The First Baptist Church

Pell City, Alabama



History

1903 - 1971

God Builds No Churches

God builds no churches. By His plan That labor has been left to man. No spires miraculously arise; No little mission from the skies Falls on the bleak and barren place To be a source of strength and grace. The humblest church demands its price In human toil and sacrifice.

Men call the Church the House of God, Toward which the toil-stained pilgrims trod In search of strength and rest and hope, As blindly through life's mists they grope. And there God dwells, but it is man Who builds that House, and draws its plan; Pays for mortar and the stone That none need seek for God alone.

The humblest spire in mortal ken Where God abides was built by men. And if the church is still to grow, Is still the life of hope to throw Across the valley of despair, Men still must build God's House of Prayer. God sends no churches from the skies. Out of our hearts they must arise. -Edgar A: Guest.

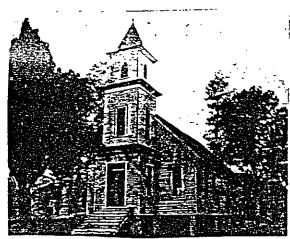
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH 2309 Second Avenue North Pell City, Alabama 35125

The First Baptist Church of Pell City was organized in April, 1903 with 18 charter members which included familar names of Cameron, Fite, Cornett, Kilgroe, Smith, Nunnelley and Miller. The first pastor was Rev. Burns (Given name not available.) The first church building was constructed in 1904, a three room frame building with a steeple and bell tower. The front of the building was rather high off the ground and was not enclosed for some time. In fact, at a homecoming in the early 1920's, dinner tables had to be moved underneath the building when an untimely rain threatened to ruin the dinner on the grounds. Later the building was enclosed to form a basement which was used as a classroom by the first Baraca Class, whose members used to sing lustily to the accomplishment of Mr. Richard Wilkins playing an old pump organ.

The church was a member of the Coosa Valley Association until 1928 when it transferred to the St. Clair County Association. The first major expansion program was undertaken during the time that Brother Joe Bancroft was pastor (1937-39) and consisted of class rooms and more space in the sanctuary. The little white church was used until 1950 but a bigger building was planned long before that time with regular contributions to the building fund during World War II when building materials were not available. A plan was set up to purchase a bond a week so funds would be available when construction could begin. The pastorium was built in Through the years additional lots were added to the church property until in 1960, the final lot was obtained and the church owned the entire block. By 1963, the need for additional educational facilities was seen and the education building was added. The music and education programs were expanded in 1956 and have continued to be a successful part of

the church program. The program was expanded to include a youth program and the Silent Friends ministry. In 1970, the santuary was remodeled. Groundbreaking services were held on October 1, 1989 and construction began the following day on a new church ministeries building. The three story building houses additional education space, pre-school, kindergarter, day-care and a multi-purpose room for basketball, volleyball, large dinners or banquets and a walking track. The building will also have an elevator making it accessible to the elderly and handicapped. The construction included re-modeling of parts of the education building to enlarge office space, make a commercial kitchen and re-do the fellowship hall.

The membership has grown to over 1,000 and church attendance and participation has continued to grow and develop through the years.







Church History

From the proud but humble beginning of the First Baptist Church of Pell City, it is necessary to turn the calendar back to the year 1903, month of April.

And if early history of the church is somewhat sketchy, it is due to the fact that the church records went up in smoke, along with the Pell City 10¢ Store on March 1, 1922. The records were in the care of Mr and Mrs. T. J. Abbott, when fire struck and destroyed their store

Charged with the responsibility of piecing together the records of the first 19 years of the church's existence was a committee comprised of Mr. and Mrs. M. M. Smith, Hardy A. Cornett and Mr. and Mrs. S. D. Kilgroe.

According to their report, 18 charter members heard the first sermon delivered by the Rev. Burns, whose given name is not available, and who served the church as pastor until 1905.

CHARTER MEMBERS

The charter members were: Mrs. John Cameron, Mrs. B. A. Fite, Mrs. Martha Cameron, Miss Nell Fite, H. A. Cornett, S. D. Kilgroe, Mrs. L. C. Kilgroe, Mrs. H. A. Cornett, Miss Dixie Kilgroe, M. M. Smith, Mrs. M. M. Smith, Charles Nunnelley, Mrs. Charles Nunnelley, Mr. Sank Miller, Mrs. Sank Miller, Miss Jessie Miller, Mrs. T. J. Kilgroe and Miss Daisy Kilgroe.

