

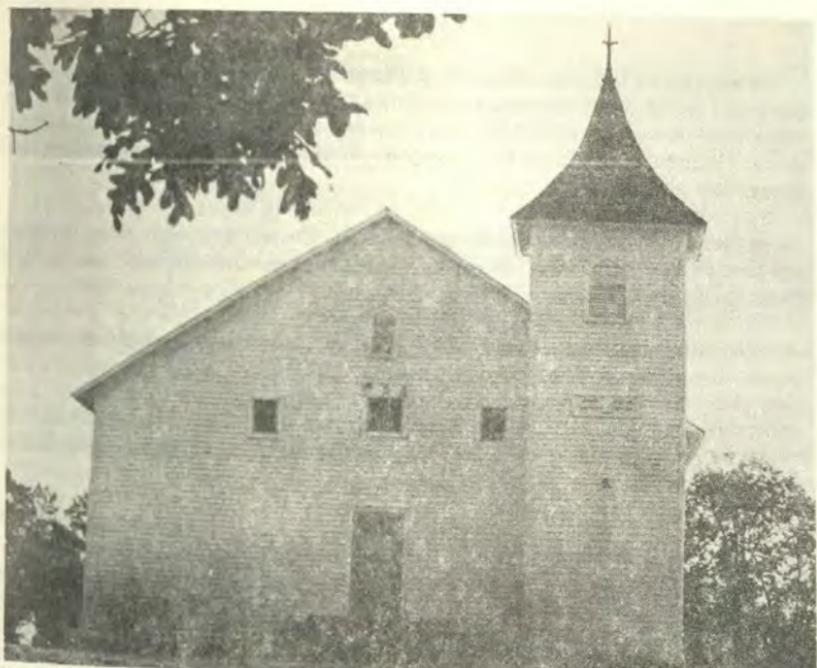
NORTHERN KENTUCKY VIEWS PRESENTS:

Mussel Shoals Baptist Church

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

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MUSSEL SHOALS BAPTIST CHURCH

Founded in 1817

In his History, J. H. Spencer says, "John Reese was among the early settlers on Eagle Creek, and is supposed to have gathered Mountain Island Church, on the eastern border of what is now Owen County, as early as 1802. He ministered in this church a few years, and then moved to Indiana, where he spent the remainder of his life.

"Benjamin Lambert succeeded John Reese as pastor of Mountain Island church, as early as 1813, perhaps several years earlier. About last named date, he established a preaching place near Mussel Shoals on Eagle Creek. Here he gathered a church, which he constituted, with the aid of John Scott and John Searcy, October 11, 1817. To this congregation, which took the name of Mussel Shoals, and to the church at Mountain Island, he continued to minister till 1820. At that date, he followed his predecessors to Indiana, where he labored in the ministry till the Lord called him home. Mountain Island Church was finally absorbed by that of Mussel Shoals, and the latter has continued a large and flourishing body, to the present time.

Rev. J. W. Waldrop, writing in 1912 about Samuel Cobb, who settled not far from Lusby's Mill in the 1790's, says that Samuel Cobb's six sons were Thomas, John, William, Daniel, Elisha, and Asa, and that "five of the eldest were in the planting of Mussel Shoals Church, in October, 1817".

Stratton O. Hammon from his research believes that most of the settling in the Mussel Shoals community began settling on the Roaring River (a tributary of the Yadkin) in what is now Wilkes County, North Carolina, sometime before 1779.

A search of Wilkes County records reveals names which are also a part of the original membership of the Mussel Shoals Church. The minutes carry many names which are still familiar in Owen County, Stampers, Hammons, Holbrooks, Morgans, Cobbs, Martins, Alexanders, and numerous others.

It must be remembered that in 1817, Owen was not yet a county, but became so in 1819. The part where Mussel Shoals was located had been in Scott County.

From the minutes: Oct. 1817. At a church meeting held at Mussel Shore The Second Saturday in October 1817 after prayer proceeded to business first read by experience Thomas Morgan franes macormac Sary Hammons Sary Osburn Sary Obanion Levana fortner Elizabeth holbrook mary purkins william holbrook John winscott Nancy Holbrook Benjamin Lambert.

