



Grady County Historical Society – Churches

Poplar Springs

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Recommended Citation:

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Dear Julian:

Churches.

Your letter of yesterday, July 19.

As previously suggested by you, I will mention the fact that Rev. Lewis, grand or great grandson of Elder Prior Lewis, Sr., is now pastor of Midway (Missionary) Baptist Church, located within a mile of Poplar Springs Primitive Baptist Church, etc. This will be done in connection with the sketch on Poplar Springs Church — and not as a separate sketch about Midway Church.

As to making any changes in ^{the} wording of that first paragraph in the preamble or preface to the subject "Churches", I will give this some further consideration and thought.

But let me say now that "I don't give a rip" as to what the preachers of Cairo or church members think of me personally. I don't intend for any of my writing to be a "top" for them. Neither do I want any praise or acclaim for what I am doing. The only pride or vanity that I have in all this is the fact that my name is Rosenberg and I glory in my ancestry. I am undertaking to honor our grandfather, my father, and your father. That is my primary motivation

in publishing this book. I am trying as far
as possible to refrain from injecting
my personal opinions and philosophy.
But I am doing my utmost to be honest
and truthful in everything that is said.
The WAY I say it may not please some
people but that is immaterial to me.
Yet I have no intention of offending
(unless such offense is deserved), and there
will be times when disagreeable truths
will be left ~~unsaid~~ unsaid, unless the
telling is necessary -

Am momentarily expecting word
as to when you will be here -
Yours,

1840
37
19 77

Poplar Springs Primitive Baptist Church
June 29, 1965

MEMO TO RSR, JR.

I finally rode down to Poplar Springs Primitive Baptist Church, and following is the information:

From the middle of railroad, south on Broad Street, then over to the Tallahassee road, it is 5.3 miles to the Poplar Springs Church. It is exactly one mile off that Tallahassee road. So it is 4.3 miles to the road you turn east.

In the corner where you turn to the left to go to the Church is the concrete new Baptist Church where Leo Lewis, now a Missionary Baptist, is pastor. You had asked what that church was. (Midway Baptist Church). I don't know how long it had been there, but there had been a Midway School there for years and years and when they consolidated with Cairo, it was closed. It is still a little community of maybe a dozen houses about, but scattered over maybe a mile.

The main tombstone in the cemetery was the following:

Elder Pryor Lewis
Born October 28, 1796 - Died November 12, 1877

And this is the original pastor, of course.

Mary A. Lewis (and it didn't give her maiden name) was adjoining,
Born May 22, 1800, Died August 5, 1872

There were several other Lewis there, but don't suppose you want them and I guess it's the next generation, was Pryor Lewis, born June 9, 1839, died December 1, 1918, and then Margaret Singletary Lewis by his side, was born March 16, 1840 and died January 15, 1927.

There seemed to be another generation of Richard Thomas Lewis, born ~~1867~~ 1868, died March 1943, and Uncle Bob may remember him for he was born the same year.

But there are hundreds of people born in the 60's, the 70's and 80's that have lived into the Twentieth Century. But what you wanted was to finish up that church history and I hope what I am giving here is what you wanted, if not, call on me again.

JBR

Dictated not read

1877
1796
81

*Poplar Springs
Primitive Baptist Church -*

(P3)

June 22, 1965

MEMO TO RSR, JR.

I have some information, but didn't get down as I thought I would, as am still covered up with cucumbers:

I enclose herewith information that Mrs. Allen, my secretary, got reference Poplar Springs Baptist Church, and this came from the Rev. Leo Lewis, great grandson of the founder of the church, or rather the first pastor, Elder Prior Lewis. Leo Lewis is now pastor of the Midway Baptist Church (Missionary Baptist)

You will note the first pastor, as you already knew, was Elder Prior Lewis, and he was pastor for 37 years. If it was constituted in 1840 that would go up to 1877. With these names before Uncle Bob he may remember who was the pastor when he used to carry Aunt Fannie there in the 1890's or earlier.

