

Elim Baptist Church was organized and managed by men and women who valued hard work, Sunday worship, and Bible education for their children. The roots of Elim Church have been put down deep. The constituting members established a hardworking standard that is continued into the present and is shored up daily to carry Elim Baptist Church into the future. This is an outline of some of the rich heritage shared among one of the families who in 1857 made the decision to charter Elim Baptist Church.

**Catherine Pamella Bacon Wheeler (1781-1879)
and
Robert John Wheeler (1780-1874)**

Information about Catherine Pamella Bacon Wheeler (1781-1879) Charter Member and Robert John Wheeler (1780-1874) Charter Member was obtained from the family records of La Fayne Hodges May and Wyman E. May.

Catherine Pamella Bacon was born on February 10, 1781, in Dorchester, South Carolina. Her father was Thomas Bacon (1742-1812). Thomas Bacon's first wife was Catherine Winn. Thomas Bacon married his second wife Martha Wheeler in 1779. Catherine Bacon moved with her father and his second wife, Martha Wheeler, to Liberty County, GA. Catherine's middle name is also shown as *Parmela, Parmella, and Pamela*.

Robert John Wheeler was born on September 14, 1780, in South Carolina. The Wheeler name also appears as *Wheler*.

Robert John Wheeler (1780-1874) married Catherine Pamella Bacon on June 5, 1806. He was 26 years old at the time of his marriage. Catherine was 25 years old. Their first child was born in 1810 and lived a short time. They had three more children who were:

Thomas B. Wheeler (1816-1896)
Sarah A.M. Wheeler (1818-1849)
Henry John Ripley Wheeler (1822-1881)

Brother Robert and Sister Catherine's son, Henry John Ripley Wheeler married Zilpha Brewer Wheeler. Zilpha Brewer Wheeler was a charter member of Elim Baptist church.

Brother Robert and Sister Catherine were the oldest members of the group who organized Elim Baptist Church in 1857. Brother Robert was 77 years old at the time and Sister Catherine's was 76 years old. They would have been active in the church of the brush arbor and familiar with a circuit rider on horseback being a pastor of several far-flung churches, visiting one each Sunday in succession. The members of the early congregation of Elim Baptist Church were fortunate to have Brother Robert to guide them, especially during the early 1860's when most of the men of the church were heavily involved in military service. The congregation must have received a great measure of confidence from him. Brother Robert certainly would have had the mentoring in his youth from his father who lived at the time that the United States was established

as a nation under God. Brother Robert, along with all the charter members, gave a great deal of encouragement, service and support to Elim Baptist Church. The very presence of Elim Baptist Church being constructed in the brush arbor was an answer to prayer. The members of the first congregation carried a strong vision. The covenant of Elim Baptist Church answers the questions of what they wanted to do, the purpose of the church, and the people they were trying to reach. The early members discovered by many prayer commitments what God was calling the church into existence to accomplish.

During the first two decades after Elim Baptist Church was chartered, Brother Robert and Sister Catherine had 15 grandchildren attending the church. Brother Robert was 94 years old at the time of his death. Sister Catherine was 98 years old at the time of her death. They leave a legacy of hardworking, church-going, and faithful children, grand children and many great(s) grandchildren. A number of their descendants have greatly contributed to the advancement of Elim Baptist Church and other Baptist churches in the area.