

A Step Back in Time

By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas

When I was working on the Back In Time article, published in the July 1st 2009 paper, I did not know the Enon Primitive Baptist Church in Bedford County had a connection to the Williamson County Flat Creek Community.

In reading the article, my friend, Ennis Wallace, a notable historian of the Flat Creek and surrounding area, recognized a couple of familiar names listed as Pastors of the Enon Church; Balaam Ezell and Jeremiah Stephens and graciously shared his information with me.

According to the history of Enon, The first pastor of Enon, 1821 –1826 was Balaam Izzel. (Spelling of names varies in early histories.) Balaam Ezell who called himself a minister of the Gospel, was very active in the early history of the Enon church. He was born in Brunswick County Virginia and had immigrated to Flat Creek Williamson County, in the early 1800's by the way of Kentucky. Balaam Ezell who was born April 11, 1783 and died June 21, 1833, was the son of Balaam Ezell Sr., and his wife Liddy. The elder Balaam Ezell was also a Primitive Baptist Minister and served as a Private in the Revolutionary War. Balaam Sr. and Liddy had three sons; Jeremiah, Balaam Jr. and Jephthah. All three migrated to Middle Tennessee; Jeremiah settled in Davidson County, Balaam Jr. in Williamson County and Jephthah in Marshall County.

Balaam Ezell Jr. was married in Williamson County Tennessee, July 17th 1805 to Keziah Tarkington, daughter of Mary and Zebulon Tarkington. Keziah was born August 11, 1778 and died June 2, 1850.

Balaam and Kenziah were parents to 12 children:

1. Mary Saunders Ezell b. Nov. 8, 1806 married Orren Vincent, November 6, 1828 and later lived near Dresden, Tn.
2. Littleberry R. b. July 19, 1807 - d. June 1, 1850, married Martha Holmes Smith, Dec. 29 1836
3. L. B. b. March 1809 - d. Aug 9, 1826
4. Joseph D. b. March 15, 1810
5. Jephthah b. May 16 1811 – d. 1855
6. Deborah married Baldwin A. Crawford
7. Emeline Elizabeth b. March 1 1815,

married Jeremiah Stephens

8. William b. April 10, 1816 - d. Sept 1877, married Elizabeth Smith
9. Balaam H. married Martha Burns, Feb. 1845
10. Nancy E. b. Sep. 24, 1820 - d. July 10, 1904 married John E. Crockett
11. Burkett M., b. November 6 1821 - d. Aug 23, 1847
12. George Washington b. April 10, 1823

In October 1824, Balaam Ezell purchased 201 acres of land from the George McLain 1000-acre North Carolina grant. According to the deed, which wasn't recorded until 1828, he paid \$1306.50 for the acreage. This land is on the north side of Flat Creek running southwest with the creek approximately ¼ mile and backing to the north.

The Ezell home place was a large log home on top of a bald hill, over looking the creek-bottom land, cemetery and church. Ennis remembers the old house being struck by lightning during a storm in 1938 or 39 and burning. He also remembers, the Eagleville Horse Show was this same night of the storm. There was a very deep hand dug well, lined with sand stone, in the corner of the front yard. The well is still preserved and still has plenty of water.

From the 201 acres purchased, Balaam Ezell gave 1.0 acre for the Primitive Baptist Church at Flat Creek. According to old church records, the Flat Creek Primitive Baptist Church was an Arm of Spring Creek Primitive Baptist Church: (Spring Creek was located east of Horton Hwy, north of Chapel Hill on Mt. Vernon Road). The early church records aren't complete but it is believed that the Spring Creek Primitive Baptist Church was an Arm of the Enon Primitive Baptist Church located near Unionville Tennessee.

In an old Flat Creek Church record book, an entry was made on Saturday before the first Lord's Day, September 1831. Four items to be noted:

1. Brother John Crick has moved away.
2. Brother Orren Vincent elected clerk.
3. \$2.00 was collected and sent to the association.

Balaam Ezell - Minister Of The Gospel



The Flat Creek Community Center - Located On The Previous Big Flat Creek Primitive Baptist Church Property, Land donated by Balaam Ezell

4. A deed of conveyance for one acre of land from Brother Balaam Ezell

To the United Predestinarian Baptist Church of Christ on Flat Creek* which has Been prepared by Brother Orren Vincent, was read and approved and also signed and attested in presence of church while in conference, signed: Orren Vincent, Clerk.

*In the Enon Primitive Baptist Church history, this church was referred to as the Big Flat Creek Primitive Baptist Church.

A log building was constructed about 1835 that served as a church and school until 1912. In 1919, the building was torn down. The Community Center is located on the old church property.

Balaam Ezell also donated the land for the Ezell Cemetery, also located on the old Melvin White Farm, where he and his wife and other family members are buried.

Emeline Elizabeth, the seventh child of Balaam and Kenziah married Jeremiah Stephens who was also the Pastor of Enon Primitive Church 1841 – 1844 and also 1862 – 1883. The history of Enon church recorded that on May 20 1883, Elder J. Stephens resigned the pastoral care of the church after serving the church as pastor for more than twenty years.

Jeremiah purchased land in the northwest corner of the McLain grant. Part of his log cabin still stand on the south side of Duck River Ridge. J. Stephens sold his land in the

22nd Civil District of Williamson County and bought land in the 12th Civil Dist of Williamson County. His family gave the land for Ash Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The singing "Stephen Quartet" is descendents of Jeremiah and Emeline, who are also buried in the Ezell Cemetery near Emeline's parents.

Ezell is an ancestry name to many residents in the Eagleville, College Grove, Flat Creek and Chapel Hill area. According to the history "FLAT CREEK – ITS LAND AND ITS PEOPLE," several traditions about the origin of the Ezell name in America have been found. The first Ezell to whom the Flat Creek Ezells can be traced through records was George Ezell (Essell) of Old Colonial Surry, Virginia. His will, proven in court in 1693, names his wife, Elizabeth and six children, George, Elizabeth, Mary, Lucy, Sarah and Timothy. It appears Timothy, who was born about 1689, lived in Albemarle Parish, Sussex County, Virginia, who a very wealthy man. He gave large tracts of land to his children before his death in or about 1760. His will lists his wife, Mary, and his children, Thomas, Timothy Jr., John, Lydia, Elizabeth, Mary and George. Thomas Ezell, the older of Timothy's children, born about 1715 was the grandfather of Balaam Ezell who chose to travel and make his home in the Flat Creek area.

Thanks again, Ennis.