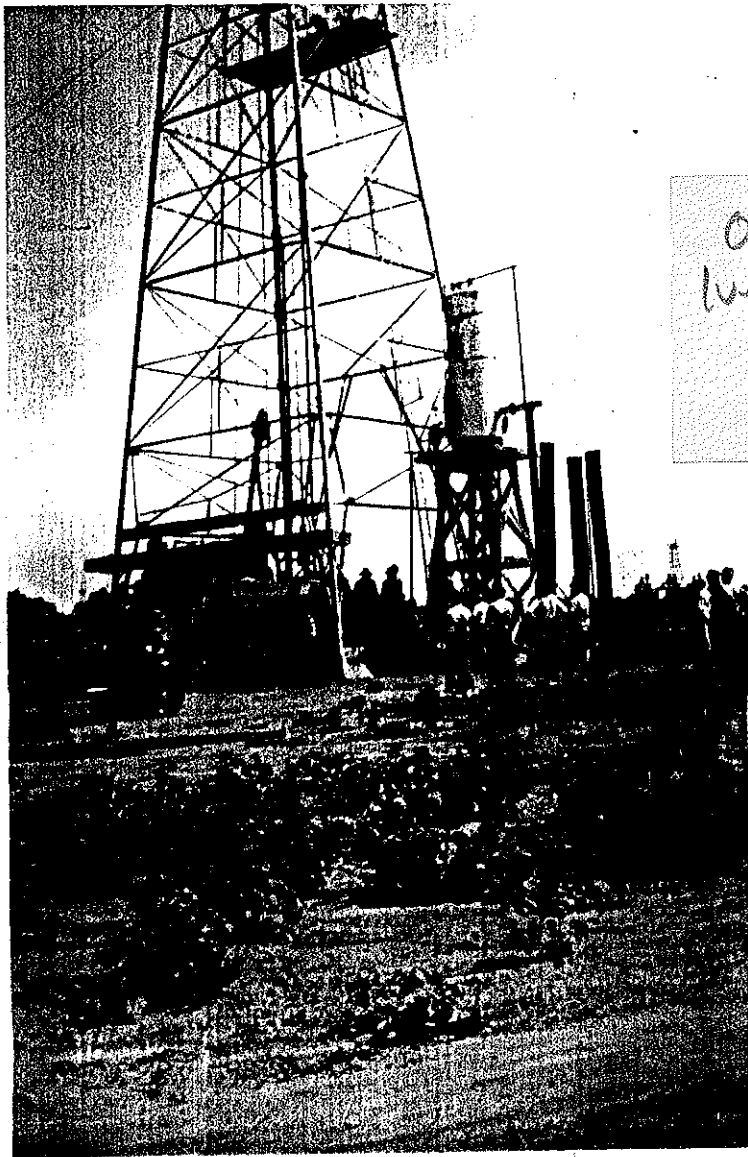
1st parsonage
1898



ORIGINAL PARSONAGE AT ELMIRA CHAPEL

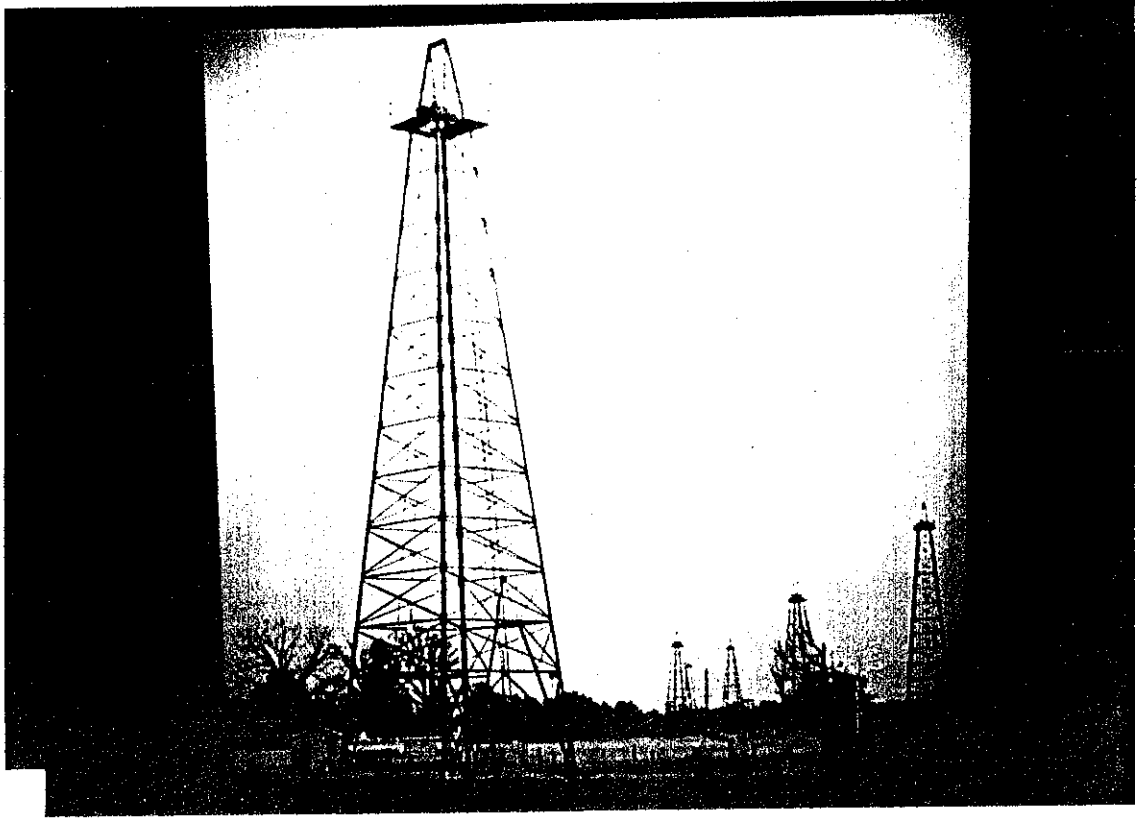






Oil well
Lumber mill



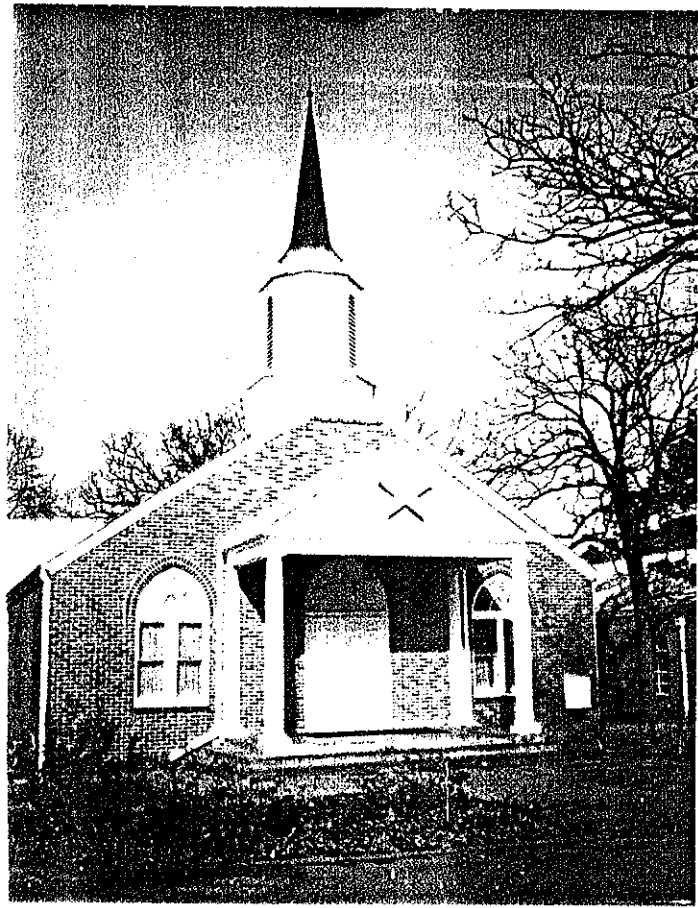


after
1931 ?

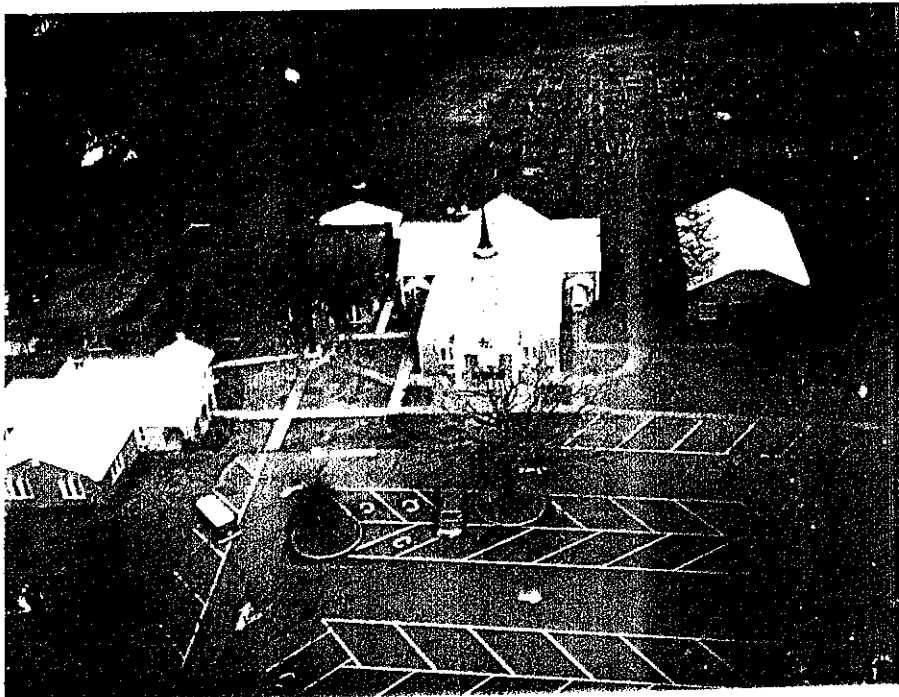








1952



THE GREGGTON

"Complete News Coverage of Greggton and Surroundings"

VOLUME XI—NO. 33

GREGGTON, GREGG COUNTY, TEXAS, THURSDAY, AUGUST 15



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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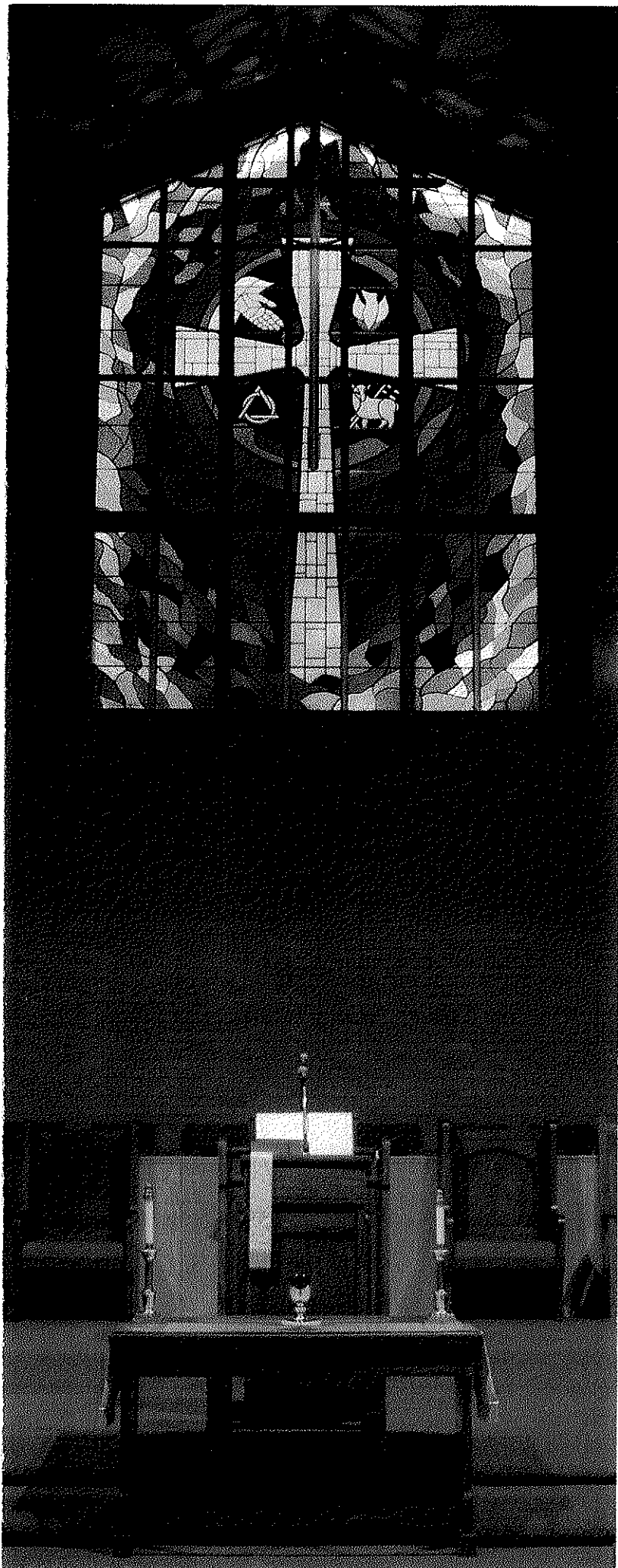
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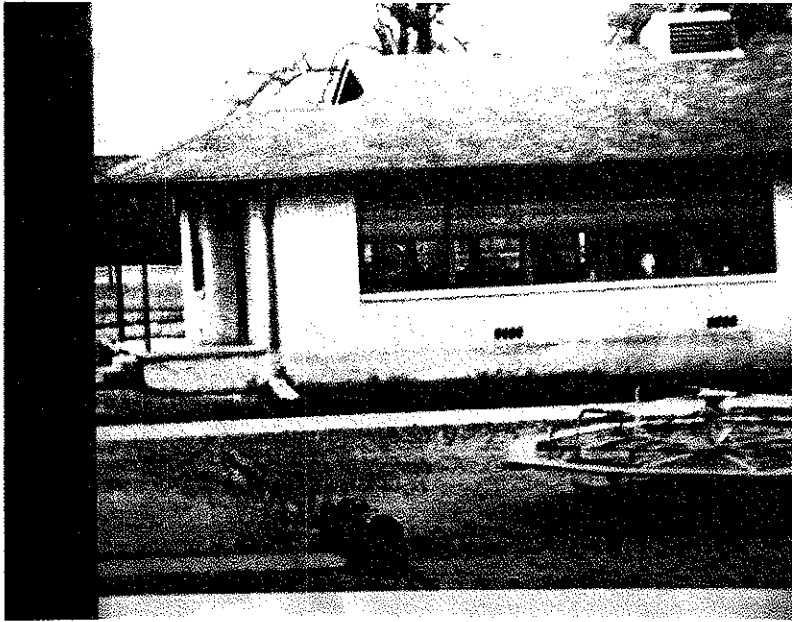


1978











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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "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 Mobberly
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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Emily C. Bell".

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

Enc.

c: The Rev. Kevin L. Ward

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.

(1998)

PLEASE CHECK ONE AND SIGN:

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

Norman H. Black
(signature) Gregg Co. A. C. 5-18-98

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

Dr. Norman Black
Gregg Co. Historical Commission
417 Mobberly Ave.
Longviiw, 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 Mobberly 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. G. Fisher J.P. and Ex-officio Notary
County of Gregg } Public in and for Gregg County, Texas, on this
day personally appeared J. R. Castleberry 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. [S] N. G. Fisher, J.P. & Ex-officio
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. 1917 at 5:01 clock P.M. and recorded
January 4 A.D. 1918 at 11:30 o'clock A.M.

County Clerk, Gregg Co., Tex

J. R. Castleberry } The State of Texas } Know all Men by these Presents:
} County of Gregg } That I, J. R. Castleberry of the County of Gregg
} State of Texas } for and in consideration of the sum of One
} Dollar; to me paid, by R. W. Castleberry, J. H. Alexander, W. J.
} Censon, G. A. Castleberry and E. Holland - Elders of
} Church of Christ, Cumberland 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. H. Alexander, W. J. Censon, E. Holland, R. W.
} Castleberry & G. A. Castleberry - Elders as aforesaid of the Co. of
} St. H. 17 all that certain tract of land sit-

The State of Texas } Before me, W. G. Fisher J.P. and Ex-officio Notary
County of Gregg } Public in and for Gregg County, Texas, on this
day personally appeared J. R. Castleberry 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
purposes and considerations therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office, this 18 day of
October A.D. 1897. [S] W. G. Fisher, J.P. & Ex-officio
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. 1917 at 5 o'clock P.M. and recorded
January 7 A.D. 1918 at 11:30 o'clock A.M.

