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Richland  
Baptist Church

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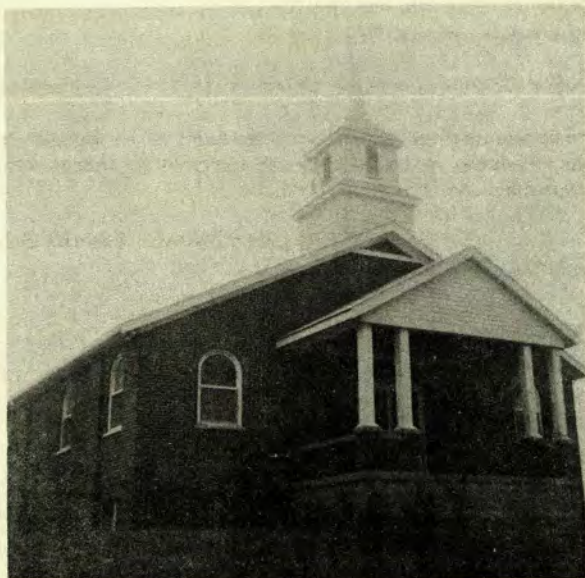
by  
Mrs. Franklin O'Banion

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From  
**A History of Owen County Baptist  
Association and Its Churches**

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## RICHLAND CHURCH HISTORY

One writer has aptly said: "There is no fence or hedge around time that has gone; You can go back and have what you like if you remember it well enough."

In the following historical sketch of Richland Church, effort has been made by research and interviews by the writer twenty-two years ago to record the earliest church life with honorable mention made of those fervent members who occupied the worship seats through Richland many years as a church organization.

All records of the first two churches were lost, but those early happenings were recaptured in a measure by interviewing the older members. Not one that is now living.

Richland Baptist Church was organized in the year 1847, by a group of members from the Mussel Shoals Church. Because of the distance and horseback or by wagon was their only conveyance.

A lot on which to construct the new church was donated by George (Squire) Hill on the Swope Road, where the modern brick home of Mr. and Mrs. June Dews now stands. Logs were hauled by oxen and hewed by hand by John Dews, Sr., Ham Simpson, John Hammonds, John Clifton, Thomas Burford, Sr., Felin and Jacob O'Banion (others I am sure had part). The one-room church also served as the community school.

The first deacons were Joe L. Clifton, George Hill, John Dews and Jacob O'Banion. Rev. A. F. Walker served as the first pastor.

Twenty-two years ago when Daniel Wilson, then 86 years, was asked to give his earliest memories of the church, he recalled a son and daughter of Rev. Baker, singing the following lines of an old Hymn: "You may bury in the East; You may bury in the West; But we'll all rise together in that morning."

Others among the early pastors were Rev. Baker, Tim Cobb, who received the sum of \$25.00 a year; two brothers, Henry and John L. Ballard, Dan Cobb, Elisha Cobb, Jr., Jim Clark, John Burton, and Clark Riley. The church went to twice-a-month services. He received \$75.00 a year.

Mrs. Rose remembered she was converted 62 years earlier during an invitation plea of Rev. John Burton. Families active in Richland Church during those days besides those mentioned were families of J. B. Clifton, Park Perkins, Sr., Henry Gaines, and Jephtha Tingle. Tingle and J. B. Clifton were made deacons in 1887.

At this time, the membership had outgrown the old building and Thomas Burford Sr., donated a plot of ground sufficient for a new building, a church yard, and a cemetery on what is now highway 227 where the present church now stands.

The best of the logs from the old church were sawed and used in the second church again in the church that burned.

Bart Rose, now deceased, recalled how as a boy of 17 he helped the carpenters, Ben Warner and Nelse Towles to construct the second church. The church was to be dedicated October 1, 1889. Oldsters recall the sudden death of Jake Romans, whose funeral was announced for the same day, but those staunch and determined Baptist were not to be delayed in their dedicatory plans. After much deliberation, the order was somewhat changed, with the funeral at 9 A. M., the first service, and the body of Jake Romans the first body interred in the new cemetery.

