

B. Way Writes Early History Elim Church

A history of Elim Church covering a hundred years, located at that time in Liberty County, Georgia, but by legislative division, now Long County.

At this place 100 years ago three acres of land was donated by Jack Way for a place of worship for any denomination that wished to use it. Services were conducted under a bush harbor led by the Rev. Ned Andrews, a Methodist, for many years. Then a log house 18 by 20 feet was built. There was not a nail in this house, the roof of split boards was fastened on with wooden pegs, the seats were logs with one side hewn flat. The two posts fastened with pegs. The seat for the preacher was made the same way and the house had no door shutters. The people worshipped here many years.

Later a plank house was built, 30 by 40 feet. The roof and frame were fastened with pegs, the doors were hung with wooden hinges fastened the same way. The boards were sawed by a water mill whose capacity was 200 feet a day. The mill decayed with age but the water became a baptismal pool and is used for that purpose to this day. It was originally owned by Gideon McGowan who donated the lumber. It is now owned by Frank M. Murray, who has been a member and benefactor of the church a long life time. The building was valued at about \$200 and was dedicated by the Baptists as a legal church and they own it this day. The original deed provided that they could have preference, and they took it under the leadership of the Rev. Mr. Brinson, who served them as pastor only a short time.

Later the present building was erected under the leadership of the late Rev. George A. Blount, who served as pastor for many years. This building is modern and valued at about \$600 and has about 100 members. The Rev. Archie Murray is the present pastor.

The church was named Elim, because the Israelites rested over night at the rocks on the side of a hill where they found rest, flowers, peace, water and plenty, and they called the place Elim. The church has had a great number of pastors, some very distinguished, also a great number of able visiting preachers.

Some strange facts about this place: The people first worshipped under a brush harbor led by the Methodist denomination. The land was donated by a Presbyterian. The constituted church was built by Missionary Baptists, and the dedication sermon was preached by a Hard Shell Baptist, who rode a two days journey on horseback carrying his Bible and hymn book in his saddle bags. There were eleven constituting members and they standing on their feet sang the following lines:

Great God thy watchful care we bless
Which gives our feeble plan success,
Here may we oft delight to meet
Our youthful charge at Jesus' feet.
And in that great decisive day
When God the nations shall survey,

May it before the world appear
That crowds were born for glory here.

And now a short sketch of the lives of the people who helped in the promotion of this work.

The man who gave the land was an Englishman, coming to this country when a little boy, and was raised and trained by Presbyterian people. When a young man he acquired land in this community, built a log house and married Miss Sallie DeLoach of McIntosh County. To them a son and daughter were born and they named them John and Sallie. They both lived to a great old age, John, the late John E. Way, became a deacon of Elim church, and so remained until his death, a few years ago.

The original Jack Way, who donated the land, was of a peculiar disposition. By the aid of his Presbyterian friend he procured a good education for that time, but he never applied it to great advantage. He was congenial in manner and greatly respected by his friends and very attractive by reason of his wit and humor. He never became a member of the church and never took any special interest in the church. He applied himself to wild life and was a noted deer hunter, deer being abundant in that day.

The family of the original Jack Way, who gave the land for the church, were all devoted members, but the old man never attended its service but once. His disposition and manners differed him from the common people, yet he was attractive to the extent that the judge of the high court on one occasion invited him to a seat on the bench with him, and the old man was game to accept, to the great amusement of all present.

In that day, the community was composed of the Shaws, McGowans, Brewers, Wheelers, Fosters, Hodges, Bentons, Zorns and Ways. The Shaws furnished for the church four clerks, all of which signed their names J.L.

In those days this was a virgin country, laden with long and short leaf pine trees, dense swamps and forest where wild game abounded. The range was great for live stock on which the people mostly lived. They planted small patches of corn and ground it for bread on hand mills. There were no mules and buggies and few horses. The ox and cart did most of the agricultural work and the people were happy.

A pleasing incident of interest to me, is that the first Sunday School at Elim was organized and superintended by a woman. She was a Miss Wheeler. This is the first and only Sunday School the writer ever connected himself with, but it ran for many years under the woman leadership. I would like to attend another like it at this day. There were no strings or red tape to it. It had no special fashions, rules or customs. It was strictly educational and was a beacon light in this community. This great woman is dead. All the constituting members are dead and I see only four members living today that were members 50 years ago. There is a new set and their customs differ from ours.

There is no date on the article. The date of writing was a few years after the death of Brother John E. Way in 1922. Mr. William Byron "B" Way died in 1934.