

Aubrey First United Methodist Church

Aubrey, Texas

Historical Narrative researched and written by Deborah Goin for 2011 Recorded Texas Historical Marker application for Denton County

AUBREY FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

I. CONTEXT

In 1846, Dr. George T. Key and family came from Missouri to Texas and settled in Collin County near the present town of Weston. In 1858, they and their relatives moved to Denton County and settled about one and one-half miles southwest of the present town of Aubrey. There they built log cabins for themselves and one which was used for a school house and church. It was in this log cabin that the first Methodist Church ever established in this section of Denton County was organized. The building was known as the Key School House.¹

The Aubrey Methodist Church was established in 1858. The First Baptist Church was established at Belew in 1875, and began worshipping in Aubrey in 1882.² The Christian Church was established at Springhill in 1889 and began meeting in Aubrey in 1894. These three churches were the only churches in Aubrey up until at least 1936. The three churches worked closely together to minister to citizens of Aubrey and surrounding communities. In the early 1900's the three churches held a community-wide Union Service to celebrate Thanksgiving Day.³ The three churches continued to work together to encourage every person in Aubrey to enroll in one of the three churches' Sunday School educational program in 1936⁴, and held a Co-Operative Revival Meeting for all three churches in July 1928.⁵

II. OVERVIEW

The Aubrey First United Methodist Church has been in existence in Aubrey for 150 years.

It is one of the oldest churches to be established in Aubrey. The church was established in 1858 with the following charter members: Dr. George and Mary Key, Henry Key, Joshua Harrison, George Harrison, Ben and Nannie Moss, Jim Wilcox, Joe Wilcox, Mrs. Heart, Squire Heart, Mr. and Mrs. Rufus Godwin, Joe Hunt and Mr. Woods and family.⁶

About the year 1874, the trans-continental branch of the Missouri Pacific Rail Road was built through Denton County and passed between the homes of Mr. Woods, a member of the original Methodist Church and L.N. Edwards. Both of these men were farmers and anxious to establish a town near their farms.⁷

L.N. Edwards plotted a small section of his farm into town lots and established the present town of Aubrey. The little church organized at the Key School decided to move to the town of Aubrey, but a permanent place for worship was not available at that time. They met in such places as store and homes. Their first pastor was Reverend F.V. Evans.

In 1885, L.N. Edwards made an addition to the original town plot of Aubrey and offered a lot free to each and every church desiring to establish itself within the town. All such churches accepting his proposition were required to begin construction of a church building within one year from the date of the offer, or the land would revert back to Edwards.⁸ Mr. Edwards gave Lots 103 and 105 of Block 26 which were located at the corner of Plum and Maple Street in the town of Aubrey, to the Aubrey Methodist Church.⁹

At this time money was extremely scarce and the Methodist membership of the community was poor. They had no money to purchase the necessary material for construction of the Methodist Church upon the donated lot. Residing at Oak Grove, a community eight miles south of Aubrey, was Ed F. Bates, one of the pioneer citizens of this county. This good man

realizing the timeliness of the situation, donated the funds to W.L. Zumwalt, a lumberman in Aubrey, to purchase enough material to build the church building. Construction on the church was completed in 1886; the church grew and prospered in this wooden frame building.

The Aubrey Methodist Church was a part of the Dallas Methodist Church's connection that provided the circuit riders, who were preachers, and rode on horseback from church to church holding church services on different days of the week. Many times it took the circuit riders a full month to make the full circuit of all churches within their assigned area.¹⁰

Rev. Archbald Campbell McDougal was pastor of the church in 1890, and remained a pastor in the Dallas/Denton area until his death in 1894, where he was buried at the Wilson Cemetery in Aubrey. He came from Tennessee to Texas.¹¹ Rev. McDougal was born in 1822 and licensed to preach in 1853.¹² He was a six foot four inches tall man, a very eloquent speaker and was able to attract a large number of people whenever he spoke. He was very involved in the building of the church which was completed in 1886.

Rev. McDougal's wife, Jennie Walling McDougal, came to Texas from Devonshire, England in 1858. She owned a millinery business in Dallas until the big fire of 1880. She married A.C. McDougal and they settled in Aubrey. Mrs. McDougal was also known as Aunt Mack, which she was called by young and old in Aubrey. She was full of energy and good humor and a most congenial entertaining lady. She was in charge of the local telephone exchange and was known as the "circulator of The News" in Aubrey.¹³

On April 14, 1918, a devastating tornado swept through Aubrey. Several structures throughout the town were destroyed, one of them the Methodist Church and another the First Christian Church.¹⁴ "With a cheerful heart these people turned their head and heart to rebuild

what was lost, and thank God it was no worse.”¹⁵

In May or June of that same year, the cornerstone of a new \$15,000 brick building was laid by the Aubrey Masonic Lodge.¹⁶ The building was completed in February 1919. The building is a one-story brick veneer structure 60 feet wide, 40 feet long and 24 feet high. The contractors for the Methodist and Christian church were Thomas and Yarbrough Construction Company of Dallas.¹⁷ The design and windows of the First Christian Church and the Methodist Church are very similar. (First Christian Church of Aubrey was rebuilt and completed in June, 1919. The church congregation has a Texas Historical subject marker, “First Christian Church of Aubrey,” 2005, number 11845.)

