

HISTORICAL MARKER APPLICATION
EMANUEL CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
BROWNWOOD, TEXAS
SUBMITTED BY BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
April 1, 2020
Ronnie Lappe, chair

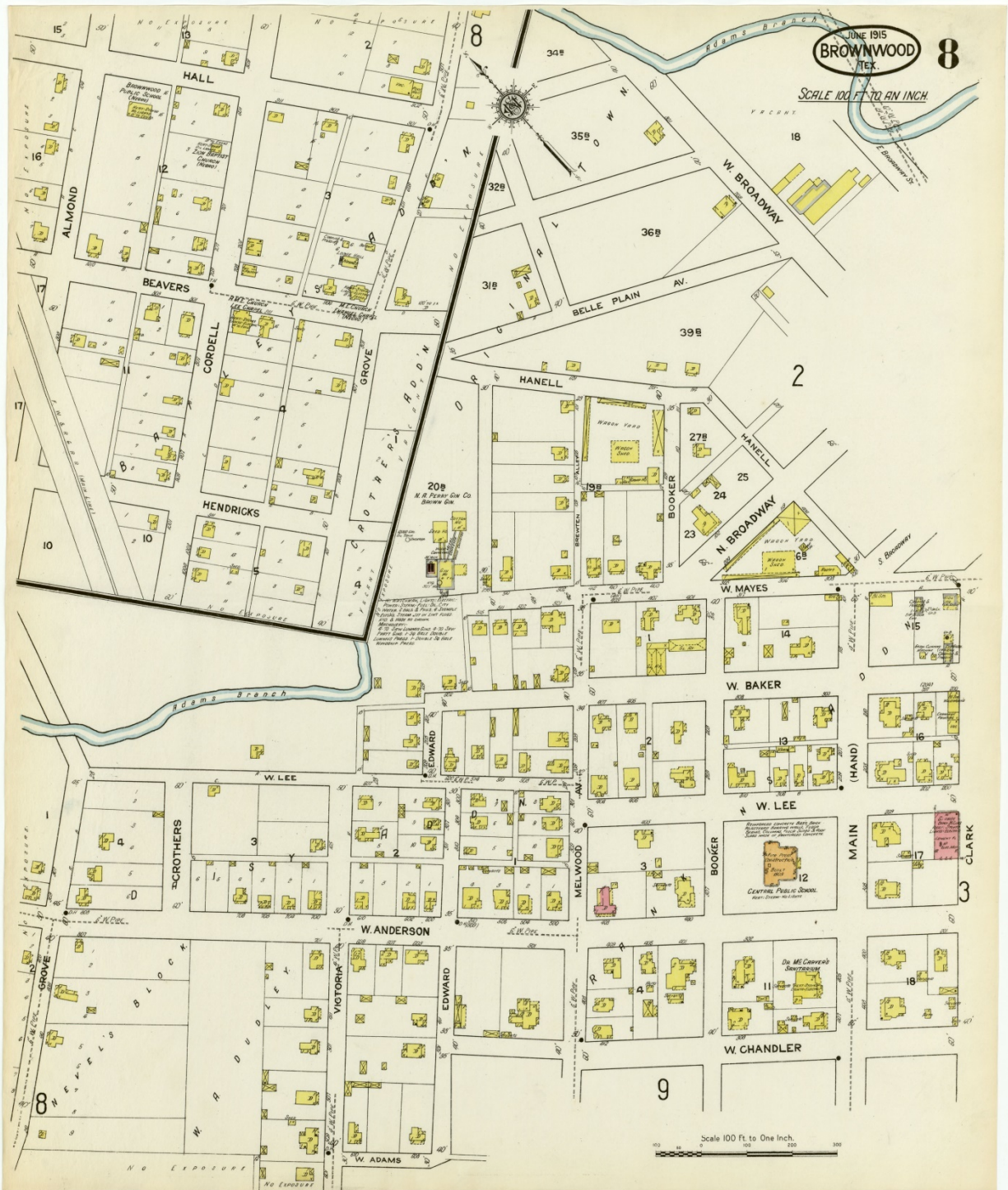
I Context

Emanuel Henderson was a member of the “traveling clergy “or “circuit rider”. “Circuit riders” carried the Methodist Episcopal faith throughout Texas after the Civil War. ⁽¹⁾ Emanuel Henderson brought the Methodist Episcopal faith to Brownwood. Specifically he brought the faith to the Bailey Addition.

