

Looking Back: Boiling Fork Baptist Church

By Jenny Lou and Jim Brock

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Probably the first church structure in the immediate Cowan area which can be documented was a Baptist Church erected sometime between the early settlement years and 1822.

On the 10th of December in this same year John Cowan sold to the Boiling Fork Baptist Church one acre of ground "including the meeting house now occupied by said Baptist Church." In January of 1826 a second acre, lying next to the first, was purchased of John Cowan, and the deed reads, "...including the Brick meeting house." Probably the first structure was built of logs and was replaced sometime before 1826 with a new building. A meeting house constructed of brick at this early date is unusual. It is possible that this was the first brick church in Franklin County

Mr. Bob Sloan remembers family conversations of many years ago stating that Union troops occupied the church and its grounds during the War Between the States. The structure was a Primitive Baptist Church and was located near Boiling Fork Creek on property now owned by Mrs. J. Y. Hinshaw. About 500 yards up the creek from the iron bridge was the place used for baptisms. Once an old foot log provided access to the creek for this purpose. The building no longer stands, but the well used for so many years by this church still stands next to Mrs. Hinshaw's home.

Perhaps some of you readers can furnish additional information. If you can, let us know. We would like to add your memories to the history of Boiling Fork Baptist Church.

Additional Notes and Information

By L. Jarod Pearson

Descendants of the Coker family claim that Coker's mill was located on Boiling Fork Creek near the Baptist Church. Some local residents say also that the pools from the old mill were used by this church and other local churches for baptizing.

There is no record of when the Boiling Fork Baptist Church closed and disbanded. There is written record of the church's existence as late as 1891. In 1917 the newly organized Cowan First Church of the Nazarene met in the Boiling Fork church building while their church was being built. One local resident and historian, Mr. Howard Coulson, said that the Boiling Fork church building was demolished in the 1920's.

One record of Boiling Fork Baptist Church refers to it as a Separate Baptist Church while another history article referred to it as a Primitive Baptist Church. Primitive Baptists were common in Franklin County in the 19th Century and there were also a few Separate Baptists. We do not know if Boiling Fork was one type or the other, or if perhaps it was one and then the other. The scarcity of records makes it difficult to know.