County Clerk, Gregg Co., Tex.

J. R. Castleberry } The State of Texas } Know all Men by these Presents:
I, J. R. Castleberry of the County of Gregg }
State of Texas for and in consideration of the sum of One }
Dollar, to me paid, by R. W. Castleberry, J. H. Alexander, W. J. }
Denson, G. A. Castleberry and C. Holland - Elders of }
Christa Chapel Cumberland 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. H. Alexander, W. J. Denson, C. Holland, R. W. }
Castleberry & G. A. Castleberry - 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.

GUESTS 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
& EXT 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!

Historically speaking



Obie LeBlanc/Staff Photographer

Frances Willis, left, unveils a historical marker at the Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church while Dr. Norman Black gives the dedication. The ceremony marked the church's 100th anniversary.

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

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

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

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

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 THIC 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. Black D.D.

Date: October 22, 1997

Address: 417 Mobberly 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): _____

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: _____

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 Mobberly 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 | <u>\$550</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18" x 28" marker without post (see below) | \$500 |

If not on post, to what (block of granite, gatepost, 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

as being "light donations" under the former \$300 annual budget, were increased from \$50 in 1931 to \$6,225 in 1932.

Once again the wealth of natural resources, gifts from God, used wisely, was the foundation for expansion and a wider field of service for Elmira Chapel and the school on the adjoining property.¹⁸

Reverend Harber, who had served Elmira Chapel and Pine Tree Churches so faithfully with little monetary return, moved to a full-time pastorate at Pine Tree where a beautiful brick and tile sanctuary was completed in 1932.

Ministers for Elmira Chapel 1933 to present

Rev. T.C. Stockton	1933-1942	Rev. Paul V. Cook	1986-1994
Rev. L.L. Thomas	1942-1970	Rev. K.L. Ward	1994-
Rev. Wm. A. Rawlins	1971-1986		

Elmira Chapel called Rev. T.C. Stockton of Memphis, Tennessee to the ministry. He had served as the field man, traveling extensively 1930-33, for the Cumberland Presbyterian Board of Tithing and Budget before coming to Elmira in 1933 as a young bachelor. He and his sister resided in the manse. In 1939 he married Mrs. Euline C. McKlesky, a widow with two young children, Dorothy and Tom. Mrs. McKlesky had been serving as assistant secretary to the Board since 1936.

(She later became Editor of The Missionary Messenger publication of the Board of Foreign Missions, from 1950-65). The Stocktons served Elmira almost ten years. They were well loved as were the next minister Leonard L. Thomas and his wife Carmen Thomas.¹⁹

Rev. Thomas had served as a professor in the Theological Department of Bethel College, then assumed the presidency of the college during the difficult years following the stock market crash and bank failures. After his resignation as Bethel President in 1939 he was assigned the Hannibal Seagle Bible Chair and came to Elmira Chapel as minister in 1942. Mrs. Thomas served as organist for the church and was largely responsible for the successful music ministry of the church, setting standards of musicianship that have provided glorious sacred music through the years since that time. Various building programs included rebuilding the sanctuary entrance and adding a steeple. The interior of the sanctuary was completely remodeled in the summer of 1963.

The Thomas's remained at Elmira from 1942-1970. The ties of the church and school grew ever more strong in this interval of time. The community once rural in character, became more urban. Elmira Chapel had been the only church in Spring Hill until 1932 when a young college student, Lee Smith, and his brother, Harley, a missionary to Brazil on furlough, established the Spring Hill Baptist Church from a tent meeting held near the present site of that church. As other denominations entered the community, they were welcomed and a spirit of cooperation prevailed. Joint services were held on special occasions and a ministerial alliance for aiding the poor was organized.²⁰

The 1931 Oil Boom with an influx of oil field workers and their families (Boomers) had brought many changes to the school systems of Gregg County. There was an immediate need for more classrooms. Temporary structures were used but in time the increased school revenue made it possible to build new and better schools. Up to this time (1931) no 4-year high school had been established in the county system.

Spring Hill was one of the "existing communities . . . [which] became little boom towns" Equal to the task, Spring Hill school arranged for temporary structures to be moved in or erected. The old reconstructed 1897 church, now one-story, was moved to the school grounds, divided into two rooms and used as one of those make-shift buildings.

In 1933, the two-room frame school which had been used, first as a one-room school built about 1910 and then, with the addition of another room, as a two room school, was torn down to build a modern brick building of eight classrooms, kitchen, gymnasium and auditorium. Seven grades were offered and a school bus took high school students to Longview. In 1934 an eleven room teacherage was added. The band room and homemaking department were added in 1936, a cafeteria in 1937, a shop in 1940, and a library in 1942.

By 1941-42 Spring Hill School had become a four-year senior high school. Approximately 25 students were graduated in the class of '42.

By 1957 the school plant consisted of a two-story main building with classrooms for both the elementary and high schools and a junior high gymnasium and auditorium, band hall, homemaking department and library. Other buildings included a kindergarten and music building, shop for industrial arts, a teacherage, an ultra-modern cafeteria and a gymnasium for the high school, swimming pool and facilities, athletic field house, football stadium with adjacent practice field and track field and a baseball field. R. G. Hensley was Superintendent, L.L. Williamson, High School Principal, both members of Elmira Chapel. Total enrollment had reached 1,318 students by 1987 and the school was ranked in the top 2 per cent in the state TEAMS testing program.²¹

After the retirement of Rev. L.L. Thomas, Elmira pastor, in 1970, the church called Dr. Wm. A. Rawlins to service. He had married the daughter of Mrs. T.C. Stockton, Dorothy McLeskey, fondly called "Dottie" by the church members. Having lived in the manse as a child, this was a homecoming for her. The Rawlins had three young daughters. Mrs. Rawlins became a Kindergarten teacher at Spring Hill School. Dr. Rawlins had twenty years experience in the ministry, having served two churches. He held degrees from Southwestern at Memphis, Memphis Theological Seminary, and Perkins School of Religion of Southern Methodist University.

During the years 1970-1986, the number of young people involved in the church increased dramatically. Elmira Chapel undertook a 4-year building program and on Feb. 19, 1978 a dedication service was held for a new sanctuary and music-education building.

The new building contained a 550 seat sanctuary, offices, a choir room, dressing rooms, restrooms and nurseries. The entire plant, including buildings built in 1931, 1934, 1948, and 1974 included 23,763 square feet and was valued at over one million dollars.²²

Two tragedies have brought grave concern and great sadness to members. On May 11, 1979 a fire destroyed one of the older buildings and heavily damaged the newly built sanctuary. Spring Hill school was used for services while repairs were being made.

The most tragic event, one which touched the lives of people coast to coast, was an accident involving the Church van returning from a Cumberland Presbyterian Youth Conference in Centerville, Tennessee. Six passengers were killed as the van with thirteen passengers was crushed by an overturning truck in the fatal accident. Two were youth from Elmira, four were youth from churches across the state. A Prayer Garden has been built at Elmira in memory of the young people who died in the 1991 van accident.²³

After the resignation of Dr. Rawlins in 1986, the Reverend Paul Cook and his wife, Marcine, had come to Elmira in October of 1986. "Pastor Paul," with 30 years of experience in the ministry was always solicitous for the spiritual and physical welfare of the membership. This concern extended to soldiers of the Armed Services, for whom he served as a volunteer Chaplain. Marcine Cook held the highest office of the Women's Board of Missions, responsible for denomination-wide programs. When Reverend Cook felt the call to a small mission church in El Paso in 1994, his resignation was accepted with great reluctance.²⁴

A young pastor, Kevin Ward, who had come to Elmira to work with youth during the ministry of Reverend Cook was asked to assume the pastoral duties for the entire church body.

In this year, 1997-1998, Elmira Chapel is celebrating its 100th birthday with the theme, "Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future." A Capital Asset program is in progress, its purpose to renovate the kitchen, restrooms, and main hallways.

Pastor Ward is especially attentive to the youth ministry, having served as director of many youth trips, camps, and retreats. He has served on the local, presbyterial and denominational level including service on the staff of the Cumberland Presbyterian Youth conference for eight years.

A significant part of the congregation now at Elmira Chapel was formed in a mission church in White Oak, Texas. It was led by the Reverend Donald Nunn. After his departure, the church was closed and most of the membership was attached to the Elmira Chapel church. The building and property was sold with a portion of the proceeds going to Elmira Chapel and the remainder going to the work of missions in the Presbytery. The membership transfers occurred in October and December of 1989.

The Spring Hill School and Elmira Chapel have prospered and grown through the years. Their mutual cooperation and support continues to strengthen the community and their area-wide community service manifests itself in ever widening spheres.²⁵

A final note: Elmira Chapel is not only indebted to Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian Church but also owes much to ministers from Harrison County and Marshall who endured weariness, extremes in weather, and danger as they traveled to preach for the two small Cumberland Presbyterian Churches in Gregg County. Walker Montecue Allen and William Bell Allen, father and son, should be remembered; also E. H. Keasler who conducted revival services in those early days before the year 1900 had arrived. Even greater service may have been rendered by W. A. Boone, who worked so zealously in the lean years, 1907-1911, to save the small congregations of the Marshall Presbytery.²⁶

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ELMIRA CHAPEL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIANS
TO SPRING HILL COMMUNITY AND GREGG COUNTY

B U I L D I N G A C O M M U N I T Y

The pioneers of Pine Tree and Spring Hill recognized the need for schools to educate their children, and churches, in which they could worship. They accepted the responsibility for building their communities, serving as church elders and as school board members.

Pine Tree was the site of the earliest organized Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Gregg County, founded by pioneers of the community with Rev. Solomon Awalt as pastor in 1847. Among early settlers there, were the Awalt's, Fisher's, Rodden's, Templeton's, Bledsoe's, Callaway's, Fuller's, White's, Magrill's, and Castleberry's. Sixteen neighboring landowners became charter members of the Pine Tree church. In 1891 they sponsored the development of Elmira Chapel in Spring Hill, a "chapel" or "branch congregation" 3 1/2 miles away. The children and grandchildren, second and third generation descendants of the earliest pioneers, embraced their role as leaders in the growing community. Thus, a close-knit group of neighboring landowners, many of them with large land holdings, and their sons, daughters, and in-laws, established the churches and schools of two of the earliest communities of Gregg County. The Castleberry's, the Callaway's, and later the Alexander's and Magrill's--these families became the foundation for sustaining the Spring Hill church and community from the nineties to the thirties, when they were joined by other

families brought into the area by the oil boom and by the industrialized growth of Gregg County.²⁷

Elmira Chapel Session Members

R.W. Castleberry (ordained at Pine Tree)	1872
J.A. Callaway (ordained at Pine Tree)	1888
J.R. Castleberry (ordained at Pine Tree)	1888
Ollie Callaway	Aug. 28, 1889
C.W. Simpson	July 1910
J.H. Alexander	July 1910
W.I. Denson	May 1912
Ernest Holland	May 1912
G.A. Castleberry	May 1912
Dennis Magrill	June 30 1918
Bob McKinley	July 30 1918

School Board Members

A.A. Castleberry	1910
(Asa, youngest son of Elmira and Aaron Trice Castleberry II)	
During early years of school	
A.E. Castleberry	
J.H. Alexander	
Dennis Magrill	

In 1930 S.C. Rundell and in 1933 R.K. Johnson were elected as elders. No other changes were made until 1943 when Minos B. Harley became an elder. On May 19, 1946, Louis L. Williamson and Walter C. McGrede became elders.

The 1936 Spring Hill School history written by W.A. Hearne, Spring Hill School Principal, listed school trustees, J.D. Davis, R.K. Johnson, and Sam Rundell.²⁸

With neighbors and kinfolk as elders and members of the school board, harmony and good will was ensured in both church and school. This cooperative spirit was enhanced by the number of Spring Hill School teachers and employees who were members of Elmira, serving the church in many ways as volunteers.²⁹

WORKING WITH YOUTH

Opportunities given young people are important factors in building a community: educating them, providing religious training, including time for wholesome recreation and entertainment. Fortunately leaders were found who were

willing to lend their talents and abilities to the life of the church and who were concerned about the training, love, and care of the children and young people of the community This was true when the area might have been referred to as rural and impoverished and it is true today in a area which has become urban and prosperous. (Though land was wealth, it was necessary to labor with almost unceasing effort to earn a living from it and often worldly goods were scarce in the rural areas.)

Elmira Chapel's record of work with youth has been outstanding, beginning with the Sunday Schools so important to the early church, programs allowing the church to survive during those times when a minister was not available. Sunday School was conducted by volunteer laymen who with the loyal church members held the congregations together in their Christian efforts. The church schools were important for young people and adults but perhaps most vital for families and children.

The first Sunday School Superintendent reported in Elmira history was J.W. Lawrence who in 1896 asked Rev. J.M. Robinson, then preaching at Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian Church, to assist with the services at Spring Hill school by teaching the Bible Class and preaching a short sermon each Sunday afternoon.

Other S.S. Superintendants of record are: Ollie Callaway, R.W. Castleberry, Will Lamb, J.C. Gray, J.H. Alexander, A.E. Alexander, C.C. Clemens, Dennis Magrill, W.L. Bussey, S.C. Rundell (1935), Minos Harley (1948), Harry Stracener, R.D. Tekell, T.C. Humphries, Skip Nuss, Tommie Tiffin, and Mike Alexander. There may be others whose names we do not have.³⁰

ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH

Activities for youth have been almost too numerous to tell.

For many years the Men's Bible Class sponsored a Spring Hill Scout Troup, building two Boy Scout cabins, one on the church grounds, the other in "The Big Woods" seven miles from the church. The cabin on the grounds was also used by religious and educational groups.³¹

Bible Schools, Christian Endeavor Societies, Sunday Evening Youth groups, Fifth Sunday Rallies have given religious training. Summer Camp, Youth Choir tours, Youth Work tours, representation on various denominational committees and Youth Boards have served as outreach programs and as ways to develop leadership qualities.

In the 30's the Educational Building or the Youth Annex, and in later years, Thomas Hall, each with kitchen accessible, have been the setting for entertainment and fellowship: socials, youth banquets, dances, lock-ins, and even a place to bed-down visiting groups of young people. (Thomas Hall is also used for church dinners, men's prayer breakfasts, lunches, Senior Citizen meetings, programs honoring special members and/or guests, and as a place which Santa visits annually.)

"LOGOS", a very successful Wednesday evening program for children and youth, with bible study, recreation, and supper, operated for a number of years, but has been replaced by a Family Night Supper with bible study for adults and a children's story hour.

Elmira offers day care to one-year-olds, and a Discovery School enrolling children ages 2 to 5, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. during the winter months. Summer fun is provided on Wednesdays with a Fun Lunch Bunch for children ages 5 to 10. The children hear stories, see films, go on field trips, have organized play, and enjoy a "brown bag" lunch.³²

A Library and Media Center was opened March 1, 1981. Backed by the Cumberland Presbyterian Women's organization, the Media Center provides books, audiovisuals, study course kits, and filmstrips for youth and adults.³³

SPORTS

Sports have played an important role in Elmira's attraction for the young adult and the Young at Heart older adult. As a team star or simply as one who is rooting for the team, sports have been good for "body and soul." Joining in the competition of church leagues was been a way to reach out in friendship to other congregations. Volleyball, basketball, bowling, and softball, all have been part of Elmira's program for wholesome fun. Proof is displayed in the glass shelved cases of trophies at Elmira.³⁴

ACTIVITIES--MEN

For many years the men of the church have enjoyed spending time with one another on an annual Men and Boys Camp-Out in June.

Men's Prayer Breakfasts are held periodically. Bonding in fellowship and service are the rewards for the men who assist in the traditional preparation of breakfast for the congregation after the Easter Sunrise Worship.³⁵

MUSIC

Elmira Chapel has, through the years, been well known for its music, whatever the musical modes of the times. The talents of church members and the professional expertise of musical directors employed by the church have made this possible.