JBR

Dictated not read

PS

Re Poplar Springs Baptist Church. Ready by

POPLAR SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH

Poplar Springs Baptist Church was constituted on August 15, 1840, under the leadership of Elder Prior Lewis ^{9m.} who was the pastor for thirty-seven years.

They in _____ cy

The following have been pastors, along with possibly a few others:

- Elder William Hollingsworth, second pastor
- Elder Peter Everett
- Elder W. H. Godwin
- Elder Robert Lewis
- Elder Miller
- Elder Josh Davis
- Elder Earl J. Childs, present pastor

June 11, 1965

J. B. R., Sr.

Poplar Springs Primitive Baptist Church

Your letter of June 10 is good news.

The picture in the church would be that of Elder Prior Lewis, Sr., and he is buried in the cemetery near the church. Since you are going there, please visit the cemetery and copy what is on his tombstone or monument. When Papa and I were there 5 or 6 years ago, some members of that church (whose ancestors Papa remembered) lived within about 50 yards or so of the church, and we talked with them. I have forgotten their names.

That Prior Lewis, Sr., (there was a Prior Lewis, Jr.) was one of first "hardshell" preachers in what is now Grady County, and Papa heard him preach when he carried Aunt Fanny to meetings. Also, he is probably the man for whom they wanted to name the proposed Lewis County (in 1871). The present Rev. Leo Lewis (missionary Baptist) is probably his great grandson.

If you can, find out when Poplar Springs Church was started. May be a cornerstone at church.


R. S. R., Jr.

M
Let me see if I can find out when Poplar Springs Church was started.

John Poppley
POPLAR SPRINGS CHURCH

Poplar Springs (Primitive) Baptist Church, situated in its original location about five miles southeast of present Cairo, was constituted August 15, 1840, under the leadership of Elder Prior Lewis [Sr.] and he was its pastor the first thirty-seven years, being succeeded, in order, by Elders William Hollingsworth, Peter Everett, W. H. Godwin and Robert Lewis. After these, the church was served by Elder Miller and Elder T. Josh Davis, and possibly a few others. In his later years Elder T. Josh Davis was Ordinary of Colquitt County (1949-52) and died in Moultrie in 1962. Elder Robert Lewis was once a barber in a Cairo barbershop. Elder Earl J. Childs is the present pastor of Poplar Springs Church in 1965.

Miss Fanny Braswell (1831-1906), spinster sister of Mrs. S. A. Roddenbery, was a devout member and constant attendant of this church. She lived in the home of Dr. Roddenbery and it was the unflinching duty of his sons to go with her by horse and buggy to every service. Her nephew Robert seemed to enjoy this duty more than his older brother Walter and, from the time he was eight years old, it was his regular chore to "go to meeting" with Aunt Fanny every time, including "foot-washing" until he went away to school. He heard all the old time preachers, including Elders Prior Lewis, Hollingsworth, Everett and Godwin, and he became rather adept in mimicking the style of "hard-shell" preachers. He remembers that Aunt Fanny always carried a silver dollar as her contribution at every service, and that was the largest contribution of any member.

The grave of Elder Prior Lewis (born Oct. 28, 1796, died Nov. 12, 1877) is in the nearby church cemetery and a large picture of him is in the church building. He was beloved by a host of friends and was one of the most dominant characters in the entire territory in his time. It is believed that it was for him that a new county of Lewis was proposed to be named in 1871. (See copy of petition to create the County of Lewis, printed elsewhere in this book.)

We think it worthy of note that Leo Y. Lewis is now pastor of Midway (Missionary) Baptist Church, located just one mile from Poplar Springs (Primitive) Baptist Church where his great grandsire preached 125 years ago.

=====

JUL 21 1965

POPLAR SPRINGS CHURCH

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~~Elder Prior Lewis~~ The grave of Elder Prior Lewis is in the nearby church cemetery and a large picture of him is in the church ~~auditorium~~ building. He was ~~greatly~~ beloved by a host of friends and was one of the most dominant characters in the entire territory in his time. It is believed that it was for him that a new county of Lewis was proposed to be named in 1871. (See copy of petition to create the County of Lewis, printed elsewhere in this book.)