Rev. Tim Cobb was pastor, Rev. J. W. Perryman preached the dedicatory sermon at 11 A. M. That night the church entered upon a four-week revival with Rev. Perryman as Evangelist, during the revival 62 souls were saved. One of them was Dock Tolbert, a man of 61 years.

Recalling revivals, the one held 12 years later in 1900 is considered the greatest revival in the history of the Richland Church. Rev. Tom Ellis was pastor, and Rev. Tom Marksberry was Evangelist. There were 120 confessions. Dating from this period, other pastors were Reverends John Hayden, Lewis Thompson, Jack Head, Henry Holbrook, and Henry Hunter. During Rev. Hunter's ministry, another outstanding revival was held with Rev. Gip Prather, a young college student, as the Evange-

list. His messages were so inspiring and realistic that the crowds overran the church and services were held in the yard. Fifty-eight were added to the church.

Deacons added at this time were: Will Bell, George Vance, Charlie Hammonds, George B. Glass, Daniel Louis Lusby, John Edward Lusby, Jep Dempsey and T. O. Prather, who was later Judge of Owen County.

The next pastor, Rev. J. A. Lee, served for nine years. The crowds increased until it was not unusual for the aisles to be filled with many standing. To prove how eager and responsive the members were for a larger church, when 361 were asked to contribute 360 responded. Jacob O'Banion is possibly the only one to help in building all three churches. When the second church was built, he was a middle aged man, and when the third church was built, he was a man of 90 years. When Rev. Lee asked him to contribute he remarked: "I have no money to help, but I have logs you can have all you need." Bart Rose who had a sawmill, volunteered to saw them free. The two possibly contributed more than any others toward the third church.

O'Banion took his team to Eagle Creek, dug trees and transplanted them to beautify the grounds of the second church. These trees stood as a monument to him. He died February, 1924 at the age of 97. These trees can be seen in a picture of the third church.

In Aughtst, 1918, a beautiful country church with four Sunday School rooms and baptistry costing \$6,375 was completed, debt free, and dedicated at the same time the Owen County Association convened. Rev. W. D. Powell, Secretary of the State Mission Board, was speaker for the dedication.

A home-coming was held in September of 1918 with Governor McCreary as speaker. Rev. J. A. Lee contributed much to Richland's growth and will always be remembered with love and gratitude by the members.

This history would not be complete without recalling some of the saintly mothers who, though never taking active parts, helped by their presence and prayers to make the church the monument it became. Among those were Amanda Rose, Susan O'Banion, Josie Perkins, Susie Gaines, Aura Belle Vance, Fannie Hill, Barbara Wilhoite, Lucy Gaines, Angie O'Banion and many more.

Many a man and woman in their seventies, no doubt, recall Miss Parthenia Buford as their first Sunday School teacher. She also served as Sunday School Secretary for years. Mrs. Bobbie Tolbert labored faithfully with the young folk; Mrs. B. Rose was another faithful teacher; Mrs. Addie Davis, Although of another faith, served for eight years as organist on the first organ purchased in 1900.

Other pastors during more recent years are: F. G. McConnelly, Orlie Hale, Levi Kemper, Andy Tate, Luther Peak, David Puckett, and E. E. Sexton. With half time preaching, then back to one-fourth, the church entered full-time services during the ministry of Rev. Sexton, and full time services have continued.

In August of 1938, a young man from the seminary, George Philips, was called, and during his three and one-half years, the church was remodeled and redecorated with new seats, new carpets, draperies and two new Sunday School rooms added.

A room for Junior boys was requested by them on Sunday at evening services. They received such co-operation, although the room was not completed, the seventeen boys (now all with families) had a room all their own fully paid for by the next Sunday.