From the days of shaped notes and camp meetings to the present day anthems and chorales--not forgetting modern trends to new rhythms and sounds and the use of guitars and other instruments--music has been an essential part of the worship services at Elmira.

In earlier times Singing Schools with dinner on the grounds were immensely popular. They were important social events as well as ways to express religious fervor in song. Elmira Chapel hosted many Singing Schools, with leaders and singers coming long distances, and local residents diligently immersed in preparations for the events. For a number of years after Elmira Chapel built its new brick sanctuary in 1931, the church hosted the meetings of the Gregg County Singing conventions which were held in the fall and spring of each year. The president of this organization was Lewis L. Richardson, longtime County Clerk of

Gregg County, and the secretary was Willie Bussey, Elmira Chapel member well known for his vocal talent.

After the early days when a pump organ accompanied the hymns, Elmira choral and musical groups made the transition to the exalting sounds of classical compositions underscored by the accompaniment of a piano and pipe organ. Mrs. L.L. (Carmen) Thomas, church organist, encouraged the development of the musically-talented corp of musicians who serve the church today.

The musical equipment of the church includes a large electric pipe organ in the sanctuary, a grand piano, a smaller electric organ in the chapel, and four upright pianos. A Handbell choir is the most recent addition to musical presentations. Other equipment used in presenting and recording performances: A Sound Sytem and Recording equipment.

Quoting Dr. L.L. Thomas, pastor of Elmira for 29 years, "Many people are so temperamentally constructed that the Ministry of Music is the most stimulating influence in their religious lives. This ministry has, no doubt lead to a greater spiritual development. Many individuals have used their musical talents in ways that have been a blessing. . . ."³⁶

PAGEANTS AND PLAYS

Another means of artistic expression and use of talent has been the presentation of pageants and plays. Two musical programs or pageants are given annually by the adult choir and one or more by the youth.

This tradition began in the days when a sheet was strung across wires suspended from poles and continues with musicals such as the one presented recently by the youth when strategically placed microphones and a sound system were used. The performance will be taken on tour to churches of the denomination.

Plays have been used for entertainment, inspiration, instruction, and as fundraisers.

A newsclipping describes a performance of the 1930's: Headlines for The Cumberland Presbyterian of May 14, 1936 read " Elmira, Texas Church Had Impressive Service." The article continued, "The Longview, Texas, Daily News has the following to say about Spring Hill Elmira Chapel: Outstanding among the many impressive services held recently at the Spring Hill Elmira Chapel, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, was the Easter Pageant given Sunday night in the presence of more than seven hundred people . . . More than forty took part in the services under the direction of Miss Rachael Faulkenberry. The beautiful music rendered was under the direction of Lewis H. Richardson. The benediction was pronounced by Rev. T.C. Stockton pastor of the church."³⁷

REVIVALS AND PRAYER MEETINGS

Certainly revivals and Wednesday night prayer meetings were good ways to build up the community. Elmira's record

is clear. The Minutes of the Pine Tree Session of July 5, 1895 made plans for a revival meeting to be held at Spring Hill, with ministers to be Bros. E.H. Keasler and Dr. Henrick (sic) of Longview. Revivals were held semi-annually or annually until the 1970's.

A quotation from Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future describes the attraction of revivals when Spring Hill was a rural community. "In the heat of summer and during a break in farming, it was Revival time at Elmira Chapel. Members as well as non-members would gather for a week to ten days of preaching, praying and singing." The setting changed in later years but the need for, and joy in "revival" did not.

Prayer meetings ignited the spark which led to the organization of Elmira Chapel. Reverend J.R. Robinson in his letter to Elmira in 1947 wrote "About the middle of October, (1896) we started a prayer meeting which grew very rapidly." The new two-story church-school was built by the congregation the next spring (1897) at the present site of the church.

The deeply ingrained practice of setting aside Wednesday night for prayer meetings lasted well into the mid-1950's and even after that, for many years now, Elmira Chapel and its members have reserved Wednesday nights for special church functions and church committee meetings.³⁸

REACHING OUT

Elmira Chapel has been fortunate in receiving both spiritual and material riches. The gift of land from James R. Castleberry in 1897 and the unexpected oil income from wells drilled in the 1930's have made it possible for the church to reach out to help others in and beyond the community of Spring Hill.

USE OF THE LAND

The 35 acre tract of land has been shared with the school from the year 1897 when a two-story school-church house was built on the donated land. Two acres were sold to the school prior to 1910 and a new one-story, one-room Spring Hill school was constructed adjacent to the older building. Cooperation between the church and school allowed the school to use church property with only nominal remuneration to Elmira. Through the years of growth for both, this remarkable mutually satisfactory arrangement has continued. The church has on its property a school football field, a track field, tennis courts, and a former home for the superintendent and principal (a teacherage now converted to other uses).

When the Spring Hill Baptist Church was organized in 1932 and acquired land on Gilmer Road backing up to Elmira property, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church exchanged a portion of land to accomodate the new denomination in its construction plans.

A small tract of land south of the church on Gilmer Road has been used for many years as a field for community Little League baseball games and another larger area, site of the 1898 manse, which has been removed, is used by both church and community as picnic grounds and a play area. The Longview Parks and Recreation Department is permitted to use the large area on Elmira Road every summer as a recreational playground. A small branch, shaded by trees, borders the expanse of green grass to the west of the church where the scout cabin once stood. This is being used by Spring Hill School classes as a Nature Study Trail.

In a time when open land (space) is becoming more and more limited, the land is a valuable resource for the church and the community. Most of the community of Spring Hill is now within the city limits of Longview. Spring Hill School is an Independent School District.³⁹

USE OF OIL INCOME

Elmira has been referred to as "The Church of the Helping Hand" because of its generosity in sharing the unexpected bonanza of oil income from 10 wells drilled on church property following the 1931 oil discovery at Lathrop No.1. in Gregg County.

For many years 10% of the oil income was set aside for denominational use. In addition, the oil revenue was generously shared with other churches both inside and outside the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination for use in their building programs. Money has been used to educate young ministers, to promote young peoples' encampments, for Red Cross work and for many other types of Christian work.

The Marshall Church and the Orphan's Home and Church in Denton were among those who were recipients of this generous spirit. Sometimes the assistance was an outright gift, at other times a loan.

Quoting The Cumberland Presbyterian Oct. 6, 1932 in an article titled "Cheering News for 1932":

"Mr. J.M. Forbis, president of the Board of Tithing and Budget, writes as follows: I want to report the answer to your prayers--the solution of our Board's financial problems. . . . One day there came a message from a pastor, stating that if Mr. [T.C.] Stockton would come to his congregation and make certain contacts, he believed we could get the money. So Mr. Stockton followed directions . . . and came away from Longview, Texas with a gift of \$1250 from the session of the Elmira Chapel congregation (there are some oil wells on the church property) and \$250 from Bro. McKinley, an elder in the same congregation. A total of \$1,500 that is a gift in fee simple directly to the expense of the Board of Tithing and Budget! Thank God!"⁴⁰

CHARITABLE GIFTS AND ACTS

Two agencies for good works have been fully supported by the Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The Spring Hill Ministers Alliance sponsored a Food Box for Spring Hill residents for many years. It was located at the Spring Hill Baptist Church and volunteers from other Spring Hill churches assisted in gathering and distributing the food, occasionally giving monetary assistance for specific needs. As it became more difficult to screen those asking for assistance, Elmira Chapel, under the leadership of Rev. Paul Cook, joined the Longview Ministerial Alliance, participating in projects under the umbrella of that organization. They include: Habitat for Humanity, Salvation Army Stewpot, donations of canned and boxed products for monthly food distribution, and Meals on Wheels.

The Spring Hill Lions Club, offering eye examinations and glasses to youth unable to afford them, was a valuable community service club for many years. They met monthly in the school cafeteria for a business meeting and a dinner prepared by the women of the Home Demonstration Club (a fund-raising HD project). Membership was made up of men of the community, a number of them from Elmira. Harry Stracener, staunch churchman from Elmira, was a leader in this charitable effort.⁴¹

MEN CALLED TO MINISTRY

Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church fostered

the call to ministry of a number of men whose lives the church touched. They were Rowe L. McKinley, Thurman Levacy, Melvin Rowland, Don T. Thomas, R.T. Packard, Sam Blackburn, Richard Carl, Vernon Sansom, Dewayne Renfro, and Zach Renfro, his son.⁴²

WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

"There were times that if the women had not taken such a strong lead, the Church may not have survived." From "Cumberland Presbyterian Women" Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future published by the Elmira Centennial Committee, 1996.

These words from the church history written and published in celebration of the 100th birthday of the church give credit to the women of Elmira Chapel for the many ways they have contributed to the life of the church and community.

The Ladies' Missionary Society of the church was organized with five members October 13, 1900 and records show the group has been engaged in Presbyterian Missionary activities since 1911, though with a small membership. Two other Gregg County CP churches, Longview and Pine Tree, reported active societies as members of the Marshall Presbytery (became the Greenville-Marshall Presbytery in 1927). The first report of mission work in the presbytery had come from Mrs. A. B. Hughes of Atlanta in 1894 naming 5 auxiliaries and 2 children's bands.

The denominational body of women in missions had been established in 1880 by Rev. W.J. Darby of Evansville, Indiana to support the work of two brothers, the Reverends J.B. and A.D. Hail in a mission effort to Japan, begun in 1877. The new Board was named the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions. In 1938, it was renamed the Board of Foreign Missions to include the participation of men as board members. The women's meetings became known as the Missionary Auxiliary. In 1964, the present name, "Cumberland Presbyterian Women," was adopted.⁴³

From 1908 until 1912 there were no auxiliary reports to Memphis headquarters from the Longview area. In 1912 the notation on the record is: "Longview (E.C.); organized 1897; Secretary, Mrs. W. R. Harber; No. Members 4." (The initials E.C. are written in the margin.)

Mrs. W.R. Harber revitalized the women's work in 1911. (1913 report from Mrs. Harber: Elmira Chapel 5 members; Pine Tree, 8 members) and again in 1925-1933, during the two periods of ministry of Rev. Harber. In 1932 Mrs. Alma Barton of Elmira became the Secretary-Treasurer of the Presbytery; in 1933 Presbytery officers were Mrs. J. Willie Bussey Johnson, President, and Mrs. Alma Barton, Secretary-Treasurer. Mrs. S.C. Rundell was Elmira Chapel Christian Endeavor Leader. The auxiliaries began reporting S.S. and C.E. groups (Sunday School and Christian Endeavor groups).

Since then several Elmira women have served as Presbyterial officers. Among those who served terms as President were: Mrs. Harry Stracener (Opal), Mrs. K.C. Mathews (Autrey), Mrs. Herman Fenton (Emma), Mrs. Homer Blankenship (Alma), Mrs. J.R. Mullins (Margie), Mrs. Raymond Davis (Naomi), and Mrs. Kip Rush (Jodi). The church has been host to a number of Presbyterial conventions and has entertained and sponsored many foreign missionaries and visiting dignitaries. The denomination has a number of home mission fields, and overseas missions in Columbia, South America, Hong Kong, Japan, Liberia, and Israel.

Opal Stracener became President of the Texas Synod. During the time she was President, the Columbia, South America missions, the Chinese home missions in California, and the Chinese foreign missions in Macau and Hong Kong were members of the Texas Synod. The Synod Convention theme, celebrating the expansion of the mission field, was "The Sun Never Sets on the Texas Synod."

Rev. L.L. Thomas has written "During the years the missionary society has provided instruction in the great work of foreign missions, as well as directing the efforts of the women of this congregation in the support of our denominational work."

Elmira now has three Cumberland Presbyterian Church Circles, Morning Circle, Agape, and Unity Circles, which meet monthly and come together for a joint meeting quarterly. Devotionals and programs are given and a time for fellowship is set aside for serving refreshments.

These units have devoted their time to publicizing mission work, communicating with missionaries in the fields and raising funds with cook books, dinners and an annual Craft Fair. A Christian Retreat for Women is held annually.

Moneys from the Craft Fair go into the annual C.P.W. budget and are then dispersed as voted on by the Executive Committee. In recent years, they have been given to Hospice Longview, Longview Community Ministries, Meals on Wheels, the American Bible Society, Church Women United and to various needs within the Church. In 1996 the Craft Fair netted over \$2800.

Many of the younger women of the church today work outside the home. They assume multiple responsibilities for home, family, and jobs and their willingness to accept and carry out extensive responsibilities for the church speaks for the strength of their Christian faith.

The annual Rusk State Hospital Birthday Party is an on-going project, first introduced by the Gregg County Red Cross in 1953. For almost 45 years the women of Elmira Chapel have participated. Home-made birthday cakes, fruit, and gifts are taken to Rusk State Hospital for the mentally ill in August of each year. Volunteers from the church go to the hospital to serve patients in their wards with the assistance of hospital personnel.

Though much of the organized effort of the women of Elmira has been through mission work, women of the church have been helpful to other organizations having charitable or educational purposes. Church Women United has been supported with monetary gifts. Elmira hosts CWU quarterly celebrations semiannually and Elmira church members have served as officers and committee members. The CPW contributes annually to The Fellowship of the Least Coin, a Church Women United project.⁴⁴

Two community services of earlier days are worthy of description here:

Elmira Chapel members organized the Spring Hill School P.T.A. and offered the first cafeteria service for students, as volunteers. It all began with a "bowl and spoon" party. in January 1933. Parents were asked to bring a bowl and spoon as donations to the project. Using the bowls, two women served soup and dessert daily to the students from a small space under a stairwell. The students had to obtain their own cups for drinking water. P.T.A. members alternated in providing the food which they cooked in their homes and brought to the school. When the new brick school building was erected in 1933, it had eight classrooms, a kitchen, gymnasium and auditorium. A band room and homemaking department were added in 1936, a cafeteria in 1937. Through many years Elmira Chapel members worked in the cafeteria as managers and assistants.⁴⁵

Because Spring Hill was a rural area, the Home Demonstration [H.D.Clubs] and 4-H Clubs were important to the community. Elmira church women led the way in organizing and steering the clubs. A strong Home Demonstration Club was important in educating families, particularly the mothers in many ways.

Workshops helped them to can and preserve food safely, to know how to have more comfortable homes, to learn how to sew for the family. Perhaps most important, they learned how to set and reach goals based on values beneficial to the family. Participation also trained them as leaders and gave them what sociologists might call "community" but what might best be described as a group of "friends with a common purpose."

Several women of the church became important to the county and district as 4-H and/or Home Demonstration leaders. [The Agricultural Extension based Home Demonstration clubs became known as Extension Homemaker's Clubs but now are called FCE Clubs as member clubs of the Texas Association for Family and Community Education.] Three women closely associated with Elmira Chapel became Directors for District 5 Home Demonstration clubs and members of the state board: Mmse. J.C. Gray (Minnie), Glenn Croft (Esther), and Clayton B. Willis (Frances); another Elmira member, Opal Gray Stracener, was a 4-H district officer thoroughly committed to 4-H leadership. Sometime between 1935 and 1945, Minnie Gray managed two area-wide government programs sponsored by the Extension Service. A cannery was set up in an unused building, the old Oliver Daniels Lumber shed, so that

home grown food could be canned by people of the community. In another educational assistance program mattresses were made, using cotton grown on the farm, in a building which had been a grocery store owned by the Clemens family. (It was just across the road--now Hwy. 300--from the old Clemens family home.)

The Spring Hill Home Demonstration Club was the hub of community leadership, important too to Gregg County. Edith Johnson Humphries, Tullie Marie Magrill Webb, and Opal Gray Stracener were named as county-wide "Women of the Year."⁴⁶

Carmen Thomas, wife of Reverend Leonard L. Thomas, was a multi-talented woman, an organist and musician, teacher and supervisor for Christian education of children, also a skilled homemaker. She was expert in growing flowers and spent many hours in the care of the church gardens and grounds--a labor of love. For years the floral arrangements in the sanctuary and church were created by Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. C.C. Clemens (Hannah McDonald Clemens), also an avid horticulturist.