George E. Smith started the Bailey Addition community by establishing Lee Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church and one of the first schools for Black children in the state of Texas. Rufus Hardin came into the addition in 1896 taking the job of principal of the Brownwood Colored School. Hardin also helped former slaves find ways to afford their own homes and businesses.⁽²⁾

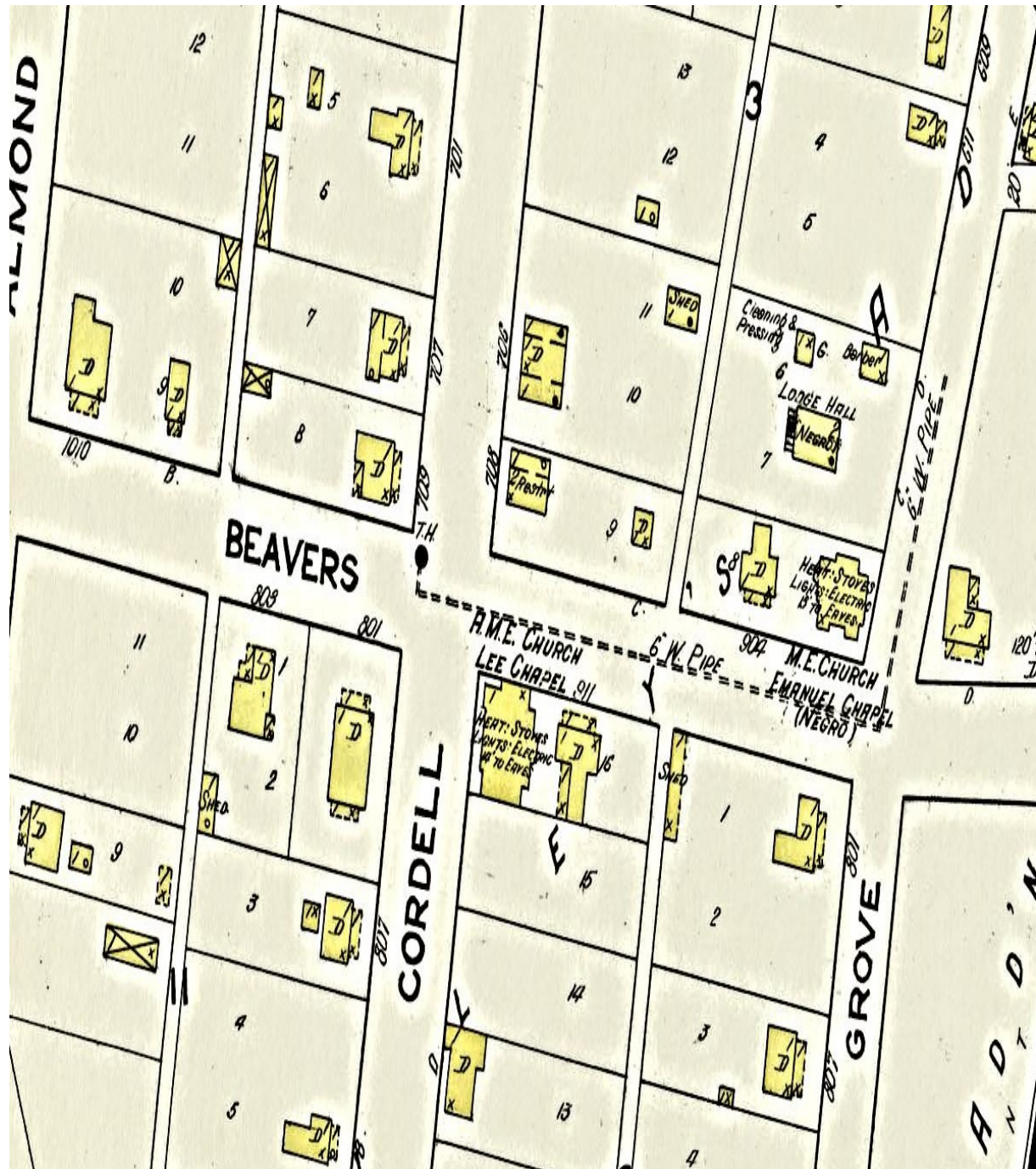
The Methodist Episcopal Church began worshipping at the corner of Beaver and Grove Streets in the Bailey in 1902. At some point Grove Street was renamed Bailey St. Men who were the founding fathers and served as the first trustees of Emanuel Chapel included veterans of the Civil War, former slaves and some of the first Black business owners of Brownwood. Today’s congregation is fully integrated but still includes descendants of the Buffalo Soldiers, Civil War Veterans, slaves and those early business owners. Emanuel Chapel United Methodist Church has been worshipping and serving the Bailey community and the city of Brownwood from the same location for 116 years.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Brownwood, Texas Map 8,1915⁽³⁾



