

**A History of Unity Baptist Church
1842 – 1992**

This book, celebrating the 150th anniversary of our church, is the result of the contributions of many people. In addition to those below, who have donated their time and effort, we thank those people who have made an invaluable contribution by keeping records of the events that are now part of our history.

Our thanks to -

Ruth Womack McCall
Lillian Womack Alexander
Rev. Larry Ball
William Jewell College
Janice Houf
Nora Campbell

Sesquicentennial Committee:

Dolphrine Korff
Helen Austin
James A. Houf, Chairman

WELCOME

In 1842 Rev. James Suggett and a small group of believers met and organized Unity Baptist Church. In the 175 years since then, the world has undergone a lot of changes.

Two World Wars have been fought. The automobile has replaced the horse and buggy.

We read by electric light instead of kerosene lamps. We communicate by cellular phone and fax machine. Computers do our thinking for us. Man has flown to the moon and back. Microwave ovens can cook a meal in a matter of minutes. Church services are broadcast on television and radio.

In his wildest dreams Rev. Suggett probably never imagined any of those things happening. I wonder if he had any idea that Unity Baptist Church would still be going strong after 150 years.

In many ways, like the world in which we now live, Unity Baptist Church has changed.

The building and the exact location are different. Generations of members have come and gone. A multitude of pastors have served the congregation. Some of the hymns have changed.

A lot has happened in a century and a half, but Unity Baptist Church has stood the test of time. It has survived the fires of destruction, weathered the storms of nature and withstood the trials of life. Although it has changed in many ways, the Unity Baptist Church of 1992 is much the same as it was in 1842. Her name is still Unity, which means "united" or "joined together by one spirit for one purpose". We are still One body of believers, seeking fellowship in One sanctuary, serving One Lord and One Saviour-Jesus Christ, and having faith in One God.

I believe that is why God has blessed this church with a long history and a rich heritage.

Welcome to our Sesquicentennial as we celebrate the past and prayerfully look to the future.

God bless you,

Rev Larry D. Ball
Former Pastor of Unity Baptist

In The Beginning...

The members of the Unity Baptist Church consider it an honor to be able to celebrate the 150th year of its existence. The membership of the church has not grown large during this time but has consistently served the spiritual needs of the community around its location.

Unity Church was established on February 27, 1842 near the small village of Toledo. The founders were James Suggett, Noah Flood and William Jesse. Eleven Baptists of the neighborhood were the charter members, which included Mathen Davis and wife, William Cooper and wife, Churchill Gibbs and wife, Lewis Stark and wife, Samuel Thornhill and James Suggett.

James Suggett served as the pastor for two years with services being held in a log schoolhouse. William Jesse followed Suggett as pastor and served for ten years. It was during his tenure that the first frame church building was constructed in 1848 at a cost of \$1,500.00. The two founders were followed in rapid succession by J.F. Smith, J.D. Gregory, Martin Bibb, W.J. Patrick and W.B. Walthall.

The present building was constructed in 1878 at the cost of \$2,500.00. The congregation has kept the building in good repair, adding a basement in 1952 and seven Sunday School rooms in 1968. Other improvements include vinyl siding, handicapped ramps, a covered walkway to the basement and a steeple.

OUR PASTORS

James Suggett	1842-1844
William Jesse	1844-1856
J. F. Smith	1857
J. D. Gregory	1858
Martin T. Bibb	1859-1866
W. J. Patrick	1867
W. B. Walthall	1868-1874
M. T. Bibb	1875-1877
J. M. McGuire	1878-1879
W. H. Burnham	1880-1887
S. K. Pollard	1888-1882
W. H. Burnham	1893-1897
J. T. Nevins	1898
E. J. Sanderson	1899-1903
L. T. Barger	1904-1911
Samuel Eaton	1912-1913
J. S. Allen	1914
E. J. Sanderson	1915-1920
J. W. Kettner	1921
J. C. Owen	1922
S. S. Stephenson	1923
S. L. Palmer	1924
A. R. Cole	1924-1931
K. E. Magruder	1932-1935
Merrill Hatcher	1936-1939
John Ross	1940-1941
Kenneth Parks	1942
Delbert Admire	1943-1955
Irvin K. Rice	1956
James Rice	1957-1959
Darrel Jackson	1960-1961
Don Allcorn	1962-1966
James Marcum	1967-1969
David Edens	1970-1975
Jodie Jackson	1976-1977
Wendell Forman	1978-1979
John Foley	1980
Delano Lewis	1981-1988
Larry Ball	1989-Present

OUR CHURCH DEACONS

Deacons ordained after 1880:

September 1901

Joe Smith
S. S. Brooks
N. A. Womack

December 1923

Bruce Meador
Oscar Adams

December 1933

Wallace Hawkins
Lee Harris
Everett Kettle
James B. Houf (voted as Deacon Transfer from
Richland Baptist Church)

