

GRIBBLE SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH

Historical Narrative researched and written by Betty Reding and Mavis Hughes for Texas Historical Commission Subject Marker Application, Denton County. 2006

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Denton County, Texas

Gribble Springs Baptist Church, organized in 1871, is a rural church in Denton County. Surrounded by prairie, near the northern bank of Clear Creek, the church sits at the top of a hill on Farm to Market Road 2164 north of the city of Denton in Denton County, Texas, four miles north of the intersection of Loop 288 and FM 2164.¹ It is one of the oldest churches in the county that still conducts worship services.²

Before Gribble Springs Baptist Church was organized in 1871, worshipers traveled by buggy and horseback over dirt trails and roads to Pond Creek, another rural Denton County community located approximately nine miles northeast of the Gribble Springs community.³ After a few years, the people from Gribble Springs desired to move their place of worship closer to their homes and organized the Gribble Springs Baptist Church located where the church stands today.

There were twenty-three charter members of the newly organized Gribble Springs Baptist Church.⁴ Among those charter members were Joe Young, Moses Swain, Ferawane Brock, Joe Bowles, E.J. Harper, Steve Basil, “Grandma” Binion, and Tom Newton. The Reverends W.C. West and J.W. Coarly, who were ministers from Pond Creek, helped the church in its organization. Reverend W.C. West became the first pastor of the new church.

After its organization in 1871 until its reorganization in 1896, no record of Gribble Springs Baptist Church has been found to indicate how long the new church remained open for worship after 1871. “When or why” church services were discontinued during those twenty-five years has remained a mystery to this day.

On July 8, 1896, Gribble Springs Baptist Church was reorganized during a business meeting of dedicated worshipers.⁵ Members mentioned in the minutes of that meeting included Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Pass, Mr. and Mrs. W.G. Handley, Mrs. Sparks, G.D. Noles, Mrs. E.J. Harper, W. Ward, E.S. Cornelius, and H.C. McBrayer. Other worshipers were added to the church roll that day. These new members transferred their membership from other Denton County churches such as Prairie Chapel, Sanger, Denton, and Cooper Creek.⁶ These new members were W.T. Ready, T.J. Hill, L.B. Ready, W.R. Handley, J.H. Hill, Annie Childress, Mary Gilbert, Willie Justice, Annie Wilson, Rosie Fain, Mabel Wilson, Katie Lewis, Lissie Sparks, Charles Cooper, and Mary Hill.

The name "Gribble Springs Missionary Baptist Church" was given to the reorganized church on July 8, 1896, and became a member of the Denton County Baptist Association in that same year.⁷ The church has remained an active member of the county association as well as a participating member of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

For eight years church services at Gribble Springs Missionary Baptist Church were held in the old school house in the Gribble Springs Community. This schoolhouse stood in the vicinity of the present day sanctuary. In 1904, three men, Mr. W.G. Evans and his two sons, Joe M. and J.W., each gave one hundred dollars toward building a church, so the church services would have a new home.⁸ Other members of the congregation added to that building fund, and a new church sanctuary was built that same year. Services were conducted in that building for forty-eight years.

The membership of the Gribble Springs Baptist Church voted to replace the old 1904 sanctuary in 1952. The building that housed the Baptist Church at Vaughttown was vacant, so the church at Gribble Springs bought the structure in Vaughttown and moved

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it from that community nine miles southwest to Gribble Springs.⁹ This move was accomplished by dedicated men of the church who worked with a team of workhorses that pulled the building over country roads on a sled made of a system of rolling logs that were rotated “by hand” from back to front as the team slowly moved the building to its destination at Gribble Springs.¹⁰

Once in its new “home,” the sanctuary underwent renovations. Educational spaces were added to the back area of the “new” sanctuary with lumber that was salvaged from the original 1904 church building. This educational addition was built by two men, Lewis Ashby and Orin Vermillion, who collaborated their knowledge and skills even though “one man was a Baptist and the other a Methodist.”

Renovations were made to the sanctuary as well. The floors were refinished, and new furniture was purchased for the sanctuary; including pews, two chairs, a communion table and a pulpit. The pulpit was bought for the amount of only two dollars!¹¹ For the church family’s comfort, electric fans, new screens, and space heaters were installed.

The new educational wing provided space for various church programs that became part of the fabric of church life during the years that followed 1953 until 1972. Training Union was the first activity to become a reality on March 1, 1953. Vacation Bible School was the next program to be added, followed by Royal Ambassadors (RA’s) and Girl’s Auxiliary (GA’s). The first Bible Study Course was conducted during this time, and a Brotherhood was organized for the men of the church.

Throughout the years since 1953, many improvements were made to both the church building and to its grounds. These improvements were made for the comfort and

the growth of the church family. Members of the Gribble Springs Baptist family made the majority of these improvements.

Among the first improvements made by the church was the digging of a shallow water well. This well was dug in 1957 “by hand” by the men of the church and provided the church with much needed water and sewer facilities.¹²

The need for a parsonage became necessary, and the church voted in September 1968, to build one on land that had been donated to the church in 1965, by the Gifford-Hill and company of Dallas. H. Wendell Thomas, a local homebuilder and a member of Gribble Springs, built the home for future pastors of the church. Pastor Eddie Neece was the first pastor to live in the new church parsonage.

Members of the church built the present educational and banquet annex of the church next to the old Vaughttown/Gribble Springs Church in 1972. This new annex provided room for a growing membership. Furniture for the annex was purchased with the help of the Mary Hill Davis Fund, a mission program of the Baptist General Convention of Texas of which Gribble Springs had been a member since before 1900.

An increasing need for a new church became stronger as the years passed. Members voted in 1988, to build a modern, brick sanctuary with a seating capacity of 250. The church was built adjoining the educational and banquet annex. During the construction, Sunday school and church services were both held in the annex.

Brother James Edens was serving as pastor of Gribble Springs Baptist Church at this time. He led the church family in the building of the new sanctuary. Members or former members of the church family accomplished most of the construction. “James” as Brother Edens was called, was an accomplished heavy machine operator and

personally "dozed the old sanctuary to make way for the new one." The new sanctuary was built by H. Wendell Thomas and his two sons, Jeff and Buster Thomas. Other members served on various committees that included selecting stained glass windows, overseeing the construction, decorating the interior, wallpapering and painting, plumbing, electrical wiring and more.

The new Gribble Springs Baptist Church conducted its first church services in January of 1989,¹³ and a dedication service was held in February of 1989.¹⁴ The church continues to serve the Lord and His work in the Gribble Springs community today.

Written and submitted by:

Betty Reding
7670 FM 2164
Sanger, TX. 76266-7561
Telephone: 940/458-7557

Mavis Hughes
9450 FM 2153
Aubrey, TX. 76227-3017
Telephone: 940/458-3472

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Gribble Springs Baptist Church reorganized 1896.

Letter from Alma (Nubine) Frazier to Gribble Springs Baptist Church, Oct. 7, 2005

Gribble Springs Baptist Church minutes of Jan. 1989 and Feb. 1989.

Recollection of Jessie Ashby Bonds, church member of fifty-three years.

Photo of church water well, church scrapbook.

Denton Record-Chronicle/ Sunday, October 9, 1988