

THE CHURCHES

By Annie Phinney

The Catholic Church

I'm not sure about when the church was started, but I think it was built in the 40's. The people were very poor and had no way to finance the building but they were not undaunted by lack of funds. The ladies went to work and made hot tamales week after week. They slowly but surely kept at it until the church was built. You might say it is the church that hot tamales built. I have been there to the funerals of my friends. I didn't understand a word that was said in Spanish, but that didn't keep me from feeling their grief. Love and music are universal. If you have these, you don't need to understand Spanish. The members of the church are an asset to the city of Coahoma.

The Presbyterians

In 1898, the faithful Presbyterians met in the school house north east of the village. It wasn't until 1898 that Dr. Zisaely of the First Presbyterian Church in Big Spring helped organize the church in Coahoma. Charter members were Mrs. A.E. Shive, Alice Shive, Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Shive and their children Bertha, Percy, Leroy, Iva Mae, and DeWitt, Mrs. Sarah McQuerry and sons Pon, Ira, and Bradley, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Guthrie and son Vernon – a total of 16 members. The original church was a modern structure on the south east corner of section twenty-seven, three miles from the village. It was later destroyed by a storm and rebuilt and in constant use until it was moved to Coahoma in 1910. The present structure was built in 1911 and is in use today. The membership has grown from 16 to 72.

Mrs. Guthrie used to come to our house by horse and buggy and pick up my sister and me to take us to Sunday School which was held in the afternoon. We were in the "Card Class." The cards resembled the modern sport, cards. They had a biblical picture on the front and memory verse and a few comments on the back. Mrs. Ada Owens was the teacher and she went to a lot of trouble to keep us interested. She made a little booklet of verses, lace and beads to keep our cards in. It was a great privilege to go there. Mr. Guthrie was always called on to pray and he would stand with his face toward heaven and begin, "Almighty God." You could feel a holy reverence in that church when he prayed. No finer example of Christianity existed than Mr. Guthrie. He has been missed by all who remember him.

The church had, at one time, a pastor and wife who were from England. One day when I was about 15 years old, my mother had to go to town for supplies. Of course, we had to go by wagon and team. I didn't want my friends, who mostly had cars, to see me in the wagon. Mother went in the store but I stayed in the wagon. Along came Mrs. Thorn, the pastor's wife and she paused to look at the horses. In her English accent, she said, "What lovely horses, much nicer than a car." I really felt humiliated at that remark.



We enjoyed going to the Christian Endeavor, the Christmas trees, and May Day, which Mrs. Lyles, the doctor's wife, conducted. It was a great time for kids to grow up. I'll always be thankful to the Presbyterian church for the Christian leadership we enjoyed as kids growing up.

The Methodists

When Coahoma was only two years old, a local preacher living in Colorado City organized a mission church. The first parsonage was later built at the corner of College and McGettes. Church services were held in the school house and the Presbyterian Church. The first church house was built in 1910 at the corner of Main and Central. This wood structure served the congregation for thirty years and in the spring of 1939, the present rock structure was erected. During that same time the present parsonage was bought in Lubbock and moved alongside the church. The church in the early days of its ministry was a part of the Big Spring and Colorado City circuit. Some of the other stations on the circuit were R Bar, Elbow, Axter Point, Moore, Erath, and Vincent. In 1940, the church became a full charge. I attended the Methodist Church a lot when I was young. Services at the Baptist church were only held one Sunday a month.

I remember Mrs. Joe Cramer who was a very faithful member. She was a beautiful woman with white curly hair and had the voice of an angel. She always sang alto and she could make any song in the congregation sound like voices of heaven. I can still hear her singing, "Twilight is Stealing Over the Lea." What a privilege to have had my visits to the Methodist Church. There was Frank Logan leading the singing. Frank was a man who was at home with any song. Hymnals were always printed with shaped notes because people who had no instruments of any kind and could read "shaped notes" could sing a song that they had never seen before perfectly.

Primitive Baptists

The primitive Baptist Church was built about 1906 on South 5th Street. I know uncle Johnnie Hale and Wheeler and Ida Graham helped. I think Louise Graham Evans had a picture of men working on the building and Louise was in a baby buggy. She was six months old at the time. Services were held there for years and finally the congregation grew so small that they all moved to Big Spring. The old building was torn down sometime during the depression.

The story was told that Tollie Hale (my dad), and Henry Wheeler were just teenage boys. On Sunday, uncle Johnnie Hale was getting ready to go to church. There would be a special service that day, a foot washing. Tollie and Henry were just full of meanness, so they got uncle Johnnie's socks and turned them wrong side out and wiped the black off of a stove pipe. They let uncle Johnnie put them on and go to church. When it was time for the solemn and sacred foot washing, uncle Johnnie pulled off his socks and exposed a very black foot. Embarrassed as he was he just laughed and said, "Them dang boys." I guess he knew who did it.



Baptists

The Baptist Church was organized in 1891 and called D.W. Adams as pastor. Charter members were: D.W. Adams, Mr. and Mrs. Murry, C.J. Robinson, Fannie Rhoten, Mr. and Mrs. Sawers, Charlie Sawers, Ms. Jeoris Sawers, Ms. Samantha Sawers, Alice Stowell, Ms. Cynthia Weaver, and Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Wheeler. Services continued to meet in the home of C. J. Robinson and F.T. Murry until the first school house was built in 1892. The church met in the school house until 1907. They built the first church house in the south west corner of Coahoma. It was then they changed the name to Coahoma Baptist. The next building was a big square building located on the north east corner of the Shive Gin lot. This building was a big square building with a pot bellied stove in the middle. There was a small rectangular opening in the stove to rake out the ashes. The opening measured about 5x14 and there was an old man who always chewed tobacco. Occasionally he would turn from his front seat, put his fingers on his lips and squish a stream of tobacco and hit this little opening every time. It always gave my sister and I an excuse to giggle.

Mr. Hull was a member of a rural church but he always came to our revival meetings. He was always called on to pray and every time he would say "Lord, I thank thee that all's well with us as 'tis." When I was a kid I thought that was very funny, but in my 62 years of married life I have learned to say "I thank thee Lord that all's well as 'tis."

Services were held every fourth Sunday and my mother would walk three miles to town and from Baptist house to Baptist house to "take up money" to pay the preacher. I'm sure if she had asked some of the other churches to help us out they would have, because that's the way we were in Coahoma. Baptisms were usually held in Itan tank. That's where trains stopped to take on water. Forty-one of us were baptized the same day in Itan tank. The water was about waist deep, the mud about ankle deep. Thank God for the modern baptistery. Singings were held from time to time and the people really knew how to sing. They learned to sing by shaped notes because often there was no piano or organ. I can still see Nando Henderson pumping out the beat with his right hand that all the fingers had been cut off. Anyone who missed hearing Frank Logan, Dal Coffman, D.C. Riley and Nando Henderson sing a quartet missed a great blessing.

Church of Christ

The first church was on First and Hoover streets. It was a one story building heated by a potbellied stove. Mr. Fuqua as one of the most devoted members. I used to spend the night with one of my friends, Ms. Smith and I attended the Church of Christ church with her and her family. The church had its majority of new converts in the Spring, since the outside baptizing waters were so cold in the winter.