The Committee reported that M. J. Smith, a Mr. Mitchell and J. H. Phillips were designated as trustees and were entrusted with the deeds and care of the church and its property. They listed the following pastors who served the church from its inception until Brother D. D. Head was elected pastor and took over the pulpit on January 1, 1922: Rev. Burns, 1903-1904; Rev. L. M. Stone, 1905-1906; Rev. J. A. Hendrick, 1907-1908; Rev. Joe Veasey, 1909-1911; Rev. J. G. Lowery, 1912-1914; Rev. J. L. Aders, 1915-1916; Rev. Carl Cunningham, 1917; Rev. W. C. Cooper, 1918-1919; Rev. J. W. Inzer; Rev. Anderson; Rev. Albert R. Bond, 1921.

FIRST CHURCH BUILT

In 1904, the first church building was constructed on the site of the present building, under the direction of a building committee comprised of S. D. Kilgroe, H. A. Cornett, M. M. Smith and J. H. Phillips. Earliest associational minutes available placed the value of the church and grounds at \$3,000.

Viewed in retrospect, 67 years later, it would fall short of the architectural elegance of many of today's houses of worship, but the



three-room frame building was surely a source of pride to those charter members.

Its proud exterior featured a steeple which reached skyward and housed the bell which clanged an insistent invitation each Sunday, urging members to hurry to attend church services.

In the beginning, as many members will recall, the front of the building was rather high off the ground and was not enclosed for some time. At an early homecoming in the 1920's, in fact, dinner tables had to be moved underneath the building when an untimely rain threatened to ruin the dinner.

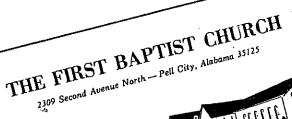
Later, the building was enclosed to form a basement which was used as a class room by the first Baracca Class, whose members used to sing lustily to the accompaniment of Mr. Richard Wilkins playing the old pump organ.

HEATING A PROBLEM

Heating the original building presented problems. Many times deacons and church members had to provide coal for the old stove. One problem recalled was when a special associational program was to be presented, it was discovered that the fire in the stove was completely out and several members had to go home and bring back kindling and coal to start a fire before the program could begin.

The heating system was updated in 1937, when the building committee proposed that a furnace heating system be installed. Within a week, more than \$400.00 had been pledged for the furnace equipment and it was then recommended that a furnace be installed at a cost not to exceed \$600.00

A subsequent improvement that was popularly accepted by the congregation was the installation of oscillating electric fans on the walls. This cut down considerably on the



1. Cole Skelton, Pastor

Welcome to Homecoming at First Baptist! A special welwelcome to Homecoming at First Baptist! to share this day
who return to and direction upcome to all our former members who return to and direction upcome to all our former members who return to and direction upcome to all our former members who return to and direction upcome to all our former members who return to and direction upwith us. We thank God for His manifold
with us. We thank God for His manifold
with us. We thank God for His manifold
with us. Dear Friends in Christ,

blessings.

We come also to dedicate our beautiful and spacious facil-es to the glory of God and as a monument to those who have We come also to dedicate our beautiful and spacious who have Many of Many of God and as a monument to those wany of ities to the glory of God and as a monument to the glory of God and as a monument them a reality.

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Today we honor the past and are inspired by recounting its

Today we honor the past and are buildings as a means today

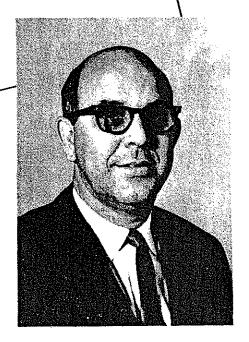
Today we honor the past and are buildings as a means today

Today we honor the past and are buildings as a means today

Today we dedicate buildings to our tord with a

Iiving history. Great Commission. In a larger sense, to addicate ourselves to our tord with a dedicate ourselves us and these buildings arrying out the dedicate ourselves us and these buildings arrying out together to dedicate ourselves us and these buildings arrying out together the pleased to use us and these buildings arrying out together the past of the past o

Welcome to Homecoming!



necessity of ... but did not entirely eliminate ... the colorful old church fans of the day with which the ladies of the congregation, particularly, used to comfort themselves.