Mrs. Thomas greatest horticultural achievement was growing show quality mums, an avocation in which Rev. Thomas joined her. The Longview Chrysanthemum Society, sponsoring annual "mum" shows in which state and national growers entered their prize-winning chrysanthemums, was named for her: "The Carmen Thomas Chrysanthemum Society." She was active also in the Iris Garden Club of Longview. A number of women of the church joined the garden club, a club with district, state, and national affiliation, which, as a Longview Federated Club, meets in the Longview Community Center which they help to maintain.⁴⁷

A new dimension was added to the role of women in the church when women began serving as ruling elders in 1984. Mrs. Lonnie Graham was ordained as Elmira's first woman elder April 1, 1984.⁴⁸

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Membership total as reported in The Epistle, Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church Newsletter, September 15, 1997, was 505, with 280 active members and 49 children.⁴⁹

SERVANTS OF GOD AND MAN

In the Foreword to the Centennial Edition of The Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Texas, Thomas H. Campbell wrote, "We cannot live on the achievements of the past . . . but we gain much of our inspiration from the past."⁵⁰

Many have been inspired by the work of those who were part of the transformation of the Spring Hill school, church, and community of yesteryear. Though they cannot all be named, they were truly Servants of God and Man.

Sources

1. Levy, Richard B. History of the Creation of Gregg County, Texas. written ca 1942. Page 16. This history from the Texana collection of Nicholson Public Library is now held in the Genealogy room of Longview Public Library. Gen/976.4189/L57h/A0640219 01.

2. Though no original source has been found which records the construction of the 1887 school at Spring Hill, oral tradition has preserved the location of the spring and building. The spring branch flows under Birdwell about a block east of the intersection with Gilmer Road.

The story of the construction of the 1887 school is included in every history of Spring Hill School and Elmira Chapel. Two which give the most complete accounts of the early history were written by: (1) W.A. Hearne, Spring Hill School principal, in Texas Centennial History of Gregg County: One Hundred Years of Progress Special 1936 Edition. "Spring Hill School," p. 451 (21?), with photos of J.D. Davis, R.K. Johnson, Sam Rundell, Trustees, and W.A. Hearne, Principal, Spring Hill Dist. 12; and (2) Faye Brown, teacher at Spring Hill School, in The History of Gregg County: A Pictorial History of Gregg County, Covering Both the Old and the New. Compiled by the Longview Junior Chamber of Commerce. Fort Worth: University Supply & Equipment Co., First edition, 1957. No page numbers. "Spring Hill School" by Miss Faye Brown. Brown named School Trustees during the early years as Dennis Magrill, A.E. Castleberry, and J.H. Alexander. Of the school trustees listed above, the following have served as elders for Elmira Chapel: R.K. Johnson, Sam Rundell, Dennis Magrill, and J.H. Alexander. J.D. Davis and A.E. Castleberry were members of Elmira Chapel.

3. "Spring Hill School" by Faye Brown. Brown wrote that W.M. Allen came by horse and buggy from Marshall or by train to Longview where some members of the church met him in a wagon. This account is also given by Rev. L.L. Thomas, The Cumberland Presbyterian, August 6, 1963.

As early as the spring of 1892, W.M. Allen was preaching one Sunday a month at Pine Tree Church, membership 126 (report of R.W. Castleberry, Clerk of the Session), and one Sunday a month at Savannah (report of Clerk S.D. Durrum, Smithville, TX). His son, Wm. B. Allen, was preaching 4 times a month at the Longview Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 111 membership (reported by T.E. Kennard, Longview, TX, Session Clerk). Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1892. The 1895 Minutes of the General Assembly show continuing ministry of W.M. Allen, pastor at Pine Tree, membership 150, and W.B. Allen, pastor at Longview, membership 86. General Assembly statistical records for Elmira began in 1899.

Biographical notes for Walker Montecue Allen (1819-1899) and William Bell Allen (1847-1929) can be found in Cumberland Presbyterians in Harrison County prepared by Rose Mary Magrill and the Heritage Committee of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Marshall. (Pages 22-24, 35, 36.) The Allens moved to Marshall in the 1870's. They were skilled builders and homes they constructed in Marshall and Longview have received historical recognition. (Old Northcutt home in Longview, 313 South Fredonia)

4. "Chapels" or "branch congregations" are described by Rose Mary Magrill and the Heritage Committee of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Marshall in Cumberland Presbyterians in Harrison County pages 2, 3, 7, a manuscript submitted August, 1996 for acquisition of an Official Texas Historical Marker, now state approved.

Minutes of the Pine Tree Session July 25, 1885.

5. Pine Tree Session Minutes: Feb. 14, 1894; May 6, 1894; first Sunday in April 1895; July 5, 1895; second Sunday in October 1895; and October 28, 1897.

The Pine Tree Session Minutes quoted and the letter from Rev. J.M. Robinson, first resident pastor at Spring Hill, appear in a booklet prepared for the 50th anniversary celebration of Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, The Ministry of Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Spring Hill Community Historical Day Services, May 2, 1948. Leonard L. Thomas, Minister.

From the General Assembly Minutes of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, (1898): The Allens were not serving in Marshall Presbytery; J.H. Hendricks was minister at Longview, membership 84, preaching 4 Sundays a month; J.M. Robinson was minister at Pine Tree, membership 93, preaching 4 Sundays a month; Elmira Chapel not yet listed.

6. Names of 60 Charter Members of Elmira Chapel are enumerated in the booklet written for Historical Day Services. However, a statement is also made that "Elmira Chapel Church was organized with about forty-five charter members." The list printed in the book Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future prepared by the 1997 Elmira Centennial Committee is incomplete because it omits the names of the elders: James Rodden Castleberry, John Callaway, Richard Watkins Castleberry, and Ollie Callaway, Session Clerk. (P 6.)

Minutes of the Marshall Presbytery meeting, July 1-2, 1898 are from the 1948 booklet The Ministry of Elmira Chapel. The minutes of the 1898 Spring meeting of Marshall Presbytery have not been found.

The following quotation is from The Cumberland Presbyterian:
 "Longview, Texas Pinetree [sic] Congregation.--On the fifth Sunday in April the commission appointed for that purpose by the Marshall Presbytery met at Pinetree church, five miles west of Longview, and installed Rev. J.H. Robinson as pastor at Pinetree and Elmira Chapel congregations. Rev. S.R. Chadick preached the installation sermon, Rev. Wm. B. Allen presided and delivered the charge to the pastor, and Rev. J.A. Williams charged the congregation. This is the old charge of Rev. Solomon Awalt of precious memory. Brother Robinson is doing a fine work in that field, and is well liked by the people." (May 25, 1899; vol. 58, p. 664)
 Research from Rose Mary Magrill, letter of March 9, 1997.

7. Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, (1899).

8. Longview Texas Centennial History: The Long View, A Hundred Years 1870-1970. Compiled by the Centennial Book Committee, Dr. D.W. Northcutt, Chmn. Longview: Hudson Printing, 1977. "Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian Church" Page 33. Article and photograph of church built in 1857. [Incomplete list of charter members.]

The History of Gregg County: A Pictorial History of Gregg County, Covering Both the Old and the New. Compiled by the Longview Junior Chamber of Commerce. Fort Worth: University Supply & Equipment Co., First edition, 1957. No page numbers. "Pine Tree" Article and 2 photos: Hexagonal church used from 1858-1932 and spanish influence brick and tile church, 1932 to present. Rev. Solomon Awalt, pastor, Elders John Rodden and J.T. Echols, and 12 members named as charter members. [Mrs. Ben A. Fuller (Mary) was omitted from the list.] The article lists names of ministers who served both Pine Tree and Elmira. "Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church." Article and 2 photos: Elmira manse built 1898 and Elmira Chapel with steeple. Names J.M. Robinson as first pastor and Rev. W.A. Boone of Marshall as "Marshall Benefactor 1905-1910." Lists 54 charter members for Elmira Chapel.

McWhorter, Eugene W. Traditions of the Land: The History of Gregg County, Texas Longview: Gregg County Historical Foundation, 1989. Pages 38-39: Photograph of six-sided church at Pine Tree. States Pine Tree Church chartered in the Marshall Presbytery Oct. 10, 1847 with 16 members on a 3 acre tract acquired May 1848. Pine Tree, Elmira Chapel, and Spring Hill "country school," Page 88; Spring Hill and discovery of oil, Page 113.

Come Color Longview. Bicentennial edition. Junior League of Longview: Longview, 1975. Text, Joan M. Abbott; Drawings, Vera M. Garlough; Historical Material, Alelia S. Belding. Pages 16,17.

Did You Know? An Activity Book for Discovering Local History Longview: Gregg County Historical Foundation, 1987. Pages 16,17.

Upshur County, Texas. Deed records; Office of the County Clerk. Joseph Castleberry 3 acres to Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Book B 158-159. Date of Deed, May 13th, 1848, Recorded April 9th A.D. 1849. Witnesses: John Rodden and A.C. Rodden. (Joseph Castleberry died in 1860. From Rose Mary Magrill records.)

9. Family History and Lineage of the Aaron T. Castleberry Family 1683-1965. Compiled by Rose Mary Magrill.

See Notes 27 and 28 for page numbers in following sources:

Microfilm U.S. Census, Upshur County, Texas 1850.

Microfilm U.S. Census, Upshur County, Texas 1860.

Ingmire, Frances T. and Carolyn R. Ericson. First Settlers of the Republic of Texas. Vol. II. St. Louis, MO: Ingmire Publications, 1982.

Kirby, Mary Laschinger. Early Days in Upshur County 1800-1860. Gilmer, TX: The Gilmer Mirror, 1989, 31,34,36.

White, Gifford. 1840 Citizens of Texas. Vols. 1,2, and 3. St. Louis, Missouri: Ingmire Publications, 1983.

10. Gregg County, Texas. Deed records; Office of the County Clerk. Castleberry Bros. to R.W. Castleberry 23 November A.D., 1896, Vol. 34, 123-124.

Gregg County, Texas. Deed records; Office of the County Clerk. J.R. Castleberry to Elders of Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. 15 Sept. A.D. 1917. A substitute deed for 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.

Photocopy of Deed: J.R. Castleberry to Elders of Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. A substitute deed. As originally prepared 15 Sept. A.D. 1917 on printed form. In possession of Rose Mary Magrill among papers of her grandfather, Dennis L. Magrill.

Photograph picturing the Castleberry Lumber Mill (about 1925).

11. Campbell, Thomas H. Good News on the Frontier: A History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The Covenant Life Curriculum. Memphis, Tennessee: Frontier Press, 1965. "Attempts at Union" 121-130. "Reconstruction and Advance." 131-142

Barrus, Ben M., Milton L. Baughn, and Thomas H. Campbell. A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians. Memphis, Tennessee: Frontier Press, 1972. "Enduring Through Crisis" Page 323 "In 1902, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was in many respects enjoying unprecedented prosperity...Yet during the next four years it was to be shaken to its very foundation by a movement to effect a union with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A."

"The Broken Body" Page 369. "Much of the work of gathering and reorganizing the scattered remnants was done by missionaries appointed by the new Board of Missions..." Rev. S.C. Lockett and the Rev. B.E. Bowmer were appointed representatives in Texas. Page 369, 562.

"Gathering Together the Pieces" Page 384. "The Board of Missions as named by the General Assembly in its continuing meeting in 1906 consisted of the Rev. J.L. Joyner, of Cordell, Oklahoma; William Clark, of Jefferson, Texas; and the Rev. W.M. Robison, F.Y. Hall, and F.H. Prendergrast, all of Marshall, Texas. The office of th Board was established at Marshall, the only paid employee the first year being a part-time secretary who was paid fifteen dollars per month. In 1907, Robison was made secretary of the Board at a salary of fifty dollars per month." (From Minutes of the General Assembly). [W.M. Robison should not be confused with J. Millen Robinson.]

R. Douglas Brackenridge. Voice in the Wilderness: A History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Texas. with Introduction by Thomas H. Campbell. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1968. W.M. Robison opposed union with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (pp. 144,148,156). Marshall Presbytery voted 18-4 against the merger (p. 154).

12. Statistical summaries of churches were included as appendices and bound with the General Assembly minutes. The summaries were compiled from written reports by the clerk of the session of each church reporting. Reports were made in the spring of each year.

Information about Marshall Presbytery ministers (which included Marshall, Longview, Pine Tree, Elmira Chapel, and other congregations) from Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, (1891-1935).

The Cumberland Presbyterian, Dec. 22, 1904; vol. 68, p.791). "Pine Tree and Elmira Chapel, Texas--I took charge here on November 13. I have not the work well in hand yet, but hope to have soon. Seven years out of the active work on account of health make one feel a little awkward, but I thank God that I am able to resume my place again in the work of my Master. I am pleased with the outlook and hope to accomplish a good work for my church here. Presbytery passed an order to have this scribe installed pastor of this group.--W.R. Edwards.

Biographical information obtained from General Assembly Yearbooks for J.M. Robinson, W.V. McGehee, W.R. Edwards, W.R. Harber, A.W. Yell, R.S. Garrett, and B.E. Bowmer.

13. The Cumberland Presbyterian, Aug. 22, 1912, Vol 82.
"A Country Work" by W.M. Robison.

14. Campbell, Thomas H. History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Texas The Centennial Volume. Compiled by the Editorial Committee of the Centennial Commission of Texas Synod, Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Nashville, TN: Cumberland Publishing House, 1936. Article: "Pine Tree" Photographs: of Rev. Solomon Awalt, Pastor of Pine Tree Church 1847-1872; Rev. S.R. Chadick, D.D., Pastor and first teacher in Chapel Hill College, Daingerfield. Photographs of hexagonal shaped frame church 1858-1932 and brick church erected 1932 Pages 56-59. Photographs of Rev. and Mrs. B.E. Bowmer; biography of Rev. Bowmer who served both Pine Tree and Elmira Chapel CP churches, also Hope Chapel. He was stated clerk of Texas Synod from 1913 to 1936. (Pages 112, 113) The names of Benjamin and Mary Fuller were omitted from the list of charter members of Pine Tree in the Texas Centennial Volume. (Benjamin Fuller was one of the land commissioners in charge of establishing the county seat of Gilmer on August 22, 1848. "Benjamin Fuller, age 43, a South Carolina native and farmer, represented the southeastern section of the county." Biographical data for Fuller and his wife, Mary, and background information can be found in Chapters 7 and 8 of Early Days in Upshur County 1800--1860 by Mary Laschinger Kirby. Fuller's on pp 31,34,36.) Doyal T. Loyd, History of Upshur County, pp 8-10, 47.

15. East Texas Industrial Magazine: Longview and Gregg County, Texas. Longview Chamber of Commerce, Longview, 1910. (Copy at Gregg County Historical Museum and Longview Public Library.) pp. 41, 46. Photograph of Spring Hill School, 1910, and description of school (8 grades) from Board of Education. Annual cost of operating school was \$800 paid from state and county funds. The text and photograph of the 1910 school prove accounts of construction of a two room school in 1915 are incorrect. A one-room frame building was constructed by 1910; a second room was attached at a later date (perhaps 1915) for a two-room school.

Other Sources: Interviews with Opal Stracener and Arlene Tekell, Elmira Chapel Church members who attended the school after the second room was added. Photograph picturing entrance to 2-room school. Painting of school by Mattie Brewer, long-time Spring Hill resident, from Spring Hill School photograph; painting in home of Arlene Tekell.

16. Interviews with Ethel Bussey Johnson, 91 year old church member, whose father-in-law, W.L. Bussey, Sr., assisted with the remodeling. (Summer and Fall 1996, Summer Meadows, Longview)

The Statistical account of the General Assembly Minutes reports expenditure of \$350 for building or repair in 1927 and 1928. W.R. Harber was pastor, J.H. Alexander, Session Clerk.

Photograph of the remodeled building and the congregation hangs on hall wall at Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

17. Marshall Evening Messenger, March 26, 1931. Reprinted in Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future, compiled by Elmira Centennial Committee, Oct. 1996. Pages 8, 9. Marshall Morning News April 1, 1931. The Cumberland Presbyterian April 23, 1931. Photographs of oil wells on church property, photographers C.B. Culpepper and Melvin Rowland.

18. Campbell, Thomas H. History of Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Texas. The Centennial Edition. Compiled by the Editorial Committee of the Centennial Commission of Texas Synod, Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Thomas H. Campbell, Chairman, Mrs. H.R. Allen, and Miss Helen Bradford. Nashville, Tenn.: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House. 1936. Photograph of Church, Manse, and Educational Building, built 1931-1936. Pages 204-205.

General Assembly Minutes Statistical Reports, 1930 to 1933.

