

In the beginning . . .

In 1859, less than ten years after the formation of Archer Masonic Lodge No. 157 (the number was changed later to 165), another entity began sharing space within the lodge building.

What we now know as White Oak Baptist Church was organized as Archer Lodge Missionary Baptist Church and was on record September 20, 1859, according to the Raleigh Baptist Association. Once-a-month services were held in the Masonic Lodge Building.

An examination of the minutes of the Raleigh Baptist Association prior to 1859 revealed no reference to Archer Lodge. In the minutes for 1859, however, Archer Lodge is listed among the churches represented, and J. Corbet and Henry Barnes are listed as the delegates.

The following quotation is from the

minutes of that meeting: *"Petitionary letters were inquired for, upon which a letter from the church at Archer Lodge was handed in and read; and, after due deliberation*

ly been organized between September 21-23, 1858, the date of the last previous meeting of the association, and September 20-22, 1859, the date of this

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Minutes of the Raleigh Baptist Association - 1859

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The manner in which the church was received and the absence of other statistics for this church indicate that Archer Lodge Baptist Church was a new church. It had almost certain-

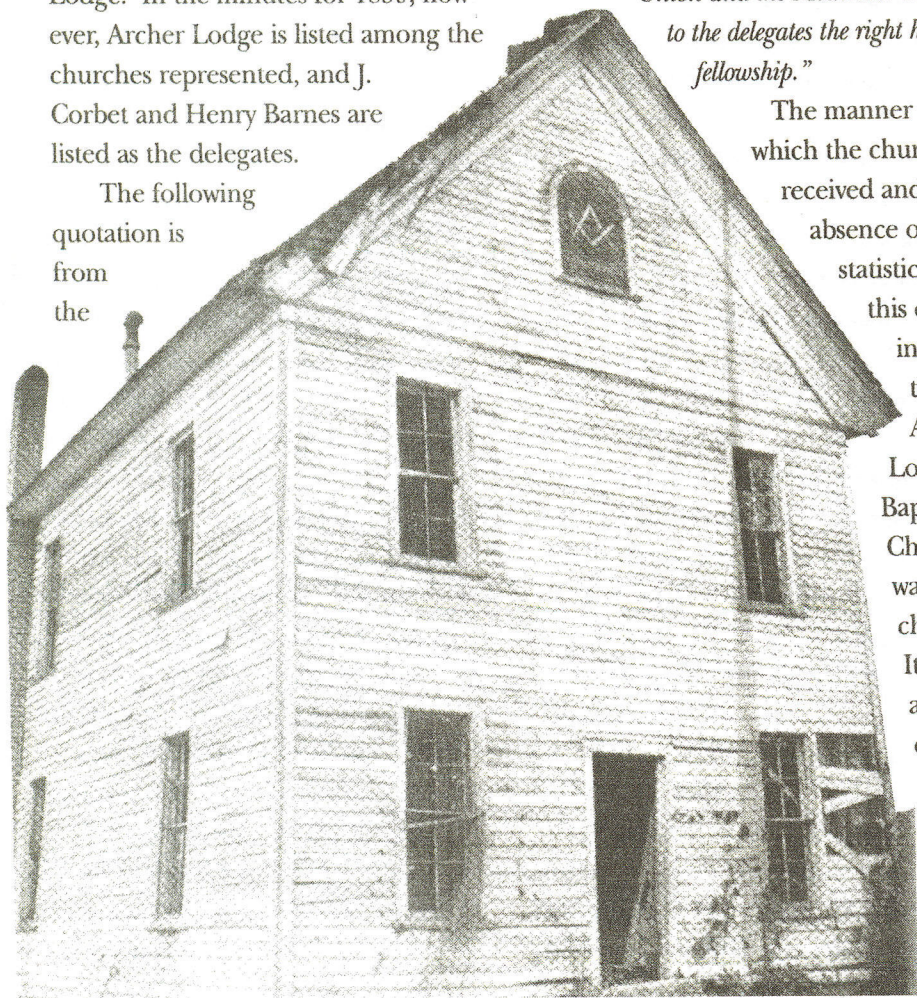
meeting.

An article entitled "Raleigh Association" in the Biblical Recorder, September 29, 1859, contains this statement: "One newly-constructed church was received . . ." This is additional proof that Archer Lodge Baptist Church was a new church in September, 1859.

In the Statistical Table for 1859, Archer Lodge had 44 members—white 40 and black 4—and contributed \$2.00 to the associational minute fund. There were no other statistics for this church. No pastor is listed until 1860.

Rev. L.B. Hortom from Eagle Rock, NC, is listed as the first pastor. For the next 20 years, Archer Lodge Baptist Church continued to meet once every month in the Masonic Lodge building.

Though this building is not the original Archer Lodge Masonic Building (that structure was destroyed by Union troops in 1865), it and its predecessor served as home of Archer Lodge Missionary Baptist Church in 1853, when the church moved to its new home and changed its name to White Oak Baptist Church.





