

The White Church of Central Baptist Church

In 1899 the members of the new church assembled to discuss the possibilities of building their own church. The construction began at what is now known as 7421 Southwest Church Road in Butler County, Kansas. Raising money to complete the new church building was accomplished by farmers donating money from the sale of kaffir corn but that was only a small part of the needed funds. Other monies were raised through donations of money and the donations of supplies needed for the construction of the church. One person was hired as the main carpenter to over see the construction of the White Church that was completed by May of 1900 with the help of many volunteers from the church.

The church building cost \$1,800 to construct. The following are examples of some of the expenses paid out of the building fund for the construction: Stonemason \$27.75, brick \$8.15, door frames \$44.50, and freight on lumber \$86.46. Mary (Harper) Wentworth learned her "...Dad's maternal grandfather, Milo Fuller, did the masonry work on the front steps of the Little White Church."

A dedication ceremony was held on May 6, 1900 with the Baptist pastor from Augusta serving as the first pastor. He served half of his time at Central Baptist and the other half of his time with the church in Augusta. Gustave Barth was the pastor at Central Baptist from 1900 to 1901 and prior to that for four years he served as the pastor for the Indianola Church.



The land for Central Baptist Church came from the southeast portion of farmland owned by Melton and Edith Ayers.

By 1903 the church had erected a parsonage near the church to the north. It was the only parsonage owned by a country church in the Baptist Association. It was a four room house.

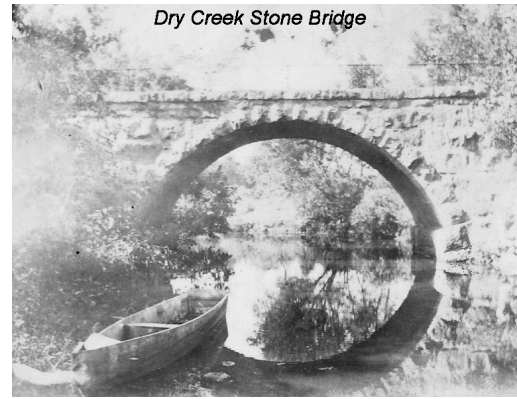
"In the summertime when it was hot, each (person) cooled himself or herself with a stiff paper fan usually given to the church by a mortuary. No air conditioning in those days, only a fan and elbow grease. Little by little the fans would disappear as people would carry them home."

When gas became available in the rural country of Butler County gas lights would illuminate the church sanctuary as a modern convenience. Mary (Harper) Wentworth told how the new lights were lit, "I remember the "Coleman" gas lights that were let down from the ceiling and has to be filled with gas and lighted," Geneva Simpson Basore explained further, "Also in the southwest corner of the church was the carbide system used to light the hanging lights." A gas light fixture is on display in the White Church.



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Before the Santa Fe Lake was constructed Central Baptist held its baptisms in the creek that ran behind the church. It would be an interesting adventure as Lois Corbin Smith continues: “Baptism was held in Dry Creek River down by the Arch Bridge. This was south of the church on 13th Street. The baptism was held just north of the bridge. I remember one service that was held in the winter and the creek was frozen over but that didn’t stop the service. The ice was broken, the minister waded in, and the candidates followed one by one. The baptism service was usually held Sunday morning after the church service. Most of the congregation went.”



1951 THE BUILDING OF A NEW FOUNDATION FOR THE WHITE CHURCH

Central Baptist Church growth in membership necessitated a change in its physical structure as a basement was added to the church. A basement was constructed just to the north of the White Church to meet the ever pressing needs of the church. Once the basement was completed in 1951 the White Church building was lifted up and slid over on top of the basement. Sidney Corbin indicated the basement addition cost \$1,500 to construct.



Photo was taken in the Fall of 1951.

The stone from the old foundation of the White Church was used to construct some of the sidewalk near the White Church.

Nellie Colburn expressed her excitement upon having a new facility: “When the basement was added, it was almost unbelievable to me. I wondered how the church could even pay for it. It had a kitchen – just about the nicest kitchen I had ever seen. The first ‘all church’ gathering in the new basement had Ernestine Hammond and Nellie Colburn in charge of the kitchen. We met at the church in the afternoon to get ready for the evening and found boards, sawdust, etc. We soon had it looking better.”



In December of 1960 a new larger and modern church building was constructed with a basement fellowship hall. The White Church continued to serve the needs of Central Baptist for Sunday school classes for many years. On special occasions a church service would be held in the White Church. A few weddings have taken place in the White Church with its quaintness and historical heritage as a backdrop. In 1970 new classrooms and offices were added to the north of the present sanctuary. Then in 2000 a new large fellowship hall was constructed to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Central Baptist Church.