July 1952

Everett J. Kettle
Emmett Meador
James A. Houf
Johnnie Spillars
John Henry Raps

February 1961

Ernest Spradlin
Leland Austin

September 1973

Gene Korff
Edwin Korff
Tommy Spradlin
Bruce Williamson

January 1987

Robert Lee Harris
Dwight Austin

OUR CHURCH CLERKS

Church Clerks beginning in 1880 to the present:

D. E. Womack
T. H. Halley
James Womack
Lora Meador
Clarence Stambaugh
F. E. Adams
Everett Kettle
Rose McClure
Lavenia Kettle
Gladys Kettle
Ernest Spradlin
Helen Austin - Present Clerk

THOSE WHO WERE CALLED

The following men were licensed to preach:

Brother James Watson
Brother J. A. Doub
Brother R. E. Mayhew

Pastors who called Unity Baptist Church "home":

Rev. John Ross
Rev. Robert Korff

Brother Bruce Williamson - Lay Minister

INTERESTING EVENTS FROM OUR PAST

We do not have any minutes from the business meetings from 1842 to 1880.

The 1880's

- July 1880

On motion the following resolution was adopted; whereas there is ground belonging to Unity Church designated for a graveyard, therefore be it resolved that a committee be, and is hereby appointed by Unity Church consisting of three members of said church, and that said committee shall be authorized to lay off the ground for a graveyard, and to set apart such portion as they may deem best to be divided into lots and sold to such persons as may wish to buy a place for the burying of their dead; and said committee is hereby authorized to lay off such portions of the ground as they deem best for a burying ground free to all who may wish to bury in such ground.

- June 1881

Brother Clay Sheets being reported as having been guilty of disorderly conduct, a committee was appointed to see him and investigate the matter.

- December 1881

On motion the Church went into an election for pastor, which resulted in an unanimous election of W. H. Burnham for the year 1882.

- April 1882

After the sermon the Church was called together by the moderator and the following resolution read and adopted: Having heard with pleasure the effort made by Brother Doub on Saturday, the 1st day of April, 1882, at Unity Church, therefore be it resolved that we, the Baptist Church at Unity, do hereby grant him license to exercise his gift in public and earnestly recommend him to cultivate the talent God has given him for preaching the Gospel.

- June 1883

The committee on finance made their report which was received. After investigation it was ascertained that the Church was delinquent in our pastors salary to the amount of sixty-odd dollars.

- November 1884

Motion carried to make some arrangement for the protection of the graveyard fence. It was decided to erect racks on the north and east sides.

- June 1885

Doors of the Church opened for the reception of new members. Brother Elisha Thomas and wife presented their letters from Fulton and were received in fellowship with the Church.

- June 1886

Motion carried to appropriate the sum of \$4 left over from the previous year toward the liquidation of the present indebtedness.

- January 1887

Miscellaneous matters were take up: By their request, letters of dismissal were granted to J. O. Watson and Fannie Smith; Robert Dudley and wife asked the Church to erase their names from the Church book. Requests granted.

(The register in the back of the book of minutes shows that some members were dismissed by letter, others were erased and the date they were erased was noted.)

- April 1888

On motion the Church decided to meet on the following Sabbath for the purpose of organizing a Sunday School.

- July 1889

Thomas Bellamy asked for letter of dismissal, whereupon charges of swearing and dancing were preferred against him and he was excluded from the Church.

(This is the first case in which the actual charges were recorded and the person excluded. There had been numerous cases recorded where a committee had met with the member but no charges were recorded. Most of these cases resulted in the member being "erased".)

The 1890's

- April 1890

The committee appointed to investigate charges preferred against William Martin, made a report, charges sustained and Brother Martin excluded from the fellowship of the Church.

- January 1891

We, the Committee on Finance, beg leave to submit the following plan: The election of the treasurer annually, whose duty it shall be to collect the pastors salary and pay over the same promptly.

- March 1892

Church convened and after the sermon by L. M. Berry, a collection of \$30 was taken up for Rising Sun Church.

- April 1892

On motion the Organ Purchasing Committee was instructed to buy the \$70 Kimball organ.

- July 1894

Doors of the Church opened for the reception of members, Katie Meador presented herself by letter for membership and was unanimously received.

- January 1895

On motion W. A. Brooks and S. S. Brooks and Joe Smith were appointed to assist in the organization of Good News Church.

(Sunday, January 27, 1895, Good New Baptist Church was organized with 17 members. Rev. Green was called as pastor.)

- February 1895

Report of the committee appointed to confer with James and Thomas Durham received. A letter of dismissal was granted to Thomas Durham. James Durham's letter withheld for further investigation.

- March 1896

The Church decided to meet at 10:00 Sunday morning for the purpose of organizing a Sunday School.

(The custom of organizing Sunday School at the end of March was started early in our history. Sunday School was held for 6 months, ceasing to exist during the winter months. This practice was still being followed in the 1950's.)

