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Pine Park Baptist

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Pine Park Baptist to celebrate centennial

Randolph H. Wind
Editor & Publisher

On Sunday, June 13, the Rev. Gordon Cloud and the congregation of Pine Park Baptist Church will celebrate the church's centennial and the community is invited to join in the occasion.

Special plans for the 100th anniversary include morning worship beginning at 10:30 a.m. with the Rev. Dr. Jimmy Brookins delivering the sermon. Dr. Brookins was ordained into the ministry at Pine Park Baptist Church.

Immediately following the morning worship, dinner on the grounds will be served in the fellowship hall.

Pine Park Baptist Church was organized on June 10, 1904, when 11 Christian men and women met to establish a church at Pine Park.

According to the church's history, the church building had already been erected. Mr. and Mrs. B.A. Alderman, Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Green, Miss Willie

Green, Miss Mamie Ballard, Mr. D.W. Noles, Mr. Eddie Mills and Mrs. Octavia Barwick came with their church letters from Barnett's Creek Baptist Church. Mr. L.A. Clay came from Long Branch Baptist Church and Mr. J.G. Moore came with his letter from Mt. Ebal Baptist Church.

The original building was a one-room wooden structure, painted white inside and out. It sat in a pine grove on the property of Mr. B.A. Alderman, one of the founding members. Although it cannot be determined, it is believed that Alderman donated the land to the church. The site of the original church building was located south of the railroad.

Church records do indicate that on the day of organization four ministers were present and that the Rev. Alex W. Bealer delivered the sermon from 1 Peter 2:9.

The Rev. T.A. White was the church's first pastor, serving from September 1904 until 1911.

An organ was donated to the church in 1905 by the ladies aid



THE CONGREGATION of Pine Park Baptist Church will celebrate the church's 100th anniversary next Sunday.

society of Thomasville and music has been an important part of the church worship service ever since.

When the Rev. White departed in 1911, the church membership had grown from the original 11 to 106.

Fire destroyed the original church building in June 1939, however, the pulpit, piano and most of the pews were saved. This was the second time the building had caught fire, but quick action by J.A. Barwick, C.L. Bonner and J.E. Moore saved the building the first time.

After the second fire, the church moved into a vacant

school building and services continued.

A Pine Park Baptist Church cemetery was established in 1944. Travis and Hulaque Bryant donated an additional acre of land adjoining the present cemetery, and last year Robert Bryant and Elzie Jones donated their time and equipment to clear the land. Jerry Bullington has served as the coordinator of the cemetery expansion and it has been cleared and leveled.

In April 1947, the old school building was torn down to make way for the construction of the

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Dedication of Grady landmark set for Friday

Former church, community center has new Fla. home

A dedication service will be held Friday in Graceville, Florida, for a century-plus-old Grady County landmark which was moved nearly three years ago to the Florida Baptist College.

The Pine Park Community Center, which once sat east of Cairo on U.S. Highway 84, was moved in 2004 to the Baptist college as part of the school's collection of restored historic churches and houses called "Heritage Village."

College officials in early 2004 approached the Ward family, who were the owners of the former community center building about adding it to their collection.

Al Ward told The Messenger in July 2004, "We hated to move it out of Grady County, but we

couldn't stand guard over it for 24 hours a day. The Florida Baptist College's interest was high, and we decided to donate the building, provided we could visit it whenever we wanted."

Al Ward is the grandson of Daniel Patrick Ward, the man who had the building constructed.

According to a Messenger news report, for about 40 to 50 years after it was erected in 1896, the Pine Park building was home to the Ward-White Universalist Church, a name that stems from the early congregation of the Ward and White families. Universalism was a common denomination in North Carolina, the home state of the Wards and the Whites.

