**Seddon Baptist Church—From Fishing Creek to Ferryville to Seddon**

**By Joe Whitten for *Discover Magazine***

**Today, the recreational waters of Logan Martin Lake wash over the abandoned 19th Century towns of Ferryville and Seddon.**

**Ferryville grew up around J. D. Truss’ ferry that connected St. Clair and Talladega Counties, lying across the Coosa River from each other.**

**James David “J. D.” Truss, the son of Enos and Tabitha Bradford Truss, married Martha Cordellia Coleman, daughter of William and Marannah Roberson Coleman of Riverside, on June 10, 1854.**

**When the Civil War began in 1861, Truss and a group of men met under an apple tree in Cropwell, and organized Company C of the 10th Alabama Infantry Regiment, with J. D. Truss as Captain. Thirty-three years after the war, his obituary in *The Southern Aegis*, February 1, 1899, told of his courage, leadership, and love for his companions, but also spoke of his compassion for all people, rich or poor.**

 **The June 30, 1876, issue of *The Southern Aegis*, published an unsigned letter, titled “Ferryville, Ala.” It stated that Ferryville “…is a little village situated on the banks of the Coosa River.” They listed Ferryville’s businesses as “…a carriage shop, a blacksmith shop, a post office, a good Templer’s Lodge, a Baptist church, and the dry goods house.” Post office records show that in 1868 Sylvester Coolidge served as the Ferryville Postmaster.**

 **W. H. Cather wrote a series of St. Clair County history articles in 1897 for his newspaper, *The Southern Aegis*, which he established in 1872. In 1972 the St. Clair County Library Board transcribed Cather’s articles and printed them as his *History of St. Clair County*. One article, titled “An Indian Story,” tells of Ferryville’s connection with the Indians.**

**W. A. Coleman, of Riverside, took his four-year-old son, Sidney, to Coleman’s father-in-law, John Roberson, to visit with his grandparents in Ferryville. By the second day, Sidney wanted to go home, and while everyone was busy, he started out.**

**“He had not gone far,” Cather wrote, “until an Indian by the wayside saw him and knowing him, followed him for the purpose of protecting him…. On arriving at home, little Sidney fell down on the doorsteps with the exclamation, ‘Ma, I thought I would never get to your house anymore.’ The Indian who had watched him through the forests, followed in immediately after him, and of course, there was great alarm until it was all understood.” Cather said Mr. Coleman’s eyes filled with tears when he recounted this.**

**Ferryville to Seddon**

**Ferryville flourished until the town of Seddon arose about a mile north with the completion of the Georgia Pacific Railroad in 1880. A June 6, 1942, *Birmingham News* article titled “This Date in Alabama History” tells for whom the town was named. It records that the railroad village of Seddon is “…on the Southern Railroad between Birmingham and Anniston. It was named for Thomas Seddon who…was associated with interests that financed the building of the Georgia Pacific Railroad, now the Birmingham-Atlanta branch of the Southern Railroad.” In a recent interview with Pell City Librarian Danny Stewart, he observed, “Thomas Seddon’s first job was at the Sloss in their railroad section, before he became president of the company.” Seddon died May 10, 1896, and was buried in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia.**

 **The “Seddon” article in *The Heritage of St. Clair County* records the population as 500 when the town was incorporated (1880) and states that some worked at the “…Empire Lumber Company which operated both a sawmill and lumber yard.” It also records that Ferryville families moved from there to Seddon. Mrs. Crow, in her history, wrote “The first merchant [in Seddon] was J. K. P. Lacy. Dr. Harry Green Crump was the first doctor. Other settlers were Jack Maddox, W. H. and W. N. Roberson, and Harvy Bell. When the timber supply was exhausted, the mills moved away.”**

**Today, any memory of Seddon is fading like a sepia tone photograph forgotten in the sun. However, one vibrant entity still survives—Seddon Baptist Church.**

**Organized in 1873 as Fishing Creek Baptist Church, the name changed to Ferryville Baptist Church in 1874. Richard M. Perry served as the first pastor.**

**Early records are scant, and no one knows where the members met for worship before they constructed a building. Nor is there a list of charter members. However, Danny Stewart found that Seddon Baptist sent J. D. Truss as representative, or messenger, to the Coosa River Baptist Association meeting in 1874. So, it’s probable that Truss was a charter member.**