Facilities were still far from perfect. It has been recalled, for instance, that the water heater which was installed along with the furnace was not adequate to heat the water for the baptistry. When a baptismal service was to be held, some of the deacons brought hot water from home to fill the baptistry.

INTERESTING EVENTS

Although the early records are incomplete, there are a number of interesting recollections about events at the church over the years:

-During the early 1920's, when the Ku Klux Klan was active in Alabama, a service was interrupted briefly one Sunday evening when members of the Klan, in full regalia, entered the church, and without speaking a word, filed to the front of the church, placed a contribution in the collection plate and, just as quietly, filed out of the church again before the amazed eyes of the congregation.

-Dr. E. G. Stout, a most distinguished-looking gentleman from Birmingham, served as minister from September, 1924 until September 1925. Mr. Thomas H. Rennie, then Superintendent of Avondale Mills, came to hear Dr. Stout's sermons regularly -- even though Mr. Rennie was not himself a Baptist. In fact, Mr. Rennie would often send his chauffeur to Birmingham to drive Dr. Stout to the church on Sundays.

--The church was in the Coosa Valley Association until September of 1928 when, answering a call for petitionary letters, the Pell City Church and several other churches were transferred to the St. Clair County Baptist Association.

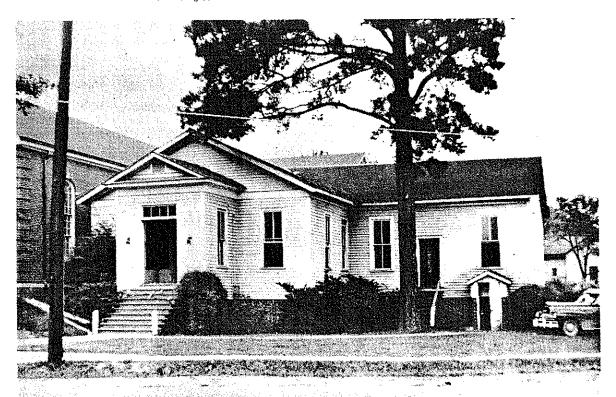
--Members of the church during World War II will always fondly remember the special prayer services held after the Sunday evening services each week for the boys in service and for those who were prisoners of war. These services always ended with the congregation singing "Till We Meet Again."

--Also during that World War II period, when the church was without a pastor, the church was served by Chaplain Waterhouse and Chaplain Stubblefield from Fort McClellan. They occasionally brought servicemen with them, some of whom played the organ and otherwise helped with the services.

MOVES PROPOSED

The original church building gradually gave way to the new building which still occupies the original site. But it might not have been so; on at least two occasions efforts were made to locate the church on another site. In 1928, a recommendation was made to relocate the building on a lot in the same block with the U. C. Martin residence (it is believed that this referred to property in Block 19, across the street from the present Post Office Building).

And again in 1933, Mr. Sumter Cogswell proposed to trade or exchange two lots in Block



22, directly northwest of the Courthouse Square, for the lots where the present First Baptist Church stands. On both occasions, however, the proposals were eventually rejected.

The first major expansion program was undertaken during Rev. Joe Bancroft's term as pastor (1937-1939), when an annex was added to the old building to provide more space in the sanctuary as well as additional classrooms.

In the early forties the church membership had reached 350 and the urgent need for more room became apparent. World War II was underway and building materials were not available, but it seemed a good time to launch a building program. A plan was set up to purchase a bond a week, so funds would be available by the time construction could begin.

The church had acquired the triangular plot of land across from the church, from Avondale Mills in 1941, and in 1947 the old pastorium (the house in which Mrs. Roy Holladay now lives) was traded for the house and lots adjacent to the church, owned by V. H. Padgett.

Found in the church minutes was a letter written in May, 1947 to the W. B. Lawley family, thanking them for the beautiful new church organ. Rumor is that no one knew there was going to be a new organ until they arrived for the Sunday morning services and found the organ installed in the church, its crate discarded on the front lawn.

BUILDING PLANS BEGIN

By May 1948, an architect had been employed and building plans were well underway. Late in 1947, the church had recalled Rev. J. W. Fagan as pastor and the Fagans lived in the Padgett home while the new pastorium was under construction. An October, 1948 bulletin announced: "The new pastorium is finished! Total cost, near \$22,500."