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

Enhanced Sanborn Fire Insurance Brownwood, Texas Map 8, 1915⁽³⁾



1930 Enhanced Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing location of Emanuel Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church⁽⁴⁾



II Overview

Black citizens of Bailey had to choose between two churches. Those churches were Lee Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church and Mt. Zion Baptist Church both were established in 1888.⁽⁴⁾ Members of the community wanted more choices.

“Traveling clergy” better known as “circuit riders” to spread the Methodist Episcopal faith was the accepted practice throughout Texas. Traveling clergy were assigned to a circuit. This circuit consisted of several communities with many miles between them. The circuit

ridertraveled from community to community with nothing but a Bible and the clothes on his back. The circuit rider assigned to Brownwood was Rev. Emanuel Henderson.⁽⁵⁾

The Methodist Episcopal Church divided Texas into two conferences separated by the Trinity River. East of the Trinity was the East Texas Conference; west of the Trinity River was the West Texas Conference. Rev. Henderson was admitted to the West Texas Conference in 1878 or 1879. Different Conference Journals give different years.⁽⁶⁾

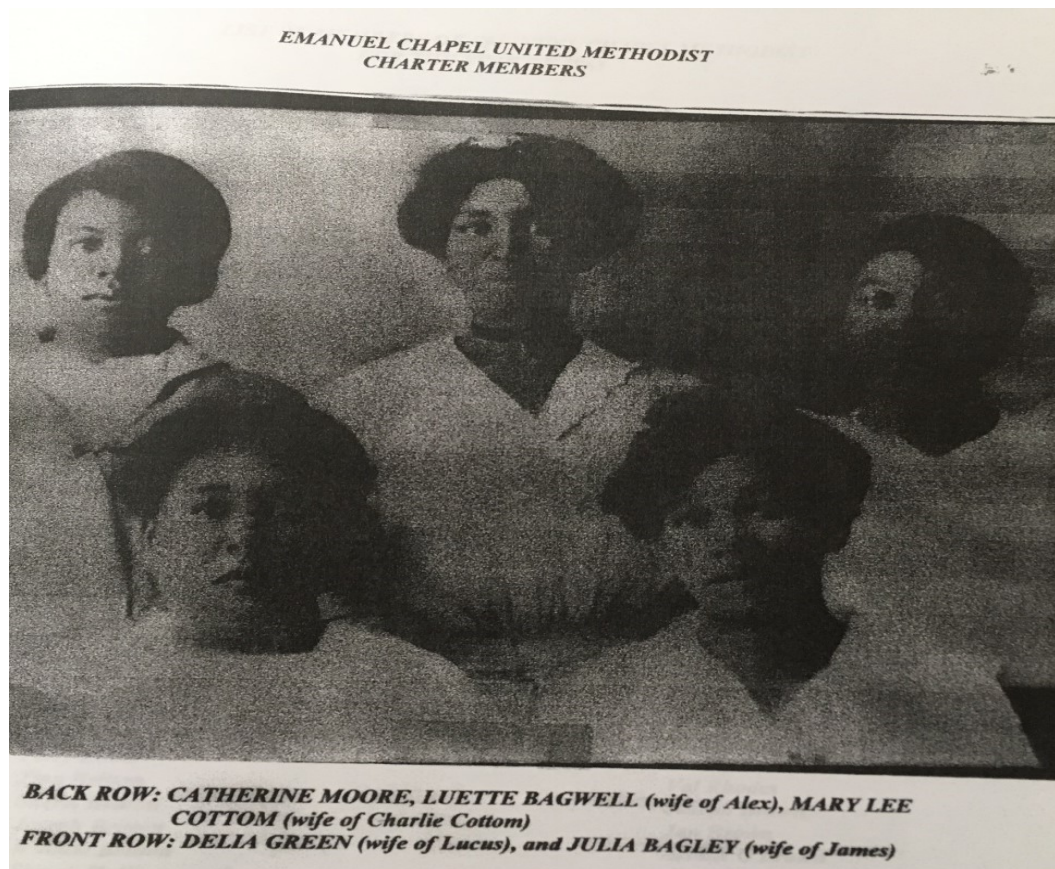
Rev. Henderson was one of the last frontier circuit riders. As a circuit rider his assignments ranged from Lampasas, San Saba, and Brownwood to Waco and Groesbeck. Toward the end of his career he was assigned to the Groesbeck Circuit then the Austin Circuit. Rev. Henderson died in 1913. In the 1913 Journal of the West Texas