19. The Cumberland Presbyterian Oct. 6, 1931, "October Tithing and Budget Campaign."; May 4, 1933, Page 12, "Stockton Accepts Call to Texas Church" and "Harber at Pine Tree, Tex., Doing Well with the Church."

Barrus, Ben M., Milton L. Baughn, and Thomas H. Campbell. A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians. Memphis, Tennessee: Frontier Press, 1972. Pages 435, 436, 508.

20. Barrus, Baughn, and Campbell. Pages 433-434, 457, 519. The Cumberland Presbyterian Aug. 6, 1963, Page 12. "Elmira Chapel Goes Back to Spring Hill School."

The Cumberland Presbyterian November 1963, Page 12, Photograph of Remodeled Sanctuary, Elmira Chapel Church. ". . . The remodeling included arching the ceiling, paneling the walls with white oak, installation of new indirect lighting and installing a red carpet down the main aisle. The large cross over the Communion table is of reflective gold tile. . ."

Thomas, Leonard L. The Ministry of Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Spring Hill Community. Historical Day Services, May 2, 1948, Longview, Texas

Photographs of Elmira Chapel after steeple added and church entrance remodeled.

All Roads Lead to our 55th Anniversary Celebration. Spring Hill Baptist Church 1932-1987 July 26, 1987.

21. Bulletins and Pamphlets from Spring Hill School: The Spring Hill Story, 1887--1932, 1933--1950, 1951--Present, Statistics 1987, 1987; Spring Hill School History, 1986.

Texas Centennial History of Gregg County: One Hundred Years of Progress. Special 1936 edition. Article "Spring Hill School", by W.A. Hearne.

The History of Gregg County: A Pictorial History of Gregg County, Covering Both the Old and the New. Compiled by the Longview Chamber of Commerce. Fort Worth: University Supply & Equipment Co., First Edition, 1957. "Spring Hill School" courtesy Miss Faye Brown. Article and photograph of panoramic view of Spring Hill school and community.

Eugene McWhorter, Traditions of the Land, The History of Gregg County, Texas. Longview, Gregg County Historical Foundation, 1989. p.113. McWhorter writes of the boom towns created by the discovery of oil in Gregg County, pp. 111-113.

Photographs in possession of Opal Stracener picturing progression of buildings constructed at Spring Hill School-- about 1930-45, some of these obtained from Ethel Bussey Johnson

22. Presenting: Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Dr. William A. Rawlins, Pastor. Longview, 1971
Cover: Photograph of Elmira Chapel, 1970, with steeple and remodeled entranceway, before building program of 1977.

The Cumberland Presbyterian May 1, 1977, Page 19.
Photograph of Groundbreaking for new sanctuary of Elmira Chapel, March 6 1977.

The Cumberland Presbyterian April 1. 1978, Pages 14 and 19. "Sanctuary-Education Building Dedicated at Elmira Chapel CP Church, Longview, TX." Photographs of the interior and exterior of the new sanctuary. Photograph of Dr. Bill Rawlins, Longview.

23. Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future compiled by Elmira Chapel Centennial Committee, Oct. 1997.
"Elmira Losses" Pages 16 and 17.

24. ELMIRA CHAPEL: Sharing One Hundred Years of Excellence. Folder introducing new minister and wife, Reverend Paul Cook and Marcine.

"Our present church plant includes in addition to our modern sanctuary built in 1978, a children's building with nursery facilities, an educational building which provides space for our many activities, with its modern kitchen, large fellowship hall, parlor, choir facilities, office complex and classrooms. A softball diamond and picnic grounds are also located on the church property. Both old and new are the makeup of fellowship here at Elmira Chapel. We invite all to come visit our congregation and our new pastor.

25. Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future Introduction: "Yesterday, Today, and Forever." Page 3. ". . . the account of Elmira Chapel over these 100 plus years is about happy and sad times, humorous happenings, frustrating feelings. Hopefully, the following memories will give some insight into the life and time of a people called Cumberland Presbyterian in a place called Spring Hill, Texas. The journey is from the early beginning through lean and full years to the present day." Kevin L. Ward, Pastor, Oct. 1997.

Announcement of the Celebration of 100 Years of Ministry to the Area: "Our centennial year will be marked with three special celebrations. The first is on October 6, 1996. Rev. Richard Magrill, Executive Director of the Board of Stewardship and Benefits of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and a descendant of Elmira Castleberry, will be the guest preacher. Worship will be done in the style of the days past and everyone is asked to wear clothing from the early years. A covered dish dinner will follow morning worship.

"A special book of history, memories and pictures has been made to commemorate the occasion."

26. Cumberland Presbyterians in Harrison County prepared by Rose Mary Magrill Assisted by Members of the Heritage Committee, Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Marshall, Grace Godwin, R.E. McClaran, Marie Sullivan. Marshall TX, August 1966.

Walker Montecue Allen and William Bell Allen: pp. 22,23,24, Note 40 p.35, Note 42 p. 36,37.

William Allen Boone (1856-1924): pp. 23-24, Note 41 p.36. Note 42 pp.36,37. Reverend Boone moved to Marshall in 1907 to pastor the Marshall congregation, died in Marshall in 1924, having served also as pastor of the Fairview congregation and interim pastor of almost every congregation in Marshall Presbytery. He also taught and served as president of Cumberland College in Leonard, Texas. (He was buried in Algoma Cemetery, Marshall, Texas, his headstone paid for by the Elmira Chapel congregation of Spring Hill in gratitude for all he had done for the small rural churches of Marshall Presbytery. Joe Magrill recollection, letter from Rose Mary Magrill Feb. 7, 1977.)

Eugene H. Keasler: "The Rev. E.H. Keasler may have served C.P. congregations in Harrison County longer than T.B. Wilson-- his ministry was particularly important to the rural congregations--but part of that time he lived in Atlanta and traveled to Marshall by train for the weekends. Note 39 p.35. Also see Note 8 p. 27 and Note 10 p. 29. (Rev. Keaslers long record of service can be seen most clearly, perhaps, by referring to the statistical reports from The Minutes of the General Assembly, Years 1892-1914

Additional information of interest: Thomas Bell Wilson. 1st resident pastor of Marshall.: pp 21,22, Note 2, p.26. Note 39 p. 35. pastor in Marshall for 23 years, served as stated clerk of Texas Synod before the Civil War, "One of the few spiritual leaders of any denomination to live in Marshall during the entire period of the Civil War and Reconstruction. . . . "

27. To picture Pine Tree community during the days of the pioneers, scroll through the pages of the 1850 and 1860 Upshur County census microfilm. (1850 Upshur County Microcopy 432 Roll 916 and 1860 Upshur County Microcopy 653 Roll 1306.) (1850 Upshur District of Upshur County HH 301 through 376) (1860 Western District, P.O. Earpville HH 1134 to 1188) Read Kirby, Mary Laschinger Early Days in Upshur County 1800-1860. Gilmer TX: The Gilmer Mirror, 1989. Also Gregg County histories (See Note 8 above), and Levy, The Creation of Gregg County.

The sixteen charter members of Pine Tree Church represented only nine families: Solomon and Anne Awalt, John and Amelia Castleberry Rodden, A.T., II and Elmira Pierce Castleberry, J.T. and Martha C. Echols, Jesse and Margaret Freeze, Milton and Anne Starnes, James R. White, J.W. Barnes, and Benjamin and Mary Fuller. **Amelia Castleberry Rodden, wife of John David Rodden, was the sister of A.T. Castleberry, II, sister-in-law of Elmira Pierce Castleberry, as was Mary Fuller, wife of Benjamin Fuller.** (Information compiled from White Cemetery records, Gregg County Historical Museum records of Pioneer Families of Gregg County before 1900, U.S. census records, LPL File-Castleberry Family, Telephone interviews with Nancy Abernathy of Pine Tree, descendant of John and Amelia Castleberry Rodden, on June 27, 1997. Kirby, Early Days in Upshur County 1800-1860, p. 36; Junior Chamber of Commerce History of Gregg County 1957, list of Pine Tree charter members.) Mrs. Mary Fuller was omitted from the list of charter members in the 1957 Jr. Chamber of Commerce History of Gregg County but her name is recorded as a charter member in the October 16, 1955, issue of The Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian News.

Bun E. Rodden, in whose home the session meeting was held in 1897 to consider separating the Spring Hill congregation from the Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian Church, was the grandson of John and Amelia Castleberry Rodden, being the only son of their son, John Howard Rodden and Jane A. McNutt. He and two of his sisters never married, gave income from several oil wells on their property to the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination. (From denominational history, White Cemetery records, and Nancy Abernathy.)

28. Castleberry Family of Pine Tree and Elmira Chapel

Sons of Aaron Trice Castleberry of Alabama and Shelby County, Texas: William H., Stephen H., Joseph, Aaron Trice, II; daughters, Anne, Polly. and Milly. Citizens of the Republic of Texas. Became residents of Upshur County 1850 and 1860. Joseph gave three acres as site of Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Elmira Pierce and Aaron Trice Castleberry, II
Sons: Joseph (Died in Civil War), Aaron Trice III, (1842-1906),
*Richard Watkins Castleberry (1844-1925), *James Rodden
Castleberry (1849-1925), ~Asa Anderson Castleberry (1861-1932)
Daughter: Mary.

Richard Watkins Castleberry md. Mary Frances Martin

Their children and marriages were:

*George Aaron Castleberry Maggie m. Richard Tulle Magrill
 Cora m. *W.I. (Ike) Denson Elmira m. *~Dennis Magrill
 Mary m. C.C. Clemens

George Aaron Castleberry, only son, married Lillian Bussey, sister of Willie Bussey. The children of George and Lillian furnished the chapel of the 1978 Elmira Chapel structure in honor of their parents.

Mable, daughter of Elmira and Dennis Magrill m. *~Sam C. Rundell who served Elmira as an elder (ordained Dec. 21 1930) and Spring Hill School as a school board member.

Early day church patrons who were not Castleberries:

Eula Alexander, daughter of *~J.H. Alexander, pioneer who served as an Elmira elder and Spring Hill school board member, married *Ernest Holland. *R.K. Johnson moved to Spring Hill about 1925 with his family, bought property right across the road from the church and school; property had a dogtrot house. He sold groceries and farm supplies from one of the large rooms, the family lived in other section of the house. Elected as elder in 1933. Father of Arlene Tekell and Edith Humphries who became Spring Hill school teachers.

Symbols designate: * Elmira Chapel Elder ~ Spring Hill School Board Tom Clemens and R.K. Johnson were deacons in 1931. (Cornerstone) [Information for Note 28 obtained from census records; Family Lineage, Rose Mary Magrill, Castleberry descendant; Elmira Chapel Cemetery markers; Interviews with Arlene Johnson Tekell; Leonard L. Thomas, The Ministry of Elmira Chapel Booklet prepared for Historical Day Services, May 2, 1948.]

J.R. Castleberry (James Rodden), Elmira elder, whose gift of 35 acres and building materials for a church-school and a manse established the Elmira Chapel CP Church, continued his sawmill business as Castleberry Bros until he joined J.J. Flewollen in a planing-mill operation known as Castleberry and Flewollen. He was one of the organizers of the Citizens National Bank of Longview. Later the Castleberry-Flewollen firm became a mercantile store. He had moved his family to Longview by this time. He was married to Lodema Lawrence. They had four children, Ann Elmira, James Herman, Madee, and Joseph Jack. He died July 9, 1925. An obituary from The Quality Qualifier Longview, Texas, August 1, 1925, Vol I, No. 3. mourns his loss and describes him as "A consistent Christian man, morally clean, and with strict integrity and the highest ideals . . ." He is listed among the Pioneer Families in Gregg County "The Castleberry Family" at The Gregg County Historical Museum. Additional information about his business interests can be read from wall panels at the museum describing Gregg County timbering operations. Also see "Thompson's," text and photo p. 61 of Longview, Texas Centennial 1870-1970.

29. Arlene Tekell Interview: List of 54 Spring Hill school teachers and employees who were members of Elmira Chapel or faithful in attendance at Elmira.
30. Sunday Schools: Reverend J. M. Robinson Letter written to Elmira for Fiftieth Anniversary; Leonard L. Thomas. The Ministry of Elmira Chapel May 2, 1948. Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church--Denominational Sunday School Statistical Reports 1912-1928. Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future, pp.27, 28.
31. Boy Scout Troup: L.L. Thomas. The Ministry of Elmira Chapel Historical Day Services, May 2, 1948. Stalwart members of the Men's Bible Class which sponsored the Boy Scout program were: George Aaron Castleberry, Sam Rundell, Fred Beasley, Minos Harley, E.R. (Manuel) Wright, Harry Stracener, Raymond Magrill, ?? Snook, and C.C. Clemens. (Names from Harry Stracener.) There may have been other members. A larger class, "The W.L. Bussey Class" for men and women, met in the sanctuary. Some time later two women's classes were organized. A class for the older women was taught by Mrs. Arch Stracener; a class for younger women was taught by Miss Anne Davis, English teacher at Spring Hill School.)
32. Youth Activities: File of Elmira Chapel church bulletins and newsletters. Notices of youth activities and other events described here cannot be individually cited, but appeared in the bulletins and newsletters current at the time of the events. Session minutes would also record most of this information. Also see Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future. "Christian Education" p. 18, 19. "Elmira Vacation School" p. 20, taken from The Cumberland Presbyterian, July 19, 1945. The Christian Endeavor Society led to the organization of three evening societies for young people. In 1948, leaders of these groups were Mrs. Kelsie Mathews, Mrs. Johnnie McGaha and Mr. and Mrs. Willie Pritchett.
- Elmira began a vacation bible school for the Spring Hill community in 1941. It continues as an annual summer event. The Cumberland Presbyterian, of July 19, 1945, denominational paper, reported after the fifth year, "Members from other churches in our community gave their support. It was indeed gratifying to see the community spirit manifested in this school."
- Discovery School was organized in 1979 by Sherry Bolt and Betty King as a Mother's Day Out program, continued by Carol Renfro, and later, Teri Burns as a school.
- Indispensable to work with youth of Jr. High and High School age are the camp leaders and the sponsors and drivers for bus tours. For many years several couples have devoted days and weeks of their time during summer months to the youth and their activities.

Among those most constant have been Carol and Dewayne Renfro, Pat and Marvin Terrell, Carol and Kent McDowell, and Steve and Rhonda Turner. Leslie Williams worked effectively and tirelessly with youth groups on Sunday evenings before Elmira began hiring youth ministers.

Two ministers of education, Terry Davidson, who initiated the Logos Youth meetings, and Reverend Kip Rush and his wife, Jodi, are remembered and appreciated by Elmira members.

Perhaps the most unselfish example of service rendered by any one working with youth was that of Rev. Paul Allen, a pastor who supplied several small churches while carrying on a tentmaking occupation in the insurance business and as an employee of a public agency. About 1972, Elmira Chapel offered him \$200 a month to work with youth. He proposed instead to work without pay if the church would buy a used bus he had found for youth trips. The bus was purchased and used in what Pastor Paul Allen called "The Glory Days" Participation of youth increased rapidly, trips were made to entertain congregations and to worship with other youth. The Elmira Group, as they were called, sang for the General Assembly when it met in Fort Worth Texas in 1973. They were directed by Imogene Cox. Their bus was decorated with an ichthus, the fish symbol denoting Jesus Christ, as were the shirts and blouses they wore when performing. After a year, the pressure of work and pastorate forced Reverend Allen to resign but the bus he had almost paid for with the agreement releasing his salary, remained with the church for many more days of "glory" with youth on board. The work of Paul Allen and his wife, Anne, Elmira members, has been of such nature and scope that Elmira Chapel honored them with a "Paul Allen Day" in 1996. Paul comes from a family of ministers: he and his father, Mathews Franklin Allen, Cumberland Presbyterian ministers; his brother, Mathews F. Allen, Jr., Presbyterian U.S.A. Another brother is a Baptist lay minister and a fourth brother is a lawyer.

33. The Media Center: The Cumberland Presbyterian c. March 1981, p.14,15 . Library Directors have been Phyllis Eberhart, Mayre Drennan assisted by Bonnie Tiffin, and Donna Kesterson. Tullie Marie Magrill Webb is the current Librarian. She is assisted by Nancy Myers.

34. Announcements for sports events appeared in Elmira Chapel Bulletin inserts and newsletters. Trophies in glass enclosed cases Elmira Chapel halls: Presenting the Past in the Present Looking to the Future. p. 26.

