

Pisgah Baptist Church
Pisgah, Missouri

Rev. Roy Sparks, Pastor
10:00 a.m. Sunday School
11:00 a.m. Worship Service

Township: T-46-N
Range: R-16-W
Section: 2
Map: [Click Here](#)

Organized: 1823
Disbanded: No
Active: Yes
Updated: July 19, 2005

Cemetery: There is a cemetery associated with this church.

Area: Southeast quarter of the northeast quarter of the section and One-half mile west of old town of Pisgah, Missouri.

Records: The Pisgah Baptist Church records are stored in a bank box in Boonville. Records cover the entire church history from its beginning in 1819 to the present.

History:



Photograph courtesy of H. Stone

Pisgah Baptist Church
From "History of Cooper County Missouri" by Levens and Drake, 1876

The next churches built (after Concord Baptist Church in 1817 and Old Mt. Nebo Baptist Church in 1820), were "Mount Pleasant" and Pisgah, in the southeastern part of the county.

Pisgah Church

From "History of Howard and Cooper Counties Missouri", 1883

Pisgah Church - But little is known of the early history of this church. It was organized prior to 1823, from the fact that at the Mount Pleasant association, which was held in October, 1823, at Mt. Nebo church, there were eight churches admitted into the association, one of these being Pisgah church.

Pisgah Baptist Church

From "History of Cooper County Missouri" by W. F. Johnson, 1919

The Pisgah Baptist Church was organized at a meeting at the residence of Lewis Shelton on June 19, 1819 with the following charter members: The Rev. William Jennings, Rev. Jacob Chism, Priscilla Chism, David Jones, Tabitha Jones, James Maxey, William Howard, Leven Savage, Polly Savage, Joseph McClure, Elizabeth McClure, John Bivian, Mary Bivian, Rhoda Stephens, Isabella Pontan, Sarah Woods, The Rev. John B. Longan, John Apperson, Sela Apperson, Jesse Martin, Mary Martin, and Pollie Longan. The first meeting-house was erected not long after the congregation had affected the organization and was situated at a point a half mile east of the present edifice. This primitive church building was, in time, supplemented by a brick building, which in 1871 gave way to a much larger, frame building, which has since supplied the needs of the congregation. The first congregation was presided over by John B. Longan and Kemp Scott.

Pisgah Baptist Church Has Come a Long Way Since Its Organization 125 Years Ago

From "Memorabilia of Cooper County", 1990

Building 26 by 34 feet, of Logs "Chinked And Well Filled With Mortar," Was Modest Beginning for a Group of 21 Charter Members of the Church.

The history of this church is found in five volumes of records now owned by the church, and is a complete record from the date of the first official meeting.

The early settlers of this territory begin French, the only religious work was done by Roman Catholics until after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

A Baptist church was organized at St. Genevieve in 1806, and in 1812 Mt. Pleasant church, near New Franklin in Howard County, was organized. Baptist churches of Cooper County were the first religious organizations of any denomination. Concord Baptist church, northeast of Bunceton, was organized in 1817, this followed by Pisgah in 1819.

Charter Members Numbered 21

The church to be known as Mt. Pisgah was organized June 19, 1819, at the home of Lewis Shelton in Cooper county, Missouri Territory, by John B. Longan, Win. Jennings and Jacob Chism, with the following twenty-one charter members: John B. Longan, Wm. Jennings, Jacob Chism, Priscilla Chism, David Jones, Tabitha Jones, James Maxey, William Howard, Leven Savage, Polly Savage, Joseph McClure, Elizabeth McClure, John Bivian, Mary Bivian, Rhoda Stephens, Izabelle Ponton, Sarah Woods, John Apperson, Sela Apperson, Jesse Martin and Mary Martin.

From information gathered from the records Longan, Jennings and Chism were outstanding men as they were instrumental in organizing other churches and John B. Longan was pastor continuously for a period of 27 years. In 1846 the church agreed to call an assistant pastor due to

the advancing age of Longan, but with the understanding that he would be pastor as long as he lived unless he should move to other lands.