- December 1897

By order of the Church, a meeting was held on December 7th. Brother W. A. Brooks was called to the chair. After song and prayer service, the vote was cast for retaining of the present pastor [Brother Burnham] resulting in a vote of 12 for and 19 against.

- December 1897

On motion the Church went into an election for pastor resulting in the unanimous election of Brother J. T. Nevins.

- April 1898

On motion the Church decided to have a re-enrollment and the clerk ordered to notify non-attendants to report to the Church within 90 days or their names would be stricken from the list.

(In listing the delegates elected to the District Association of Little Bonne Femme, it was not until 1898 when the names of feminine members appeared. In 1899 Kate Meador and Belle Pasley were elected as alternates.)

- November 1899

Church granted Dr. Craghead permission to build an office on Church grounds provided he would put it 150 feet from the Church.

(It was not until January 1899 when T. H. Halley was elected clerk that the minutes were signed by the regular clerk.)

The 1900's

- January 1900

Motion made and seconded to change services from first Saturday and Sunday to the second Saturday and Sunday.

(The practice had been for years to have a sermon and business meeting on Saturday and a sermon again on Sunday.)

- September 1901

An application for charity was made in the interest of Sister Austin. Brother Joe Smith was appointed to solicit funds to aid in defraying her expenses while undergoing medical treatment in the City of St. Louis.

- January 1902

The Church employed Brother E. J. Sanderson to preach two Sundays in each month beginning with February 1902.

(The Church went to bi-monthly services.)

- August 1903

The Church went into an election of messengers to the Little Bonne Femme Association to be assembled at Sturgeon, Missouri with the following results: S. S. Craghead, Ora Brooks, Sally Womack and James Womack.

(This is the first appearance of a woman's name as a messenger to the Associational Meeting.)

- December 1903

The committee to draft resolution to Rev. E. J. Sanderson and his pastoral work at Unity Baptist Church, was submitted, which by motion was adopted and ordered spread on the minutes of the church record, also to be published in the County papers.

(There followed a lengthy resolution praising Brother E. J. Sanderson for his successful ministry at Unity and wishing him well in his future endeavors.)

- March 1904

Rev. L. T. Barger accepted an indefinite call to the pastorate of Unity Church beginning with March 1904, preaching one Saturday and one Sunday each month. Salary of \$200 for the year.

(Bi-monthly services were seemingly dropped.)

- April 1905

By motion a part of the Church ground was given to R. S. Simcoe in exchange for the same amount of land (owned by him) laying adjacent to the graveyard.

- May 1905

Motion prevailed allowing the graveyard to be grazed twice a year by sheep.

- December 1906

Committee to select and buy stoves for the Church reported a purchase of two King heaters. Price \$22.00.

- March 1907

A committee was appointed to buy trucks for the Church.

(These were trucks (dollies) to transport caskets in the Church during funerals. They were reported purchased in December at the cost of \$28.00. They were found under the Church when the Church was raised to build the basement.)

- April 1908

The trustees of the Church were appointed to name a day and notify the community to come and aid them in erecting hitching racks for the convenience of those who attended Church.

- September 1909

A motion without explanation was offered ordering the paint committee to have the Church painted with lead and oil at the highest bid of \$41.00 and hold the Church for the debt. The three or four votes cast favored the motion.

The 1910's

- July 1910

By order of the Church, the deacons presented a list of names, from which messenger in the L.B.F.A. to be held at Hibernia, Callaway County, MO, were selected as follows: Y. H. Halley & wife, James Womack & wife, Alternates - Jack Kemp, N.A. Womack and Orin Craghead.

- July 1911

A donation of \$10.00 in the Building Fund of Portland Baptist Church was reported.

- August 1912

By a unanimous vote of the Church, Brother R. E. Mayhew was licensed to preach.

- March 1913

A report from the board meeting of March 14 show Brother Eaton was called to the pastorate of a group of Churches - namely Ebenezer, Unity, Harmony and Yucatan at a salary of \$1,200.00.

- August 1914

A committee composed of John Raps, Wink Craghead and N. Womack was appointed to take charge of the Church funds for improvements and to supervise the laying of concrete walks.

- February 1915

Brother E. J. Sanderson accepted the Church preaching first Saturday and Sunday at 2:30 P.M.

- April 1916

The trustees of the Church were requested to have and keep the Church house insured at a sum not less than \$1,000.00.

- March 1917

The offer of a fund of \$260.00 to Unity Church by Judge S. P. Gilbert, the interest therefrom to be used in payment of pastors salary was accepted by the church according to his plans.

- September 1918

Committee to purchase organ reported that the instrument delivered cost \$67.49. A collection was ordered on the Sunday following to pay for same.

- July 1919

A resolution was adopted to drop from the membership rolls of the Church, all members living near the Church who take no part in any department of Church work. J. C. Smith and S. S. Craghead comprise the committee to notify such of the Church's action.

