

# Round Top, Texas, African American Pioneers

## The Concord Missionary Baptist Church

By David L. Collins, Sr.

The Concord Baptist has been an active African American Church in Round Top, Texas since it's founding in 1867 with a membership of 186. This rich history is recorded in the historical records of the La Grange Baptist District Association Historical Album published in 1993. A review of some of the original church attendance record by long time church member Maude Cole, the first month in 1927 attendance was 14. The highest in 1927 was 27 & 28 in 1928, 45 on October 13, 1928, 47 on June 29, 1929, and 48 in one month in 1931. At a special gathering in the summer of 1932 there were 117 members in attendance.

Arch Leonard, Thomas Rivers, and Adam Rivers paid a sum of \$100.00, received in hand by J. C. Benford, Thomas Shelby, and Jerry Crawford, Trustees of the Round Top Missionary Baptist Concord Church, in the Town of Round Top (James Winn League. This was part of a transaction by Isaac Killough and wife to C. F. Flack to Arch Leonard, Thomas Rivers and Adam Rivers of two (2) acres of land on the east side of Highway 237 and Will Graf.; E. Henkel was the Notary Public, and filed with R. Klatt, County Clerk Fayette County, Texas December 20, 1892.

Based on information from Georgia Tubbs and from her conversation with James Dobbins, Ollie Jones and Perline Knotts-Burrell, the church had two singing groups in the 1930's; the "Standard Four, consisting of Ferris Cole (bass), Lufkin Shelby, Loraine Cole, and Arizona Shelby. The other group was the "Royal Four" with James Dobbins (lead tenor), Eddie Jones, Charlie Daniels and Van James. The latter group was still in existence when the Round Top Area Historical Society was founded in 1993.



These groups sang/performed at the Round Top church and rendered programs for neighboring churches.

Pastors of Concord included Rev. Sidney Grant, Rev. A. N. Bass, Rev. White, Rector, Rev. John Simmons, Rev. Goins, McNeil, Hubbard, Rev. T.R. Simmons and Rev. C. D. Ray. Deacons included Silas McCoy, Jasper McCoy, Albert Shelby, Bud Craft, Isreal Crump, Eddie Jones, James Dobbins, Addison Ferguson, Lufkin Shelby, Ollie Jones, Albert Shelby, Jr., Alvin Crump, Green Collins, and Clarence Phoenix.

Some of the early members/families of the church were, William Craft, Seth Banks, Ben and Thuney Knotts, Charles Lovings, Charlotte Phoeniz, William Cole, Professor Hollins, Emily Harris, Sergie Martin, Smith Sampson, Al Leonard, Shed Williams, Wash Wade, Mae Cole, Addie Benford, Walter Moore, Hezekiah McCoy, Mr. Vincent, Mrs. Lucia Rhone, Oscar and Julane Knotts.

Some of the church member who were, Educators in the Round Top School System were C. L. Rhone a Colored School Teacher in 1900, the father of Urissa Rhone-Brown, who taught in the school system for many years. She retired in 1976. Other Round Top Faculty included Iva Lee Rhone Tanner, Weldon Knotts, Sarah Simpson, and Pearline Knotts Burrell. After retirement, Pearline Knotts Burrell retired and moved to Brenham. I was fortunate enough to visit with her on a couple of occasions.

My Great Uncle Matt Rivers, Jr. was a long time member of Concord until his death in 1955 and is buried in the Connersville Primitive Baptist Church Cemetery on FM 1457, directly behind the Richter Cemetery. The other long time member was James Walter Dobbins, my cousin, was a member until he died in 2005. He was 105 when he died and he and his wife would wear bright red matching suits on special Sunday occasions.

James Dobbins would always tell me when we met that Matt Rivers was a very proud man and would always ride his great white stallion to town or church. James Walter Dobbins lived his entire 105 years in Fayette County, Texas.

Clarence Phenix and his family were life time residents of the Round Top, Texas area, and member of Concord and local Auto Mechanic in Round Top until his death in 2011. He is one of few African American who did not migrate from the Round Top Area, and is buried in Connersville Primitive Baptist Church Cemetery.

*Sources:*

Collins, David L., Sr. Family Oral History

Fayette County, Texas Deed Records

Lee County, Texas Deed Records

U.S. Census Records for 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910 and 1920

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