

Salt Fork Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Township:	T-49-N	Organized:	1833
Range:	R-19-W	Disbanded:	Yes
Section:	36	Active:	No
Map:		Updated:	March 8, 2020

Cemetery: There is a cemetery associated with this church.

Area: Northeast quarter of the northeast quarter of the section 1/2 mile for Cooper-Saline Counties line; near Highway #40. The church was razed in the 1990s.

Records: The location of the church records is unknown at present.

History:

HISTORY OF SALT FORK CHURCH September, 1949

In the northwest corner of Cooper County, Mo., near Highway No. 40 (note: Now called Z Road or Old 40) there stands a little old country church. It is partly surrounded by a forest of verdant green. Though simple and homely in appearance, it occupies a tender spot in the heart of every person who has come within the bounds of its far-reaching influence. Many are those who have been reared within the surrounding community and as children have been taught to worship at its shrine. Hundreds of people, both old and young, black and white, have there dedicated themselves to God, and gone out rejoicing in a greater freedom of religious and emotional expression.

Since the days of its first organization, in 1833, this old Cumberland Presbyterian Church has gone by the name of Salt Fork. It was called such by reason of its first situation near a stream bearing that name. Though first organized at the home of Asa Finley, services were later held not far from the mouth of Salt Fork Creek on the north side of Blackwater Creek and one mile northeast of the old Marshall Bridge. Here, at the old camp meeting grounds a brush arbor was erected and served as a place of worship.

The ruling elders who first served at this by-gone seat of worship were: William B. Wear and William Burke, with Daniel Buie as pastor. During the winter months, services were held at the respective homes of Wear, Finley, Burke, and Wallace. The first members to be pledged to the fold of this church were: Asa James, Dabney and Wallace Finley; Mollie, Elizabeth, Mary, and Margaret Finley; Thomas, Rhoda, Parus, and Nancy Finley; Rhodes and Polly Marshall; James and Lorene Burke; Margaret Wallace; R. J. Steele; W. H. and Mary C. Finley; and Margaret Wallace. Among those numbered as the first pastors were Rev. Buie, L. Burns, J. L. Wear, and Henry Weedon.

In 1842, two and one-half acres of land, one and one-half miles south of Blackwater Creek and one half mile east of the Cooper and Saline County lines, were deeded to this Christian organization for a church site. The building erected of hewed logs was very crude with its low ceiling and very small windows, but, perhaps was adequate to the wants and demands of the people at that time. The building, however, remained in an unfinished condition until 1847 when it was destroyed by the then dreaded prairie fires.

In those days of isolation, these early settlers, who largely lacked intimate contact, would gather together in late summer or early fall for their good old annual camp meetings. Work was dispensed with, stock left to care for itself, and equipped with provisions and other necessary articles, the family would load into a farm wagon and go miles to the long looked forward to event of the year. Every few days, the men that lived near would go home to dress a sheep or young shoat, and to

bring back other edibles that were needed. Here, brother would meet brother, neighbors see neighbors, and families visit families, who perhaps, had not called upon each other during the year.

Both, Presbyterians and Methodists held their meetings here together, and with their old time form of religion, they would make the old hills ring with their singing and the shouting of their "Halleluiahs" and "Amens".

"Tis the old time religion", and some good old brother or sister would give vent to their emotions and go threading his way down the aisle, shouting, "Halleluiahs", "Praise the Lord", or "Bless His Hold Name". Through this rustic but cleanly form of worship many souls were brought in Christ and believed in the faith. The meetins would last for weeks, until all seemed happy and satisfied; then, they would break camp, go home, and leave the old campgrounds to the forest and its silencing peace.

In 1848, another building was erected at the same spot on which the previous church had stood. It was built at a cost of about \$1200, and still stands today, though it has been remodeled several times.

Some of the first ministers who have held services in this building were Wm. B. Wear, Archibald McCorkle, W. E. Burke, and Robert Crockett. The latter preached there longer and gave more of his time and service to the interest of the church and community than has any other one pastor. He now lies buried in the Old Salt Fork Cemetery, but his descendants yet remain and one son, Rev. Robert Crockett, Jr., has held some fine old meetins at the church in former years.

For over seventy years this church performed a wonderful service and did a great work for its community, but beginning with the year 1911 or 1912 the congregation gradually dwindled, owing to a difference of opinion in regard to the "union" question. Still, however, a faithful few remained and held Sunday School and at times there were preaching service, but both services were continued somewhat irregularly and finally become so poorly attended that the effort to maintain them was give up. The town and modern means of conveyance had sapped their strength.

One of the most influential members of this church and Sunday School was Mr. Philander Crockett, who for seventy-two years was an acting elder and one time Sunday School Superintendent. He never removed his letter from the old church. He and his wife are buried in the Old Salt Fork Cemetery; he passing away the last of August and she in January.

Annually there is a home-coming held at the old church, on the firth Sunday, in July, or the first Sunday in August. The purpose of the gathering is to promote interest in the club and cemetery and to perpetuate the memories and connections of good times in olden days. Aprogram is always arranged for the day, and a speaker is secured to address the crowd. People with baskets overflowing with country ham, fried chicken, salads, pies, cakes, and other edibles, come from far and near to add to and detract from the huge basket dinner.

Visitors attended last year from Kansas City, St. Louis, West Plains, Sedalia, Boonville, Marshall, Lamonte, and Slater.

Among the speakers for these occasions have been Rev. John Crockett, Rev. G. L. Coffman, Rev. E. F. Dillon, Rev. A. B. Jackson, Rev. Lee Lakin of Kansas City, and Rev. Clinton C. Cox of Drexel Park Avenue Church in Chicago, Illinois. The latter two speakers were reared in the community and as boys attended services at the Salt Fork Church.

Written by Mrs. Edna McGuire in 1920.

But many years before, the earliest records show that in 1833, a group of early settlers met at the home of Asa Finley and organized the Salt Fork Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Near the Blackwater River at the mouth of Salt Fork Creek, the group built a "brush arbor" and established a camp meeting ground. Services were held here in warm weather and in the homes during the winter months. The homes of the families of Finley, Weir, Burke and Wallace were the homes where they met frequently. The first pastors included the names of Rev. Buie, L. Burns, J.L. Wear, and Henry Weedon.

In 1842, two and one-half acres of land, located one and one-half miles east of the Saline-Cooper County lines, were deeded to this Christian organization for a church site and burial grounds. The building erected was of hewed logs and was very crude, with a low ceiling and small windows. But it was adequate for the wants and needs of the time. In 1847, the structure was destroyed by a prairie fire.

In those days, when persons lived in isolated areas, and without near neighbors, there was a need for persons to assemble and spend some time together in fellowship and worship. In late summer or early fall, all would gather at the old camp grounds for their annual camp meeting. Work was left behind and livestock left to care for themselves. The trip was made in wagons and families often traveled many miles. Every few days, the men who lived nearby would go home for extra food supplies or to dress a sheep or pig for food.

Both Presbyterians and Methodists were present at the meetings, and with their old time form of religion, they made the hills ring with singing and shouting. The meetings often lasted for weeks until all seemed happy and satisfied; then all would break camp and go home, leaving the old camp grounds until another year.

In 1848, another building was erected, and services were held there for many years. The building was remodeled a number of times. But the towns and modern means of transportation sapped the strength of the old church and finally services were discontinued. In time, vandals destroyed the building and it was torn down.

For many years, a homecoming was held at the old church site, with a large crowd attending, a basket dinner, with country-cured ham, fried chicken, home-grown vegetables, salads, pies, and cakes, all home-made and home-grown. There was much visiting, reminiscing, and usually a guest speaker.