Because there were no other Universalist Churches in southwest Georgia at the time, and therefore no Universalist ministers, preachers from North Carolina traveled to the Church to serve in a way similar to the early "circuit riding" or travel

ing preachers. "When the minister came, which was about four times a year, an all day meeting was held with dinner on the grounds. The minister would stay at the home of D.P. Ward and would occupy one of the shed rooms (an outer room separate from the main house) on the front of the Ward home," Lewis says. "The minister would stay several days and would visit with members of the church. I myself recall attending some services in 1934 when I was four or five years old. We moved away and returned in 1941. After that time, I remember attending services there almost every time the minister came."

The Universalist Church continued to function for only a few years after the death of D.P. Ward in 1938. Brother Thomas Chapman, the church's original minister from North Carolina, was quite old by then and was able to come less and less to Pine Park.

At that time, D.P. Ward's widow, Mamie Sasser Ward, was very interested in 4-H Club work and allowed the Pine Park 4-H Club members to use the church for club meetings. In

1945, the Universalist Church decided the building and its one acre lot to Mamie Ward, who in turn signed an agreement for the building and lot to be used as a 4-H clubhouse. "Club members and their families worked hard to make the church and yard into a suitable meeting place. The church originally faced the old road before Highway 84 was paved in 1929 and the road bed moved to its present status. So the door into the building was moved so that the clubhouse opened to and faced Highway 84," said Pine Park historian Opal Lewis.

Makeshift lanterns provided light for the first meetings so that cooks could see to fry chickens and prepare food for gatherings. "We soaked bricks in kerosene for several days and then put them on wires hanging from posts and lit the bricks. A number of state 4-H club staff attended the first gathering; among them was the state recreation leader Rip Van Winkle. Billy Stringer remarked that never would he have believed that we would see burning bricks and Rip Van Winkle in Pine Park, Ga.," Lewis says.

The ladies of the local Home



THE PINE PARK COMMUNITY CENTER building stands in the 1997 photo, just before the building fell victim to acts of vandalism and theft.

Demonstration Club also used the building at this time and were responsible for adding a kitchen, tables and chairs.

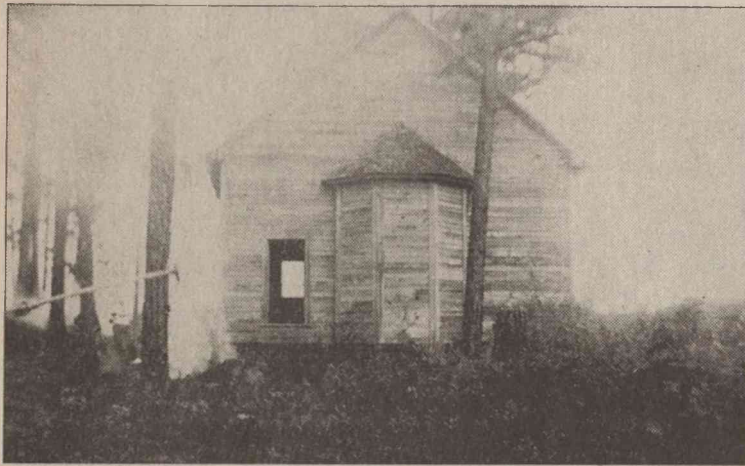
Numerous other events were held in the building over the years including fish fries, family reunions, picnics and square dance classes. But along came air conditioning and recreational facilities in area churches which brought less and less use of the club house. "No air conditioning, no water, and no restrooms made the club house a less desirable place for public use. 4-H club work had changed its structure a great deal and community

club meetings were no longer used as a part of the 4-H program. Due to all these reasons, the club house closed its doors, and the electricity was disconnected," Lewis says. Until recently, the building has been "sitting silently" since the 1970s.

The dedication ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. on the campus of Florida Baptist College in Graceville, Fla. For more information about the event call Al Ward at 229-226-6381.

(Editor's Note: Former Messenger staff writer Brian Dekle contributed to this report.)