- September 1919

W. B. Meador was added to a committee, composed of J. C. Smith and S. S. Craghead, whose duty it is to notify all members living near the Church who do not attend or take any part in Church work of the Church's action.

- October 1919

A committee was appointed to notify all members living near the Church of the resolutions past, dropping from the membership roll, the names of persons living near the Church who do not attend, nor take part whatsoever in Church work. The clerk and all members present was requested to invite the Church membership to be present at the November business meeting.

- November 1919

(There is no record of a November meeting)

The 1920's, 1930's & 1940's

- August 1921

At the close of the meeting August 22, the Church gathered at the waters of the Auxvasse Creek when a very clear and impressive talk on baptism was made by the pastor. After which baptism was administered and the hand of Church fellowship given to eleven candidates as follows: Uda Crump, Elija Crump, Geneva Crump, Sarah Womack, Lillian Womack, Lora Meador, Katie Meador, Bernice Baker, Mrs. Carl Baker, Ruby Sheets, and Vernice Brooks.

- October 1922

October 19th was the day set to fence the cemetery.

- December 1923

In the afternoon of Sunday, December 16, 1923 Bruce Meador and Oscar Adams were ordained as deacons of Unity Baptist Church.

- September 1924

A committee purchased lamps for the Church at a cost of \$14.00.

- August 1925

Mrs. Wink Craghead was appointed incidental treasurer.

[There are no recorded minutes from August 1925 until October 1929].

[The minutes for 1930 through 1932 show only one business meeting per year.]

- November 1933

Several men were voted on for deacon. The three receiving the highest votes were to be elected. Lee Harris, Wink Craghead and Everett Kettle were elected.

- October 1934

Motion was made and seconded to adopt the envelope system of paying expenses of the Church.

[Only routine minutes are recorded for the years 1935 through 1951]

The 1950's

- July 1952

James Addison Houf, Everett J. Kettle, Emmett Meador, Johnnie Spillars, and John Henry Raps were selected to be ordained as deacons on September 21.

- May 1953

Emmett Meador reported a bid of \$4,043.50 for raising the Church and constructing a basement. The contract was awarded to Adams and Giboney of Mexico.

- June 1953

Committee appointed to see about borrowing money to finish paying contractor for basement work. The amount is to be \$1,700.00.

- July 1954

Motion made to let contract to paint the Church to Brothers Hallum and Wyatt for the sum of \$187.00 for labor.

- November 1955

The note to the Steedman Bank for the loan made to pay basement contractors was paid in full.

- January 1956

The Church discussed buying a new piano.

- February 1956

Motion made to pay for the piano out of the Building and Piano Fund.

- July 1957

The Church made plans to have Brother Jim Rice ordained in Jefferson City on September 15th.

- October 1958

The Church voted to sell pies and coffee at Charlie Frey's public sales.

- March 1959

The Church voted to petition the General Assembly to defeat the bill legalizing horse racing.

The 1960's

- November 1960

The Church voted to elect Ernest Spradlin and Leland Austin as deacons of the Church.

- February 1961

Ernest Spradlin and Leland Austin were ordained as deacons of the Church.

- December 1962

The Church voted to accept the Annuity Plan for pastors and the Church would pay all cost.

- December 1963

The Church made plans to take a Lottie Moon Offering at Christmas.

- July 1964

Mrs. Leland Austin, Mrs. Irene Kettle and Mrs. Lorene Houf were appointed as a committee to see that one meal was provided for the young people at the Church Camp.

- May 1965

The Church voted to have Dale Chiles care for the Church cemetery.

- May 1966

Mrs. Irene Kettle led a discussion about the rules and requirements for sending boys and girls to the Church Camp.

- November 1967

Mrs. E. J. Kettle moved that we send \$50 to the Allcorns for the purchase of Bibles for the Indians on the reservation. Motion carried.

- June 1968

Tommy Spradlin reported for the building committee. Mr. Houf moved that the building committee be empowered to start basement for the Sunday School addition. Mr. Kettle moved that we heat the addition with electricity.

- May 1969

The average Sunday School attendance for April was reported at 81.5.

The 1970's

- September 1970

Dr. Edens read a letter from the Callaway Clothing Center in Fulton. Mr. Kettle moved that we contribute \$12.00.

- August 1971

Barbara Glasford asked that a Youth Group be started. Mrs. Ed Korff and J. T. Spradlin to be sponsors.

- March 1972

Mrs. Austin was asked to write a thank you note to the Kingdom Daily News for the subscription sent to servicemen.

- September 1973

The nominating committee for deacons reported the nominees as follows: Gene Korff, Ed Korff, Tommy Spradlin and Bruce Williamson.

- September 1974

Leland Austin announced that he had increased the insurance on the Church and its contents to \$29,000.00.

- January 1975

Gladys Kettle moved that we order 100 new hymnals.