The following year, on July 14, 1949, at 7:30 p.m. a ground-breaking ceremony for the new

church was held. Mr. Hugh Comer was speaker for the occasion; the site was brightly lighted by floodlights, and an aura of excitement pervaded the scene.

Actually, it was to be a work night, also. Brick, sand and slag had been hauled in (Mr. J. A. Honeycutt used his truck to haul in much of the materials as his contribution to the building). The lot was graded, a retaining wall had been built, and the church members hoped to see the foundation completed before the night was over. While the men worked, the ladies served sandwiches, coffee and tea. The following week, the local paper published pictures showing Barnett Lawley, Bob Turner, Sonny Kilgroe, Jimmy Duran, Littleton Yarbrough and Billy B. Yarbrough--all small youngsters then--pitching in to help build the new church. And so, the new Pell City First Baptist Church was well on the way to becoming a reality, with literally all the members pitching in to help.

The first contributions to the building fund had been made by two widows--Mrs. Sudie King and Mrs. W. O. Dycus.

FIRST SERVICE HELD

And on September 24, 1950, the big day arrived. The first service was held in the new building with Rev. J. W. Fagan delivering the message. Also the first wedding was held that same day, when Miss Helen Bain and Mr. Billy Ray Purdy were married by Rev. Fagan.

Among other "firsts" in the new church were: --On October 8, 1950, Brother Orville David Duran was ordained for the gospel ministry.

-On October 8, 1951, "after a wonderful sermon by our pastor, Brother J. W. Fagan, the following came and offered themselves to the service of our Lord: Brother Laney Bain, Richard Moore and Don Hyde."

--On October 28, 1951, the church accepted the recommendation of the Presbytery that



Brother William Laney Bain be ordained to the ministry. Richard Hunt Moore later was ordained on June 1, 1958.

Still continuing to expand, the church obtained additional lots in Block 7 in 1955 and again 1956. In 1960, the final lot was obtained so the church now owns the entire block on which it sits. Included in this property was the house which has been used for the minister of music and is now utilized as a Youth Center. The church membership was nearing 500 by 1958, and the Deacons recommended that a building fund be started for future expansion to provide room needed for a greater church program.

MUSIC DEPARTMENT EXPANDED

By this time, the church was growing steadily in all departments, and the Music Ministry also came in for its share of expansion.

During the early years, the choir had been directed by such well-known men as J. L. Ragland, J. B. Cagle, Leroy Truitt and E. F. Lee, In 1956, Brother R. S. Holliman was called as part-time Minister of Music. In August, 1959, he was given these duties on a full-time basis.

Later the music program was expanded to include the Youth Choir, Men's Chorus, Ladies' Chorus, and Children's Choirs. Mrs. J. Rogers Moore served for years as organist. Terry Kirkland and Jimmy Jones later served as organist. Our present organist, Millie Ann Lawley has been the faithful organist for several years.

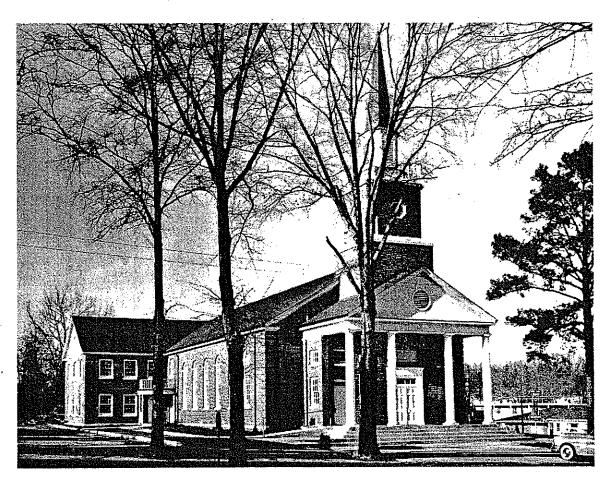
Music directors have included John B. Maderra, Tommy Black, Bill McGuin, Wayne Vaughan and Bob Rosser. Only recently, the church has called Dennis Meilstrup as Minister of Music and Youth.

Rounding out the building program, the new Education Building was added in 1963 when Dr. Austin F. Staples, Jr. was pastor. The sanctuary was remodeled in the late Fall of 1970, under Rev. I. Cole Skelton, the present pastor.