Conference, he was eulogized by Rev. A. L. Carper as “pioneer preacher who had traveled through the Conference when it was dangerous because of the rough cowboy life in Texas; he feared no danger and made all kinds of sacrifices for the Master and His kingdom”.⁽⁷⁾ Sadly, nothing else is known about Rev. Henderson’s life or death. There is a single index card in the General Commission on Archives and History in New Jersey with a single sentence stating that *Rev. Emanuel Henderson was buried in San Antonio, Texas.*⁽⁸⁾

There are no written records with a date or reason for naming the church Emanuel Chapel but the accepted legend of the church is that it was named to honor the work and dedication of Rev. Emanuel Henderson. The Sanford fire insurance 1915 map clearly shows that the wooden structure on the corner of Beaver and Grove (Bailey) as M. E. Church Emanuel Chapel.⁽⁹⁾

Reverend John Walker was the first minister assigned to the congregation of Emanuel Chapel. Rev. Walker worked under the direction of Reverend Henderson and the first trustees;

Will Clark, Newt Blackwell, Jim Bagley, John Sepolen Sr. and Spencer Perkins.⁽¹⁰⁾ Pioneering members Emanuel Chapel were: George McLemore, Kitty McLemore, Mrs. Ella Clark, Eugene Henderson, “Dad” Henderson, Annie Henderson, Mrs. Vera Harris, Gus Blocker, Gertrude Blocker, Charlie Cottom, Luetta Bagwell, Alex Bagwell, Catherine Moore, Lucas Green, A.L. and Delia Green,⁽¹¹⁾

CHARTER MEMBERS OF EMANUEL CHAPEL⁽¹²⁾



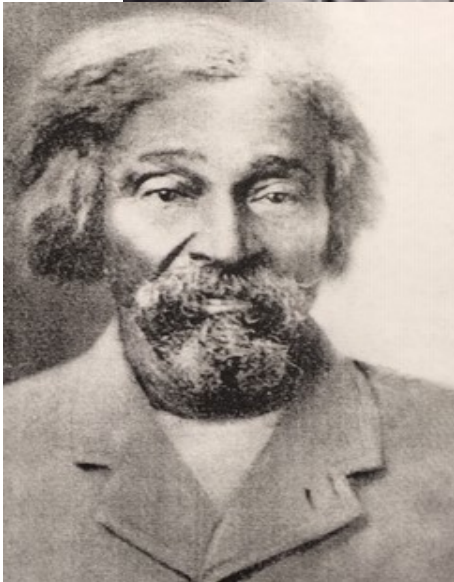
FIRST TRUSTEES OF EMANUEL CHAPEL



John Sepolen

Born William's Ranch; May 22, 1877 Mother one of Chandler Slaves and father was a full blood Indian (picture taken 1946)