- September 1976

The deacons recommended that any person professing faith in Jesus Christ and having been scripturally baptized (immersed) and desiring membership in this Church be received as members in good standing. Motion made and seconded to accept this recommendation and voted affirmatively.

- February 1977

The Church voted for the choir to be in complete charge of the Easter Program.

- June 1978

There was a discussion on renovating the cemetery and raising and re-setting the stones which had fallen. Date to be set at the July meeting.

- July 1979

Bruce Williamson moved that we call Rev. Foley as pastor.

The 1980's

- December 1980

Bruce Williamson moved that we approved Brother Lewis for ordination. The date of January 4th, 1981 at 2:30 set for the ordination services. Rev. Jones of the Friendship Church in Audrain County to be examiner. Rev. Allen Bartlett of First Church Fulton to bring the message.

- September 1981

Dwight Austin moved that we accept the Deacon Board's recommendation to sponsor a child from the Deaf School for \$10 a month. Janice Williamson to be in charge of the program.

- October 1982

J. A. Houf moved that we accept the \$5,000 donation in the form of a check for Virgil R. Goodman of Maryland Heights, Missouri dated Friday, October 1, 1982. The donation was a bequest of Homer Ficklin. The money is to remain in a certificate of deposit with the Community Federal Savings and Loan Association. The interest is to be used for the maintenance of the cemetery.

- April 1983

Brother Lewis read a letter from Donald Kritzer asking for a donation of \$1.00 per resident member for the construction of two new cabins at the Providence Camp. The deacons recommended that we send \$125.00 to them.

- October 1984

Mrs. Austin moved we raise our Cooperative Program giving to 16% of the Church collection.

- June 1985

Motion made that we build a handicapped ramp to the front door. Motion carried.

- November 1986

Brother Lewis announced that we had two candidates for ordination to the Office of Deacon - Robert Lee Harris and J. Dwight Austin. The Church voted to ordain them.

- December 1987

Mr. Houf asked for a committee to be appointed to investigate a cover over the basement entrance, sides, window and door. The money was left to the Church in memory of Lorene Houf.

- October 1988

Delano Lewis moved that we have District Water put into the Church. Irene Kettle asked if the Church would be interested in the Kettle Family purchasing a steeple for the Church when the new roof is completed.

- June 1989

Brother Ball said Carol Ragan wanted to donate a flag pole and her sons would help set it. The pole is 30 feet tall. The Church accepted the gift.

- July 1989

Joyce Lewis discussed a memorial fund for Brother Del Lewis being used to purchase a portable baptistry. The Church accepted the gift.

The 1990's

- October 1990

In preparation for the 150th anniversary, the Church voted to have the wallpaper in the sanctuary replaced.

- October 1991

Motion made and seconded that we keep the Cooperative Program giving at 20%.
Motion carried.

- January 1992

A tentative date of October 2, 3 and 4 is set for the Sesquicentennial Celebration.

To Be Continued.....

HELPING OTHER CHURCHES

Unity Baptist Church was involved in the establishment of two of our neighboring churches.

EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH

The first recorded minutes of the Ebenezer Baptist Church read:

"Bro. Thomas Wright's residence on the St. Louis Road.

March 1, 1879. The following brethren having been invited by certain Brethren and Sisters to assist organizing themselves into a Baptist Church (Via) Bro. W. B. Wathall, Tipton; W. A. Robinson; J. P. Sallee; Wm. Brooks; Womack; Lovelace. Bro. Tipton was chosen moderator; Bro. J. P. Sallee, Clerk of Council. Prayer being offered by Bro. Wathall. Letters were read from Unity recommending and letters from Richland Baptist Church recommending the following:

Bros. Sisters from Unity:

H. J. Roberts
Mattison Pugh
Mary L. Houchins
H. N. Roberts
J. G. Roberts
Louisa F. Roberts
M. E. Gilbert
Dollie F. Land
Eliza P. Meadow
S. C. Wright
Judie M. Roberts

M. J. Roberts
W. M. Pugh
Elizabeth Hardin
Lucy M. Roberts
Lucy A. Roberts
S. W. Gilbert
W. L. Land
J. W. Meadow
Fannie Meadows
E. E. Wright

And the following Bro. and Sisters from Richland:

Wesley G. Roberts
Martin E. Pugh
W. C. Debo
W. A. Debo
M. S. Roberts
Eliza F. Roberts
A. C. Althiser
Mary E. Roberts
Harriet E. Roberts

W. H. Davis
Martha V. Hardin
Peter F. Althiser
Mary Bagley
F. B. Bagley
R. G. Roberts
William Goodman
J. G. Berry

All of whom were approved by the Council."

GOOD NEWS BAPTIST CHURCH

The Good News Baptist Church, organized January 26, 1895, was without a doubt what we now know as Yucatan. The Little Bonne Femme minutes of 1894 does not list Yucatan but the 1895 minutes shows the Yucatan Church as an active organization.