**Seddon Baptist provided a first for that association in 1908, as recorded in *Coosa River Baptist Association*, 1833-1983, by Margaret Keelen Newman. “Early, only pastors of churches of the Association were given messenger status. …The most important change came in 1908 when the Seddon Church sent Mrs. Stella Brothers, Miss Minnie Crump, and Miss Lenola Crump as messengers to the annual meeting. During the afternoon of the second day of a three-day meeting, the accepted messengers voted to enroll the women as messengers.” The church didn’t send a messenger in 1909 but in 1910 sent Miss L. E. Smith and none after. Because of Seddon, other churches began sending women messengers, and in 1913 the Association agreed that “there could be no barring of anyone on the basis of sex.”**

**The date for Seddon Baptist constructing a sanctuary is unclear; however, the July 3, 1889, *Weekly Age Herald* article “Festival at Seddon” reports: “The supper last Friday night given by the ladies of Seddon for the benefit of the new Baptist Church was a complete success, the net receipts accounting $206.05.”**

**The festival also sponsored a “bouquet” contest, “The contest for the bouquet which was to be given to the most beautiful young lady was very exciting and $130.00 was raised from this. Miss Leona Fowler…received the bouquet from Mr. JS Lacy.” A total of $336.05 in 1889 was a grand sum. It seems this money helped construct the first sanctuary.**

**Singings brought together church and community. One for Seddon was announced in *Our Mountain Home*, Talladega, Alabama, May 19, 1909. “There will be an all-day singing at Seddon on the 5th Sunday in May. It will be a Sacred Harp singing and everybody is invited to come and enjoy the occasion. The old-time music is getting a new start among the people of Seddon.” This singing was acapella because the voice itself was the “sacred harp.”**

**Regular worship services flourished in the first sanctuary until the demise of the town. From 1926 until 1938 there was no church in Seddon.**

**What caused this? The town’s economy lay in timber and lumbermills, so when the timber supply ran out, timber companies left. When the timber mills left, people left.**

**Jack Walker, who grew up in Seddon, recalled history he learned from parents and relatives when he wrote of Seddon’s decline. “The clouds of a terrible depression were forming. Mills, factories, and stores were closing down. …Seddon which had been a thriving town was fast falling apart. We had a train depot, a drugstore, a general merchandise store, a grocery store, and other businesses as well as two large churches. Within a year, all these businesses were closed and boarded up. Both churches were closed. …Seddon had become a ghost town.” Walker’s memories were published in the Georgia newspaper, *Jackson Progress-Argus*, May 9, 2008.**

**According to Betty Clements’ *Heritage* article, Ruby Walker was the force behind resurrecting Seddon Baptist Church about 1938. At that time the only surviving church building was the Methodist church owned by Dr. John Roberson. Mrs. Walker met with Dr. Roberson, and he agreed to let the Baptists meet in the building; however, he soon asked them to meet elsewhere.**

**The *Heritage* article relates that Walter and Leona Crump had an unused barn which they let the congregation use for church. The Crumps emptied the barn, cleaned it inside and out, painted the interior and exterior white, replaced the barn doors with two double doors, and added entrance steps. Inside they installed a wood floor. “They raised the floor in front,” she recounted, “so that the men’s choir would be on one side and the ladies’ choir on the other side. In between they built a pulpit. The lighting was kerosene lamps.” The Crumps donated both the building and the property to Seddon Baptist’s trustees.**

**Linda Haynes Grantham recalled girlhood memories of this church. “To get to church, we drove over the railroad tracks and down a slight hill…Seddon Baptist Church sat on the left, a beautiful church painted white. We had a potbellied stove in the sanctuary and a raised choir loft. A huge window fan was in the window on the right in the choir loft that kept us quite comfortable even during hot summers. …Brother [Lewis] Nixon was our minister and Betty Williamson Turner was our talented pianist.” Lewis Nixon was pastor from 1952 until 1957.**

**The church thrived during these years, with yearly revivals announced in the newspaper, as in this *News-Aegis* one of July 21, 1955: “The annual homecoming at Seddon Baptist Church will be held next Sunday. The revival will begin Sunday night. At Sunday’s homecoming, there will be singing and dinner served on the grounds at noon. The public is invited to come and bring a basket ….Rev. J. S. Williams of Pell City, evangelist.”**

**In the 1960s, with the completion of Logan Martin Dam and the Coosa River’s waters filling the lake, Seddon Baptist purchased land on Cropwell Cutoff Road (Hardwick Road) and constructed a brick sanctuary. A *News-Aegis* article of June 4, 1964, announced the dedication to be “…on June 7th at 2:30 p.m. …Bro. Paul H. Mabe will bring the dedication message.”**