35. Annual activities--Men: See Bulletins and Newsletters,

36. Music: "The Ministry of Music" from The Ministry of Elmira Chapel. Presenting the Past in the Present pp. 11,21-22,27-28,30. Mr. Austin Dolittle, Spring Hill band director, played the violin at early day worship services. Julia Giddings also played violin with special choir renditions Professor V.M. Nipper who was a Spring Hill High School principal in the 40's and called on for special church services such as revivals, also taught Singing Schools and was on the faculty of a V.O. Stamps Music School as early as 1924. (This from The Gilmer Mirror August 14, 1996, p 26B. quoting a 1924 ad; also, an article from The Cumberland Presbyterian, August 13, 1942.) Professor Nipper entered the Baptist ministry at a later date. (From interviews with Ethel Bussey Johnson, Arlene Tekell, and Opal Stracener.)

The outstanding music professionals who have served Elmira Chapel include:

Choir Directors: Paul Stroud and Jerry Leard who were also Band Directors at Spring Hill High School; Dennis Boyter; Dick McKean, Sherry Bolt, Sharon Faulkner, Terry Davidson, Jerry M. Compton, and Anne Cox. Sherry Clark has assisted in directing and has been particularly important in directing Junior Choirs.

Organists: Only three organists have served at Elmira Chapel, Elsie Rhea Davis, Carmen Thomas, and Imogene Cox.

Pianists: Judy Vaughn Freeman.
(Names from Telephone Interview with Imogene Cox, June 27, 1997)

Most of pianists were volunteers from the church membership. Among these were Velma McKinley and a few other Spring Hill teachers who could play the piano. Those who played the pump organ in earlier days were Mable Rundell, Allie Ingram, and Rosie Alexander.

37. Pageants and Plays: File of Elmira Chapel bulletins and newsletters. The Cumberland Presbyterian May 14, 1936 from the Longview Daily News. "Elmira, Texas Church Had Impressive Service." Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future, pp. 22,24,28. Rachel Faulkenberry was a first grade teacher at Spring Hill who was actively engaged in the work of Elmira Chapel.

38. Revivals: Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future. "Revivals" (written by Opal Stracener) p. 10. Reprints from The Cumberland Presbyterian, October 1, 1931, p. 10 and The Cumberland Presbyterian, August 13, 1942 appear on pp. 10 and 11.

Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting: J.M. Robinson letter of 1947 describing the days leading up to the organization of Elmira Chapel, "About the middle of October [1896], we started a prayer meeting which grew very rapidly." p. 7 of Celebrating the Past . . .

39. Use of the Land: See Spring Hill and Elmira histories. Also notes "Church and School, Hand in Hand" for story related by Gene King, retired Spring Hill high school principal when the Elmira-Pine Tree Stories were told at Pine Tree Church for the combined Celebration of 250 Years of faith and service on Sunday evening February 2, 1997.

Leases and letters Elmira Chapel and the Spring Hill Independent School District: The agreement so important in welding the bond of the school and church, the Lease from Elmira Chapel to the Spring Hill Independent School District, is a 25 year lease of 6.88 acres, renewable under agreed upon conditions of the lease, upon payment of \$1. It includes the sixth paragraph of a March 24, 1950 deed, Volume 335, Page 569 Deed Records of Gregg County, Texas, and allows the area east of the cemetery and north of the school to be used rent free until further notice. Those signing the lease were: For Elmira Chapel Presbyterian Church, Tom Brewer, Louis L. Williamson, E.R. Wright, J.M. Clemens, M.R. Harley, R.S. Johnson, R.D. Tekell, and W.G. Pritchett as Lessor, and for Spring Hill Independent School District, Tom Brewer, Thomas Webb, Esker J. Richardson, Sid Shelton, Joe M. Roy, and Billy D. Secord as Lessee. Tom Brewer, first signatory for each, was an Elmira Chapel elder who was treasurer of Elmira for nineteen years and a member of the Spring Hill School Board for fourteen years.

A lease agreement with the Springhill (sic) Little League Baseball Club, is an annual lease with conditions and restrictions stated, renewable yearly for \$1 per year. Field has three softball diamonds. (The leases are held in a file cabinet at the Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian office.)

The Old Manse land south of the church is used by groups during the winter by request, on a first come, first served basis; in the summer the land is leased without fee to the Longview Parks and Recreation Department.

The Elmira Cemetery is North of (behind) the church sanctuary. To the west behind Thomas Hall is a chain-link-fenced playground with playground equipment for use during Bible School and Discovery School. This was built by the church with funds donated in memory of Ruby Vernon who, with her mother, Nora Leath, and aunts, Stella Alexander, and Ethel Johnson were steadfast in their loyalty and attendance at Elmira Chapel.

40. Use of Oil Income: Elmira Chapel Church Budgets and Treasurer's reports on file. Letters and Lien release from Denton Cumberland Presbyterian Church,

Interview with William T. Ingram, Jr., conducted by J. Richard Magrill, Jr. on February 2, 1997 at Memphis, Tenn. (Original tapes are in the Archives of the CP Church of Marshall.) In the interview Dr. Ingram, Jr. upon being asked about money raised for the Marshall church built in 1932, replied, "Elmira Chapel made a contribution. They contributed to a lot of churches--ours included."

L.L. Thomas The Ministry of Elmira Chapel. "The Ministry of the Helping Hand." "With the oil revenue from the ten wells on the church property, it has been possible for the church to render great financial aid to many churches in their building programs."

The Cumberland Presbyterian, Oct. 6, 1932

41. Charitable Gifts and Acts. Elmira bulletins and newsletters. Lions Club records in possession of Harry Stracener. Elmira's cooperation with the Longview Ministerial Alliance has been for the most part coordinated by Naomi Davis and Ann Allen. Others who have served faithfully have contributed to the success of the programs.
42. Sketches of those who were called to Ministry from Elmira Chapel are on p. 23 of Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future (Article by Opal Stracener)
43. CPW records. Campbell, Thomas H. Good News on the Frontier: A History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church The Covenant Life Curriculum. Memphis, Tennessee: Frontier Press, 1985. Chapter 7 "In Regions Beyond" pp. 87-96.
44. Women in Missions: Two brief histories have been written by Opal Stracener, Elmira Chapel CPW Historian. History of Elmira Chapel Missionary Auxiliary covers the period between 1931 when Mrs. W.R. Harber reorganized the work for the second time and 1955 when she (Stracener) became President of the CPW. Children's Bands were organized in 1932 with leaders Mrs. E.W. Pearson, Willie Bussey, and Homer Blankenship. Deaths mourned during the period were Mrs. Margaret "Maggie" Magrill, Nov. 11, 1934 and Mrs. Kathryn Harley, July 5, 1951. "We do not have a record of the amount sent to the Board from 1934 to 1942, but from 1942-1954 we have sent more than \$6,929.56." For the second history, The History of Caddo Presbytery she obtained a typed skeletal outline by ten year periods of all Missionary Auxiliaries of the Marshall Presbytery for the years 1894 through 1933 from Miss Helen Deal, Executive Secretary of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Memphis. Mrs. Ruth Pepper prepared the reports which list the Presbytery officers for each year with a list of Auxiliaries, when organized, name of Secretary and the number of members. Organized children's groups, such as the Children's Bands, Junior Christian Endeavor, and S.S. (Sunday Schools) were sometimes listed. At the time of writing the second history, Mrs. Stracener was President of the McAdow Presbytery [several name changes had occurred]. She summarized changes made during this period of time, stating that after "McAdow Presbytery became East Texas Presbytery . . . this Presbytery became one of the strong arms of the denomination and entertained Synod, General Assembly, Convention, and Foreign Missionaries." Mrs. Stracener became the President of Texas Synod.

The Cumberland Presbyterian, May 26, 1932. "Marshall-Greenville Presbyterian Missionary Rally." "The ladies of the missionary societies of the Marshall-Greenville Presbytery met in an all-day rally on Wednesday, May 4, at the beautiful new Elmira Chapel Church, about six miles from Longview. About forty ladies were present." Rev. Thomas Campbell delivered the sermon and dinner was served picnic-style underneath the trees back of the church by the ladies of the Elmira Chapel Society. "The President read the amounts apportioned to each society for the support of the Chinese worker supported by the Texas Synodic Society. . . Rev. Thomas Campbell stressed the value of being present at the encampment to be held at Decatur, Texas, August 29 to September 4. . . .Every-one went away feeling that it was good to be there, and with gratitude in our hearts to Rev. and Mrs. W.R. Harber and their splendid coworkers at Elmira Chapel for their hospitality to us." Sig. Mrs. Norine Ellis

Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future.

p. 10 From The Cumberland Presbyterian, October 1, 1931,

p. 10. "On the evening of September 1, a very appreciative audience of Elmira Chapel and Pine Tree people heard Brother Gam speak of his work in China, at Pine Tree. An offering of sixty dollars was given Brother Gam for his Shekki Mission. We were so glad to have this man of God in our midst, and all wished that he might come this way again." W.R. Harber, Pastor

Photograph of Opal and Harry Stracener and friends from China, Jacob and Josephine Hwang, 1986.

45. The Longview (Texas) Daily News, Jan. 15, 1933 The Woman's Page. "The Parent-Teacher association of the Spring Hill School held a social and bowl-and-spoon shower Thursday afternoon. . . . The program of entertainment (was) planned and supervised by Mrs. Willie Bussey and Mrs. Barton. . . . The association, which was organized several months ago, last week prepared lunches for the children of the school, selling the lunches to the pupils who were able to buy them, and donating to fourteen who were unable to pay for them. . . . In this way, from week to week, until the close of school the association plans to provide food for the children who are in need of it. By providing food and clothes for needy children the women of the P.T.A. have been able to re-enter a number of children in the school, who were being kept away because they lacked proper clothing and food. Forty bowls and 40 spoons were received at the shower. . . ."

46. The Longview (Texas) Daily News. Second Section pp. 1,3, Jan. 15, 1933.

Headline: "Home Demonstration Clubs Active in Gregg County." "Through the leadership and under the direction of Miss Vida Holt, home demonstration work in Gregg County reached 375 families . . . Besides the canning work, there were many other lines of endeavor, such as gardening work, clothing work, interior improvement and health and sanitation work in all of which Miss Holt was the leader."

A companion article on pp. 1,3 was headed "Gregg Woman Makes Strong Plea for Better Rural School System. Is Way to Quit Poverty, view of Miss Mackey. Better rural schools is the answer to the cry of poverty stricken rural areas, according to an article released from the state educational committee by Miss Cora Mackey, superintendent of the Gregg county school system."

Opal Stracener photos of Spring Hill Home Demonstration Club meetings. Yearbooks and othr records.

47. Photographs and News Articles of Carmen Thomas with prize-winning chrysanthemums and awards for flower arrangements, Iris Garden Club History and scrap books; also photos in possession of Bill Thomas, her son. The following Elmira Chapel women served as President of the Iris Garden Club of Longview: Mrs. Dave McVay (Billie), Mrs. R.L. Magrill, Mrs. J.W. Lee, Mrs. Harry Stracener, Mrs. Clayton B. Willis, and Mrs. L.L. Thomas. Mrs. Willis served as Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. District III Director and state board member, and has held state committee chairmanships in the field of conservation from 1987. The motto for the national garden club organization is "A Force for Good."

Women with a talent for gardening have nurtured the flowerbeds of the church. Among these were Minnie McGaha and Ethel Johnson. Supervision of the garden and church grounds was transferred from the older generation to the younger generation with a recent restructuring of walkways and flower beds by Anne Cox, Salina Warrick, and Tammy Bailey.

48. Women as elders: Celebrating the Past in the Present Looking to the Future p. 32, List of Elders of Elmira Chapel & Date Ordained, 1872-1995.

49. The Epistle Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, September 15, 1997. "Celebrating 100 Years of Ministry to Spring Hill and the Surrounding Area."

50. Thomas H. Campbell. Forword to History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Texas. Centennial Edition. pp. vi-x

NOTES ON SOURCES

56

Sources were obtained from:

Gregg County Historical Museum, Longview, Texas
Longview County Public Library, Genealogy Room and Newspaper Files
Upshur County Public Library, Gilmer, Texas
Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church Media Center
Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church Office and Files
Office of the Gregg County Clerk, Longview, Texas
Office of the Upshur County Clerk, Gilmer, Texas
Archives of Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Marshall, Texas

Miscellaneous Sources:

Interviews with Opal and Harry Stracener, Arlene Tekell, and Ethel Johnson, Spring Hill, Longview, Texas residents.
Telephone interview with Imogene Harley Cox, organist, Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church; Spring Hill resident, descendant of the Toler and Harley families.
Telephone interviews with Nancy Abernathy, organist, Pine Tree Cumberland Presbyterian Church; Pine Tree resident, descendant of John Rodden and Amelia Castleberry.

Additional information from Rose Mary Magrill, her brother, Reverend J. Richard Magrill, Jr., and their father, Joe Magrill, of Marshall Texas, members of the Castleberry-Magrill family.
Centennial Celebration story: "School and Church, Hand in Hand" written and narrated by Gene King, former Spring Hill High School Principal.

Cumberland Presbyterian Church Archives

Photocopies of official church records were obtained from the Historical Foundation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Cumberland Presbyterian Church of America, 1978 Union Ave., Memphis, Tennessee by Rose Mary Magrill, Marshall, Harrison County, Texas historian, whose assistance we gratefully acknowledge. These records are available to the public by appointment at the address named above.

Statistical Tables from Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (1891-1935)
Marshall Presbytery
Statistical Tables for Sunday Schools Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (1912-1928)
Marshall Presbytery
Articles from The Cumberland Presbyterian, monthly denominational publication
Records from General Assembly Yearbooks

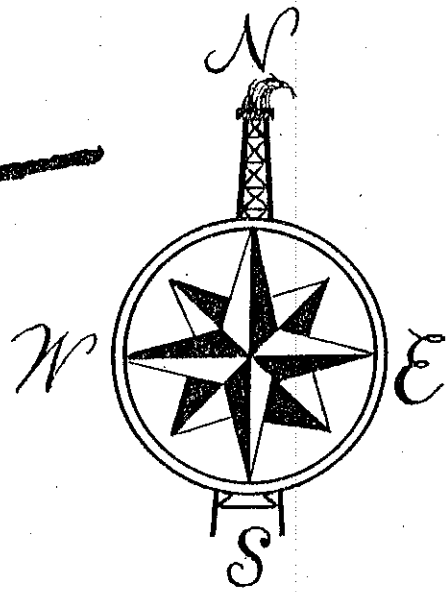
A Bibliography has been prepared and is available for review at the Elmira Chapel Media Center (Archival File).