Elisha Cobb, Clk."

"At a call meeting held at the Mussel Shoals the third saturday (October) in 1817--after prayer proceeded to business Chosen Brother Elisha Cobb Clark read summary of rules brought forward by Bro. Elisha Cobb for the government of this Church unanimously agreed for to call Bro. Lambert to attend us on our sated(?) meeting of business. Chosen Bro. John Orsburn deacon Chosen Bro. John Osburn moderator Read by Experience mary morgain ooly Clifton Benjamin Lambert.

Elisha Cobb Clk.

Agree to appoint Bro John Cobb and Elisha Cobb to prepare a table for the meeting house, agree to appoint Brother Thoams Cobb to see Mr. Warren to prepare a seat for the meeting house and timber for the soire.

Elisha Cobb, Clk.
John Osborn, Mo.

At the muscle shore meeting House a meeting held the sed sarturday in Febr. 1818 after prayer proceeded to business unanimously agreed to call Bro Lambert, our preacher.

Elisha Cobb, Clk.

Rev. Edgar L. Morgan says that there have been four church buildings. The first building was small and crude and perhaps had only a dirt floor. It was located far to the east of the crown of the hill in what is known as the old cemetery. This information he had from his Uncle John Cobb, born in 1847.

As a reader studies the membership in those early days, as recorded in the minutes, it is apparent that members were dismissed or excluded almost as often as they were taken into the church. Sometimes they were restored or re-instated.

The Concord Association (1821-1906, as reported by Rev. J. W. Waldrop) was constituted at White's Run Church, Gallatin County (now Carroll) on the 28th and 29th days of September, 1821. Mussel Shoals Church was received at the Ninth Session meeting at Long Ridge Church on August 4, 1829. The Concord Association met with Mussel Shoals Church four times within the period covered by Bro. Waldrop's history, 1841, 1861, 1872, and 1900.

This is an interesting abstract from the minutes: "2nd Sat. Augt. 1843. The Church Say they will not Countenance the masonic Institution as they believe it to be of himan Invention."

In this day of hassle over integration, it is appropriate to note on the church roll that many Negroes were of the membership, although the church clerk was far from consistent in spelling "colored". From church roll: Essick of collor; Mill Colored; Dolly, a woman of (color); Bose a woman of color; Evaline a Coulered woman.

Neither was there consistency in the name of the church nor its spelling: From the minutes of Sept. 1847. The baptist church of Jesus Christ at Muscle Shoales. Second Sat. in July 1849. The Bapt Church of Jesus Christ at Muscle Shoals.

Rev. Morgan says that the second church building was located farther west toward the final site, but the second building was not sufficient for the growing community and the final location was selected for a third building about 100 yards away.

Second Sat in Aug 1849. The Bap Church of Christ at Miscal Shoals met--Resolved that we build a new frame meeting house Forty feet wide and Sixty feet long.

This third building is the one that Rev. Morgan remembers from his own childhood and youth. I quote from Him: "Official action in 1849 must have started the building but it was not finished by 1852 as it was still under construction then. In 1854, stone steps were out in place which perhaps marked the completion, or at least of was complete enough for worship to begin in the structure. To my eye it was large, very broad and was adapted to the large community. I suppose at that time this church community was one of the largest in Owen County. This condition lasted for about three decades. (At the 51st Session of the Concord Association, meeting at Dallasburg on August 2, 1871, Mussel Shoals was reported to have 478 members, the most in the Association, where as Owenton had only 116.)

Rev. Morgan continues, "From the west, or south, two doors led into a spacious vestibule. Men and women scrupulously observed the entrance on their own side. Two other doors admitted them into the aud-

entrance on their own side. Two other doors admitted them into the auditorium. At the very entrance was the platform; the pulpit and two posts, upon which lamps were placed when that form of illumination was introduced. Everyone had to pass the preachers and confront a staring congregation. It was very embarrassing if one arrived late for services.