THE UNITY ANNIVERSARY OF 1910

On Sunday, February 27, 1910, was celebrated at Unity Baptist Church , 8 miles east of Fulton, the 68th anniversary of the organization of this body. It was indeed, an interesting and profitable occasion. Old pastors had been invited to be present and two of them had responded. These were Dr. W. J. Patrick and Rev. W. H. Burnham. On Saturday, Dr. Patrick preached a very interesting and impressive discourse - a most suitable introduction to an anniversary occasion.

On Sunday, Rev. W. H. Burnham preached a sermon including both gospel and history. It was shown that the church had been served by fifteen pastors, most of whom have gone to their reward. The church had enjoyed many precious revivals, the two most noted of which were held by Revs. J. D. Robnett and W. H. Burnham in November, 1880. During these meetings there were about 100 persons added to the church. As nearly as can be ascertained there have belonged to this church about 600 members, most of whom have departed, but the church is still a strong, vigorous, working body. It was organized by Rev. James Suggett, a man who gained military notoriety in the War of 1812-14. He preached for the church two years. The present pastor is Rev. L. T. Barger under whose faithful leadership the church is now doing good work and faces the future with courage and buoyant hope.

(The above excerpted from the Fulton paper of 1910)

JESSE JAMES?

Was Jesse James ever at Unity Church? The following are articles taken from the Columbia Tribune of October 10, 1910 and October 17, 1910.

October 10, 1910

JESSIE JAMES RAN A SUNDAY SCHOOL

EAST OF COLUMBIA IN 1882

"Brother Johnson" Was Name He Went Under While He Was In Callaway County

When Jessie James was hiding in Callaway County in the eighties he was a Sunday school superintendent for a month or more, and taught classes of little children Bible lessons out under the trees near old Unity Church, southwest of Fulton. The desperado was an excellent singer and was well liked in the community.

Miss Sallie Flood, of Columbia, William Babb, at that time a young man living here but now a successful Wichita editor, were among a party of young people from Columbia who saw Jessie James at a church convention held by the Baptists at "Two Churches," east of Columbia in 1882, when the man who made-Missouri-famous was known as "Brother Johnson".

The officers were tracking Jessie James down in the early eighties and he went to Callaway county where he turned up near Old Unity church and opened a singing school. He had a beautiful voice and the singing school had many pupils. Brother Jonathan McGuire, pastor of the Baptist church, was anxious to open a Sunday school at Old Unity, a phase of church work that was undeveloped in that region. "Brother Johnson" was made superintendent of the Sunday school, and his singing was a feature of the sessions.

Brother Johnson would take the little children out under the trees near the church and teach them lessons from the Bible. He was a good teacher, according to the

children who are now grown men and women. His stories were always interesting, and kept the children enthralled. Most of those who were in the class today stoutly maintain that "Jessie James was a good man, the victim of circumstances, and I don't care what you say about him, I know, for I was in his Sunday school class."

One characteristic of Jessie James, the Sunday school superintendent, is remembered by everyone who attended Old Unity church at that time. He always called on someone else to pray. He did not himself address the Throne of Grace in public. However, as there were many brethren in the church "fortified and gifted in prayer," this was not noticed at the time.

Shortly after Brother Johnson became Sunday school superintendent numerous peddlers began to come through the country, selling trinkets and asking questions. Peddlers had never been known in the country before.

A Sunday school picnic was planned at Wommack and the children of Jessie James' Sunday school were drilled to march to the picnic grounds, singing. The number of peddlers and horse traders who came into the country the week or ten days before the Sunday school picnic was astonishing and caused much comment.

Luther McKinney was prosecuting attorney of Callaway county, had men who came to the house at midnight or later and he would go out and confer with them. The night before the picnic Mrs. McKinney noticed that there were more conferences than usual and asked her husband repeatedly to tell her what was on

foot. "Well," he said, "it can't do any harm to tell you now. We are going to capture Jessie James tomorrow. He is disguised and is teaching a Sunday School and we're going to overpower and take him at the Sunday School picnic at Wommack tomorrow."

It so happened that Jessie James had saved the life of Mrs. McKinney's brother during the Civil War by a piece of wild riding and good shooting, but of this fact her husband, the prosecuting attorney, was ignorant. She herself had never seen Jessie James. After her husband was asleep she stole out of the house and called a negro boy, gave him instructions to ride to the house where Brother Johnson boarded, and deliver a note. The note contained the information that the Sunday School picnic had been settled upon as the place for his capture.

The next day the crowd gathered at Wommack, introductory talks were made, and the crowd began to be impatient for the arrival of Brother Johnson's Sunday School pupils who were to come singing, and marching in companies, marshalled by classes.

Many strangers were at the picnic, and several times the deacons commented to one another upon the number of strangers at the picnic and the wonderful good Sunday School work was doing. The woods were full of horses hitched to swinging limbs.