The first church officials besides the pastor, were David Jones, chosen clerk at the first business session June 19, 1819, and also the first deacon, elected in November of the same year; Jesse Martin, deacon and chorister; and Joseph Reavis, treasurer.

Ruled With An "Iron Hand"

In the early days of the church the discipline very strict, the records showing church trials of members for drinking, dancing, horse racing, swearing, fighting and joining secret societies. Masons and Odd Fellows were especially ruled against. Confessions and restorations usually followed such trials but many were excluded. A brother was excluded for playing a fiddle at a party and two of the brothers had a church trial over the "paltry sum of ten cents."

From the Rules of Decorum presented by Brothers Jennings and Longan and approved by the church in August, 1819, is found under article 5, "No member shall be permitted to speak without rising to his feet and addressing the brethren; article 6, No member shall be permitted to whisper or laugh during public speaking; article 9. No member shall leave his seat during church meeting without leave of Moderator; article 11, If any brother fail to attend two monthly meetings, he shall inform the church the cause of absence and if for three monthly meetings the church shall send for him and deal with him as she may think best."

The first church building on Saturday, July 3, 1821, was finally located near Mr. Bowl's spring, or on the southwest corner of the land now owned by Mrs. Carrie Braun, this being the fourth location agreed upon was near Frances Apperson's, the second near Reavis' spring and the third across the Moniteau near Brother Keanny's. The building was to be of logs chinked and well filled with strong lime mortar and to be 26 by 34 feet in size, roofed with shingles, to have three doors and two windows and an 8-foot aisle and space for the colored members.

To Present Site In 1838

In 1838 with John B. Longan still pastor and Samuel D. Reavis, clerk, a new house was voted by the church and the location changed to the present site. It was to be a one story brick building 30 by 50 feet with a gallery for the colored people. The contract for the brick work was given to Samuel D. Reavis for \$299.50 and the carpenter work to B.T. George for \$200.00. The old building was sold for \$31.

This was followed in 1871 with a frame building 40 by 60 feet just a few feet north of the brick building. At this time J.B. Box was pastor and G.F. Jones, clerk. While in this building, in 1895, the clock now on the wall was presented to the church by J.N. Parsons.

Present Building Erected in 1826

Most of the older members well remember this building as it stood until 1926, when with T.M. MacDonnell as pastor, the present building was erected. While digging the basement for the present building, workmen discovered bricks from the 1838 church proving that this building stands on almost the same spot as the brick church.

The church sent delegates to the Association in 1819 and has continued to send messengers and cooperate to date. John B. Longan was moderator of the Association from 1826 to 1843, as well as moderator of the General Association four years, 1836-1839. The church has also furnished the assistant moderator, clerk and assistant clerk for a number of years and has entertained the Association seven times - 1823, 1831, 1858, 1876, 1895, 1908 and 1919.

The membership seems to have increased steadily from a charter membership of 21 in 1819 to 368 in 1864, including 75 Negro members. All colored members, however, were granted letters of dismission in 1871 to form a new church to be known as the First Colored Church of Pisgah. On

the first Sunday in March 1871, J.B. Box, W.H. Maxey and Henry Clay (colored) organized the first colored church with 26 charter members. The present membership is 158.

Organized Other Churches

Pisgah preachers and members have helped to organizing several other churches. Big Lick, organized in 1820 by John B. Longan and Jacob Chism, both members of Pisgah, took 16 members, among them Wm. Jennings; Moran in 1822; Union in 1822; Mt. Pleasant took 24 members, including Jacob Chism and Lewis Shelton in 1823; an arm in Saline in 1829; an arm in Blackwater in 1830; and First Colored Church in 1871.

The following preachers have been ordained from among its members: Thomas Crossbolt; James H. King; James W. Maxey, Joel Ponton, James Jones, Jesse G. Beakly and Henry Clay (colored).