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This added to what was previously written. It gives recognition to Leo Y. Lewis and I think this is all that needs to be said about Midway Church, which is modern and has no connection with first days of Cairo.

JUL 21 1965

Poplar Springs (Primitive) Baptist Church was constituted and organized August 15, 1840, under the leadership of Elder Prior Lewis [Sr.], and he was its pastor the first thirty seven years, being succeeded, in order, by Elders William Hollingsworth, Peter Everett, W.H. Godwin and Robert Lewis. After these, the church was served by an Elder Miller and Elder T. Josh Davis, and possibly a few others. In ^{his later years} T. Josh Davis was Ordinary of Calhoun County (1949-1952) and died in Maultrie in 1962. Elder Earl J. Childs is the present pastor of Poplar Springs Church. Robert Lewis was a barber in Cairo at same time he was pastor of this church.

This church, still in its original location, is about _____ miles southeast of present Cairo and Elder Prior Lewis was buried in the nearby church cemetery. He was one of the most dominant characters in the entire territory during his time and it is believed that it was for him that a new county of Lewis was proposed to be named in 1871. (See ^{copy of} petition to create the County of Lewis, printed elsewhere in this book.)

Location and Distances.

The present city of Cairo is 265 feet above sea level, located at latitude 30:53 and longitude 84:12, and its average mean temperature is 67.5 degrees. Distances from Cairo are generally measured from the railroad crossing of Broad Street or from the Goady County courthouse. It is 225 highway miles south of Atlanta, 53 miles south of Albany, and 24 miles south of Camilla. By direct rail Cairo is 214 miles southwest of Savannah, 14 miles west of Thomasville, and 27 miles east of Bainbridge. By highway it is 34 miles north of Tallahassee, and 10 air line miles north of the Florida state line.

June 2 4, 1965

Dear Julien:

Poplar Springs Baptist Church

The information Mrs. Allen secured from Rev. Leo Lewis is splendid and greatly appreciated.

These additional facts are still needed and I hope you can promptly obtain the answers from Rev. Leo Lewis. I want to verify my belief that Elder Prior Lewis is buried in the cemetery at Poplar Springs Church and his gravestone will give date of his death which I presume was about 1877 or soon after. I also want to know the relation of Elder Robert Lewis to Elder Prior Lewis; was he a son or grandson. Papa remembers him (while Papa was a grown man) as being a pastor of Poplar Springs Church and at the same time he was a barber in a barber shop in Cairo.

I still want the distance from Cairo to Poplar Springs Church and you are to get that.

Papa distinctly remembers old man Prior Lewis, Sr., and it is his recollection that he was preaching at Poplar Springs when Papa first started going there with Aunt Fannie. Of course he would have been only 8 or 9 years old at that time but it was not unusual for boys of that age to drive a horse and buggy. Of course Aunt Fannie could drive herself but she had to have company. But Papa well remembers Elders William Hollingsworth, Peter Everett, and W. H. Godwin and remembers hearing them preach on numerous occasions.

As a matter of information to you, Elder T. Josh Davis lived in the western part of Colquitt County (before moving to Moultrie), was a bosom friend of Congressman E. E. Cox and later my friend and he was Ordinary of Colquitt County between 1949 and 1952. He died in 1962.

You will note that Poplar Springs Church is five years older than Long Branch Church.



June 11, 1965

J. B. R., Sr.

Poplar Springs Primitive Baptist Church

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R. S. R., Jr.



From Lewis Cemetery Tombstones

Diamond Crystal Salt Company

located East of Highway 100
Elder Prior Lewis

B 10-28-1796

D 11-2-1877

that's
Lewis
1877

Another
Prior Lewis

6-9-1839

17-1-1918

Cymmeria
West
been
soon
1870
1-1871
1-1879
Tombstone
Elder
Lewis

Jacob Lewis

10-25-1473

1-27-1972

994

to
must
have
been
B. from
Elder Lewis

Richard Thomas Lewis

1-23-1866 - 3-19-1943

FOR HOME - FARM - INDUSTRY

Charles
Prior
Promer
P3

-

5