The most stunning quality of the building is the exquisite stained glass windows adorning the structure. There are 680 square feet of stained glass windows in the church sanctuary. The windows are Pre-Raphael style windows. They were created with a look back to the classic Pre-Raphael style of painting and subject matter. The painted sections of the windows were made of Kokomo glass (a very old USA stained glass manufacturer still in business). The subject panels of the windows depict stories of the Christian faith: the nativity; Martha and Mary; Christ praying in the Garden Gethsemane; Christ embracing the little children; the Good Samaritan; the good shepherd; and the resurrection of Christ. The smaller panels aren’t illustrations, but panes of color that dye the light as it shines into the sanctuary. The windows were dedicated to the following people at the time of construction of the church building: B.F. McMillan; Rev. H.W. Isbell and Wife; J.T. Robinson presented by Mrs. J.T. Robinson; J.W. Hyatt by J.S. and A.C. Hyatt; Memory of Rev. A.C. McDougal presented by Jennie May and Aubrey friends; Our Children, Mary Louise Garland, Jimmie, Katherine, Joe and Mrs. Jessie Garland; Mr. & Mrs.

J.B. Wright; Little Tincher McKerly; J.W. Tincher, presented by Mrs. Mary Tincher; Dr. Wayne Phillips, Marjorie, Leroy, May, Marion, presented by Mr. & Mrs. Lee Phillips; 1889-1918 Rev. Alfred Young, Mr. & Mrs. T.J. Young, George Young; Memory of Mrs. May Tobin by F.E. Tobin' Joe and Sarah Phillips by James Rogers; Thomas R.C. Barr, Henrietta Barr.

A high point in the church history occurred in 1925, when it paid off its indebtedness for the building built in 1918. The Bishop Hiram Abiff Boaz of Dallas preached the dedicatory sermon. Bishop Boaz was a bishop of various conferences in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Mexico from 1925 until his retirement in 1938. He was president of Southern Methodist University from 1918-1920.¹⁸ Membership at the Aubrey Methodist church was at an all-time high in that year, with 148 persons on the church roll.¹⁹ The Reverend E. A. Drew was pastor.

The Aubrey Methodist church was affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, as evidenced by the cornerstone on the current church building. In 1939, the three branches of Methodism (the Methodist Protestant Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South) came to an agreement to unite under the name of "The Methodist Church."²⁰

In 1958, the church celebrated its Centennial year, Reverend Kenneth Newcomer was pastor at this time.²¹ Then, in 1968, bishops of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church took the necessary steps to combine their churches into The United Methodist Church. This is when the Aubrey church was named Aubrey First United Methodist Church.²²

At the same time the congregation was planning for the building of Collins Hall, a fellowship hall, a decision was made to charter the congregation as a private corporation under the laws of the State of Texas. The congregation adopted the charter in October 1986, and filed the

papers in November, 1986. Funds and labor for the building of Collins Hall were donated by members of the church and many community members not affiliated with the church. The addition of Collins Hall provided a fellowship hall, updated restrooms, and additional classroom facilities.²³

In the summer of 2003, the Aubrey Methodist Church was “saved by the Bible and Backed-up by the Choir.” A candle from the previous Sunday’s service was not completely extinguished. The choir entered the church on the following Thursday for choir practice, and found the church filled with a gray smoke.²⁴ Apparently the candle had fallen over onto the altar Bible and the smoldering fire slowly burned through the bible, the altar table and was burning the floor, when the choir entered the church on Thursday evening.

III. SIGNIFICANCE

A Methodist Church that had its beginning in a dirt floor log cabin and survived its organizing pastor’s suggestion to disband has overcome many obstacles. When their place of worship was demolished by a cyclone, the group rebuilt a larger more modern and beautiful structure. Then it survived near disaster, when the burning candles were smoldered by the altar bible. It is due to the courageous, faithful and founding pioneers that enabled Aubrey First United Methodist Church to celebrate its 150th Anniversary in 2008. The congregation of the Aubrey First United Methodist Church is proud of its founding fathers and most thankful for their endurance through the trials and tribulations.

There have been numerous successful ordained deacons, elders and ministers who began their career path in the Aubrey First United Methodist Church. Many of the ministers have moved into significant roles in the North Texas Conference heading various committees and

leading very large churches.

The women's organization of the church was named originally the Women's Missionary Society and later named the United Methodist Women. This organization has been active throughout the church's history. There were various mentions of the Women's Missionary Society in the Aubrey Argus in 1918 throughout the 1930's. The women hosted programs and outreach for all people within the city of Aubrey.

In addition, the Aubrey church has sponsored and hosted the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of the United States of America for many years. The first Boy Scout troop was sponsored in 1936.²⁵ Recently the Aubrey church has provided several local Girl Scout troops and service units a meeting place and location to host service unit activities.

The Aubrey Methodist church members are very active in community affairs. They participate in food and clothing drives, sponsor meetings and get-togethers for all citizens and churches in the area, participate in the annual Aubrey Hometown Christmas Celebration and the annual Peanut Festival.

Throughout the history of the Aubrey church, the members have been integral members of the Aubrey community. Many founding families still have active members in the Aubrey Methodist church. The members of the church have owned and operated businesses in Aubrey and have served in various capacities on the city council, mayor, presidents of the chamber of commerce, school board , and county, state and federal law enforcement officials.

IV. DOCUMENTATION

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¹⁹ Drew, Rev. E.A., p 6.

²⁰The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2008, The United Methodist Publishing House, http://www.gcah.org/site/c.ghKJIOPHIoE/b.3504153/k.48DE/United_Methodist_Church_Timeline.htm

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