**“The new building,” the article continued, “is valued at $27,000.00. However, the work was done by members and friends in the community, thereby saving the cost of labor.” According to the article, Cady Bryan drew the plans and was in charge of construction. Rev. J. Z. Lipham was pastor.**

**The first revival in this building was announced in *The Anniston Star* on August 31, 1963. “The Rev. Barlow Mason, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, will be evangelist for special services at Seddon Baptist Church Sept. 28. The pastor, Rev. J. Z. Lipham announced the services would begin nightly at 7 o’clock.”**

**As the years passed, Seddon Baptist attendance ebbed and flowed as was typical of many churches. Current pastor, Dale Foote, accepted the pastorate when attendance was perhaps at its lowest. In a recent interview, he recollected, “I started as pastor of Seddon Baptist Church in April 1995. That was Easter Sunday, April 16. At that time, we averaged less than ten people a Sunday.”**

**A turning point occurred in February 1996, ten months into Foote’s tenure. The church burned down. “Seddon Baptist Church Destroyed by Fire,” reported Gary Hanner in a February 8 *News-Aegis* article. Hanner quoted Pell City fire Chief Mike Sewell, “It appears the fire started around two gas heaters that were behind the baptistery. I saw a tint of blue in the flame and that let me know that natural gas was involved.” Bro. Dale told Hanner, “When I became pastor, we had six people who came the first Sunday. The last Sunday we met here, we had 60 for the morning service. We’ve had 18 saved and 33 additions to the church... We aren’t going to let this get us down. We will rebuild in the same spot. The Lord sent me here for a reason. I just want people to pray for us.”**

**And it didn’t get them down even though insurance covered only a fraction of the rebuilding cost. “We had $180,000.00 in insurance,” Foote recalled, “and the estimated cost of building back was half a million dollars. We were $300,000 in the hole.”**

**Campers on Mission were a Godsend for the rebuilding. “I have a friend—a general contractor--who is a member of Campers on Mission,” Foote said, “and he helped us to rebuild.”**

**In the March 13, 1997, issue of the *News-Aegis*, Anne Boone wrote of Campers on Mission in her article, “Building churches, fellowship and faith.” She quotes Camper Bill Pilgreen., “We are Christians who travel to…disaster areas that need us.” Boone told of Pilgreen and his wife, who, although living in Pell City, “…set up their camper with others from their organization across the street from Seddon Baptist Church.” Boone reported that other churches, community folk, and community businesses came together to help Seddon Baptist Church in the rebuilding. Some donated food, some time and material. Cropwell Baptist provided their kitchen for preparation of noonday meals for the Campers.**

**At completion, the church owed $90,000.00—a lot of money, yes, but far less than the $300,000.00 insurance didn’t cover.**

**The church’s Fellowship Hall escaped destruction, so the congregation met there for worship, from February 1996 until December 1997. “There were weeks that we didn’t have power or HVAC or water in the Fellowship Hall because of the demolition. We had porta potties,” Foote reminisced, “and we used a kerosene heater in cold weather. We never missed a service.”**

**“Just before Christmas [1997] almost 40 people with active membership at Seddon Baptist held Sunday morning service inside the new church sanctuary for the first time,” Laura Nation wrote in her January 24, 1998, *Talladega Daily Home* article, “Good will breathes new life into church.” Her article announced a revival running from February 16-20 and a February 28 benefit singing featuring the musical group “Assurance.” The building dedication would occur on Sunday March 15.**

**With this new beginning, attendance and membership increased as months turned into years under Bro. Dale’s bivocational ministry. In 2003, attendance had grown to over 100 each Sunday and the church called him as their first full-time pastor.**

**“We filled that building. It held about 150, and we stayed full for years,” Foote recalled. “In 2010, we went to two Sunday morning services, and by the end of that year, we were averaging 300 in the two services.” Although the church desired to expand, the property was land-locked, and no adjacent property was available.**

**One day, Bro. Dale saw the “For Sale” sign at the old 84 Lumber complex on Cogswell Avenue. The property had gone back to the bank, and someone bought it. In 2010 the church located the owner and began negotiations. In 2013, the church made an offer for the property, and the owner accepted it. The church renovated the property for a sanctuary, a children’s worship center, and a youth worship center.**