Following is a complete list of Pastors who have served the church: John B. Longan, 1819-1847; James Jones, assistant pastor, 1846-1847; Tyres C. Harris, 1847-1848; Snelling Johnson, 1849-1850; R.H. Harris, 1860-1864; G.B. Tutt, 1865; R.H. Harris, 1855; J.B. Box, 1866-1869; James Robinson, 1869; J.B. Box, 1870-1873; Wm. M. Tipton, 1874-1876; J.B. Boa 1877-1881; Ray Palmer, 1882; J.B. Price, 1883; S.B. Whiting, 1888-1896; John Youngblood, 1897-1898, C.N. White, 1899-1902; J.C. Mitchell, 1903; J.E. Dillard, 1905; C.N. White, 1906; S.H. Carter, 1907; E.J. Sanderson, 1908-1910; L.E. Hedrick, 1910-1912; D.H. Howerton, 1913-1915; T.M. MacDonnell, 1916-1927; D. Earl Allen, 1928-1930; E.L. Painter, 1931-1935; Geo. A. Craig, 1936-1942; Steward McDaniel, 1943; Bill Tatom, 1944. It will be noted from the above that four pastors have served the church for a total of 60 years, John B. Longan, 27 years, Robt. H. Harris, 12 years, T.M. MacDonnell, 11 years, and J.B. Box, 10 years.

by Lewis L. Morris

Pisgah Baptist Church

From "Cooper County Church Sketches" by F. Chesnutt, 1993

In 1813 Judge T.A. Harris entered a considerable acreage of land from the government on which the Pisgah settlement grew. A Virginian by birth, he, and those that soon joined him, had lived in Kentucky before migrating West. The village soon included a blacksmith and wagon shop (Stemmons & Brown who traded for cattle as far as Texas), a grist mill, chair factory, a carding mill to prepare wool for weaving (using a tread mill for power), three general stores and a drug store.

The Pisgah Baptist Church was organized June 19, 1819 by William Jennings, John B. Longan, and Jacob Chism. Longan was the first pastor and served until 1847. David Jones was clerk, Jessie Martin was chorister, and Joseph Reavis was treasurer. They built northeast of the present location at what was then Bowl's Springs. It was "26 feet by 34 feet, the logs chinked with strong lime mortar, shingle roofed, with three doors, two windows and an eight-foot aisle."

In the fall of 1838 a new building of brick was begun of one story with a gallery for negroes with the entrance facing south. A frame Federal style structure 40 feet by 60 feet followed in 1870 which stood until the present Church was built just south in 1927.

Pisgah preachers and members have helped establish several other Churches; Big Lick near Wooldridge in 1820, Mora in 1822, Union in 1822, Mt. Pleasant in 1823, "an arm of Saline" in 1829, "an arm in Blackwater" in 1830, and the Colored Church of Pisgah in 1871.

Only two Baptist Churches preceded Pisgah; a Mount Pleasant congregation of 1812 in Howard County (only the cemetery remains) and Concord Church north of Bunceton established in 1817. Concord is probably the oldest cemetery in Cooper County, though the church is long gone.

The early discipline was very strict. The first heresy trial of '48 excluded the minister who succeeded Longan. The council was composed of members from Concord, Mt. Nebo, Hopewell, and Mt. Pleasant Churches. The records show trials for drinking, dancing, horse racing, swearing, scandal, fighting, forming secret societies (Masons and Odd Fellows were specially ruled against). A brother was excluded for playing a fiddle at a party.

The council voted disapproval of members who sold black people for profit. The right of the Church to make this ruling was questioned a year later.

The Women's Community Club was formed in 1920 as a social and missionary society. As the schoolhouse was too small for social events, the group bought the old Providence Church and moved it from north of Prairie Home to rest by the school for socials, plays, debates and round table discussions. Thus, Pisgah was the first town to have its own community building.