Suddenly an old woman came running, with her sunbonnet trailing behind her head as she shouted, "Brother McGuire, Brother Johnson ain't Brother Johnson, He's Jessie James, and he's gone, he's gone."

The special agents and deputies made a rush for their horses, scrambled on and set off for Fulton. The timber at Wommack was thick, and they feared that Jessie James was in ambush with a gang of desperadoes, waiting to shoot them down. The

deputies did not stop until they galloped up to the public square in Fulton.

Brother Johnson was not seen again in Callaway County.

October 17, 1910
A JESSIE JAMES INCIDENT

DESPERADO ESCAPED DISGUISED AS WOMAN

When Jessie James made his escape from Callaway County, after having been "Brother Johnson," a Sunday School superintendent for some month, he disguised himself as a woman. The night before a Sunday School picnic, at which he was to have been captured, Jessie James was warned of the plan by a note from a woman whose brother he had saved during the civil war.

His landlady, Mrs. Sarah Nowlin Wommack, when she learned the identity of her boarder, at once urged him to go to the railroad and get out of the county. The station was guarded. She got a dress and Jessie James, disguised as a woman, drove to Fulton and boarded the train, while the town was filled with officers on the lookout for him.

Mrs. Wommack was one of those who believed Jessie James to be a victim of circumstances and that he was an excellent man. She told the story of his escape in 1890, at a Baptist association, when others brought up the subject.

In addition, we have various accounts that a man known as John Franklin (Brother Johnson) was in the area during the summer of 1880 and possibly again in 1882.

The best information is from the Fulton paper dated May 20, 1948, which quoted James Womack the youngest of the Womack Brothers, who farmed just 2 miles west of Unity and were very prominent in Unity's early history. James Womack was twenty years old at that time and was well acquainted with the stranger visiting in his home.

The article reads as follows:

A mysterious John Franklin was the house guest of the Womack brothers during the summer of 1880. Equally mysterious was the reluctance of all of the usually candid brothers to reveal any information concerning their visitor. Finally James Womack said that John Franklin was Jesse James.

He said the sojourn of James at the Womack home was arranged by J. W. Pace and John Maloney, Confederate veterans who lived in Callaway County and had been in several military arrangements with the James boys in the war between the states. It was said that the Womack home was selected because of its secluded location and the Southern sympathies of its owners. Acting as hosts to Jesse James was not, according to Womack, looked upon as the harboring of a notorious bandit, but as extending hospitality and security to a persecuted Southern soldier.

Womack recalled the constant alertness of James, his skill as a croquet player, his good singin' voice and his large repertoire of gospel hymns.

Other local historians that were certain that Jesse James was that stranger were Jay Dunham and John B. LaMar.

Taylor Ficklin, who was raised by the Womacks, from the age of 10 until he was 21, was certain that the stranger was Jesse James. ⁽¹⁾

(1) Womack Trails - Helen Ring Womack

SERIOUS TRIVIA

- Unity elected their pastor on an annual basis until 1900. The election was generally held at the business meeting in December.
- In 1900, Bro. E. J. Sanderson was called for an indefinite period. He was to give the Church a three month notice. The Church was to give him the same.
- The minutes of each clerk varied in length according to the amount of business to be transacted. Each clerk had their own style of reporting. Some were very detailed while others tended to just list items discussed or decided.
- As previously mentioned during the early years there was a sermon by the Pastor on Saturday with the business meeting following, then a sermon on Sunday. It was not possible to tell when night services began. There is one entry that indicated Sabbath Services were to be held at 4:00 p.m.
- The early 1880's minutes generally followed the following format:
 1. Date...The church met after services by the Pastor and organized for business.
 2. Visiting brethren were invited to be seated.
 3. Doors of the Church were opened for the reception of members.
 4. Fellowship called for.
 5. Minutes of previous meeting read.
 6. Report of committees (a committee that had completed its purpose was "discharged").
 7. "New Business".
 8. Miscellaneous business.
- The minutes until well into the 1900's were crowded with references to the sexton (janitor). Many committees were appointed to either hire a sexton (for a year) or to raise money to pay his salary. The salary was generally in the \$20 to \$25 range per year and sometimes required him to furnish the wood.
- The Church was often behind in the Pastors salary. Sometimes they were not paid until they had left the Church for some other field.
- The primary way of providing money was to appoint a committee to raise the money for: Pastor salary, Sexton salary, District Missions, State Missions, Provide improvements on the Church building.
- There was an occasional reference to an envelope system of giving but this never seemed to provide sufficient funds.
- Several years ago Unity Church established the "Connie Caine Fund". Brother Caine is with the "New Tribes" Movement in South America (especially Brazil). The workers have no retirement plan so the fund was established to help ease his retirement when that time arrives. It has grown to a nice sum but not sufficient for retirement.