Mr. Sapolen's occupation was always listed as rancher. In 1917 he was hired to break 404 horses that had been sold to the U.S. Cavalry by Brooke Smith and company.⁽¹³⁾



Spencer "Uncle Dick" Perkins

Born June 11, 1841, Vicksburg, Mississippi As a slave, he followed his master into battle, when his master was killed, he picked up his master's gun and joined the fight. He fought in the 17th Texas Infantry, Company B of the Confederate Army. Perkins was wounded and hospitalized. During this time, he was told that he was a free man and an American citizen. Not believing this to be a true statement, Perkins escaped only to be captured by the Yankees, He was immediately declared a Union soldier and ordered to fire on the Rebels. Not liking the idea of shooting at his friends, he deserted and returned to the Confederate side where he remained. Every year Perkins would lay flowers on his master's grave.⁽¹⁴⁾

Mr. Perkins worked for the city of Brownwood.⁽¹⁵⁾



Charlie Cottom at Easter services with children of Emanuel Chapel.⁽¹⁵⁾

By 1902, the fledgling Methodist Episcopal Church in Brownwood was meeting at the corner of Beaver and Grove Streets in the Bailey Addition on land owned by Thomas Lathem. The Methodist Episcopal Church bought Lot eight (8) in Block three (3) of the Bailey Addition for \$65.00 July 4, 1904. Church trustees signing the deed were Newton Blackwell, Spencer Perkins and James Bagley.⁽¹⁶⁾

In 1904, "Jim Crow Era" was the law of the land in Texas. These laws established segregation.⁽¹⁷⁾ Mr. Lathem continued to pay the taxes on the property even after it was purchased by the church leaving some parties to feel that he was "harboring" the church. Harboring was a practice used to conceal the fact that a black church or business was meeting on the site; harboring would have protected the church allowing the church to become established. However, other parties may have considered Mr. Lathem a poor businessman who didn't know how he was spending his money. Mr. Lathem died in 1909 without revealing his reasons for paying the taxes.⁽¹⁸⁾

George Smith, founder of the AME church in Brownwood also established the school for Colored children in the Bailey Addition. Rev. Smith called upon the black churches for assistance providing an education for the black children of Brownwood in any way possible. Emanuel Chapel responded by adding a Mission building to the church.⁽¹⁹⁾ This building was used as a school room until a school was assembled from two wooden buildings in 1910. The school burned 1917. Emanuel Chapel's Mission building was there to welcome the students. It continued to be used as a classroom until a new school could be built.

Once the new school was built, the classroom was used for community gatherings such as musical programs, talks on various topics⁽²¹⁾ and celebration of National Negro History Week⁽²²⁾. Brownwood Bulletin printed announcements for the special events. Each article carried a sentence stating that "Special seats will be reserved for white persons".

The church building was showing its age. It had been in service more than four decades. Rev. J. N. Hooey, 1934-1943 started discussing the need to replace the well-used wooden building. However Rev. Hooey moved on before a new building was constructed. Rev. M.A. Freeman stepped in to continue working toward a new building. Rev. Freeman called a congregational meeting in September of 1945. District Superintendent, Rev. A.B. Holden, took charge of the meeting. Rev. Holden presented a Rev. Marcus Freeman called a congregational meeting in September of 1945 to discuss the challenge created by the aging building. Rev. Freeman introduced District Superintendent, Rev. A.B. Holden. Rev. Holden presented a plan that would cost \$11,342.00 for the construction of a new building on Lot eight (8) in Block three (3) of the Bailey Addition. Rev. Freeman appointed a committee consisting of George Grayson, John Sepolen and W.D. Garner to make further inquiries into the proposal. A second congregational meeting was held in April to approve construction of a new building.