**So, a facility providing building materials for houses became a facility proving building materials for the soul.**

**On September 24, 2023, Seddon Baptist celebrated its 150th anniversary. On this day Alabama Baptist State Missionary, Ben Edfeldt, presented a certificate of recognition from the Alabama Baptist Association. After the service, the church family enjoyed an afternoon of fellowship, games, and food.**

**Associate Pastor Chris Mayfield first attended Seddon Baptist in 2005 because his girlfriend, Megan Foote, invited him. He continued attending with Megan, and in 2006 he accepted Christ and joined the church. He and Megan married and are parents to two children. Chris serves in several areas, including adults; however, his main area is with children and their Sunday school curriculum. “I’ve been in children’s ministry here for a decade or more, now” Chris commented, “so I’ve had a lot of my former kids come and serve alongside me in children’s ministry.”**

**Chris and Megan work together in the church’s summer Vacation Bible School, an event for the entire surrounding communities. “I write the VBS curriculum and lessons,” Chris said, “and right now I’ve got about four years planned.” Megan oversees the teaching staff, music, and decorations.**

**According to Bro. Dale, VBS is one of the wonderful ministry event of the church. Attendance averages around 300 each summer.**

**Micah Kitchen is minister of Seddon Students. “We seek to encourage and equip students to live their lives to the fullest for Jesus,” he recently commented. “We are passionate about teaching students the Word of God and how to live out their lives to make the Gospel known at home, their schools, and their communities.”**

**Kitchen and his students participate in the First Priority Club at Pell City High School. They also partner with the St. Clair Baptist Association for See You at the Pole Afterparty, and St. Clair County Night of Worship. Yearly student events include Summer Camp and Disciple Now—an event where students stay at host homes, attend study sessions, and spend intentional time in discipleship.**

**Seddon is a traditional Southern Baptist church, having a senior pastor and two associate pastors. However, it differs somewhat from other Southern Baptists in that Seddon has both deacons and elders. “I am privileged to have Biblical elders,” Bro. Dale said. “I have five to eight men who preach here.”**

**Chairman of Elders, Rodney Ray, joined Seddon in 2008. “My wife and I saw the vibrance of the church and how the Word of God was preached. It was so refreshing that we have never left.”**

**Of the church being elder led, Ray said, “We kind of grew into it. As we studied the book of Acts and the Apostle Paul’s epistles, we saw that Paul’s instructions were always to appoint elders. It was plural. We have eight serving as elders, and we call it our Church Council. Three are paid pastors, and five are bi-vocational, or lay pastors.”**

**Each lay elder teaches a class and serves in other areas as well. Ray emphasized that members other than elders also teach classes, “…but I do feel that the teaching and preaching of the Word of God lies with the Elders.”**

**When asked for a comment about Bro. Dale, he said, “There’s a difference between a preacher and a pastor—someone you know was called by God and placed in that position. Dale Foote is at the top of that list. I say that because of the effect he’s had on my life.”**

**Today attendance averages around 400. In 2024, the church hopes to complete a Family Life Center in their complex—a gymnasium-fellowship hall. The church serves all age groups, but the median age is 37 years. “We have wonderful senior citizen members,” Foote commented, “but we are still a ‘young’ church and have been privileged to reach young people.”**

**Bro. Dale’s focus for Seddon’s congregation is that they “Invite, Invest, and Intercede.” Invite someone, invest in them, and pray for them. “Our goal is to continue to share the Gospel and to make disciples,” he said recently. “That doesn’t change; every year, that’s our goal.”**

**Proverbs 3:5-6 is Foote’s favorite Bible passage: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” He has seen the assurance of these verses proved true multiple times in his 29 years of serving God at Seddon Baptist.**

**In 1873 not only was Seddon Baptist Church organized, but Fanny Crosby’s hymn, “Blessed Assurance,” also was published in July of that year. Whether or not Seddon’s congregation sang it that year, we don’t know. However, the assurance of Proverbs 3:5-6 connects well with the hymn’s words:**

***Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,***

***Oh, what a foretaste of Glory divine.***

***Heir of Salvation, purchased of God,***

***Born of His spirit, washed in His blood.***

***This is my story, this is my song;***

***Praising my Savior all the day long*.**

**Knowing this blessed assurance, Foote continues to trust God and His guidance as he and the elders lead Seddon in sharing the Gospel and making disciples.**

**From 1873 to 2024 and onward, Seddon Baptist Church continues faithful as a beacon of hope in a dark world.**