GREGG COUNTY

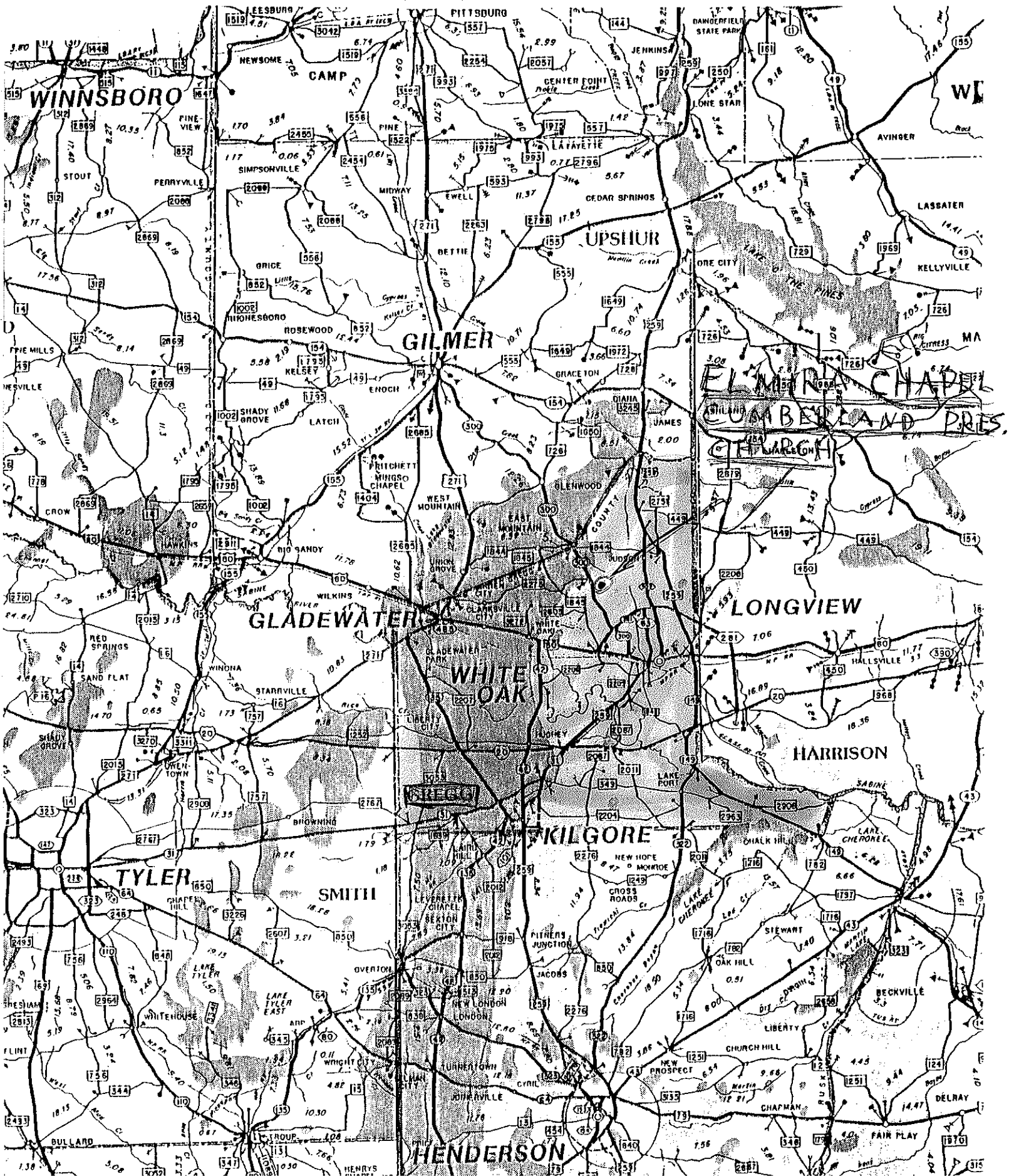
GLADEWATER
LONGVIEW

KILGORE

TEXAS



GREGG COUNTY



UPSHUR COUNTY
GREGG COUNTY

1844

NORTHWEST
LONGVIEW

Elimiz Chapel Cumberland
Presbyterian Church

Panther Park

14

2275

1845

21

22

2603

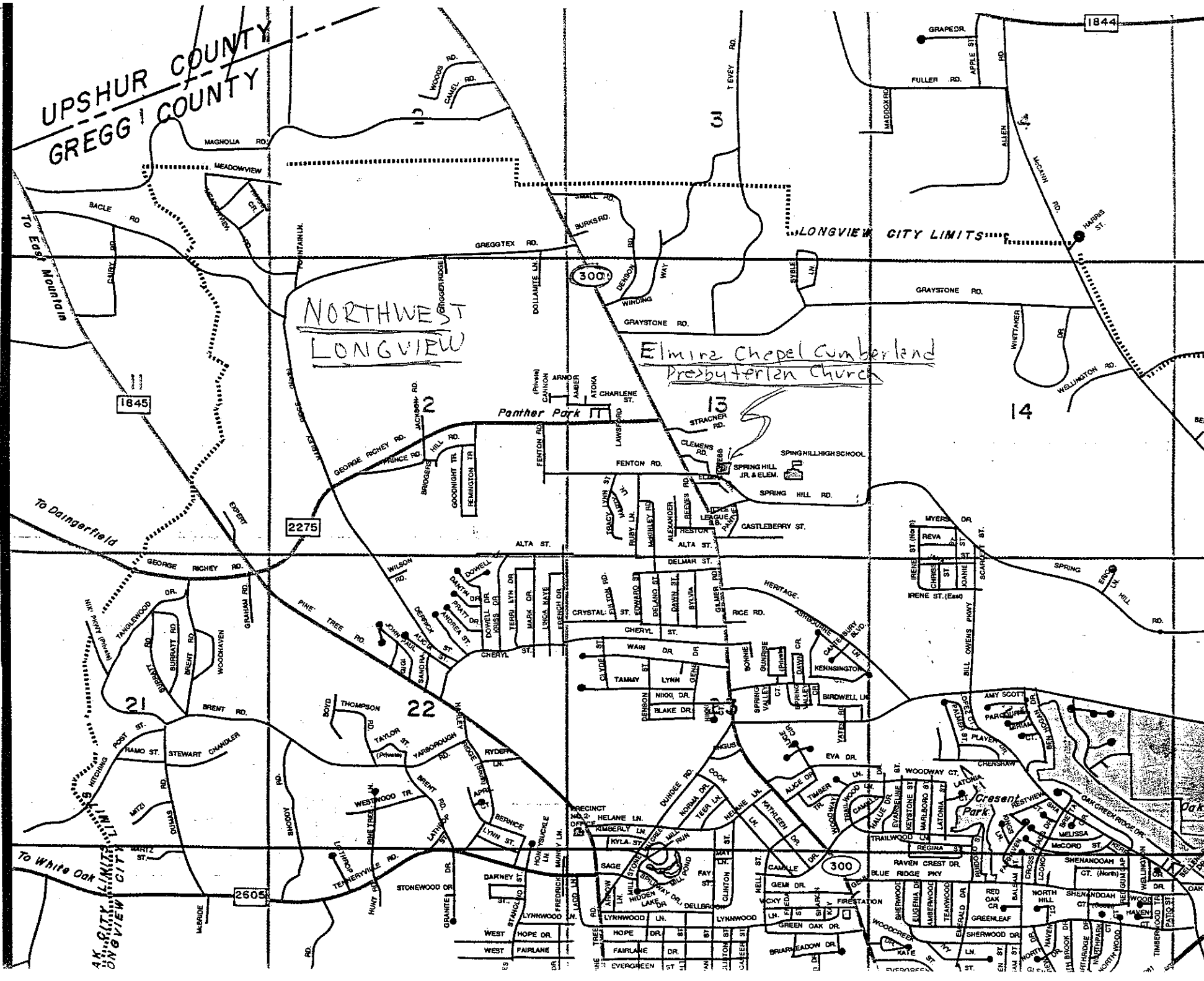
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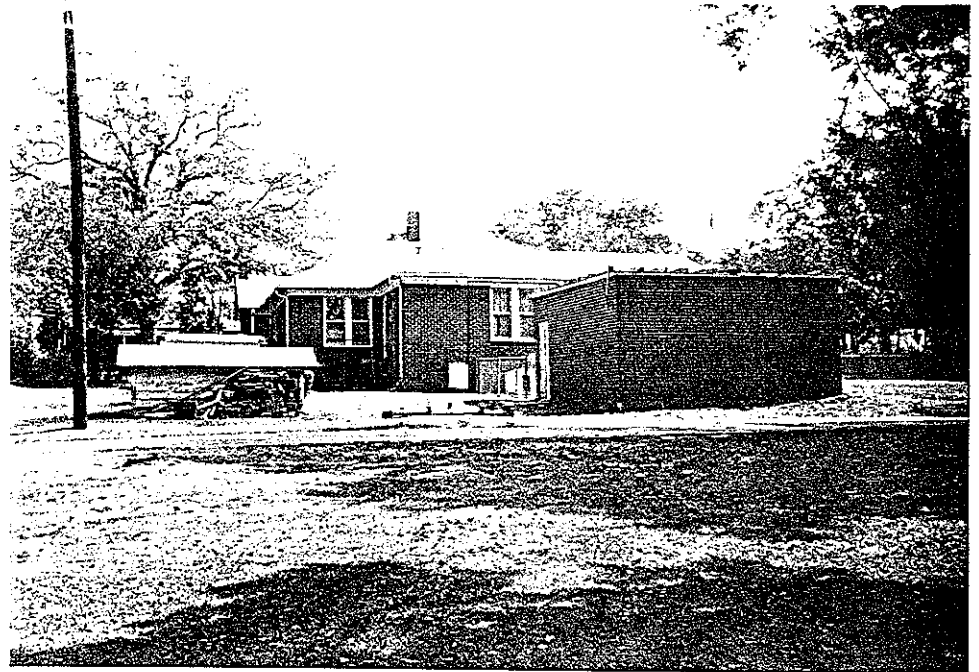
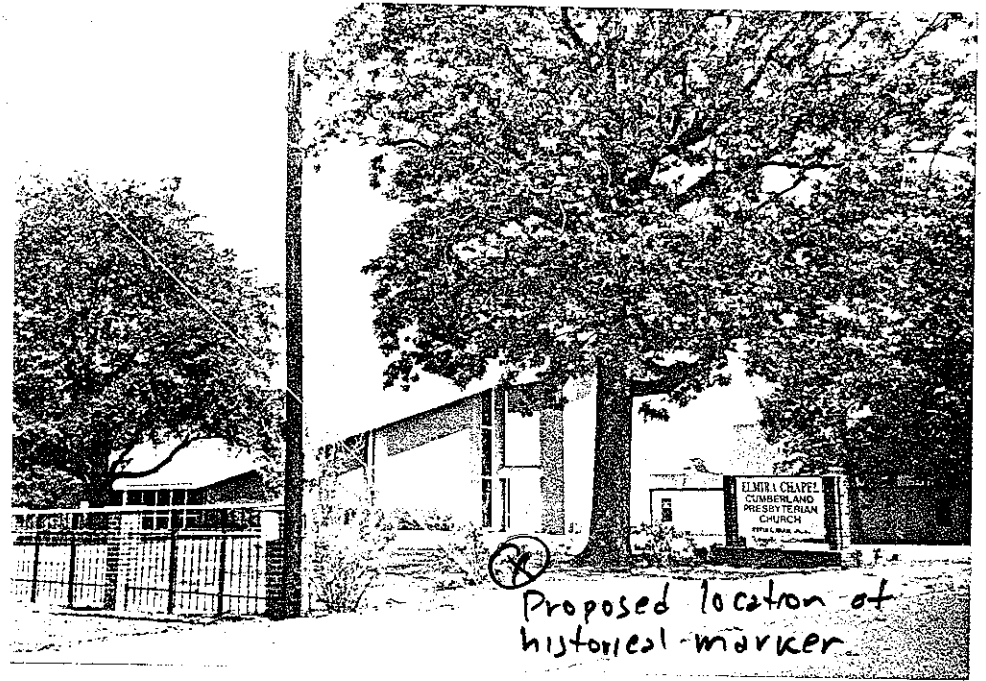
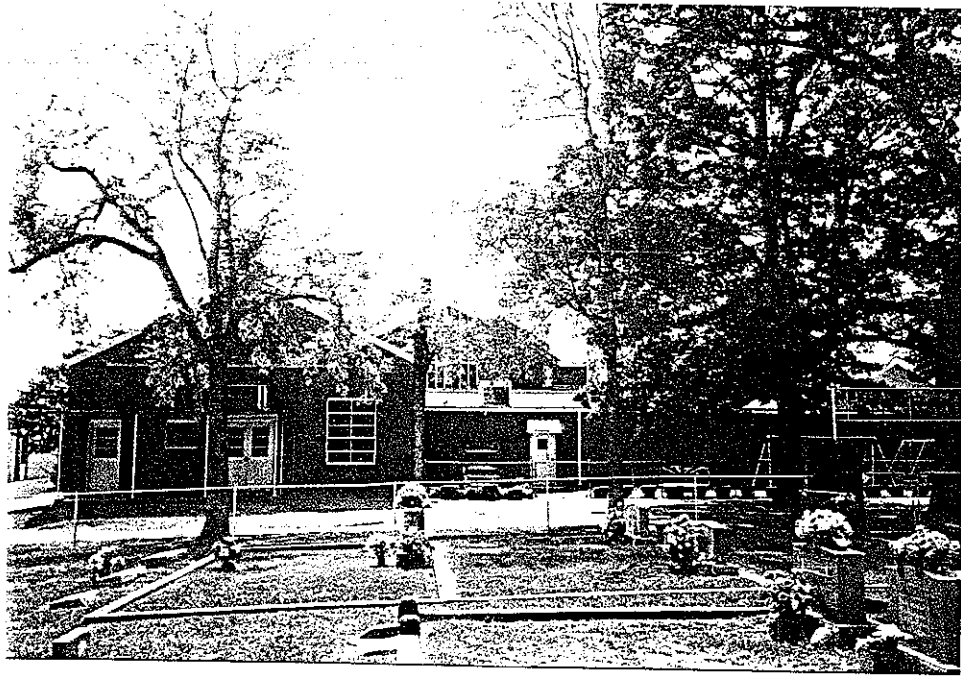
To Edgemoor

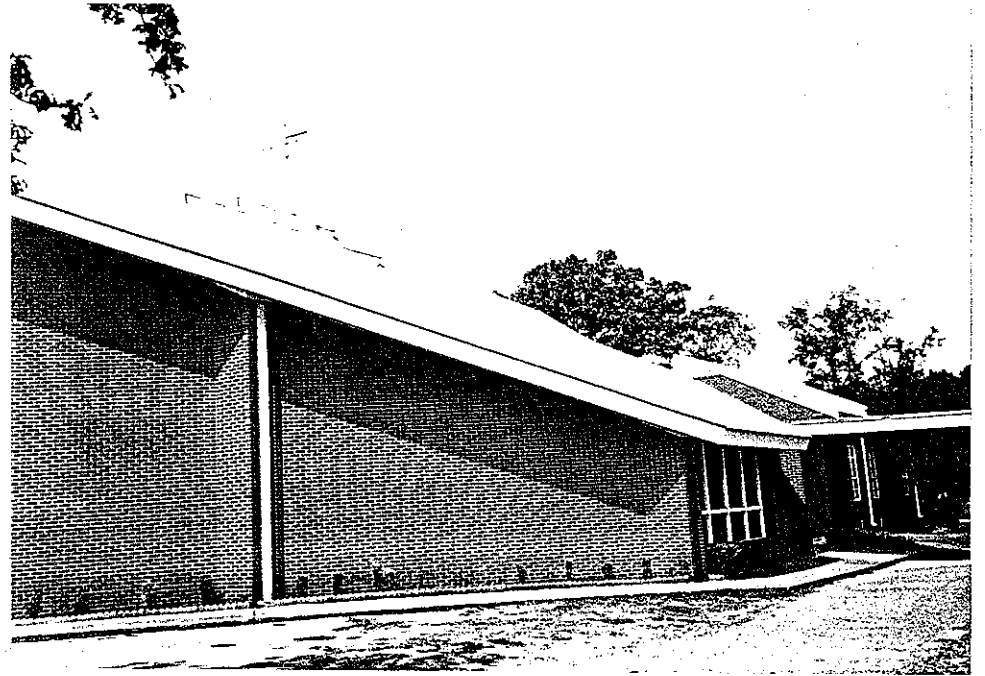
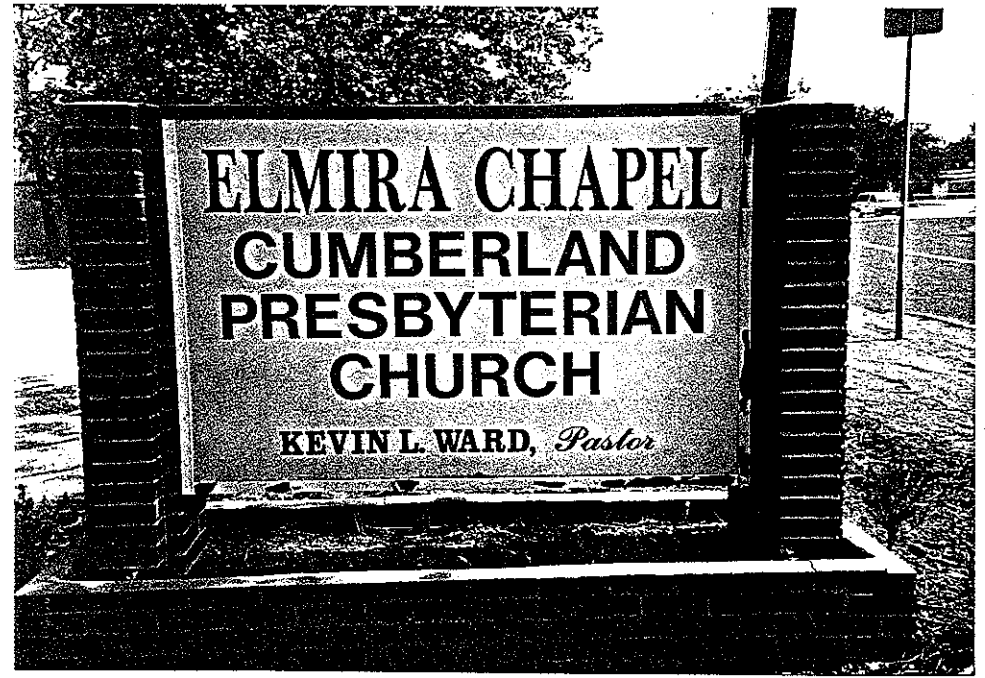
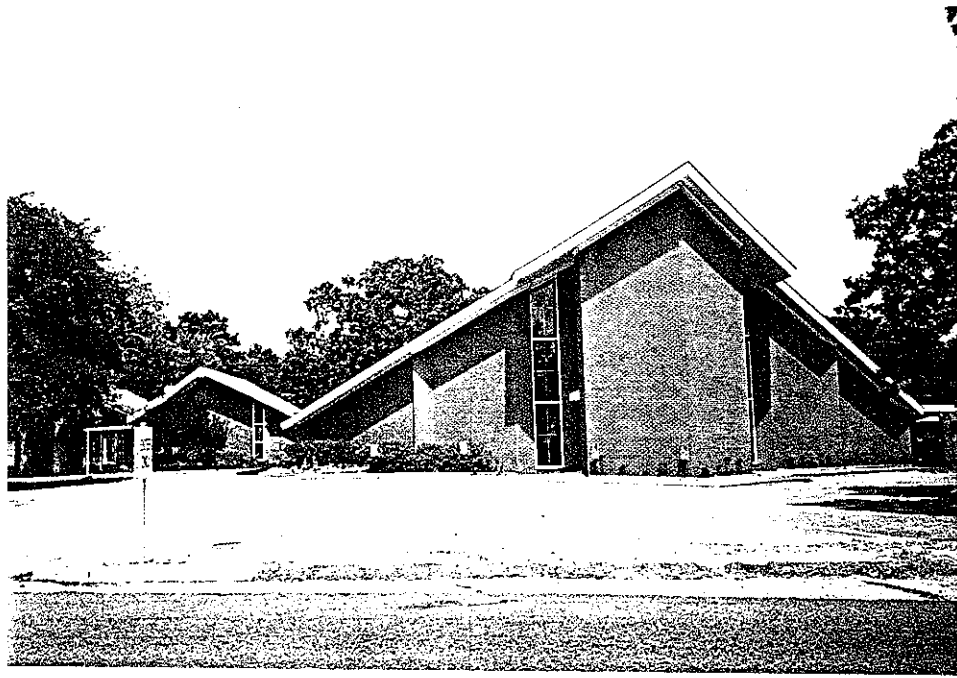
To Daringfield