"A seat-high wooden partition ran down the center of the building separating the sexes. Later the pulpit and amen corners were put in the other end of the house but the partition down the center was unchanged."

From minutes for Sec Sat in Aug. 1861: Bros. B. O'Banion, John Perkins, H. Stamper and D. R. Kinman are appt. a vigilance committee to clear the vicinity of the association to a reasonable distance, say 1 mile of all huckstering, wiskey selling or anything else that would be a nuisance to the Religious vorship or business of the Association.

They were getting ready for the Association which was meeting with them on August 23, 24, 25, 1861. The following resolution was voted at the meeting:

"A well written, and sadly expressed resolution was adopted, naming the 30th day of September, 1861, as a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, that the dark cloud of war, then hanging over our beloved country might not settle over our own State, and that the troubles of the nation might in the fear of God be speedily adjusted. This was the saddest meeting ever witnessed by the writer. All appeared to be trembling and fearful, yet strong in faith, and steady in the one purpose of being true to god."

Jesse Holbrook, Clk. L. D. Alexander, Mod."

At the 52nd session of the Concord Association, at Mussel Shoals, the sermon was by Rev. Lewis H. Salin, the well-known converted Jew, born in Bavaria, who was ordained at Long Ridge Church and became such an outstanding preacher.

By 1882 there were only 131 members at Mussel Shoals, certainly a great drop from the 478 members of 1871.

Ordained at Mussel Shoals were Elisha Cobb, Sr. his brother, Asa Cobb, his son, William (known as "Uncle Tim") and Henry Holbrook. These four dedicated men served as pastor at the church, as well as such God-fearing men as Louis D. Alexander, J. W. Waldrop, P. H. Todd, Andrew Suter, Elijah Threlkeld, and others.

Perhaps among the more outstanding of the preachers was Elisha Cobb. Spencer gives his birthplace as South Carolina on February 19, 1794. In contradiction, Stratton O. Hammon reports that written in pencil on the last page of the book of minutes of Mussel Shoals are these words: "Elisha Cobb was born in N. Carolina, Feb. 17, 1794 and emigrated Scot Co. Ky. 1795 joined Mt. Island Church in 1818." Rev. Edgar Morgan has made some investigation, and inclines to the belief that the family of Samuel Cobb went from North Carolina to South Carolina and thence to Kentucky. Spencer, who presumably knew him, says that "perhaps no minister has been more beloved, or more useful, in the field in which he labored."

Asa Cobb's years in the ministry were comparatively few, since his life was cut short by cholera. Spencer says that he enjoyed a good degree of success from his preaching.

William Cobb ("Uncle Tim") Elisha's son, still remembered by some few grandchildren who knew him as the saintliest of men, held pastorates at Mussel Shoals, Cross Roads, Mt. Hebron and other churches, but also acted as a colporteur (or missionary), a term not in use now, to small churches in both Owen and adjoining counties. Many pastors in that period seemed to fill the post of colporteur.

Rev. Henry Holbrook's pastorate at Mussel Shoals carried over well into this century. Still another Cobb, Everett, the great-grandson of Asa, was pastor of the church in 1927 and 1928, until his sudden death.

The fourth church building was built sometime between the time that Rev. Edgar Morgan went out to China in 1905 and his first furlough home in 1911. There was a Centennial celebration in 1917, at the time of the association meeting.

Other ministers known to have been ordained by Mussel Shoals Church include:

Rev. Edgar L. Morgan, and Rev. Eugene Morgan, brothers. Rev. Edgar L. Morgan served as missionary in China and Rev. Eugene Morgan served as missionary in New Mexico. The three sons of Mr. and Mrs. Lonnie Wainscott--Harold, Carl J. and Harry Lee Wainscott.

The most recent ordination service was held at Mussel Shoals Church May 5, 1957 to ordain Rev. John W. Nichol.

August 9, 1959, the Church observed a "Home Coming" and Dedication of five Sunday School rooms.

Times have changed, populations have shifted, but a faithful few carry on at this grand old church. The pastor at present is Rev. Gary Sharp.

Mariam S. Houches
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