

Appanoose Baptist Church 125 Years Old

from the FCHS Headlight

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In 1874, in a frame building known as the Cargy School House, Mrs. Julia St. John started what is believed to be the first organized Baptist Sunday School in Franklin County. Under her direction the Appanoose Sunday School prospered and attendance increased. People came by wagon, buggy and on horseback.

In 1877, a new stone school house was erected about 2 miles south of Cargy. Rev. Isaac Hetrick drove out to preach from Pomona on the 1st and 3rd Sunday, driving to Greenwood on the 2nd and 4th. In 1877 the Appanoose Baptist Church was organized and admitted to the Miami Association with 18 members. At this time several were baptised in "The Old Baptising Hole" in Appanoose Creek about 2 miles south of the church. The first trustees were Phillip Cantrell, Marcus St. John, Clark Tefft, D.L. Montgomery, and Perry McMannen.

Beginning in 1877-78, the present building was begun. When Rev. Hetrick assumed the leadership of the work to build the first room, he was a retired man with little or no income, but vibrating with faith that a church built on the rock shall long endure. Day after day they dug the foundation until they hit solid rock. There were 13 teenage boys who spent most of the summer splitting out the rock for the walls and others in turn hauled water from about 2 miles away by wagon for the cement. Mr. Hetrick supervised and helped with much of the masonry. Although he was a weary, hardworking, bald-headed man by the week, he became on the Sabbath a handsome, bewigged gentleman filled with God's message of courage and faithfulness. In the fall of 1878 the church was finished and dedicated in November. Dr. T. J. Williams gave the dedicatory address.

The north-facing front door proved to be a problem, so a series of donations, sales and bazaars were held to earn enough to build an anteroom of the same stone as the original structure. A bell tower was placed atop it. The bell itself was bought with money from the birthday fund.

In the 1920s a new high school was opened just across the section from the church. A Union Sunday School was begun there. Many of the members of Appanoose Baptist were attracted to the "new, fancy, modern religion being taught at the High School." However, within two years it lost popularity and people returned to the church they'd built themselves. The last addition was an annex that provided a basement, a nursery, a kitchen and space for four Sunday School classes.