Construction of a new church building was approved. The trustees of Emanuel Chapel and representatives of the Division of Home Missions and Church Extensions of the Methodist church to arrange financing met on May 18, 1946. Trustees of Emanuel Chapel and various other entities negotiated and signed several legal documents before construction began in 1946. The cornerstone was laid in 1946 by the Lincoln Lodge of Masons.

Emanuel Chapel celebrated its 50th anniversary in September, 1952. The celebration lasted most of the week beginning with a special service on Wednesday. A community wide social was held on Saturday and ended with a regular church service on Sunday.⁽²⁴⁾

Youth programs have always been an important facet to Emanuel's ministry. The early 50's brought a summer intern from Southern Methodist University to the chapel, Cecil Williams. To this day his summer programs made an impact on several members who as school children participated in those activities.⁽²⁵⁾

Providing support for the youth of the community brought the congregation to the decision to build a youth center for after school activities. It was decided to begin the task of adding a youth center to Emanuel Chapel located on Lot eight (8) in Block three (3) of the Bailey Addition.

“We believe the church needs a new dimension in doing something for the community.”

Hardy Reed told the Brownwood Bulletin as Emanuel Chapel prepared for the ground breaking

ceremony for the Youth Center December, 1969. Mr. Reed went on to explain the church had a responsibility to provide opportunities for the young people of the community. He stated that it was not right to have a good school like Brownwood High School and not have a place for the students to study after school.⁽²⁶⁾ Hardy Reed was the Lay Leader for the Chapel and the son of A. L. Reed who became interim principal of Brownwood Colored School when Rufus Hardin had a career ending stroke.⁽²⁾

The late Barbara Jordan was the principle speaker for the groundbreaking ceremony. She was the state senator from Houston at that time.⁽²⁷⁾ The church raised \$7,000.00 for the addition and the Methodist church provided a grant for \$47,000.00 to complete the project. The final cost was \$65,000.00. Rev. B. E. Collie explained that businesses and individuals contributed money, time or skills to make the project possible.⁽²⁸⁾



Barbara Jordan meeting with church members during groundbreaking for the Youth Center⁽²⁷⁾

The Center was finished in 1971. Consecration services were held in January of 1972. Bishop W. Kenneth Pope led the service with Rev. Collie by his side as well as other representatives of the Methodist Church.⁽²⁹⁾ Attending the service was Lt. Governor Ben Barnes, the mayor of Brownwood and the president of Howard Payne. Rev. Collie immediately put the Center to work serving lunches every day including Sundays to the community.⁽³⁰⁾

Through the years Emanuel Chapel has participated and community celebrations such as “Juneteenth” and Black History Month. Planning and carrying these celebrations was a community effort. Each church took responsibility for a specific part or day of the festivities. Emancipation Day 1914, Mr. Richard Lester spoke to the community about the responsibilities of the government to every citizen. Mr. Lester continued work diligently for equal rights for all. Mr. Lester went on to become a leader in the Dallas area N.A.A.C.P.⁽³¹⁾ His name is inscribed on the 1972 cornerstone of the Youth Center of Emanuel Chapel.

Emanuel Chapel United Methodist Church turned 104 in 2006.⁽³²⁾ Michael Kelly stood before the congregation during the special heritage service held to celebrate anniversary to present the history of the church. Mr. Kelly is the fifth generation of his family to be members of Emanuel Chapel. Spencer Perkins was his great-great- grandfather; Mary Cottom, shown in the picture of the charter members, was his great grandmother.⁽³³⁾

The Chapel has been deeply involved in the establishment and development of Cecil Holman Park. The park, located in the Bailey Community is named for Cecil Holman who was the undertaker for the black community for many years. Recently, the Reserve our Community (ROC) established a Memory Garden in the park. Carol Hester Spratt daughter of Richard Hester worked diligently on this project with the UNITI organization which preceded COR as well as the COR to accomplish the goal of unifying and betterment of the community through the use of the park.⁽³⁴⁾

In recent years, the ministries of the Chapel have included adding the population of the Aldersgate Community as special members of the congregation. The Aldersgate community is made of people with challenging disabilities. The Chapel supports Aldersgate community financially and spiritually.

