

Antioch marked end of an era

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era for Picayune. The church had grown up with the town. It was very much a part of the life of the community for some 52 years, from 1882 to 1934.

Old Antioch was never officially disbanded. Some of the members, including some of the Howards, Mitchells, Laniers and other were received into the fellowship of a new church established on East Canal Steet in Picayune in 1945 under the leadership of this writer. The new church, a mission from the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Picayune, also established by this writer, was given the name of Antioch to memorialize the name of historic old Antioch, our first chruuch.

As a teen-age lad, I fondly recall passing the old church on my happy way to the old "Antioch swimmin' hole" on Hobolochitto Creek, "Boley," as we called it, just down the slope back of the old church an cemetery.

On the church membership roll could be found such names of pioneer families familiar to this area of present as well as by-gone days. Names such as Mitchell, Warden, Harris, Tate, McGehee, Herrin, Culpepper, Davis, Dillard, Stockstill, Varnado, Gray, Watts, Wages, Bennett, Smith, Lanier, Howard, Sherrer, Moody, Kindrick, Jackson, Mahan, Craddock, Wheat and many others.

Among those stalwart pastors who led the church through times of trial and triumph through the years in addition to Thad. B. Mitchell, and W.H. Varnado, were James P. Johnston, James G. Sibley, Pembroke Mitchell, Thomas Dossett, James Q. Sones, E.R.Boone, B.S. Penton and A. Jack Spiers.

With old Antioch, the Baptists were the first to preach the gospel and provide a public place to worship for the people of Picayune. So, historically, the first Baptist

Church in Picayune was not the First Baptist Church of Picayune. This historic distinction goes to Antioch.

With the development and progress of the City of Picayune has come many fine churches. Commensurate to the zeal which established Antioch, the Baptist are more in number than all others combined. While old Antioch and the zeneth of her glory in the service of Jesus Christ lingers only as a memory to so many, yet the history of Picayune can never be written apart from her name; her ministry; and her influence.

This article taken from notes on "The History of Antioch Baptist Church" in the library of the Mississippi Baptist Commission on History at Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel, was prepared by L.S. Walker, D.D., chairman of the Commission on History, and is vice president of the Pearl River County Historical Society.