A new and exciting aspect of the church's program began in early 1970, when an expanded youth program was launched and a new church bus was purchased. Already it has been used for a choir tour into Florida, several trips to Atlanta and Callaway Gardens on field trips and for a Youth Retreat, trips to State Youth Conventions and to several ball games.

And so, the First Baptist Church of Pell City has arrived at its present point in history-having grown from 18 charter members in 1903, to its present membership 650, with plans for future growth and expansion of its programs.

The Lord has blessed First Baptist Church in a wonderful way. TO HIS GLORY WE BUILD.....



	<u>Pastor</u>	Clerk	Treasurer
1903	Rev. Burns	M. M. Smith	
1904 1905	Rev. Burns Rev. L. M. Stone	M. M. Smith	
1906	Rev. L. M. Stone Rev. L. M. Stone	C. B. Alverson P. M. Mathews	
1907	J. A. Hendrick	P. M. Mathews	
1908	J. A. Hendrick	John Mewburn	
1909 1910	Joe Veasey Joe Veasey	John Mewburn John Mewburn	
1911	Joe Veasey	John Mewburn	
1912	J. G. Lowery	J. H. Willingham	
1913 1914	J. G. Lowery J. G. Lowery	J. H. Willingham J. H. Willingham	
1915	J. L. Aders	J. H. Willingham	
1916 1917	J. L. Aders	J. H. Willingham	
1917	Carl Cunningham W. C. Cooper	J. H. Willingham J. H. Willingham	
	J. W. Inzer	J. H. Willingham	
1921	Anderson	J. H. Willingham	
1922	Älbert R. Bond D. D. Head	J. H. Willingham J. H. Willingham	S. D. Kilgroe
1923	D. D. Head	J. H. Willingham	J. 2. 11mg/ 00
1924	D. D. Head	J. H. Willingham	
1925 1926	Rev. E. G. Stout Bro. R. H. Parker	J. H. Willingham J. H. Willingham	
1927	Bro. J. T. Renfroe	J. H. Willingham	
1928 1929	R. W. Stuckey	J. H. Willingham	J. H. Willingham
1930	Claude Bridges	J. H. Willingham J. H. Willingham	J. H. Willingham
1931	R. R. Brasher	J. H. Willingham	J. H. Willingham
1932 1933	R. R. Brasher R. R. Brasher	J. H. Willingham	J. H. Willingham
1934	R. R. Brasher	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland
1935	R. R. Brasher	J. L. Ragland	J. L. Ragland
1936 1937	J. R. Bancroft J. R. Bancroft	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland	J. L. Ragland
1938	J. R. Bancroft	J. L. Ragland	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland
1939	J. R. Bancroft	J. L. Ragland	J. L. Ragland
1940 1941	J. W. Fagan J. W. Fagan	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland
1942	J. W. Fagan	J. L. Ragland	J. L. Ragland
1943	J. W. Fagan	J. L. Ragland	J. L. Ragland
1944 1945	Simpson Daniels	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland
1946	Simpson Daniels	Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland
1947 1948	I W Faran	Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland
1949	J. W. Fagan J. W. Fagan	Hoyt Hamilton Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland
1950	J. W. Fagan	Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland
1951 1952	J. W. Fagan J. W. Fagan	Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland
1953	J. W. Fagan	Hoyt Hamilton Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland
1954	J. W. Fagan	Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland
1955 1956	J. W. Fagan J. W. Fagan	Hoyt Hamilton Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland
1957	J. W. Fagan	Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragiana J. L. Ragiand
1958	J. W. Fagan	Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland
1959 1960	Q. P. Davis Q. P. Davis	Hoyt Hamilton Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland
1961	Q. 1. Davis	Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland
1962	A. F. Staples, Jr.	Hoyt Hamilton	J. L. Ragland
1963 1964	A. F. Staples, Jr. A. F. Staples, Jr.	Hoyt Hamilton Hoyt Hamilton	Tom Milner Tom Milner
1965	A. F. Staples, Jr.	Hoyt Hamilton	Tom Milner
1966	A. F. Staples, Jr.	Hoyt Hamilton	Tom Milner
1967 1968	A. F. Staples, Jr. A. F. Staples, Jr.	Hoyt Hamilton Hoyt Hamilton	Tom Milner Tom Milner
1969	Cole Skelton	Hoyt Hamilton	Bettie Scott
1970	Cole Skelton	Hoyt Hamilton	Bettie Scott