The first Bible School was held during Rev. Philips ministry with 83 in attendance. A school bus was used for conveyance and attendance during this period is the largest on the record of the church.

Richland congregation then felt the need of a pastor on the field and called Rev. C. H. Hamby soon afterward they purchased as a parsonage the property of John Cooke near Hesler.

Rev. W. T. Dunaway came to the church in October of 1944, having held a revival there in August. During his ministry, a basement was added and a new heating system. The church trebled its missionary offering to 15% of all collections. Deacons serving at this time were: Frank Rose, Elmer Neal, Tilden Rose, Walter Gaines, Roger Kingcade, John H. Perkins, Oldham Rose, and Anthony Giles.

Tilden Rose was a teacher of the Adult Men's Class for 30 years. Walter Gaines taught the Intermediate boys, and Mrs. Walter Gaines the Primary Class for many years. John Smith Gaines, son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Gaines, is the only member to enter the ministry. He is now pastor of Burning Side Baptist Church, Harrodsburg, Kentucky.

Many of our young men served in World War I and II. But all returned except Ralph Rose in World War I. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Rose.

Other pastors were Marvin Byrdwell, W. T. Bassett, J. A. Johnson, and Rufus Owens, a brilliant young man who met a tragic death soon after leaving Richland for Kuttawa Church. He, his father, and brother-in-law, were all drowned while fishing on Kentucky Lake.

Charles Hedrick served one year as pastor followed by Jerry Privette of Concord, N. C. During his ministry, February 13, 1960, during one of the worst blizzards of the season on Saturday night, Richland Church burned around 11 P. M. At 10 A. M. Sunday morning, the pastor, deacons and several members met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Billie Wash to make plans for rebuilding the fourth church. Services were held each Sunday at Bethany School House until in January when the basement was completed so services could be held. On Sunday, 2:30 P. M. July 16, 1961, the new modern \$41,500 church was dedicated to the glory and edification of God.

The 40 x 76 ft. building has 14 average Sunday School rooms, Pastor's study, church office, specially built nursery, modern kitchen, seating capacity of 180 in the auditorium, and two rest rooms.

The story of the rebuilding of Richland Baptist Church is a story of courage, hope, and mutual dependence upon each one and complete dependence upon God. It was built for his Glory and was dedicated for that purpose.

Some of the former members sent generous offerings, as well as pleasant memories of the older churches, such as the old stile block when ladies traveled by horseback, when all the older mothers wore ruffled black bonnets and dresses touching the floor.

We learned there are still Samartians waiting to help in God's cause. Miss Sara L. Bacon, knowing only a former member, sent monthly check to the amount of \$700.00.

Those serving on committees in rebuilding the new church were: Mr. and Mrs. Reat Clifton, Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Kingcade, Mr. and Mrs. Edd Rose, Mr. and Mrs. Orvill Rose, Mrs. Vade Taylor, Mrs. Fannie O'Banion, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Rowlett, Mr. and Mrs. June Dews, Roscoe Wiley, Billie Wash, Roger Kingcade, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Juett, and serving in every capacity, our faithful pastor, Rev. Jerry Privette. Only two other pastors have served, Rev. Wallace York, and in April 1964 Rev. Wayne Kelly came to lead. By his gentle Christ-like manner, the Church has grown spiritually and in attendance.

Deacons are now Walter Gaines, Ernest Gaines, G. W. Kingcade, Roger Kingcade, Roy Melvin Minch, and Billy Wash.

It is hoped that Richland, as an organized congregation, will continue for a long time to come and uphold its former tradition as a doctrinal church, an evangelistic church, a missionary church, and a church of unity.

The sixth generations in some families are now carrying on the mission started by their forefathers.

May Richland Church always be a beacon light for lost souls.

Material has been gathered from various sources by the writer, and if some pastor, deacon, or some early or even later church family is omitted, it was not done intentionally.

Written by Mrs. Fannie O'Banion