

Hall County history column

West clan helped organize Concord

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Special to The Times

According to minutes of Concord Baptist Church, Clermont, the church was constituted with less than ten members in February, 1851. Four of these people were

members of the West clan. The Rev. James West and wife, Eunice (or Unica), and their youngest son, the Rev. William B. West and wife, Louisa. Elder James West is believed to have been the first pastor of Yonah Baptist Church, now First

Church, Cleveland, Ga., and William B. West was clerk of Superior Court, Cleveland, and clerk of the Yonah Church.

The Clermont area and the first church building were described in a newspaper article in 1951 when the church observed its centennial. "Clermont was just a hilly farming area some 100 years ago. There were a few dirt roads and some fields to scar the mostly wooded area...there were few farm homes, many of them built of logs; but the people then, as now, were God-fearing people and built a church in the center of their settlement.

"The first building was a simple log structure, located in the middle of a field near a spring...the history of Clermont closely parallels the history of the Concord Church.

"Clermont's settlers came into the North Georgia hills greatly because of a lush mountain grass that grew on the hills, and they chose the Clermont area because of the several springs and a good amount of level land...After the first log church was built, the community grew..."

Carolinian

Elder James West was born about 1778, North Carolina. His wife Eunice Bowen was born about 1785. The couple moved to the Nacoochee Valley section around Helen sometime after 1826 from Greenville District, S.C. James West, according to records, was ordained to the ministry in 1819 at the Head of the Tyger River Baptist Church, S.C., and became the

pastor of the church. Apparently, the only family member left behind when moving to Georgia was a daughter, Sarah, wife of Willoughby Barton. She is interred in the Tyger River Church Cemetery.

Many descendants of the James West couple still reside in Northeast Georgia. Their children were Sarah, Jephtha, Samuel, Enoch, Marian, James F. Jr., Benjamin, Nancy, Eunice, Mary and William Bowen West. There may have been another older son named John Benton.

James West was the son of Sgt. James West, a Revolutionary soldier, and Mary Chadwick. He is believed to have had at least two brothers: Benjamin and William Hargrove West, and a sister, Sarah, who married Lilliston Pardue.

Habersham

A Georgia history gives James West as an original settler of Habersham County: "Rev. James West, the grandfather of the late Dr. E.P. West, of Clarkesville, was also an early settler. He lived to be quite an old man and died almost within sight of the century mark." Records also state that he was J.I.C., Habersham County, Jan. 10, 1837 to March 12, 1838, and Jan. 8, 1853.

William Bowen West, the youngest child, was born in 1826, South Carolina. He died in September, 1884 and is supposedly buried in the West family plot someplace near Cleveland. His marriage to Moriah Louisa Haralson, Dec. 21, 1845, is recorded in Habersham County. Louisa was born about 1829 in Tennessee.

Their children were Sarah Jane, who died in her twenties; James A., William Jefferson, Eliza Ann, John, Mary L. and Hillyer. After the death of the husband, Louisa evidently was unable to provide for the family and sometime after 1870, she moved to Fort Payne, Ala., where some of her relatives resided.

The marriage of the son, James A. West, is recorded in Hall County Courthouse. He was

married to Frances Isabel Sears, Aug. 20, 1871. James A. and wife moved to Alabama along with the mother. He and his family moved to Boham, Tex., in the 1890's and he went into grocery business.

Eliza Ann West, daughter of William Bowen and Louisa West, married William Leander McRay. They eventually moved to Floyd County, Ga. They became grandparents of James Wallace McRay, the founder and first pastor of the Lakewood Baptist Church, and this writer's husband, the late Rev. James McRay.