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1903 1904 1905 1906 1907 1908 1909 1910 1911 1912 1913 1914 1915 1916 1917	S. S. Supt. P. M. Mathews J. W. Allen W. O. Smith T. J. Abbott John Mungall Goodnow J. H. Willingham J. A. Honeycutt J. L. Ragland Thos. Franklin	BYPU or BTU Director	WMU or WMS President
1921 1922 1923 1924 1925	J. L. Ragland J. A. Honeycutt		,
1926 1927 1928 1929 1930 1931 1932 1933 1934 1935 1936 1937 1938 1940 1941 1942 1943 1944 1945 1944 1945 1946 1947 1951 1952 1953 1954 1955 1955 1956 1957 1958 1959 1961 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970	J. L. Ragland J. L. Ragland Roy H. Holladay J. R. Moore J. R. Moore J. R. Moore J. R. Moore F. A. Burroughs Gordon Wilcox Gordon Wilcox C. Smith L. C. Smith C. C. Smith J. C. Smith J	Orwell Parrish Mrs. Lloyd Garrett Bixie Handcock Mrs. Ed Young Mrs. R. M. Walker J. R. Moore Mrs. R. M. Walker Etha Maw Savage Etha Mae Savage Etha Mae Savage Mrs. W. O. Gilmer B. H. Davis Mrs. Sam Dycus Mrs. R. J. Cornett Mrs. Nick Dollar Bill Scott Gordon Wilcox Gordon Wilcox Cordon Wilcox Don Decker A. C. Langner, Jr. Kenneth Bradshaw Kenneth Barber Gordon Wilcox	Mrs. J. H. Willingham Mrs. J. B. Embry Mrs. M. C. Lawley Mrs. Lloyd Garrett Mrs. Lloyd Garrett Mrs. Lloyd Garrett Mrs. Lloyd Garrett Mrs. M. C. Lawley Mrs. H. H. Johnson Mrs. J. H. Hardwick Mrs. J. W. Fagan Mrs. Aaron Smith Mrs. Aaron Smith Mrs. Aaron Smith Mrs. R. S. Hollimon Mrs. Claude Sawyer Mrs. Claude Sawyer Mrs. John Haynes Mrs. John Haynes Mrs. John Haynes Mrs. John Haynes

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MINISTERS FROM CHURCH

INTERIM PASTORS

Chaplain Waterhouse Chaplain Stubblefield Waymon Reece - 1959, 1961-1962, 1970 Jim Bain
William Laney Bain
Orville David Duran
Robert F. (Bob) Gunter, Jr.
Ned Gunter
Richard Hunt Moore

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Pell City, Alabama 1971

Minister
Minister of Music and Youth

I. Cole Skelton Dennis Meilstrup

Official Board of Deacons

Chairman Vice Chairman Clerk

Clarence (Bill) Scott, Jr. Harold King Gordon Wilcox

Cliff Barber Kenneth Barber James L. Bell Doyle Fendley Isadore J. Hardwick A. G. Keller
Roy Mann
John David McClurkin
Aaron Smith
Charles Smith

Harold Smithson

Trustees

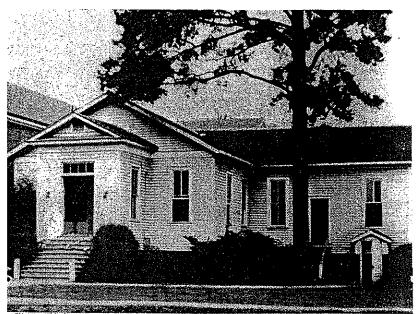
J. Lloyd Garrett

W. Aaron Smith

Church Officers

Clerk
Treasurer
Superintendent of Sunday School
Church Training Director
W. M. U. President
Brotherhood President
Organist
Pianist

Hoyt B. Hamilton
Bettie Scott
A. G. Keller
Gordon Wilcox
Mrs. John E. Haynes
Jach Baggett
Millie Ann Lawley
Mrs. W. Aaron Smith.



PELL CITY FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH—The original building for Pell Sity First Baptist Church stood where the lawn is now (facing Pell City Steak House.) The first service that was held in the present building was on September 24, 1950.