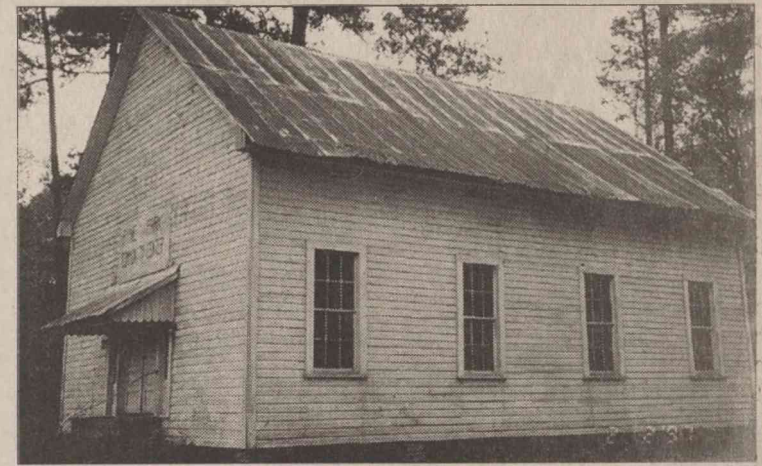
Road trip for local landmark planned



THIS EARLY 20TH CENTURY PHOTO shows what the Pine Park Community Center building, then home to a Universalist Church, looked like in its younger days. This was the "front" of the building when it faced the old dirt Highway 84, which was later moved to its present location on the other side of the building. The small extension in the middle of the building is where the preacher stood to give sermons.



THE CHANGING OF THE FRONTS. This photo of the Pine Park Community Center was taken in the 1940s when the front of the building was changed to where it is now, facing the then newly paved U.S. Highway 84.



AN OLDIE BUT GOODIE, the Pine Park Community Center building stands in the 1997 photo, just before the building fell victim to acts of vandalism and theft.



NOW COMPLETELY TOPLESS, the Pine Park Community Center building has its roof removed in preparation for its long journey to Graceville, Fla.



WORKERS prepare the old Pine Park Community Center for moving to Graceville, Florida.

Brian Dekle
Summer Intern

A long-unused Grady County landmark will soon be given new life and a new home.

The more than 100-year-old Pine Park Community Center, located east of Cairo on U.S. Highway 84, is moving to Florida Baptist College in Graceville, Fla., as soon as movers obtain a Department of Transportation house moving permit, which is expected within the next couple of weeks. The historic building will become part of the Baptist college's collection of historic buildings

churches and houses called "Heritage Village."

College officials approached the Ward family, current owners of the building, earlier this year with "much interest" in adding it to their village. The building's old age and contributions to the past led the Wards to believe the building was worth saving. "We believe that despite its years in age, it is still young at heart - especially the heart pine used in its construction," Pine Park historian Opal Lewis remarks.

The Ward family decided to give up the old building, a victim of years of vandalism and neglect, with the hope that it will be remembered and preserved long into the future. "We hated to move it (the Pine Park Community Center) out of Grady County, but we couldn't stand guard over it for 24 hours a day. The Florida Baptist College's interest was high, and we decided to donate the building, provided we could visit it whenever we wanted," Al Ward says. Al Ward and Pat Ward, another Pine Park resident, are grandsons of the man who had the building constructed. Daniel

Patrick Ward.

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Carolina traveled to the Church to serve in a way similar to the early "circuit riding," or traveling, preachers. "When the minister came, which was about four times a year, an all day meeting was held with dinner on the grounds. The minister would stay at the home of D.P. Ward and would occupy one of the shed rooms (an outer room separate from the main house) on the front of the Ward home," Lewis says. "The minister would stay several days and would visit with members of the church. I myself recall attending

widow, Mamie Sasser Ward, was very interested in 4-H club work and allowed the Pine Park 4-H club members to use the church for club meetings. In 1945, the Universalist Church deeded the building and its one acre lot to Mamie Ward, who in turn signed an agreement for the building and lot to be used as a 4-H clubhouse. "Club members and their families worked hard to make the church and yard into a suitable meeting place. The church originally faced the old road before Highway 84 was paved in 1929 and the road bed

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The ladies of the local Home Demonstration Club also used the building at this time and were responsible for adding a kitchen, tables and chairs.

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