To White Oak

AK CITY LIMITS
LONGVIEW CITY LIMITS









Rt. 9 Box 609
Gilmer, TX 75644
October 30, 1998

Dr. Norman Black
417 S. Mobberly Ave
Longview TX 75602

Dear Dr. Black:

Enclosed are photocopies of articles appearing in the Longview News-Journal and The Gilmer Mirror publicizing the dedication of the State Historical Marker on Oct. 4, 1998 at Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Springhill Community, Longview, Texas.

In addition to these articles, publicity was broadcast on the Longview Channel and on Channel 7 KLTV announcing the dedication before it occurred, and Channel 7 KLTV broadcast a short segment of the televised dedication on Sunday night, Oct. 4, 1998, and Monday morning, Oct. 4, 1998. Newscasters were Cynthia Izaguirre and Joan Hallmark, respectively. One of our Elmira Historical Committee members, Arlene Tekell, was largely responsible for obtaining the publicity received.

Thank you again for your guidance in reaching our goal of obtaining a historical marker. We are especially grateful for your help in erecting the marker, your presence at our luncheon and official presence as Master of Ceremonies at the dedication.

It was a pleasure to meet you. If I can be of further assistance "Historically speaking" please let me know.

Sincerely,


Frances M. Willis

Frances M. Willis, Member of the Historical Committee
Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church

cc. Pastor Kevin Ward
Arlene Johnson Tekell
Hazel Stiver
Tommy Tiffin

Historically speaking




ELMIRA CHAPEL
 CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
 FIVE 1/2 ACRES CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN
 CHURCH BUILT IN 1898. THE CHURCH WAS
 BUILT ON THE SITE OF THE OLD ELMIRA
 SCHOOL HOUSE AFTER THE ELMIRA
 CHURCH Began TO REACH HERE ON SUNDAY
 AFTERNOON IN 1871. THE REV. J. AL
 JACKSON AFTER THE DEATH OF THE
 CHURCH. THE NEW CONGREGATION WAS
 NAMED FOR ELMIRA CASTLEBERRY
 JAMES HER SON. MRS. E. J. AND
 CHURCH. THE FOLLOING LIST OF
 OF LAND AND MATERIAL FOR A
 SCHOOL/CHURCH - GIVEN BY FOR A
 ANNE J. AND OTHER DENOMINATIONAL
 BROTHERS. GARRARD AND
 CHURCH COMMISSION TO SERVE THE AREA.

Obie LeBlanc/Staff Photographer

Frances Willis, left, unveils a historical marker at the Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church while Dr. Norman Black gives the dedication. The ceremony marked the church's 100th anniversary.

Elmira Chapel to celebrate 100 years

Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church will be celebrating 100 years of service in the Spring Hill community with a Texas State Historical Marker dedication ceremony at 1:30 p.m. Sunday.

A Worldwide Communion Sunday will begin at 9:45 a.m. with Sunday school followed by 11 a.m. worship.

For more information, call 759-2069.

*Elmira Chapel
Cumberland Presbyterian
Church*

3501 ELMIRA DRIVE
LONGVIEW, TEXAS 75605
TELEPHONE (903) 759-2069

THE CHANCEL WINDOW

The window is composed of symbolism for the Holy Trinity and Pentecost.

Celtic Cross — Irish or Wheel Cross expresses eternity.

Lamb of God bearing a White Pennant with Red Cross — White banner represents the body of Christ. The Lamb is spoken of in John 1:29. The lamb is standing for the Lamb of God is risen.

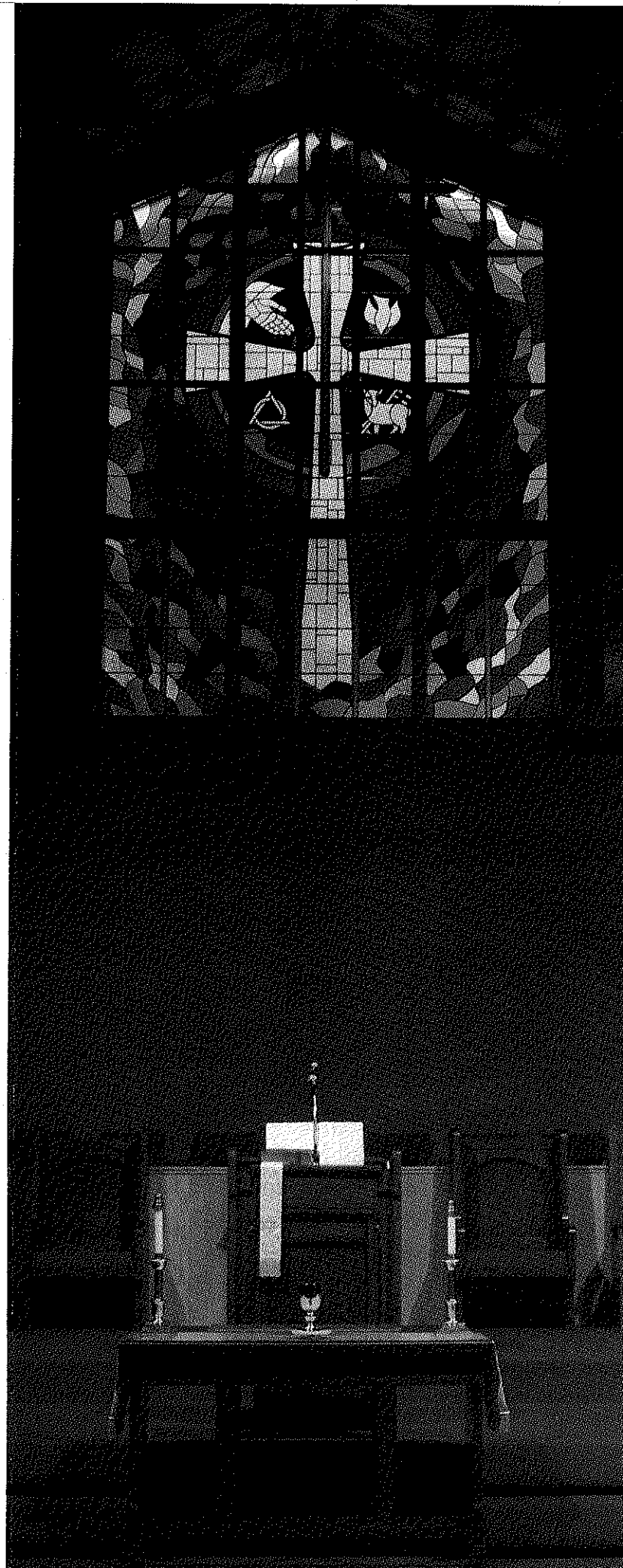
Descending Dove — Usual symbol of the Holy Spirit. See Mark 1:10.

The Hand — the most outstanding symbol of God the Father. See Exodus 15:6 and Psalm 48:10.

The Circle and Triangle — A most popular symbol is the Holy Trinity. Each side represents a "person" of the Godhead. The circle, like God, has no beginning or ending.

Colors in the Window: White — the Creator, light, joy, purity and perfection. Green — universal color of nature and means hope. Purple or violet — denotes mourning and penitence, humility. Black — grief. Blue — the heavens and water. Red — tongues of fire and blood of the martyrs.

Colored Pieces around the cross are not square, they flow downward from God to you, and upward from you to God.



GREGG COUNTY
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Mildred Wood Barker
Carol Morris Little
Norman W. Black, DDS
Mrs. H.L. Long
Sue Martin Brown
Anne P. Mackenzie
Mr. Jack Buchanan
Nauty Byrd Mayer
Mrs. Pauline Cox
Amanda Pratt Nobles
Mrs. B.W. Crain, Jr.
Dr. W.D. Northcutt, III
Beth Holloway Dodson
Mrs. John W. Osteen
Dr. Ken Durham
Mr. Joe White
Mrs. Helen McHaney Griffin
Mr. W.A. Williams

RULING ELDERS
OF ELMIRA CHAPEL

Mrs. Barbara Alexander
Mr. Dick Baker
Mr. Bill Bolt
Mr. Sonny Bonds
Mrs. Shirley Jo Brown
Mr. Don Burns
Mrs. Gene Cox
Mr. Phil Higdon
Mr. Gene King
Mr. Marvin Terrell
Mrs. Lesle Williams
Mr. James White

DEDICATION OF OFFICAL
TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

ELMIRA CHAPEL
CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

Master of CeremoniesNorman W. Black
Chairman of Gregg County
Historical Commission

InvocationLeslie A. Johnson
Assistant Pastor
Elmira Chapel

Introduction of GuestsDr. Black

AddressRev. Kevin L. Ward
Pastor
Elmira Chapel

Dedication of MarkerDr. Black

Unveiling of MarkerFrances Willis
Elder
Elmira Chapel

Reading of MarkerPat Terrell
Elder
Elmira Chapel

BenedictionRev. Ward



Gregg County Historical Commission

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

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

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

November 7, 1998

Mrs. Frances Willis
Rt. 9, Box 609
Gilmer, Texas 76544

Dear Mrs. Willis:

Thank you for the very nice letter of October 30th and for the photograph and clipping from the Gilmer Mirror. The newspaper and other media coverage of the event was just great. Please thank Mrs. Tekell for me. It is difficult to get the television stations to cover these dedications when they are on Sundays. I thought it was very good and heard a lot of comments about it.

Mrs. Willis, in my experience in the awarding of Official Texas Historical Markers, it usually requires one diligent and persistent person to see it through. And you certainly were the driving force behind this historical marker. It was indeed a pleasure working with such a knowledgeable and professional person such as yourself.

Rev. Ward and the congregation were so kind to me that Sunday and before. My thanks to them also.

Once again, it was all my pleasure in working with such a fine and deserving church as Elmira Chapel.

Sincerely,

Norman Black, D.D.S.

(Mrs. Clayton B. Willis)



TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

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

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

November 12, 1997

Dr. Norman Black, Chair
Gregg CHC
417 Mobberly Ave
Longview, TX 75602

RE: ELMIRA CHAPEL CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
18" X 28" marker w/post
Job # 04898; Received: 10/24/97

Dear Dr. Black:

We have received the above-referenced marker application. The application will be reviewed and evaluated by the Texas Historical Commission staff in the order in which it was received. Currently, there is about a 60 day wait between the time subject marker applications are received and evaluated. Should additional information be needed for the review, we will contact you and any parties listed below at that time. After any deficiencies have been corrected, we will send copies of the application to the members of the State Marker Review Board, who will make the final determination of the topic's acceptability for marking.

We will notify all parties as soon as the Board makes its decision. If the topic is approved for marking, payment will be requested at that time. If not approved, the application will be returned along with a letter of explanation.

Because of the variables involved in the marker process, and because we must coordinate our orders with the schedule of the contracting foundry, we suggest that the date of the marker dedication not be set until the completed marker is received.

We appreciate the effort made to record this topic. Should there be any questions about the status of this marker application, please contact me at 512/463-5853.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ronnie Kaase".

Ronnie Kaase
Local History Programs

pc: Rev Kevin L Ward

OBITUARIES

10B

Thursday, March 25, 1999, Longview News-Journal ☆



Frances Marie Willis

GILMER — Services for Frances Marie Porterfield Willis, 80, of Gilmer will be held at 10 a.m. Friday, March 26, at Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Spring Hill with Kevin Ward officiating. Interment will follow at 2 p.m. Saturday, March 27, in Laurelland in Fort Worth with Bill Pennington officiating. Arrangements are under the direction of Croley Funeral Home of Gilmer. Mrs. Willis died Monday, March 22, 1999, in Gilmer.

She was born Nov. 24, 1918, in Oklahoma City, the daughter of Rose Ella McCollum Porterfield and Dr. Austin L. Porterfield. On Dec. 12, 1940, she married Clayton B. Willis, who had grown up in the Indian Rock community of Upshur County. The couple returned to this area in 1954 and began the Gilmer Post Yard, which they operated until Mr. Willis' death in 1981.

Mrs. Willis was a life member of the Texas Garden Clubs Inc. and served in leadership roles at the district, regional and state levels. She won two state awards for floral design and was a member of the Texas Landscape Design Critics Council and a master-level flower show judge.

Mrs. Willis enjoyed birding, and she traveled to six continents to study birds in their natural habitats. Locally, she participated in annual bird surveys for the North East Texas Field Ornithologists. She was a life member of the National Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon Society.

Mrs. Willis, a consummate historical researcher, compiled a centennial history of Elmira Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, where she was an elder emeritus. The history prepared by her resulted in a Texas state historical marker for the church.

She did extensive genealogical research and published the Porterfield Lines, a journalized history of her father's family. She was the current historian of Texas Garden Club and was compiling a history of the South Central Region of the National Garden Clubs.

Mrs. Willis was a frequent contributor to newspapers and other publications, including the Faith and Fate of East Texas, Churches and Cemeteries. She was often a speaker and teacher on wildlife, birds and flowers; and she was a member of the Rusk County Poetry Society.

Mrs. Willis is survived by her sons, Terence A. Willis of San Antonio, Donald S. Willis of Fort Worth and Richard A. Willis of Austin. Her grandchildren are Catherine Willis, Tyler Willis, Meredith Willis, Stuart Willis, Anne Willis, Aaron Willis, Zachary Willis and stepgrandchild Brady Riordan. She is also survived by one brother-in-law, W. Joseph Chastant of Hot Springs, Ark., and one sister-in-law, Mrs. V.E. Porterfield of Dallas.

Visitation is 6-8 p.m. today, March 25, at the funeral home.

Croley
FUNERAL HOME
GILMER • 843-2555