III Significance

Emanuel Chapel was the first and only Black Methodist Episcopal Church in Brownwood, Texas. The founding fathers were freed slaves, veterans of the Civil War, and some of the first Black business owners in Brownwood. These were men and women who struggled to build the Bailey Addition into a peaceful, productive, law abiding community that provided safety and an education for their children. When Rufus Hardin needed classrooms for his school; Emanuel Chapel was there. When the community celebrated; Emanuel Chapel was there. Youth programs for the children of the Bailey has always been an important function of the ministry to the point of building a center just so the youth of the community would have a place to go after school. The names of the street may have changed from Grove to Bailey but Emanuel Chapel United Methodist Church has met in the same place for 116 years. Only one other church in Brownwood has met in the same place for a longer period of time. Today Emanuel Chapel United Methodist Church is fully integrated and continues to serve the Bailey Addition and Brownwood faith and devotion.

EMANUEL CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



VI. DOCUMENTATION

HISTORY OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN BROWNWOOD TEXAS compiled by the Pecan Valley Genealogical Society is an 11 volume collection of articles from various sources detailing black history of Brownwood. Since many of these articles were collected from family scrap books, they cannot be referenced using accepted formats. The volumes can be found in the Pecan Valley Genealogical Library at 213 S. Broadway in Brownwood.

1. "Circuit Rider (Religious)." *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circuit_rider_\(religious\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circuit_rider_(religious))
2. "A Brief History of R. Hardin High School." *Brown County Historical Society*,
www.browncountyhistory.org
3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Perry-Castaneda Collection University of Texas at Austin 1915
Brownwood map 8 <http://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/b.html>
4. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Perry-Castaneda Collection University of Texas at Austin 1930
Brownwood map 13 <http://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/b.html>
5. Circuit Rider (Religious)
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10. Graves, Harriette. "Emanuel Chapel Formed in 1902." *Brownwood Bulletin*. Black History of Brownwood, Texas Vol 3
11. Emanuel Chapel Methodist Church Homecoming 2006 Emanuel Chapel Methodist Church History
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13. Sepolan Family, Black History of Brownwood Texas, Vol 10
14. Spencer Perkins Black History of Brownwood Texas, Vol 11 originally published in **Confederate Veterans Magazine, April, 1924, Vol XXXII**
15. Personal Interview Michael Kelly, November 5, 2018
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19. Emanuel Chapel Methodist Church Homecoming 2006 Emanuel Chapel Methodist Church History
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21. Health Talks at Colored Church." *Brownwood Bulletin*, 10 Mar. 1934.

22. "Program Celebrating Negro History Week." *Brownwood Bulletin*, 24 Feb. 1938.
23. Emanuel Chapel Methodist Church Homecoming 2006 Emanuel Chapel Methodist Church History
24. "Emanuel Chapel 50th Anniversary Celebration." *Brownwood Bulletin*, 24 Sept. 1952
25. Personal interview Peggy Weathersly, October 24, 2018
26. Harriette Graves. "Hardy Reed Saluted: Community Shows Thanks." *Brownwood Bulletin*, 12 July 1988.
27. "Picture At Groundbreaking ." *Brownwood Bulletin*, 15 Dec. 1969.
28. "Church Puts Accent on Youth" *Brownwood Bulletin*, December 11, 1969
29. "Consecration today of new center" *Brownwood Bulletin* January 29, 1972.
30. "Meals Proceeds Helping Center." *Brownwood Bulletin*, 15 Sept. 1972.
31. Carl Bodiford. "Juneteenth in Jim Crow Era" *Brownwood News*, June 19, 2018
32. Gene Deason. "Emanuel Chapel turns 104" *Brownwood Bulletin*, 2006 Black History of Brownwood, Texas Vol 3
33. Personal interview, Michael Kelly, November 5, 2018
34. Personal interview, Carol Hester Spratt, October 30, 2018