- In the more recent years as members have died, memorial funds have been established. These have enabled Unity to improve the physical part of the Church.
- For the past few years, The Gideon's have been conducting one service a year at Unity.
- The church has encouraged many of its young people to be pianist for either Church Services or Sunday School. It has also encouraged those who sing or play musical instruments to perform before the Church. For many this has helped them develop a sense of responsibility and self-confidence.
- Vacation Bible School was held for the first time at Unity Baptist in 1951 with an attendance of 76. Mrs. Oma Harris was the first to suggest having Vacation Bible School and served as the first director. Vacation Bible School has been conducted each and every summer since then.

OUR MEMBERSHIP ROLL

Billy Adams
J. C. Adams
Mildred Adams
Angela Atterberry
Jill Gibbs Atterberry
Suzanne Windsor Atterberry
Dwight Austin
Helen Austin
Leland Austin
Patsy Redden Austin
Dewey Backer
Harold E. Backer
Eddie Baise
Larry Ball
Melceenia Wells Ball
Lula Barcak
Lois Ann Bullard Barnes
B. J. Baysinger
Germaine Bellers
Steven Bellers
Christina Blackburn
Linda Blackburn
Robert Blackburn
Tabitha Blackburn
Diana Adams Brandl
Nick Brandl
Cecilia Brigrance
Melanie Brigrance
Melissa Brigrance
Melody Brigrance
Robert Brigrance
Brenda Brooks
Dean Brooks
Dewey Ray Bullard
Becky Burkett
Christina Burkett
Gary Burkett
James D. Burkett
Cindy Burnicky
Grace Campbell
Nora Gene Korff Campbell
Norma Craghead
Vernon Craghead
Helen Craighead
Johnnie Craighead
Karyn Craighead
Ronnie Craighead
Vicki Craighead

Lorie Hamilton Croy
Janet Danuser
Jerry Danuser
Carroll Davis
Dewayne Davis
Jennifer Davis
Judy Lawrence Davis
Vicki Hamilton Dennison
Esther Fletcher Dinwiddie
Junior Dinwiddie
Doris Vaughn Dudley
Pauline Estes
James Farmer
Lesa Korff Farmer
Terry Farmer
Treva Farmer
Keven Foley
Karen Craghead French
Billy Jean Dillion Garriott
Josephine Gibbs
Larry Gibbs
Chris Gilman
Jack Gilman
Bob Glasford
Edward Glasford
Mary Jane Gibbs Glasford
Adine Gowin
Brandi Lewis Gowin
John T. Gowin
Kathy Hamilton
Alma Harris
Mary Sue Williamson Harris
Robert Lee Harris
Brenda Hawkins
Dennis Hawkins
Shirley Jean Adams Holland
Charlotte Wilson Holtcamp
Everett Houchins
Faye Glasford Houchins
John Houchins
James A. Houf
Janice Houf
Richard Houf
Thomas A. Houf
Cindy Lewis Huddleston
Dean Huddleston
Juanita Gowin Hudson
Loran Paul Hume

James Humphrey
Betty Johnson
Dorothy Johnson
E. L. Kettle
Irene Kettle
Linda Means Kettle
Terry Kirkman
Debra Korff Klick
Kathleen Koepp
Dolphrine Korff
Edwin Korff
Elnora Korff
Eugene Korff
Gary Korff
John Korff
Karen Carter Korff
Frankie Lander
Tony Lander
Connie Lawrence
Joyce Lewis
Carol Martin
Darren Martin
Derik Martin
Larry Martin
Tressie McClellan
Linda Craighead McDaniel
Bobby McKee
Vicki Blackburn McKinney
Gene Meador
Mattie Meador
Rhonda Glasford Metz
Linda Houchins Mirts
Carol Mitchell
David Mitchell
Mike Mitchell
Steve Mitchell
Velvet Morrison
Dorothy Raps Neal
Patricia Gowin Payne
Rebecca Payne
Roice Payne
Joretta Craghead Phelps
Carol Ragan
Betty Williamson Railton
Randy Railton
Billy Raps
Donald Raps
Odie Raps

Wayne Raps
Laura Lewis Rice
Norman Ridgel
Ray Ridgel
Rose Roe
Sandy Kallmeyer Russell
Nancy Gowin Schutt
Sharmon Wilson Scott
Dora Thomas Shelburn
Eva Siegel
Edna June Backer Smith
Barbara Glasford Spradlin
J. L. Spradlin
James T. Spradlin
Joyce Meador Spradlin
Mary Beth Gibbs Stepp
Faye Ann Gibbs Stewart
Bruce Terrell
Nancy Terrell
Louise Raps Wetherill
Joan White
Bruce Williamson
Bryan Williamson
David Williamson
Janice Siegel Williamson
Lois Williamson
Dexter Wilson
Iola Fletcher Wilson
Kenneth Wilson
Randall Wilson
Charlotte Evelyn Wommack
Clyde Wommack
Jessie Wommack
Dean Wright