A new home, A new name . . .

Services for the newly formed Archer Lodge Baptist Church were held once a month in the Masonic Lodge Building. Throughout the first 23 years of its existence the church shared space with the Masonic Lodge. Many of its early leaders were also members of the Lodge. J.(John) Robertson, who was listed as one of the first two delegates to the Association Meeting, was an early member of the lodge.

On November 28, 1881, Elias G. Barnes decided to the Archer Lodge Missionary Baptist Church the property upon which the present building, White Oak Baptist Church, now sits.

There are still four generations of Elias G. Barnes descendants living in the Archer Lodge area and affiliated with White Oak Church

October 24-27, 1882 is the last known time Archer Lodge Baptist Church appears in the Raleigh Baptist Association Minutes. Beginning October 23-26, 1883, a new name appears in the the tables in the space formerly used for Archer Lodge Baptist Church. With a new building constructed on the land deeded by Elias G. Barnes, and taking its new name from the numerous white oak trees that graced the property, the newly named White Oak Baptist Church now took the place of Archer Lodge Baptist Church in the Raleigh Baptist Association records.

The first reference to a Sunday School was in 1883, with A.J. Nowell as superintendent. The Sunday School had 4 teachers and 50 pupils.

A change in “Association” . . .

Appearing in The Raleigh Association Minutes for 1903 is this note: “. . . the following churches have been aided through the State Mission Board during the past year” Among those named was White Oak.

Also appearing in the 1903 is the following:

Motion: “Because of the great number of churches now composing the Raleigh Association, and the further difficulty of assembling their representatives for associational purposes on account of the vastness of the territory over which it is now spread; be it

Resolved: 1st. That we advise a division of the present territory and churches with a view to forming a new Association.

Resolved: 2nd. That we recommend the lines bounding the territory of Johnston County as the general boundary lines of the proposed new Association.

“The vote being taken resulted as follows: For division, 41; against, 31. On motion of Bro. A. A. Pippin, the vote was made unanimous.”

“Bro. J. W. Suttle made a statement in reference to plans for the formation of the new Association. The Churches desiring to enter into the new organization are requested to meet in Selma on Friday before the fifth Sunday in November for organization.”

This was done in Smithfield on October 30, 1903.

White Oak Baptist Church is among the churches missing from the Raleigh Minutes for 1904. But the following information was taken from the

Minutes of the Johnston County Baptist Association:

“Friday night, November 27, 1903. Pursuant to the call issued by order of the meeting at Smithfield, October 30, 1903, representatives from the churches met in Selma Baptist Church Friday night, November 27, 1903, for the purpose of organizing the new association!” (page 7).

White Oak was one of 30 churches represented at this first meeting of the Johnston County Baptist Association. The messengers were N. E. Jeffreys and R. H. Biggs. White Oak’s pastor is A. A. Pippin. Total membership is 83. Value of church property is \$450,000. Seating capacity 450.”

A “real church building . . .”

A more modern church building was constructed on the building site in 1910. The sanctuary of this new building would remain in use until the construction of the present sanctuary in 1959.

The initial 1883 building had been a simple one-room structure, not unlike the Masonic Lodge the church had shared for 23 years. But the new building was large, imposing and elegant in appearance. It was definitely a church.

The main sanctuary was created by the intersection of a pair of two-story high wings, each with pairs of tall slim windows with “pointed” tops. The entry was the base of a three-story tower placed at the intersection of the two wings. At the top of the tower, a church bell was located and was rung to call people to the service. It was also rung at times of crisis or important events.



White Oak Baptist Church at Archer Lodge - From a postcard, dated 1912, bearing "Archer, NC" postmark

Across the back of the church was another wing for Sunday School rooms. The ceilings were very high, especially in the sanctuary where they were at least 20 feet.

Heating in the wintertime was a real task. Tall freestanding wood heaters were used and the wood supplied by members as they cut wood for their own homes and tobacco barns. The stovepipes rose up from these stoves to the ceiling ran across the ceiling and were held up by wire. Someone had to come hours before service in the winter to start the fire in order to heat up the large space. People close to the stoves were always too warm and

those far away were always cold.

Not long after the dedication of the new building, the Johnston Baptist Association met at White Oak Baptist Church, on November 9-11, 1910. No history of the church was given at the time.

The Women's Missionary Society, now known as the WMU, was first listed in 1922. Mrs. Jessie Williams was president.

The Great Depression hit farm families very hard. This being a farm community, cash money was not readily

available. In the 1920's and 30's, big hearts still prevailed, and there was a willingness to share whatever anyone had. Sometimes during this period, when a revival was held or it was the Holiday Season, members of this church would "pound" the preacher and his family. This terminology meant that church members would share what they had produced on their farm with their preacher as a token of their love and appreciation.

By 1940, White Oak had grown to 403 members and there was a real need for a much larger building. World War II halted strong efforts to start construc-